Original Paper

A Study on the English Translation of Chinese-specific Words from the Perspective of Transknowletology

—Taking the English Version of *Work Government Report (2024)* as an Example

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Abstract

The Government Work Report is rich in Chinese-specific terms across various fields like economy, culture and politic, each carrying significant background knowledge. Transknowletology studies on translating these culturally and contextually specific terms while preserving their original meaning. This paper analyzes the translation of Chinese-specific words in the 2024 English version of the Government Work Report through the lens of Transknowletology. It examines political, ecological, and cultural aspects to address translation issues and proposes strategies such as literal translation, free translation, amplification. The goal is to enhance understanding of Chinese-English differences, improve cultural exchanges, and contribute empirical insights to Transknowletology research.

Keywords

Transknowletology, Chinese-specific words, Government Work Report, translation strategy

1. Introduction

With the "going out" strategy, international exchanges have surged, underscoring translation's role as a bridge between nations. Effective communication between Eastern and Western nations requires addressing cultural differences and conveying underlying knowledge, not just translating language. Yang Feng's (2021) concept of Transknowletology redefines translation as a cultural practice involving the cross-language processing and re-transmission of knowledge. This approach is crucial for translating Chinese-specific political terms, as it includes cultural connotations and knowledge systems. Xiao Huafeng (2023) highlights that Transknowletology promotes global knowledge dissemination and

the integration of cultures, offering a strategic tool for knowledge diplomacy and enhancing translation studies.

The *Government Work Report*, crucial for international outreach, presents complex translation challenges due to Chinese-specific terms (Liu, 2022). Terms like "the Chinese Dream," "Positive Energy," "the Belt and Road," "Global Governance," and "Community of Shared Future for Mankind" highlight cultural and political dimensions. Research on these translations focuses on methods and strategies. Lv Xiaomin (2021) examined how translators manage accuracy and timely dissemination through new media. Wang Dongping (2020) found that 72% of translations from the 2016-2020 Reports employed strategies preserving Chinese cultural imagery, enhancing global understanding of Chinese values and contributing to a Chinese discourse system.

2. Features of Chinese-specific Words in *Government Work Report (2024)*

The annual *Government Work Report* presented at the National Two Sessions is a key official document for external communication and publicity by the Chinese government (Li, 2024). This report not only reveals the governing principles of the government but also announces national policies, serving as a critical medium for conveying China's story and uniqueness to the outside world (Yue & Chen, 2022). Chinese-specific terms describe the unique aspects of contemporary Chinese economic, political, and cultural life (Yang & Jiang, 2002), and such terms have various features as following.

2.1 Four-character Phrase

The four-character structure in Chinese vocabulary is highly valued for its simplicity and depth of expression. This form, deeply rooted in ancient Chinese tradition and extensively used in classic texts and poetry, combines rhythm and rhyme to facilitate memorization and recitation. Four-character idioms, found in seminal works such as *The Analects of Confucius, Zhuangzi, and The Classic of Poetry*, have profoundly influenced modern Chinese. Their symmetrical structure and harmonious rhythms enhance the beauty of the language while also shaping a distinctive style and enriching the literary and artistic quality of expression. The *Government Work Report* emphasizes the importance of achieving this year's expected goals by using a series of three four-character phrases: "稳中求进"、"以进促稳"、"先立后破". These phrases express the commitment to prioritize stability. When discussing the maintenance of steady industrial economic operations, the report highlights "补齐短板"、"拉长长板"、"锻造新板" to enhance the resilience and competitiveness of the industrial and supply chains.

2.2 Use of Metaphor

The *Government Work Report* often employ rhetorical devices such as metaphors to strengthen and deepen its expression. These metaphors not only clarify complex policy intentions but also make the language more vivid and impactful, enhancing the report's overall influence (Zhang, 2021). For instance, the metaphor "大水漫灌" illustrates the broad and comprehensive nature of policy implementation. When translating such expressions, the translator must first grasp the underlying meaning and then accurately convey this sense in the target language to preserve the original intent and

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effect. The *Government Work Report* mentions that to strengthen research and application in health, elderly care, and disability assistance, the "揭榜挂帅" mechanism will be improved. This mechanism is a new model for deepening science and technology system reform and enhancing innovation-driven research efforts. It aims to address the disconnection between research breakthroughs and their practical application. The approach involves publicly listing key core technology projects; candidates, regardless of their background, can take on these tasks if they possess the required capabilities.

