



A Study of the Translation of Special Education Texts from the Perspective of Eco-Translatology

Liu Wang

Changchun University, Changchun 130022, Jilin, China.

How to cite this paper: Liu Wang. (2025)

A Study of the Translation of Special Education Texts from the Perspective of Eco-Translatology. *Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Science*, 9(2), 274-279.
DOI: 10.26855/jhass.2025.02.011

Received: January 20, 2025

Accepted: February 16, 2025

Published: March 12, 2025

***Corresponding author:** Liu Wang,
Changchun University, Changchun 130022,
Jilin, China.

Abstract

As an important vehicle for conveying educational concepts, policies and technical support, the translation quality of special education texts directly affects the sharing and practice of cross-cultural special education resources. Based on Eco-Translatology and with “three-dimension transformation” as the core framework, taking the academic essay collection *Routledge Handbook of Adapted Physical Education* edited by Dr. Justin A. Haegele of Old Dominion University in the United States as an example, this paper discusses the translation of special education texts from the linguistic, cultural and communicative dimensions through case studies and other methods. The translation of special education texts needs to consider the accuracy of terminology, cultural adaptability, and audience accessibility. Translators need to balance “adaptation” and “selection” to achieve the best translation that adapts to the target language environment. This article aims to try to summarize some of the methods and techniques for translating special education texts, to provide some theoretical reference for the translation of similar texts in the future, and to promote the effective dissemination of special education resources around the world.

Keywords

Eco-Translatology; Three-dimension transformation; Special education

1. Introduction

International academic exchange and knowledge dissemination in special education have long faced many challenges in the translation process due to differences in language systems, educational philosophies, and cultural backgrounds. Much English-language literature in special education contains extensive pedagogical theories, teaching methods, and policy systems. If the translation strategy is not appropriate, some core concepts cannot be accurately conveyed, which affects the application of this literature in the local environment. Translating special education texts involves transferring professional knowledge and affects various aspects, such as educational equity. In this situation, improving the translation quality of such texts can help promote in-depth dialogue and practical innovation in special education at home and abroad. Eco-Translatology was proposed by Hu Gengshen (2008), which emphasizes the process of “multidimensional adaptation and adaptive selection” in translation and studies translation activities from the three dimensions of linguistic, culture and communication. Compared to traditional translation theory, this perspective emphasizes the dynamic balance between the text and the translation environment, which can effectively improve the professionalism and acceptance of special education texts among the audience. High-quality translation promotes equal access to educational resources and disseminating global special education concepts. This paper uses Eco-Translatology as a theoretical framework to explore the adaptive conversion strategies of special education texts in the linguistic, cultural, and communicative dimensions, providing some reference for the translation research of special education texts.

2. Eco-Translatology

As global cooperation in the field of education intensifies, so does the demand for translations of texts in the field of special education. The quality of the translation has a direct influence on intercultural communication and the application of the associated research results. In recent years, the development of Eco-Translatology has opened up new perspectives for studying the translation of texts in special education. It has gradually become the focus of academic attention.

The emergence of Eco-Translatology is a paradigm shift in current translation studies, integrating Western ecological thought and Eastern ecological wisdom. Eco-Translatology originates from Darwin's theory of survival of the fittest, but is not built according to the Western system of translation theory (Fang Mengzhi, 2024). Professor Hu Gengshen (2008) proposed the theory of Eco-Translatology, which starts from the overall ecosystem of translation and focuses on adaptation and selection, emphasizing the multidimensional interaction of linguistic, culture and communication factors in the translation process. "Eco-Translatology, rooted in the metaphorical isomorphism between translation ecosystems and natural ecosystems, represents an ecological approach to translation studies. This framework, guided by environmental holism and informed by Eastern ecological wisdom, takes the Adaptation-Selection Theory as its theoretical cornerstone. It systematically investigates the dynamic interplay among translation ecology, textual ecology, and translation community dynamics, analyzing their mutual adaptations and symbiotic relationships. By integrating these elements, the discipline seeks to provide a holistic perspective on translational ecosystems and systematically analyze translation theory's ontological foundations through an ecological perspective" (Hu Gengshen, 2013).

