

# WHAT CAN TRANSLATION DO FOR THE ENDANGERED EARTH? – AN OVERVIEW OF ECOCRITICAL TRANSLATION STUDIES

Meiou Zhao<sup>1</sup> and Jiyong Geng<sup>2</sup>

*<sup>1</sup>University of Shanghai for Science and Technology  
and <sup>2</sup>Beijing Jiaotong University*

**Abstract:** Ecocritical translation studies aim to discover and interpret the human-nature relationship embodied and represented in translation. Different from studies on translation ecology, they focus on ecology related to nature, rather than using ‘ecology’ as a metaphor. This article attempts to clarify the ecocritical translation studies by analyzing their meaning, features, current studies and basic paradigms. Ecocriticism enables translation studies to transcend the human realm and delve into the natural world, challenging anthropocentrism. In the face of global eco-crises, it offers a new perspective and direction for translation studies, infusing these studies with a concern for nature, ecological values, and the responsibility to save the endangered earth.

**Keywords:** ecocriticism, translation studies, ecology, the human-nature relationship, anthropocentrism, nature

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.3176/tr.2024.1.03>

Received 21 December 2023, accepted 15 January 2024, printed and available online 20 March 2024

## 1. Introduction

In response to environmental crises, the humanities are currently witnessing an ‘ecological turn’ where environmental issues are being addressed through various disciplines. Ecological studies within the humanities such as ecological aesthetics, ecological politics, and ecological philosophy, a multitude of such interdisciplinary studies have sprung up recently. There has been a growing interest in translation

studies from an ecological perspective, in line with the prevailing trend and the need to broaden the scope of translation studies in the Anthropocene and post-humanist era. Within this context, translation studies are exploring the ecological dimension to reveal human attitudes towards nature and the human-nature relationship as reflected in translation. Additionally, they seek to investigate the potential contributions of translation to the environmental sustainability of our endangered earth. This paper aims to analyze and reflect upon the new paradigm and perspective of translation studies known as ‘ecocritical translation studies’.

In the past two decades, there has been a growth of studies conducted on the intersection of translation and ecology. Existing studies in this area can be categorized into two groups based on the interpretation of ‘ecology’, namely, metaphorical ecology and nature-related ecology. Most studies fall under the former category.

At the beginning of the 21st century, Michael Cronin proposed the concept of ‘translation ecology’ (Cronin 2003: 165) for the protection of ‘minority languages’ in the context of globalization. In the same year, Hu Gengshen proposed the concept of ‘the translator’s adaptation and selection activities in a translational environment’ (Hu 2003: 283), which laid the foundation for the later development of eco-translatology. This ‘translational environment’ includes various factors – the source/target text and languages, the linguistic, cultural, and social aspects of translation, as well as the author, client, and readers. Following these initial contributions, scholars like Xu Jianzhong (2009), Wang Ning (2011), and Clive Scott (2015) have also explored translation ecology in a metaphorical sense. Their interpretations pertain to the translation system, text system, cognitive system, social environment, and other related aspects. However, it is important to note that while these studies represent the burgeoning of ecological translation studies, they use the ‘ecology’ metaphorically and do not address environmental issues nor promote environmental sustainability. Therefore, they are, in essence, not ‘eco-’studies.

In contrast, another category of current ecological translation studies examines the nature-related ‘ecology’. These studies explore the human-nature relationship reflected in translation, the influence of nature on translation, and the impact of translation on nature or human attitudes towards nature. As early as 1988, Newmark (1988) paid attention to the impact of ecology on translation, specifically the challenges posed by diverse natural ecologies and regional landscapes. In the subsequent decades, translation studies from this perspective have primarily focused on the following areas: biotranslation, which views translation as an intrinsic part of the natural ecosystem (Marais and Kull 2016, Zhou and Xie 2020); the interaction between translation and political ecology (Cronin 2017); the ecological implications of translation behaviors, processes, texts, and strategies (Geng 2018, Chen 2019, Hu et al. 2020), and the ecological views of translators (Chen 2017, Geng and Zhao 2021). These cover ontological, textual, and phenomenological examinations of translation, as well as studies focused on the translators. To distinguish these studies from the first category of ecological translation studies, we call them ‘ecocritical translation studies.’ The term ‘ecocriticism’ is employed here due to its explicit reference to ecological concerns, its interdisciplinary and cross-cultural applicability,

and its capacity to consider the ecological significance through translation issues in the context of environmental degradation. In the following sections, we will clarify the concept of ‘ecocritical translation studies’, and summarize and explore their features, related topics, current studies, basic paradigms, and rationale.