2.3 Use of Numeric Abbreviation

The *Government Work Report* employs many distinctive terms with numerical structures, where specific quantity words serve as prefixes to succinctly convey various policies and guidelines (Zheng, 2018). For instance, when emphasizing the creation of a fair and competitive environment for all types of ownership enterprises, the report mentions the need to continuously improve and implement the system and mechanism of the "两个毫不动摇", which refer to: unwaveringly consolidating and developing the public ownership economy, and unwaveringly encouraging, supporting, and guiding the development of the non-public ownership economy. Using the full terms each time would make the text lengthy and monotonous. The numerical prefix structure not only aids in memory but also makes the expression more concise. However, to ensure that the target audience fully comprehends the original text, it is necessary to translate these numerical expressions completely to avoid misunderstandings due to insufficient background knowledge.

3. Translation Strategies of Chinese-specific Words in *Government Work Report (2024)* under the Guidance of Transknowletology

Chinese-specific words profoundly reflect Chinese wisdom and style. When translating such terms, it is crucial for the translator to thoroughly grasp the connotations and meanings of the original text, understand the underlying knowledge, and accurately convey this knowledge to adhere to the Transknowletology emphasized in translation studies. In translating *Government Work Reports*, the commonly employed methods generally include the following three:

3.1 Literal Translation

SL1: 一带一路

TL1: The belt and Road

SL2: 地缘政治

TL2: geopolitical

SL3: 高质量发展

TL3: high-quality development

SL4: 绿色发展

TL4: green development

Although such words do not have direct equivalents in English, the knowledge they convey is consistent across both languages. Literal translation effectively communicates this knowledge to the

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reader, achieving the objective of translating content. It preserves the original structure and meaning of the words, aiding readers in better understanding and memorizing them. By using literal translation, readers of the target language can quickly grasp the specific meanings and background of these terms as they are used in Chinese. This approach is particularly effective for words with clear definitions and specific contexts, as it enables readers to comprehend their meanings swiftly and accurately, minimizing the risk of misunderstandings or ambiguities. Thus, direct translation not only facilitates the transfer of knowledge but also maintains the accuracy and consistency of the original text, enhancing the target language readers' understanding and retention of these terms.

3.2 Free Translation

SL5: 制定实施一揽子化解地方债务

SL5: We formulated and implemented *a package of steps* to address local government debt.

In Chinese, the term "一揽子" often refers to a comprehensive set or series of measures, programs, or plans. This expression is particularly prevalent in areas such as policy-making and project management, where it underscores that these measures or programs are part of an integrated whole, with each component interrelated and coordinated. The term's systematic and comprehensive nature reflects its unique character in Chinese. Finding a direct equivalent in English can be challenging. To effectively convey the knowledge, translators often need to employ a method that captures both the meaning and the contextual nuances. Translating "一揽子" as "a package of steps" is one such effective strategy. This translation method uses "package" to represent the totality of the set and "steps" to refer to the specific components within the set. Thus, while there may not be a direct one-to-one equivalent for "一揽子" in English, this interpretive translation method helps ensure that the target language readers grasp the comprehensive and systematic nature of the concept, maintaining both accuracy and clarity in the translation.

SL6: 做好"双减"工作

SL6: relieve students of excessive burdens from homework and off-campus tutoring.

The "relieve students of excessive burdens from homework and off-campus tutoring" policy is an educational reform measure introduced in China in 2021, aimed at alleviating the academic burden on primary and secondary school students and easing the financial pressure on families. It encompasses two main aspects: reducing homework and limiting extracurricular tutoring. The policy is designed to promote students' holistic development and enhance educational equity. When translating this term, the translator opts for free translation, explaining its meaning to provide the target audience with more relevant knowledge. A literal translation could lead to ambiguity and fail to convey the true intent of the policy, thus not achieving the goal of informative translation.

SL7: 厚植人民幸福之本，夯实国家富强之基。

SL7: lay a solid foundation for enhancing the *well-being of our people and the prosperity of our nation*.

The phrases "幸福之本" and "富强之基" both belong to the four-character structure of the Chinese

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expression, and both are forms of the "之" structure. The former refers to the fundamental source of happiness, while the latter refers to the foundation of a country's wealth and strength. When translating these expressions, translators often choose to use free translation in order to accurately convey the original meaning. In translating "幸福之本", the translator transforms it into "well-being of our people", which not only maintains the original meaning, but also makes it clear that it is the source of happiness. Because literal translation may make it difficult for the target language readers to grasp the real meaning, especially when it comes to abstract concepts, free translation can better convey the core meaning. For example, a literal translation of "root" or "foundation" for "本" might make it difficult for readers to understand its meaning as a source of happiness, so choosing a free translation would provide a more accessible translation. For "富强之基", translators usually translate it as "prosperity" to express its meaning, which ensures that the translation accurately conveys the intent and context of the original text. This method of translation not only meets the requirements of Transknowletology, but also effectively enables the target language readers to understand the underlying meaning of the source language.

