

# ***A Diachronic Examination of the English Translation of Adverbs in Political Literature-- Taking the Government Work Report (2004-2023) As an Example***

**Tongyu Wu<sup>\*</sup>, Yanyan He, Yule Song**

*School of Foreign Languages, Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics, Nanjing 211100, Jiangsu Province, China*

*<sup>\*</sup>Corresponding author*

**Keywords:** Adverb English translation of Government work report Translation strategy

**Abstract:** The English translation of political documents is related to the times, and there is relatively little research on adverbs. Taking the Chinese-English parallel texts of the Government Work Reports from 2004 to 2023 as corpus, this paper analyzes the strategies and evolution of adverb translation into English, finds that the diachronic changes in the English translation of some adverbs are related to the times, etc., aiming to provide references and new perspectives for translation practice and research.

## **1. Introduction**

Political literature translation is an important window for the international community to understand China's development concepts, and the quality of the translation directly affects the international dissemination effect of China's policies. The government work report, as an authoritative text, embodies the evolution of national governance concepts. Adverbs are the core elements that regulate semantic intensity and convey attitudes and positions. Its English translation needs to take into account policy intensity and English habits. It is of great significance to study the balance and evolution of its translation strategies.

Domestic scholars have achieved a lot in translating government work reports into foreign languages, focusing on translation strategies and political terms. The former includes the study of explicit translation, while the latter sets the goals of "accuracy", "political" and "readability". But the study of adverb translation is less enlightening, such as finding a decreasing trend in adverb density and analyzing the types and causes of the weakening of "adverb + verb" in English translation. There is a lack of related research abroad.

Based on this, this study combines diachronic linguistics and translation research, relying on the parallel corpus of the government work reports from 2004 to 2023 in Chinese and English, to investigate the diachronic characteristics and normative evolution of adverb English translation. This has a positive effect on improving translation quality and promoting the dissemination of Chinese political theory.

## **2. The Process of Building a Corpus**

### **2.1 . Corpus Collection and Format Conversion**

This study focuses on a diachronic examination of adverbs in the English translation of political literature, with adverbs in the bilingual texts of the government work reports from 2004 to 2023 as the subjects [1]. This period of time not only reflects the phased and coherent development of China's politics and economy, but also the evolution of the political discourse system, and can provide rich and representative language materials. The team collected texts through official channels such as People's Daily Online and Xinhua News Agency, and used Acrobat to uniformly convert them into TXT format, laying the foundation for subsequent analysis.

### **2.2 . Corpus Alignment and Corpus Establishment**

Since the core of this study is the diachronic examination of adverbs in political literature and the need for close Chinese-English correspondence for precise comparison, text alignment of the Chinese and English versions of the government work report is a key prerequisite.

After research and demonstration, the team selected the SISU Aligner tool developed by the Corpus Research Institute of Shanghai International Studies University. This tool has significant advantages in the field of corpus alignment [2]. Its algorithm has been verified by a large amount of corpus, with high accuracy and reliability. It can effectively identify the corresponding relationships between Chinese and English at the syntactic, semantic and textual levels, and precisely achieve text matching.

Using this tool, the team meticulously aligned the Chinese-English versions of government reports collected from 2004 to 2023, strictly adhering to the tool's usage norms and academic standards to ensure quality, and successfully established an initial corpus containing 20 Chinese-English bilingual corpora, laying a solid foundation for subsequent analysis of adverb English translations.

## **3. Preliminary Processing and Analysis of the Chinese and English Adverbs Studied In the Government Work Report**

### **3.1. Extract Chinese and English Adverbs through Part-of-Speech Coding**

Given the large scale of the text and the poor efficiency of manual search, our research team has decided to adopt a method combining part-of-speech coding and keyword search to conduct data statistics and analysis on Chinese and English adverbs. The team used the previously constructed TXT format corpus, which was imported in batches into the Claws7 web page, and assigned part-of-speech codes to the corpus to obtain the coded format corpus. Subsequently, the research team used Antconc software, referring to the claws7 coding set table (see Figure 1), to perform keyword search on the coded text, and conducted secondary checks based on Chinese and English language usage habits and the classification system of Chinese and English adverbs, as well as word frequency statistics.

