

A Study of Translation Teaching Strategies Based on Three-dimensional Transformation Theory in Eco-translatology

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Abstract

As an interdisciplinary translation theory, Eco-translatology has been widely applied into various subjects in addition to translation field. In terms of translation teaching of college English, students' translation abilities are generally insufficient and weak since they lack the overall grasp and comprehension of the context. Therefore, this study focuses on the core concept of Eco-translatology—the Three-dimensional Transformation Theory and utilizes it as an epistemology and methodology for guiding and evaluating translation teaching in College English Education from the perspectives of linguistic, cultural and communicative dimensions. The integration of teaching content and translation practice can enable students to consciously select and adapt to the translating context, and then to produce translations that are consistent with the true meaning of the original work as well as complying with the current value system of the whole society which ultimately can facilitate the improvement of students' translation abilities and the achievement of the goal of college English teaching.

Keywords

Eco-translatology; translation teaching; Three-dimensional Transformation Theory.

1. Introduction

With the development of nearly two decades, Eco-translatology has yielded many significant scientific results in academic world. Taking a sweeping view of studies on translating teaching, it is clear that those studies are conducted mostly from the perspectives of linguistics and psychology. Overall, scholars seldom employ the theory of Eco-translatology to the teaching of translation in College English in universities. This research is therefore quite innovative and applicable.

1.1. Research Background

Contemporary philosophy is facing a shift from epistemology to ontology as well as from anthropocentrism to a holistic ecological view, and this philosophical turn will enable translation studies to offer more research perspectives and research paradigms. With the ever-increasing integration of the research fields of translation academia, a translation theory featuring ecological concept—Eco-translatology has emerged. Originating from the Chinese classical philosophy of "the union of heaven and man", it focuses on the integration of human and nature, and tends to seek for harmony between them, rendering the whole to act as the noumenon and harmony the purpose. This poetic and intellectual system, based on the balanced ecosystem of the inherent relations in source language, attach great importance to balance, harmony and unity of all the elements involved. Being reflected in translation epistemology, this system requires translators to be "loyal to the original work" which is taken as the fundamental principle while pursuing the harmony and unity between people and the whole ecological translation environment. As for the translation method, the selection and

adaptation of the Three-dimensional Transformation Theory, namely linguistic, cultural, and communicative dimensions are proposed by Prof. Hu Gengshen (2004) for guiding translation practice, especially in literary texts. To be specific, the linguistic dimension centers on the intellectual system of internal linguistic relations in the texts, cultural dimension stresses the cultural elements beyond the language and communicative dimension emphasizes the interaction between subjects in translation practice. On the premise of regarding language as the crucial core, these three dimensions penetrate and integrate with each other, which reflects the translators' pursuit for the perfect harmony between original texts and translated texts. Although the translator's subjectivity is highly valued, this ecological theory also pays great attention to the overall grasp of the context of the original texts, including the balance and changes of the various relationships within the texts and outside the text. Meanwhile, the intelligent participation of people is integrated into the internal relationship of the original text containing its certain cultural background, the author as well as the linguistic elements to present a holistic, comprehensive and dynamic translational eco-environment. The pursuit of a harmonious state in which all relevant factors between the source and the target texts can be properly coordinated stands as the ultimate aim of the Three-dimensional Transformation Theory.

It is acknowledged that translation teaching has always been one of the important components of listening, speaking, reading and writing and in college English Education, translation abilities of students reflects the comprehensive language ability and level of students to a large extent. With the acceleration of globalization, a large number of qualified talents equipped with intercultural communicative competence are greatly needed. The situation indicates that improving the quality of translation teaching is not only the aim of foreign language majors in Chinese universities, but also one of the imminent tasks of College English Education in contemporary world. In 2004, the newly formulated College English Teaching Requirements (Trial) formally issued by the Ministry of Education in China clearly stated that the goal of college English teaching is to cultivate students' comprehensive skills of English. Therefore, translation teaching no longer exists as a means of language learning in college English teaching, but exists as a teaching purpose (Adab, 2000). However, according to the statistics and the analysis of some renowned scholars, Chinese students' translation abilities are generally insufficient and weak since they lack the overall grasp and comprehension of the context of the original texts.

