UDC 81

THE ECO-PARADIGM IN TRANSLATION STUDIES: PROBLEMS AND PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract*. This article examines the emergence and development of the ecological paradigm within Translation Studies, critically assessing both its theoretical contributions and its practical limitations. Tracing the trajectory from metaphorical applications of ecological concepts to the formalized framework of Eco-translatology, the study identifies key challenges confronting the paradigm, including its philosophical underdevelopment, the tension between its holistic aspirations and its operational methodologies, and the difficulty of empirically validating its central claims. The article further explores future perspectives, considering how Eco-translatology might engage with technological advancements such as artificial intelligence and machine translation, while also addressing the imperative for its internationalization beyond East Asian academic contexts. Despite these challenges, the article argues that the ecological paradigm offers a valuable corrective to reductionist views of translation, promoting a more interconnected, ethical, and adaptive understanding of translational practice. It concludes that the paradigm's future viability depends on its capacity to refine its theoretical foundations, expand its empirical applications, and demonstrate its relevance to contemporary translation challenges in an increasingly globalized and digitally mediated world.*

Key words*: eco-translatology, language ecology, eco-holism, metaphorical framework, paradigm shift.*

TARJIMASHUNOSLIKDA EKO-PARADIGMA: MUAMMO VA ISTIQBOLLAR

Annotatsiya*. Mazkur maqolada tarjimashunoslik doirasida ekologik paradigmaning vujudga kelishi va rivojlanishi ko'rib chiqilib, uning nazariy hissasi hamda amaliy cheklovlari tanqidiy baholanadi. Ekologik konsepsiyalarning metaforik qo'llanilishidan boshlab, ekotranslyatsiya nazariyaning shakllangan tuzilmasigacha bo'lgan rivojlanish yo'lini kuzatish orqali tadqiqot ushbu paradigma oldida turgan asosiy muammolarni aniqlaydi. Jumladan, uning falsafiy yo'nalishidagi kamchiliklar, nazariy tushunchalari bilan operatsion metodologiyalari o'rtasidagi ziddiyat, shuningdek, asosiy nazariy qarashlarini empirik jihatdan tekshirish bilan bog'liq qiyinchiliklar shular jumlasidandir. Maqolada kelajak istiqbollari ko'rib chiqilib, ekotranslyatsiya nazariyaning sun'iy intellekt va mashina tarjimasi kabi texnologik yutuqlar bilan qanday o'zaro aloqaga kirishishi mumkinligi tahlil qilinadi, shuningdek, uni Sharqiy-Osiyo akademik kontekstidan tashqarida internatsionallashtirish zarurati ko'rib chiqiladi. Mazkur muammolarga qaramay, maqolada ekologik paradigma tarjimaga nisbatan reduksion qarashlarni qayta ko'rib chiqish uchun muhim imkoniyat yaratishi, tarjima amaliyotini yanada o'zaro bog'liq, axloqiy va moslashuvchan tarzda tushunishga ko'maklashishi ta'kidlanadi. Xulosa sifatida, mazkur paradigmaning kelgusidagi hayotiyligi uning nazariy asoslarini takomillashtirish, empirik qo'llanish doirasini kengaytirish hamda tobora globallashib borayotgan va raqamli texnologiyalar vositasida shakllanayotgan dunyo sharoitida zamonaviy tarjima muammolarini hal etishdagi dolzarbligini namoyon eta olish qobiliyatiga bog'liq ekanligi qayd etiladi.*

Kalit so'zlar*: ekotranslatologiya, ekolingvistika, ekoholizm, metaforik konsepsiya, paradigma almashinuvi.*

ЭКО-ПАРАДИГМА В ПЕРЕВОДОВЕДЕНИИ: ПРОБЛЕМЫ И ПЕРСПЕКТИВЫ

Аннотация*. В данной статье рассматривается возникновение и развитие экологической парадигмы в рамках переводоведения, критически оцениваются как её теоретический вклад, так и практические ограничения, прослеживая путь от метафорического применения экологических концепций до формализованной структуры эко-трансляционной теории. Исследование выявляет ключевые проблемы, стоящие перед этой парадигмой, включая недостатки её философской*

направленности, противоречие между её теоретическими понятиями и операциональными методологиями, а также трудности эмпирической проверки её основных утверждений. В статье также рассматриваются перспективы на будущее, анализируется, как эко-трансляционная теория может взаимодействовать с технологическими достижениями, такими как искусственный интеллект и машинный перевод, а также рассматривается необходимость её интернационализации за пределами восточноазиатского академического контекста. Несмотря на эти проблемы, в статье утверждается, что экологическая парадигма предлагает ценную корректировку редукционистских взглядов на перевод, способствуя более взаимосвязанному, этичному и адаптивному пониманию переводческой практики. В заключение делается вывод о том, что будущая жизнеспособность данной парадигмы зависит от её способности совершенствовать свои теоретические основы, расширять эмпирическое применение и демонстрировать свою актуальность для решения современных задач перевода в условиях всё более глобализированного и опосредованного цифровыми технологиями мира.

