

# Multimodal Analysis of the C-E translation of the Ecological Promotional Video “Harmony Between Humanity and Nature”

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**Abstract:** The linguistic community has long been concerned about ecological issues, and in today's society with advanced multimedia, multimodal texts should receive more attention. Multimodal discourse analysis broadens the perspective of translation research, and audio-visual translation is the most representative type of multimodal translation research. Ecological promotional videos play an important role in promoting the construction of a global community of life and promoting global ecological civilization. This article takes the ecological promotional video "Harmonious Coexistence between Man and Nature" as an example from a multimodal perspective to explore the English translation of the COP15 theme promotional video from three modes: language, vision, and sound. The aim is to provide experience and reference for the English translation of ecological promotional videos, and successfully convey the original intention of ecological promotional videos calling for people to protect the earth.

**Keywords:** Multimodal analysis; Ecological promotional videos; C-E translation.

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## 1. Research Background

A United Nations (UN) biodiversity deal, entitled Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, has been adopted at the UN biodiversity conference, COP15. China holds the presidency of COP15, formally known as the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. It held the phase-one meeting in Kunming, capital of southwest China's Yunnan Province, in 2021. The theme of “Ecological Civilization: Building a Shared Future for All Life on Earth.” Humanity is a community of shared future. Whether it is to overcome the COVID-19 epidemic, or to strengthen biodiversity conservation and achieve global sustainable development, only solidarity and cooperation can effectively address global challenges. Ecological prosperity leads to civilized prosperity. Therefore, jointly promoting harmonious coexistence between humans and nature, building a community of life on Earth, and building a clean and beautiful world are common pursuits and of great significance.

With the advent of industrialization, human civilization has developed rapidly, and people's quality of life has been significantly improved. However, to some extent, human profit comes at the cost of sacrificing nature, ignoring the importance of the earth, environment, and ecological civilization. This issue has not only attracted the attention and discussion of environmentalists and ecologists, but many linguists have also called for and advocated that language does not passively reflect objective reality, but actively participates in constructing reality. Therefore, linguists should contribute their efforts to ecological environment research from a linguistic perspective. He Wei and Gao Ran reviewed the development and research status of ecological linguistics and found that people's neglect and destruction of the ecological environment largely stem from the characteristics of our language system.

Therefore, exploring the impact of language on human cognitive ecological environment and using it as a starting

point to enhance people's environmental awareness is very meaningful and necessary. Chang Yuan summarized the research hotspots of ecological linguistics in China and found that domestic research mainly focuses on ecological discourse analysis, ecological translation studies, ecological teaching of foreign languages, and localization research. It can be seen that domestic research on ecological issues focuses on language, while there is less attention paid to the increasingly mainstream multimodal research. Although discourse analysts tend to prioritize the use of language modalities, visual modalities are ubiquitous in modern media and have significant semiotic potential. In recent years, in addition to traditional comics, movies, posters, and news, multimodal discourse analysis has also expanded to discourse such as games, corporate website reputation building, and conscription promotional videos. This reflects the significant semiotic potential of multimodality in modern media, highlighting the importance of visual and auditory modalities. Traditional discourse analysis takes a single textual symbol as the research object, often ignoring other forms of expression such as images, sounds, colors, animations, etc. (Li Zhanzi et al., 2012:1-8). Multimodal mobilization of multiple senses, such as auditory, visual, and tactile senses, and communication through various means such as language, images, sound, actions, and symbolic resources (Zhu Yongsheng, 2007:82-86). Over the years, an increasing number of domestic and foreign scholars have combined the multimodal characteristics of translation and applied research methods from multiple perspectives and dimensions to conduct in-depth discussions on translation activities, translation products, and translation teaching (Xu Mianjun, 2017:1). Multimodal translation research has become a new direction in translation studies. Although multimodal translation research in China has achieved certain results, there are still some shortcomings, such as insufficient literature, low recognition, and a relatively single research perspective.

This paper takes the COP15 theme propaganda film

"Harmonious Coexistence between Man and Nature" released by the Ministry of Ecology and Environment in 2013 as the research object, explores the English translation of the ecological propaganda film from the three levels of language, vision and sound mode, and jointly conveys the theme of "ecological civilization: co building the earth life community". Multimodal ecological text analysis beyond language itself can not only improve the applicability of English translation of ecological promotional videos in the multimedia era, but also promote the comprehensive construction of people's ecological and environmental values.

