

Original Paper

On the Translation of Culture-loaded Words in *The Lane* from the Perspective of Eco-translatology

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Abstract

With the increasing cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries, the translation and dissemination of literary works become increasingly important. In this paper, the source text is Ke Ling's prose The Lane, and the translation is from Selected Modern Chinese Essays, written by Zhang Peiji. In this paper, some culture-loaded words are selected to show the translator's adaptation to the ecological environment of translation and his choice of the target text under the guidance of Eco-translatology. The adaptive transformation in linguistic, cultural and communicative dimensions is also analyzed. Eco-translatology shows great importance in translation, and provides some enlightenment for other Chinese literature translation.

Keywords

Eco-translatology, Culture-loaded words, The Lane, Selected Modern Chinese Essays

1. Introduction

Eco-translatology can be understood as translation studies from an ecological perspective. Since "Eco-translatology" involves "Ecology" and "Translatology", it is a cross-disciplinary study. The Eco-translatology theory has aroused an upsurge in the world. Many scholars describe translation activities from the perspectives of "ecology" and "environment", and there are more and more related researches in this field.

Eco-translatology is a translation theory, and emphasizes the study of translation from an ecological perspective. It compares the translation process to a complex ecosystem. In this ecosystem, the translator, the original author, the target language reader and the translation environment are interrelated and influence each other. Culture-loaded words are important carriers of literary classics and culture. The proper translation of culture-loaded words directly affects the quality of the translation,

and thus affects the whole translation ecological environment. This paper explores how to effectively translate culture-loaded words under the guidance of Eco-translatology, and shows the choice and adaptation of translation in order to adapt to the translation environment. When translating, the translator should play a leading role in processing the original text and the target text, and should realize the dynamic balance of the translation ecological environment.

2. Literature Review

Eco-translatology focuses on translation studies from an ecological perspective. Many international scholars describe translation activities from the perspectives of “ecology” and “environment”, and there are some related researches in this field. Peter Newmark (1988) divided cultural interference in translation into five categories, and laid emphasis on the ecological characteristics of translation. According to Rosanna (1989), he discussed that translation was a mode of cognition, and translators must adapt to the new environment when translating from one language to another. Wolfram (1996) viewed the translation process as two highly complex stages, including the analysis of context-determined texts and the manipulation of the input text within the framework of a complex processing mechanism. It was required to focus on the various environmental characteristics of the target language and finally form the output of the target language. Also, it paid attention on environmental factors, including the characteristics of the translation task, the needs of the client, the translator and his decision-making ability (Wilss, 1996). In the book *Translation and Globalization*, Michael (2003) also focused on the “ecology of translation”, and called for a “balance” between translations in different languages.

Chinese scholar Hu (2004) proposed the concepts of “Eco-translatology” and “text ecology”. By drawing on Darwin’s theory of evolution for reference, he incorporated the concepts of “natural selection” and “survival of the fittest” into translation studies. In his book *An Approach to Translation as Adaptation and Selection*, he introduced the background, theoretical basis and basic principles of adaptation and selection theory in translation, which laid a solid foundation for Eco-translatology studies (Hu, 2004). Eco-translatology embeds the ecological perspective in translation studies and lays a solid foundation for the establishment of “ecological paradigm” in translation studies (Hu, 2019). Linguistic, cultural and communicative dimensions are three branches of ecology. When translators translate under the guidance of Eco-translatology, these three elements contribute to the adaptive selection and transformation in the linguistic, cultural and communicative dimensions. Eco-translatology, based on Darwin’s biological evolution theory, points out that the original text, source language and target language form a unity: translation ecological environment. Translation ecological environment is influenced by customs, society and nature of the source language and target language. The translation activities in this environment that translators engage in are not the conversion of literal meaning, nor the simple correspondence between words and sentence structures. Instead, in the overall translation ecological environment, translators try to figure out the profound connotation of