## 2. Meaning and features of ecocritical translation studies

What are ecocritical translation studies? To answer this question, it is necessary to understand ecocriticism. Ecocriticism is a green research methodology that has emerged in response to the contemporary environmental crisis. It aims to give a voice to the endangered earth. The origins of ecocriticism can be traced back to the field of literary studies when Joseph W. Meeker introduced the term ‘literary ecology’ in 1974. This concept advocates the exploration of the relationship between humans and other species, as revealed in literature (Meeker 1974: 3). In the 1990s, ecocriticism experienced a surge in popularity, extending its influence from the United States to other countries and igniting a global trend in ecological writing and critical studies. Among the numerous definitions of ecocriticism, the most widely accepted is the one provided by Glotfelty. He defines ecocriticism as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment,” characterized by an “earth-centered approach to literary studies” (Glotfelty 1996: xix).

However, ecocriticism is not limited to literary studies alone; it can also be utilized as a form of cultural criticism. Kerridge and Sammels, for instance, regard ecocriticism as a cultural criticism, elaborating on ecocriticism in *Writing the Environment*:

The ecocritic wants to track environmental ideas and representations wherever they appear, to see more clearly a debate which seems to be taking place, often part-concealed, in a great many cultural spaces. Most of all, ecocriticism seeks to evaluate texts and ideas in terms of their coherence and usefulness as responses to the environmental crisis (1998: 5).

Their words locate the application of ecocriticism in many cultural spaces. Similarly, Garrard applies ecocriticism to explore “the relationship between human beings and the environment in all areas of cultural production” (Garrard 2012: i). Accordingly, translation, as a cultural product, can be subject to ecocritical analysis within the field of translation studies.

The combination of ecocriticism and translation studies has been acknowledged by some scholars. Aksoy (2020: 30) argues that the ‘cultural turn’ in translation studies draws attention to the link between translation and ecocriticism, and this combination is expected to bring about new perspectives and evaluation methods for translations. Ecocritical perspectives in literary translation studies perceive translated texts as a “the space where the existence and treatment of ecological concerns in the source text have either been expressed or subdued in relation to the cultural environment in which the translated text is allowed to exist” (Aksoy 2020: 30). Guillermo Badenes and Josefina Coisson (2015: 360) also refer to the interdisciplinary integration

of ecocriticism and translation, and classify ‘ecotranslation’ into three situations: rereading and retranslating literary works where nature, having its voice in the source text, was silenced in translation; translating works that present an ecological cosmivision and have not yet been translated; and translating via manipulation works that do not originally present an ecological vision to create a new, now ecological, text.

These scholars’ explanations of the combination of ecocriticism and translation are limited to literary texts, but according to Garrard’s definition, the vision of ecocriticism includes all fields of cultural production. Therefore, we aim to provide a more comprehensive definition of ecocritical translation studies – ecocritical translation studies utilize ecocritical discourse to describe, explain, and analyze specific translators, translated texts, translation behaviors, phenomena, or other issues concerning translation. In short, they consider all aspects of translation as subjects of ecocritical research and seek to explore the human-nature relationship involved in translation.

The fundamental feature of ecocritical translation studies, compared with other branches of translation studies, lies in their ecological concern, that is, the care for nature and the attention to the human-nature relationship in the Anthropocene. Ecocritical translation studies are grounded in the essential humility of human beings, the humility about becoming aware of our place in the world. It involves recognizing and respecting non-human nature, acknowledging our shared existence on a singular planet, and understanding that the survival of human beings is intertwined with that of other species inhabiting this world. Distinguishing itself from other research approaches in translation, ecocritical translation studies transcend the narrow confines of human linguistic communication. It expands beyond the anthropocentric perspective to encompass the natural world. This shift redirects the focus of inquiry from language and text, traditionally at the heart of translation studies, to the broader realm of environmental sustainability encompassing the entirety of the planet that humanity inhabits. Consequently, translation is integrated into a more expansive and current context that invites contemplation and reflection.

### **3. Current ecocritical translation studies**

Combining ecocriticism with translation studies has given rise to the burgeoning of green translation studies. According to the reference of ecocriticism, all translation studies that explore the relationship and interaction between human beings and nature can be considered ecocritical translation studies. Since the human-nature relationship is embodied in all aspects of translation, these studies delve into every part of translation ecocritically. The existing studies predominantly focus on the following key aspects.