RA	adverb, after nominal head (e.g. else, galore)
REX	adverb introducing a positional constructions (namely, e.g.) that leads to the same structure
RG	degree adverb (very, so, too)
RGQ	degree adverb wh-degree adverb (how)
RGQV	Emphasize the degree adverb wh-ever degree adverb (however)
RGR	comparative degree adverb (more, less)
RGT	superlative degree adverb (most, least)
RL	locative adverb (e.g. Youdaoplaceholder0, forward)
RP	Prepositions, adverbs, short words prep. adverb, particle (e.g. about, in)
RPK	Presup. adv., catenative (about in be about to)
RR	general adverb
RRQ	WH 普通副词 wh- general adverb (where, when, why, how) WH-EVER
RRQV	普通副词 wh-ever general adverb (wherever, whenever)
RRR	comparative general adverb (e.g. better, longer) superlative
RRT	general adverb (e.g. best, longest)
RT	quasi-nominal adverb of time (e.g. now, tomorrow)

Figure 1. Claws7 adverb classification and coding1

### 3.2. Data Analysis and Classification Study of Chinese Adverbs

By browsing relevant literature and works such as "Dictionary of the Usage of English Adverbs", "Longman English Grammar", and "Compendium of English Grammar", we have classified the extracted English adverbs by year into the following eight categories: time adverbs, place adverbs, manner adverbs, degree adverbs, frequency adverbs, interrogative adverbs, relative adverbs, and conjunctive adverbs[3]. The statistics of the various types of adverbs in English are as follows (see Table 1):

Table 1. Data Statistics of various adverbs in English1

Adverb types	Number	Number proportion	Times	Proportion of times
Adverbs of time	291	25.15%	398	28.27%
Adverbs of manner	274	23.68%	307	21.80%
Degree adverb	258	22.29%	369	26.21%
Adverbs of place	147	12.70%	147	10.44%
Conjunctions	128	11.06%	128	9.09%
Adverbs of frequency	59	5.09%	59	4.19%
Interrogative adverbs	0	0%	0	0%
Relative adverbs	0	0%	0	0%

By browsing relevant literature such as "Practical Dictionary of Modern Chinese Adverbs Classification" and "Nature, Scope and Classification of Chinese Adverbs", we have classified the extracted Chinese adverbs into the following eight categories by year: degree adverbs, scope

adverbs, time adverbs, frequency adverbs, manner adverbs, mood adverbs, negative adverbs, and associative adverbs. The statistics of the various types of adverbs in Chinese are as follows(see Table 2):

*Table 2. Data Statistics of various adverbs in Chinese2*

Adverb types	Number	Number proportion	Number of occurrences	Proportion of appearances
Adverbs of time	324	About 20.4%	422	About 24.0%
Adverb of mode	304	About 19.1%	308	About 17.5%
Degree adverbs	281	About 17.7%	333	About 18.9%
Negative adverbs	213	About 13.4%	227	About 12.9%
Adverbs of range	149	About 9.4%	149	About 8.5%
Adverbs of mood	129	About 8.1%	129	About 7.3%
Associative adverbs	129	About 8.1%	129	About 7.3%
Adverbs of frequency	60	About 3.8%	60	About 3.4%

### 3.3. Select Specific Subjects of Study

It has been found that over the past 20 years, the translation patterns of various adverbs such as time and scope in Chinese in government work reports have been fixed and do not require diachronic analysis; The adverbs of manner and degree are frequently used and have diverse English translations, which are of research value. Therefore, the two are set as research subjects.

The team referred to relevant literature and used the sampling Method to select five typical words such as "moderate" from the adverbs of mode and six representative words such as "further" from the adverbs of degree. Meanwhile, six common Method for translating adverbs into English, such as the direct translation Method, were summarized. Then, with the help of Antconc software to extract relevant sentences, a research corpus for sampling Chinese adverb translation strategies was constructed.

### 4. Analysis of Translation Strategies for Sampled Adverbs

The team used the keyword search function of Antconc software to conduct a detailed search of 11 adverbs such as "moderate" and "further" according to the given year parameters and word segmentation rules, extracting their sentences in the government work reports over the years to lay the data foundation [4].

Subsequently, the corpus is labeled with translation Method on a five-year cycle, and the NLTK library of Python is introduced for verification. It can conduct in-depth statistical analysis, identify

biases, mine colcombinations and syntactic patterns, and enhance scientific accuracy.