the original text and retain the cultural characteristics of the source language in order to achieve language fidelity and readability, and minimize the unfamiliar feeling to help target language readers to understand the source language culture. Hu summarized the translation principle as “selective adaptation and adaptive selection”. Translators need to balance the relationship and try to adopt the optimal strategy to make the translation easier to understand. Eco-translatology theory holds that the translation process shows the translator’s adaptation and selection to the ecological environment, and emphasizes the translator’s role in this process (Hu, 2014). Eco-translatology is important in academic research, which opens up a new perspective for translation studies. Hu also regarded the translation as “transformation in three dimensions”, including linguistic dimension, cultural dimension and communicative dimension. Language, culture and communication have always been the most important parts in the translation process. Moreover, these three aspects intersect with each other: Translation is a kind of language conversion; Language is the carrier of culture; Culture comes from communication. As a result, it is the translator’s responsibility to strike a balance by making adaptive choices in linguistic, cultural and communicative dimensions. Hu also put forward that the best translation is the one with the highest degree of adaptation and selection.

Many Chinese scholars have dedicated themselves to further studies in this field. According to Wang (2011), in the process of translation, attention should be paid to the ecological balance between the original text and the target text. Song (2016) focused on several issues in translation studies, such as translatability, translation strategies, and proposed some new views. According to Fang (2020), he pointed out that the ecological environment of translation was a diversified conceptual system, which attached great importance to the transformation in the ecological environment. At the same time, he also laid emphasis on maintaining the “ecological balance in translation”.

3. Culture-loaded Words

Culture-loaded words are those words that contain cultural information. Culture-loaded words have unique characteristics, which are difficult to find in other nations. Culture-loaded words also refer to lexical gaps. Culture-loaded words are products of the influence and restriction on its language vocabulary system, affected by a nation’s customs, material and spiritual culture. In English and Chinese languages, Culture-loaded word is divided into the following two categories: one category is the words used in Chinese culture, but can not be found in English culture, or the words used in English culture but is missing in Chinese culture; The other category is the words are both in English and Chinese vocabulary, but have different or even opposite meanings in the two cultures.

To a translator, knowing two cultures is even more important than knowing two languages (Nida, 1993). Language is not only a tool used by human beings to express their thoughts and feelings, but also the carrier of culture. As the way of interlingual communication, translation is not only the conversion of the language, but also the conversion of cultural information for the reason that language and culture are inseparable. Language is the carrier of culture, and culture is the basis of language. Every language

is loaded with its profound cultural connotation, and the vocabulary system of a language can reflect the cultural value of the nation directly. As a result, how to deal with the culture-loaded words is the key to successful translation.

4. The Translation of Culture-loaded Words in *The Lane*

*4.1 The Appreciation of *The Lane**

The Lane is an excellent prose written by famous writer Keling. With his unique artistic style and profound cultural connotation, this prose is widely appreciated by readers. The author describes the scene of the lane vividly, so that readers feel as if they are in it and enjoy the charm of the lane. While depicting the lane, the author cleverly integrates his own emotions into it, expressing his yearning for a leisurely and quiet life. It represents a kind of peace in the world, a spiritual realm, an ideal life that people pursue in the modern society. By depicting this kind of life, the author calls on people to slow down, pay attention to their inner world, and find the true meaning of life. In addition, this prose also shows some good qualities of humans. In the microscopic world of the lane, the author sees the embodiment of truth, goodness and beauty. Through the description of these beautiful things, the author conveys an idea: the truth, goodness and beauty are everywhere. As long as we love our life, we can find them in every place. Keling's prose *The Lane* takes a lane as the carrier of his emotions. Through the profound perception of life, it shows the author's longing for a better life and the pursuit of human truth, kindness and beauty. This article not only has a high artistic value, but also has a strong humanistic concern, which is worth our thinking.

4.2 The Translation of Culture-loaded Words

Culture-loaded words refer to words with rich cultural connotation and specific meaning produced under specific cultural backgrounds. These words often reflect national characteristics, regional culture and historical traditions, so the translation of culture-loaded words is of great significance in cross-cultural communication (Sun & Han, 2021). This paper will briefly introduce the culture-loaded words in *The Lane* and analyze their three-dimensional transformation under the guidance of Eco-translatology.

