

# An Analysis of External Publicity Text Translation from the Perspective of Eco-translatology—A Case Study of Huai'an External Publicity Translation\*

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**Abstract**—External publicity plays an important role in the course of internationalization. And it is necessary for translator in the process of translating external publicity to consider the differences between the two languages and cultures, which is the key to the fact that whether the true publicity can be really achieved. The present research employs the theory of eco-translatology to study the translation of external publicity. The translation version in Huai'an municipal government website is taken as a case analysis to support the author's view point. The existing errors are pointed out and the factors resulting in the problems are listed. At the same time, some strategies and approaches are proposed in the terms of improvement, which serve as theoretical and practical references for those working on the translation of external publicity texts as well as other practical writings.

**Index Terms**—eco-translatology, adaptation and selection, translation of external publicity, multi-dimension transformation

## I. INTRODUCTION

External publicity (international publicity) translation serves as the window of a country or a city in the process of shaping its image and transmitting its culture, which meanwhile helps to enhance the right of speech in the international community. Therefore, the importance and necessity of doing a good job of international publicity translation is self-evident. However, there exist quite a lot of errors in such kind of publicity text translation in both cities and towns which cause misunderstanding of meanings, leave bad impressions on the foreign visitors and sometimes even seriously damage the image of a city.

This paper, taking Huai'an Municipal international publicity translation as a case study, aims to analyze the existing problems in the translation versions and propose some approaches in view of three dimensional transformation based on the theory of Eco-translatology, which provides some practical references for improving the quality of international publicity translation.

## II. REVIEW OF ECO-TRANSLATOLOGY

Translation has always been studied from various perspectives. In recent years, a new perspective called "eco-translatology" has been created to combine translation study with ecology. Eco-translatology, embodying the philosophical concept of "harmony", has come up with many new ideas and research focuses of translation studies like translational eco-environment and the translator's adaptation and selection to address various concerns in translation such as translation process and strategies.

Eco-translatology is to study translation from an ecological perspective with ecology and translatology together. Therefore, eco-translatology is trans-disciplinary. Embodying harmony, it studies translation and translational eco-environment holistically and seeks for harmony among all the elements in the eco-environment.

In the past ten years, Professor Hu Gengshen (Hu Gengshen, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, etc.) from Tsinghua University has analyzed translation as adaptation and selection which is the fundamentality of eco-translatology. He proposes that this adaptation and selection is translator's adaptation to and selection in the linguistic environment which requires the translator to make full use of his or her subjective initiative and make

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three-dimensional transformation according to different context which involves language, culture and communication. And these three dimensions are the core suppositions of eco-translatology and can be taken as theoretical foundation for the studies of translation. Translational eco-environment proposed by Hu Gengshen is composed of both source elements including source text, and author and target text involving the translator, language, culture, reader, aim and society. It effectively overcomes the vagueness of translational eco-environment of physical environment, political environment, climate and space advocated by Katan (Katan, 1999).

Professor Hu (Hu Gengshen, 2004) explores the concept of translator-centeredness in the ecological environment of translation based on the previous translation studies. During the translation process, the translator takes up a central position and plays a dominating role in adapting to translational eco-environment and selecting translation method. The translator's dominating status and role in eco-translatology are conformed on the basis of different dimensions of some basic factors like source text-translator-translated text relationship and translation process, etc. Translator's adaptation and selection explains the translator's choice of translation strategies. Actually, the "adaptive selection" is an important theory in eco-translatology, according to which, translators should make adaptive selection in a translational eco-environment that refers to the environment the source text, the source language and the target language present, comprising the linguistic, communicative, cultural and social aspects of translation, as well as the author, the client, and the readers", and is "a set of various factors that affects translators' best adaptation and optimal selection". Yet very often it is impossible for translators to adapt to all elements in the translational eco-environment. Therefore, the translation principle embodying the basic idea of adaptive selection is a multi-dimensional "adaptation" which means translators should make different selections for adapting to the translational eco-environment.