For cases of inconsistent labeling, the team reviewed authoritative literature, consulted experts, had in-depth discussions to reach consensus, unified standards, and improved reliability. Finally, AI tools are used to multi-dimensionally analyze the reviewed annotation results, count the usage frequency and number of each translation Method, and generate intuitive statistical results to provide support for subsequent research.

## 5. Diachronic Variations in Adverb English Translation

Based on the translation theory framework proposed by Xiong Bing (2014), this study divides the translation process into three hierarchical core concepts: translation strategy, translation Method and translation technique. Among them, translation strategy, as macro-level guiding principles, provides an overall solution for translation practice[5]; Translation Method belong to the meso level and are manifested as a general approach to handling the text. Translation skills, on the other hand, focus on the micro level and involve specific means of language Operation. This study will follow this theoretical framework and conduct a systematic analysis and exposition of diachronic changes from the above three dimensions.

### 5.1. A Description of the Phenomenon of Diachronic Changes in the English Translation of Adverbs

This study employs the Method of corpus linguistics, selecting 11 high-frequency adverbs such as "moderate" and "orderly" from the government work reports from 2004 to 2023 as the research objects, and conducts targeted text mining through the NLTK toolkit of Python. The quantitative analysis showed that the foreignization strategy accounted for 82.56% of the English translations of these words, while the domestication strategy accounted for only 17.43%.

This discovery is in line with the conclusions of existing research. Litteff's (2004) five-dimensional system of principles for political discourse translation emphasizes principles such as political fidelity [6]; Cheng Zhenqiu (quoted from Liu Zhihong, 2011:104) pointed out that the translation of political commentary texts should adhere to political accuracy and ideological consistency, requiring translators to have policy awareness and multi-dimensional fidelity.

Overall, the strategy of translating the Chinese government work report into English is dominated by foreignization and supplemented by domestication, which is closely related to the political attributes and ideological functions of the political discourse text.

### 5.2. Method Analysis of the Diachronic Variation Phenomenon in the English Translation of Adverbs

Through a sampling quantitative analysis of two types of adverb translation strategies, "way" and "degree", in the government work reports from 2004 to 2023, we found

#### 5.2.1. Significant Differences in Translation Method

Both types of adverbs are characterized by a significant dominance of literal translation strategies:

Form: Literal translation accounted for 83.08% (371/447), free translation accounted for 16.92% (76/447).

Degree: Literal translation 83.58% (1211/1450), free translation 16.42% (239/1450)

This finding corroborates the core principle of "political fidelity" (Li, 2004) in the translation

of political discourse texts, that is, to preserve the accuracy of the original political expression to the greatest extent through the strategy of literal translation.

### 5.2.2. Apply the Stability of Translation Method

The proportion of literal translation for both types of adverbs remained stable for a long time (standard deviation: 1.47% for the type of adverb, 0.87% for the type of adverb), and the fluctuation range narrowed further after 2010 (standard deviation 0.92% for the type of adverb, 0.55% for the type of adverb). This reflects the enhanced standardization of government translation practices(see Figure 2):, which echoes the theory of "institutionalized translation Management" proposed by Liu Zhihong (2011).

