

# An Analysis of Public Signs Translation Based on Translation as Adaptation and Selection-Taking the Slogan Translation of Beijing Olympic Winter Games for Example

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**Abstract:** As a new paradigm of translation studies, Eco-translatology regards translation as a process of adaptation and selection. The translator follows its' basic principle, "Multidimensional adaptation and adaptive selection", in order to reach multi-dimensional transformation of translation. This translation method is often reflected in the translation of public signs, and show its' significance in both language communicating and culture exchanging, As a greatest success of public signs translation from a new approach, the slogan translation of Beijing Winter Olympic Games is of great significance to explore a new way to tell stories about China and promote the communication and cooperation in the standard spoken and written Chinese language.

**Keywords:** Eco-Translatology; Public Signs Translation; Translation as Adaptation and Selection

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## 1. Introduction

As one of the greatest sporting event, the 24th Beijing Winter Olympic Games is an important international platform for China to present its' story to the world. The slogan "Together for a Shared Future" and its' English translation convey China's voice in the first place to every country around the world. Undoubtedly, the translation of this slogan, straightforward but powerful, is one of the models of public signs translation. As an important part of work on the standard spoken and written Chinese language, language exchange and cooperation require us to pay attention to the inheritance and dissemination of language and culture. From the perspective of translation on adaptation and choice theory in eco-translatology, this paper takes the slogan translation of the 24th Beijing Winter Olympic Games for example, and attempts to analyze the "multi-dimensional adaptation and adaptive choice" achieved in its' the transmission. It aims to provide scholars with a new research perspective, which will promote the external communication of the standard spoken and written Chinese language, enhance the ability of Chinese to carry and disseminate information and and strengthen language and cultural exchanges and cooperation between China and other countries.

## 2. Literature Review

At the beginning of the 21st century, eco-translatology was born. In his paper *An Initial Exploration into An Approach to Translation as Adaptation and Selection*, Hu Gengshen, the representative of this school in China, defines translation activities as "the translator's selection activities to adapt to the translation ecological environment" <sup>[1]</sup>. Ecological paradigm describes translation from the perspective of neo-ecologism. Under its' guidance, the translation reveals the ecological core values everywhere.

On the one hand, the translation eco-environment is composed of many factors, which refer to the world presented by the text, the source language and the target language<sup>[2]</sup>, that is to say, the interaction among language, communication, culture, society, authors, readers and clients. This will affect the optimal choice that the translator makes, so as to achieve the best adaptation. On the other hand, in the process of translation, the translator should follow the basic principle,

"multidimensional adaptation and adaptive selection"<sup>[2]</sup>. To be more specific, it refers to the continuous transformation and selection of translators in the process of translation in order to pursue multi-level adaptation. This basic principle mainly includes three translation methods in the following dimensions: adaptive transformation from the linguistic dimension, adaptive transformation from the cultural dimension and adaptive transformation from the communicative dimension<sup>[1]</sup>.

Public signs refer to the written language in public, which plays the role of instruction, reminder, explanation, request, warning and encouragement in a striking way. In essence, public signs translation is a cross-language and cross-cultural communication activity. At the National Language Work Conference in 2022, Tian Xuejun clearly proposed that "we should strengthen cultural confidence, vigorously promote the excellent Chinese language and culture, and strengthen language and cultural exchanges and cooperation between China and other countries". Because of its' international environment, public signs translation plays an important role in cultural communication.

"Together for a Shared Future", the slogan of the 24th Beijing Winter Olympic Games, is presented to friends from all over the world in various ways, including new media, traditional newspapers and magazines, pictures and videos, and conveys the Olympic spirit and good wishes with Chinese voice. Before translating, the translator should place himself in the environment of the source language and the target language, that is to say, the translation ecological environment mentioned above. Moreover in the process of translation, the translator keeps optimizing selection, transforming and adapting to achieve the best translation effect. It is through "three-dimensional" transformation that "multi-dimensional adaptation and adaptive selection" is achieved. The research from this perspective provides a new research approach for the majority of scholars, which is conducive to the inheritance and dissemination of the national common language and its' culture. Language is regarded as a bond to promote cultural exchanges and interaction between people around the world.

