

A Case Study of Eco-translatology

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Abstract: Translation is needed for communication between different countries or nations, for communication between different cultures, and for mutual reference among different civilizations. Translation is a kind of cross-cultural communication, and its importance is self-evident. Eco-translatology, as a new translation theory, has been widely concerned since it was put forward. Its "translation ecological environment" has brought people a new cognitive vision. Its focus on the "translator center" has also enabled people to understand the translator's subjectivity again. Its emphasis on "three-dimensional transformation" has opened up a micro path for translation studies. Therefore, the combination of eco-translatology and literary translation may produce different sparks, thus injecting new strength into cultural communication.

Keywords: Eco-translatology; To Live; Translator; Three-dimensional Transformation.

1. Introduction

There have been several climaxes in the history of Chinese translation. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, Jesuits brought advanced Western science and became intermediaries between the two major civilizations of China and the West. With the assistance of Chinese literati, they accelerated the process of modernization in China, forming the first climax in the history of cultural exchange between China and the West. The translation activity combining Jesuits and Chinese literati has built a bridge for communication between Chinese and Western cultures. Their translation activities have become the second climax in the history of Chinese translation after the translation of Buddhist scriptures. However, with the passage of time, in today's China, the era of "Western learning spreading eastward", which was instilled in China through Western learning, has become a thing of the past. Whether it is the brilliant national culture or the distinctive era culture; Whether it is the increasing economic strength or the rising international status, there is no doubt that the practice of introducing excellent foreign culture has long been withdrawn from the mainstream stage. The policy of "going global" in Chinese culture has firmly established the trend of the times, and "learning from the East and spreading from the West" has gradually become the mainstream of society. In this context, literature, as one of the representatives of national cultural soft power, has become a top priority in terms of "going abroad".

From a cultural perspective, translation is not only a transformation of language symbols, but also a form of cultural exchange. The success of literature's "going out" partly depends on the source language content and practical significance of literature, and partly on the means and approaches of "going out". Translation with cross-cultural communication function is one of the representatives of means and approaches. In the field of translation, the translation guidance theory chosen by the translator, as well as the translation strategies and techniques chosen during the translation process, have a significant impact on the translation results.

2. Eco-translatology Studies

As an original translation theory with Chinese localization

characteristics first proposed by Chinese scholars, the concept of "Eco-translatology" has caused a sensation in the translation industry. Eco-translatology studies explore translation from an ecological perspective, integrating ecology into translation and highlighting the importance of "selection" and "adaptation". Eco-translatology studies mainly emphasize the need for new descriptions and explanations of content while maintaining the integrity of the entire translation system. Its core is the concept of "Three Lives", which is composed of translation community (survival), translation environment (ecology), and translation text (life).

As an interdisciplinary approach to Eco-translatology research, Eco-translatology studies apply ecological rationality to conduct a comprehensive study of translation from an ecological perspective. It is an ecological paradigm and research field of "translation is adaptation and choice". From this perspective, there are nine major research focuses in the field of Eco-translatology studies, namely ecological paradigm, correlation sequence chain, ecological rationality, translation action, translation ecological environment, translator center, adaptation and selection, "three-dimensional" transformation, and "post punishment".

2.1. Development Stage

The term "Eco-translatology" was proposed by Professor Hu Gengshen. He described the translation process as the translator's adaptation and choice. Eco-translatology started in 2001 and was fully developed in 2009. On December 6, 2001, Professor Hu Gengshen delivered an article titled "Preliminary Exploration of Translation Adaptation Selection Theory" at the Third Asian Translators Forum of the International Federation of Translators. This is the first article on Eco-translatology studies read by Chinese scholars at an international conference. This article explores the adaptation of translators to the translation ecological environment and their choices in translation activities, paving the way for the systematic construction of the theory of translation adaptation and selection, and laying the foundation for the development of Eco-translatology studies. Translation adaptation selection theory is fundamental theoretical research in the early development of Eco-translatology studies.

In 2004, Professor Hu Gengshen published a monograph titled "Translation Adaptation Selection Theory", which

introduced how Eco-translatology studies boldly borrowed the basic principle of "natural selection survival of the fittest" from Darwin's "adaptation selection" theory of evolution, and introduced it into the field of translation studies. Afterwards, Professor Hu Gengshen successively published papers in major domestic and foreign journals, comprehensively and systematically proposing the theoretical construction basis and application principles of Eco-translatology studies from both theoretical and empirical perspectives.