### III. ERRORS IN THE TRANSLATION OF CHINESE EXTERNAL PUBLICITY TEXTS

Huai'an, the birthplace of our late Premier Zhou Enlai, is a very beautiful city with a long history which enjoys distinctive Chinese traditional cultures. The city is quite well-known for its Jianghuai Plays, Horse lantern dance, Huai'an Yangchun Noodles and so on. The annual Huai'an food festival is widely celebrated and has become internationally well-known. More and more foreigners are attracted to pay a visit or put investment in some industries. With more and more international communication occurring, the city government realizes the importance of bringing the city to the world through the media publicity and has established the English website so as to let the world know more about the city. Yet, quite a lot of errors are found in the English versions of the introductions to the local customs and other practices due to different reasons. The author of this part makes a survey of some of these errors and tries to make an analysis from the aspects of linguistic failure, communicative environment, and cultural differences which are based on the eco-translatology theory.

#### A. Errors Resulting from Linguistic Failure

There are many differences between English and Chinese in terms of language patterns, thinking modes, idiomatic expressions, and language cultures. As a translator, he or she is expected to find out the differences so that appropriate words can be chosen for the proper situation. Otherwise, linguistic failure might occur. The following example taken from Huai'an municipal government website is a case in point.

##### **Example 1**

The Chinese Text (CT):

①淮剧，又名江淮剧，是江苏省的主要剧种之一，并且在江苏省和上海非常流行。②作为淮剧的起源和流行的主要场所，目前淮安拥有4个专业淮剧剧团。③淮剧拥有超过100年的历史，来源于民间的秧歌和民歌，后来发展吸收了昆曲和徽戏的一些元素。④其著名的剧作包括“白蛇传”，“杨家将”，“秦香莲”等。

The English Version (EV):

①Also known as Jianghuai Plays, Huaiju Opera is one of the main operas in Jiangsu Province, and is popular in Jiangsu province and Shanghai city. ②As the major place of origin and popular region, Huai'an has 4 professional Huaiju Opera troupes at present. ③With a history of over 100 years, Huaiju originated from Yangge and folk song in the countryside, and later absorbed elements from Kunqu Opera and Anhui Opera. ④Its famous plays include "White Snake Legend", "Generals of the Yang Family", "Qin Xianglian" and so on. The Chinese text is an introduction of Huaiju Opera which roughly expresses the original meaning quite well. But still there exist some flaws.

The CT① actually provides us such information: (a) Huaiju has another name called Jianghuai Plays, in which Jianghuai Plays is the apposition of Huaiju, (b) Huaiju Opera is one of the main operas in Jiangsu Province, (c) Huaiju Opera is popular in Jiangsu province and Shanghai city. Furthermore, grammatically, Huaiju is used as the subject of the sentence and should be focused. So to make the meaning clearly understood and conform to the English grammar, it is advisable to revise the EV① as "Huaiju Opera, with its another name being Jianghuai Plays, is one of the main operas in Jiangsu Province which is popular in Jiangsu as well as in Shanghai area".

The CT② indicates that Huai'an is a main place where Huaiju Opera originated and has become popular. But the EV② obviously misunderstands its meaning and puts it in a wrong expression by using "popular region" which actually suggests the region is popular not the Opera.

The word "absorb" in the EV③ is not appropriate which means "become imbued" often in terms of liquid, light and

gases, or “take up mentally” meaning absorbing the knowledge or beliefs of something. These errors are obviously caused by translator’s lack of linguistic deficiency.

### B. Errors Resulting from Cultural Differences

Since there exist differences between the source language culture and target language culture, translator not only needs to make linguistic transformation, but also adapts himself or herself in the cultural system of the languages and pays attention to the cultural transference while translating the source language into the target one (Hu, 2004).