1.2. Research Significance

First of all, it is innovative to use the Three-dimensional Transformation Theory from Eco-translatology which is rich in holistic concepts, as the epistemology and methodology to guide and evaluate translation teaching in college English education. Based on the ecological wisdom in traditional Chinese philosophy of "the union of heaven and man" which transcending the boundaries of the humanities and social sciences, the study explores the strategies of translation teaching from an ecological perspective. Here translation activities present as a dynamic conversing process in which translators are continuously make selection and adaptation to the translational eco-environment and due to the respect for the objectivity of the original work, the precise interpretation of the original text can be attained.

Moreover, the Three-dimensional Transformation Theory consisting of linguistic dimension, cultural dimension and communicative dimension is of great significance for the construction of a harmonious cognitive system for translation teaching. It can not only provide an effective method for text translation, but also serve as a solid theoretical basis for measuring the reliability and validity of translation teaching in college English education.

Lastly, the ecological wisdom, such as harmony, equilibrium and integration of translation embodied in Eco-translatology is manifested in the translator's commitment to the "ecosystem

of original work" to achieve a dynamic and balanced state, delicately coordinating with each elements to reach the state of harmony. In the practice of translation teaching, if teachers can follow closely the isomorphism of the teaching content and translation practice, students can thus be able to constantly make appropriate selection and adaptation to the translating context and produce translation consistent with the true meaning of the original work as well as with the value system of the current society. In this way, students' translation abilities will be definitely improved to obtain the goal of college English teaching.

2. Literature Review

Nourished by the cultural spirit of "the union of heaven and man", the translation method of Eco-translatology, rooted in the integration of subjects and nature proposed by the Three-dimensional Transformation Theory, is a reflection of the ecological wisdom within the framework of translation.

2.1. Studies at Home

Generally, domestic scholars' research in this area is mainly divided into two parts, theoretical research and applied research. The literature on the former can be basically classified into three categories as follows.

In terms of the theoretical research, the first is to explore and evaluate the translation principles, translation methods, and translation processes of the theory itself, in order to improve feasibility of the theoretical system and build a defensible theoretical and practical translation theory from a new perspective. Li Yashu and Huang Zhonglian (2005) believed that the theory is both theoretical and practical. Cai Xinle (2006) put forward that Eco-translatology, reflecting the combination of science and art and getting rid of the "modern" myth, belongs to a "post-modern" theoretical form; it highlights the role of translation in cultural integration and emphasizes the significance of translation in creating new forms of culture. Fang Mengzhi (2011) pointed out that the translation ecology and the translation environment are a whole, and the various components are organically connected, harmonious, symbiotic and endless.

Second, studies comparing Eco-translatology with other theories have also begun to emerge, presenting an increasingly innovative and diversified trend. The Translation Ecology Theory proposed by Xu Jianzhong (2009), also inspired by the integration of translation and ecology, systematically explored all aspects of translation studies from the perspective of ecology, such as the translational eco-environment, ecological structure, ecological function, ecological principles, etc. It mainly discussed the relationship between the translation ontology and the translational eco-environment, and examined the translational eco-environment that affected translation activities as well as the counteraction of translation activities in it. Another famous scholar Wang Ning (2011) elaborated on the relationship between Eco-translatology studies and ecological studies as well as ecological criticism of literature, and put forward that ecological translation studies, in addition to bearing the characteristics of deconstructionism, are also constructive. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the original texts carefully to discover their translatability. Meanwhile, in the process of translation, the ecological balance of the original text in the target language should be preserved as much as possible. With the continuous deepening of research in this circle, Eco-translatology will gradually penetrate into other disciplines to expand the cross-cutting fields and to integrate the research horizons. These studies not only guide readers to look at translation issues from a different perspective, but also place translation studies in a broader context that emphasizes dynamic harmony and overall relevance, and will certainly reveal deeper and more comprehensive mechanism and law of translation activities.

Lastly, it is common that there will always be doubts in the birth and development of a new theory. Being questioned is not to hinder its development, but to promote the continuous improvement of the theory. For instance, Wang Yuping et al. (2009) put forward some suggestions for Hu Gengshen's theory, mainly expounding the core concepts of translational eco-environment, translation process, and basic translation principles in Eco-translatology. Moreover, they questioned the applicability of Darwin's Evolution Theory in translation studies and drew the conclusion that this fusion of western and eastern theories is slightly far-fetched. According to these numerous studies, it is undeniable that there are some limitations and defects in the theoretical concept of Eco-translatology, but the questions raised by scholars are also showing scholars' interest and enthusiasm in this specific field from another aspect, thus proving that this theory will be bound to continue to grow and improve in twists and turns.