Eco-Translatology regards translation as a dynamic ecosystem. During translation, the translator must make adaptive decisions concerning the source text and its ecological environment to ensure the translation fits better into the target language environment. The ecological environment of translation refers to the world represented by the original text, language and translation, that is, the interconnected and interactive whole of linguistic, communication, culture, and society, as well as the author, reader, customer, etc. (Hu Gengshen, 2008). The ecological environment of translation includes several elements such as language system, cultural context, social context, translator, author, and reader. This means that translating texts in special education is a language transformation process involving ecological factors such as cultural adaptation and intercultural communication.

3. Analysis of special education texts from three-dimension transformation perspectives

The Routledge Handbook of Adapted Physical Education is a collection of academic papers edited by Dr Justin A. Haegele and others. This collection of documents is an interdisciplinary study of adapted physical education in the field of adapted physical education related to sports education for people with disabilities. It focuses on this field's core concepts, practical models, and international experiences. It provides an in-depth analysis of the critical role of adapted physical education in special education. The book not only summarizes the development experience of special education systems in the field of physical education in the West but also explores how to improve the physical participation and physical fitness of special education students through scientific teaching methods and policy support, providing theoretical reference and practical guidance for special education research around the world.

The basic translation theory of Eco-Translatology concisely describes the translation method as a "three-dimension transformation"; under the principle of multidimensional adaptation and adaptive selection, it relatively focuses on the adaptive selection and transformation of the linguistic, cultural, and communication dimensions (Hu Gengshen, 2014). In the translation process, the conversion of the linguistic dimension includes adjusting vocabulary, grammar, and discourse structure to ensure that the translation is faithful to the original text and conforms to the expression norms of the target language. Conversion of the cultural dimension involves understanding the cultural connotations of the source language and using the artistic expressions of the target language to make appropriate conversions, reducing the interference of cultural differences in the transmission of information. Conversational dimension conversion emphasizes the audience orientation of translation and requires that the translation accurately conveys the original text's communicative purpose. Eco-Translatology discusses how to make adaptive choices from the three dimensions of linguistic, culture, and communication to achieve translation into the target language (Yuan Xin, 2021). This paper combines specific translation examples and, from the perspective of Eco-Translatology, uses the "three-dimension transformation" to analyze the translation of special education texts.

3.1 Linguistic dimension

Adaptive transformation from the linguistic dimension is the translator's adaptive transformation of language forms in the translation process (Hu Gengshen, 2008). Special education texts are highly academic and practical, involving terminology in education, psychology, medicine, and other disciplines, so translators need to pay attention to accurate understanding of terminology and vocabulary, precise translation, reasonable adjustment of syntactic structure, and adaptive transformation of morphology to ensure that the translated text is faithful to the original text and acceptable to readers of the target culture. Liu Miqing points out that since expository texts use more rigorous and solemn words, especially those that are more abstract and general, the correct understanding and translation of words become the priority in translating expository texts (Liu Miqing, 1998). In the translation of special education texts, the conversion of the lexical level is crucial. The terminology in the field of special education is highly specialized. Some of them can be found directly in the official expressions. In contrast, those that cannot be found in the relevant expressions need to be translated according to the specific context of the text by consulting the relevant authoritative materials, referring to parallel texts, etc., to ensure the accuracy and scientificity of the vocabulary translation. For example, the translation of universal design for learning (UDL), Inclusive Education, differentiated instruction (Appendix I, Table 1), and other specialized vocabulary requires the translator to have a certain degree of understanding of the relevant background knowledge and to pay attention to the connotation and extension of the selected words in the process of translation to achieve the linguistic meaning better, and an extension to better accomplish the ecological adaptation of linguistic dimension conversion.

When carrying out linguistic dimension conversion, translators should pay attention to the accurate understanding of vocabulary and focus on converting syntactic structure. Especially in academic translation in special education, it is not enough to understand the basic meaning of vocabulary; it is also necessary to analyze in depth the inherent laws of syntactic structure. The two languages, English and Chinese, have significant differences in syntactic structure. English emphasizes form-fit and attaches importance to the formal unity of sentence components. At the same time, the Chinese are more inclined to meaning-fit, stressing the transmission of information through context and semantics. In English academic papers related to special education, the standard passive voice structure is usually used to highlight objective facts, which is different from the way of expression in Chinese.