Ключевые слова: *эко-транслатология, эколингвистика, эко-холизм, метафорическая концепция, смена парадигмы*

Introduction. For several decades, the dominant approaches to Translation Studies were largely preoccupied with the issues of linguistic equivalence, cultural transfer, and perennial dichotomy between "faithfulness" and "freedom". However, just as the natural world is governed by complex systems of interdependence, balance, and evolution, the field of Translation Studies has witnessed the emergence of a holistic paradigm that challenges anthropocentric and mechanical views of language transfer. In recent decades, one of the most intriguing developments has been the emergence of the *eco-paradigm*, which seeks to reinterpret translation through the lens of ecology, sustainability, adaptation, and the dynamic interaction between languages, cultures, societies, and environments. Eco-translatology, a theoretical framework pioneered by Chinese scholar Hu Gengshen, offers an ecological approach to translation, redefining it as a process of adaptation and selection within a translation ecosystem. [5] The eco-paradigm reflects a broader interdisciplinary movement that has affected numerous fields of the humanities and social sciences. As ecological thinking increasingly influences philosophy, sociology, linguistics, and literary studies, Translation Studies has also begun to reconsider its theoretical foundations. Translation is no longer viewed merely as a process of transferring linguistic information from one language into another; instead, it is understood as an ecological activity situated within complex systems of communication, culture, ideology, technology, and human interaction. In fact, eco-translatology represents a significant and necessary evolution in translation theory. By tracing its historical development from metaphorical roots to a robust theoretical system, and by critically examining its future perspective in a globalized world, it becomes clear that eco-translatology, while facing certain challenges, is poised to become a dominant force in shaping the future of Translation Studies.

Historical roots and prerequisites for development.

The historical trajectory of Eco-translatology can be understood through the model of disciplinary turns proposed by D.Bachmann-Medick, which charts a movement through thematic expansion, metaphorical application, and methodological refinement. [2] The initial phase of the ecological turn in translation studies was characterized by a thematic expansion of the field. Translation scholars began to show interest in themes directly related to the environment, such as the translation of ecological literature, climate discourse, and indigenous knowledge systems. This expansion moved the discipline beyond its traditional focus on literary and religious texts to encompass urgent global issues.

Other scholars consider that "The major intersection of language and ecology is, no doubt, indebted to Einar Haugen's (1971) seminal work, in which he first introduced the concept of language ecology as a metaphorical framework. Haugen defined the ecology of language as "the interactions between any given language and its environment" [4; 325], and with this definition, he was able to connect the two points: environment and language, through an extremely powerful metaphor. The framework constructed in the 1970s saw languages in the light of living organisms, similar to biological organisms, which interact with one another in ecosystems. Just as plants and animals adapt to their ecological niches, languages evolve, thrive, decline, or even perish depending on the social, cultural, and political environments in which they are embedded." [1]

The second and more conceptual phase involved the metaphorical application of ecological concepts. Terms like "*translation ecology*" and "*ecosystem*" were borrowed to describe the complex environment in which translations operate. This was an attempt to capture the dynamic, interconnected nature of the

translation process, moving away from static, text-focused analyses. These metaphors served as a stepping stone, paving the way for a more systematic theory.

The third and most definitive stage, methodological refinement, saw the birth of Eco-translatology as a formal paradigm. Spearheaded by Hu Gengshen, this framework synthesized concepts from Darwinian evolution – specifically "adaptation and selection" – with traditional Eastern eco-wisdom and the philosophical principle of Eco-holism. [6] G.Hu's seminal work posits that translation is fundamentally a translator's "adaptation and selection" within a translational eco-environment. The translator, as the central agent, must adapt to the environment, which includes the source text, the target culture, and the specific context of the translation task, and then select the most appropriate translational choices to survive and thrive in the target ecosystem. [6] This framework is operationalized through a "three-dimensional transformation" process, which involves adapting the translation at the linguistic, cultural, and communicative levels. This represents a concrete shift from viewing translation as a simple act of transfer to understanding it as a survival mechanism in a complex ecosystem.

Approaches to defining eco-translatology as a seminal discipline.

