



TRANSLATING FICTION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ECO-TRANSLATOLOGY

Novosad Yu. I.

Teaching assistant,

Department of Theory and Practice of Translation, Faculty of Foreign Languages,
Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University,
2 Maksyma Kryvonosa Str, 46027 Ternopil, Ukraine

ORCID: 0000-0002-0037-7903

Abstract. *The article aims at analyzing fiction translation from the point of view of a recently emerged eco-translatological perspective to literary translation criticism. Originally, it is a Chinese theory brought forth by Hu Gengshen in Translation Studies. Eco-translatology is a unique translation theory related to some Western schools, namely the principle of dynamic equivalence, the Skopos School and the descriptive translation studies. However, Hu Gengshen suggests a broader way of treating translation from the ecological perspective. Eco-translatology assumes placing translators at the central position during the process of translation. In terms of translator centeredness concept, where translator plays a central role keeping the balance and harmony of the ecological environment, translation process is a process of multi-dimensional adaptation and selection of the ecological environment of translation. We, in turn, believe that eco-translatology is applicable to all translations of fiction analysis and we aim to apply this translation theory not to translation of Chinese contemporary literature, but to analyze translation of fiction from Ukrainian into English. Theoretical framework of this study is ecological translation. Research corpus is Lesya Ukrainka's novel and its English translation by Roma Franko. We aimed to reveal some of characteristics of her translation through case study. In addition, we revealed and analyzed Roma Franko's selective adaptation to the ecological environment of translation.*

Key words: *Adaptation and Selection, Eco-Translatology, Ecological Environment of Translation, Translation Theory, Translator Centeredness.*

Introduction

Interdisciplinary integration is vital for the development of translatology nowadays. Until the 1970s cultural turn in translation studies, translation studies concentrated mainly on source text and target text leaving the identity of a translator in the shadow. Later, things began to change and studies began to shift from text centeredness to translator centeredness. The emergence of eco-translatology allows measuring the degree of translator's identity visibility in translation on a new level. Hu Gengshen initiated eco-translatology in his PhD thesis "Exploration into a Translator-Centered Approach to Translation as Adaptation and Selection" (Hu, G., 2003). Later he developed his theory in a series of academic papers and his monograph "On Translation as Adaptation and Selection" (Hu, G., 2004).

The main theory of eco-translatology is "translation as adaptation and selection", according to which the translation process is "cyclical alternations of the translator's adaptation and selection" (Hu, G. 2008; 1). The theoretical basis is Darwinian idea of adaptation and selection and survival of the fittest. In addition, the translation standard in eco-translatology involves three elements: multidimensional transformations – which are on language level, culture and communication level, reader feedback, and the translator's aptitude; and the best translation should be the highest degree of holistic adaptation and selection (Hu G., 2004, 4), (Hu, G., 2008, 2).



As a new theory, eco-translatology came up with its unique terminology – such as translational eco-environment, adaptive selection, selective adaptation, adaptive (and multidimensional) transformation. Researchers state: “These new terms exactly present the holistic, dynamic, correlative, and hierarchical thinking about translation process. These fruitful modes of thinking and theorization outlooks exactly reflect the ecological worldview and methodology. More importantly, the viewpoints of the translator-centeredness and disciplinary integration are especially inspiring for furthering translational construction” (Lin Zhu, p. 55)

In its essence, eco-translatology is deeply humanistic theory, focusing on translator’s personality and emphasizing translator’s subjective initiative and creativity. Translation is impossible without translators. Translators in a certain ecological environment of translation carry out translation, doing their best to produce the most suitable translation and to keep a balance between all of the components of ecological environment of translation.

In this paper, we attempted to demonstrate Roma Franko’s selective adaptation to the ecological environment of her translation of the short story “Sonderous Strings” by Lesya Ukrainka.

Methods

Our research was based on eco-translatology concepts, namely translator-centeredness and adaptation and selection translator needs to perform in order to adapt to the ecological environment of translation.

The methods of descriptive analysis and case study gave us the opportunity to analyze the selection of translation strategies from the three dimensions: language, culture and communication. Discourse analysis was in hand during our investigation. In addition, we believed it was very important to use cross-cultural analysis and biographical analysis to find out some consistencies in translator’s decisions. We attempted to analyze linguistic, cultural, and communicative dimensional transformation, which requires translators to pay attention to the language forms, the transmission and interpretation of cultural connotation of source and target languages, and the realization of bilingual communication intention.

