English Translation of Chinese Natural Ecological Discourse:

A Corpus-based Case Study on *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*

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Amid the increasingly severe global natural eco-environment, it is necessary to build a natural ecological civilization by constructing an ecological civilization discourse. Against this background, this study compiles a corpus of natural ecological discourse in the English translation of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* (short for *Xi*). By using Wordsmith and AntConc, this study explores the linguistic features of the ecological discourse in English translation of *Xi* in the following dimensions, including high-frequency words, keywords, word collocations, concordance lines. This study aims to analyze the concepts and attitudes towards natural ecology, so as to provide certain valuable insights for the construction of China's discourse on natural ecological civilization. The study found that the natural ecology discourse involving in the English translation of *Xi* turned out to be ecologically beneficial.

Keywords: Xi Jinping: The Governance of China, ecological discourse analysis, English translation, corpus

1 Introduction

The 18th CPC National Congress has incorporated the construction of ecological civilization into the Five-sphere Integrated Plan and the Four-pronged Comprehensives Strategy. The construction of ecological civilization must construct the discourse of ecological civilization, through the discourse to clarify the necessity, urgency, importance and difficulty of ecological civilization construction, and to reveal the nature of ecological civilization and the practical requirements of ecological civilization construction (Zhang, 2023). *Xi* is a concentrated manifestation of Chinese discourse, and its English translation is an effective way to tell Chinese stories and further build China' s international image. At present, domestic research on its English translation mainly focuses on three aspects: translation strategies and methods, overseas publicity and national image construction, and discourse analysis (Yang, 2021), but few scholars have studied the ecological discourse in the English translation of *Xi*. In view of this, this study takes the English translation of *Xi* as an example to analyse its ecological discourse qualitatively and quantitatively based on the corpus methodology, to explore the features of Chinese ecological discourse, enhance the public's awareness of natural ecology, promote the dissemination of China's ecological ideology to the outside world.

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2 Literature Review

Eco-linguistics originated in the 1970s (Huang, 2016), and currently there are two research models, namely, Haugen's model and Halliday's model. Haugen's model is the metaphorical model of eco-linguistics, which mainly focuses on the interaction between the environment and language. While Halliday's model is the non-metaphorical model of eco-linguistics, which mainly focuses on the role of language on ecology, and studies ecological problems from the beginning of language (Haugen, 1972; Halliday, 1990; He & Wei, 2018b).

With the rise and development of eco-linguistics, the research on ecological discourse analysis in China tends to be diversified, mainly from the perspectives of critical discourse analysis, positive discourse analysis, multi-modal discourse analysis, systemic functional linguistics and other perspectives on ecological discourse. For example, Liu Yumei and Wang Jufen (2022) conducted ecological discourse analysis on Thomas Nashe's poem Spring mainly from the perspective of transitivity, which reveals the poet's ecological view behind the language. Liu Ning (2018) compared the differences and similarities of the media's reports on the haze in China and America. He Wei and Wei Rong (2018a) constructed the Ecosophy of "Diversity and Harmony, Interaction and Co-existence" by explaining the characteristics of Ecosophy and integrating traditional Chinese philosophy and diplomatic concepts. Through the discussion of ecological issues, Huang Guowen and Zhao Ruihua (2017) proposed that ecological discourse analysis is closely related to discourse analysis, and explored the objectives, principles and methods of ecological discourse analysis. However, the current research at home and abroad mainly focuses on theoretical constructs and research overviews, and the research that carries out specific quantitative analyses is relatively lacking (He & Gao, 2019).

4 Research Design

A total of 17 natural ecological discourses were selected from *Xi Jingping: the Governance of China*, and the data was cleaned to create a natural ecological discourse corpus, with a total of 17,909 tokens. This paper aims to answer the following questions:

(1) What are the linguistic features of the ecological discourse in the English translation of *Xi*?

(2) What kind of ecological concepts are conveyed in the ecological discourse of *Xi*?

5 Results and Discussion

Basic corpus data retrieval is carried out on the corpus, and high-frequency words, keywords and concordance lines are taken as the objects of investigation to analyse the ecological discourse of the English translation of the collection of *Xi*.