#### Example 2

The Chinese Text:

①“压床”作为婚姻习俗，在淮安是非常流行的。②它指的是在结婚的前一天晚上，新郎邀请一到四个健康的童男与他在新房一起睡觉。③据传说，在南北朝时，贫穷的农民王二宝在他三十岁时从淮安娶了一个漂亮的寡妇。④在他的婚礼之前的夜晚，他梦见一个硬汉砍死了他并且抢走了他的妻子。⑤第二天，他娶了他的妻子，他们彼此深爱着对方。⑥三天后，王二宝不得不离开他的妻子去为地主劳作。⑦不幸的是一个富有的人在村里被王二宝的妻子所吸引并在午夜抢走了她。⑧但村民们以为新娘被抢走是因为一些邪恶力量导致的。⑨为了驱逐它们，人们开始让健康的童男在结婚的前一天晚上“压床”。⑩后来这种行为成了当地的婚俗。

The English Version:

①As a marriage custom, “pressing bed” is very popular in Huai’an. ②At the night before marriage, the bridegroom invites one to four strong virgin boys to sleep together with him. ③According to the legend, during the Northern and Southern Dynasties, poor worker Wang Erbao from Huai’an married a beautiful widow when he was 30. ④At the night before his wedding, he dreamed that a tough man slashed him and robbed his wife. ⑤The next day, he married his wife and they loved each other dearly. ⑥Three days later, Wang Erbao had to left his wife and went to work for a landlord. ⑦A rich man in the village was attracted by Wang Erbao’s wife and robbed her at midnight. ⑧But the villagers thought the bride was lost because of some evil energy. ⑨And in order to dismiss such energy, people began to let strong virgin boys “press the marriage bed” at the night before the wedding. ⑩This behavior became a local marriage custom later.

The Chinese text introduces a kind of traditional Chinese marriage custom in which “压床(YaChuang)” is most popular which refers to the convention that the night before the wedding four strong virgin boys are invited to sleep on the wedding bed together with the bridegroom in order to avoid evil influence. The word “压床” is a culture-loaded word and should be clearly explained at the beginning of the translated sentence so as to eliminate the readers’ confusion about what “YaChuang” really is. “Pressing bed” in the EV① is a word-for-word translation which keeps the form of the source language pattern but does not convey the true meaning of the original text mentioned above, and thus, it fails to achieve the purpose of transmitting the information of Chinese culture.

### C. Errors Resulting from Lack of Communicative Consciousness

The selective adaptation in the communicative dimension means that in the process of translation translator should pay enough attention to the communicative intention in both source language and target language. This requires translator to place emphasis on communicative information in addition to the transformation in dimensions of language and culture and pay close attention to the fact that whether the communicative intention in the source language is embodied in the translated text. Lack of this consciousness will influence the effect of communication. See the following example.

#### Example 3

The Chinese Text:

①阳春面，如同淮扬菜一般，看起来寻常普通，但实际上却是十分讲究的。②“阳春”这个名字是由清朝的乾隆皇帝赐予的。③乾隆在他南巡的时候来到淮安，他有一次在面条馆吃面，发现面条非常好吃。④当他知道这个面条都没有一个名字，他说，因为现在是三月，一个月里都是阳光明媚的春天，这个面就被称为阳春面。⑤此后，这家面馆生意兴盛，再后来转作了中国著名的老字号餐馆震丰园。

The English Version:

①Like Huaiyang Dishes, Yangchun Noodles looks normal, but are actually very dainty. ②The name of “Yangchun” was given by Qianlong Emperor of Qing Dynasty. ③When Qianlong arrived in Huai’an during his southern tour, he had a meal at a noodles restaurant, and found the noodles very delicious. ④When he knew that the noodles hadn’t got a name, he said since in March there were sunny days for the whole month, the noodles could be called as Yangchun Noodles. ⑤Since then, the noodles restaurant became prosperous and later turned to be Zhenfengyuan Restaurant, a famous old restaurant in China.

