

Research on Zheng Zhenduo's Translation Thoughts From the Perspective of Eco-Translatology

Fan Yang^{1,2,*}

¹Department of Foreign Languages, Fuzhou University of International Studies and Trade, Fuzhou, Fujian 350001, China

²Graduate School, University of Perpetual Help System DALTA, Las Pinas City, 1740, Philippines

*Corresponding author. Email: hellonancy@126.com

ABSTRACT

Zheng Zhenduo was a prominent translator, writer and archaeologist in the May Fourth New Literature Movement. He made great achievements in the study of translation and translation practice during the 1920s. As a cross-disciplinary theory, Eco-translatology provides a new perspective for the study of translation. The study shows that in Zheng Zhenduo's translation activities the following ideas are embodied: "harmonious unity" of translational eco-systems, "translator-centredness" of translation subjectivity, translators' action of "adaptation and selection", and translators' pursuance of "doing things with translations".

Keywords: *Eco-translatology, Zheng Zhenduo, translation thoughts*

I. INTRODUCTION

Zheng Zhenduo (1898-1958), one of the pioneers of the May Fourth New Culture Movement in China, was an excellent translator, writer and archaeologist. In addition, he also made outstanding contributions to literary editing, sorting out and protecting cultural heritage. Zheng Zhenduo began his literary translation work during the May Fourth New Culture Movement, and continued to work hard in the field of translation theory research and translation practice for decades. He translated a large number of Russian, Indian, Greek and Roman literary works, including Russian dramas of "Seagull", "June" and "Poverty Is Not Criminal", Russian novels of "Vengerova" and "Sanine", Tagore's poetry anthologies of "Stray Birds" and "The Crescent Moon", Greek works of "The Legend of Heroes in Greek and Roman Myths" and "Greek Myths", and children's literary works of "Reynard and the Fox". The themes of his translations are different, including works reflecting Russian realism, poems containing life philosophy, and children's literature full of childlike innocence. In addition, his translations have different genres, including dramas, novels and poems. However, Zheng Zhenduo's translated works are of high level, among which the "Stray Birds" and "The Crescent Moon" are the most popular ones. As soon as Zheng Zhenduo's translation of "Stray Birds" was published, it aroused the love of readers and influenced a generation of young readers, including Bing Xin and others.

Among the numerous translation versions of "Stray Birds", Zheng Zhenduo's version is the most popular and influential one, and it is still loved by readers from generation to generation. From this, Zheng Zhenduo's translation level can be seen. Zheng Zhenduo also has his own views on translation theory. He has made outstanding contributions in introducing advanced translation theories, discussing the translator's responsibility and the appropriate Europeanization of language. Many of his views are quite forward-looking and predictable.

Eco-translatology is an interdisciplinary translation theory put forward by Professor Hu Gengshen. It systematically discusses translation issues under the guidance of ecological principles. [1] Professor Hu first put forward the theory of translation adaptation and selection. It can be summarized as "a theoretical paradigm of translation that is guided by the basic principles and thoughts of Darwin's 'adaptation/selection' theory, takes the thematic concept of 'translation being adaptation and selection' as the keynote, takes the translation concept of 'translator-centredness' as the core, and is able to make new interpretations of the translation ontology" [2]. Based on this, this paper explores the Eco-translatology. Eco-translatology does not study the source text, translator, translation and other elements related to translation solely, but integrate them organically into scientific research. Therefore, Eco-translatology is a holistic study on the interaction between the translator and the ecological environment of translation. [3] Based on the above understanding, the interpretation of Zheng Zhenduo's translation thoughts from the perspective of

*Fund: This paper is supported by Education and Teaching Reform Research Project of Undergraduate Universities in Fujian Province China (Project Number: FBJG20180203).

translation ecology may help to dig deeper and understand Zheng Zhenduo's translation thoughts, or evaluate the academic value of his translated works more fairly and objectively.

II. "HARMONIOUS UNITY" OF TRANSLATIONAL ECO-SYSTEMS

Eco-translatology holds that translation is a holistic activity, and the "harmonious unity" of various factors in the process of translation should be fully considered in the study of translation. The "harmonious unity" refers to the overall "harmonious unity" of comprehensive factors, including the "harmonious unity" of translation ecology, text ecology and "translation community" ecology, as well as cross-language "harmonious unity", cross-cultural "harmonious unity", "harmonious unity" between internal and external causes, macro and micro "harmonious unity".

In Zheng Zhenduo's translation thought and practice, the concept of "harmonious unity" runs through it. In "Three Issues on Translating Literary Works", Zheng Zhenduo first introduced and commented in detail on the three principles of Tytler's translation, namely, "A translation should give a complete transcript of the ideas of the original work. The style and manner of writing should be of the same character as that of the original. A translation should have all the ease of the original composition." [4] In his comments, Zheng Zhenduo proposed that the translation should first be faithful to the original text, but at the same time, it must avoid the two extremes of "word for word translation" and "overindulgence". It is necessary to find a balance between the two, which can fully reflect the meaning of the original text in the translation, show the style of the original text, and do not rigidly adhere to the translation word for word. In Zheng Zhenduo's opinions, a good translation should fully convey the meaning of the original work, maintain the style of the original work, and at the same time, make the target readers read smoothly and naturally, and conform to the reading habits of the target readers. In order to make the translation that meets the readers' aesthetic expectation, translators should concentrate on the original work, consider all the factors in the process of translation, integrate the spirit of the original work with the translator's personal interpretation, and find the balance of language, culture, style and communication.