Firstly, studies may examine the human-nature relationship in the concept of translation itself. Different from the general understanding of ‘translation’ in translation studies, biosemioticians usually use the term ‘translation’ to denote the

processes by which meaning is generated in living systems (Hoffmeyer 2003, Kull and Torop 2011). They believe that non-human organisms also possess their own 'language' (the sign system of organisms), enabling them to transmit and understand the meanings of each other. Consequently, they regard the exchange of signs among organisms as a form of translation (Kull and Torop 2011). This form of translation is a process of meaning-making in living systems, including the inheritance of the genetic code and communication within the animal world. Kobus Marais and Kalevi Kull (2016: 184) have pointed out that 'semiotranslation' includes both 'biological translation' and linguistic translation, ranging from interlingual translation to adaptations of various nature and from literary texts to communication between animals. This aligns with Cronin's notion of 'tradosphere' (2017: 71) – "the sum of all translation systems on the planet, all the ways in which information circulates between living and non-living organisms and is translated into a language or a code that can be processed or understood by the receiving entity." Similarly, Zhou Hongxia and Xie Yu (2020) interpret the process of 'translation' by drawing from the protein translation mechanism and symmetry phenomena prevalent in Nature, providing a biological perspective on translation. All of these unconventional translation studies go beyond interpersonal communication to include interspecies communication in the concept of translation, thereby reexamining the ontology of translation in the dimension of the human-nature relationship. In other words, they attempt to answer 'what is translation' from an ecocritical perspective.

The second aspect that ecocritical translation studies focus on is the ecological value of the source texts. In some translation studies, the source texts clearly or implicitly show ecological value, and these studies pay attention to whether the ecological value of the source texts has been translated to the full. *Translating and Communicating Environmental Cultures* (2020) is a good case for this kind of studies. According to this book, the source texts of environmental translation pertain to environmental protection and sustainable development. The book provides an in-depth discussion of the linguistic, textual, and cultural aspects of the dissemination and translation of various eco-texts, such as eco-literature, ecotourism promotion materials, environmental documentaries, and children's books, to enhance their environmental awareness. Among those eco-texts, translations of literary texts received increasing attention in recent years. As the world's environmental literary classics have been translated and disseminated, Daniela Kato and Bruce Allen (2014) explore the different-language versions of the Japanese classic *Hōjōki* that have been made since the end of the 19th century, revealing the cross-cultural representations of nature and ecopoetics in these translations. Selen Tekalp (2021) focuses on how the English translation of the Turkish eco-novel *Bit Palas* reproduces the ecological views and connotations of the original text. Yu Ning, a Chinese-American scholar, in his book *Great Lump of Earth: An American Eco-Critic's Translation of Tang Poems* (2014), carefully selects more than four hundred Chinese poems of the Tang Dynasty for translation according to the standards of 21st-century ecocriticism, offering Western readers an opportunity to appreciate Tang poems through an environmental lens.

In addition, the source texts with ecological value also include environmental research texts and specific terms. In the field of environmental studies and ecocriticism, ‘translation’ holds importance and has research space. Carmen Flys-Junquera and Carmen Valero-Garcés elaborate on the term ‘translation’ in *Key Words for Environmental Studies* (2016), a pivot book in the field of ecocriticism. As they remark, landscapes or natural environments in different places in the world shape and influence the development and usage of the words used to describe them, making it impossible for translations to reproduce them fully (2016: 189). For example, terms such as ‘nature writing’, ‘wilderness’ and ‘pastoral’ have no direct translation in Spanish, so some of their denotations or connotations are lost during translation. This problem of the untranslatability of ecological culture was also mentioned by Newmark (1988: 95-96) as early as 1988. As environmental studies and ecocriticism expand internationally, many terms are being used universally, but the usage and interpretation of certain words are necessarily culturally and locally conditioned. Consequently, translation has become an increasingly important consideration in this field.

Thirdly, ecocritical studies of translation may delve into the interaction between translation phenomena or activities and the environment. Facing the translational consequences of the Anthropocene, Cronin (2017) sets out to examine translation phenomena in the context of globalization, delves into the complex relationship of ‘ecology-language-politics’ and focuses on vital environmental issues that scholars and practitioners of translation engage with, such as energy security, animal rights, environmental justice, and biodiversity. He examines the interplay between social factors pertaining to nature and certain translation activities, for example, the role of translation in upholding climate justice and environmental justice. Similarly, Xu (2010) argues that translation, as a basic human activity, is closely related to geographical factors, and in his book *Translation Geography*, he explores the impact of geographical environment on language and language transmission. All of these studies provide insights into the close connection between the phenomenon/activity of translation and the environment.

