

# Translation Strategies of Informative Texts from English to Chinese under the Guidance of Communicative Translation Theory-Take *Energy Transition* (Excerpt) for Example

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## Abstract

With the conversion of traditional energy sources to new energy sources, the dissemination of informative texts on energy is increasing. The book *Energy Transition*, written by a famous French energy expert Bertrand Cassoret, has a strong reference effect on China's current energy transition. As one of the three major text types, the importance of informative texts is self-evident. This type of text is characterized by its strong practicality and contains many technical terms and complex sentences. Communicative translation theory focuses on the dissemination of information and the reader's response and is suitable for guiding the translation of informative texts. Guided by communicative translation theory, this paper explores different translation techniques in conjunction with the translation examples in Chapters 6 and 7 of this book. In terms of vocabulary, the method of part-of-speech conversion is used to convert nouns into verbs. In terms of sentences, the translation skills of voice conversion, inversion, addition and subtraction are adopted. According to communicative translation theory, the translator tries to make the language easier for the target readers to understand, thus achieving the purpose of information dissemination.

**Keywords:** Informative text, Communicative translation theory, Energy transition, Translation techniques.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Energy transition is a major structural change in the energy system. Global energy development has experienced the evolution process from the firewood era to the coal era, then to the oil and gas era and the electrical era. As fossil fuels are the main source of carbon emissions, we must change the energy system on a global scale to replace fossil fuels. Whether mankind is willing or not, energy replacement is the general trend.

As one of the first countries to put forward the concept of green economy, France has always maintained a positive attitude towards climate governance. As one of the developed countries, France has reached "carbon peak". In April 2020, France issued a decree to adopt the "national low carbon strategy", setting the goal of "carbon neutrality" by 2050. Nevertheless, France, which is famous for nuclear energy, has lagged behind other developed countries in the development of new energy. As a major energy consumer and producer, China has been

vigorously developing renewable energy. However, due to its large population and land area, China's energy shortage has been very serious. Facing the target pressure of "carbon peak" and "carbon neutrality", China can learn from the experience and lessons of France and explore the best energy transition path and technical route.

As countries around the world have promoted energy transition, a large number of informative texts about energy have been disseminated. The translator takes chapters 6 and 7 of the book *Energy Transition* as the translation materials, hoping to provide practical and effective energy information for policy makers and experts, and provide new ideas for China. In order to help the spread of such texts, translators need to adopt appropriate translation strategies to convey the information of the original text accurately and smoothly. When translating the book *Energy Transition*, the translator chooses the communicative translation theory as the guide, pays attention to the response of the target readers, adopts a variety of translation techniques such as subtraction and addition,

flexibly handles complex long sentences, and strives to serve the target readers.

## 2. LITERATIVE REVIEW

Newmark published his famous theory of communicative translation in his book *Approaches to Translation* in 1981. In the book, Newmark defines it as "the effect produced for the target readers is as close as possible to the effect produced for the original readers". Compared with Nida's translation theory, Newmark's innovation is that he no longer emphasizes the difficult equivalence. He believes that how to choose translation theory depends on the type of texts. In *Discourse and translator*, Hatim and Mason (1990:7) make it clear that communicative translation is not an extreme translation strategy. Like semantic translation, it is the "golden mean" in translation, neither as free as compilation, nor as rigid as line-by-line translation. Some domestic scholars have also made further interpretations of communicative translation theory. Fu Jing (2014:4) pointed out that in order to ensure the effective communication between the original text and the target readers and reproduce the function of the original text, the translator must pay attention to the accuracy and consistency of the translation of professional terms when translating. Yang Qingyu (2017:2) believes that communicative translation theory does not need the form and content of the text to be consistent with the original text to the greatest extent but pays more attention to whether the translation is easy to understand, simple and straightforward.