On the other hand, Chinese tend to use structures such as subject-less or subject-observed sentences to express objectivity of things. In terms of grammatical structure, Western languages are rule-bound, while Chinese is context-driven (Wang Li, 1984). That means Chinese speakers express objective things through linguistic structures that either lack subjects or present subjects after their observations. Western languages require strict rules, yet Chinese language structure depends on situational interpretation. English follows strict rules, making its sentences precisely structured so that they deliver multiple meanings in elongated sentences. English's tight structure reflects its rule-bound nature, using precise sentence construction to convey layered meanings in extended sentences. In contrast, as a context-driven language, Chinese employs direct vocabulary and flexible syntax to express rich meaning through compact phrases and strategic word order. Therefore, in the translation process, the characteristics of the two languages should be fully considered. When translating English long sentences, methods such as splitting and order adjustment can be adopted; when translating English passive voice, it can be translated into Chinese active voice or subject.

The original text of Example 1 (Appendix I, Table 2) develops logical progression through three action verbs which advance from "growth" to "emphasis" to "evolution". The selected verbs create connections between Adapted Physical Education (APE) concepts with inclusive physical education and competitive sports activities designed for disabled populations. The organizational structure initially grows its reach into new fields before it evolves its philosophies, which produce visible results that raise social impact understanding. The lengthy English sentence received modification by the translator who created short segments that followed Chinese sentence patterns. The authors restructured the original time-based phrases by placing "APE development" at the start of an adverbial clause which acts as background information. The conjunction "while" structures a dual relationship between "emphasizing inclusive education" and "the evolution of competitive opportunities". The concluding statement marked by a dash explicitly transforms the originally embedded relative clause "that has become..." into a causal conclusion: "These opportunities have not only multiplied but also gained heightened social visibility". This restructuring approach addresses the "awkward syntax" caused by lengthy English modifiers while aligning with Chinese narrative logic that presents facts first and conclusions last. By reorganizing sentence structures, the translation transforms a list of information into narrative coherence, achieving dynamic equivalence at the linguistic level.

3.2 Cultural dimension

Adaptive transformation from the cultural dimension means that the translator pays attention to the transmission and interpretation of bilingual cultural connotations in the translation process (Hu Gengshen, 2008). Significant differences exist in the cultural backgrounds on which different language systems are based. In translation, the cultural ecology of the source and target languages are not entirely consistent, especially when comparing Chinese and Western cultures; these differences are pronounced. Therefore, the cultural dimension of translation should pay attention to both the source language culture and the target language culture and accurately grasp the cultural connotations carried by the text. When translating special education texts, translators should not only ensure the accurate transmission of educational concepts and academic information but also take into full consideration the differences between the cultural backgrounds of the source and target languages to avoid misunderstandings or distortions due to cultural differences to make the translated text achieve the best adaptability on the cultural level. Translation is not only a process of converting language symbols but also a process of mutual collision between different cultures. For example, the concept of “mainstreaming” (Appendix I, Table 3), which means integrating special education students into general education classrooms in Western countries, may be difficult for target language readers to understand. Therefore, to make this concept better understood and accepted by target language readers, translators can translate it as “integration” (ibid.), which realizes adaptive transformation and conforms to the cultural ecology of the target language.

3.3 Communicative dimension

Adaptive transformation from the communicative dimension refers to the transformation of the translator’s focus on bilingual communicative intent during translation (Hu Gengshen, 2008). The communicative dimension of Eco-Translatology focuses not only on language transformation but also on cultural adaptation. The value of translation lies not in word-for-word correspondence but in whether the target audience can truly understand and accept the message as naturally and fluently as if they were reading the source language. Language carries culture, ways of thinking, and habits of expression, and a simple comparison can often not accurately convey the original meaning. With different linguistic structures and cultural backgrounds, translators must find suitable expressions so readers can receive the message in another language. For example, English academic writing habitually uses the passive voice, while Chinese tend to express themselves in the active voice. This adjustment does not change the original meaning but instead makes the translation more in line with the logic of the target language so that reading is smoother. A good translation should allow the free flow of information between languages. It should not only be accurate but also easy to read and understand. Adjusting the wording, optimizing sentence structure, and supplementing necessary information are all ways to make the translation more communicative.