As for applied research, the studies mostly lie in case studies by adopting the translation method—Three-dimensional Transformation Theory in Eco-translatology. The quantity of such literature accounts for the largest proportion in studies of this theory. Jiang Xiaohua (2009) used it as a theoretical tool to review different versions of "Peony Pavilion" translated by Birch, Wang Rongpei, and Zhang Guangqian to test the feasibility of this translation method. Based on those studies, Eco-translatology emphasizes that in the translation process, translators need to pursue multi-dimensional adaptation at different levels and aspects of translational eco-environment and then to make selective conversion for achieving the harmony between original texts and translated texts.

2.2. Studies Abroad

Although Eco-translatology is originated in China, many well-known overseas scholars have long looked at the adaptation and selection in translation and language since early ages and produced many valuable research achievements which provided a constructive theoretical foundation for the flourishing of this innovative theory.

Jef Verschueren (1987) proposed the linguistic adaptation theory in the book *Pragmatics as a theory of linguistic adaptation*, and held that language adaptation refers to the adaptation of the language to the concrete environment, or the environment to the language, or both. Later, Peter Newmark (1988) divided the cultural involvement in translation into five categories in which the first category is the ecological characteristics of translation. In the book *Translation and Globalization*, Michael Cronin (2003) also specifically put forward the rationale for focusing on the "ecology of translation" of the language, calling for a healthy balance between translations in different languages. Moreover, the International Conference on Eco-translatology has also begun to attract the attention of scholars in the international translation circle to follow and to participate in to varying degrees.

As seen above, compared with domestic studies, studies by foreign scholars mainly focus on theoretical level of Eco-translatology, explaining the abstract concept and improving theoretical framework, while seldom involving any applied research. Therefore, using this epistemology and methodology as a guideline to instruct the translation teaching in college English education are somewhat innovative and significant. To sum up, all the scientific work indicates to a certain extent the dynamic developing trend of Eco-translatology in the future.

3. Three-dimensional Transformation Theory and Translation Teaching

Translators of the past centuries had creatively used those words featuring unity of opposites, such as "refinement and simplicity", "speech and meaning", "faithfulness and beauty", "sublimation and misinformation" as well as "form and belief" in exploring the general laws of translation aesthetics and translation activities to seek harmony in mutual interaction of involved elements. Therefore, the harmonious convergence is viewed as the linguistic creed,

aesthetic pursuit and guiding principle of the translation practice in Chinese history. Here Eco-translatology proposes and demonstrates that in the triangular relationship of original text, author and translation, the translation theory which attaches great importance to translators' roles is actually a reflection of human-centered ontology. Due to it, the translation theory from an ecological perspective is seen as translators' selective adaptation to the translational eco-environment. However, though Eco-translatology recognizes the translators' subjectivity, it emphasizes more the united interrelationship with other elements of translation practice to help translators make modest adaptation and selection in order to seek for the most harmonious integration between original and translated texts under the particular translational eco-environment.

The intelligent philosophical system of "the union of heaven and man" in China embodies the ecological wisdom of Chinese culture that highlights balance, neutrality and unity. Being reflected in translation epistemology, this thinking mode requires translators to be faithful to the original texts, while pursuing harmony and unity between people and the translational eco-environment. When it comes to the specific translation method, it stipulates that the translated texts must be selected and adapted in multiple dimensions, including the linguistic dimension, the cultural dimension, and the communicative dimension. And in view of the research content in this study, seeing from a macro perspective, the Three-dimensional Transformation Theory is used as a theoretical basis to guide and evaluate the effectiveness of translation teaching in college English education. More precisely, oriented by the Three-dimensional Transformation Theory, the study attempts to give out some useful strategies for translation teaching, involving implementing the aim of "the union of heaven and man" at the level of translation practice, cultivating students' overall awareness of translation so that students can not only lay emphasis on the ecological system of the internal relations of the original text, but also rest their eyes on the adaptation and selection of cultural and communicative dimensions. Thus, they can successfully produce translations that are consistent with the true meaning of the original work as well as with the value system of the current society so as to improve students comprehensive skills including translation abilities and intercultural communicative competence and achieve the goal of college English education.

Based on the results from a series of teaching practices, some effective strategies of translation teaching are proposed from the perspective of the Three-dimensional Transformation Theory as follows.