Research Results and Discussion

We believe that any literary translation can be of interest to analyze from the perspective of eco-translatology. It is a matter of particular interest to investigate the degree of holistic adaptation and adaptive selection during fiction translation because this is the field of translation where a translator has the most space in decision-making. Literary translators may follow or neglect some linguistic, culture and communication information, so this makes literary translation subjective. On the other hand, they are restricted by many factors as well – all for the sake of creating translation that would “survive” among other translations and would be performed without breaking the balance inside the ecological environment of translation.

As Hu Gengshen claims, the process of translating starts with the translational eco-environment “selecting” the translator. (Hu G., 2003, p.286). Here we feel the need to provide some details of Roma Franko’s biography and professional translator activity. Roma Franko is a modern translator, representative of Ukrainian diaspora in Canada, former Head of the Department of Slavic Studies and the Department of



Modern Languages and Literatures in University of Saskatchewan. Roma Franko (Stratychuk) studied at the University of Saskatchewan and obtained her Master's degree in Slavic Studies there. After that, she studied in Toronto and obtained her PhD degree. In 1996 when she finished her pedagogical career, she started translating literary works. Together with her sister Sonia Morris, she founded a publishing house "Language Lanterns Publications". They dedicated themselves to translation and publication of classic Ukrainian literature. The first series "Women's Voices in Ukrainian Literature" consisting of six volumes was published between 1998 and 2000. They are "The Spirit of the Times", "In the Dark of the Night", "But...The Lord Is Silent", "From Heart to Heart", "Warm the Children, O Sun" and "For a Crust of Bread". In the introduction to the Series Roma Franko clarified the purpose of the translations as "to make accessible to English readers the selected works of Ukrainian women writers, most of whom have not been previously translated into English, and, in so doing, enhance our understanding of women's slow, difficult and ongoing trek to political, economic and social equality...." The authors bring up the topics of gender, social division, female roles, and these topics are interpreted from female perspective. "Translating their stories into English permits their message to transcend temporal and geographical boundaries". Therefore, Roma Franko herself selected to be a mediator of the message. In other words, her background, education, professional career contributed to the fact that she met the demands of a certain ecological environment of translation – and the translational eco-environment "selected" Roma Franko as a translator for a certain source text.

Roma Franko also admits facing some difficulties in the process of translation. Namely, transliteration, archaic and dialectal language and 19th century stylistic conventions. She claims that the main criterion that ruled her decisions is that of readability. We will try to notice her translation decisions, adaptive selection transformations – to be specific. In addition, we will attempt to group them in adaptive selection transformations of the language dimension, culture dimension and communication dimension.

Before doing that, it would be appropriate to provide some information about the author and the source text as well.

Lesya Ukrainka is a Ukrainian poet, drama and prose writer, and translator. Researchers state (Shchukina, 2016) that prose is not her strong side; she succeeded mainly with her verses and dramas. It is worth mentioning as well that prose is part of her legacy that is least studied. Nevertheless, a sketch "Sonorous Strings" is one of the most lyrical prose writings of her. There is a high degree of identification of the author's inner world with the world of her heroine. Nastya suffers being a hunchback, and Lesya Ukrainka suffered from tuberculosis. They both suffer from unanswered love. Therefore, when we read the sketch we feel that someone who wrote it must have experienced the same or similar sad emotions in their life. Perhaps this is what makes this sketch so intimate.

Bearing in mind translator-centeredness, which is another important concept of eco-translatology, we will analyze translator's decisions on translation behavior such as "selective adaptation" and "adaptive selection". Researchers divide the process of translation under the eco-translatology model into two stages. During the first stage



translators select source texts, adapt or enhance their capabilities to fit to the text to be translated. In this stage, selective adaptation is carried out.

In the second stage, translators perform translation of the source text. They are one of the components of translational eco-environment. They decide on the selection of different translation strategies in order to obtain an ecological target text. That is how adaptive selection is carried out. As it was mentioned previously, the multi, – or it would be better to say – the three-dimensional transformations happen on the levels of language, culture and communication. Selection of translation strategies will be reflected in the three-dimensional transformations of language, culture and communication.