Zheng Zhenduo believed that translation activities should be in harmony with the social environment at that time. On the issue of choosing literary works for translation, he believed that it should start from the social reality and choose the literary works that meet the needs of the people at that time. When Zheng Zhenduo began to engage in translation activities, it was in the rise of the May 4th New Literary Movement

in China. At that time, China's social system and science and technology were relatively backward. Scholars from all walks of life called for "opening up the wisdom of the people" and actively absorbing advanced western culture, science and technology. In such a social context, Zheng Zhenduo proposed that translators should choose more positive works that can enrich people's cultural life. During this period, Zheng Zhenduo translated a large number of Russian works reflecting realistic themes, hoping to provide Chinese readers with reference to solve domestic contradictions by taking advantage of similar national conditions and social problems. It reflects the "harmonious unity" between his translation practice and social environment.

III. "TRANSLATOR-CENTREDNESS" OF TRANSLATION SUBJECTIVITY

Eco-translatology holds that the translator plays a central role in the process of translation and plays a leading role in translation activities. As a bridge and link between the original text and the target text, the role of the translator cannot be underestimated. The level of the translator directly affects the quality of the translation, and even determines the popularity of the original text in the target country.

Zheng Zhenduo once pointed out the importance of translators in his article. It is through the unremitting efforts of translators that a large number of excellent foreign literary works can be accepted by Chinese readers. Translation is a part of culture communication. [5] The translator's role in introducing foreign literary works and scientific ideas and spreading other countries' culture should not be ignored. It is precisely because the translator is in the central position in the process of translation that the translator should not neglect all aspects of translation. Zheng Zhenduo encouraged the translators at that time or young people who were interested in translation to fully understand the importance of translation, constantly study and explore, and improve their translation level and cultural literacy. The survival and development of translators cannot be separated from the improvement of their own translation level. Only when the professional level of translators is improved can they be able to translate high-quality literary works. Only by making high-quality translations can translators develop better.

In his translation activities, Zheng Zhenduo also gave full play to the role of "translator-centredness" and assumed the responsibility of the translator. In his early years, he tried to translate "The Crescent Moon", but the initial translation was not smooth. He was not satisfied with his translation. He only published a few poems in "The Story Magazine". After careful study and speculation of the original poem and his profound writing skills, Zheng Zhenduo finally translated "Stray Birds" and published "The Crescent Moon" next year.

These two translated works show Zheng Zhenduo's outstanding translation, which have stood the test of time and are still widely circulated and loved by readers.

The translator plays an important role as a medium between the original text and the target text, as well as between the author and the reader. A good literary work cannot attract foreign readers without a high level of translation.[6] The translator's personal accomplishment, cultural level and aesthetic ability all affect the translator's translation ability more or less. To some extent, the translators' writing level must reach or approach the original author's level of writing. And then, they can fully understand the original work and realize the spiritual dialogue with the original author. Therefore, translators should make continuous efforts to tap their personal potential, give full play to their subjective initiative and improve their translation level.

IV. TRANSLATORS' ACTION OF "ADAPTATION AND SELECTION"

Eco-translatology holds that "adaptation" and "selection" are the instincts of translators in translation practice. In the ternary relationship among the original text, the translator and the translated text, the original text and the translated text are not living beings, so they have no ability to make "selection". The translator is the only living body. Therefore, only the translator has the ability of "selection" and "adaptation" in translation practice. As the link between the original text and the target text, the translator should carefully use the ability of "adaptation" and "selection".

In translation practice, Zheng Zhenduo is always cautious about "adaptation" and "selection". From the beginning of selecting translation works, he screened them carefully. The criteria for selecting works were not personal preferences or the difficulty of the works. He first considered whether the works had the spirit of the times, whether they were suitable for Chinese readers at that time, and whether they could promote the development of culture. Therefore, his works are either positive and bring aesthetic feeling to readers, or reflect the real life and provide reference for solving the social contradictions at that time in China. There are also works that provide new knowledge and fill in the blank of similar subjects at that time.