### **3.The Translation Eco-environment**

After 14 years, the Olympic flame was lit again in Beijing, which has become the world's first "double Olympic city". "Together for a shared future", the slogan of 24th Beijing Winter Olympic Games and winter Paralympic Games, is Chinese sincere invitation to the world and conveys beautiful expectations of 1.4 billion Chinese people. Inspired by the Olympic spirit, we will join hands with people around the world to create a beautiful future. Five simple words have infinite power. Friends from all over the world, regardless of color, race and faith, move forward together.

Hu Gengshen regards the Translational Eco-environment as an interconnected and interactive entirety between the source context, the source language and the world presented by the target language<sup>[2]</sup>. These factors are closely connected and interwoven, constituting the translation eco-environment together. On this basis, Fang Mengzhi defines the translation eco-environment as the sum of all external conditions affecting the survival and development of translation subjects, and divides the translation eco-environment into two parts: translation ecology and translation environment<sup>[3]</sup>. In translation process, ecology and environment are essentially different aspects of the same question. The two are relatively independent, but closely linked internally, which together constitute the translation ecological environment.

#### **3.1 The Translation Ecology**

Ecology originally refers to the state of mutual connection and interaction between organisms and its' surrounding environment. Fang Mengzhi defines translation ecology as the interaction between translation subjects and the external environment<sup>[3]</sup>. Thees subjects mentioned above are not translators in a narrow sense, but all living entities involved in the process of translation activities, including the original author, translator, reader, translation promoter, sponsor, publisher, marketer, editor and etc. In order to achieve the purpose of translation, the subjects negotiate and interact with each other, jointly maintaining their translation ecological field.

This is a vivid explanation of the birth and the translation process of the slogan of Beijing Olympic Winter Games. The 24<sup>th</sup> Beijing Winter Olympics Organizing Committee sent the task of slogan creation to five professional organizations, including Tsinghua University and Peking University and etc. Experts from the fields of culture, media, and sports selected 11 slogans as standby from 79 submissions. "Unity", "together" and "the future" are the high-frequency phrases among those. After discussion, "一起向未来", in Chinese, and its' English translation "Together for a shared future" has been identified as

the slogan of the 24th Beijing Winter Olympics Games. In terms of its' birth process, including collection, official formation and translation confirmation , the translation ecological field in which the translation subject is located is extremely complicated. This also shows each subject in the translation ecology needs to complete its' own task during the process of the translation of public signs, which is essential for a successful translation.

### 3.2 The Translation Environment

Translation environment mainly refers to the external environment (objective environment) involved in translation activities, including economic environment, linguistic and cultural environment and social and political environment<sup>[3]</sup>. First of all, translation activities are affected by social environment. In the specific process, the translation of the same term would be different in different times. In the translation of this slogan, "一起" is translated into "together", which is endowed with new era characteristics. The meaning of "一起" in Chinese is "一同, 一共" (according to *The 6th Edition of Modern Chinese Dictionary*), while the meaning of "together" in English is "in combination; into companionship or doing association" (according to *The New Oxford English-Chinese Dictionary*). Translating "一起" into "together" is an interpretation of the Olympic motto for the new era. It is the first time that the International Olympic Committee has agreed to add "Together(more unified)" into the Olympic motto. At present, the world is confronted with problem of the COVID-19. China, taking advantage of the Winter Olympic Games, a world sports event, conveys its' aspiration to work together with the whole world for a better tomorrow. It is under such a background that translating "一起" into "together" can better express the meaning and spirit of the original text.