Eco-translatology shows that the translation ecosystem is a harmonious and unified whole, which is applicable to the translation process. As a new translation theory, it discusses the essence of translation, emphasizes the translator's responsibility and the translator's central role in the translation process. It breaks the marginal position of the translator in the past, and makes the translator occupy the dominant position in translation process. "Three-dimensional transformation" means transformation in linguistic, cultural and communicative dimensions, providing theoretical basis and methodological guidance for translation. Eco-translatology breaks the traditional framework of translation, offers a new perspective for translation research and practice, and opens up a broad new world. When translating, the translator should first analyze and understand the meaning expressed by the original author, maintain the correspondence between the original text and the target text, and then try their best to restore the

characteristics and expressions of the original text. Translators should take into account the differences between Chinese and English languages. In order to satisfy the reading experience of the target language readers, the translator should convert the original text from three dimensions. In this paper, the source text is a prose written by Keling, and the target text is translated by Zhang Peiji. Under the guidance of Nida's translation standards of culture-loaded words (Nida, 1993), the translation of culture-loaded words based on Eco-translatology from three dimensions will be analyzed below.

4.2.1 Linguistic Dimension

"Linguistic dimension" refers to the translator's choice of words, sentence structure and style of writing in the translation. Due to the great differences between Chinese and English, the language characteristics of the source language should be preserved to the greatest extent, and the translation should cater to the reading habits of target language readers. The focus of linguistic dimension is to ensure that the translated text can accurately and properly express the content of the original text (Hu, 2006). Translation from the linguistic level means that the translator should accurately understand the meaning of the original text and master the grammar, vocabulary and expression of the target language. There are some differences in expressions and grammatical structures between different languages, and translators need to be skilled in using both languages to make sure that the information of the original text is not lost in the translation process.

There are some examples of culture-loaded words in *The Lane* and how to translate them from the linguistic dimension will be analyzed.

Example 1

Source text:它不是上海的里弄。

Target test:Nor has it anything in common with linong (meaning alleys) in Shanghai.

Analysis:The transformation in the linguistic dimension means that Chinese and English are different in the linguistic level. Translators should pay attention to the choice of vocabulary when translating from Chinese to English. In Chinese, "里弄" usually refers to the alleys in the residential areas in Shanghai. This culture-loaded word is a dialect of Shanghai, and contains the characteristics of Shanghai. It has the similar meaning with the word "alley" in English. The translator adopts the method of transliteration and annotation, and translates "里弄" into linong (meaning alleys). This kind of translation maintains the Chinese lingual characteristics by using Chinese Pinyin, and the added annotation can help the targeted readers understand the culture-loaded word, contributing to the conversion between Chinese and English in the linguistic dimension.

Example 2

Source text:也不像北地的胡同。

Target test:Nor has the lane anything in common with hutong (also meaning alleys) in North China.

Analysis:In this sentence, the translator needs to transform the culture-loaded word in the linguistic dimension from Chinese to English. Attention should be paid to the translation of the word"胡同". In Chinese, it refers to the small alleys, and is a unique culture-loaded word in Beijing. It's a local dialect

of Beijing. Therefore, the translator adopts the method of transliteration and annotation to translate“胡同”into “hutong (also meaning alleys)”. This kind of translation maintains the Chinese lingual characteristics by using Chinese Pinyin, and the added annotation can help the targeted readers understand the culture-loaded word, realizing the transformation from Chinese to English in the linguistic dimension.

4.2.2 Cultural Dimension

“Transformation in the cultural dimension” means that when translating contents with cultural characteristics, we should not only pay attention to readers’ reading experience, but also skillfully convey the cultural connotation of the source language. The translation in the cultural dimension requires the translator to have a deep understanding of the cultural background, customs and historical sources involved in the original text (Hu, 2006). In the process of translation, the translator should fully consider cultural factors, understand the cultural meaning of culture-loaded words, and choose the appropriate translation to explain them, so as to ensure that the translation can be understood and accepted by the targeted readers in the cultural background of the target language.

