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## Eco-Translatology and Translation Teaching

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### Abstract

Eco-translatology, a new translation theory, was developed on “translation theory of adaptation and selection”. It focuses on the integrity of translational ecosystem and adheres to the “theory of translator-centeredness”. From the perspective of eco-translatology, this paper attempts to explore new translation teaching mode, translation teaching eco-environment, as well as students’ and teachers’ roles in the entire translation teaching eco-environment, thereby promoting translation teaching reform and improving the quality of translation talents.

**Key words:** Eco-translatology; Translation teaching; Eco-environment; Translator-centeredness

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### INTRODUCTION

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Translate Teaching has always been one of the research keys to the domestic foreign language teaching reform. The traditional translation teaching focuses on teachers’ lectures in class and students’ passive learning, so students rarely receive translation practices. Eco-translatology was developed on the “translation theory of adaptation and selection”, which has been applied into different fields,

such as the translation of literature works, advertisement, public signs, film titles, etc. (Hu, 2008; Du, 2012). But the researches on applying this theory to translation teaching are still (Zhang, 2011). Compared with other translation theories, this theory focuses on the macro and systematic research, which has developed a new vision and idea for translation studies. Eco-translatology offers a new perspective for exploring translation teaching reform. There this paper attempts to use eco-translatology theory to guide translation teaching and explore the establishment of a new mode of ecologically oriented translation teaching, so as to promote the sustainable development of the reform on translation teaching.

This paper offers an account of a new translation teaching mode from the perspective of eco-translatology. In section 1, we give a brief introduction to the theories of eco-translatology. Section 2 presents an ecological translation teaching mode. In section 3, we discuss the eco-environment of translation teaching. The last section explores the roles of teachers and students in the ecological translation teaching mode.

### 1. THEORIES OF ECO-TRANSLATOLOGY

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Eco-translatology is a new translation theory proposed by Chinese scholar Hu Gengshen in recent years (Hu, 2008; Hu, 2010; Hu, 2011; Hu, 2011, pp.96-109). As a newly emerging translation theory, eco-translatology is booming, flourish, causing increasing extensive international academic interest. This theory takes the concept of “adaptation/selection” of Darwin’s evolution theory as its theoretical foundation, focusing on the integrity of the translation ecosystem, making a novel description and interpretation to the nature, process, standard, principles and methods of translation and translation phenomena from the perspective of eco-translatology (Hu, 2008; Hu, 2010; Hu, 2011, pp.96-109). Professor Hu Gengshen pointed out that eco-translatology is an ecological approach of translation study,

or translation study from ecology perspective, which basic principles and theoretical foundation are “natural selection”, “survival of the fittest” and “biological evolution” (Hu, 2008; Hu, 2011; Hu, 2011, pp.96-109). Eco-translatology examines translation activities in the “translational ecological environment”, exploring and constructing a new ecological approach to translation studies.

Eco-translatology adheres to the theory of translator-centeredness (Hu, 2008; Hu, 2011), in which translator is a bridge of the communication between the original text and the translation, occupying a central position in translation activities. The impact of various factors in translational ecological environment on translation directly affects the translator. The adaptation and control mechanism of translators include “self-adaptation” and “post-event penalty” mechanisms (Hu, 2008; Hu, 2011). “Self-adaptation” mechanism refers that the translators always try to adapt to the translational eco-environment, make efforts to demonstrate their adaptive abilities, proactively optimize multi-dimensional selection/transformation, and constantly strive to the optimal integration and adaptation. “Post-event penalty” mechanism refers to the judge and decision of the translation work after the translation activities (Hu, 2011).

The translation process of eco-translatology can be divided into translator’s adaptation phase and translator’s selection phase. On the one hand, translator’s adaptation phase refers to translator’s adaptation to translation environment; on the other hand it refers to the selection of eco-environment to the translator. The translator must firstly face the eco-environment which the original texts are in, and adapt to the original translational eco-environment. Moreover the eco-environment of the original texts will also select the translator. At the same time, translators must also adapt themselves to the eco-environment they are in, that is the translation environment of target language. Translator’s selection phase refers to the “translator’s selection to translational eco-environment as the typical elements”. In this phase, translator should adapt to the translational eco-environment of original language and target language, in order to be able to adapt to the translational eco-environment to select the optimal translation. This kind of selection not only highlights the subjectivity of the translator, but also emphasizes the impact of translational eco-environment on the translator.

On translation principles, eco-translatology claim “multidimensional adaptation and selective adaptation”. On the one side it focuses on “multi-dimensional adaptation”; on the other side it emphasizes on making an adaptive selection on translational eco-environment based on multi-dimensional adaptation to translational eco-environment, including the linguistic dimension, cultural dimension and communicative dimension. In eco-translatology, the translation approaches are summarized as “three-dimensional transformation—the dimensions of language, culture and communication” (Hu, 2011).

