

Research on the English Translation of *Lingnan* Poetry from the Perspective of Eco-translation Theory

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Citation: Wu C and Gao H (2024) Research on the English Translation of *Lingnan* Poetry from the Perspective of Eco-translation Theory. Int J Teach Learn Sci: IJTLS-105.

Received Date: 02 November, 2024; **Accepted Date:** 14 November, 2024; **Published Date:** 19 November, 2024

Abstract

As a special literary genre, poetry not only expresses its text content, but also carries multiple information such as culture, language, and art. The complexity of its translation far exceeds the scope of textual translation. Based on the theory of eco-translation, this paper explores the “three-dimensional transformation” strategy and the effective path of cultural value transmission in the English translation of *Lingnan* poetry through the elaboration of *Lingnan* culture, the theory of eco-translation and its applications. This research employs the specific cases of English translations of *Lingnan* poetry to reveal the impact of the translation activities on the languages, cultures and the environments and how these impacts, likewise, affect the translation activities. This study provides examples for the practice of eco-translation theory. It also broadens the horizon of cross-culture communication for the promotion of the international dissemination of *Lingnan* poetry and cultural exchanges using poetry as a tool.

Keywords: eco-translation; *Lingnan* poetry; adaptation; selection; three-dimensional transformation; cultural exchange.

1. Introduction

Against the background of globalisation and increasingly close cultural exchanges between China and the West, Tang poetry, as an indispensable part of traditional culture, presents a high demand and difficulty in being introduced to the world while retaining its original flavor. In the translation of ancient poetry, the names of places, people and allusions appearing in the poems need to be accurately expressed in the translation. Meanwhile, how to accurately convey the cultural background and meaning of the poem in the target language in a new linguistic environment is also a major challenge in translation practice.

The *Lingnan*¹ region, with its unique geographical environment and humanistic history, has nurtured a rich and colourful poetry culture. In recent years, the study of *Lingnan* poetry has been a hotspot of extensive attention in the academic circle, with fruitful results ranging from the study of the *Lingnan* School of Poetry in the perspective of regional literature, to the analysis of case studies of *Lingnan* poets, and to the interpretation of the *Lingnan* imagery group in the relegation poems of the Tang Dynasty. Although researchers have realised the cultural spirit behind *Lingnan* poetry, there are still shortcomings in the existing studies, such as the restriction of geographical concepts and the lack of comparative studies [1]. Studying the *Lingnan* poetry by Tang dynasty poets, especially looking at their translations to see the characteristics of translation, and refining the regional culture and spiritual kernel embodied in them, is of positive significance to the construction of the image of *Lingnan* [2].

Within the Chinese research domain, “Ecological Translation” (its elliptical form ‘eco-translation’ is widely used as a disciplinary term. Eco-translation is used hereafter in this paper) is a new translation research paradigm with Chinese characteristics, in which Chinese scholars, under the background of globalization, think and act ecologically in translation studies. Eco-translation is a new research paradigm of translation studies with Chinese characteristics in the context of globalization within the vision of ecology. Eco-translation provides a new theoretical framework and research perspective for the English translation of *Lingnan* poetry. This paper will start from the perspective of eco-translation studies and combine it with English translation works of specific cases which are mainly selected from *Complete Tang Poems*, which is a collection of poems by Chinese poets in the Tang Dynasty. This paper will study the poetry of the Tang Dynasty that was sung or written in *Lingnan* by important poets in the Tang Dynasty [3], and take the English translation method as the main research object to study the way of English translation of *Lingnan* poems and its eco-translation characteristics, with a view to providing examples for the practice of eco-translation theories, and also providing ideas and useful references for the promotion of the international dissemination of *Lingnan* poems and cultural exchanges using poetry as a carrier.

¹ *Lingnan* refer to the southern regions of the Five Ridges (a reference to a series of low mountain ranges in southern China’s Guangdong Province) in China, encompassing areas such as Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Hong Kong, and other parts of southern

Guangdong. It is a geographical and cultural concept that signifies the south of the Five Ridges, which has a unique climate, landscape, and rich cultural heritage distinct from other parts of China.