Fourthly, the translator with ecological awareness is another aspect that ecocritical translation studies explore. Some studies have specially selected translators with specific identity labels such as ‘eco-poet,’ ‘environmentalist,’ ‘eco-philosopher,’ etc., and explored the influence of their ecological thinking on their translation practices. Geng (2018) draws on specific ecocritical theories such as ‘the sense of place’ ‘the aesthetics of relinquishment’ and ‘the personification of nature’ to interpret the intentional misinterpretations in Gary Snyder’s English translations of classical Chinese poems. The ecological connotations, that are not in the original texts, are constructed through translation by the American eco-poet. Consequently, his translations are endowed with a unique value in this special age. Geng and Zhao (2021) focus on Kenneth Rexroth, an American poet who merges poetry and environmentalism, paying attention to his views on ancient Chinese poetry, his selection of translated poems, and his ‘creative treason’ in translation, which embodies an ecopoetic characteristic. Cao and Qin (2021) examine how

David Hinton, an American translator of classical Chinese poetry, absorbs and forms his unique eco-value ‘wilderness cosmology’ from classical Chinese poetry and philosophical texts, and how he, in return, injects his ecophilosophical views into his translations. All these studies reveal the ecopoetic and ecophilosophical construction of Chinese poetry in the English-speaking world, with a focus on translators’ subjectivity, i.e., the intervention and manipulation of their ecological thinking in the translation process.

#### 4. Basic paradigms of ecocritical translation studies

All these above can be regarded as ecocritical translation studies. Generally speaking, the paradigms of ecocritical translation studies are mainly divided into three categories: the (bio)semiotic discussion on what is translation, the exploration of translation activities from political ecology, and the close reading of translated texts on eco-thematic intertextants.

##### 4.1. *The (bio)semiotic view of the concept of translation*

What is translation? This is the core question of translation studies, which touches on the nature of translation. Studies in the first paradigm seek to redefine translation and extend the scope of translation from the realm of human communication to the semiotic exchange of the non-human world.

One explanation is that translation is a language activity, and human being is not the only creature that is equipped with language. Cronin’s idea of ‘translating animals’, which places interspecies communication in the field of translation studies, is a typical case for this standpoint. Some animal behaviorists in the United States have used computer technology to decode and mimic the alarm sounds of prairie dogs and rats, demonstrating that animals also have a ‘language’ and the ability to communicate (Cronin 2017: 67). Their experiment result leads Cronin to think of the idea of ‘translating animals’. Kull and Torop (2011: 315) also hold a similar statement that there exists a special kind of translation, ‘biotranslation’. Human texts are made of syntactic elements, while those biological texts from non-humans have prosyntax, which makes their special ‘language’. This is a biosemiotic view to see ‘language’ and this kind of ‘language’ in animal communication, or in any other communication among living systems makes it possible that the message in biological texts can be translated and understood.

Another explanation is that the term of ‘translation’ itself covers a large scope of meanings, and it is not confined to a linguistic issue. Jakobson (1959: 233) classifies translation into three kinds: intralingual translation, interlingual translation, and intersemiotic translation. In terms of the last kind, even though he describes it only by the verbal-nonverbal interpretation, he proposes the ‘sign systems’, which is a breakthrough for defining translation. Marais (2018) explores cases of translation that do not include language at all, theorizing translation that covers all semiotic phenomena. In terms of ‘biotranslation’ proposed by Kull and Torop (2011: 315),

different from logotranslation (conscious translation by human beings), it occurs as a general process in message transfer between the *Umwelten* of organisms, including both intraspecific and interspecific translation. Similarly, Pi (2023: 177) proposes the information theory of translation, believing that “translation/meaning-making is a fundamental characteristic not only of all life forms but also of artificial life or life that we have yet to know”. Even though Pi ascribes his analysis to information, it is obvious that he chooses another word to emphasize the semiotic view of translation. All the translation thinking breaks through the linguicentric and anthropocentric bias in translation studies and expands its scope to explain new phenomena and address new problems. Accordingly, research findings of material science, physics, chemistry, engineering, geology, and other disciplines in their investigations of the communication of non-living entities would become a standard part of the exploration of the sphere of translation (Cronin 2017: 91).

#### 4.2. *The exploration of translation activities from political ecology*

The second paradigm probes the interaction between translation activities and environment and stresses the role of translation in dealing with practical environmental problems. In his book *Eco-translation: translation and ecology in the age of the Anthropocene*, Cronin (2017: 2) states that ‘eco-translation’ covers a broad spectrum: “all forms of translation thinking and practice that knowingly engage with the challenges of human-induced environmental change,” putting translation studies under the framework of ‘political ecology’. It is a great step for translation studies in their way to connect with environmental humanities.

‘Political ecology’ focuses on how political, economic, and social factors influence the environment. It affirms that it is the loss of control of human society and itself that “accounts for the generalized processes of exploitation and deterioration of contemporary society and nature” (Toledo 2001: 479). Accordingly, the progression of human history can be viewed as a movement towards an even greater loss of control over the processes that affect human beings and their environment. Within this framework, studies in political ecology attempt to explore the social structure and interactions among different groups engaging with environmental issues and argue that environmental problems should be understood within the complex and expansive context of culture and power, the interaction between colonialism and resource control, for instance (Li 2017).