This Chinese text introduces the history of the Yangchun Noodles. It tells why the ordinary noodles are called the Yangchun Noodles which comes from an allusion related to a Chinese ancient emperor. Therefore, the Yangchun Noodles represents the Chinese food culture like Huaiyang Dishes. In China, the position of emperor is supreme, and words used to describe his activities or behavior should be different enough to embody his majesty and dignity. The writer of the Chinese original text aims to emphasize the specialty of the Noodles. Yet, the words “given”, “arrived”, “called” in the EV②③④fail to reflect the special culture of the feudal autocratic monarchy. Therefore, the

communicative intention in the original text is not conveyed and the specialty and rarity of the Yangchun Noodles are not well expressed to attract more people to try the noodles. In China, it is regarded as a great honor to be very precious and very honorable to be able to have the food enjoyed by emperors.

#### IV. TRANSLATING STRATEGIES BASED ON ECO-TRANSLATOLOGY

According to translation of adaptation and selection in eco-translatology, translator's adaptation and selection is made through the approaches of multi-dimensional transformation, that is, linguistic dimension, cultural dimension and communicative dimension which is known as very practical strategies in the translating process.

##### A. Linguistic Dimensional Transformation

To achieve effective translation, translator must know both two language systems. Due to the differences in historical background and national situation as well as living styles, there exist a lot of differences between the two languages. Therefore, translators should always strengthen their own knowledge base both in English and Chinese. Linguistic proficiency comes first in doing translation as lexis, syntax and semantics are the most fundamental elements, without which there's nothing that could be talked about in translation. This also means that translator should not only know the lexical meaning, but most importantly he or she should grasp the lexical semantic meaning, pragmatic meaning and language context. A good translator should know how, where and when to make transference in linguistic dimension. Let take example 1 for instance again.

In Section A part III of this paper, analysis is made about the translation errors resulting from the translator's linguistic deficiency. According to the principle of adaptation and selection, translator's subjectivity decides his or her move which in turn is determined by translator's knowledge of various areas. From the analysis, it can be seen that lack of linguistic proficiency restricts translator's subjective initiative which is responsible for the translation errors. To improve the translation version, appropriate adaptation to and selection of the language environment should be taken into consideration so as to make necessary transference in linguistic dimension. The revised translation based on the previous analysis is suggested as follows.

##### **The Revised Version (RV):**

*Huaiju Opera, with its another name being Jianghuai Plays, is one of the main operas in Jiangsu Province which is popular in Jiangsu as well as in Shanghai area". As the major place where Huaiju Opera originated and has become popular, Huai'an has 4 professional Huaiju Opera troupes at present. With a history of over 100 years, Huaiju originated from Yangge and folk songs in the countryside, and later introduced some elements from Kunqu Opera and Anhui Opera. Its famous plays include "White Snake Legend", "Generals of the Yang Family", "Qin Xianglian" and so on.*

##### B. Cultural Dimensional Transformation

Language and culture are closely interrelated with each other and cannot be separated. Many idioms, set phrases, allusions are loaded with rich historical and national culture and have their own fixed symbolic meaning and associative meaning. Different languages carry different cultures which bring about lots of difficulties for translator. Therefore, to know about different cultural background of languages is very important for translator and to be able to convey the cultural connotation properly to the readers of the translation is most essential. Let's see example 2 mentioned above again.

"Yachuang(压床)" in CT① is a Chinese culture-loaded word, for which we can't find the equivalent in English. In this context translator should first understand its real meaning and then try to convey the meaning into what a reader of translation can understand instead of putting it literally into "pressing bed" in which "press" corresponds to Chinese "压(Ya)" and "bed" to Chinese "床(Chuang)". As a traditional Chinese marriage custom, the meaning of Yachuang is known to everyone but foreign people. So, extra explanation is necessary in addition to transliteration. Except for the errors resulting from lack of cultural consciousness in the English version, there are also quite many linguistic mistakes which do not fall into this part of analysis, and thus, the analysis of them is omitted here but the corrections are included in the following revised translation.