2. Overview of Eco-translation Theory

Ecotranslation is an interdisciplinary theory that applies ecological principles to translation research. It is based on the theory of adaptation and selection and applies ecological principles to translation activities. The theory emphasises that translation is not only a linguistic transformation, but also involves the impact of translation on the target culture, environment and society. Eco-translation advocates the achievement of ecological balance in the translation process and the promotion of sustainable cultural development [4]. This theory believes that translation is a dynamic process of text transplantation, in which the text is transferred from the original ecological environment to the translated ecological environment, and the translator needs to “adapt” to the ecological environment in order to “select” the best translation. It draws on Darwin’s doctrine of “adaptive selection”, and regards the translation process as the translator’s adaptation to the translation ecological environment and the selection of the translation. Eco-translation emphasizes the ecological balance of translation and the transmission of cultural values, and focuses on the interaction and relationship among the translator, the original text, the translated text and the translation environment. Under the perspective of eco-translation, translation is not only the conversion between languages, but also the transmission of culture and values [5].

Eco-translation is a product of ecological way of thinking in a global perspective. It is the inevitable result of the social and ideological transformation since the 20th century. From the perspective of Chinese translation theory and practice, it has promoted the process of “going out” of Chinese translation theory, broken the traditional stereotypes of translation thinking, and contributed to balancing the theoretical pattern of translation between the East and the West.

There are three core concepts in eco-translation. First, translation is adaptation and selection: Ecotranslationism believes that translation is the process of translators adapting to the ecological environment of translation and selecting the translation. Translators need to adapt to the language, culture and communication environment of the original text, and simultaneously selecting appropriate translation strategies and methods according to the translation purpose and readers’ needs.

Second, “three-dimensional” transformation: Eco-translation proposes the translation strategy of “three-dimensional” conversion, that is, the conversion of linguistic, cultural and communicative dimensions. In the linguistic dimension, the translator needs to accurately convey the semantics and style of the original text; in the cultural dimension, the translator needs to pay attention to the cultural connotation and background of the original text to ensure the acceptability of the translated text in the target culture; in the communicative dimension, the translator needs to pay attention to the communicative intention of the original text and the reading needs of the readers, so as to realise the communication equivalence between the original text and the translated text.

Third, respect and protect linguistic and cultural diversity: Eco-translation emphasizes linguistic and cultural diversity, believing that each language and culture is unique and has no absolute advantages and disadvantages. In the process of translation, translators should respect and protect such diversity and avoid excessive naturalisation or alienation of the original text.

Driven by the support of the above core viewpoints, eco-translation theory has the following characteristics.

First, eco-translation is interdisciplinary in theory. Eco-translation theory transcends the boundaries of traditional translation disciplines and actively absorbs the theories and methods of other related disciplines, such as culture, sociology, environment, etc. This interdisciplinary nature can provide a more comprehensive and in-depth research perspective for translation practice. This interdisciplinarity can provide a more comprehensive and in-depth research perspective for translation practice.

Second, eco-translation is distinctly pluralistic in practice. The theory of eco-translation emphasizes that every language and culture is unique and there is no absolute superiority or inferiority. In the process of translation, the differences of various languages and cultures should be respected and treated equally, so as to achieve a balanced and sustainable development of cross-cultural communication.

Finally, eco-translation is inherently sustainable. The theory of eco-translation emphasizes that translation practice should focus on the sustainable development of the environment and society. In the process of translation, the waste of resources should be minimised, the ecological environment should be protected, and social equity and harmony should be promoted.

3. The Three-Dimensional Translation Strategy of *Lingnan* Poetry in English Translation

Eco-translation puts forward the translation strategy of “three-dimensional transformation”, namely, transformation of linguistic dimension, cultural dimension and communicative dimension. In the process of translating *Lingnan* poetry into English, translators need to take these three dimensions into full consideration, so as to achieve an ecological balance between the original text and the translated text, as well as to transfer cultural values, and to reflect its interdisciplinary, multidimensional and sustainable characteristics.

