

An E-C Translation Study under the Theory of Eco-translatology: Children and Nature in *The Secret Garden*

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Abstract: Approaching the second decade of the 21 century, the theoretical translation field of China is gracing with a new theory that might open up a new paradigm for the discipline. Inspired by ancient Chinese wisdom on the harmonious relationships between man and environment, the theory of eco-translatology was published by Gengshen Hu. Eco-translatology is an interdisciplinary subject that involves the subject of translation and the ideas used in ecology. In most translated (English to Chinese) children's literature, translators select different words under their translational environment and their own understanding of cross-cultural adaptation. Therefore, the ideal version of translation would achieve the harmonious relationships between linguistic, communicative, cross-cultural transition, and other translation-related factors, it would also achieve the harmonious relationships between author's original attempt, translators' selection of words, and reader's experience. This paper will make a specific analysis of the different E-C translated texts of the famous children's literature *The Secret Garden* to explore translators' different interpretations of author's unique ideas and translators' selection for words under the theory of eco-translatology at that time period and social background. Finally, the author concludes how eco-translatology theory could be beneficial in serving practical use in translation.

Keywords: *The Secret Garden*, eco-translatology, children's literature, E-C translation

1. Introduction

1.1. Relevant Background

Eco-translatology, as a new translation theory, is metaphorically compare the activity of translation and the hidden principles within the translation activities to the actual ecosystem and the process of the natural tenets in the ecosystem, also known as the Darwinian Theory [1]. The Darwinian Theory includes principals such as species react differently in different environment, species will make attempt to adapt to nonindigenous environment, and the fittest survive in the end principal. Correspondingly, eco-translatology indicates that translators consciously or unconsciously try to adapt to non-native language environment, while words that survive best under cross-cultural transition would be the optimal choice for the translation.

Children's literature is a distinguishable part within literature filed for its frequent use on rhetorical devices, interjections and sometimes onomatopoeia. Most children's literature emphasis on the depiction of figurativeness which eventually serves for the educational purpose. The literature chose in this paper is *The Secret Garden*, written by Frances Hodgson Burnett [2]. This paper will explore the difference between the two E-C translated versions of *The Secret Garden*, which were translated by Wenjun Li and Hong Xu [3,4]. First, this paper will find out how the two translators adapted on the main idea of *The Secret Garden*, then this paper will compare the two translated texts on linguistic dimension, cultural dimension and communicative dimension, which are the key three dimensions of eco-translatology.

1.2. Theoretical Implications

In order to explain the significance of eco-translatology theory, the origin of the theory must be traced. The combination of ancient Chinese philosophy, Darwinian theory plus years of research foundation and theoretical accumulation by Newmark, Warren, Bassnett & Lefevere, Wliss, Gengsheng Hu and others in the translation theory field produced the product of eco-translatology [5-8].

Before Hu put forward the independently-defined theory of eco-translatology, when using the term "the ecological environment of translation" or other similar terms, most academics used it as a sub-category of another translation theory or referred it in a sense closer to actual ecology than translation.

Actually, before the promotion of eco-translatology, Gengshen Hu have already spent years trying to figure out a more complete and inclusive translation system just like many other researchers who have tried on "multidisciplinary" or "integrative" translation studies. The former version of translation theory such as Functional Equivalence Theory by Eugene Nida in 1969 and Skopos theory in 1970s has already proven to be the foundation stone of the discipline and has been gathering dust on the shelves for decades [9]. In 2004, Hu put forward the translation adaptation and selection theory inspired by Darwinian theory, trying to point out that translation is an activity of adapting and selecting within the entire translating environment, representing the bud of eco-translatology began to take shape in Hu's mind [10].

For years, most translational theory is leaning centered on the output of the translation or focused on the way of reaching the result. Even the articles that did focused on translators as their dominant factor fail to connect translators' central position with a broader environment. Since the previous perception that translators are considered more as a carrier of knowledge and skills for translation has not been outmoded.

One of the theoretical perspectives of eco-translatology is translator-centred while seeing the translational environment as an organic whole [11]. This is different from other theories that mainly focused on the output of the translation. This could be contributed to the influence from traditional Chinese wisdom. In ancient Chinese philosophy "天人合一", man is not only being considered a carrier of one's own mind, no one can escape the influence of their own environment (physical environment or mental environment). Thus, this ancient Chinese philosophy believes that the mind of people must be affected by their environment and to achieve the best living is to reach the "harmonious relationships between man and environment". Build on this ancient wisdom, Hu point out that translators can't escape the influence of their own translational and language environment. Another ancient philosophy "适中尚和" pointed out that "The one that fit the environment best would be the one that achieve true harmonious". Therefore, the features extracted from these philosophies helped forming eco-translatology.

