

Routledge Advances in Translation and Interpreting Studies

TRANSLATION STUDIES AND ECOLOGY

**MAPPING THE POSSIBILITIES OF A NEW
EMERGING FIELD**

Edited by
Maria Dasca and Rosa Cerarols



Translation Studies and Ecology

This innovative collection explores the points of contact between translation practice and ecological culture by focusing on the relationship between ecology and translation.

The volume's point of departure is the idea that translations, like all human activities, have a relational basis. Since they depend on the places and communities to which they are addressed as well as on the cultural environment which made them possible, they should be understood as situated cultural practices, governed by a particular political ecology. Through the analysis of phenomena that relate translation and ecological culture (such as the development of ecofeminism; the translation of texts on nature; translation in postcolonial contexts; the role of dialect and minority languages in literary translation and institutional language policies; and the translation of texts on migration) the book offers interpretive models that contribute to the development of eco-translation. The volume showcases a comparative and interdisciplinary approach to an emerging disciplinary field which has gained prominence at the start of the 21st century, and places special emphasis on the perspective of gender and linguistic diversity across a wide range of languages.

This book will be of interest to students and scholars in translation studies, linguistics, communication, cultural studies, and environmental humanities.

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Preface

Maria Dasca and Rosa Cerarols

Based on the theoretical approaches of eco-translation (Cronin 2017) and eco-translatology (Hu 2013), this book offers a synthesis of some of the main contributions to the debate on the relationship between translation and ecology, by applying them to the analysis of a wide range of examples of situated cultural practices. The starting point is the assumption that translation is “a body of ideas and a set of practices [...] central to any serious or sustained attempt to think about [...] interconnectedness and vulnerability in the age of human-induced climate change” (Cronin 2017, 1). In the book, translation is analysed by taking into account some of the principles which can be inferred from ecological sensibility, such as the importance of the situatedness of place, the preeminence of context, and the relatedness between species.

Through the analysis of translations from different geographical areas, the book offers a comparative and relational approach to the phenomenon of eco-translation. This involves taking into account the physical and environmental context in which the translation takes place. The approach connects with the debates concerning the circulation and reception of world literature, especially the discussion of the link between global, national and minoritized literatures (Cronin 2003). The analysis, therefore, addresses eco-translation based on the socio-political, ethical, literary and theoretical factors that make it possible, proposing hypotheses which allow us to contribute to a broader methodological debate and which can be applied to cultural contexts and periods not specifically studied in the book.

The book is structured in four parts, each of which deals with different issues regarding the influence of ecology on translation and interlinguistic contact. Each part contains chapters based on a central theme: language contact and postcolonialism, ecofeminism and migration, standard languages and linguistic variation, eco-translation and animal studies. The analysis takes into account both the conditions of production and

reception in which translations are made and received (mainly determined by interconnectivity or population flows) and the role of the participating agents (translators, linguists, writers, activists, cultural mediators and state or institutional policies). Overall, the book is a broad compendium of studies, characterized by a diversity that is reflected both in the variety of theoretical and methodological approaches (from corpus linguistics to stylistics and literary analysis) and in the inclusion of a wide range of languages and cultures (Ancient and Modern Greek, Arabic, Catalan, Chinese, English, French, Galician, German, Italian, Nigerian pidgin, Spanish, Thai and non-standardized Thai dialects).

The discipline of eco-translation/eco-translatology is an emerging and little-worked field, theorized by Cronin (2017) and Hu (2013). Methodologically, it can be related to the adoption of a cultural perspective in translation studies (Carbonell Cortés & Harding 2018), which implies a greater attention to the structural and systemic conditions in which translation is produced. Eco-translation, however, makes cultural approaches to translation more specific, insofar as it places the interconnectivity between the translation itself and the environment at the heart of the research. In this regard, eco-translation has emerged as a response to the need to assume a plural, inclusive and holistic view of translation and language contact that relates human activity to the environment.