In the selection of translation standards, Zheng Zhenduo stressed that the translation should be faithful to the original text, but he did not translate the original text word by word. The translator should properly handle and convey the meaning and style of the original text to the target text, but not use the sentence pattern and words of the target text to be exactly the same as that of the original text. For example, in explaining the translatability of poetry, Zheng Zhenduo proposed that

although the rhythm of poetry cannot be completely translated, the content of poetry and the author's emotion can be fully reproduced in another language. When translating "Stray Birds" and "The Crescent Moon", Zheng Zhenduo chose to keep the prose style of the original work, and did not try to translate the original poem into a poem more suitable for Chinese rule, so that Chinese readers could get in touch with the new poetry genre and feel the beauty of its rhyme. When he translated other novels, dramas and fairy tales, Zheng Zhenduo also chose to translate in vernacular, abandoning the traditional ancient Chinese. On the one hand, the vernacular language is closer to the original text and the translation is closer to the original text. On the other hand, the vernacular language is more suitable for the pursuit of new culture in the society at that time.

Zheng Zhenduo's "selection" and "adaptation" in the process of translation were made according to the translation ecological environment at that time and considering the overall situation. At that time, the readers were not only eager to adapt to the current situation of China, but also to meet the requirements of the new era.

V. TRANSLATORS' PURSUANCE OF "DOING THINGS WITH TRANSLATIONS"

Translation is a purposeful activity. "Doing something in translation" means that the translator should have a higher pursuit of translation and strive to change people's thinking and promote cultural progress.

It was with the motive of "saving the nation and the people" that Zheng Zhenduo began his translation. He first translated Russian literature, but he did not learn Russian himself, so he could only translate English version of Russian works into Chinese version. The reason why Zheng Zhenduo chose to translate Russian literature persistently is that he took a fancy to the works of Russian critical realism, which may bring Chinese readers ideas and methods to solve Chinese social problems. During the May 4th Movement, the struggle against imperialism and feudalism was fierce, and class and social contradictions were acute. The vast number of patriots was eager to resist the tradition and liberate the Chinese people's thoughts from the ideological and cultural fields. Most of the Russian literary works selected by Zheng Zhenduo reflect social reality, which can provide reference for Chinese readers to think about China's development path.

Zheng Zhenduo translated two classical Greek literary works, "The Legend of Heroes in Greek and Roman Myths" and "Greek Myths", hoping to introduce excellent classical literature to Chinese readers and broaden the horizons of Chinese youth. Zheng Zhenduo was quite good at literature. When reading European literary works, he found that there are allusions of

Greek mythology in many European literary works. If readers do not understand Greek mythology, they will have certain obstacles when reading European literary works. Similarly, translators also have a lot of difficulties in translating, and even using annotations, it will reduce readers' interest and enthusiasm in reading. In order to solve this problem fundamentally, Zheng Zhenduo translated two works about Greek mythology and Roman mythology, which enriched readers' knowledge and helped them better appreciate European literary works.

There is many children's literature in Zheng Zhenduo's translation works, the most famous one is "Reynard and the Fox". When talking about the translation of children's literature, he said that children's literature should abandon the feudal concept, and use positive content, vivid and interesting words, which can attract children's interest in reading. At the same time, it should also have a certain degree of cruelty in social reality, so that children can establish a correct social outlook. Therefore, he translated many excellent foreign children's literature works for Chinese young readers, enriched children's spiritual world, cultivated children's reading habits from childhood, and hoped to instill the thoughts of freedom and anti-feudalism into the next generation of China.

VI. CONCLUSION

To interpret and discuss Zheng Zhenduo's translation thoughts from the perspective of Eco-translatology is helpful to study Zheng Zhenduo's translation thoughts and practice from a new perspective. The quantity of Zheng Zhenduo's translation, the wide range of subjects and genres, and the high quality of his translations are amazing. His translation thoughts are closely combined with his translation practice. It can be said that his translation practice promotes the formation and perfection of his translation thoughts, and his translation thoughts further guide his translation practice to become more perfect. He pays attention to the "harmonious unity" of translational eco-systems, attaches importance to the "translator's responsibility", carefully makes "selection" and "adaptation" in the process of translation, and pursues the principle of "doing something in translation". All these reflect his rigorous attitude towards translation and his constant exploration of translation methods, which are worth learning for contemporary translators.

References

- [1] Hu Gengshen. Eco-translatology: A New Paradigm of Eco-translation: A Comparative Study on Approaches to Translation Studies and a Brief Response to Some Related Questions/Doubts [J]. *Foreign Languages in China*, 2014 (5): 104-111. (in Chinese)
- [2] Hu Gengshen. Translation Adaptation and Selection Theory [M]. Wuhan: Hubei Education Press, 2004: 181. (in Chinese)
- [3] Hu Gengshen. On Fu Lei's Translation Philosophies: An Eco-translatological Perspective [J]. *Journal of Foreign Languages*. 2009(2): 47-53. (in Chinese)
- [4] Zheng Zhenduo. The Complete Works of Zheng Zhenduo (Volume 20) [M]. Hebei: Huashan Literature and Art Publishing House. 1998:59. (in Chinese)
- [5] Steiner, George. After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation [M]. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975: 56.
- [6] Yang Fan. A Study on Two Chinese Versions of Stray Birds from the Perspective of Eco-translatology [J]. *Journal of Anyang Normal University*. 2018(3): 79-81. (in Chinese)