C-E Translation of Political Text under the Guidance of Discourse Cohesion Theory—A Case Study of 2023 Government Work Report

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Abstract: The world today is in the midst of major changes unprecedented in a century, with a turbulent political landscape and a sluggish economy. China, as an important pole in the world's political and economic landscape, will have a growing voice in the international arena, and its institutions and policies will be increasingly valued and drawn upon by other countries. This thesis compares the Chinese and English versions of the Report on the Work of the Government delivered at the First Session of the 14th National People's Congress on 5th March 2023, and analyses the use of cohesion devices, including grammatical and lexical cohesion devices used in *2023 GWR*, and explores their textual effects, intending to provide reference for the translation of political texts and media outreach work in China.

1. Introduction

2023 is the first year to implement the 20th CPC National Congress spirit. The international community is highly concerned about the National People's Congress and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference in 2023. On March 5, Premier Li Keqiang delivered a report on the work of the government to the first session of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC), summarizing the achievements of the government in 2022 and clarifying the economic goals and tasks for 2023.The English version of the 2023*GWR* was passed by the Congress and published by Xinhua News Agency. The translation is accurate and smooth in writing, which reflects China's latest policies and plans. Some cohesive devices are used to enhance the coherence, readability and coherence of the translation of *GWR*, so as to better tell the story of China to the world and highlight the power of China.

2. Discourse Cohesion Theory and Government Work Report

2.1 Discourse Cohesion Theory

As an important subject in discourse analysis, cohesion has attracted much attention at home and abroad. Many researchers have begun to study its application in language learning. From functional

linguistics to pragmatics, cognitive pragmatics, semantics, cognitive linguistics and other disciplines, the theoretical research continues to improve. In recent years, the academic attaches great importance to cohesion theory, and has also carried out relevant research to further develop and improve the theory.

2.1.1 Definition of Discourse Cohesion Theory

Cohesion is of great importance for the parts of a text to be connected together, linking up words and sentences. Halliday and Hasan gave a detailed and formal description of cohesion in their book Cohesion in English, which officially marked the birth of discourse cohesion theory. In their book, they elaborated on the theory of cohesion, defining it as the semantic relation between one element and another in a text. In Introduction to Text Linguistics, Beaugrande and Dressle put forward the famous seven criteria of discourse characteristics: cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, contextuality, informativity and intertextuality. That is to say, cohesion is a non-negligible index to judge the quality of a text [1].

2.1.2 Classification of Cohesion Devices

According to Halliday and Hasan, cohesive devices can be divided into grammatical cohesive devices and lexical cohesive devices.

Grammatical cohesive devices can be categorized as reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and elaboration. Reference is the most common type. Pronouns, demonstratives, articles, and comparatives are used as reference referring to items in contexts. In a discourse, reference has three subclassification as personal reference, demonstrative reference, comparative reference.Substitution refers to use one or more words to replace for the elements used in the text hereinbefore, therefore effectively avoid repetition. It is similar to reference, making no difference to the original meaning of a sentence. The difference between substitution and reference is that substitution refers to the grammatical relation, while reference refers to a semantic relation [2].Ellipsis means to omit one or more words since the meaning is clear in the text. To some extent, it is a special kind of substitution replacing nothing, thus it is sometimes called substitution by zero. Conjunction can be identified as connectors of units that share semantic similarity. As a cohesive devices, conjunction can make the logical relationship between sentences clearer. Lexical cohesive devices are frequently used in English texts linking sentences and forming a cohesive structure according to different nature, meaning, and structure of vocabulary. These words can be reiteration, which includes repetition, synonymy, hyponymy, and collocation, which includes antonymy, complementarity [3]. In order to complete the picture of cohesive relations, it is necessary to take into account lexical cohesion. This is the cohesive effect achieved by the selection of vocabulary [4]. Reiteration, as an indispensable method of cohesive devices, reveals the relationship between one word with another by repeating words and phrases. According to Halliday and Hasan, reiteration can be segmented into repetition, synonymy, near-synonymy and hyponymy [3]. Collocation was first identified as a kind of company between words, then Halliday and Hassan expanded its definition, holding that collocation is "achieved through the association of lexical items that regularly co-occur"[3].

2.2 Government Work Report

Since the reform and opening up, China's comprehensive national strength, international status and worldwide influence have been continuously enhanced. China is attracting more and more attention from the world. The *Government Work Report* is an official document of Chinese government. It provides an effective way for people at home and abroad to learn about China's latest development achievements and interpret China's policies.

The Government Work Report almost covers all aspects of China's socialist politics, economy and culture. Generally, it is divided into three sections, including a review of the previous year's work, development goals and tasks, and priorities of the year's work.