The Lane is a Chinese modern prose. Its language is beautiful and concise. When translating the allusions and cultural words with Chinese characteristics, the translator should pay attention to the adaptive transformation in the cultural dimension. It requires the translator to pay attention to the cultural connotation of the language. Some culture-loaded words are selected to be explained in the following examples.

Example 3

Source text:爱逐臭争利，锱铢必较的，请到长街闹市去；爱锣鼓钲镗，管弦嗷嘈的，请到歌台剧院去。

Target test:Those who strive after fame and gain, and haggle over every penny, please go to the downtown area! Those who love deafening gongs and drums as well as noisy wind and string instruments, please go to the opera house or theatre!

Analysis:Due to the cultural differences between Chinese and English, translators need to transform in the cultural dimension. In this sentence, “锱铢” and “管弦” are two material culture-loaded words. “锱铢” is an ancient monetary unit in Chinese, meaning “very little money”. “管弦” is also a culture-loaded word, meaning “wind instrument and string instrument” . Therefore, the translator translates “锱铢” into “every penny” and translates “管弦” into “gongs and drums”. These two terms are specific in Chinese culture. Under the guidance of transformation in the cultural dimension, the translation conveys cultural characteristics of our country, and shows the cultural connotation.

Example 4

Source text:你要在这种城市里住久了，和它真正成了莫逆，你才有机会看见她。

Target test:You’ll never have an opportunity to see it until you have become truly attached to the small town after living there for a long time.

Analysis: In the process of translation, the translator needs to realize the transformation in the cultural

dimension. In this sentence, “莫逆” is a culture-loaded word in Chinese. Its meaning is “two people are very friendly and they are good friends”. In this sentence, it means “a person gets familiar with a city”, so the translator translates “莫逆” into “become truly attached to”. Under the guidance of transformation in the cultural dimension, this kind of translation can be accepted by the targeted readers, and can also convey the cultural connotation.

Example 5

Source text:它可能是一条现代的乌衣巷。

Target test: It is a world of its own on earth. It may be a modern version of Wu Yi Xiang, a special residential area of nobility in the Jin dynasty southeast of today's nanjing.

Analysis: In the process of translation, the translator should pay attention to the culture-loaded words in prose. In this sentence, “乌衣巷” is a culture-loaded word in Chinese. It also has ancient Chinese allusions. It is the luxurious residence in the Jin Dynasty, and people inside are honorable and noble. It is located at the Qinhuai River in Nanjing city, so the translator translates “乌衣巷” into “Wu Yi Xiang, a special residential area of nobility in the Jin dynasty southeast of today's nanjing”. The translation effectively explains the cultural connotation of the culture-loaded word, which is helpful to make the target language readers understand the history and culture of China. The translator transforms under the help of Eco-translatology in the cultural dimension, and realizes the intention of spreading Chinese culture.

Example 6

Source text：这种巷，有如古代的少女，躲在僻静的深闺，轻易不肯抛头露面。

Target test: The lane, like a maiden of ancient times hidden away in a secluded boudoir, is reluctant to make its appearance in public.

Analysis: When translating, the translator needs to pay attention to the culture-loaded word “深闺”. This phrase comes from Bai Juyi's poem in the Tang Dynasty in ancient China. It refers to the boudoir where women of rich families live, and also refers to women who have lived a life isolated from the outside world. The translator adopts the method of free translation and amplification to translate “深闺” into “like a maiden of ancient times hidden away in a secluded boudoir”, which is helpful to explain the cultural connotation of the source language. This kind of translation helps the target language readers understand the text, and is helpful to disseminate the cultural connotation of the source language. From the perspective of Eco-translatology, the translator completes the adaptive transformation of translation in the cultural dimension.

