

An analysis of eco-translation from the perspective of culturally-loaded words

Dandan WEI

School of English Studies, Xi'an International Studies University, Xi'an 710128, China

Abstract: In recent years, the discussion on cultural translation perspectives has gradually replaced the simple language analysis and has gained more attention in translation studies. With profound cultural connotations and distinct cultural personalities, culturally-loaded words are often regarded as the representatives of the soft power of a country. However, since there exist cultural differences between different languages, the translation of culturally-loaded words remains a major difficulty in the translation process. This paper aims to explore the translation of culturally-loaded words in terms of three dimensions of ecological translation so as to achieve the translation accuracy as much as possible. The study shows that eco-translation does play a significant role in the translation of culturally-loaded words.

Key words: culturally-loaded words; ecological translation; three-dimensional conversion

1 Introduction

Nowadays, cultural communication has been a driving force for mutual development. However, the obstacles caused by cultural differences have set barriers for efficient communication. Many scholars have explored solutions to this issue. Eco-translatology, proposed by Hu Gengshen, holds that translation is "the translator's selection to adapt to the translational eco-environment" [1]. Warren has also mentioned that "translation is a cognitive and survival model" [2]. Translating literature into another language is similar to transplanting animals or plants to a new environment, requiring adaptation to survive. Therefore, it is seen as a new theory for translation research. This paper will explain the theory of ecological translation studies in three dimensions to further promote its development.

2 Theoretical analysis

This part gives a brief introduction to the general theoretical framework of culturally-loaded words and three dimensions of eco-translatology.

2.1 Culturally-loaded words

Culturally-loaded words are phrases and idioms that reflect the activity mode of a specific nation and which makes a nation different from other nations. Catford mentioned "translation is the process of replacing one language text with another" [3]. In Chinese culture, there are certain words that do not have direct translations in foreign languages. These words are loaded with specific national information and reflect deep national culture. Since there are cultural differences, sometimes it can be quite difficult to find the exact words in the target language, which may lead to semantic misunderstanding and inaccuracy of original text. The following section will provide a detailed classification of these culturally-loaded words.

2.2 Introduction of eco-translatology

Professor Hu Gengshen emphasizes the harmony and unity of translation ecology, the translator-centeredness of the translation subject and other factors [4]. This theory involves some core concepts, including translation ecological environment, adaptation and selection, translator's central view, "three dimensional" conversion perspective and so on.

Eco-translatology comprises three dimensions, with the linguistic dimension emphasizing the translator's conversational response to language forms. Cultural dimension means that translators should pay attention to the transmission and interpretation of bilingual cultural connotation. As Nida stated, "for truly successful translation, familiarity with two cultures is even more important than mastery of two languages, because words are meaningful only when applied to a particular culture" [5]. In order to maintain the communicative ecology, the translator is required to express the communicative intention of the source text to the target language readers. Thus, communication between different languages can go on smoothly.

2.3 The relationship between culturally-loaded words and eco-translatology

Language is influenced by the unique ecological environment of each country, and accordingly forming certain culturally-loaded words respectively. Eco-translatology is to study and analyze ecological translation from the perspective of ecology. The translator take the both ecological environment of source language and the ecological environment of the target language into account. The translator must possess relevant knowledge of both the source and target languages, as well as the cultural context in which they are used. It is essential to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the source text and more importantly, the ecological environment it depends on. Therefore, it is necessary to translate culturally-loaded words from the field of eco-translatology.

3 The application of eco-translatology in the translation of culturally-loaded words

This chapter will introduce and analyze the application of eco-translatology in the translation of Chinese culturally-loaded words from the above mentioned three dimensions.

3.1 Linguistic-dimensional transformation of Chinese culturally-loaded words

The linguistic dimension focuses on whether the translator has adapted the lexical and semantic selection to the target language [6].

Example 1: Jie shang che shui ma long, ren men san san liang liang,...shen cai fei yang de jiao tan, guo lu ren liang bian guan kan, xin shang zhe jie jing.