1.3. Organization of the Thesis

This paper discovers translators' attempt to adapt eco-translatology methods (whether consciously or unconsciously) in Frances Hodgson Burnett's unconventional description of nature and children in *The Secret Garden*. This paper will make a specific analysis of the different translated texts to explore translators' different interpretation of author's unique idea and their words' selection under the theory of eco-translatology at that time period and social background.

2. Translation Analysis Study based on Eco-translatology

This paper will explore the difference between the two E-C translated texts of *The Secret Garden*, which were translated by Wenjun Li and Hong Xu. First, this paper will find out how the two translators adapted on the main idea of *The Secret Garden*, then this paper will compare the two translated texts on linguistic dimension, cultural dimension and communicative dimension under the framework of eco-translatology. The purpose of this study is to compare different translation techniques adopted by different translators under the theory of eco-translatology, not to subjectively criticize the translation version of any translator.

2.1. Representations in the Novel

2.1.1. The Representation of Children's Desire of Nature

The source text of these translation practices is excerpted from *The Secret Garden*, this book tells a story of three children growing, interacting and changing under the help of nature. The three main characters were a grumpy mean girl Mary Lennox who was neglected by her parents and got sent to a mansion owned by her uncle Mr. Craven; a paranoid weak child Colin Craven ignored by his father and refuses to get out of his bed while hiding in the mansion and a positive peasant boy Dickon who could befriend animals with a poor family consist of 12 kids. Mary discovered a deserted garden hidden in the mansion, later she shared the secret with Dickon and Colin. The three children then tended the garden to bring back its liveliness, in return the garden gradually guided the children to realize and solve their own grumpiness, loneliness and other problems.

In the previous researches on translations of *The Secret Garden*, most studied it from the perspective of Skopos theory, functional equivalence theory and other previous theories.

The reason for selecting Eco-translatology theory are two, first this book is mostly made up by dialogues (sometimes with accent), so it is the translators' responsibility to select the most appropriate tone to best present each characters' feature under the eco-translational environment. Secondly, nature is frequently mentioned in this book, therefore the translation involving the species of plants, animals as well as other specific species within the book will require certain botanic and ecology knowledge of the translators in both cultural dimension and linguistic dimension.

2.1.2. Garden as the Symbol of one's Inner Sanctum

In *The Secret Garden*, the author Frances successfully managed to convey the main idea of embracing nature will benefit children physically and mentally. But the nature described in this book has much more depths regarding the main idea, the hidden secret garden also represent the inner sanctum of one's heart [12,13].

According to the original book, the garden was once carefully tended by Mrs. Craven which is also Colin's mother. The garden became deserted after her misfortunate death when giving birth to Colin, Mr. Craven and Colin's mental state also became "a deserted and lifeless garden". Mary the mean girl who is raised in India, is always thin, sick and grumpy, however she ate and excersiced

much more frequently after discovering the garden and set the goal of bringing it back to life. Colin was feeble, paranoid to the verge of suicidal thoughts in the beginning, yet he found meaning in life when Mary accidentally walk into his room and shared the goal of tending the garden, he began to step outside and focused on living instead of death. Dickon was the only main character that begin with a positive attitude towards life, he served mostly as a guardian and helper character in the trio, showing a contrast example of a child growing in the arms of nature and parental love vividly.

2.2. The Difference Between Different Translators' *The Secret Garden*

Eco-translatology includes three key dimensions. The communicative dimension indicates that translators should pay great attention to interpret the communicative intention from original author. The linguistic dimension means that the translators' adaption and selection of language form in different aspects and levels in the process of translation activity. And the cultural dimension refers to the translators' effort to the transmission of cultural connotation in the translation process.

This following part of the paper will analyze the translation of some chosen paragraph or sentences in linguistic dimension, cultural dimension and communicative dimension respectively, in order to discover the different translation methods, the adaptation and selection techniques in the translated texts under the theory of Eco-translatology.

2.2.1. The Linguistic Dimension

The linguistic dimension refers to translators' adaption and selection of language form such as word meaning, language style in different aspects and levels in the process of translation activity. The following are two examples.

Example 1:

Li translated "a sour expression" to "还老哭丧着脸", Xu translated it to "那副愠怒少欢的面孔". Li's translation is obviously verbal and mixed with a subjective tone that remind Chinese children of their parents' frequent scolding, which is vivid and emotionally connecting to Chinese readers. Xu's translation used a traditional Chinese four-character idiom "愠怒少欢", meaning "always sulky and seldom happy", in Chinese the four-character idioms are usually used formally and are being considered as the language of educated people, therefore Xu's translation brought a sense of sophistication to the literature tone on the linguistic aspect.

