

# Analysis of Metaphor Translation in *Wei Cheng* on the View of Eco-translatology—A Case Study of Jeanne Kelly and Nathan K. Mao's English Translation of *Fortress Besieged*

WANG Yongyu, GAO Wencheng

University of Shanghai for Science and Technology, Shanghai, China

As a famous work of Mr. Qian Zhongshu, *Fortress Besieged* not only has fascinating plots and profound themes, but also has excellent language expression and language style. The beauty and subtlety of its words and expressions in *Fortress Besieged* are of great aesthetic value; especially the metaphor expression used is the essence of the novel. Eco-translatology advocates that translation is an adaptation and selection process which should be applied in language, culture, and communication and it stresses the central role of translator, so as to ensure that the translation remains the longevity and has vitality in the target language. From the perspective of eco-translatology, this paper analyzes the metaphor translation in the English version of *Fortress Besieged* in the dimensions of linguistics, culture, and communication, and provides suggestions for improving the quality of metaphor translation.

**Keywords:** eco-translatology, metaphor translation, three-dimensional transformation, translation strategies

## Introduction

*Fortress Besieged* is a unique satirical novel in the history of modern Chinese literature, and apart from its plot and themes, the expression of this novel is also a highlight. The magnificent expressions, especially the metaphor expressions used extensively in this novel, play an important role in the portrayal of its characters and their psychology, and the metaphor expressions in the novel are soothing and appropriate to read, and the use of some metaphors has a mocking and derogatory effect, making the novel more humorous and readable. Therefore, the study of the translation strategy of metaphor expressions in *Fortress Besieged* is of great value.

For the translation study of *Fortress Besieged*, some existing studies on its translation are mostly from the perspective of semantic translation and communicative translation (Zhong, 2016), the perspective of relevance translation theory (Miao, 2022), and the perspective of Newmark's metaphor translation strategy (Zhang, 2015), and few studies have studied the translation of *Fortress Besieged* from the perspective of eco-translatology which has important guiding significance for translation practice. And a literature search reveals many excellent journal papers that study translation quality and strategies take the eco-translatology perspective as the theoretical basis, such as the study of documentary subtitle translation (Zhang, 2017), the study of Chinese to English translation of public transportation public announcement language (Chen & Fan, 2020), and the analysis of optimization of

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WANG Yongyu, graduate student, College of Foreign Languages, University of Shanghai for Science and Technology, Shanghai, China.

GAO Wencheng, Dr., professor, College of Foreign Languages, University of Shanghai for Science and Technology, Shanghai, China.

C-E translation strategies in publicity texts (Li, 2021), among which there is a lack of studies that analyze metaphor translation based on the perspective of eco-translatology. Thus, it is of great research value to study and analyze the translation strategies of metaphor expressions in *Fortress Besieged* from the perspective of eco-translatology.

### **An Overview of Eco-translatology Theory and Its “Three-Dimensional Transformation”**

The eco-translatology theory names after the isomorphic metaphor of translation ecology and natural ecology, which is a research paradigm for analyzing translation from an ecological perspective (Liu, 2022). The whole concept of eco-translatology and its research object both highlight the word “sheng” (Hu, 2020). The eco-translatology involves the translation, translator, and the acceptance of the translation in the receiving environment. The three core concepts of eco-translatology are corresponding to the translator, translated text, and the translation’s acceptance in its receiving environment respectively, that is, from the perspective of the translation of the source text, translation is the transplantation of text. For translators, translation is a process of adaptation and selection. Keeping textual life alive in the target text focuses on whether the target text can maintain the ecological balance of translation in the new language environment. Eco-translatology advocates translators’ translation activities should maintain a natural and harmonious ecological balance with the current cultural context (Cronin, 2003). In a word, eco-translatology is a new research paradigm in the field of translation studies, which takes ecologism as the concept and advocates the adaptation and selection of translators in the translation process. It is a scientific exploration of an ecological paradigm in translation studies (Hu & Wang, 2021).

