

# A Study of Modality in English Versions of Chinese Government Work Reports in the New Era

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Project: Research on the Diplomatic Discourse in English Translation of Reports on the Work of the Government in the New Era from the Systemic-functional Perspective(2020KY55019).

**Abstract:** In the new era, with the exchanges and communication of various countries in the world, the work report of Chinese government has become a window for the media of all countries to fully understand the social situation in China. The English translation of the government work report will help the international community to have a deeper understanding of China's social and economic construction and development, and help to establish the international image of China. This paper first introduces the research on the English translation of China's government work report, points out the current research status of the English translation of the Chinese Government Work Report, and explores the modal language in the English version of the Chinese Government Work Report from four aspects: modal verbs, position verbs, modal adverbs and other modal terms, so as to promote the research on the English translation of the Chinese Government Work Report and further improve China's publicity to the outside world, creating a good image of China.

**Keywords:** New Era; Chinese Government Work Report; English Translation; Modality Study

With the rapid development of global economic integration, China's trade with other countries has become increasingly close, and its status and influence in the international community are also increasing. In order to deepen the understanding of Chinese society and gain the understanding and recognition of many countries, and realize mutual benefit and win-win situation with other countries, it is necessary to speed up the study of modality in the English version of the report on the work of the Chinese government, which will be helpful for translators to promote Chinese culture and create a good international image.

## 1. A study on the English translation of the Chinese Government Work Report

For people, the most concerned focus of the party and government is the annual two sessions, during which the premier's government work report is more important. The contents of the Chinese Government Work Report mainly include: reviewing and summarizing the previous year's government work, clarifying the basic ideas and main tasks of the government's work in that year, and pointing out the ideas for the construction and development of the government. The English translation of the Chinese Government Work Report provides a channel for foreign media to understand and understand the work of the government.

In recent years, the research on the English translation of Chinese Government Work Report mainly embodies the stylistic research on the characteristics of words, sentences, discourse analysis and cohesive devices, and the translation of frequently used words in government reports based on corpus. For example, "do well" "build" "civilization" "strengthen" and other words. In addition, based on relevance theory, functional equivalence theory, skopos theory, adaptation theory and other translation theories, this paper studies the translation of the English version of the Chinese Government Work Report, especially on the translation strategies of Chinese characteristic terms and long and difficult sentences.

## 2. The current situation of modality research in English versions of Chinese Government Work Reports

Modal state is a universal semantic category across languages, which is reflected in languages all over the world. Due to

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the different forms and ways of expression of various languages, the modality system of languages is also different. In English Chinese translation, modal state belongs to an open system, with modal verbs, modal adjuncts, comment adjuncts, modal metaphors and person expressions. Modality covers a wide range of meanings, mainly involving the judgment, possibility, foreshadowing, permission, obligation, will and conjecture of propositions. Among them, modal auxiliary verbs occupy an important position in the modal system, and their meaning is closely related to people's emotions and ideas.

In recent years, more and more experts and scholars have applied modality theory to the translation of different issues, including the translation of publicity materials, traditional Chinese cultural elements, tourism texts, public signs, film and TV drama lines and traditional Chinese medicine, especially in the translation of literary works. For example, the translation of the Analects of Confucius, Daodejing, Zhuangzi, Chuici and other classics; the translation of the dream of Red Mansions, Romance of the Three Kingdoms, Lu Xun's representative works and Mo Yan's representative works. Under the guidance of modal translation theory, this paper systematically studies the English versions of Chinese Government Work Reports.

### 3. A study of modality in English versions of Chinese Government Work Reports in the new era

#### 3.1 A study of modal verbs in English versions of Chinese Government Work Reports

The modal types of modal verbs in the English version of the report on the work of the Chinese government in the new era can be divided into epistemic modality, deontic modality and dynamic modality. First of all, epistemic modality refers to the authenticity of a proposition by the speaker. There are words expressing possibility, probability and necessity. Generally speaking, epistemic modality is related to knowledge or belief. For example, "may" means a word that can be a fact but has a possibility. Such words as "should" and "will" indicate probability. The former means reasonable and reasonable, while the latter is inference and estimation, which is not absolutely sure. Secondly, deontic modality refers to the possibility or inevitability of a certain action carried out by a moral responsible person, and this instruction mainly involves the influence of action, state or event. For example, "want" "should" "must" means necessary meaning words, "will" "certain" means guarantee meaning, and "can" means permission meaning. Tirdly, dynamic modality refers to the expression of sentence subject and intention, such as "can" "willing" "want" "dare" and so on.

In the new era, the frequency of modal verbs used in the English version of the Chinese Government Work Report is divided into high frequency words (>100), medium frequency words (>10 and <100) and low frequency words (<10). The statistics of positive and negative modal verbs are shown in Table 1 and Table 2.