## 2. ECOLOGICAL TRANSLATION TEACHING MODE

Eco-translatology regards translation activities as translators’ selection of translations by the adaptation to translational eco-environment. Translational eco-environment means the overall world involving the interconnective and interactive factors in the translation process, to which translators are adapt for survival in the translation process. For the translation teaching, this theory can be interpreted as regarding the entire translation teaching process as a large and complex ecosystem, and regarding all aspects of the translation teaching process as the components of the ecosystem of the entire translation teaching. In the translation teaching ecosystem, the translator-centered concept should be changed into the student-centered. The translation teaching process is the multi-dimensional adaptation and selection process. Teachers exist as the factors in this eco-environment, playing the role of guidance, cooperation and assistance. Ecological translation teaching includes the related elements in the entire teaching process, such as curriculum, teaching methods, teaching content, teaching methods, classroom forms, surrounding environment, translator’s own condition and so on. Overall, the ecological translation teaching mode is a new translation teaching mode which takes “student-centered” concept as the core, students’ adaptation and selection as the main feature, teachers’ guidance, students’ collaboration and interact with the environment and cooperative learning as the primary method, with the help of modern multimedia teaching resources to build a translation teaching ecosystem, through the “adaptation/ selection” mechanism to obtain translation skills.

In the ecological translation teaching mode, teachers need to construct the environmental elements, and make adjustments and supplements to the translation teaching course and content to establish the market-oriented translation teaching curriculum in line with the requirements of students’ level and requirement. According to the teaching content, teachers need to design a scientific teaching program using multimedia and other means to establish a comprehensive teaching plans and courseware. They need to take lessons from various teaching modes and methods, and use different teaching methods and classroom teaching forms according to different teaching content. In addition to the homework, students should carry out a variety of practical activities. The construction of ecological teaching process based on environment with various factors allows students to make adaptive selection according to their own conditions to improve the comprehensive quality.

Foreign language translation teaching is not equivalent to foreign language teaching because foreign language proficiency is reflected in the mastery of foreign languages, while foreign language translation level is a comprehensive ability to use the language. Therefore,

foreign language translation teaching involves not only languages, but also cultures; not only theory explanation, but also practical application; not only the improvement of students' professional quality, but also the development of their humanistic qualities.

In translation teaching, teachers should not only strengthen the learning and master of vocabulary translation and translation skills, but also pay attention to the cognition and study of the cultural differences between China and western countries, enhance the understanding of Chinese and foreign history, culture, society, religion and other background knowledge, improve students' Chinese proficiency. A homeostasis translation system of translational ecological interdependence should thus be formed through concerning about the interaction and impact between translation body and external environment.

Translation practice is the foundation and source of translation teaching, and translation theory has universal significance for guiding the overall translation practice. As an important part of translation teaching, the teaching of translation theory can summarize the laws and principles of translation, explain the phenomenon of translation, making translation practice become rational behavior with theoretical guidance. For this purpose, the principles combining theory and practice is very important in translation teaching, macroscopically guiding the strategies, methods and ideas of translation practice. Therefore, in classroom teaching, when teachers are teaching translation theory and translation skills, they can adopt the advantages of interactive approaches. In classroom discussion, teachers can adopt respondent mode appropriately. In translation activities and practice, they can use the method like workshop. In pre-class preparation and the design and assignment related to translation tasks and homework, they can use task-based model. In short, the whole process of translation teaching is not a single process of using a particular method, but a comprehensive, diverse, dynamic and active organic entirety, aiming to mobilize learners' initiative and enthusiasm.

Teachers can establish a process-based translation approach, which concerns students' translation process in the teaching process, including its perception, thinking, understanding, expression and rhetoric, rather than simply assess students' translations. During the assessment, teachers should comment students' selection process and analyze every aspect of the problems by their performance in translation practice, and then propose an improved method. This teaching method takes the entire translation teaching education system as a dynamic process, in which teachers observe, record and evaluate the performance of students in translation, translation strategies adopted and the translation works completed to help students effectively regulate their learning process and to achieve good translation effects.

Teachers can also adopt the translation workshop

method, which emphasizes students' appreciation, understanding and interpretation to the original works, and require the students to complete the translation task through their respective study and discussion in a cooperative manner. The process-oriented translation teaching concerns about every step in translation, attach importance to the constant revision and improvement of the translation work. This student-centered teaching method exerts students' independence and autonomy, and leads them to complete the analysis and evaluation of translation work through mutual cooperation and discussion. Teachers are only the guiders in collaborative discussion. In this kind of translation teaching mode, students can really participate in the translation process, which will develop their overall quality, enhance their translation ability and improve their translation efficiency.