4.2.3 Communicative Dimension

The core idea of “transformation in the communicative dimension” is to make sure that the communicative intention can be successfully realized. It means the translation can be understood and accepted by the targeted readers in the environment of the target language. This concept emphasizes that translators need to reproduce the emotional charm of the original text as much as possible, so that the readers of the target language can deeply appreciate the deep emotions in the

original text, so as to achieve the purpose of communication. In the actual translation process, the translator should pay full attention to the differences in language and culture, take into account the acceptability of the translation. Translation is not only a simple language conversion, but also a form of cross-cultural communication. Only when the translated text can be understood and accepted by the readers of the target language can the translation work truly complete its communicative task. In addition, the communication concept also emphasizes the translator's cultural sensitivity and intercultural communication ability. In the process of translation, the translator needs to have a deep understanding of the cultural background of the target language. In this way, the translator can accurately convey the information of the original text, so as to achieve true cross-cultural communication.

Example 7

Source text:这种小巷，隔绝了市廛的红尘。

Target test:The lane, though cut off from the hustle and bustle of busy cities.....

Analysis: When translating the prose, the translator should pay attention to the realization of the communication intention. In this sentence, “红尘” is a culture-loaded word in Chinese. The translator needs to effectively show the translation of “红尘”. It refers to “the busy secular life”, which contains the meaning of “flourishing and bustling”. As a result, the translator translates “红尘” into “the hustle and bustle”. It is a culture-loaded word, which has no direct connection with its literal meaning, so literal translation should be avoided. It needs to be translated under the guidance of free translation. The use of free translation is helpful to make the translation easy to read, and contributes to achieving the purpose of communication.

Example 8

Source text:你是否觉得劳生草草，身心两乏？

Target test: Aren't you weighed down with cares in this life of hard toil and exhausted physically and mentally?

Analysis: The translator needs to realize the communicative intention of the translation. In this sentence, “劳生” is a culture-loaded word, which originates from the famous ancient Chinese thinker Zhuangzi. This culture-loaded word comes from his poem. It is used to refer to “a hard and tiring life”. This culture-loaded word often appears in literary works, so the translator translates “劳生” into “this life of hard toil”. Under the guidance of Eco-translatology in the communicative dimension, the translator skillfully explains the cultural connotations, which is conducive to the communication between different-language readers.

Example 9

Source text: 你如果有时情绪烦躁，心情悒郁，我劝你到小巷里负手行吟一阵。

Target test: When you are fidgety or depressed, go to the lane and wander around reciting or composing poems with your hands crossed behind your back.

Analysis: The translator needs to realize the communicative intention of the translation. In this

sentence, “负手” means “walking with your hands crossed behind your back”, and “行吟” refers to a state of activity. The translator here translates “负手行吟” into “wander around reciting or composing poems with your hands crossed behind your back”. It is a culture-loaded word. The translator uses free translation to explain the meaning of the source language. The translation is clear and easy to understand, and the target language readers can easily understand the source language, thus realizing the communicative intention.

5. Conclusion

Translating culture-loaded words is a challenging task, which requires the translator to fully understand the original text, skillfully use a variety of translation strategies to and aptly convey the cultural connotation and meaning of the original text. In this process, translators need to handle difficulties brought by many cultural differences, and effectively solve the problems in the translation of culture-loaded words. When dealing with culture-loaded words, translators need to be as close to the culture of the target language as possible, understand the cultural background of the source language and the target language, and grasp the cultural meaning of the original text, so as to show the cultural charm of the original text. In order to accomplish this task, translators need to deeply study the Eco-translatology theory and solve the problem from the perspective of three-dimensional transformation. In this process, the translator should be faithful to the core of the original text, and should pay attention to the needs of the target audience. Through adaptive transformation in linguistic, cultural and communicative dimensions, the translated text is not only faithful to the original text, but also has high readability and acceptability. By analyzing some translation of culture-loaded words from the perspective of Eco-translatology, this paper provides guidance for appreciating other literary works and translating other culture-loaded words.

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