5.1 Analysis of High-frequency Words

High-frequency words can reflect the concerns of the subject and reflect the ideology embedded in the discourse. Wordsmith 4.0 was used to retrieve the top 30 high-frequency content words in the corpus, which are shown in Table 1:

Table 1

High Frequency Content Word in Ecological Discourse in English Translation of Xi (top 30)

Rank	Type	Freq	Percent	Rank	Type	Freq	Percent
1	development	184	1.01	16	progress	61	0.34
2	environmental	173	0.96	17	conservation	58	0.32
3	eco	157	0.87	18	control	58	0.32
4	green	113	0.62	19	improve	58	0.32
5	environment	104	0.58	20	resources	57	0.32
6	protection	86	0.48	21	energy	56	0.31
7	carbon	85	0.47	22	people	56	0.31
8	river	79	0.43	23	system	54	0.30
9	water	771	0.43	24	efforts	45	0.25
10	economic	721	0.40	25	promote	44	0.24
11	nature	71	0.37	26	use	44	0.24
12	ecological	66	0.37	27	make	43	0.24
13	new	62	0.34	28	quality	42	0.23
14	pollution	62	0.34	29	life	41	0.23
15	china	61	0.34	30	yellow	41	0.23

As can be seen from Table 1, high-frequency words such as *China*, *environment*, *environmental*, and *ecological* reflect that China attaches great importance to the construction of ecological civilization.

High-frequency words such as *green, economic, and development* can reflect China's concern for the ecological environment and its advocacy of adhering to the construction of a green economic system and the strategy of sustainable development. What's more, *river, water, yellow (river)* etc. involve the main environmental components of the ecosystem, reflect that China is concerned about the quality of natural resources.

Besides, the discourse involves high-frequency verbs such as *control, improve, promote, use, make* etc. Retrieval of the concordance lines containing these verbs reveals that the subject of the above verbs mainly is *we*, indicating that the discourse not only puts forward specific requirements to the relevant functional departments of China, but also calls on the public to actively participate in global ecological governance and build a community of a shared future for mankind. Searching the collocations of the above verbs, this study finds that the collocations with *control* are mainly *pollution* and *soil*; the collocations with *improve* mainly include *systems* and *quality*; the collocation with *promote* is *progress*; *use* is mainly collocated with *land, energy, water, resources, fertilizers*; while *make* is often used with *efforts* and *sure*. It is not difficult to find that the collocation words mainly involves how China builds an ecological civilization and takes concrete measures.

5.2 Analysis of Keywords

According to Scott & Tribble (2006), keywords refer to words that occur much more frequently than the norm compared to the reference corpus in the text. The keyword word list of four volumes are shown in Table 2:

Table 2

Keywords in Ecological Discourse in English Translation of Xi

Rank	Type	Freq_Tar	Freq_Ref	Keyness
Keywords in Ecological discourse in English translation of *Xi* Volume 1				
1	ecological	33	33	86.318
2	progress	17	44	23.338
3	conference	5	2	18.024
4	environment	20	84	15.468
Keywords in Ecological discourse in English translation of *Xi* Volume 2				
1	land	18	18	24.303
2	system	23	31	23.763
3	level	11	5	23.515
4	model	12	9	19.803
5	fallow	5	0	18.977
Keywords in Ecological discourse in English translation of *Xi* Volume 3				
1	ecological	5	61	33.16
2	carbon	4	81	53.80
Keywords in Ecological discourse in English translation of *Xi* Volume 4				
1	carbon	76	9	94.290
2	emissions	29	6	28.267
3	peak	15	0	28.111
4	neutrality	13	0	24.361
5	dio*xi*de	15	1	21.624
6	energy	39	17	21.275
7	low	27	9	19.074
8	new	41	21	18.369
9	rights	9	0	16.862

Analyzing the keyword word lists of the four sub-corpora, it can be found that the keywords in the volume 4 are more concentrated in terms of content themes and are obviously the most representative. Among them, the keywords *carbon*, *emissions*, *low*, *peak*, *neutrality*, and *dioxide* reflect China' s attention to the issue of carbon emissions, and the corpus discusses the carbon emissions in a large number of pages, reflecting China' s shift and development of focus in the process of ecological governance over the years.

6 Conclusion

Against the background of an increasingly severe ecological environment, this study based on corpus tools, quantitatively analyses the ecological discourse of *Xi* as an example, and analyzing the ecological thoughts and ideologies behind the text. By analyzing its high frequency words, keywords from multiple perspectives, it is found that the ecological discourse of *Xi* is an ecologically beneficial discourse, which reflects the positive ecological values and emphasizes the concepts of harmonious coexistence among nature, man and society.

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