**Table 1.** Statistics of affirmative modal verbs

Word meaning	High frequency words			Intermediate frequency words
	High value	Medium value	Low value	Medium value
Affirmative modal verbs	Should(147) Ought to(105)	None	Need(368), can/enable(308), will(224)may(209), possible(126)	Willing(53), worth (19), good at (13), daring(12)

**Table 2.** Statistics of negative modal verbs

Word meaning	High frequency words	Intermediate frequency words	Low frequency words		
	High value	High value	High value	Medium value	Low value
Negative modal verbs	No(276)	Impossible(53), forbidden(46), will not (42), cannot (42), strictly forbidden (21), Should not(12)	Should not(8), ought not to(6), not allowed(4), shall not(3), cannot((1)	Unwilling(6), not good at (1)	Unwanted (3)

According to the modal distribution of modal verbs, three conclusions are drawn: Firstly, dynamic modal verbs are often used in Chinese government reports, among which "should" "must" "need" "can" and so on appear more frequently. Secondly, modal words with distinct quantity are frequently used in the English version of government reports, but modal words with significant quantity are often used to realize the discourse function of government reports. Thirdly, modal verbs expressing negative meanings are less frequently used in Chinese government reports.

#### 3.2 A study of position verbs in English versions of Chinese government reports

According to the statistical analysis of the corpus, the position verbs in the English version of the Chinese government report can be divided into two types: the supporting type and the opposing type. Among them, supportive modal words refer to those who hold a positive position on discourse events, such as "approve" "support" "affirm" and so on; anti modal words refer to words that hold an opposition position on discourse time, such as "against" and "abandon". The frequency of position verbs used in the English version of the report on the work of the Chinese government is shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Statistics of position verbs

Frequency Type	High frequency words		Medium frequency words		Low frequency words	
	Support	Opposition	Support	Opposition	Support	Opposition
Position verbs	Support(722)	Opposition(232)	Thank(58), Affirm(18), Favor(12)	None	Favor(8)	Give up(9), Negation(8), Ignore(4), Refuse(2)

From the above table data, it can be seen that in the English version of government reports, specific two character words are used to express political stance, and position verbs with clear attitude and supporting modality are frequently used.

### 3.3 A study of modal adverbs in English versions of Chinese government reports

There are three types of modal adverbs in the English version of Chinese government report in the new era, which are faithfulness, ambiguity and reinforcement. Among them, the affirmative modal adverbs, represented by “of course” “obvious” “actual” and “in fact”, refer to the exact and affirmative attitude towards the discourse event. The determinate modal adverbs, represented by “certain” and “inevitable”, indicate that they have made up their minds or made up their minds about a certain discourse event. The modal adverbs which express fuzzy modality can be divided into conjecture, if so and euphemism. Intensifier modal adverbs are modal words that emphasize or progress, such as “especially” “even”. The frequency of modal adverbs used in the English version of the report on the work of the Chinese government is shown in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Statistics of modal adverbs

Modal types	High frequency words	Intermediate frequency words			Low frequency words		
	Confirmatory modality	Confirmatory modality	Fuzzy modality	Strengthening modality	Confirmatory modality	Fuzzy modality	Strengthening modality
Modal adverbs and frequency	Definite (285), fundamental (251), decisive (125)	Of course (40), necessity (38), certainty (18), absoluteness (16)	Possible (28)	Especially (21), even (47)	Certainty (9), primordial (8), undoubtedly (6), apparent (3), actual (3), actually (2), fact (2), be sure to(2), reality (1)	It seems (2), about (2), seems (2), inevitable (2), estimation (1)	0

In government reports, modal adverbs with high frequency are used to express definite meaning, while those expressing vague and strengthened meanings are relatively less frequently used.

### 3.4 A study of other modal terms in English versions of Chinese government reports

The study of other modal expressions in the English version of the Chinese government report in the new era mainly includes five types of modal words: expressing strictness and seriousness, expressing one’s best efforts, expressing firm will, expressing firm will, expressing close connection and expressing caution. The application of these modals reflects the firm wills, faith and determination of the government. At the same time, low value modal words are often used in government report, which not only reflect the rigorous and prudent attitude of government departments, but also leaves discourse space for the text audience.

## 4. Conclusion

In the new era, the selective application of modality in the English translation of Chinese government reports helps to accurately grasp the relevant policies and play a positive role in clarifying the development direction. This paper, by exploring the English translation of China’s government work report, points out the current research status of the English translation of China’s government work report, and studies the application of modal language in the English version of China’s government work report from various aspects, for the purpose of accurate information conveying and emotions expression, so as to complete the communicative function by influencing the ideology of the audience, do a good job in China’s foreign publicity, and improve its influence in the international community.

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