The *2023 Government Work Report* summarizes the policies implemented in 2022 and proposes the priorities for the government's work in 2023. The linguistic feature of the report is formal and precise, and its words and sentences is carefully deliberated, reflecting its seriousness.

2.2.1 Definition of Government Work Report

Government Work Report, as one of the most significant and authoritative source in presenting China's social situation and policy proposals, has been highly emphasized by our government. The ultimate aim of promoting China to the outside world demands a good translation of *GWR*. However, the discrepancies of cultures and linguistic features results in the difficulties of *GWR* translation. What's more, *GWR* as the specific genre of political texts requires a higher demand of translation, calling for the translator's fully understanding of two cultures and excellent mastery of linguistic features of two languages.

2.2.2 Contents of Government Work Report

The content of *GWR* is presented with the characteristic of comprehensiveness, concerning fields like industry, agriculture, commerce, finance, business, personnel, taxation, labor, culture, education, science, health, sports, transportation, construction, foreign affairs etc., giving prominence to the key points. The *2023 GWR* is composed of three parts, including a review of the previous year's work of the Government, summary and the overall deployment of all work of the current Government, and Government's self-construction and main task of this year. Therefore, *GWR* has been a mirror, revealing a real China that is close to current situation.

2.3 Significance of the Application of Discourse Cohesion in Government Work Reports

GWR, as a review of China's main tasks at present and a vision of its future development, reflects the current state of China's politics, economy, culture and people's livelihood. Its English translation is an important way for foreigners to get informed of China's political and economic development. Therefore, the translation of *GWR* has a direct impact on the effectiveness of China's foreign propaganda.

The discourse cohesion theory, being one of the essential components in the language system, has certain importance and necessity in the translation of political text. Firstly, traditional translations take words and sentences as the unit, focusing on the microscopic comparison of words and sentences in the source and target languages. Secondly, as far as the text itself is concerned, the meanings of many words and some problems with strong background cannot be explained in the traditional lexical and syntactic level, so it must be solved by integrating the whole text. Finally, the differences between Chinese and English languages make the use of cohesive devices inevitable.

3. Grammatical Cohesive Devices Used in 2023 GWR

3.1 Reference

Reference is one of the most important cohesive devices in the text y,and is the most frequent devices. This device is frequently used to explain objects mentioned in the preceding texts. To some extent, reference works as a signal, and plays a significant role in text. On the one hand, it can effectively avoid vocabulary repetition; therefore, make the article concise, and semantically

coherent. On another hand, the application of reference makes it possible to achieve the integrity of the whole text, which enables readers to better grasp the content of the article and understand its true meaning. Therefore, reference is an indispensable device in various types of text, and *GWR* that have the specific characteristic is to be no exception.

3.1.1 Personal Reference

In terms of the frequency of personal reference, it is obvious that the number of using personal reference in English version is much more than that used in Chinese version. It is necessary to supplement the subject or change the sentence pattern according to the needs, so that the sentence can conform to English grammar norms.

Chinese	Cu jin duo zhong suo you zhi jing ji gong tong fa zhan. Jian chi he wan shan she hui zhu yi ji ben jing ji zhi du, jian chi "liang ge hao bu dong yao".
English	We promoted the common development of enterprises under all forms of ownership. We upheld and improved China's fundamental socialist economic systems and worked unswervingly both to consolidate and develop the public sector and to encourage, support, and guide development of the non-public sector.

The above paragraph consisted of four sentences both in Chinese and in English. In the Chinese version, there are no subjects for each single sentence, but their translated versions all add the first person reference "we" as the subject except for the third sentence take "the task" as the subject.

3.1.2 Demonstrative Reference

The items used for demonstrative reference are determiners and adverbs. Determiners include the, this, that, these, those. Adverb contains here, there, now, then.

Chinese	wu nian lai, wo men shen ru guan che zhong yang jue ce bu shu.
English	Over the past five years, we have fully implemented the decisions and plans of the Party Central Committee with Comrade.

The typical reference "the" is used as the definite article to modify "CPC". In English, the definite article the has definite meaning and is used to refer specifically to a person or thing, indicating that the person or thing referred to by the noun is a specific one of the same kind, so as to be different from other people or things in the same kind, equivalent to the meaning of "zhe ge" or "na ge" in Chinese, whereas, most of the time, there is no equivalent in Chinese.