The emergence of eco-translation as a new theoretical and epistemological framework is also the result of the disciplinary development of the environmental humanities, where intellectual exercise, text creation and the notion of literature are framed in the analysis of the different geographically contextualized worldviews of ecological culture. In recent years, phenomena such as the climate emergency have heightened the awareness of the need to develop new forms of relationships with the natural environment, focused on the relationships between species from a posthuman perspective (Braidotti 2013), and have given rise to the conclusion that part of the academic reflection should be oriented precisely towards the analysis of certain forms of ecological politics (Robbins 2004), ecological linguistics (Fill & Penz 2018, Stibbe 2021) and ecological activism (Grubbs 2021).

At present, studies on ecology and translation are scarce. To Cronin's contribution (the most influential in the English-speaking academia; we should remember that Hu's approach has spread mainly in China), we must add the volume coordinated by Zapf (2016) on ecocriticism and ecological culture which contains a chapter on literary translation. In general, the areas that relate ecology and the humanities and that have aroused the most academic interest have been eco-linguistics (Stibbe 2021) and eco-criticism (Glottfelty & Fromm 1996, Garrard 2004, Huggan & Tiffin 2010, Clark 2011, Hiltner 2014), which have generated a very extensive bibliography, applied to sub-areas such as discourse analysis (Flowerdew

& Richardson 2018), language learning didactics (Gill 2003, Leather & Van Dam 2003, Van Lier 2004), theories of communication (Bogusławska-Tafelska 2013), environmental studies (Buell 2005, Christensen, Heise & Niemann 2017, Slovic, Rangarajan & Sarveswaran 2019) and ecofeminism (Plumwood 1993, 2002, Gaard & Murphy 1998, Puleo 2011). One of the few contributions to the analysis of the link between environmental studies and translation is the book edited by Ji (2019), whose contributions are based on a corpus of texts and environmental resources.

This book aims to give a broader scope to the phenomenon of eco-translation, starting mainly with literary and legal texts related to nature and the environment. The centrality that ecology (and all its interdisciplinary connections) has progressively acquired in the social, political and academic debate associated with the climate emergency makes this publication a strategic contribution which may be of interest to linguists, translators, and specialists in communication, cultural mediation and green humanities.

Introduction to the sections

The first section (“Language contact and postcolonialism”) analyses the impact of cultural ecology on translation that takes place in postcolonial contexts or that derives from migratory flows. The studies in this section focus on translating food-related terminology and legal language related to migration, and the effects of cultural translation from a lesser-used or lesser-translated language into a global language. In their chapter “‘Faut pas oublier que vous êtes sel’: food and the political ecology of translation in/of Ken Saro-Wiwa’s *Sozaboy*” Gabriel Dols and Caterina Calafat deal with the specific case of the Ogoni minority in Nigeria. In their analyses of the novel *Sozaboy, a novel in rotten English*, by the environmental activist and writer Ken Saro-Wiwa, they focus on the ideological charge of pidgin (a postcolonial creation) and its use to transform the colonial language (English, in this case). The paper looks at the role of food in the novel and, following Cronin, highlights the productive “incommensurability” of terms that refer to it. Because of their African substrate, food lexicon complicates the task of translating the novel into French, Italian and German and can be interpreted as a device that avoids the relentless homogenization in the production and consumption of aliments.

Cultural conflict between India and Nagaland, one of the eight states that form the region of Northeast India, is the centre of Felicity Hand’s chapter, “From head hunters to insurgents: translating the cultures of India’s Northeast”. Hand contextualizes the postcolonial history of Northeast India and the stereotypes and prejudices that the “Indian mainlanders” have regarding the Naga people. These prejudices started

in the colonial era, when members of the army and the administration presented the Nagas as blood-thirsty savages, and have been perpetuated until the present as the background of a struggle over ownership of the land and the natural resources. The embodiment of this conflict in a set of literary works and films is analysed from two perspectives: the feeling of nostalgia for a repressed and subjugated tribal history, and the State's lack of empathy and solidarity towards the Naga community and its identity. Hand emphasizes that the conflict highlights the impossibility of a balanced cultural translation between the Indian mainlanders and the Naga people, given the difficulty experienced by speakers of lesser-used languages when communicating with speakers of hegemonic languages. This impossibility is paradoxical in a country like India, which is recognized for its multiculturalism and multilingualism, where any writer, by the simple act of writing, also acts as a translator.