Within the framework of political ecology, Cronin in his ‘eco-translation’ studies pays attention to certain translation phenomena and problems. For example, he tries to explore the issues of translation technology engaging with eco-crises. The rapidly developing Information Communication Technology (ICT) of our time allows translation to play a key role in the process of globalization. However, because it is driven by an economic model of unlimited material growth, it ultimately leads to environmental problems. Therefore, how to examine the translation tools and regulate translation methods to reduce energy consumption, save the endangered environment, and promote environmental sustainability is the concern of ‘eco-translation’ studies. In addition, Cronin also delves into the link between climate

justice and translation. He focuses on two marginalized and silenced groups in the context of climate change – language minorities and non-human species – to give them a ‘voice’ through translation (Cronin 2017: 77). The former is exploited and oppressed in terms of their linguistic status due to their economic and political status, while the latter falls victim to an anthropocentric ideology that denies non-human species the right to have a ‘voice’ in the face of eco-crises. Other issues at the intersection of translation activities and ecological problems are also included in this paradigm of studies, such as the connection between travel writing and ecological diversity, and the issue of destruction of minority languages and their ecological cultures as a result of linguistic assimilation in the age of globalization.

#### 4.3. *The close reading of translated texts on eco-thematic interpretant*

Compared with the second paradigm, a macro-paradigm, studies in the third paradigm are more microscopic. The second paradigm regards translation as a social issue, mainly exploring the relationship between translation activities and the environment, or the ecological politics behind translation. The third paradigm sees translation as a cultural, literary, or linguistic issue, delving into the ecological ideas, ecosophy, or ecopoetics embodied in translations. To put it simply, this micro-paradigm tracks and analyzes certain poetics, ideas, or concepts, rather than the actual environmental problems that the macro-paradigm focuses on.

The third paradigm of ecocritical translation employs textual analysis – a close reading of texts, especially literary texts – to analyze the values, concepts, beliefs, and worldviews of the human-nature relationship. In other words, this study dimension is more thematic than linguistic. For this reason, the ‘thematic interpretant’ in translation proposed by Lawrence Venuti can be used to elaborate on this paradigm. Venuti (2010: 74-75) thinks the correspondence between source text and target text is due to an interpretative labor, inscribing an interpretation by using the interpretant, which leads to a ‘mediating representation’ between a signifier and the signified. The interpretant is a principle of mediation and transformation. It has two kinds: the formal interpretant and the thematic one. According to Venuti,

Formal interpretants include a concept of equivalence, such as a semantic correspondence based on current dictionary definitions, or a concept of style, a distinctive lexicon, and syntax related to a genre. Thematic interpretants are codes: they may be specific values, beliefs, and representations; a discourse in the sense of a relatively coherent body of concepts, problems, and arguments; or a particular interpretation of the source text that has been articulated independently in commentary. (Venuti 2010: 75)

In this regard, the third paradigm of ecocritical translation studies is concerned with thematic interpretants<sup>1</sup>, which involve ecological ideas, environmentalist

<sup>1</sup> The author participated in the 9th Institute of World Literature Session at Harvard University in July 2019, and discussed the ecocritical study of the translation of Chinese poetry translation with Venuti in the seminar “World Literature and Translation.” Venuti considered that it is related to the thematic interpretant.

viewpoints, or the opposite ones – anthropocentric thoughts. The focus in those studies is whether the specific value, belief, and representation of certain human-nature relationships in source texts are translated, or whether the translations are rewritings with ecological ideas. Essentially, the translation's application of eco-thematic interpretants recontextualizes the source text, incorporating source-cultural materials to some extent and replacing it with the receiving situation. Then the translating result is an eco-rewriting mediated by eco-elements on two sides.

Many studies in this paradigm are taking translations of classical Chinese poetry as the corpus, due to its ancient eco-wisdom and the 'ecopoetic tradition' at heart (Hinton 2017: 14). Based on the comparison of Chinese and Western traditional views of nature, Chen Yuehong (2016) discusses how 'ecological translation' can be used to convey the Chinese ecological idea of '天人合一' (the unity of heaven and man) into English lexically, syntactically, and textually. The term 'eco-translation' Chen used refers specifically to "the translation of classical poetry that embodies '天人合一', especially the Taoist and Zen concepts of nature, in terms of content, and, in terms of form, the simulation of recreating the traditional Chinese non-dualistic view of nature through the sinicization of English sentences" (Chen 2015: 102). Chen (2019) explores David Hinton's interpretation of the wilderness cosmology of ancient China and its reproduction in his translation of Chinese 'rivers-and-mountains' poetry, claiming that the American translation tradition of classical Chinese poetry displays the poetics of verse eco-translation due to the elliptical reflection of Taoist/Ch'an philosophy, wilderness philosophy, and deep ecology as well. Instead of dealing with direct and practical environmental issues as in the case of the second paradigm, these studies focus on the reproduction or reconstruction of the ecological wisdom of classical Chinese poems in translation and analyze the ecological connotations of translation from the subtleties of the text.