Translation: There is heavy traffic on the streets: cars coming and going, some people in twos and threes...others in groups talking in high spirits, or looking around-enjoying the street scene.

"Che shui ma long" means that cars are like flowing water and horses are like wandering dragons. Here, in order to better reflect the ecological environment of the target language, the translator flexibly adopts the free translation by using "heavy traffic" and "cars coming and going", rather than literal translation such as "like running water and moving dragon". In addition, "dragon" in China symbolizes nobility, power and honor. However, in western countries, it is a symbol of evil and violence. The translator translates "shen cai fei yang" into "in high spirits", which better transmits the information of the original text.

3.2 Cultural-dimensional transformation of Chinese culturally-loaded words

Professor Hu argued that the selection and transformation of cultural dimension requires the translator to adapt to the whole cultural system to which the language belongs, that is, cultural ecology [7].

Example 2: Jiang si chou zhi lu, jiu bu neng bu ti yi ge ren, ta jiao zhang qian, shi xi han shi qi de yi wei gong ting shi lang.....

Translation: The pioneer who blazed the trail of the Silk Road was Zhang Qian (164-114 BC), a general of the Western Han Dynasty.

"Gong ting shi lang", is an official name in ancient China. More importantly, the sentence is to introduce Zhang's contribution to the Silk Road. Therefore, the translator directly translates "gong ting shi lang" into "general", which not only is close to the cultural connotation to be expressed in the original text, but also makes the translation concise and easily understood by target readers. The translated text adapts to the ecological environment of the source and target language and functions well in cross-cultural communication.

3.3 Communicative-dimensional transformation of Chinese culturally-loaded words

Eco-translation believes that translators should focus on the successful transmission of the original communicative intention based on the transformation of language and culture.

Example 3: Ci qi zhui qiu chun jing you ya de mei, zhe zai qing hua ci zhong ti xian zui wei chong fen.

Translation: Pure and elegant beauty is the goal that porcelain pursues, and this goal is best explained in the production of blue-and-white porcelain.

"Qing hua ci" is considered as the outstanding representative of China's excellent traditional culture. It is difficult to find a corresponding expression in English for the color word "qing" in Chinese. Therefore, the translator uses "blue-and-white" to vividly depict the color. This translated text succinctly and accurately conveys the deep meaning of "qing hua ci", which retains characteristics of the original text and improves its readability, achieving a satisfying communicative effect.

4 Conclusion

The paper concludes that a text ecology should be respected, and linguistic, cultural and communicative dimension should be integrated. Then the author selects some source texts and target texts to analyze and evaluate the feasibility and importance of ecological translation so as to facilitate the communication between different countries and narrow the cultural gap. Moreover, since eco-translatology places emphasis on the translator centeredness, students should be put in a central position in translation training rather than teacher-oriented pattern. Teachers are required to organize some beneficial activities between teachers and students or between students to guide and assist them in learning translation.

Acknowledgments

Funding: This research was supported by Xi'an International Studies University Postgraduate Research Fund Project (grant number 2021SS025).

Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

References

- [1] Hu GS. 2008. The interpretation of eco-translatology. *Chinese Translators Journal*, 29(6):11-15.
- [2] Huang LW. 2013. Analysis of the translation concept of "translator centered". *Journal of Yuzhang Normal University*, 27(02):147-148+3.
- [3] Hu GS. 2009. Eco-translation studies: interdisciplinary integration of translation studies. *Shanghai Journal of Translators*, 2:3-7.
- [4] Newmark P. 2001. *Approaches to Translation*. Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- [5] Hu GS. 2004. *The Adaptation and Selection Theory of Translation*. Hubei Education Press.
- [6] Hu GS. 2013. *Eco-translatology: Construction and Interpretation*. Beijing Commercial Press.
- [7] Liu WT. 2019. A study on the English translation of frog from the perspective of three dimensional transformation in eco-translation studies. *English Square*, 8:15-16.