China, as the chairman of COP15, has played a leading role. With the continuous improvement of China's international status, Chinese ecological promotional videos will also enter the vision of Western people. The main purpose of ecological promotional videos reflects the willingness and determination to promote biodiversity conservation. Therefore, improving the translation quality of ecological promotional videos plays a crucial role in promoting ecological concepts such as promoting harmonious coexistence between humans and nature, and building a community of shared life on Earth.

## 2. Multimodal Analysis Theory and Translation

Linguistic translation research can be traced back to Roman Jakobson, who divided translation into three types: intralingual translation, interlingual translation, and symbolic translation. Interlingual translation refers to the conversion between two or more languages. It is the key to linguistic research and a common issue for translators. Inter symbol translation refers to the interpretation of meaning between linguistic and non-linguistic symbols, which is a cross symbol system transformation (Jakobson, 1959). It has only recently attracted widespread attention from researchers, and the development of translation theory has therefore taken on new directions. In the 1970s, there was an academic trend in discourse analysis in the field of linguistics, where scholars incorporated context, function, and communication into translation research (Pan Hanting, 2022). In the 1990s, multimodal discourse analysis emerged in the West, which not only considered language as the research object, but also included various senses such as hearing, touch, and vision, as well as various forms or symbol systems such as images, movies, and music. In this regard, many different research paths have gradually emerged in the academic community.

The semiotic ideas and systemic functional linguistics theory of British linguist Halliday provide a direct theoretical source for multimodal discourse analysis. Researchers have further expanded and applied semiotic ideas to various fields of multimodal discourse analysis, a research path known as "Systemic Functional Linguistics Multimodal Discourse Analysis" (Pan Yanyan et al., 2017). The study of multimodal discourse in China started relatively late and is still a research field that needs further development. The research on multimodal discourse analysis in China has been greatly influenced by Hu Zhuanglin [4], Zhu Yongsheng [5], Li Zhanzi [6], Zhang Delu [7], and others. They have made contributions to the theoretical framework and analytical approaches of multimodal discourse analysis, and have successfully promoted the research and development of multimodal discourse analysis in China. Hu Zhuanglin [4] introduced the concept of "multimodal semiotics" into China, distinguished between multimodality and multimedia, studied

computer semiotics, and summarized the research focus of multimodality; Zhu Yongsheng [5] analyzed the theory and methods of multimodal discourse analysis; Li Zhanzi [6] summarized the theoretical foundation, research approaches, and development prospects of multimodal semiotics in recent years. Zhang Delu [7] pointed out that multimodal discourse refers to the phenomenon of using various senses such as auditory, visual, and tactile senses to communicate through various means and symbolic resources such as language, image, sound, and action. Based on the theory of systemic functional linguistics, multimodal discourse analysis is interpreted from four levels: culture, context, meaning, and form.

Modality is a symbolic resource that is formed within social culture and has creative significance (Kress et al., 2020). The concept of multimodality is currently widely studied by scholars in various fields, and its definition is not yet conclusive. However, a widely accepted description is that multimodality refers to the phenomenon of one or more modalities coexisting in a specific context, such as written language, oral language, images, etc. It is a combination of meanings from different symbol systems (Gibbons, 2012). Li Zhanzi et al. (2012) pointed out that traditional means of expressing meaning solely through language are gradually being replaced by compound discourse that coexists with multiple media. The use of multimodal methods to reflect the norm of social practice has become an inherent feature of today's social and cultural system.

Wan Zhengfa (2020) also pointed out that with the advancement of media technology, the direction of cultural dissemination points to the correct transmission of the profound connotation of traditional Chinese culture through translation. This means that translation is no longer limited to the conversion of symbols between two different languages, but involves multiple modes such as text, images, colors, sound, animation, and video. According to the definition, multimodal discourse refers to a discourse that contains two or more modalities in a specific context. Feng Dezheng (2017) believes that multimodal discourse analysis can treat all symbolic resources equally to examine their role in meaning construction. Undoubtedly, compared to pure text translation, multimodal translation is more interesting, as it makes the target content more clear and understandable through multiple sensory pathways, making it easier for readers from different cultural backgrounds and levels to understand.