Example 2:

Li translated "had always been ill in one way or another" to "从小就这病那病不断", Xu translated it to "加上体弱多病". Li's translation include the Chinese pronoun "这" "那", meaning "this" "that", emphasizing Mary is always ill with this disease or that disease, which is antithesis neat to "ill in one way or another" as well as verbally catchy. Xu's translation used a four-character idiom "体弱多病", meaning "feeble with many disease", which is a quite direct in meaning and concise in word length translation.

2.2.2. The Cultural Dimension

The cultural dimension indicates that translators should pay great attention to interpret the communicative intention from original author.

Throughout the book, there has been a noticeable number of Indian words due to Mary's background of being raised in India. In the heading paragraphs of the first chapter appeared at least three Indian words, which are "Ayah", "Mem Sahib" and "Missie Sahib".

It could be seen that the two translators choose different approach on these words, Li choose to keep the indigenous flavor by translated "Ayah" to "阿妈", "Mem Sahib" to "女主人", "Missie Sahib"

to “小主人”, which are all verbal expressions commonly used in the feudal society of China, helping the reader to better understand the background of India at that colonized time period. Xu choose to translated “Ayah” to “保姆”, “Mem Sahib” to “夫人”, “Missie Sahib” to “小姐”, these words are more modern and formal, which means Xu chose to lose the verbal and indigenous flavour and turn to a more standardized translation, which enables readers in general better understand what these Indian expressions represent. Another worth-noting benefit of Xu’s translation is modern and standardized translation facilitates younger readers who lack the knowledge and understanding of the feudal society of China to understand the meaning of these Indian expressions.

In chapter IX, the words “the natives charm snakes” “snake-charmer” described people in India using sounds to control snakes. In Li’s translated version, he translated this words as “能引着蛇扭身起舞的印度土著”, Li’s translation approach showed that attempt that he is trying to picturing the vivid scene of a person play music and a snake twirling and dancing along, though the length of the translation is much longer than the original English words, Li’s translation does add a certain level of literary description. Xu translated “snake-charmer” to “耍蛇人” and “训蛇师”, which is just as concise as the original English words while still keep the main idea of a snake tamer, reader could understand the Chinese translation at once.

2.2.3. The Communicative Dimension

The communicative dimension refers to the translators’ effort to the transmission of cultural connotation in translation process.

After analysing these two versions of translation, it was discovered that, the translator Li inclines to use expression more verbally and informal usage of regional slangs even, and tends to include readers into the book’s dialogue, while Xu chooses to use more formal expressions and positioned the readers at a third-party perspective.

For example, Li translated “everybody said” to “谁都说”, Xu translated it to “人们都说”. Li translate “everybody” to “谁”, Xu translated “everybody” to “人们”, Li translated “It was true” to “这说的也是大实话”, and Xu translated it to “的确如此”. The difference of translation in these sentences is the choice of perspective. In Chinese, most verbal expression is longer in length and more vernacular, Li’s linguistic translational choice uses this verbal expression to create an inclusive conversation between the fictive book teller and the readers, while Xu’s translation put readers in a third person perspective.

These two translation choices reflect translators’ choice on communicative dimension by positioning the readers in different perspectives, creating two literary distances for readers, the two translated texts achieved distinct reading experience. Specifically, when reading Li’s translated text, reader would reflect on the verbal and informal tone, and try to connect with the text in conversation, making the readers be personally on the scene, which is the kind of closeness some literary critics pursue. Xu’s translated text would provide readers with a more distant position by using more formal terms and Chinese four-character idioms, allowing readers to gain a more concise reading experience and a chance to view the text in a more analytically position, which is beneficial for readers to better deconstructing and understanding the text in translation.

3. Conclusion

Studying the practical use of eco-translatology theory by comparing different translated text from *The Secret Garden* is the main idea of this paper. By searching the theoretical development of eco-translatology, it could be seen that eco-translatology is a cross-discipline theory, combining both translation and ecology. Furthermore, Gengshen Hu concluded and put forward the key features of

eco-translatology, which include translator-centredness, seeing the translational environment as an organic whole, translators consciously or unconsciously try to adapt to non-native language environment, words that survive best under cross-cultural transition became the optimal choice for the translation [14]. Therefore to explore translators' different interpretations of author's unique ideas and translators' selection for words under the theory of eco-translatology in *The Secret Garden* at that time period and social background could facilitate both translation and literary understanding. Taking the translator as the center, analyzing, studying the ecological environment of the translation texts and later compare the translations of different translators could help obtain broader perspectives and more conclusive observation of the translation, which could further helping to understand and identifying the cultural and linguistic factors brought by the translator. Secondly, analyzing the ecological environment of translation could facilitate identifying which words were discarded and which descriptions are added by the different translators during the process of translation, so as to better visualize the "abstract art contained in translation". At the same time, it can also better help to check the quality of the translated text, and may even check the existence of mistranslation caused by the translation ecological environment

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