3.1.3 Comparative Reference

Comparative reference refers to a referential relationship expressed by the comparative hierarchy of adjectives and adverbs and other words with comparative significance. It is "indirect reference by means of identity or similarity". The items used for demonstrative reference are adjectives and adverbs. Adjectives of identity includes "same", "identical", "equal", etc. Adjectives of similarity includes "similar", "additional", "suchlike", etc. Adjective of difference includes different, other, else, etc.

Chinese	Xia da li qi zhua nong ye sheng chan, qiang hua chan xiao xian jie he chu bei tiao jie, que bao liang shi he sheng zhe\ shucai deng wen ding.
English	We redoubled efforts to bolster agricultural production, ensured better linkage between production and sales and managed reserves more effectively, and ensured a stable supply of agricultural products, such as grain, hogs, and vegetables.

The above example shows two comparative reference which are "better" and "more". In the Chinese version, the comparison is achieved by "zneg qiang" and "kuo da". In the English version, there are more diverse expression of comparison. It is not merely translated literally with "more +

adjective/adverbs". The particular comparison can be achieved through adjectives or adverbs with a suffix such as "-er", "-est", which reveal comparative degree.

3.2 Substitution

Substitution plays an important role in English text and is widely used in the process of C-E translation. It is universally acknowledged as an important means to avoid duplication or repetition. In addition, substitution have essential effect on the connection of the context, thus enhance the coherence and integrity of the article.

According to the classification of systemic functional linguistics, Substitution can be categorized into three subgroups, including the nominal substitution, the verbal substitution, and the clausal substitution [2].

3.2.1 Nominal Substitution

Nominal substitution refers to the substitution of another noun phrase by a substitute that can serve as the central word of a noun phrase. In English, usual nominal substitution includes one, ones, the same, so, and the kind etc., among which "one" is the most frequently used to replace a countable noun or phrase that has already appeared above.

Chinese	Fang fan hua jie di fang zheng fu zhai wu feng xian, you hua zhai wu qi xian jie gou, jiang di li xi fu dan, e zhi zeng liang, hua jie cun liang.
English	To prevent and defuse local government debt risks, we should improve the mix of debt maturities, reduce the burden of interest payments, and prevent a build-up of new debts while working to reduce existing ones.

The prementioned example contains the typical structure of verb-predict in the *2023 GWR*. Apparently, there are two "liang's in the Chinese version, and the "liang" means "debts" in English, but it just appears once in the translation. Therefore, the second "liang" in Chinese is rendered as "ones" instead.

3.2.2 Verbal Substitution

Verbal substitution, just as its name implies, refers to replace verbs or phrasal verbs with verbal substitutions. In English, "do" is often used to replace verbal phrases that appeared in the preceding context, and it has the transformation of "did", "doing", "done". In Chinese, there are equivalents as "lai, nong", however, in most instances, such equivalents do not appears but are expressed in other ways, owing to the diversity of Chinese language. The following examples are the only two cases using verbal substitution in the *2023 GWR*. The frequency of verbal substitution is relatively low due to the differences in word formation between Chinese and English. When adopting such cohesive devices amid translation, it is recommended to take the whole context or at least the corresponding paragraph into consideration so as to make the article more coherent.

3.2.3 Clausal Substitution

Clausal substitution refers to replace the clause with an adjective. In English, substitute words for a clause are "so" and "not", expressing positive and negative meanings respectively. "so" and "not" are often used as a replacement of that clause functions as an object in the whole sentence. Moreover, "if so" or "if not" are often used to replace a certain part of a clause or an adverbial clause of condition.

In the *2023 GWR*, the phenomenon of using clause substitution is not apparent in its C-E translation, partly because its rigorous style of writing and detailed context.

Generally, the adoption of substitution is indispensable amid the process of C-E translation of political text especially in the *2023 GWR*.

3.3 Ellipsis

Ellipsis refers to the omission of a certain element in the language structure, so as to avoid repetition and make the text more concise, compact, and clearer. According to Halliday and Hassan, "Ellipsis can be interpreted as that form of substitution in which the item is replaced by nothing.". that is to say, to some degree, ellipsis is a special kind of substitution. There are many differences between English and Chinese, but both of them can use ellipsis to connect the context, but the specific use of ellipsis varies between the two languages.

Ellipsis can be divided into three types, including nominal ellipsis, verbal ellipsis, and clausal ellipsis. This paper will pay more attention to nominal ellipsis and verbal ellipsis.

3.3.1 Nominal Ellipsis

There are many differences between English and Chinese, but both of them can connect the context by means of ellipsis. However, subject ellipsis exists in both English and Chinese. Generally speaking, in English, subject ellipsis is less common, usually limited to the context and speech, while in Chinese, subject ellipsis is the most common, either in oral language or in written form. The reason is that one of the biggest features of Chinese is that it focusing on the theme. When the topic of the sentences connected in a paragraph is the same, the subject is usually omitted

As the most obvious phenomenon of nominal ellipsis in the C-E translation, nominal ellipsis is not rare in the translation of the *GWR* of 2023, and the ellipsis of subject is the most frequently used.

