

## Research on Native Literature Translation Based on Eco-Translatology

Dan Gao

College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Heilongjiang Bayi Agricultural University, Da Qing 163319, China.

gaodan.00@163.com

---

### Abstract

Local literature has its own unique requirements for translation, which not only requires smooth words and easy to understand, but also requires readability, and its own characteristics and internal cultural factors lead to the complexity and uniqueness of the translation. This paper intends to analyze the translation of local literature from the perspective of Eco-translatology, and explore how the translator can convey the essence of it from the perspective of multi-dimensional transformation of language, culture and communication, and highlight the translator's ecological translation principle. This paper selects "Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out" as research object. After nearly ten years of development, the theoretical system of eco-translatology studies has become more and more complete, and the theoretical research and applied research on ecological translation studies has been increasing, and the research team has been expanding. As a new translation research paradigm, ecological translation studies have increasingly shown strong vitality, and have made positive contributions to the development of Chinese translation studies and even the development of humanities and social sciences.

### Keywords

Local Literature; eco-translatology.

---

### 1. Introduction

"Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out" is one of Mo Yan's important long novels, but it is not as famous as Red Sorghum Family or Big Breasts & Wide Hips whose names have attracted widespread attention. However, Mo Yan thinks highly of it. Beijing Times reported that the committee of Nobel Prize in Literature asked Mo to introduce one of his works to the university students around the world because many of them would like to read the works of Nobel Prize, and Mo said it was Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out and explained that the novel was a typical work of his style and it contained some exploration in literature writing. Furthermore, the novel's English translation version translated by Howard Goldblatt helped Mo get the first prize of the first Newman Prize for Chinese Literature and it became a recommendatory bibliography.

As a big country with huge population, China has such a large number of writers and good literary works, so translation occupies a crucial position to let these writers and literary works be well known around the world. Under this situation, less fruitful original translation theories were proposed especially theoretical system of translation. Eco-translatology is a theoretical system of translation that was firstly initiated by Chinese scholar Hu Gengsheng and headed by him.

## 2. Researches on Eco-Translatology

Nothing could exist without the interaction with its circumstances, and translation is exception. Profound historical background and national spirit must be one crucial reason that makes a new idea be born. Even though the term of eco-translatology was proposed by Chinese scholar, it was deeply influenced by the social development.

Firstly, it is a reaction reflecting the transformation of economy and social effects on the research of translatology. The development of industrial civilization aggravates ecological stress all around the world. In 1962, the publishing of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* made people begin to care about the environment. As the time goes on, more and more people pay attention to it. Our Common Future was issued in the Human Environment Conference which was convoked by WCED (World Commission on Environment and Development) in 1987. In China, ecological environment began to attract people's attention from 1970s. Thereafter, policies of Sustainable Development and Scientific Outlook on Development were put forward in succession. Under this background, ecological dimensionality was brought in various research fields including translatology.

Secondly, trends of thoughts for ecology are the result of the transformation of modernism and philosophy. From the twentieth century, the transformation, from subject-object dichotomy to inter-subjectivity or from anthropocentrism to eco-holism, occurred in thought and philosophy field. In 1967, French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1967:223) proposed that "center" can be inside the structure and also can be outside. In 1973, "Deep Ecology" was put forward by Norwegian ecological philosopher Arne Naess. He proposed some important ecological philosophy theories such as "ecological self", "ecological equality" and "ecological coexist". In 1995, American ecological philosopher, David Griffin proposed "eco-existence", which meant ecological existentialism came out. The transformations of philosophy research above offer translating researchers an ecological perspective to study translating activity.

## 3. Researches on the Translation of *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out*

*Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* is Howard Goldblatt's translation of Mo Ya's Novel, which was translated in 2008. Only Goldblatt's English version was published and can be found on the internet and in the market. After winning the Nobel Prize in Literature, Mo Ya's achieves wide attention and studies in China. The studies are of great quantity, covering the aspects of writing style, religious thought, rhetoric, narrative perspective.

Shao Lu, associate professor of Southwestern University of Finance and Economics, has published three papers about the English version of *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* in 2013. They are from the perspectives of narratology, translation reading models and stylistics. In the article, about narratology, Shao dissects the deep reasons for the success of Goldblatt's translation of *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out*, and points out that narrative ways and narrative levels of the target text contribute a lot to its success in the English world. In the article about translation reading models, Shao discusses two reading models for the special readers-translators, and she studies the use of explication employed in the English version in the article of stylistics and lists four features. Chen Huihua (2015), Jiang Haifeng and Li Lili (2015), and Wang Yunhong (2014) study the English version from the aspect of culture-loaded words and Goldblatt's translation strategies.

## 4. Translational Eco-environment of *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out*

Just as has been mentioned in Chapter Three, translational eco-environment" refers to the worlds of the source text and the source/target languages, comprising the linguistic, communicative, cultural and social aspects of translating, as well as the author, the client, and the readers (Hu 2004:220). From ST itself, firstly, the author Mo Yan is not only a Chinese author that won a lot of awards at home and abroad, but also a winner of Nobel Prize in literature. Because of this, the possibility that his works

gain wide attention from international literary circle must be high, especially after winning Nobel Prize.