In the theory of eco-translatology, the principle of “three-dimensional” transformation is an important translation method. Eco-translatology regards translation as a process of adaptation and selection, and translators should focus on three dimensions: linguistic dimension, cultural dimension, and communicative dimension for adaptive selection and transformation. In the translation process, the translator has to adapt to the translation ecology of the source text and at the same time select for the ecology of the translated text (Xue, 2021). As Stibbe (2015) points out, translation is not a simple linguistic transformation, but involves many aspects, such as cultural, communicative, and social contexts. Thus, the translator has to make a comprehensive adaptation and selection of the translation from three perspectives: linguistic dimension, cultural dimension, and communicative dimension in order to choose the most integrated translation. In the following, the authors will analyze the metaphor translation in the English version *Fortress Besieged* from the three dimensions of linguistic, cultural, and communicative dimensions respectively.

### **Analysis of Adaptive Selection in the Three-Dimensional Transformations of Metaphor Translation in *Fortress Besieged***

#### **Linguistic-Dimensional Transformation**

The linguistic-dimensional transformation means that the translator’s focus in the translation process is on the wording of the translated text and its linguistic expressions, and the translator should make adaptive choices to transform the linguistic expressions of the source text from different aspects and perspectives.

Example 1: 我们是老古董了…… (Qian, 2002, p. 13)

Translation 1: We are already **antiques**. (Kelly & Mao, 2003, p. 16)

Example 2: 看人家一对对谈情说爱，好不眼红。 (Qian, 2002, p. 14)

Translation 2: Seeing couple after couple in love, he grew **red-eyed** with envy. (Kelly & Mao, 2003, p. 19)

As shown in Example 1 and Example 2, there are many metaphors expressions with Chinese characteristics in *Fortress Besieged*, and the translator has chosen to translate these metaphors directly, which is very faithful to the source text. The translation retains the metaphorical content of the source text on the basis of ensuring the understanding of the recipients, and conveys the maximum effect of the humorous and expressive language expressions in the source text, reflecting the translator's efforts in transporting the metaphor expressions of the source text under the perspective of eco-translatology.

Example 3: 你只靠一张**油嘴**, 胡说八道。 (Qian, 2002, p. 21)

Translation 3: Your **big mouth and glib tongue** are spouting all kinds of nonsense. (Kelly & Mao, 2003, p. 28)

In this example, the translator's translation of the metaphor “油嘴” is a direct translation, and after comprehensive consideration, the translator adds the present tense, which precisely realizes the transformation in the linguistic dimension, vividly conveying Ms. Bao's anger at that time and reproducing the source text's expression effect.

### Cultural-Dimensional Transformation

The cultural dimension of adaptive selection of translation refers to the translator's consideration of the cultural factors behind the two languages when performing translation transplantation. As Nida (1993) argued, the translation process should not only focus on the proficient use of the two languages, but also have an in-depth understanding of the culture behind the languages, because only when language and culture are combined does it have significant conversational meaning. Therefore, translators should pay attention to the cultural differences between the source language and the translated language in the translation process, and fully consider the different ways of thinking and the acceptability of the translated text in different cultures.

Example 4: 你们**西装朋友**是不用这老古董的…… (Qian, 2002, p. 29)

Translation 4: You people **in Western suits** won't need this antique... (Kelly & Mao, 2003, p. 37)

The metaphor expression “西装朋友” in the source text is a common expression in the pre-statehood China of the last century, which is also in the context of the novel. In those days, China was in a situation of poverty and weakness, so wearing a suit represented to a certain extent a dignified status, especially a progressive idea, in contrast to the “老古董” in the original sentence. The translator chooses to use the literal translation because the specific cultural connotation that Chinese people wearing suits in those days represented their advancement in thought is known to readers in the English-speaking world. At the same time, such a translated text using foreignization translation strategy allows the target readers to feel the novelty and charm of the linguistic expressions of the foreign culture, which is conducive to experiencing the connotation of Chinese culture and realizing the linguistic transformation of the cultural dimension.