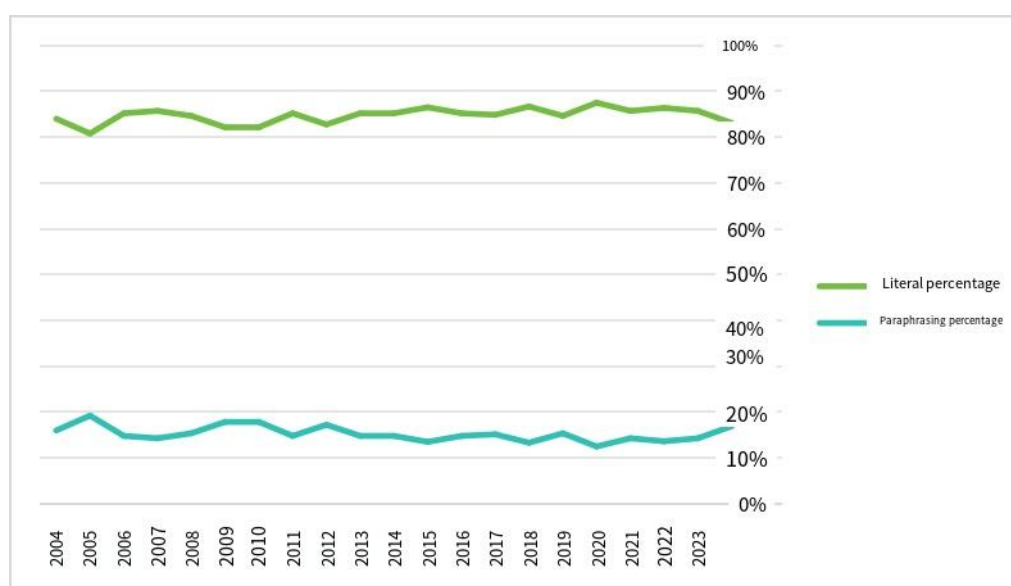


Figure 2. Method Analysis and Cause Analysis of Translation Strategies

### 5.3. Analysis of Translation Strategy Method

From the diachronic development of Method for degree adverbs from 2004 to 2023, additive translation has always been the most commonly used Method for translating degree adverbs, and in most periods, its proportion has exceeded 60%. Among them, some high-frequency adverbs such as "salient/obvious" and "further" have seen a continuous increase in the rate of addition since 2010, reaching 88.39%, 83.51% and 84.14% respectively in 2010, 2011 and 2012, approaching or exceeding 80%. In contrast, subtraction is hardly used in the translation of degree adverbs, with only a 9.09% isolated case of "more" in 2004. No subtraction strategy has been seen in any subsequent years, indicating that subtraction is on the periphery of adverb translation [7].

In terms of conversion strategies, lexical conversion accounts for the highest proportion, followed by syntactic conversion, and lexical conversion is the least. However, since 2010, the lexical conversion ratio of some adverbs (such as "further") has dropped to 15% - 20%, while the syntactic conversion ratio of adverbs like "height" and "power" has risen to 12.5% - 14.29%. The proportion of semantic conversion and pragmatic conversion has long been at a relatively low level, indicating that the translation of adverbs mainly relies on the internal adjustment mechanism of the language.

Looking at the proportion of various translation Method in different periods, the proportion of



each strategy remained basically stable from 2004 to 2010. After 2010, the proportion of additional translation continued to rise, while the proportion of vocabulary conversion slightly declined, forming a contrast. Overall, the translation of degree adverbs is mainly based on addition, supplemented by various conversion strategies.

A diachronic analysis of the translation strategies for adverbs of form from 2004 to 2023 also reveals that additional translation has always dominated, with the proportion of additional translation for most adverbs exceeding 50%. Among them, adverbs such as "moderate" and "solid" have seen a significant increase in addition since 2020, especially "solid" which reached 100% in 2023, with almost no use of subtraction strategies.

In terms of conversion strategies, lexical conversion was relatively stable in the early stage (15% - 33.3%), but after 2020, some adverbs (such as "solid") saw a sharp drop in lexical conversion rates to zero. At the same time, the proportion of semantic conversions has gradually increased, for example, the proportion of semantic conversions for "deep" rose from 12.5% in 2004 to 25% in 2019. The overall syntactic conversion fluctuates greatly (0% - 25%), but there is no obvious trend of growth or decrease. Pragmatic and cultural conversions remained at very low levels for a long time, generally at 0%.

In addition, after 2020, the conversion rate of some modal adverbs (such as "full") exceeded 70%, accompanied by an increase in partial semantic conversion (such as 33.3% for "solid" in 2022).

To sum up, from 2004 to 2023, the translation Method of the two adverbs were mainly additive translation, while the use of the conversion Method also increased.

This indicates that political literature strives to naturalize semantics while preserving the original meaning.

#### **5.4. The Translation Strategy Takes the Analysis of Causes**

##### **5.4.1. Translation of Political Commentaries Requires the Greatest Possible Retention of the Accuracy of the Original Political Description**

Political literature is highly political and prone to controversy. The primary principle of translation is to accurately convey political stance, policy guidelines and ideology. Chen Mingming proposed that his external propaganda translation should achieve "political equivalence" and convey the political discourse with Chinese characteristics while being faithful to the original meaning. In Chinese political discourse, adverbs of degree and manner carry important tone, attitude and policy orientation. Translators tend to add translations to avoid downplaying the expression of ambiguous political intentions, and this trend has become more pronounced since 2010. This has become an important means to ensure the accuracy of political expression.