The three paradigms ultimately fall under the umbrella of translation studies within an ecocritical framework, because they all touch on the human-nature relationship which is manifested in translation. To that end, numerous topics can be further explored. These encompass examining translators' intervention through their ecological awareness, the transmission of original ecological thought, the convergence and divergence of Eastern and Western eco-wisdom, the development of cross-cultural ecopoetics, the interaction between the phenomenon of translation and the environment, the concept of translation, and the scope of translation studies. All these aspects can be analyzed from the perspective of the human-nature relationship, involving the ontology of translation, the translation tool, the translation phenomenon, the translation process, the translation subject, and the translation result. In essence, ecocriticism offers a comprehensive framework for analyzing the various aspects of translation concerning the human-nature relationship.

## **5. Reflections on ecocritical translation studies**

Nowadays translation studies concerning the human-nature relationship are still in their infancy. For one thing, those studies are diversified and fragmented, leaving ample room for systematization and theorization. For another, till now, there is a lack of universally accepted terminology to designate these specific translation studies. Scholars have employed various terms to emphasize their specific areas of interest, such as eco-translation, verse eco-translation, intersemiotic translation, and biotranslation. However, since all these studies ultimately revolve around the human-nature relationship, which is the essence of ecocriticism, we propose that the term ‘ecocritical translation studies’ offers a comprehensive designation for these studies.

We hold that it’s reasonable and timely to bring ‘ecocritical translation studies’ to the stage of translation academia. At present, studies on ecology in the metaphorical sense predominate interdisciplinary research in translation and ecology. Discussions on the ecology of translation, eco-translatology, for instance, have gained prominence in translation academia. However, there has been a lack of attention given to the exploration of nature-related ecology and the human-nature relationship. Even the founder of eco-translatology, Hu Gengshen, has acknowledged this deficiency and emphasized the urgent need for future development in eco-translatology to address topics such as ecological society and environmental protection, and to draw upon research methods from ecocriticism (Tao and Hu 2016: 96). More importantly, the current world is witnessing a deterioration of the environment, making it imperative for academia to show its concern.

Another thing to be noticed is the generalization and ambiguity of the interdisciplinary research in translation and ecology. Due to the multi-dimensional interpretations of the term ‘ecology,’ natural ecology, social ecology, cultural ecology, mental ecology, or language ecology are all included in the scope of ecological research in translation studies. While these dimensions have enriched the research field, translation scholars should still critically reflect on and define the precise meaning of ‘ecology’ to avoid excessive generalization. Without clear boundaries, a field will lose its distinct features that identify it as a particular discipline, and the studies will become meaningless. The term ‘ecocritical translation studies’, with its clear and precise reference, helps to avoid the ambiguity and generalization of this interdisciplinary field, and distinguish itself from those studies of translation and ecology in a metaphorical sense.

## **6. Conclusion**

Efforts are made, as Cronin (2017: 3) puts it, to radically rethink a planet that, from a human standpoint, is entering the critical phase of its existence. Nowadays, we have stepped into the era of ‘environmental humanities’ or ‘ecological humanities’. Ecology has become a core issue that affects the survival, development, culture, and language of human society. In the current context, emerging challenges need to

be addressed and new research directions should be created. What can translation, translators, and translation scholars do for our endangered planet and environmental sustainability? In the 21st century, marked by frequent global eco-crises and worsening environmental issues, we must examine the ecological implications of translation and elucidate the intricate relationship between human beings and nature within this discipline, and it is important to explore how translation studies can align itself with ecological awareness and environmental protection through the lens of ecocriticism.

We embark on ecocritical translation studies, driven by a universal environmental concern. Ecocritical translation studies emphasize environmental sustainability, ecological responsibility, and green perspective within the translation field. These studies turn the focus from language and text which are traditionally at the center of translation studies, to the broader scope of the entirety of the earth we share with other species. Engaging with the endangered earth, translation, and translation studies are integrated into a more expansive and current context, which invites more contemplation and reflection.