3.3.2 Verbal Ellipsis

Verbal ellipsis is also a universal phenomenon during the process of C-E translation. Verbal ellipsis refers to the cohesive device of omitting the whole or part of a phrasal verb.

Chinese	Ren min jun dui shen ru tui jin zheng zhi jian jun,gai ge qiang jun,ke ji qiang jun,ren cai qiang jun,yi fa zhi jun.
English	The people's armed forces intensified efforts to enhance their political loyalty, tostrengthen themselves through reform, scientific and technological advances, and personnel training, and to practice law-based governance.

As we can see in the above example, this sentence have some repeated words like "qiang jun", and the long sentence has some single structures as noun-verb structure like "zheng zhi jian jun,gai ge qiang jun", which is a typical characters of political text. In its English version, "strengthen ourselves" is used for one time to replace the repeat of "qiang jun" using the preposition "through" as a connection.

3.3.3 Clausal Ellipsis

The clausal ellipsis signifies the omission of clause or clauses by presenting an assertive word or a negative word in sentence. This cohesive device is rarely seen in the C-E translation of political text, and there is almost no appearance in the translation version of the *2023 GWR*.

To sum up, ellipsis leaves readers the space of consideration, for contents omitted will be understood by readers through the texts. However, because of the specific genre and form of political text, the organization of the text uses a lot of repetition, with the aim of highlighting certain thoughts, achieving the destination of emotional emphasis and the enhancement of rhythm.

3.4 Conjunction

Conjunctions in the text are words with clear meanings. Through these words, people can understand the semantic relationship between sentences, and even logically predict the semantics of subsequent sentences through the previous sentence [5]. That is to say, conjunction stands for the logical relationship between sentences of a discourse, and sentences are linked by certain conjunctive means. According to the different functions of conjunction, conjunctive methods can be divided into multiple types. Halliday and Hasan divided it into four types: additive conjunction, adversative conjunction; causal conjunction, and temporal conjunction.

3.4.1 Additive Conjunction

Additive conjunction plays the role of explanation and interpretation in the text, which is usually used in the situation where new information said or written by language users is supplemented in order to extend the preceding sentence's or clause's semantic meaning. Additive conjunction can be divided into four categories: simple additive relation like and, also, too, or else, not...either, complex additive relation like furthermore, moreover, besides that, in addition, comparative relation like likewise, in the same way, in this way, and appositive relations like that is, in other words .

3.4.2 Adversative Conjunction

Adversative conjunction is "contrary to expectation", to put it in another way, it indicates that the connected events or condition or desire doesn't match the actual or expected result. Words like "yet, but, instead, however, on the other hand, on the contrary" are usually adopted to express adversative relation, and their corresponding meanings delivered by "dan shi".

3.4.3 Causal Conjunction

Causal Conjunction refers to the relation of reason and result indicated in the text, and the cohesive devices are similar both in English text and Chinese text. Words like "so, thus, hence, therefore, accordingly, as a result", are often used to show the causal relation, the corresponding words, such as "suo yi, yin ci, jie guo" can be found in Chinese.

3.4.4 Temporal Conjunction

Temporal conjunction refers to the development process of one thing, or the order and sequence different things occurring. According to Halliday and Hasan, the text is composed of a series of sentences in sequence. This temporal relation is expressed by words like "then, next, after, before, afterwards" and so on, which have the corresponding words like "hou lai" in Chinese used to convey temporal conjunction.

4. Lexical Cohesion Devices Used in 2023 GWR

4.1 Reiteration

In lexical cohesion, reiteration refers to a form that contains repetition of words or phrases. To be more specific, a reiterated item may be a repetition, a synonym or near synonym, a superordinate, or a general word; and in most cases it is accompanied by a reference item.

4.1.1 Repetition

Repetition is one of the most direct way of lexical cohesion, repeating one or more words that appear in the context, thus realize cohesion within sentences. It is "the repetition of a lexical item, or the occurrence of a synonym of some kind, in the context of reference; that is, where the two occurrences have the same referent". In the English version of *2023 GWR*, there are lots of appearance of repetition which exert essential influence on the cohesion of the whole texts. On the one hand, repetition can well organize sentences and paragraphs realizing semantic coherence. On the other hand, repetition can also be used to express strong feelings or underline main contents.