The eco-paradigm is grounded in ecological philosophy, systems theory, complexity theory, and interdisciplinary thinking. Unlike traditional mechanistic models, ecological thinking emphasizes interdependence, adaptation, balance, diversity, sustainability, and dynamic interaction among multiple components of a system. Applied to translation, this perspective suggests that every translation exists within a complex ecosystem consisting of authors, translators, readers, publishers, languages, cultures, technologies, institutions, historical circumstances, and communicative purposes. None of these elements function independently; instead, each influences the others in multiple directions.

According to Yan Liu "Eco-translatology is an interdisciplinary field of study that focuses on the interconnection of environment, culture, and language in translation. The translation process is not a simple language conversion, but a complex process involving various cultural and environmental factors. Ecological Translation Studies aims to examine the impact of translation on environmental sustainability and cultural diversity by considering the context of the source and target texts. It also involves considering the impact of translation on society and exploring ways to achieve greater harmony between humans and nature through translation. It shows that translation is a process of adaptive selection for translators, and believes that translation is a process of multi-dimensional transformation, focusing on linguistic, communicative and cultural dimension." [9; 230] Here the scholar specifically emphasizes the connection between people and surrounding world, which should be taken into consideration in the process of translation to achieve the maximal degree of translational adequacy.

Further, many scholars insist of subdividing eco-translatology as an independent discipline motivating it by developing the specific features and approaches. In particular, "Eco-translatology is a self-contained translation theory system. Under the guidance of eco-holism, it emphasizes its metaphorical reference to the basic principle of "survival of the fittest", which is generally accepted by human beings. It not only shows the characteristics of a discipline at the abovementioned connection point but also constructs a holistic translation ecosystem, reveals the eco-reason of translation, and proposes Eco-translation ethics based on the classical precepts of ancient Chinese philosophy, such as "*man and nature as one*", "*follow nature's course*", "*people-oriented*", and "*moderately harmonious*". Constructed on the abovementioned basis, Eco translatology answers the fundamental questions in translation studies: "What is translation?" "Who translates?" "How to translate?" and "Why to translate?" What is translation (what) refers to translation as an activity of the translator's selection and adaptation to the translational eco-environment and textual life transplantation; who translates (who) refers to "translator-centeredness" and "translator's responsibility" in the ethics of translation; how to translate (how) refers to the translator's "survival of the fittest", "selective adaptation", and "adaptive selection"; and why to translate(why) refers to the core tenets of translation studies, such as "doing things with translations". Meanwhile, Eco translatology provides a new overview and exposition of translation principles, translation processes, translation criteria, translation strategies, translation methods, and other translation phenomena as well as the holistic translation ecosystem from the perspective of eco-reason." [3; 7] It is especially focused by Chinese researchers whose background deeply roots in Chinese philosophy and cultural perspectives.

These ideas are widely supported by G.Hu and Y.Tao who extended the borders of this approach: "Eco-Translatology takes "ecology" as its perspective of argumentation, a comprehensive and holistic study on translation from the ecological perspective. Namely, Eco-Translatology tries to interpret and examine translation from eco-holism, rather than from the perspectives of linguistics, literature, culturology, communication, Skopos, feminism, ideology, etc." [8; 123]

Drawing upon developments in translation studies, ecological thought, and specifically the theory of translation as adaptation and selection, Eco-translatology has given rise to a distinct terminology (including such concepts as the "*translational ecosystem*", "*translational eco-environment*", "*textual transplants*", and "*translator's adaptations and selections*". This emerging framework has also introduced notions of "*survival through selection*", "*coexistence and interaction*", and a fundamental "*emphasis on existence and harmony*". Through sustained theoretical investigation, scholars in this domain have sought to construct an alternative perspective on the translational ecosystem, establishing an ecological metaphor through which translation, grounded in practical activity, may be holistically conceptualized.

By developing these ideas, G.Hu identified the following discernible features of Eco-translatology:

1. a unique research perspective (a macroscopic eco-reason perspective);

2. specific research foci (textual ecology, translator-community ecology, and translation-environment ecology);

3. systemic research subjects (interaction and interrelation between translational text, translator, and translational eco-environment; the research trinity of the macroscopic framework of translation studies, mesoscopic system of translation theory studies, and microscopic textual production, etc.);

4. supporting terminology (e.g., ecology, life, survival, selective adaptation, adaptive selection, translational eco-environment, translational ecosystem, Eco-translation ethics, translator responsibility, "doing something with Eco translations", "post-event penalty", "survival through selection", multi symbiosis, multiple eco-integration); and

5. nascent research methodology (interdisciplinary intersections, metaphorical analogies, conceptual borrowings, and particularly the systematic synthesis of eco-holism). [7; 33-34]