Secondly, language is the carrier of culture. To some extent, language translation is actually translating culture. To be specific, the translation of public signs reflects a country's thinking pattern and the way of language expression to a certain extent. Beijing is the only city in the world that has hosted both the Summer Olympics and the Winter Olympics. The slogan "Together for a Shared Future" is a continuation of the slogan "One World, One Dream" for the 2008 Beijing Olympics. "One World, One Dream" expresses Chinese noble desires, promoting the harmonious and all-round development of people and building a better world. It's more of an expression of China's view towards the world. "Together" expresses the attitude and strength of "one dream", that is to say, we are ready and will work with people of all countries to advance into the future; "A Shared Future" is not only a continuation of "one dream", but also an action plan that we should move forward hand in hand to the bright future against the backdrop of the epidemic. Thus, the translation of the slogan of the Winter Olympics delivers Chinese culture to the world with China's voice.

Translation ecology and translation environment are organically integrated to achieve harmony and continual growth between each other. Exactly so-called: without translation ecology, there is no translation environment The subjects in the translation ecological field are interrelated and interact with each other, and the successful translation can be realized.

### 3.3 Features of Translation Eco-Environment

Translation eco-environment is of different levels<sup>[3]</sup>. The hierarchy here mainly includes the following three aspects: general environment, medium environment and small environment. In the general environment, translation should pay more attention to metaphysical issues such as national interests, political stance and ideology. As a kind of publicity translation, public signs translation is more than just the translation at the literary level. It is necessary for translation subjects to have an international perspective in Chinese writing and translation. With the development of comprehensive national strength and international status, it is more important for us to tell China's story and spread China's voice at such a large international event. "Together for a Shared Future" , the translation of the slogan of the 24th Beijing Olympic Winter Games, shows China's strength by concise language express. The English translation of this slogan, embodying the idea of sharing, is a vivid demonstration of China's initiative to build a community for mankind. The translation is consistent with a common aspiration for a better future under the challenge of COVID-19, and the core values and vision of the Olympic Games-Unity, peace, progress and inclusiveness. Therefore, in the translation of public signs, it is necessary to understand international relations and discourse system and the practices of international news media. Only in this way can we meet the challenges of publicity translation.

## 4. Multidimensional Adaptation and Adaptive Selection

The principle of Translation Adaptation and Selection theory is "multi-dimensional adaptation and adaptive selection". Under its macroscopic guidance, the "three-dimensional" transformation, linguistic dimension, cultural dimension and communicative dimension transformation, is applied in the process of translation as a concrete translation method. That is to say, under the principle of "multi-dimensional adaptation and adaptive selection", translation is relatively concentrated on the adaptive selection transformation of linguistic dimension, cultural dimension and communicative dimension. From this perspective, the English translation of the slogan of the 24th Beijing Winter Olympic Games has realized multi-dimensional adaptation and adaptive selection of the original one.

### 4.1 Adaptive Transformation from the Linguistic Dimension

"Adaptive transformation from the linguistic dimension" refers to the translator's adaptive transformation of language form in translation process<sup>[4]</sup>. In concrete terms, this transformation refers to the mutual adaptive relationship among various elements: language, code and style, discourse construction elements, discourse and discourse bundle, and discourse construction principles. The English translation of the slogan of the 24th Beijing Winter Olympic Games has realized the adaptive selection and transformation in terms of vocabulary selection and language form.