3.1 Transformation from the linguistic dimension

Adaptive selection of linguistic dimension is to make adaptive selection of language forms of the source language according to the ecological environment of different target languages under the guidance of linguistics, which is embodied in different aspects and at different levels. In terms of linguistic dimension, translators should strive to maintain a balance of linguistic forms in different aspects and levels through selection and adaptation, including word meaning, sentence meaning, writing style, expressiveness, practical aesthetics, and so on. Linguistic transformation is the basis for the English translation of *Lingnan* poetry. Translators need to accurately understand the linguistic characteristics and expressions of the original language, and at the same time take into account the linguistic conventions and expression norms of the English language and make appropriate language conversion.

In the English translation of *Lingnan* poems, translators should pay special attention to the beauty of sound, imagery and mood of the poems, and endeavour to preserve these aesthetic features in the translation.

In terms of the techniques used in *Lingnan* writing, from the local conditions and customs of *Lingnan* as seen by the people to the forms of existence of those who are in *Lingnan*, the poets use a variety of linguistic and rhetorical techniques in the process of portraying the impression of *Lingnan*. The poet quotes allusions, comparisons and contrasts, and uses metaphors, so that the landscape and the thoughts and feelings that have been deeply embedded in his heart, and which have been stained with strong regional characteristics, can flow more distinctly and tangibly into the end of his writing. In translating these poems, there are multiple necessities to maintain the aesthetic features at the linguistic level in the translation in terms of semantics, syntax, and textual functions.

Take the poem *Song of Xiangjiang River's Flow* by the famous poet Liu Yuxi of the Tang Dynasty as an example, the original poem reads:

- ✓ *The Xiangjiang flows, the Xiangjiang flows,*
- ✓ *Clouds and mist over Mount Jiuyi still evoke sorrow.*
- ✓ *If you ask where the two concubines reside,*
- ✓ *In Lingling, amidst autumn dew, fragrant herbs grow.*
- ✓ *Mottled bamboo! mottled bamboo,*
- ✓ *Traces of tears mark how I miss you,*
- ✓ *The guests from Chu who wish to hear the sad zither music,*
- ✓ *Please wait till the deep night when the moon shines bright at Xiao-Xiang waters.*

Liu Yuxi wrote about the bamboos in order to express his nostalgic feelings for the past. The whole poem is full of elegance and melancholy, and the poet writes his anger and sorrow of being innocently deported into the song *Song of Xiangjiang River's Flow*, which uses rhetorical devices such as repetition, couplets, personification and puns to bring out the linguistic features of the poem to the fullest extent. For the translation of poems with obvious linguistic features, the translator needs to consider the similarities and differences between the source language and the target language, and transform smoothly between the two languages, keeping the aesthetic features of the original poem while taking account of the language habits and norms of the target language. For example, in the translation of the two repetitions of “Bamboo branches, bamboo branches”, it is neither appropriate to directly repeat the *mottled bamboo*, resulting in the redundancy of the words; nor to use a *mottled bamboo*, resulting in the reduction of the intensity of the original thought and feeling of the poem, but to add an exclamation in the middle of the two mottled bamboo, which is not only the same as the original poem, but also the same as the target language. Instead, an exclamation should be added between the two *mottled bamboo*, which not only retains the intensity of the original poem, but also avoids direct repetition. In the translation of *Traces of tears mark how I miss you*, the use of *traces* instead of *drops* can better highlight the intensity of the act of shedding tears, enhance the sense of vividness and convey the poet's feelings. The use of *how* instead of *that* is a better way to express the depth of the poet's longing.

3.2 Transformation from the cultural dimension

The cultural dimension means that the translator pays attention to the transmission and interpretation of bilingual cultural connotations and the adaptive conversion of bilingual cultural differences in the translation process, so as to prevent the translator from misinterpreting the meaning of the original text only from the perspective of the target language culture, thus failing to accurately convey and expound the cultural connotations of the source language. In terms of cultural dimension, translators should pay attention to the differences between bilingual cultures, the transmission and interpretation of bilingual cultural connotations, and strive to eliminate barriers to cultural exchange.

Cultural transformation is the key to the English translation of *Lingnan* poetry. *Lingnan* poetry contains rich regional culture and human history, and the translator needs to understand these cultural backgrounds in depth to accurately convey the cultural connotations of the original text. In the process of translation, translators can adopt such means as augmentation and interpretation to explain and supplement the cultural elements in the original text, so as to help readers of the target language better understand the cultural connotation of the original text.