In his study "Language contact within an institutional ecosystem: the impact of EU translation", Edward Clay analyses the linguistic effects of translation practices within the institutional ecosystem of the European Union. Based on the idea that the European Union is a unique multilingual law-making environment, whose linguistic policies affect legal language, Clay's research focuses on the way in which translation can propagate contact-induced language change. By analysing the results of several corpus-based research studies, he observes how most of the translations keep traces of the original language. Although the use of languages in the European Union is regulated through the principles of equality and diversity, which aim to place all the 24 official languages on an equal footing, most of the documents are first drafted in English. This predominance of a hegemonic language can provoke long-lasting changes in the language of the translated texts, especially at the morphosyntactic and the lexical levels.

The second section ("Ecofeminism, migration and translation") focuses on the theoretical development and dissemination of ecofeminism—a current that is analysed from the perspective of its cultural transfer/adaptation—and theoretical reflection on the practice of translating texts by migrant writers. The first two chapters explain the reception of ecofeminist movements in the Catalan-speaking area. Pilar Godayol, in "Early ecofeminist debates of the seventies and eighties in Barcelona: translations and reception", analyses the origins of the concept of *ecofeminism*, the interest it aroused among radical American feminists and its impact on the emergence of Consciousness-Raising groups. Godayol focuses the study on the translations made in the framework of the Feminist Self-Awareness Groups that were created in Barcelona from 1970 onwards, focusing on the diffusion of collections of essays representative of the new philosophy of women's bodies. While adopting a feminist historiographical approach

to translation, the study focuses on the importance these translations had when developing ecofeminist initiatives opposed to the national-Catholic thought imposed by the Franco dictatorship (1939–1975).

Teresa Iribarren's chapter, "Displaced ecofeminisms: between stigma, domestication and transformational potential. Considerations from translations into Catalan", focuses on the reception of ecofeminist essays from the 1990s to the present day. In this context, ecofeminist thought is intertwined with the environmentalist movement and the actions to protect the planet initiated in the 1991 Global Assembly of Women and the Environment in Miami, and the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. In this chapter, the translation of a set of ecofeminist essays into Catalan is studied from the perspective of their embodiment in a non-hegemonic language, on the one hand, and the influence on them of local political movements (the Catalan pro-independence process), on the other, which has affected the reception of certain texts by deactivating some of their more radical positions.

The last chapter in this section, "Translation, migration and gender: some ecocritical and ecofeminist considerations", by Manuela Palacios, focuses on a specific experience of collective translation. Palacios analyses the translation principles underlying the anthology *Migrant Voices. Irish, Moroccan & Galician Poetry* while underlining its ecofeminist values. In her approach, the translation into English of this collection of poems written in Arabic and Galician by migrant women is proposed as a process that aims to destabilize heterarchical relations, while calling for an ecology of attention based on a more sensitive and considerate way of being among and *with* others. Translations made in the framework of this process were conceived as "trans-versions", that is, "response poems" or "echolations" that establish a dialogue between source and target texts, cultures and societies.

The relationship between standard languages, dialects and ecosystems is the central theme of the studies in the third section of the book ("Standard languages and linguistic variation"). Cronin's notion of *resilience* is the point of departure of Helena Badell and Joan Josep Mussarra Roca's article "*Hymn to Demeter* translated: views on earth, land and life". Their case study centres on a selection of Catalan and modern Greek translations of the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, which include a set of features that resist translation. The resilience of the *Hymn to Demeter*, which celebrates the goddess of agriculture (Demeter) and the fertility of the earth, is grounded in two factors: on the one hand, the expectations created by a work labelled as "Classical" complicates its adaptation to modern languages; and on the other, the loss of the orality of the original in the translation, conceived as a written text. In the Catalan version and the four Greek versions under study, translators struggle to produce a translation in languages which

were being codified as a standard during the period when the translations were being carried out. Through a detailed, close analysis of the changes introduced by the translators in their respective texts, the authors reveal the nuances involved in adapting a classical work in two emerging cultural and linguistic ecosystems of contemporary Europe.

