

## Language and Climate: Environmental and Translation Nuances\*

### اللغة والمناخ: البيئة وأثرها في دراسات الترجمة

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#### Abstract:

A new age is dawning upon humanity, ushering in a fractured world. Humankind is no longer at one with nature, and global warming is a real threat to human existence. Since translation has always been about communication, for better or for worse, the question as to the role of translators in that new world order as go-between agents linking the biological and ecological worlds is pertinent. If empowered, will translators be capable of working their way amidst linguistic and ecological nuances? Could translation be a life-saving activity that might retrieve glimpses from a former brave new world? Could consumers of translated works worldwide unite for a common cause to help save the planet? Translators need to be ecologically aware and pay attention to technical terms, metaphors, and cultural nuances. Ethical concerns underlie translation theory, particularly in eco-translation, where language and culture can shape perceptions and understanding of environmental issues.

**Keywords:** Eco-translation, Anthropocene age, Translation ethics.

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## الملخص:

إن عصرا جديدا يشرق على البشرية، ويبشر بعالم ممزق. فالجنس البشري لم يعد في انسجام مع الطبيعة، والاحترار العالمي يشكل تهديدا حقيقيا للوجود البشري. وبما أن الترجمة كانت دائما تدور حول التواصل، للأفضل أو للأسوأ، فإن السؤال عن دور المترجمين في ذلك النظام العالمي الجديد كعوامل وسيطة تربط بين العالمين البيولوجي والإيكولوجي هو سؤال وثيق الصلة، إذا تم تمكينهم، فهل سيكون المترجمون قادرين على شق طريقهم وسط الفروق اللغوية والبيئية؟ هل يمكن أن تكون الترجمة نشاطا منقذا للحياة قد يسترجع لمحات من عالم شجاع سابق؟ هل يمكن لمستهلكي المصنفات المترجمة في جميع أنحاء العالم أن يتحدوا من أجل قضية مشتركة للمساعدة في إنقاذ الكوكب؟ يحتاج المترجمون إلى أن يكونوا مدركين بيئياً، وأن ينتبهوا إلى المصطلحات الفنية والاستعارات والفروق الثقافية الدقيقة. تكمن الاهتمامات الأخلاقية وراء نظرية الترجمة، لا سيما في الترجمة البيئية، حيث يمكن للغة والثقافة تشكيل تصورات القضايا البيئية وفهماها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الترجمة البيئية؛ العصر الأنثروبولوجي؛ اخلاقيات الترجمة.

Environmental issues, including global warming and pollution, have become increasingly critical concerns today and have left their mark on translation theory and practice. Translating environmental texts requires translators to pay special attention to concepts and language related to ecology, climate change, conservation, and sustainable development.

Translating environmental texts also requires ecological awareness and sensitivity. Translators need to embrace a multidisciplinary approach that combines environmental sciences, ecology, and linguistics when translating texts related to the environment. Environmental texts require specific terminology and conceptual frameworks that may not exist in the target language, and these translations should prioritize maintaining the original meanings and aims of the text to the greatest extent possible.

Furthermore, numerous translation challenges emerge when dealing with environmental texts, mainly technical terms, metaphors, and cultural nuances. These aspects of text translation are crucial in conveying the right message to the targeted audience. Where possible, translators should strive to remain faithful to the original context of the text while using language that fits the target audience's cultural and social background.

The environment featured all along the practice of translation – especially literary translation. Translating Shakespeare's Sonnet 18, which starts with "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day"? into different languages can be challenging, especially regarding the reference to "a summer's day". The challenge arises because the cultural contexts of other languages have different climates. A translation into Arabic would render the reference to "a summer's day" as "يومٌ رَق هوأؤه، أو طاب هوأؤه". The reference may be translated in Japanese as "a bright sunny day", as Japan generally experiences moderate to high temperatures and clear blue skies during summer. In Swedish, the reference may be translated as "a warm midsummer day", as in Scandinavia, summer is a season of long days and bright sunshine.

The reference may be translated in Russian as "a hot summer day", as Russia experiences warm to hot temperatures in summer, although the climate may vary depending on the region.