It is necessary to clarify which translation transformations can be referred to mentioned above dimensions.

Adaptive selection transformation within language dimension deals with textual language expression, with language form in its possible aspects and at different levels. Primarily translator should remember about the origin of languages. If it is different, so there is a great difference in vocabulary, syntax etc. In addition, we should mention language style. For example, English is plain, concise and easy to understand, while Ukrainian is rich in synonyms, phraseologisms, diminutives; the language is very suitable for poetry and singing.

Adaptive selection transformation within culture dimension deals with transmission of cultural information. It is very important for a translator to be educated and enquiring person in order to recognize and treat cultural elements in a source text properly. Culture-loaded words or culturally marked signs and issues with translating them is no new matter for consideration for a translator.

Adaptive selection transformation within communicative dimension means that translator should mediate author's creative intention accurately in order to receive target text evoking the same emotions in readers as source text.

The quality of translation correlates with the level of adaptive selection integration. During the process of translation, translator should make selections in three dimension: language dimension at the level of vocabulary, sentence, style, grammar, cultural dimension of history, culture, religion etc., and the communicative dimension aiming to accurately realize and recreate author's communicative intention. Translator's background knowledge, their strategy, style of work, practical experience – all of it plays crucial role affecting translation activity. One may argue, but the fact is that a translator places a central position in eco-translatology theory, and this commits them to be responsible for their translation activity in all possible meanings.

Linguistic dimension

When translating, the translator should adjust the sentence structure and improve the content of the sentence.

Example: "...коли умре кохання, зостанеться по ньому мертве пожарище" (Ukrainka).

Translation: "...when love dies, only the dead, charred ruins remain" (Franko, 1999, p. 360).

Analysis: In Ukrainian, we have the noun "*пожарище*" meaning "big fire" or



“the place where there was a fire; what was left after the fire”. In English, the translator used the phrase “**charred ruins**” which fully render the meaning, though the grammar was adjusted.

Example: “А, Настуся!” (Ukrainka).

Translation: “Ah, my dear Nastya!” ((Franko, 1999, p. 357).

Analysis: In Ukrainian, **Настуся** is hypocorism of the woman’s name Nastya. Therefore, the best option is to render it by means of the adjective “**dear**”, as hypocorisms are not common for English language.

Example: “Тоді звилась полум’яна, гучна мелодія, горда і буйна, сповнена болю і розпачу, що збудила всі струни” (Ukrainka).

Translation: “Then a sonorous melody, proud and wild, and filled with pain and despair, erupted in a blaze and awakened all the strings” ((Franko, 1999, p. 369).

Analysis: In Ukrainian, the noun “**мелодія**” is described with adjectives *полум’яна* (*fiery*) and *гучна* (*sonorous*). The verb “**звилась**” has a several meanings. The first is *to wring* (as a snake). Moreover, one more fits the context – *to sound loud and high* – when it comes to voice or music. As we mentioned, the sketch is full of musical terms and the text in general is rich in subjective author’s symbols that the translator should see and decode for the target reader. In English translation, the words “erupted” and “awakened” may be associated with volcano, so the translator adapted to the ecological environment of the target language in order to create the form and the meaning to make people able to understand information conveyed without difficulty.

Cultural dimension

Superficially, translation is a cross-cultural activity. As language is a carrier of culture, so an ideal translation shall be able to integrate both the linguistic meaning and the culture meaning of the source language seamlessly into the target language. Cultural connotations of two languages deserve particular attention during transformation and interpretation.

There are several episodes in the sketch, when we read about “**руса коса**” – blond braided hair.

Example: “Довгенько чесала вона свою русу косу, “свою єдину красу” (Ukrainka).

Translation: “She spent a long time combing her blond hair, her “one claim of beauty” ((Franko, 1999, p. 365).

Analysis: In Ukrainian culture, long braided hair is a symbol of young innocent women, it is their honor and decoration. Long thick hair has always been a sign of beauty, and a neatly braided braid is a symbol of chastity and virginity. In traditional Ukrainian culture, the maiden braid was a sign of beauty, hence the saying “Braid is a maiden’s beauty”. Nastya claims that her hair was her “one claim of beauty” because she consider herself not pretty due to physical affliction (she was hunchback). This moment is very crucial to convey to the target text reader for them to understand that perhaps her braided blond hair was her only consolation for her and statement of her as being actually a beautiful young woman. In order to protect the cultural ecological balance of two languages and to transmit information successfully a translator should have cultural awareness.