Because of the different functions of the text, Newmark also divided the text into three types: expressive texts, informative texts and vocative texts in his book *Approaches to Translation* in 1981. Expressive texts emphasize the authority of the original author. In translation, we should follow the principle of "original author first", which is faithful to both the ideological content expressed by the original author and the language style of the original author. Typical expressive texts include imaginative literary works; authoritative remarks and texts that do not need to consider the reader group and are the personal emotional catharsis of the author. The core of informative texts is the authenticity of content, and the author's language is secondary. In translation, the principle of "authenticity first" should be observed. The translator should take the language level of the target language readers as the standard in language application and strive to be easy to understand. Informational texts are commonly used in industry, agriculture, commerce, science, technology and economy, and their forms are often very standardized. The vocative texts take readers as the center and calls on readers to act, think and feel. Notices, product manuals, brochures and advertisements all fall into this category. The translator can make full use of the advantages of the target language and not stick to the expression form of the original text.

As for the translation strategies of informative texts, some domestic scholars have carried out relevant research. Yuan Chuandao (2005:3) wrote in his paper that the core of the function of informative text is its authenticity, and information accuracy is an important translation principle of this type of text. In translation, the cultural background, information receiving psychology and habits of readers should be fully considered. Chen Kai (2008:6) believes that translators have more freedom in translating informative texts than expressive texts. For example, when the expression of the original text is vague, confusing or inaccurate, the translator has the responsibility to modify it to be responsible for the target language readers. In view of this, when translating informative texts, we cannot be bound by the structure of the original text, disrupt the narrative order of the original text, and enrich the information of the original text in a flexible way.

To sum up, communicative translation theory can well guide the translation practice of informative texts. First, communicative translation pays attention to information transmission, which is consistent with the characteristics of content-centered informative texts. Second, communicative theory pays attention to readers' response in order to achieve the purpose of science popularization. When translating informative texts, translators can get rid of the shackles of the original language structure and have more translation freedom.

## 3. AN ANALYSIS OF TRANSLATION STRATEGIES OF EXCERPT FROM *ENERGY TRANSITION* UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF COMMUNICATIVE TRANSLATION THEORY

### 3.1 Vocabulary Level

#### 3.1.1 Term Translation

The book *Energy Transition* contains a lot of technical terms. When translating terms, the most important thing is to ensure the objectivity and accuracy of terms. In order to avoid mistranslation, we should treat the terminology translation carefully. According to communicative translation theory, when translating informative texts, professional terms can be translated using literal translation or transliteration plus annotation.

**Example 1:** In France, the project was called Astrid. It was inspired by the breeder reactors Phenix and Superphenix, which have now been closed down. (page 73)

**Chinese translation:** 在法国, 该项目被命名为阿斯特丽德(用于工业示范的先进钠技术反应堆)。它的灵感来自现已关闭的增殖反应堆“凤凰”和“超级凤凰”。

"Astrid" in this sentence is the first industrial demonstration reactor in France, which needs to be accurately introduced to the target language readers. Therefore, the transliteration plus annotation method is

adopted, which not only help the Chinese readers understand this project more clearly, but also help them understand its main content. "Phenix" and "Superphenix" are two breeder reactors of France. These two words not only have corresponding Chinese words, but also have been identified as "凤凰" and "超级凤凰" in China, so the translator adopts the method of literal translation. **Example 2:** The limitation of the rise of the planet's temperature to 2°C could involve the doubling, or worse, of the demand in aluminium, chromium, copper, indium, iron, lead, nickel, silver, zinc, platinum, neodymium, manganese, etc. (page 81)  
**Chinese translation:** 地球温度上升 2°C 以内就可能会使铝、铬、铜、镧、铁、铅、镍、银、锌、铂、钷、镨等的需求增加一倍, 甚至更多。

As a typical informative text, this book needs to explain the greenhouse effect to the readers, and it needs to use the vocabulary in the field of chemistry. This sentence contains many chemical nouns. The translation method of these words is fixed, which requires literal translation. It is not allowed to translate casually to avoid ambiguity.