First, *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* is a novel that deeply reflects Chinese social background at that time. The author tries to reveal Chinese peasants' living condition and imply social unfairness through this novel. Finally, in style and language use, Mo Yan narrates with the animal's point of view as well as people's point of view at the end of the story. The "people", who is called "Mo Yan", is thought as the author himself by readers. The reason for putting animal's point of view and people's point of view together in one novel is to achieve balance of objectivity and subjectivity. Animals do not have worldly prejudice and will not be controlled by social trend. Their eyes are filters, which filter out sense, customs, stereotypes, culture and the like. Therefore, the social visage showed by them is rich in original ecology. This society is real compared with the society showed by people's point of view, and animals' point of view can discover blind spots of people. In language, the author uses authentic local countryside's language habit in China. It is close to the reality but it brings lots of difficulties to translate at the same time. According to the social environment the ST came out, Mo Yan's work has reflected the living condition of that generation as well as the social state at that time. He offers readers a place to know the history indirectly. As the Chinese in the modern society, we all wish world's acceptance to our indigenous culture. Furthermore, Mo Yan getting Nobel Prize in literature urges Chinese people to spread domestic excellent literature around the world and look forward to making waves of learning Chinese as Chinese people learn English. Consequently, based on the environment of ST, the book of *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* is worth translating, but the translation is full of difficulties. From TT itself, firstly, the translator and *Death Are Wearing Me Out* is an American sinologist--Howard Goldblatt. As a scholar who studies Chinese culture, Howard Goldblatt has a good knowledge of Chinese customs and habits and well masters connotation of Chinese literature works. Meanwhile, as a native-born American, he can fully grasp the language habit of English-speaking people. It offers good foundation and condition to translate Chinese literature works in English.

Secondly, in contents of TT, Howard Goldblatt got rid of shackle of word for word's, sentence for sentence's and paragraph for paragraph's translation. He translates while modifying, which makes TT fluent and lucid. Finally, for the fruits of TT, *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* achieves acceptance of readers from English-speaking countries, and other English versions of Chinese literature translated by Howard Goldblatt are well accepted. According to the social environment of TT, with the ceaseless rising of China's economic status, the influence of Chinese literature gradually enhances around the world. Foreign literature amateurs keep attention to Chinese native culture constantly, because they hope to have a deeper knowledge of Chinese through Chinese literature. Consequently, based on the eco—environment of TT, Howard Goldblatt's translation well reproduces ST' history and emotions and it gets recognition from the readers of English-speaking countries.

## 5. Three-Dimension Analysis of *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out*

Different ways of thinking between English-speaking people and Chinese-speaking people cause big differences between English and Chinese in many aspects. Broadly Speaking, one lays emphasis on forms and another lays emphasis on meanings. English demands strict standard in grammar, and its forms drive its meanings. However, Chinese focuses on connotation. The sentences can be understood as long as they are related by connotation, even if their forms are scattered. Just as the Chinese famous Wang Li said "So far as the sentence structure is concerned, western languages seem to be law-governed while Chinese language seems to be man-governed (1984:3 5). That is to say, English emphasizes structure while Chinese emphasizes meaning. According to ST and TT, some other specific features exist.

(1)Rhyme

Rhyme is a common feature of Chinese language, especially in verses and songs. In the novel, many Chinese traditional literary forms or folk literary forms are presented, such as allegro, Lii Opera and Shunkou Liu. These kinds of literary forms are usually full of rhyme, which requires translator's good adaptation and selection. Examples that Goldblatt did well for solving this problem will be given in the following paragraphs.

#### (2) Couplet

Except for rhyme, couplet is another typical feature of Chinese traditional literary forms. As a novel with bright Chinese characteristics, couplets exist in the original text so many times. They can be found in those art forms. Goldblatt's decision also will be given in the following paragraphs.

During the process of the translation of Chinese folk art forms, Goldblatt plays the role of translator-centeredness. He decided what kinds of skills, methods or strategy should be adopted when translating some special terms. He adapted to the typically important components of the translational eco-environment and selected the translation of folk art forms based on target language. He can be responsible for his retention and his modifications. Besides, translator's comprehensive consideration in the whole novel based on the three-dimensional adaptation and selection as well as the use of translation strategies also can be found. The adaptations and selections the translator made in the translation of *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* brings a chance for Chinese excellent literature works to bloom all around the world.

## 6. Conclusion

During the process of the translation of Chinese folk art forms, Goldblatt plays the role of translator-centeredness. He decided what kinds of skills, methods or strategy should be adopted when translating some special terms. He adapted to the typically important components of the translational eco-environment and selected the translation of folk art forms based on target language. He can be responsible for his retention and his modifications. Besides, translator's comprehensive consideration in the whole novel based on the three-dimensional adaptation and selection as well as the use of translation strategies also can be found. The adaptations and selections the translator made in the translation of *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* brings a chance for Chinese excellent literature works to bloom all around the world.

## Acknowledgements

Art Science Project in Heilongjiang Province (2017B093); Art Science Project in Heilongjiang Province (2018B034).

## References

- [1] Hatim, B. 2001. *Teaching and Researching Translation* [M]. Edinburgh Gate: Pearson Education limited.
- [2] Hu G.S. 2003. Translation as adaptation and selection. *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology* (3):278.
- [3] MandeU, C. 2002. Translation as breathing new life in a new language: covering with Charlotte Mandell. *Emprise Review* (10):43-48.
- [4] Mo Yan. 2012. (Howard Goldblatt, tram.) *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* [M]. New York: Arcade Publishing.
- [5] Naess, A. 1973. The shallow and the deep, long-range ecology movement: a summary inquiry (16): 95-100.