Communicative dimension

Faithful rendering of communicative purpose during translation is as well a crucial factor of quality of translation. The translator should focus on whether the communicative intention in the original text can be reflected in the translated text.

Example: “Павло віддав листа і за хвилину біг уже шпаркою ходою вгору вулицею, поспівуючи тихенько щось досить бравурне” (Ukrainka).

Translation: “A moment later he was already walking rapidly up the street, singing a lively tune sotto voce” (Franko, 1999, p. 359).

Analysis: According to Dictionary of the Ukrainian language, a word “*бравурний*” means “cheerful, lively, sublime, and loud (mostly about a piece of music)”. The translator used a term “*sotto voce*” meaning “intentionally lowering the volume of one's voice for emphasis”. In music, it is a dramatic lowering of the vocal or instrumental volume. This seem irrational, because the meaning is opposite. It is likely that the translator wanted to fill her translation with musical terms for the text to sound as musical and lyrical as the original. Still, the cognitive intention is lost.

Conclusion

From the perspective of eco-translatology, this paper illustrated different translation strategies and approaches for different dimensions based on the theory of three-dimensional transformations. We attempted to interpret Ukrainian-English translation of literary work. The focus of the study was placed on the translator's personality and her subjective initiative and creativity. Roma Franko's three-dimensional transformations mostly maintain the balance within ecological environment of the translation. Still, we may observe her facing some difficulties caused by different factors – analyzing which can be the prospect of further research in this field.

References

1. Dictionary of the Ukrainian language. *Academic explanatory dictionary* <http://sum.in.ua/> Retrieved 9 March, 2021.
2. Franko R. (transl.), Morris S. (ed.), (1999). *From Heart to Heart: selected prose fiction*. Toronto: Language Lanterns Publications, 471 p.
3. Hu, G. S. (2003). *Exploration into a Translator-Centered Approach to Translation as Adaptation and Selection*. [Unpublished PhD dissertation]. Hong Kong Baptist University.
4. Hu, Gengshen. (2003). Translation as Adaptation and Selection. *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology*, pp. 283-291.
5. Hu, G. S. (2004). Theoretical props of the approach to translation as adaptation and selection. *Shanghai Journal of Translators for Science and Technology*, pp. 1-5.
6. Hu, G. S. (2004). On Translation as Adaptation and Selection. *Wuhan: Hubei Education Press*.
7. Hu, G. S. (2008). An overview of translation as adaptation and selection from its terminology. *Shanghai Journal of Translators*, pp. 1-5.
8. Jun, W. (2020). Translator's Subjectivity in Eco-Translatology. *Journal of Critical Studies in Language and Literature*, 1(3), 14-19 DOI:



<https://doi.org/10.46809/jcsll.v1i3.24>

9. Kozachuk, Andrii. (2013). Anhlomovnyy pereklad ukrayinskoyi dialektnoyi leksyky yak chynnyk stylovoyi transformatsii tekstu. [English translation of Ukrainian dialect as a factor of stylistic text transformation]. *Word and sentence: syntax, semantics, pragmatics: Proceedings of Int. Scientific Conf.* pp. 173-178.

10. Lin, Zhu. Rethinking the Interdisciplinary Construction of Translatology in the Context of the “Ecological Turn”: Philosophical and Theoretical Analysis.

11. Shchukina, Iryna. (2016). “Holosni struny” Lesi Ukrainky: muzyka v riadkakh i mizh nymy [“Sonorous Strings by Lesia Ukrainka: music in and between the lines.] *Slovo i chas*, Issue 12. pp.10-17.

12. Ukrainian Canadian Congress. *Roma Franko*. <https://www.ucc.ca/award-receipient/roma-franko/>

13. Ukrainka, Lesia. *Holosni struny*. [Sonorous Strings] Retrieved 9 March, 2021 from <https://www.l-ukrainka.name/uk/Prose/GolosniStruny.html>