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### 3. THE ECO-ENVIRONMENT OF TRANSLATION TEACHING

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In the process of language acquisition or translation learning, learners' emotional states are directly affected by the language environment they are in. Therefore, ecological translation teaching focuses greatly on constructing the eco-environment. In the ecosystem of ecological translation teaching, students are the center, while teachers, teaching content, teaching methods and teaching conditions are the environment for students' survival in the ecosystem. The role of the teachers is to guide and help students to improve their ability to make a maximum adaptable selection in a natural language atmosphere to obtain better translation skills.

The eco-environment of translation teaching is composed of two parts—hardware and software environment. Hardware environment mainly refers to the foreign language teaching resources covering translation teaching resources, including textbooks, teaching equipments, corpora, libraries, etc. Software environment refers to the humanistic environment of foreign language teaching, which mainly consists of foreign language teaching mode, teaching methods, the interpersonal association features between teachers and students. Therefore, for constructing the teaching eco-environment, teachers must use the existing language learning resources to design and develop textbooks, teaching content and learning materials in line with the market demand, era features and students' requirements and levels on the basis of investigation and research.

Students need to grasp the thinking and cultural differences between native and foreign languages through a lot of language application practices. This requires the full use of the computer, network and multimedia learning platform, and input a lot of translation examples according to the lesson plan, such as company introduction, product descriptions, university profiles, business and

legal documents, famous translations of fiction, poetry and politics materials, and translation test database, etc., through an interactive interface to facilitate self-learning to meet students' autonomous needs for translation practices.

In addition, teachers should focus on the construction of humanistic resources for the eco-environment of translation teaching, including teacher-student relationship, student-student relationship, teacher' role, student' role, and teaching methods.

#### 4. ROLES OF TEACHERS AND STUDENTS IN THE ECOLOGICAL TRANSLATION TEACHING

Eco-translatology puts an emphasis on the dominant role of the translators in the translation process, which is the basis and main part of the translation practice. The traditional translation teaching often pays more attention to the translated text. The lectures mostly focus on the teaching of translation skills, such as the translation of words with a certain part of speech, the subject and predicate, whereas involve little on the translation practices for the students. Usually the teachers are the core of the whole class, while the students become passive recipients of knowledge in a subordinate position, which will thus affecting students' enthusiasm and creativity for translation practice.

In the ecological translation teaching, teachers are the designers of teaching mode and the leaders in teaching activities. The planning and design of the modern education and teaching mode, the opening of the teaching resources and the organization and implementation of teaching activities all demand the teachers to have a scientific and professional knowledge and management capability. Therefore the teachers should change their traditional teaching concepts, and make a thorough understanding of eco-translatology to grasp the spirit and principles of ecological translation teaching mode. Teachers should pay attention to the construction of ecological environment factors such as language communication, cultural background, and practice environment. The roles of teachers change from the knowledge imparter to the director of teaching activities and the facilitator and assistor of students' learning activities. In the teaching activities, teachers should focus on stimulating students' autonomous learning motivation and creativity to create a harmonious humanistic ecological environment of the autonomy and cooperation among students, and the equality and collaboration between teachers and students. Teachers should plan the teaching activities and flexibly adjust the teaching content according to students' individual differences and needs, and use different teaching methods for the actual situation of different students to construct a material eco-environment for the survival of the students.

They should also focus on the use and development of

teaching resources to improve teachers' professional skills, and at the same time, should guide the students to use the computer and network to make individual guidance and group cooperation. In the traditional teaching model with chalk and blackboard, teachers set translation exercises, and students complete the translation tasks passively and listen to the teacher' comments to imitate the standard answer. This kind of teaching mode puts students in the secondary and passive position, ignoring the overall interaction between teachers and students, thus affecting the effectiveness of teaching. The use of information technology can realize students' real-time operation on the basis of traditional teaching methods, exerting their enthusiasm and initiative. Teachers can also involve in students' learning process as both participants and supervisors. In ecological translation teaching mode, students are put in a central position, and teachers' assistance and mutual assistance among students can inspire and mobilize their enthusiasm for learning and innovation.

The setting of the teaching content and the arrangement of teaching resources need to be benefit for the students' healthy development to be able to adapt to social needs. The teaching needs to give full play to the interaction between teachers and students, between students and students. At different stages of teaching, teachers should create appropriate teaching methods for different teaching content by different English teaching theories.

#### CONCLUSION

Eco-translatology focuses on the macro and systematic study of translation and has developed a new vision and idea for translation studies, which offers a new perspective for exploring translation teaching reform. Therefore this paper attempts to use eco-translatology theory to guide translation teaching and explore the establishment of a new mode of ecologically oriented translation teaching, so as to promote the reform on translation teaching.

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