Chinese	Wo men yao gen jia jin mi de tuan jie zai dang zhong yang zhou wei.
English	Let us rally more closely around the CPC Central Committee.

Here "let us" appears many times which is a typical application of repetition of verbal phrase, which functions to strongly appeal to everyone for the final realization of national rejuvenation.

4.1.2 Synonymy

To attain the coherence, some words with the same or near-same meaning are used in the same texts, and such method is called synonymy.Synonym can not only connect sentences, but also brings more colors to the usage of language.

Chinese	Wo men yao jian chi feng xing du li zi zhu de he ping wai jiao zheng ce, jian ding bu yi zou he ping fa zhan dao lu, jian chi.....
English	We should stay committed to an independent foreign policy of peace and to peaceful development and pursue friendship and cooperation with other countries on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. We should remain firm in...

From the above example, we can see that there are three words and phrases to express the approximately same meaning of "jian ding" or "jian chi", which is "stay committed to", "pursue", "remain firm in".

4.1.3 Hyponymy

In linguistics, hyponym is a term that is used to designate a member of a broader class, standing for a sense relation between lexeme. On the basis of discourse cohesion theory, partial and overall relationship can be deemed as the relationship of superordinate and hyponyms, which are no longer be seen as distinct concept but be collectively called hyponymy. In the translation of *2023 GWR*, hyponymy is occasionally applied to reach the goal of discourse cohesion.

Chinese	Fa hui jin bo hui,guang jiao hui,fu mao hui,xiao bo hui deng zhong da zhan hui zuo yong.
English	Major trade events such as the China International Import Expo, the China Import and Export Fair, the China International Fair for Trade in Services, and the China International Consumer Products Expo delivered positive results.

The superordinate is the included word and the hyponym is the including one. The application of hyponymy has dual function. The superordinate usually has strong generality, summarizing the general ideas, while the hyponymys assists to make the texts more figurative, accurate, and understandable.

4.2 Collocation

Collocation, also named co-occurrence, is defined as the "association of lexical items that

regularly co-occur". This device is often used to replace repetition, because the excessive use of repetition will develop feelings of boredom of readers. It includes antonymy and complementarity.

4.2.1 Antonymy

In lexics, the antonymy is concerned with semantic relation that holds between two words or phrases that can express opposite meaning. To be more specific, it includes complementaries, contraries, and conversives. In a contexts, antonyms always contain reverse terms making the text magnificent, and add to the coherence of a texts. The following examples illustrate the application of antonymy in *2023 GWR*.

Chinese	Zai quan qiu gao tong zhang bei jing xia, wo guo wu jia bao chi jiao di shui ping, you wei nan de.
English	Despite high global inflation, we have kept overall prices at a comparatively low level, which is truly remarkable.

In the above example, "quan qiu gao tong zhang", which is translated into "high global inflation", and "bao chi jiao di wu jia shui ping", which is translated into "kept overall prices at a comparatively low level" clearly reflect the application of contraries through the words "high" and "low". This sentence indicates the key information, that is the efficient measures our country takes to maintain price stability.

4.2.2 Complementarity

Complementarity embodies the relationship of two items that complements each other, forming an either-or-other relationship. The chosen words are usually mutually exclusive in meaning. There is clear difference between antonymy and complementarity, in that words of different degree or nature can be inserted to every two levels of antonyms,showing separability, whereas complementarity denotes the mutual repulsion between items, the existence of one presupposes the existence of the other.

Chinese	We ba wo guo jian she cheng wei fu qiang min zhe wen ming he xie mei li de she hui zhu yi xian dai hua qiang guo bu xie fen dou.
English	Let us strive to advance national rejuvenation on all fronts and build China into a great modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, harmonious, and beautiful.

Six words "prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, harmonious, and beautiful" form a complementary relation, showing the overall characteristic of the future of China, and emphasize the main direction of development.

5. Conclusion

In this thesis, we choose discourse cohesion theory as the guiding theory and then proceed to analyze the linguistic characters. By combining general theory with specific text, we study the official English translation in terms of different categories of cohesive devices including grammatical and lexical devices which respectively contain different subgroups. Finally we draw the conclusion that in political text translation, the purpose of achieving coherence should always contain priority, meaning both grammatical devices and lexical devices should be adopted properly and taken equal emphasis.

After the analysis of examples in the translation of *2023 GWR*, we can see that Chinese and English have similarities and differences in the adoption of cohesion devices. In general, discourse cohesion theory is of incomparable practicability to political translation. Suitable cohesive devices

used in the translation benefits a lot in dealing with different difficulties of professional translation of language, making the English version more accessible and readable.

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