Take the Tang Dynasty poet Zhang Jiuling's poem *Sense of Encounter - There are tangerine in Jiangnan* as an example:

- ✓ *There are tangerines in Jiangnan,*
- ✓ *And even in winter, there are still green forests.*
- ✓ *Is it not the earth warm in the southern area?*
- ✓ *I have a cold heart every year.*
- ✓ *We can recommend Jiake,*
- ✓ *But there is still a lot of obstruction.*
- ✓ *Fortune only comes by chance and cannot be found in cycles.*
- ✓ *Talking about peach and plum trees,*
- ✓ *Is there no shade in this wood?*

There are two lines in the original text: *There are tangerine in Jiangnan* and *Is it not the warmth of the southern area* [6]. When translating into languages with non-Chinese geo-cultural and linguistic backgrounds, it would be inappropriate to translate *Jiangnan* into *South of the River*, and it should be directly transliterated as “*Jiangnan*”; It is not appropriate to translate *Yidi* as *the area*, but rather *the southern area*, in accordance with its cultural connotations.

3.3 Transformation from the communicative dimension

The adaptation-selection transformation from the communicative dimension means that while paying attention to the linguistic and cultural dimensions, the translator focuses on conveying the communicative intention to achieve the function of transmitting and receiving the emotional attitude of the information. In other words, the translator pays attention to the adaptation-selection transformation of bilingual communicative intention in the process of translation, which requires the translator, besides the conversion of linguistic information and the transmission of cultural connotation, to put the focus of selective transformation on the communicative dimension, and to pay attention to whether or not the communicative intention of the original text is embodied in the translated text. In terms of communicative

dimension, translators should pay attention to the reasonable expression of the communicative intention of the original text in the translation, and enable readers in the target language background to fully understand the true meaning expressed in the original text.

Communicative transformation is one of the purposes of the English translation of *Lingnan* poetry in cross cultural communication. Translators need to pay attention to the communicative intent of the original text and the reading needs of the readers to make sure that the translation can accurately convey the communicative intent of the original text, and at the same time observing the reading habits and meeting the aesthetic needs of the English readers. In the English translation of *Lingnan* poems, translators should pay special attention to the lyricism and infectiousness of the poems, and endeavour to retain these emotional features in the translation to arouse the resonance and attention of English readers.

- ✓ Take Su Shi's poem *One of the Best in Huizhou* as an example. The original text of the poem reads,
- ✓ *At the foot of Luofu Mountain,*
- ✓ *The four seasons like fragrant colorful spring,*
- ✓ *Sweet loquat and tasty waxberry,*
- ✓ *Fresh delicious doodies every day.*
- ✓ *Eating three hundred lychees every day,*
- ✓ *I would not mind being a resident of Lingnan for life.*

In the original poem, the author uses the technique of plain and unadorned description to describe the seasonal characteristics of Luofu Mountain and the production of fruits accompanying with seasonal changes. However, the author's expression goes beyond the literal meaning of the lines: *I would not mind being a resident of Lingnan for life* expresses his love for these fruits and the place of the *Lingnan* region. Therefore, the seasonal characteristics and fruit production in the author's plain descriptive style are in fact full of the author's strong feelings. In order to reflect this thought and feeling in the translation, and to express the emotional intention accurately so as to achieve the communicative intention, the English translation needs to focus on the communicative level and adopt special translation techniques to convey the real intention of the original work.

Therefore, *At the foot of Luofu Mountain, There are four seasons* should not be straightly translated as the line originally goes, but should be translated as *At the foot of Luofu Mountain, the four seasons Like fragrant colorful spring. Fragrant colorful spring* here can more clearly convey the author's true feelings and communicative intent. Similarly, the *Lu orange and Yangmei second new* is not just a description of the author's emergency production of fruit, but an expression of his love for the fruits of this place, so the translation goes as *Sweet loquat and tasty waxberry, Fresh delicious goodies every day*. In this version, *Sweet, tasty, fresh, delicious* are all deliberate additions by the translator.