## 3. An Analysis of the English Translation of "Harmonious Coexistence between Man and Nature" from a Multimodal Perspective

The ecological promotional film showcases the protection of the ecological environment through film and television, where green waters and mountains are invaluable assets. It combines images, language, text, and music with the unique style of the ecological environment, biodiversity conservation, and social culture, transforming abstract concepts such as biodiversity, sustainable development, community of life, and harmonious coexistence into vivid images. The purpose of such videos is to showcase the significance of protecting global biodiversity through images, text, and sound, creating a positive and positive impression for the audience, thereby enhancing their awareness of ecological conservation and

responsibility. The images, language, sound and other modalities in the video jointly present the theme, deepen the audience's memory, and evoke cognitive resonance. In the process of translating multimodal discourse texts such as ecological promotional videos into English, the key is to combine visual symbols of images and appropriately transform the original text. The effective combination of text modality and visual symbols in images can not only improve the quality of translations, but also help to raise people's awareness of ecological and environmental protection,

In recent years, multimodal discourse has been widely applied in various fields such as semiotics and sociology, and even in the field of education. The research object extends from language and text to various elements such as music and images. Ecological promotional videos, as a form of audio-visual art, have multimodal characteristics. To construct a complete meaning in translation, translators must integrate various media resources, comprehensively consider multiple levels, and interpret the meaning of promotional videos. This article mainly explores the English translation of ecological promotional videos from three aspects: language modality, visual modality, and sound modality.

### (1) Language Modal Analysis

The cultural aspect is an important aspect that facilitates multimodal communication and is an indispensable link in multimodal communication. This layer of bread contains an ideology composed of human thinking patterns, social philosophy, lifestyle habits, and all hidden rules of society (Zhang Delu, 2009).

There are many words and expressions with Chinese characteristics in the subtitles of ecological promotional videos. Translators need to use appropriate translation strategies and methods to convey Chinese ecological characteristics, while meeting the viewing needs of the target language audience and preserving the cultural characteristics of the original subtitles. In subtitle translation, for words with cultural connotations, the translator should consider the understanding level of the target language readers and the presentation form of subtitle translation. To address translation barriers caused by cultural loaded words, translators can use translation methods such as transliteration, literal translation, and free translation.

Example 1: “人与自然和谐共生” is translated as “Harmony between Humanity and Nature”. Here, the two words of harmonious coexistence are translated as Harmony, which is in line with the conciseness of English and effectively conveys the meaning of harmony in Chinese.

Example 2: “浩浩黄河滚滚长江” is translated as “The mighty and torrential Yellow and Yangze Rivers”, and “The clear water on the banks is green, and the fish soar at the shallow bottom” is translated as “Aquatic life now rivers in the Lucid waters of the Yangze”. This translation uses the combined translation method, combining two adjectives as attributives to translate the two words of the vast Yellow River and the rolling Yangtze River, which is in line with the conciseness of the English language. “The water is clear, the shore is green, and the fish soar on the shallow bottom” uses the free translation method, allowing the audience to better understand.

Example 3: 真的是“绿水青山就是金山银山”。

WuHantu and his work, exemplify China's guiding green development philosophy “Lush mountains and Lucid waters are invalid assets”

In Chinese, the subject is usually omitted, while in English,

a complete sentence cannot be without a subject. Therefore, an additional translation method is used here to add characters and specific situations, reflecting WuHantu's embodiment of ecological concepts. At the same time, the mountains of gold and silver belong to specific things that can be understood in the Chinese context, but in English sentence structures, they need to conform to the expression habits of the target language. Therefore, it is more appropriate to translate them as valuable assets, which reflects the importance of ecological protection.

Example 4: 全国空气质量持续在改善, 蓝天白云闪烁繁星, 给百姓带来了实实在在的幸福感。

With China's air quality consistently improving, blue skies and shining stars have broken the Chinese people a sense of increased well-being.

When translating this sentence, attention should be paid to analyzing the logic of the sentence. The air quality throughout the country is continuously improving. In English translation, it is used as an adverbial and “blue sky, white clouds, twinkling stars” is used as the subject that brings happiness.

### (2) Visual Modal Analysis

In terms of color, different scenes in the film use different colors. Natural

landscapes use a large number of cool tones such as green and blue to express the

freshness and tranquility of nature, while human activity scenes use more warm tones to express enthusiasm and vitality. For example, the space and Earth at the beginning of the promotional video are blue and white colors, reflecting the beauty of the Earth and making people feel relaxed and happy. The blue and white of icebergs, the emerald green of mountains, the deep blue of lakes, the vast green of grasslands, and the interplay of green mountains and lakes Forming a beautiful picture scroll fully embodies ecological beauty.