Since 2009, research on Eco-translatology theory has gradually deepened and matured and applied. The number of related research papers has increased significantly, with a significant increase in the number of researchers at different levels and a significant expansion of research scope. The research scope involves theoretical research, research on various translated texts, research on translator thinking, and teaching research. As a result, Eco-translatology studies have received widespread attention and recognition. In addition to Professor Hu, other scholars have successively participated in the relevant discussions.

2.2. Correlation Sequence Chain

From an ecological perspective, the entire translation activity has established a correlation and interactivity with nature. Translation activities are called translation ecology and belong to a part of the natural ecosystem. In the entire ecosystem, the order chain of association is a chain from the translation world to the natural world, which has both internal logical connections with the natural world and cognitive extensions. As a result, natural ecosystems interact with human social systems. The perspective of translation research has also expanded, from translation itself to language, culture, and human ecology. However, this is not a change in research perspective, but rather a cyclical and interactive relationship between various links in a sequence chain.

Under the influence of the sequence of associations, translators naturally incorporate logical and natural associations into their cognitive world during the translation process. Specifically, whether it is pre translation preparation, in translation selection, or post translation editing, translators can take a more nuanced perspective to study or evaluate the source language text and translation content, which can enter a relatively micro level and gain a better understanding of the translation itself.

2.3. Adaptation, Selection and Translation Ecological Environment

Based on the basic principle of "natural selection survival of the fittest" in Darwin's theory of evolution, translation is described in Eco-translatology as an alternating cycle of translator adaptation and translator selection. The basic research of Eco-translatology studies, "Translation Adaptation Selection Theory," believes that for translators, they need to both adapt and make choices. In addition, there should be integration between the two, that is, adaptation

2.4. "Three-dimensional" Transformation

The "three-dimensional" transformation is a translation method based on the fundamental theory of Eco-translatology studies, which refers to the adaptive selection transformation of translators in language, culture, and communication dimensions under the principle of "multi-dimensional adaptation and adaptive selection".

The adaptive selection and transformation of language

dimension refers to the translator's adaptive selection and transformation of language forms during the translation process. For example, 'Xishi Tongue' is translated as 'the beauty's tongue', directly using 'beauty' to refer to the language meaning behind 'Xishi'; Translate 'Huanghe Lou' as 'the Yellow Grand Tower', using 'tower' to express the characteristics of ancient architecture; The translation of "Shizi Tou" as "Large Meatball" is vivid and reflects the raw materials. Because the dish lion's head is not actually made from the head of a real lion, it is only made into a ball with meat, named after its shape resembling a lion's head. If the above examples are directly translated as "xi shi's tongue" or "lions head", whether expressed in Chinese pinyin or literal translation, they will cause doubts and ambiguity, and do not conform to the target language culture. The application of language dimension minimizes misunderstandings caused by language differences and reduces conflicts caused by cultural differences.

The adaptive selection and transformation of cultural dimension refers to the translator paying attention to the differences in bilingual cultural content during the translation process, paying attention to the transmission and interpretation of the source language connotation, avoiding misinterpretation of the source language content, and adapting to the target language cultural environment. For example, "Dongpo Rou" is translated as "Dongpo Braised Pork", and the relevant history introduction is annotated on the side; In Chinese culture, "bamboo" represents integrity and open-mindedness; 'Pine' represents longevity and perseverance, so in some translations, its metaphorical meaning is explained as 'Bamboo representatives a strong and resilient character'; Pine representatives longevity and persistence'; When Chinese people express their admiration for others, they often use the term "Wu Ti Tou Di". "Wu Ti Tou Di" refers to the most respectful ritual in ancient times, which refers to the extreme admiration. After understanding this cultural connotation, the sentence can be translated as "I simply admire him from the bottom of my heart" to avoid misinterpretation of meaning caused by literal translation.