### 3.1.2 Part of Speech Conversion

Part of speech conversion is one of the most commonly used means in English-Chinese translation. English usually uses nominalization structures, while verbs are used more often in Chinese. In order to get expressions that are more in line with Chinese norms, according to communicative translation theory, translators can appropriately translate some nouns into verbs, making them livelier and more influential to achieve the purpose of transmitting information. **Example 1:** The access to a 'higher' energy need requires the energy source used to generate an adequate energy surplus. (page 79)

**Chinese translation:** 要想满足“更高”的能源需求, 就需要能源产生足够的能量盈余。

The subject "access" in the original sentence is a noun. If the original part of speech is retained, it is translated into“‘更高’能源需求的获取”, which is semantically cumbersome and does not conform to the Chinese expression. Therefore, transforming it into a verb part of speech can get a more natural translation.

**Example 2:** It implies fewer visits to family and friends, fewer exchanges with other people, more problems in working, buying food or construction materials etc. (page 89)

**Chinese translation:** 这意味着越来越少的人走亲访友, 越来越少的人沟通交流, 从而在工作, 购买食物或者建筑材料上出现越来越多的问题。

"Fewer visits" and "fewer exchanges" in the original sentence are a pair of noun phrases. In the translation, the translator translates it into “走亲访友” and “沟通交流” respectively. Apart from accurately

retaining the source language information, it is more in line with the characteristics of Chinese which makes good use of verbs and four-character lattice.

## 3.2 Sentence Level

### 3.2.1 Subtraction Translation

Subtraction refers to "some words in the original text cannot be translated in the translation, because although there are no such words in the translation, they have their own meaning, or they are self-evident in the translation" (Guo Zhuzhang, Li Qingsheng, Liu Junping, 2010). According to the theory of communicative translation, informative texts focus on the objective transmission of information. It is a good translation as long as the translation is complete and the target language readers can get the same information as the source language readers.

**Example 1:** With heat pumps, which work on the same principle as refrigerators, calories can be transferred from the underground, water tables or ambient air. (page 78)

**Chinese translation:** 热泵的工作原理与冰箱相同, 热量可以在地下、地下水位或环境空气中转移。

For the sake of structural integrity, English usually uses prepositions extensively. Chinese language is often concise. During English to Chinese translation, prepositions can be subtracted or translated into verbs. Although "with" in this sentence means "have", it does not need to be translated. After subtraction, the information is not missing, but more concise and clearer.

**Example 2:** The benefit of this operation was to promote the awareness of the importance of the energy issue through extensive communication exchanges. (page 92)

**Chinese translation:** 这次行动的好处是通过广泛的交流, 提高人们对能源重要性的认识。

The words "communication" and "exchanges" in the original sentence all mean communication. If they are both translated, it will appear repetitive and wordy. Therefore, the use of subtraction translation technique can make the expression more concise.

### 3.2.2 Additional Translation

Sometimes, in order to facilitate understanding, we need to add some words that are not in the original sentence to make the sentence more fluent and the information clearer. The book *Energy Transition* aims to convey information about energy. Therefore, in order for readers to better digest information, if necessary, additional translation can be used. **Example 1:** In spite of these huge efforts, according to Négawatt, the demand for primary energy should be reduced by 65% while the population would increase by 15%. (page 88)

**Chinese translation:** 根据内加瓦特的说法, 尽管他们做出了巨大的努力, 一次能源的需求应被减少 65%, 而人口将增加 15%。

If "these huge efforts" in the original sentence is translated into "尽管这些巨大的努力", the meaning is incomplete because of lacking people and actions, and the information expression is not clear. After adding the subject and verb "他们做出了", the sentence information is complete and convenient for the target language readers to understand.

**Example 2:** Efficiency means improving techniques to get the same services with lower consumption. (page 88)

**Chinese translation:** 能源效率意味着改进技术, 以更低的消耗获得相同的服务。

Although the subject of the sentence is only "efficiency", according to the context, it should refer to energy efficiency. If it is directly translated as "效率", it will give people confusion in understanding and unclear meaning. Therefore, the subject is translated as "能源效率".