Nevertheless, the researcher still considers the evolution of Eco-translatology within the framework of traditional translation studies claiming that "it is rational to label Eco-translatology as "cross-disciplinary" and to consider it a subdiscipline of general translation studies". [7; 34]

Another viewpoint on Eco-translatology is focused on the translator's personality and his/her ability to cooperate with linguistic and cultural environment. Some scholars insist on the idea that translation should not be viewed as the mechanical transfer of linguistic forms but as an adaptive process of negotiating relationships between interacting systems, which significantly expands the translator's role. "This approach of translation puts the translator at the center of the process and gives priority to maintaining ecological integrity. There are two steps in the translation process of eco-translatology: the translator's selection and adaptation. The translation environment, which includes both the original text's and the target language's environments, is referred to as the translator's adaption. Using a "three-dimensional" adaptation approach that takes into account the linguistic, cultural, and communicative aspects of the translational eco-environment, the translator selects the best translational eco-environment." [11; 125-126]

Finally, a group of scholars refer Eco-translatology to the discipline that deals with translation of ecological texts, or everything related to nature: "…eco-translation might be a strategy to understand and know the concerns and implications of nature, earth, universe and the common home in general. In this procedure, ecological texts and all the creations, may be considered as the source language/text and the target text/language would be the understanding and concerns that will be given to these elements. Eco-translatology emphasizes the ecological environment of translation and the adaptation and selection of translators." [10; 176] This interpretation narrows the Eco-translatology to a specific discourse and can be restricted only by its reference to special translation opportunities.

Perspectives for development and future challenges.

While Eco-translatology has made significant strides, its future development is contingent on addressing several persistent challenges and exploring new frontiers.

One of the primary criticisms of Eco-translatology is its philosophical foundation. While its integration of Eastern philosophy and Darwinian biology is its greatest strength, it has also been criticized for a lack of rigorous philosophical depth. Some scholars argue that its use of ecological terminology can sometimes appear as a fashionable metaphor rather than a fully fleshed-out methodology. [12] To secure its place in global translation discourse, Eco-translatology must move beyond metaphorical language and further develop its interdisciplinary intersections with fields like ecolinguistics, biosemiotics, and sociology to build a more robust and empirically testable framework.

The rapid advancement of technology, particularly Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine translation, presents both a challenge and an opportunity. AI-driven translation tools often struggle with cultural nuance, contextual adaptation, and the "eco-balance" that Eco-translatology champions. The future of the theory lies in demonstrating how human translators, guided by ecological principles, can provide value that AI cannot

replicate. This involves understanding how translators can act as "ecological activists" who resist linguistic homogenization and preserve endangered worldviews and traditional ecological knowledge.

Furthermore, the internationalization of Eco-translatology is a critical step. While it is a "paradigm sourced from East Asian traditions", its universal application must be demonstrated across a wider variety of languages and cultural contexts. The future research agenda, as outlined by G.Hu himself, includes exploring the discipline's evolution within AI-driven contexts and developing the "life-oriented translation Dao" and "source-oriented translation art". A key research gap remains in the empirical application of its principles, moving beyond theoretical construction to demonstrate its practical utility in fields like translator training and literary analysis.

Conclusion. Eco-translatology has undeniably carved out a significant niche in the landscape of Translation Studies. Its historical development from a simple metaphor to a complex theoretical system represents a paradigm shift that challenges the field to rethink the very nature of translation. By framing translation as an adaptive process within a dynamic ecosystem, it promotes a more ethical, holistic, and interconnected view of the translator's work. However, for Eco-translatology to realize its full potential and transition from a promising theory to a foundational paradigm, it must continue to evolve. This evolution requires addressing its philosophical gaps, engaging more deeply with the challenges and opportunities presented by new technologies like AI, and expanding its empirical and international scope. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected and faces profound ecological crises, the ecological perspective offered by Eco-translatology, with its emphasis on balance, harmony, and adaptation, will likely become an indispensable tool for navigating the complex challenges of intercultural communication in the 21st century.

Although the eco-paradigm still faces conceptual and methodological challenges, its interdisciplinary orientation makes it one of the most promising approaches for future Translation Studies. Continued refinement of ecological concepts, stronger empirical validation, closer engagement with artificial intelligence, and deeper integration with cognitive and sociocultural research will further strengthen its theoretical foundations. Ultimately, the eco-paradigm reflects a broader transformation in contemporary scholarship: the recognition that translation is not an isolated linguistic act but a living ecological practice that connects languages, cultures, technologies, and people within an ever-evolving global communicative ecosystem.

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