##### **The Revised Version:**

*As a marriage custom, "Yachuang" is very popular in Huai'an. At the night before marriage, the bridegroom invites one to four strong virgin boys to sleep on the wedding bed together with him to avoid evil influence. According to the legend, during the Northern and Southern Dynasties, there was a poor worker Wang Erbao who married a beautiful widow from Huai'an when he was 30. At the night before his wedding, he dreamed that a tough man slashed him to death and rapped his wife. The next day, he married his lover and they loved each other dearly. Three days later, Wang Erbao had to left his wife and went to work for a landlord. A rich man saw Wang Erbao's wife in the village and was attracted by her and rapped her at midnight. Therefore, the villagers thought the bride was lost because of some evil energy. And in order to dismiss such energy, people began to ask strong virgin boys to sleep on the wedding bed together with the bridegroom the night before the wedding, which is customarily called "Yachuang (pressing bed)" in Chinese. From then on, this convention became a local marriage.*

In the revised translation, some omitted cultural information in the Chinese text is added to make the version quite

clear. Transliteration plus explanation makes readers quite clear about what Yachuang implies and gets rid of readers' confusion about "pressing bed". Besides, syntactically and lexically, some coordinating conjunctions and subordinating conjunctions are added to the sentences smooth and coherent. Some wrong words and expressions like "slashed him and robbed his wife", "married his wife", "behavior" are corrected to make the meaning more accurate. All these changes in the revised version can help the readers get clear idea of what the custom is and what connotation "Yachuang (pressing bed)" conveys. In this way cultural information is fully transferred.

### C. Communicative Dimensional Transformation

Eco-translatology in terms of communicative dimension means that translator should care about the communicative purpose of both English and Chinese in the process of translation. It requires translator to stress the key point and convey the communicative intention at the same time. If translator does not consider the communicative environment, confusion will be aroused for readers of the translation. Let's see again Example 3 mentioned above and compare the two different translation versions.

#### The Revised Version:

①Like *Huaiyang Dishes*, *Yangchun Noodles* looks **ordinary**, but **actually are** very dainty. ②The name of "Yangchun" was **vouchsafed** by Qianlong Emperor of Qing Dynasty. ③When Qianlong **made his southern inspection trip in Huai'an**, he had a meal at a noodles restaurant **on one occasion**, and found the noodles very delicious. ④When he **was told** that the noodles hadn't got a name, he said since **the time was in March when there were sunny days for the whole month**, **Yangchuan Noodles(sunny spring)would be the best name**. ⑤Since then, the noodles restaurant became prosperous and later turned to be Zhenfengyuan Restaurant, a famous old restaurant in China.

In section C part III, analysis is made about the errors caused by translator's lack of communicative awareness. The introduction of the story of the Yangchun Noodles is to let known the specialty of the noodles, and meanwhile, with the purpose to get it popularized. Therefore, it is necessary to choose appropriate words or expressions to make the focal points communication stand out. Obviously, the first translation version fails to convey this communicative purpose. To change it, translator should bear in mind the principle of communicative dimension and adapt to the communicative environment and make adaptive selection by changing "given" into "vouchsafed" which is a big word that can conform to the emperor's status and make the noodles different and unusual. Besides, syntactically and semantically, the expressions in bold in RV①③④ are more idiomatic and can better convey the meaning of the Chinese original compared with the first English version, which receives better communicative effect.

## V. CONCLUSION

The problems existing in the external publicity translation are mainly categorized into the mistakes of language, lack of culture awareness and failure of communicative intention which are closely related to the exertion of translator's subjectivity proposed in the principle of eco-translatology. Without linguistic proficiency, different cultural consciousness and skills of communicative purpose, good translation can hardly be achieved.

This research, by taking the translation of external publicity in Huai'an municipal government website as a case study, analyzes the existing errors and points out the factors resulting in the problems. At the same time, some strategies and approaches are proposed to improve the translation quality, which is theoretically and practically helpful to those who are engaged in the translation of practical writing.

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