These are only a few examples, and the translation of "a summer's day" in different languages may depend on various factors, including the climate, weather, and cultural associations in various regions. Nevertheless, translators must use appropriate expressions and analogies to convey the intended meaning of Shakespeare's Sonnet 18 in different languages.

### **The Anthropocene Age:**

The Anthropocene Age refers to the period when human activities significantly impacted Earth's ecosystems and natural systems. The impact on nature and ecology has been profound and, in many cases, devastating. Some of the significant impacts of the Anthropocene age on nature and ecology include:

1. **Habitat destruction:** Human activity has led to the destruction of natural habitats at an unprecedented scale, causing a loss of biodiversity that is unprecedented in human history.
2. **Climate change:** The use of fossil fuels and deforestation has led to an increase in the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, causing global temperatures to rise and leading to the loss of unique ecosystems.
3. **Pollution:** Human activity has caused significant pollution, leading to the contamination of our oceans, rivers, and air, as well as the decline of species dependent on these ecosystems.
4. **Overconsumption:** Human activity has led to the overconsumption of natural resources, leading to the depletion of essential resources such as forests, water, and soil.

Overall, the impact of the Anthropocene Age on nature and ecology is significant and far-reaching.

## **Ethical Concerns in Translation Theory:**

The cultural turn in translation studies heralded relevant theoretical concerns and frameworks since the turn of the century. Mona Baker's concern with the ethical responsibility of the translator, for example, is rooted in the recognition that translation is not a neutral process but rather an act of interpretation and representation that can have far-reaching consequences for individuals and societies. In particular, Baker emphasizes the need for translators to be aware of the power dynamics and potential imbalances inherent in their work and approach their task with a sense of social responsibility beyond simply conveying a text from one language to another.

Regarding eco-translation, this emphasis on ethical responsibility is particularly relevant. Translating texts related to environmental issues and sustainability requires an understanding of the complex and interconnected relationships between humans and the natural world and an awareness of how language and culture can shape perceptions of these relationships. Eco-translators must therefore be sensitive to the nuances of both language and culture and willing to engage with the broader ethical and moral issues at play in their work.

In short, Mona Baker's emphasis on the ethical responsibility of translators is highly applicable to eco-translation, where the stakes are exceptionally high and where translators can play a crucial role in promoting greater awareness and understanding of environmental issues across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

## **Holy Texts:**

There has been a noticeable shift towards ecological consciousness in Bible translations in recent years. Many translations now highlight the importance of nature as a God-given gift that should be cherished and protected while also acknowledging the impact of human activities on the environment.

For example, the New International Version (NIV) translation of Psalm 24:1 now reads "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it". The addition of "and everything in it" emphasizes the interconnectedness of all living beings and the importance of preserving the natural world.

Similarly, the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) translation of Genesis 1:28 includes the phrase "subdue the earth" but also introduces the term "stewardship" to offer a more ecologically conscious interpretation: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth...and let them have dominion...and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth".

In addition, modern translations often introduce new ecological terms and concepts to better reflect the contemporary understanding of environmental issues. For example, the Good News Translation (GNT) of Jeremiah 2:7 uses the term "polluted" to describe the degradation of the natural world caused by human actions: "I had brought you to a fertile land to eat its fruit and rich food. But you came and defiled my land; you made my possession loathsome".

Overall, these translations reflect a growing recognition of the importance of ecological stewardship and a desire to reframe the traditional Biblical understanding of humanity's relationship with nature in light of current environmental concerns.

There has been a growing movement among Quran translators to emphasize the text's ecological message. Many of the newer translations now include language that highlights the importance of preserving the environment as a manifestation of God's creation and humanity's responsibility to care for it.

For example, the word 'khalifa' (خليفة) (meaning steward or custodian) is often used to describe our role on earth, suggesting that we have a duty to take care of the planet and its resources. Similarly, the concept of 'fitrah' (فطرة) which refers to the natural state of purity and balance that God has imbued in creation, is used to underscore the idea that our actions should not disrupt this delicate equilibrium.

In terms of specific ecological terms, new translations are introducing terms such as 'taharah' (طهارة) (purity) and 'tazkiyah' (تزكية) (cleansing), which have been linked to environmental conservation efforts. Furthermore, some translations now use the phrase 'the sacred earth' instead of simply 'the earth' to emphasize the sanctity of the natural world.