Based on an experimental translation experience, Phrae Chittiphalangsri's study "The Antipodean Translation: reconfiguring the space and ecology of dialectal movement in Thai experimental literary translation" reflects on the possibilities of using alternative dialects to Central Thai in literary translation. In her project, the dialectal rendition is seen from what the author calls "the Antipodes of translation", insofar as it starts from positions that challenge the idea of borders. Starting from Hu and Tao's term *eco-translatology* (2016), which implies approaching translation from an ecological perspective, Chittiphalangsri assumes that translation supposes a connection through noncontiguous performances such as warping and bypassing. This approach is presented as an alternative to the conception of translation as transfer between adjacent spaces, from which translations of certain linguistic hierarchies are promoted. In the specific case of Thailand, translating into Jawi, Lanna, Karen and Surin-Khmer, four Thai dialects that do not exist in print, is experienced as an opportunity to defy the overt nationalism which imposes Central Thai as the only possible standardized language.

The two chapters that comprise the fourth section of the book ("Eco-translation and animal studies") focus on the notion of *eco-translation*, which is applied in two case studies: children's literature translated from Chinese into English, and a contemporary Spanish novel translated into English. The representation of wild animals in recent children's literature and the possibilities of subverting certain gender stereotypes in favour of ecological sustainability is the focus of Chengcheng You's study "Re-engendering the genre: anthropomorphism in the eco-translation of Chinese wild animal stories". Starting from the theoretical approaches of critical anthropomorphism and eco-translation (Cronin), You compares and analyses the English translations of three works published between 2009 and 2019 (*Langwang meng*, *Heiyuan* and *Hongcai*) focusing on some of the most controversial aspects of wild animal stories, such as analogies between animal and human behaviour. These aspects are key in the construction of supposedly realistic stories, with a melodramatic component, which usually channel a vision of animal reality based on social Darwinism. However, as You demonstrates, two of the translators under study manage to minimize these ideological components; the translation options they use bear witness to their receptivity to intra- and inter-species communication.

Cronin's notion of *eco-translation* and Reiß and Vermeer's theory of *skopos* provide the theoretical framework for Laura Vilardell's study "Eco-translation in the English translation of *Platero y yo*, by Juan Ramón Jiménez, published by The Dolphin Book (1956)", one of the Spanish Nobel Prize winner's most iconic works. This book about the adventures of a boy and his donkey was translated into English thanks to the tenacity of a Catalan entrepreneur living in London, Gustau Gili, who entrusted the scholars William and Mary Roberts with the task. After providing a general overview of the misadventures of the publication, which was delayed eight years, Vilardell scrutinizes the translation and the page proofs; applying *skopos* theory, she sheds light on the degree of cultural adaptation to the target audience. In the analysis of the changes introduced she also considers the three conditions that, following Cronin's approach to eco-translation, are needed to make a successful translation: place (related to the need to meet the target audience's expectations), resilience (the capacity of overcoming difficulties) and relatedness (the need to pay attention at the historical context, languages and cultures, including the non-human).

This book is the result of the *7th Conference of the International Association for Translation and Intercultural Studies (IATIS)*, which, under the title "The Cultural Ecology of Translation" and co-organized by the Department of Translation and Language Sciences of Universitat Pompeu Fabra, took place in Barcelona on September 14, 15, 16 and 17, 2021, in the midst of the COVID pandemic. The debate and interest generated by this academic meeting was the starting point for the reflections that the authors of this volume present in their texts. The editors wish to thank them for their commitment and their belief in an embryonic book project which, three years later, happily, has seen the light of day. We would also like to thank our publisher, Routledge, particularly Elyse Preposi and her team, for their patience and support throughout the editing process. As happened in 2021, at the IATIS Conference, we hope that the insights gained from this book will pave the way for future discussions in the emerging field of translation studies and ecology.

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Part I

Language contact and postcolonialism



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