The adaptive selection and transformation of communication dimension refers to the translator's ability to achieve a reasonable transformation of the content between the source language and the target language during the translation process, as well as the correct transmission of cultural connotations. The translator focuses on bilingual communication and successfully reveals the communicative intention of the source language from the target language. For example, to ensure simplicity and clarity, "Chang Cheng" is translated as "The Great Wall", "Zijin Cheng" as "The Forbidden City", and "Xunwen Chu" as "Information Desk"; Using a transliteration and annotation translation strategy, translate "yin" and "yang" as "Yin the feminine or negative principal in nature" and "Yang the masculine or positive principal in nature" respectively, or use a literal translation and annotation strategy to translate "four comprehensives", translate it as "Four Comprehensive builds a modelly prospective society; comprehensive deep reform; comprehensive implementation of the rule of law; comprehensive strength of the Party discipline", in order to achieve the ecological balance of the translation as much as possible, allowing target language audiences lacking relevant cultural backgrounds to understand the original content at the linguistic level and the deep meaning at the cultural level, And thus achieve communicative intent.

3. Analysis of Eco-translatology Application

3.1. To Live and its English Translation

Yu Hua is from Hangzhou, Zhejiang. Yu Hua is not a prolific writer, but his works often stand out with detailed narratives and unusual discourse systems, constructing one mysterious, strange, and truly cruel textual world after another. *Alive* "is a representative novel by Yu Hua, which tells the tragic story of Fugui's life and family suffering from social changes such as the Civil War, the Three Anti Five Anti Rebellions, the Great Leap Forward, and the Cultural Revolution. Eventually, his son, daughter, and wife passed away one after another, leaving only the elderly Fugui and the old scalper to rely on each other. The English translation of *To Live* was officially released by ANCHOR BOOKS in the United States in 2003. The translator was Michael Berry, Associate Professor of East Asia at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Once published, the book sparked heated discussions in foreign media and a warm welcome from readers. The Washington Post, Time Several mainstream media outlets such as the Seattle Times have highly praised this work.

Starting from Eco-translatology studies, the implementation process from the Chinese title to "To Live" is carried out in Chinese, Chinese content, and English systems. Specifically, the translation ecological environment of "To Live" is the interconnected whole of bilingual conversion between Chinese and English, communication between authors and readers, and collision of different social cultures. Michael Berry adapted to the translation ecological environment of 'To Live', understood the story of this book, and understood that the title "To Live" means "to pursue survival, in order to live". Therefore, he chose the latter as the title of the English translation between "lifetimes" and "to live" to convey the theme of "To Live".

3.2. Translators and Eco-translatology

Michael Berry is a Ph.D. in Modern Chinese Literature and Film from Columbia University and currently teaches at the University of California, Los Angeles. His main research areas include contemporary Chinese literature, film, popular culture, and translation studies. In addition to *To Live*, his Chinese English translations also include "The Song of Everlasting Sorrow," "Nanjing 1937: A Love Story," and more.

In an interview with Jia Zhangke, Michael Berry mentioned that the standard for choosing a translated work is to find a contemporary classic. Translation is a hard work that requires a lot of time, so Michael Berry hopes to find some works that can withstand the test of time. For Michael Berry, the primary condition for choosing is to love this book very much, and as a reader, it feels very enjoyable. A good writing style, a good story, and a genuine emotional touch. The first work translated by Michael Berry was Yu Hua's *To Live*, which he began writing during his undergraduate studies. In the theory of Eco-translatology, "doing something in translation" refers to the subjective motivation and objective effect of the translator's translation. Subjective motivation refers to the reasons why the translator chooses the translated content, while objective effects refer to the impact of the translation results. Regardless of the reason or the impact that a translation can have, it is a result of adaptive selection theory. Starting from the perspective of translation, the domestic sensation indicates that *To Live* is indeed a very important

work in contemporary Chinese literature, and the huge success of the English translation *To Live* also proves that Michael Berry's subjective motivation and objective effects are both correct and considerable.

3.3. Case Analysis

TT1: "This child has been without a mother from the moment he entered this world. Let's call him Kugen. Kugen, bitter root."

For the child's name "Kugen", Michael Berry adopts the translation technique of Chinese Pinyin with annotations. The literal translation of "Bitter Root" can also make the target audience associate the meaning of the name, without affecting the language style of the original author, and on the other hand, it preserves the cultural labels behind the name in the source language. Adaptive selection at the linguistic level directly reduces misunderstandings caused by language differences and reduces conflicts caused by cultural differences.

TT2: "As the saying goes, 'if you escape a calamity with your life, there is bound to be good fortune to follow'."

