



THE USE OF ECOLOGICAL TERMINOLOGY IN MODERN CHINESE MASS MEDIA

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the lexical-semantic, cultural, and communicative characteristics of ecological terminology in modern Chinese mass media. The study focuses on how ecological terms such as “生态文明” (ecological civilization), “绿色发展” (green development), and “碳中和” (carbon neutrality) have expanded beyond their scientific meanings to convey political, cultural, and ideological values. Based on examples from People’s Daily, Xinhua News Agency, and CCTV News, the paper examines the semantic evolution of ecological terms and their role in shaping public discourse in China. Particular attention is given to the challenges of translating Chinese ecological terminology into English and the cross-cultural implications of these terms in international communication. The findings demonstrate that ecological terminology in Chinese media functions not only as a linguistic tool but also as a means of promoting environmental awareness, national identity, and sustainable development ideology..

In recent decades, environmental issues have become one of the most urgent global concerns. Climate change, air pollution, biodiversity loss, and carbon neutrality are no longer discussed solely in scientific circles but have entered social and political discourse. As a result, new terminological layers have emerged in the languages of many countries. In China, ecological terminology has not only developed in academic contexts but has also become widely used in mass media (电视, 报纸, 网络媒体).

The active use of ecological terms in modern Chinese media is closely linked to the concept of “生态文明建设” (“building an ecological civilization”), which was elevated to a national policy level in the early 2010s. This policy direction has generated a wide range of terms such as “绿色经济” (green economy), “低碳生活” (low-carbon lifestyle), and “碳中和” (carbon neutrality). Therefore, analyzing how ecological terms are used in Chinese media helps us understand their semantic, cultural, and ideological functions in modern Chinese discourse.

1. The Development of Ecological Terminology in Chinese Media

The formation of ecological terminology in Chinese began actively in the 1980s, when environmental awareness gained importance globally. However, since 2012 — when the concept of “生态文明建设” was included in China’s Constitution — this terminological field has expanded significantly.

Leading media outlets such as People’s Daily (人民日报), Xinhua News Agency (新华社), and CCTV News (央视新闻) frequently use ecological terms to report on environmental policies and development goals. Examples include:

- 绿色发展 (green development),
- 低碳社会 (low-carbon society),
- 清洁能源 (clean energy).

The growing presence of these terms in mass media is closely connected to China’s “Green China” initiative, which presents ecological issues not merely as environmental challenges but as part of national modernization and sustainable development strategies.

2. Semantic and Stylistic Features of Ecological Terminology

Ecological terms in the Chinese language — especially in media discourse — possess distinctive semantic and stylistic characteristics. They tend to carry positive connotations, symbolizing progress, harmony, purity, and renewal.

For example:

- 绿色经济 (“green economy”) does not only refer to ecological economics but also implies sustainable and innovative economic growth;
- 生态安全 (“ecological security”) is interpreted as part of national security;
- 碳中和 (“carbon neutrality”) functions both as a scientific and political term.

Through mass media, such expressions have acquired metaphorical and symbolic meanings. Phrases like “绿色中国梦” (“Green Chinese Dream”) illustrate how ecological terminology has been ideologically elevated to express national aspirations and policy visions.

3. Cultural and Ideological Connotations of Ecological Terms

The semantic study of Chinese ecological terminology reveals that many terms convey ideas of harmony between humans and nature, deeply rooted in Chinese traditional philosophy. The concept of 生态文明 (“ecological civilization”) echoes the classical principle 天人合一 (“unity of heaven and man”). Therefore, Chinese ecological terminology reflects not only environmental awareness but also a culturally embedded worldview.

At the same time, ecological terms carry strong ideological implications in political discourse. Phrases such as “绿色转型” (“green transformation”) or “双碳目标” (“dual carbon goal”) appear frequently in speeches by Chinese leaders and in official media narratives. These terms present ecological reform as a national mission and a symbol of China’s responsible leadership in global environmental governance.

Through media usage, ecological terminology has thus evolved from being purely scientific vocabulary to becoming part of political and moral rhetoric that shapes public attitudes toward the environment.

4. Translation and Cross-Cultural Challenges

Translating Chinese ecological terminology into other languages — particularly English and Uzbek — presents several challenges. Many terms lack full semantic equivalents because they contain specific cultural and ideological overtones.

For instance:

- 生态文明 (“ecological civilization”) cannot be fully translated as “ecological civilization” in English, since in China it represents a broad political ideology and development philosophy.

- 绿色信贷 (“green credit”) in English means “eco-friendly banking,” but in Chinese media it refers to a specific state-led financial policy.

- 双碳目标 (“dual carbon goals”) refers to China’s commitment to peak carbon emissions by 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2060 — a concept with no direct equivalent in Western terminology.

These examples illustrate how semantic expansion and cultural adaptation occur when Chinese ecological discourse enters international communication. Translators must therefore interpret not only the linguistic meaning but also the socio-political and cultural context of each term.

5. Communicative Role of Ecological Terminology in the Media

In Chinese mass media, ecological terms perform both informative and persuasive functions. They aim not only to report facts but also to shape public perception and promote ecological awareness. Expressions such as “保护地球母亲” (“Protect Mother Earth”) are emotionally charged slogans designed to inspire collective responsibility.

Television programs, news articles, and social media campaigns frequently employ ecological terms in combination with visual metaphors and emotional imagery. This strategy enhances their rhetorical effect, transforming environmental vocabulary into a means of moral and patriotic persuasion.

Stylistically, the media discourse on ecology is characterized by conciseness, metaphorical richness, and positive tone. The frequent use of key terms such as “绿色”, “生态”, and “低碳” helps reinforce the idea that environmental protection is inseparable from national development and modern identity.

Ecological terminology in the Chinese language — as used in modern mass media — represents a rich and dynamic system that combines scientific precision, cultural symbolism, and ideological meaning. These terms are not merely linguistic signs but carriers of values and national identity. Through their active use in the media, environmental issues are framed not only as technical or scientific topics but also as moral and political imperatives.

The study of ecological terminology in Chinese media is therefore significant not only for linguistics and semantics, but also for cultural studies and communication theory. It

demonstrates how language can function as a bridge between environmental consciousness, state ideology, and public discourse in contemporary China.

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