There is also a growing focus on the concept of *zulm*, or oppression, as it relates to environmental destruction. Some new translations use this term to describe the harm caused by polluting industries and unbridled development, suggesting that it is a form of injustice and should be stopped.

Overall, the new translations of the Quran reflect a growing awareness of the interconnectedness of all life and the importance of stewardship in protecting the environment.

### **Minortiy Languages:**

Relatively small numbers of people speak minority languages within a larger population. These languages often face numerous challenges in their sustained development due to the dominant forces of globalism and the homogenizing effect they can have on culture and language.

In recent decades, translation studies and practice have increasingly focused on minority languages as an important area of research and practice. This is because minority languages are at risk of disappearing altogether in the face of globalization and the spread of dominant languages.

One of the key reasons for this interest in minority languages is the recognition of their cultural and linguistic value. Minority languages are often closely linked to a sense of identity, history, and tradition for the speakers of those languages. These languages embody unique and diverse ways of thinking, communicating, and expressing culture, which are important to preserve and sustain.

Moreover, the rise of homogenizing globalism is viewed by many as a threat to this diversity and cultural richness. The proliferation of global media, the spread of popular culture, and the widespread use of dominant languages as a means of communication are all seen as factors contributing to the decline of minority languages. This has led to increased interest in translation's role in preserving and promoting minority languages.

Translation can be a powerful tool in revitalizing these languages, as it allows for transmitting significant cultural and linguistic

knowledge. The translation of literature, for example, helps to promote minority languages by making them accessible to a broader audience while also raising awareness of the value and importance of these languages.

The sustained development of minority languages against the powerful forces of globalism demands a focus on translation as an essential mechanism for promoting linguistic and cultural diversity. This requires a concerted effort on the part of individuals, organizations, and governments to invest in the translation of minority languages and to recognize their value in preserving the richness of our global cultural heritage.

### **Reading the Old Masters:**

The attempt to add or imbue nuances of ecological consciousness in old masterpieces of literature ,such as Anton Chekhov's" Cherry Orchard "and T.S. Eliot's" Waste Land ",involves a critical re-reading of these works through an environmental lens.

In Chekhov's" Cherry Orchard ",the destruction of the orchard represents the destruction of nature and the loss of a vital aspect of the countryside. This loss is not just a loss of physical space but also represents the loss of a way of life and the people who were connected to the land. Chekhov's work subtly highlights the importance of ecological preservation by emphasizing the emotional and psychological impact of the loss of nature.

Similarly, in T.S. Eliot's" Waste Land ",numerous environmental references allude to the degradation of the natural world. The poem depicts a dry, barren landscape that serves as a metaphor for the emptiness and despair felt by society. The poem's various literary allusions also highlight the human experience's interconnectedness with the natural world.

In both cases, the critical attempt to add or imbue nuances of ecological consciousness in these works involves recognizing the environment as an essential aspect of the human experience. Additionally ,these efforts highlight the importance of preserving the natural world for future generations.



## Reading the New Sci-Fi Masters:

Many science fiction novels in recent years have explored the environmental issues facing our planet, such as climate change, deforestation, and pollution. These stories often imagine what the future could look like if we fail to address these problems, and they can inspire readers to take action in the present. Some examples of science fiction novels that tackle environmental issues include "The Water Will Come" by Jeff Goodell, "2312" by Kim Stanley Robinson, and "The Windup Girl" by Paolo Bacigalup.

Other sci-fi novelists who add or imbue nuances of ecological consciousness into their works include Margaret Atwood: In her novel "The Year of the Flood", she explores themes of environmental crisis and corporate greed; Jeff Vandermeer, who in his "Southern Reach Trilogy", presents a landscape that has been damaged by human activity, and he explores the relationship between nature and humanity; J.G. Ballard who in his novel "The Drowned World", imagines a dystopian future where rising sea levels have overwhelmed cities".

## Conclusion:

In conclusion, translating environmental texts presents unique challenges, requiring an ecologically aware approach to ensure the intended message is not lost. The ecological themes within these texts resonate with people's concern for the planet; therefore, translations of such material should prioritize maintaining the original meaning and context of the text while adapting to cultural and linguistic differences.

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