In terms of sports, the swaying posture of trees, the running of animals, and the walking of humans in nature reflect the harmony of ecology through different forms of sports.

In terms of space, the camera transitions and spatial relationships between different scenes in the film reveal the spatial connections and interactions between humans and

nature.

In terms of shape, various plants in nature appear vibrant, full of vitality, with majestic animal vitality, as well as people's joy and architectural structure. Analyze their visual effects and symbolic significance in the picture.



Based on the visual grammar theory, analyze the multimodal discourse of the logo of the COP15 theme promotional video "Harmonious Coexistence between Man and Nature", and deeply interpret the 2050 vision of harmonious coexistence between man and nature under the Convention on Biological Diversity and the desire for global co construction of ecological civilization.

Composition is an essential element in visual art works, just like the process of integrating images into discourse through various coherent and cohesive means, logo designers construct the composition meaning of logos by integrating various image elements.

Logo designers express themselves by shaping the relationship between image participants and surrounding elements. The design concept of the logo comes from China's Paper Cuttings art and seal culture. The overall image of the logo is full of affinity, memorable points, and closely related to the theme, with distinct Chinese characteristics.

The emblem is composed of different elements, forming a "water droplet" in the shape of a "seed". "Water droplet" means that water is the source of life and the source of all things. The "water droplet" includes elements such as little girls dressed in ethnic costumes, giant pandas, peacocks, butterflies, plum blossoms, waves, etc., with oracle bone inscriptions as the background. Reflecting biodiversity and cultural diversity, expressing the 2050 vision of the Convention on Biological Diversity - the desire for harmonious coexistence between humans and nature, and global co construction of ecological civilization; The "Global Biodiversity Framework After 2020" formulated by COP15 is like a seed, nurtured by all contracting parties and stakeholders. Over the next decade, it will bloom brilliantly and bear fruitful fruits, showcasing the beautiful wish of "harmonious coexistence between humans and nature".

Through the multimodal combination of oracle bone inscriptions and drawings, the "Kunming, China" mark in the bottom right corner of the logo not only indicates the location of this COP, but also showcases the unique Chinese seal culture. The logo uses oracle bone script as the design background, consisting of characters such as mountains, rivers, forests, fields, grasses, flowers, birds, insects, and fish. As the earliest hieroglyphs in China, oracle bone script has gradually promoted the progress of Chinese civilization and

even human civilization, telling the world the history and connotation of ancient Eastern civilizations.

Through the above multimodal analysis methods, we can gain a deeper understanding of the richness and complexity of visual elements in the ecological promotional video "Harmonious Coexistence between Man and Nature", and combine them with English subtitles to better convey the theme of harmonious coexistence between humans and nature.

### (3) Sound Modal Analysis:

The multimodal analysis of sound in the ecological promotional video "Harmonious Coexistence between Man and Nature" can be carried out through the following steps:

From the perspective of sound emotion: the emotional colors conveyed by sound in the film are very rich, and the tone, volume, and rhythm of male dubbing are just right, which can affect the audience's emotional experience and reaction.

From the perspective of the relationship between sound and image: the complementary relationship between sound and visual elements. When the subtitle displays "blue skies and shining stars", one can see the transformation of blue sky and vast starry sky;

By conducting a multimodal analysis of the sound in "Harmonious Coexistence between Man and Nature", we can gain a deeper understanding of the important role of sound in the film, as well as the coordination between sound and other visual elements, thus better revealing the ecological theme and emotional connotations that the film aims to convey.

## 4. Conclusion

The development of the new media era has promoted the prosperity of ecological promotional videos. As a multimodal text that integrates text, sound, and image, ecological promotional videos complement and confirm each other with their subtitles. Therefore, its subtitle translation inevitably has multimodal attributes, presenting characteristics different from pure language modal text translation. How to successfully connect and transform between bilingualism, text, and two cultures has become the core issue of such multimodal text translation. The COP15 themed promotional video "Harmonious Coexistence between Man and Nature" fully embodies the multimodal concept and showcases the unique ecological beauty of China to the world. This article takes the ecological promotional video "Harmonious Coexistence between Man and Nature" as an example, and analyzes the translation strategies of multimodal discourse and ecological promotional videos from the perspectives of language, vision, and sound within the framework of multimodal analysis theory, promoting the development of the concept of protecting biodiversity and ecological environment.

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