The meaning of "未来" in Chinese is "the time after now, the coming time and the future"(according to *The 6th Edition of Modern Chinese Dictionary*), while "Shared", an adjective form of the verb "share", means "have some thing in common, held or experienced in common"(according to *The New Oxford English-Chinese Dictionary*). The English slogan of the Beijing Winter Olympics uses "a shared future" as the corresponding translation of "未来". At first glance, "a shared future" is not a word to word translation in Chinese, but it is the word "shared" that vividly shows China's voice, strength and determination. First of all, in the era of high globalization, mankind all over the world has only one future. Especially today, with the global spread of COVID-19, no country or region can be spared. Only by working together in the same boat and building a community with a shared future for mankind can we tide over the difficulties. The usage of the word "shared" reflects the aspiration of China to join hands with the world for a better tomorrow under the challenges of the current epidemic. Secondly, the English translation of the slogan reflects the core concept of the 24th Beijing Winter Olympic Games, "sharing and opening". The Winter Olympic Games is not only a sports event, but also a bright future for everyone to participate in. It not only popularizes ice and snow sports, but also drives the coordinated development for the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region. If the word "shared" is removed, it can not accurately convey the internal concept of the slogan of the Winter Olympic Games. It is through the selection of vocabulary and the adaptive transformation of language form that the English translation of the slogan can better convey the inherent meaning.

### 4.2 Adaptive Transformation from the Cultural Dimension

"Adaptive transformation from the cultural dimension" refers to the translator's attention to the transmission and interpretation of cultural connotations between languages in the process of translation<sup>[4]</sup>. The cultural dimension focuses on the contextual effect of translation.

In terms of the Chinese slogan, "一起" and "未来", core terms of this slogan, lively reflect chinese core concept: "peace is most precious" and "all under heaven are of one family.". Meanwhile, it is a continuation and deepening of "One World, One Dream", the slogan of 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. In terms of the English translation, "together" and "shared" convey fully the corresponding connotation of the original one.

As part of the Olympic slogan of the new era, the word "together" is regarded as a common value by people all over the world, while the word "shared" is one of the key words of global integration and common destiny. By emphasising the contextual effect of translation, "Together for A Shared Future" realizes the transmission of the connotation of the original text and vividly explains the contextual meaning of the source language culture with the target language, so as to realize the adaptive selection and transformation of the slogan in the cultural dimension.

### 4.3 Adaptive Transformation from the Communicative Dimension

“Adaptive transformation from the communicative dimension” refers to the translator's attention to the adaptive selection and transformation of communication intention in the process of translation <sup>[4]</sup>. The communicative dimension focuses on the interpersonal intention of translation. Any information is useless if it does not play a communicative role.

From the perspective of pragmatic translation theory, the translation process is actually the process of conveying intention. Bühler divided linguistic functions into three parts: descriptive function, expressive function and appeal function <sup>[6]</sup>. The English version of the slogan fully embodies these three functions.

First of all, "a shared future" describes the good wishes of the Chinese people - the global future is a bright future for us to work together. It is also the Chinese expression of the Olympic spirit. Secondly, the translation of this slogan uses the two key words, "together" and "shared", to express that only with closer cooperation and mutual help, can we successfully manage the challenges. Finally, "Together for A Shared Future" is not only China's positive attitude, but also an initiative sent by China's voice. The transformation of phrase pattern is more in line with English expression, and the appeal function of this translation can be better achieved.

Although the transformation in the translation process is not limited to these three dimensions, these should be the most important ones. When translating public signs, the translator should pay attention to not only adaptation and selection from multiple dimensions, levels and aspects, but also the interaction of various aspects.

## 5. Conclusion

By reason of the foregoing, "Together for A Shared Future", the translation of the slogan of the 24th Beijing Olympic Winter Games, is undoubtedly a successful case of public signs translation. As a kind of publicity translation, the translation of public signs is an important way to tell Chinese stories because of its' cross-language and cross-cultural characteristics. “Translation as Adaptation and Selection” in Eco-translatology provides a new research perspective for the translation of public signs. In terms of the collection and translation process of public signs, the translation subject should take complex ecological translation environment in consideration, and pay attention to the mutual connection and interaction between them. In terms of translation, the translation of public signs, as a kind of publicity translation, should realize the adaptive transformation from language dimension, culture dimension and communication dimension, so as to achieve the multi-dimensional adaptation. Under the guidance of this theory, public signs translation is helpful to strengthen the inheritance and dissemination of Chinese language and culture, and is of great significance to promote national language exchange and cooperation.

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