SL8: 落实新冠病毒感染"乙类乙管"措施

SL8: Measures for dealing with Class B infectious diseases were applied in Covid-19 response

In Chinese, the terms "甲乙丙丁 (Jia, Yi, Bing, Ding)" are used to denote levels or sequences, which can be dated back to ancient times. These symbols, derived from oracle bone inscriptions found in texts like the *Yi Jing*, were originally used to mark order and categories. In contrast, Western countries typically use Roman numerals or letters to indicate sequence. The term "乙类乙管" refers to the management of matters classified under the "乙类" (B class) category with a corresponding "乙管" level of oversight. This classification and management approach is common in areas such as public safety, environmental protection, and health management. To make the concept accessible to Western readers who may not be familiar with this classification system, translators often convert "乙类" to "Class B". This substitution not only conveys the relative significance of the category (which is lower than "甲类" or "Class A") but also helps readers understand the cultural context and different levels of management.

3.3 Amplification

SL9: "三北"工程攻坚战全面启动

TL9: The *shelterbelt program in northeast, north, and northwest China* entered a crucial stage.

The "三北" project, formally known as the "Three Norths Project for Sand Prevention and Control," is a significant ecological initiative in China aimed at combating desertification. This project addresses three key regions in northern China: the north, northeast, and northwest. By implementing measures such as afforestation and grassland restoration, the project seeks to enhance ecological quality and curb the spread of desertification. In translating this terminology, the translator adheres to a two-step process to ensure accurate and comprehensible communication under the guidance of transknowletology. Firstly, the translator provides a detailed explanation of the "Three Norths" regions, which encompass

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the northern, northeastern, and northwestern parts of China. This explanation is crucial as it contextualizes the project within the specific areas affected by wind and sand issues, which have been a longstanding national concern. This additional context helps target language readers grasp the significance and scope of the project. Secondly, the translator incorporates the term "shelterbelt" to clarify the project's specific measures. In English, "shelterbelt" refers to a protective strip of vegetation planted to prevent desertification and mitigate wind and sand damage. By using this term, the translator clearly conveys the project's objectives and methods, making the core content and implementation goals more accessible to readers. Directly translating "三北" as "three north" without additional context could lead to confusion due to the lack of geographical and project-specific information. Such a translation might be ambiguous and fail to communicate the project's true scope and purpose. Thus, providing a detailed explanation and incorporating relevant terminology ensures that readers fully understand the meaning and aims of the "三北" project.

SL10: 不搞"大水漫灌"

TL10: We refrained from resorting to *a deluge of stimulus policies*.

The term "大水漫灌" refers to a traditional irrigation method where fields are inundated with large volumes of water to irrigate crops. In contemporary usage, this term often serves as a metaphor for a simplistic, crude, and inefficient approach to problem-solving. In policy, program, or management contexts, this metaphor highlights the pitfalls of using generalized, "大水漫灌" strategies, which can lead to resource waste and ineffective outcomes. From the perspective of transknowletology, including the term "policy" in the translation helps to more accurately convey the metaphorical meaning of the original term. While "大水漫灌" describes a physical irrigation method, it also serves as a deeper metaphor for an imprecise or inefficient approach to addressing issues. Translating "大水漫灌" simply as "deluge" might not fully capture the policy and management implications, potentially leaving the target language readers without a clear understanding of its nuanced meaning. By incorporating the concept of "policy" into the translation, the translator provides a clearer representation of the metaphor's intent. This approach not only retains the cultural connotations of the original text but also ensures that readers in the target language grasp the nature of the policy or management practices being discussed. Effective translation does not only depend on literal conversion, but it aims instead to convey the underlying message and intent with precision to optimize communication.

4. Conclusion

To effectively tell the Chinese story in English, excellent translation is essential. Translating Chinese-specific words in documents like the *Government Work Report* is a crucial means of conveying Chinese knowledge. Translators need not only a deep understanding of Chinese culture and national conditions but also familiarity with Western cultures. They can apply various translation strategies effectively to facilitate knowledge exchange. Transknowletology theory emphasizes the need to process, reconstruct, and re-disseminate knowledge appropriately. It highlights the translator's role in bringing

local knowledge to a global audience (Yang, 2023). By leveraging the translator's subjectivity and agency, this approach helps to project China's unique characteristics and promote Chinese culture internationally.

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