### **Funding**

This work was supported by the National Office for Philosophy and Social Sciences (CN) (23BWW041) awarded to Jiyong Geng.

Addresses:

Meiou Zhao

Faculty of Foreign Languages  
University of Shanghai for Science and Technology  
No. 382, Kailu Road, Yangpu District  
Shanghai, 200438, China

E-mail: zhaomeiou@usst.edu.cn

Tel.: +86-18117169239

Jiyong Geng (corresponding author)

School of Foreign Languages and Communication Studies  
Beijing Jiaotong University  
No.3, Shangyuancun, Haidian District  
Beijing, 100044, China

E-mail: jyngeng@gmail.com

Tel.: +86-18616388467

## References

- Aksoy, Nüzhet B. (2020) “Insights into a new paradigm in translation: eco-translation and its reflections”. *Babel* 66, 1, 29–45. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1075/babel.00136.aks>
- Badenes, Guillermo and Josefina Coisson (2015) “Ecotranslation: a journey into the wild through the road less travelled”. *European Scientific Journal* 11, 10, 356–368.
- Cao, Peihui and Qin Si (2021) “Zhexue yu fanyi: wangwei shige de chongshi yu zaisheng”. [Philosophy and translation: reinterpretation and rebirth of Wang Wei’s poetry.] *Waiyu xuekan* [Foreign Language Research] 4, 83–87.
- Flys-Junquera, Carmen and Carmen Valero-Garcés (2016) “Translation”. In Joni Adamson et al. eds. *Key words for environmental studies, 189–191*. New York and London: New York University Press.
- Chen, Lin (2017) “Lun xindun de huangye yuzhouguan yu shengtai yishi de fanyi shixue yiyi”. [On David Hinton’s wilderness cosmology and the poetics of verse eco-translation.] *Yingmei wenxue yanjiu luncong* [English and American Literary Studies] 26, 1, 345–355.
- Chen, Lin (2019) “Cong shengtai yishi lun fanyi jiangouxing”. [On the formative force of translation with verse ecotranslation as a case.] *Zhongguo bijiao wenxue* [Comparative Literature in China] 2, 122–136.
- Chen, Yuehong (2015) “Shengtai fanyi xue yanjiu de xinshijiao – lun hanshi yingyi zhong de shengtai fanyi zhuanxiang”. [A new perspective for eco-translatology – on paradigm shift of ecological translation in Chinese-English poetry translation.] *Waiyu jiaoxue* [Foreign Language Education] 36, 2, 101–104.
- Chen, Yuehong (2016) “Shengtai fanyi xue shizhi hezai”. [A tentative exploration of the literal-sense studies of ecotranslatology.] *Waiguo yuwen* [Foreign Language and Literature] 32, 6, 62–68.
- Cronin, Michael (2003) *Translation and globalization*. London: Routledge.
- Cronin, Michael (2017) *Eco-translation: translation and ecology in the age of the Anthropocene*. London: Routledge.
- Garrard, Greg (2012) *Ecocriticism*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Geng, Jiyong (2018) “Wei binwei de shijie fanyi – shengtai piping shiyu xia sinaide Tangshi yingyi de yiyi yu jiazhi”. [Translating for an endangered world: an ecocritical study of Gary Snyder’s translation of Tang poetry.] *Dangdai waiyu yanjiu* [Contemporary Foreign Language Studies] 3, 68–72.
- Geng, Jiyong and Zhao Meiou (2021) “Lun wanghonggong hanshi yingyi de shengtai shixue jiangou”. [On the eco-poetic construction of Kenneth Rexroth’s translation of classical Chinese poetry.] *Fudan waiguo yuyan wenxue luncong* [Fudan Forum on Foreign Languages and Literature] 1, 153–159.
- Glotfelty, Cheryll (1996) “Introduction: literary studies in an age of environmental crisis”. In Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, eds. *The ecocriticism reader*, xv–xxxvii. Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press.
- Hinton, David (2017) *The wilds of poetry: adventures in mind and landscape*. Boulder: Shambhala.
- Hoffmeyer, Jesper (2003) “Evolution by natural translation”. In Susan Petrilli, ed. *Translation translation*, 329–346. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi.
- Hu, Gengshen (2003) “Translation as adaption and selection”. *Perspectives* 11, 4, 283–291. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0907676X.2003.9961481>