### 3.2.3 Voice Conversion

In English, inanimate nouns are often used as the subjects and passive sentences are often used to make the expression more objective, closely structured and euphemistic. However, Chinese tends to use person as subjects and uses active sentences more often (Lian Shuneng, 1993). The main purpose of informative texts is to convey information, not to retain the characteristics of the source language. Therefore, in order to improve communication, passive sentence patterns can be transformed into active voice, which is convenient for Chinese readers to read.

**Example 1:** More energy has to be made available year after year, which means that more oil or gas has to be extracted than the year before. (page 71)

**Chinese translation:** 年复一年, 人们必须提供更多的能源, 这意味着必须比前一年开采更多的石油或天然气。

Both the main sentence and the attributive clause of the original sentence are in the passive voice. If the passive voice is used, this sentence will be translated as "年复一年, 更多的能源必须被提供, 这意味着相比前一年, 更多的石油或天然气必须被开采". Obviously, this translation does not conform to the habits of Chinese. Therefore, the translator changes the nominal subject and transforms the passive voice into the active voice. The translated version is natural and smooth, avoiding a stiff translation.

**Example 2:** In any case, as the sun does not always shine, gigantic storage systems would have to be developed. (page 75)

**Chinese translation:** 无论如何, 因为并不总是有阳光照射, 人们必须开发出巨大的存储系统。

In English, passive sentences are often used when the agent of the active sentence does not need to be pointed out or cannot be pointed out. This sentence is to emphasize the necessity of a huge storage system. According to the requirements of communicative translation theory, considering that taking person as the subject is the characteristic of Chinese, the omitted agent is translated into the fuzzy subject "人们" to better highlight people's initiative, and the passive is changed into active.

### 3.2.4 Inversion

In English, the main and subordinate compound sentences with complex structure often appear at the beginning of the sentence and modify the information at the end; In Chinese, simple sentences are often used, and the focus is often at the end of the sentence. In English-Chinese translation, considering the response of the target language readers, we cannot copy the word order. We can adjust the order of some component in the original text according to the habits of Chinese.

**Example 1:** However, considering the shutdown of current reactors which are reaching the end of their lifespans and the time required for studies and construction processes, a 100-GW installed power capacity in France by 2050 seems extremely unlikely to me (page 95).

**Chinese translation:** 然而, 考虑到即将寿终正寝的反应堆们纷纷关闭, 加上研究和施工过程需要一定时间, 我认为到 2050 年, 法国的装机容量达到 100 GW 的可能性微乎其微。

Some nouns in the original sentence have long post attributive or attributive clauses after them, which is a linguistic feature of English. When translating into Chinese, the translator put the attributes in front of the noun, which conforms to the characteristics of Chinese expression. In addition, the latter half of the sentence uses something modified with a longer attribute as the subject, which is not in line with Chinese habits. Therefore, the translator changes the sentence pattern, taking "我" as the subject and putting the original subject behind as a part of the object information.

**Example 2:** Some people see in this view the influence of the nuclear lobby who would have found there a means to shut down as few reactors as possible. (page 99)

**Chinese translation:** 一些人从这一观点中看到了核游说团体的影响, 他们本可以找到一种方法, 尽可能少地关闭反应堆。

According to the communicative translation theory, the translator can appropriately break the shackles of the original sentence structure. Therefore,

the translator puts the adverbial of place "in this view" before the verb "see". In addition, the translator breaks the modifying relationship in the attributive clause in the second half of the sentence and changes the "few" into an adverb to modify the verb "shut down", which is more in line with the expression habits of Chinese.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The importance and uniqueness of informative texts require translators to have extensive knowledge and profound cultural heritage, and flexibly use different translation strategies in translation. Communicative translation theory not only respects the original text, but also takes full account of the cultural register and language characteristics of the target language to ensure the fluency of communication, which is of guiding significance for the translation practice of informative texts. Therefore, the author hopes to explore the feasibility of Newmark's communicative translation theory to guide informative texts by analyzing the translation examples in the book *Energy Transition*, in order to explore the translation techniques suitable for informative texts and improve the translation quality of similar texts.

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