In the source text, the phrase "大难不死必有后福" refers to the belief that if they survive a tribulation, they will surely have good luck. In the target language environment, there is a famous quote from the philosopher Nietzsche, "what does not kill you make you stronger", which was included in the popular song Stronger by American singer Kelly Clarkson and made people familiar with it. From the perspective of the translator center, Michael Berry could choose Nietzsche's famous quote to translate this sentence, but he did not do so. Without affecting the understanding of the target language readers, Michael Berry chose to use literal translation, relying on his translator identity to fully preserve the cultural imagery of the source language, thus successfully achieving an adaptive choice between language and cultural dimensions.

TT3: "Seeing the old man's dark face smiling in the sunlight was quite moving. The wrinkles on his face moved about happily. They were caked with mud, just like the small dirt trails that run through the fields."

In the process of writing, Yu Hua used many vivid and vivid metaphors to showcase the appearance and psychology of characters, which is also a major feature of Chinese, often expressed through metaphors. For most of the metaphors in *To Live*, translator Michael Berry also chooses to use literal translation techniques to maximize the preservation of the source language and cultural image, while adapting to language and cultural dimensions, conveying the communicative intention of the source language to the target language readers.

TT4: "It hurts to think about it now. When I was young, I was a real asshole."

For metaphorical sentences, whether they are similes or metaphors, Michael Berry often uses literal translation techniques to preserve the source language imagery. However, in ST4, the literal translation of the metaphorical image "乌龟王八蛋" as "turtle bastard" in the source language can easily lead to ambiguity, and "turtle" in the target language culture does not contain the source language cultural image, which cannot achieve the degree of meaning equivalence. Therefore, Michael Berry adopts free translation to achieve three-dimensional transformation.

TT5: "Long Er still showed no understanding of the time. He was as stubborn as a mule. In the end he was executed."

"Mule" means "stubborn" in bilingual environments. Michael Berry uses literal translation to construct the context

of the entire sentence, and then uses free translation to fully express the stubbornness of "Longer" in the source language with "as stubbornness as a mule", which not only achieves cultural adaptability but also conveys the original author's communicative intention, that is, "Longer" is very stubborn.

TT6: "Holding the kerosene lamp with three fingers, Dad emerged from his room. The glow from the lamp danced upon his face, leaving it half illuminated and half cloaked in darkness. His back slumped over as he coughed incessantly. After sitting down, he asked me, 'Did you settle the debt?'"

Simple and easy to understand is also Yu Hua's language style. He often uses simple verbs to depict the character's psychology, and uses simple descriptions to enhance the contextual atmosphere. As the translator of choice, it is obvious that Michael Berry has adapted to this translation environment. On the basis of language dimension, he also chose some simple words to convey source language information, using "dance" to indicate flashing lights and "settle debt" to indicate debt repayment.

TT7: "Suddenly I could no longer see the doctor - my mind went blank and my head began to spin. All I felt were the tears pouring down my face."

The source language readers can associate images such as "dizzy," "confused," and "at a loss" when they see "脑袋黑了", but due to different cultural backgrounds, the target language readers do not have this ability to relate. Michael Berry took into account cultural differences and chose to use free translation techniques to convey the communicative intention of the source language.

4. Conclusion

In Eco-translatology studies, 'translator' is referred to as the sum of all contradictions in the translation process. The translator is the only subjective entity in the entire translation activity, possessing independent subjectivity. He can choose and transform the cultural connotations of the original text, and can also reshape the fuzzy information of the original text. The translator's subjective "three-dimensional

transformation" encompasses language, culture, and communication dimensions, which bring translation research to a more micro, detailed, and full level. Whether the translator uses techniques such as transliteration and annotation, literal translation and annotation to translate Chinese characteristic vocabulary, or Michael Berry uses methods such as literal translation, free translation, or a combination of various techniques to translate *To Live*, both reflect the importance of "translator centeredness" and "three-dimensional transformation" in the translation process. The task of literary translation is to transfer the image of certain social life contained in the original work from one language to another intact, and in the process of translation, to pursue the artistic beauty of the language and reproduce the artistry of the original work, which corresponds to the "three-dimensional transformation". Therefore, continuing to study the new theory of Eco-translatology and combining it with literature may open a different window for literary translation, injecting new power into it. On this basis, the path for Chinese culture to "go global" may become even broader.

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