- Hu, Gengshen (2008) “Shengtai fanyixue jiedu”. [Eco-translatology: a primer.] *Zhongguo fanyi [Chinese Translator’s Journal]* 29, 6, 11–15.
- Hu, Gengshen (2011) “Shengtai fanyixue de yanjiu jiaodian yu lilun shijiao”. [Eco-translatology: research foci and theoretical tenets.] *Zhongguo fanyi [Chinese Translator’s Journal]* 32, 2, 5–9.
- Hu, Gengshen et al. (2020) “Shiying lvse fazhan xuanze lvse fanyi”. [On ‘green translation’ for ‘green development’.] *Shanghai fanyi [Shanghai Journals of Translators]* 4, 46–51.
- Jakobson, Roman (1959) “On linguistic aspects of translation”. In Reuben A. Brower, ed. *On translation*, 232–239. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Ji, Meng (2020) *Translating and communicating environmental culture*. London: Routledge.
- Kato, Daniela and Bruce Allen (2014) “Toward an ecocritical approach to translation: a conceptual framework”. *State of the Discipline Report*. Available online at <<https://stateofthediscipline.acla.org/entry/toward-ecocritical-approach-translation-conceptual-framework>>. Accessed on 20.12.2023.
- Kerridge, Richard and Neil Sammels (1998) *Writing the environment*. London: Zed Books.
- Kull, Kalevi and Peeter Torop (2011) “Biotranslation: translation between *Umwelten*”. In Timo Maran et al., eds. *Readings in Zoosemiotics*, 411–426. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter Mouton.
- Li, Xiuying (2017) “Xifang zhengzhi shengtaixue de lilun yu shijian”. [The theory and practice of Western political ecology.] *Zhongguo shehui kexue bao [Chinese Social Sciences Today]*. Available online at <[https://epaper.csstoday.net/epaper/read.do?m=i&iid=4997&eid=32635&idate=12\\_2017-01-12](https://epaper.csstoday.net/epaper/read.do?m=i&iid=4997&eid=32635&idate=12_2017-01-12)>. Accessed on 20.12.2023.
- Marais, Kobus (2018) *A (bio)semiotic theory of translation: the emergence of social-cultural reality*. New York: Routledge.
- Marais, Kobus and Kalevi Kull (2016) “Biosemiotics and translation studies”. In Yves Gambier and Luc Van Doorslaer, eds. *Border crossing: translation studies and other disciplines*, 170–188. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Meeker, Joseph W. (1974) *The comedy of survival: studies in literary ecology*. New York: Scribner’s.
- Newmark, Peter (1988) *A textbook of translation*. New York: Prentice Hall.
- Pi, Qiang (2023) “The information theory of translation”. *Information & Culture* 58, 2, 166–179. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7560/IC58203>
- Scott, Clive (2015) “Translating the nineteenth century: a poetics of eco-translation”. *Dix-Neuf* 19, 3, 285–302. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1179/1478731815Z.00000000083>
- Tao, Lichun and Hu Gengshen (2016) “Guan zhongxi shizhe cun: shengtai fanyixue de xingqi yu guojihua – hugengshen jiaoshou fangtan lu”. [Going global: eco-translatology in bridging the oriental and the west – an interview with professor Hu Gengshen]. *Zhongguo waiyu [Foreign Languages in China]* 13, 5, 92–97.
- Tekalp, Selen (2021) “Ecocriticism and translation: a descriptive study on Elif Shafak’s *Bit Palas*”. *Çeviribilim ve Uygulamaları Dergisi* 30, 151–164. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37599/ceviri.903813>
- Venuti, Lawrence (2010) “Translation, empiricism, ethics”. *Profession* 1, 72–81. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1632/PROF.2010.2010.1.72>
- Valero-Garcés, Carmen (2011) “Ecocriticism and translation”. *Odissea* 12, 257–272. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25115/odisea.v0i12.333>
- Wang, Ning (2011) “Shengtai wenxue yu shengtai fanyixue jiegou yu jiangou”. [Eco-literature and eco-translatology: deconstruction and reconstruction.] *Zhongguo fanyi [Chinese Translator’s Journal]* 32, 2, 10–15.

- Xu, Jianzhong (2009) *Fanyi shengtaixue*. [Translation and ecology.] Beijing: Sanxia Chubanshe [Three Gorges Press].
- Xu, Jianzhong (2010) *Fanyi dilixue*. [Translation and geography.] Harbin: Heilongjiang renmin chubanshe [Heilongjiang People's Publishing House].
- Yu, Ning (2014) *Lvchuang tangyun:yige shengtai wenxue pipingzhe de yingyi tangshi* [Borrowed from the great lump of earth: an American eco-critic's translation of *Tang* poems]. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe [Shanghai Classics Press].
- Zhou, Hongxia and Xie Yu (2020) "Yuzhou xianxiang zhong renlei translation xingwei zai sikao". [Rethinking human 'translation' in cosmic phenomena]. *Zhongguo fanyi [Chinese Translator's Journal]* 41, 2, 92–98.