##### **5.4.2. Cultural Differences between China and the West Have Led To Adverb Translations That Need To Adapt To the Expression Habits of the Target Language**

There are significant differences in the use of adverbs between Chinese and English political commentaries. Chinese adverbs are dense, emphasizing rhetoric and force; English prefers conciseness and uses restraint in adverbs. Zhao Xiangyun believes that alienated translation should take into account the audience's comprehension habits. If adverbs are simply translated, they can make English long and stiff, reducing readability. In recent years, translation has optimized expression through strategies such as vocabulary conversion and syntactic adjustment, respecting the original meaning while also reflecting an understanding of language and cultural differences.

##### **5.4.3. The Demand for International Communication Drives Translation towards**

## "Readability" and "Affinity"

As the national propaganda strategy advances, propaganda translation needs to balance information fidelity with audience readability and affinity. Xu Mingqiang (2014) believes that the key to the success of external publicity is to make the international audience "willing to read and able to understand".

In recent translation practices, translators have optimized their expressions by means of moderate addition and information reorganization. For example, the rate of adverb additions such as "comprehensive" and "solid" has increased significantly since 2020, enhancing the affinity and dissemination power of the translations. The infrequent use of subtraction and cultural transformation strategies indicates that political literature translation places more emphasis on internal language adjustment for semantic reconstruction.

From 2004 to 2023, the translation of adverbs in political documents mainly relied on addition, with conversion as a supplement. This trend reflects both the demand for accuracy and the reasonable choice in the context of the differences between Chinese and Western languages and cultures, as well as the transformation of China's foreign propaganda concepts and the enhancement of its international discourse competitiveness. In the future, there will be a need to strike a balance between faithfulness and readability, innovate expressions, and tell China's story well.

## 6. Summaries and Inspirations

This paper takes the Chinese-English bilingual texts of the government work reports from 2004 to 2023 as the corpus, and combines diachronic linguistics and translation research to explore the English translation of adverbs. It is found that the English translation is mainly based on foreignization, supplemented by domestication, with the accuracy of the original text retained, while the translation of adverbs is mainly based on addition, supplemented by conversion. This trend reflects the requirements for the accuracy of political literature, constrained by language and cultural differences, and reflects the transformation of China's foreign communication concepts. In the future, a balance should be struck between faithfulness and readability, and innovative expressions should be made to tell China's story well.

## References

- [1] Li Jie. *Research on the Translation of English Adverbs in English-Chinese Translation Practice* // Institute of Education Science, Chinese Academy of Management Sciences. *Proceedings of the 2018 Special Seminar on Teacher Education Capacity Building Research*. China Foreign Affairs University, 2018:502-504. DOI: 10.26914 / Arthur c. nkihy. 2018.005170.
- [2] Lao Xinxian. *Multidimensional Analysis of Chinese-English Domain Characteristics of the Government Work Report of the State Council (2000-2023)*. Shanghai international studies university, 2024. DOI: 10.27316 / , dc nki. Gswyu. 2024.001214.
- [3] Si Bingyue, Li Yitong, Wu Meixuan. *A Study on the Lexical Characteristics of Political Literature in English Translation from the Perspective of Corpus Linguistics: Taking the Government Work Report and State of the Union Address from 2018 to 2020 as Examples*. Language Education, 2021, 9(03):60-65.
- [4] Asurada. *Any music CEO. From the diachronic perspective of political literature translation to abnormal*. Foreign language teaching, 2023, 44 (6): 63-70. The DOI: 10.16362 / j.carol carroll nki cn61-1023 / h. 2023.06.016.
- [5] Wang Baorong, Chen Yuzhe, Jiang Haiyan. *Analysis of the Translation of Chinese Characteristic Words in Political Literature: A Case Study of the English Translation of the*



*2021 Government Work Report. Asia-Pacific Interdisciplinary Translation Studies, 2023, (01):16-28.*

[6]Xiong Bing. *Conceptual Confusion in Translation Studies: Taking "Translation Strategies", "Translation Method" and "Translation Techniques" as Examples. Chinese Translation, 2014 (3) :82-88*

[7] *Foreign Languages and Literatures, 2021, 37(05):1-9.*