In Example 2 (Appendix I, Table 4), when translating “paradigm shift” as “major paradigm shift,” the word “major” is added to strengthen the breakthrough nature of the change, compensating for weakening the adverbial effect in the Chinese context. In addition, the use of “non-categorical, functional” parallel expressions forms semantic contrasts. In particular, when dealing with the core concepts of “medical model” and “functionality approach,” category words such as “path” and “paradigm of practice” are added. This gain-loss processing conforms to the “dynamic balance between linguistic dimension and communicative dimension” in Eco-Translatology. This translation strategy not only completes the conversion of linguistic symbols but also builds an ecological bridge for disseminating academic ideas at the level of cross-cultural communication. Translation is not just a purely technical conversion between two languages but also a mediation between two cultures through language to achieve coordination and dialogue with the aim of communication (Yuan Xin, 2021). It allows people from different linguistic backgrounds to find resonance in the exact text and make communication indeed happen.

4. Conclusion

The translation goes beyond linguistic conversion, serving as a cognitive bridge. In special education texts, the process entails language transformation and the transmission of core principles. It directly affects educational equity while shaping special education development across diverse cultural contexts. Precise and accurate translations ensure proper comprehension and foster cross-cultural exchange of educational philosophies. The ecological translation principle of “adaptation and selection” offers translators a framework to evaluate source and target language environments, enabling informed strategies that achieve optimal communicative outcomes.

References

- Fang, M. (2020). Revisiting the translation eco-environment. *Chinese Translators Journal*, (5), 20-27+190.
- Fang, M. (2024). Eco-translatology going global. *Foreign Language Education Technology*, (1), 3-8+113.
- Gu, J. L., & Huang, Z. L. (2023). A study on the generation of Hu Gengshen's thought on translation. *Foreign Languages Research*, 40(06), 103-107.
- Hu, G. (2008). A terminological lens on translation theory: An overview of translation as adaptation and selection. *Shanghai Journal of Translation*, (2), 1-5.
- Hu, G. (2008). Interpreting eco-translatology. *Chinese Translators Journal*, (6), 11-15+92.
- Hu, G. (2013). *Eco-translatology: Construction and interpretation*. Beijing: The Commercial Press.
- Hu, G. S., & Li, X. X. (2024). Systematic modeling and figurative presentation of eco-translatology theory. *Chinese Translators Journal*, 45(04), 5-14+191.
- Yuan, X. (2021). Translating political theory texts through eco-translatology: A case study of What Can China's Path Contribute to the World. *Chinese Translators Journal*, (6), 134-140.

Appendix I: Tables 1 to 4 from Section 3 of the Study

Table 1. Translation of vocabulary in special education texts under linguistic dimension

Source Language	Target Language
universal design for learning (UDL)	通用学习设计
Inclusive Education	全纳教育
differentiated instruction	差异化教学

Table 2. Translation of sentence patterns in special educational texts under linguistic dimension

Source Language	Target Language
1. In addition to the growth in APE, the past 25 years have seen an emphasis on inclusive physical education and the evolution of competitive sport opportunities for athletes with disabilities that have become increasingly available and visible.	过去 25 年间，适应性体育教育（APE）不断发展，同时融合体育教育日益受到重视，残疾人竞技体育机会也经历了显著演变——这些机会不仅日益增多，而且愈发受到社会关注。

Table 3. Translation of special education texts under cultural dimension

Source Language	Target Language
mainstreaming	回归主流
mainstreaming	一体化

Table 4. Translation of special education texts under the communicative dimension

Source Language	Target Language
2. The 21st century ushered in more inclusive language and relied less on categories of impairment and more on ability and performance and a paradigm shift from the medical model and categorical approach to APE to a non-categorical and functionality approach to APE.	21 世纪采用了更具包容性的语言体系，逐渐弱化以损伤类别为核心的表述方式，转而更加强调个体能力与行为表现。在适应性体育教育（APE）领域，这一转变体现为从医学模式和分类化路径，向非分类化、功能化实践范式的重大转型。