3.1. Adaptation of Linguistic Dimension—Focusing on the Improvement of Linguistic Competence

The linguistic dimensional transformation centers on the translators' adaptive selection and transformation of the language form including elements such as phonetics, grammar, and vocabulary throughout the whole translation process. In addition, the stylistic style, here referring to the intellectual ecosystem of the text, and language form complement each other, which requires translators to note the tremendous influence of fulfilling the appropriate transformation of the linguistic dimension on the ultimate goal of language dimension when translating,

In the practice of translation teaching, students are found commonly weak in analyzing the in-depth syntactic structure of the sentences they have heard, said, read, or written and slow to grasp the core meaning of the texts. In response to this phenomenon, based on the fundamental concept of linguistic dimensional transformation, teachers can take the strategies such as, teaching students the mnemonics of lexical chunks to enable students to memorize a large number of vocabularies as much as possible, cultivating students' ability in comparing the differences and similarities between Chinese and English as well as motivating students'

learning autonomy to help them give it a full play to improve their linguistic skills in the teaching process.

3.2. Adaptation of Cultural Dimension—Developing Students' Cultural Awareness in Translation Practice

The consciousness as well as the adaptive selection and conversion of cultural dimension require translators to bear cultural awareness in the translation process, recognizing that the adaptation, selection and reproduction of the linguistic ecosystem of the original text experience a communicative process that transcends languages and cultures which focuses on overcoming obstacles caused by cultural differences to ensure the realization of information exchange. Cultural ability refers to the ability to make sharp judgement on the cultural differences and then to internalize with some adjustment to better understand them. The fact that most of the students of non-English majors, lack of this certain ability, has reminded educators that it has become a serious problem for translation teaching that should also convey abundant cultural information to students. Therefore, teachers should add more knowledge related to traditional Chinese and Western culture into translation teaching to develop students' cultural ability in translation. Some measures such as adopting a series of teaching materials with wide selection of topics, consciously teaching students culturally loaded words as much as possible as well as introducing the comparative study on the differences of western and eastern cultures.

3.3. Adaptation of Communicative Dimension—Emphasizing Communicability of Translation Practice

The purpose of communication is to transform the linguistic intellectual ecosystem of the original text, so that people speak different languages can exchange information at both metaphysical level and spiritual level, thereby to realize the function of communication. However, in reality, a large quantity of teachers teach translation skills only from the vocabulary, sentence, paragraph or grammatical structure in practical teaching, neglecting the real context of the language and the cultural attributes behind it. And the defective teaching method has made students generally lack discourse awareness and mechanically chose literal translation which are short of cohesion and integrity. It is certain that under such situation, the communicative competence of students can hardly be improved. So, as a result, it is nearly impossible to enhance students' communicative competence by using conventional teaching methods. In view of the fact, teachers should focus on the communicability of translation teaching in practical teaching process, in order to improve students' particular ability in delivering the true meaning of the context at full strength. Several concrete teaching strategies including training students' ability in discourse analysis and contrast, applying the teaching model of translation workshop to strengthen students' teamwork skills and analytical thinking as well as creating a communicative context for translation teaching should be employed.

4. Conclusion

Oriented by the holistic thinking mode, the Three-dimensional Transformation Theory in Eco-translatology, demonstrating the typical cognitive style of Chinese philosophy, is regarded widely as the philosophical generalization and spiritual pattern of the classical ecological wisdom in our nation. From the perspectives of linguistic dimension, cultural dimension and communicative dimension, translation teaching strategies in college English education, by fully displaying the spirit of "the union of heaven and man", embody teachers' careful selection and adaptation to the intellectual system of internal linguistic relations in the texts. Therefore, it is believed that the Three-dimensional Transformation Theory under the overall concept stemming from ancient philosophy has certain applicability to act as an effective theoretical

basis and proper evaluation standard for translation teaching in college English education, aiming at enhancing students' comprehensive abilities for English learning.

Acknowledgements

The author is grateful to Shaoxing Education Science Planning Project in 2020("A Study on the 3D Interactive Teaching Mode of College English under the Background of Ubiquitous Internet"—Subject No. SGJ2039); Shaoxing Higher Education Classroom Teaching Reform ("A study on the Interaction Model of College English Classroom Groups in Newly Established Universities"—Subject No. SXSJKG2018034) for providing financial assistance to carry out this research work.

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