The analysis of three-dimensional transformation in the translation of the above *Lingnan* poetry reveals that during the translation process, the transformation in the linguistic, cultural, and communicative dimensions all play crucial roles, and these three dimensions

intertwine with each other, jointly influencing the quality and effectiveness of the translation.

In the linguistic dimension, the unique linguistic style and expressive ways of *Lingnan* poetry pose challenges for translators. Translators need to accurately understand the vocabulary, grammar, and rhetoric of the original text while transforming them into equivalent expressions in the target language, maintaining the poetry's rhythm and meter. Precision and fluency in language are important criteria for assessing translation quality in this process.

In the cultural dimension, *Lingnan* poems are rich in regional culture and historical background. Translators must not only grasp the literal meaning of the poems but also delve deeply into their underlying cultural connotations and symbolic meanings. This requires translators to possess profound cultural literacy and cross-cultural communication skills to accurately convey the cultural implications of the original text in the translation.

From the communicative dimension, translation is not merely the transformation of linguistic symbols, but also the transmission and communication of cultural information. In the translation of *Lingnan* poems, translators need to fully consider the cultural background and reading habits of the target readers, ensuring that the translation can accurately convey the meaning of the original text while also pleasing the target readers. This dimension requires translators to possess a high level of cross-cultural communicative competence, enabling them to retain the characteristics of the original text while making the translation conform to the expressive habits of the target language, thereby facilitating exchanges and understanding between different cultures.

In summary, the analysis of three-dimensional transformation in the translation of *Lingnan* poetry unveils the complexity and diversity in the translation process. Across the linguistic, cultural, and communicative dimensions, translators need to comprehensively apply various translation strategies and techniques to achieve optimal equivalence between the original and translated texts. Meanwhile, this analysis also provides useful guidance and inspiration for translation practice, contributing to the international dissemination and exchange of *Lingnan* poems and other literary works.

4. Conclusion

Through the elaboration of the theory of ecotranslation and the analysis of *Lingnan* poetry translation cases, this paper discusses the effective paths and strategies of translating *Lingnan* poetry from the perspective of ecotranslation. The study shows that ecotranslation provides a new theoretical framework and research perspective for the translation of *Lingnan* poetry, which can help promote the international dissemination and cultural exchange of *Lingnan* poetry. In the future, we can further expand the application fields of eco-translation and explore more effective translation strategies and techniques to promote intercultural communication and integration.

Eco-translation provides us with a new perspective by examining the linguistic and literary aspects of translation activities. The theory put forward by Hu Gengshen (2008b) [7] not only reflects a deep understanding of the essence of translation, but also echoes the respect and maintenance of cultural diversity in the context of globalization. Through the above analyses, we can see that

whether in the transmission of traditional culture, such as the translation of Tang Dynasty poems, or under modern media, such as the translation of film subtitles, eco-translation can effectively guide translators to make more reasonable adaptive choices, so as to achieve a dynamic balance between the source language and the target language, and to better convey the original's emotional and cultural connotations.

Eco-translation is not only a theoretical innovation in theory, but also provides practical guidelines for ancient style poetry translation practice. It emphasises ecological adaptation and selection in the translation process, and encourages translators to gain a deeper understanding of the ecological environment of the source and target cultures, so as to carry out more accurate and sensitive translations. With the deepening of global cultural exchanges, the guiding method of eco-translation on poetry translation practice will show its importance and practical value in a larger scale.

In addition, eco-translation is widely used in the fields of literary translation, scientific and technical translation, business translation, legal translation, medical translation and so on. It can help translators better understand and convey the ecological consciousness and ecological ideas in the original text, and make the translated text more in line with the ecological values of the target culture. At the same time, eco-translation also provides strong support for cross-cultural communication and cooperation.

With the increasing severity of global environmental problems and the in-depth development of cross-cultural communication, the theory of eco-translation will continue to deepen and expand its research fields. In the future, research will pay more attention to the ecological impact and social responsibility of translation practice, explore more effective translation strategies and methods, and make greater contributions to the promotion of global environmental protection and cultural communication.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Authors contributions: The corresponding author contributes the main idea, structure organization and the writing of the paper. The second author contributes the data collection and proof reading.

Source of funding: This research received no external funding.

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