Example 5: 这姓方的不合式, **气量**太小…… (Qian, 2002, p. 36)

Translation 5: That Fang fellow isn't suitable. He's too **small-minded**... (Kelly & Mao, 2003, p. 48)

The word “气量” in the source text is a very common expression in Chinese, equivalent to “胸怀” and “度量”, and the Chinese character “气” is often combined with some other Chinese characters to form various meanings, but this concept is not available in English cultural expressions. The word “small-minded” in the target text is a perfect transposition of the word “气量” in the Chinese cultural context, which is in line with target

readers' construal ways, and at the same time, it conveys the connotation of “胸怀” and “度量” in the source text, achieving an adaptive transformation of the cultural dimension.

### Communicative-Dimensional Transformation

The most direct purpose of translation is to achieve effective communication, and the adaptive transformation of the communicative dimension refers to not only focus on the linguistic expression of the target text and the transmission of the cultural connotation in the source text, but also focus on the communicative intention of the source text. Most of the metaphors in Chinese cultural contexts have cultural connotations with Chinese characteristics though, if the translation pays too much attention to the specific cultural connotations, the target text may become obscure and hard to understand, so the communicative-dimensional transformation should also be fully considered when translating.

Example 6: 总算认识了你们这两位大架子小姐, 以后不敢碰钉子了。 (Qian, 2002, p. 53)

Translation 6: Now, at least, I know what a couple of stuck-up girls you are. Next time, **I won't risk a refusal.** (Kelly & Mao, 2003, p. 66)

The origin of the metaphorical expression “碰钉子” in the original text is that in feudal China there were nails on the gates of government offices and official houses, referring to the fact that the people often found it difficult to enter those offices and houses' entrances and to get things done there, and they were often rejected and snubbed, so this is why the expression “碰钉子” is subsequently used to mean “to be rejected or rebuked”. This expression and its connotation is vacant in the English context; thus a direct translation of its metaphorical image may be confusing to the target reader. The translation of the expression “I won't risk a refusal” well reflects the fact that Fang Hongjian invited Miss Su to dinner without success but also took Miss Su to no avail, achieving the communicative purpose of the translation.

Example 7: 你这人就爱吃醋, 吃不相干的醋。 (Qian, 2002, p. 54)

Translation 7: You **like being jealous**, and it's over nothing. (Kelly & Mao, 2003, p. 67)

The metaphorical expression “吃醋” in the source text is very common in the Chinese context, but there is a lack of similar metaphorical expressions in the English cultural context; “吃醋” in Chinese context refers to being jealousy, especially in the relationship between men and women, and this meaning is said to originate from a court story in the Tang Dynasty. This meaning is said to have originated from a court story during the Tang Dynasty, so it is difficult to explain it in the English context or to retain the original metaphorical image, and literal translation of “吃醋” is also not conducive to the fluency of the sentence. In the target text, the Chinese metaphor expression “吃醋” is rendered as “like being jealous”, which fully conveys the emotion to be expressed in the source text and realizes the transformation of the communicative dimension in the translation process.

### Conclusion

The metaphor expressions used in *Fortress Besieged* is an important aspect to contribute to this novel's great success in wording and expression, and therefore the study of its metaphor expressions' translation is of great importance. This study analyzes the metaphor translation in the English version of *Fortress Besieged* from the perspectives of linguistic, cultural, and communicative dimensions in the perspective of eco-translatology, and illustrates that the three-dimensional perspectives of eco-translatology all have guiding significance for translation practice, and that various factors should be fully considered to make different dimensional transformation choices. Meanwhile, according to the analysis of metaphor expressions' translation in this paper,

I find that the three translation dimensions of linguistics, culture, and communication are not independent of each other but intersect with each other, and the integration and balance of the three dimensions is the core concept advocated by eco-translatology.

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