

# Research on the Translation of the English Translation of "The Old Kiln": Based on the Three-dimensional Transformation Perspective of Ecological Translation

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## ABSTRACT

Based on Hu Gengshen's theory of ecological translation, this study systematically analyzes the multi-dimensional transformation strategy of the English translation of "Ancient Furnace" in 2025. The research focuses on three core dimensions: the linguistic dimension examines the semantic reduction of Shaanxi dialect vocabulary and the structural reorganization mechanism of special sentence patterns; cultural dimension analyzes the cross-cultural interpretation path of folk symbols and regional imagery; The communicative dimension evaluates the impact of emotional transmission and background supplementation on the acceptance of target readers. By empirically analyzing the adaptive selection strategy in the multi-translator collaboration model, this paper aims to summarize the effective translation methods of unique expressions of local literature, and provide a theoretical reference and practical path for improving the cross-lingual readability and artistic appeal of such texts.

## KEYWORDS

"Ancient Furnace"; ecological translation; 3D conversion; local literature; English translation strategy; Cross-cultural communication

## 1 Introduction

In the context of globalization, literary translation is not only the transformation of language symbols, but also the transplantation and reconstruction of cultural ecology. Jia Pingwa's masterpiece "Ancient Furnace" is regarded as a representative work of contemporary Chinese "local epic" with its heavy local texture, profound writing of special historical periods and strong regional cultural characteristics. This work not only carries the historical memory of rural Chinese society, but also constitutes a high difficulty in translation with its unique language style (Shaanxi dialect) and complex cultural imagery (folk beliefs, patriarchal system).

In 2025, the English translation of the work, Old Kiln, will be jointly launched by three translators, which quickly attracted the attention of the Western mainstream media. The Financial Times hailed it as an "immortal novel", The Spectator called its translation "superb", and the Irish Times considered it a unique addition to contemporary fiction that was "both authoritative and unique". This phenomenon of translation marks a major breakthrough in the field of international communication of Chinese vernacular literature, and also provides a vivid sample for translation research.

Looking at the existing research, there are two obvious limitations in the discussion of the translation of "The Ancient Furnace". On the one hand, the research objects are lagging behind, and the existing research on Jia Pingwa's translation and introduction focuses on early single-translator texts such as "Impetuous" and "Happy", and the systematic translation research on "Ancient Furnace", a multi-translator collaboration model, is still blank. On the other hand, the theoretical application is single, and the existing applications of ecological translation focus on single-dimensional or traditional classical texts, which is difficult to fully explain the adaptation mechanism of complex vernacular texts in the three-dimensional dynamic system of "language-culture-communication". In view of this, this study takes the English translation of "Ancient Furnace" in 2025 as the object, and systematically analyzes the adaptive selection strategies of translators at the levels of language, culture and communication dimensions based on Hu Gengshen's ecological translation theory. The academic value of this study is reflected in three aspects: first, it fills the academic gap in the translation and introduction of "The Ancient Furnace"; Second, through micro-empirical analysis, the effective path of dealing with composite texts of "special age + heavy locality" under the multi-translator collaboration mode is revealed. Third, it verifies the explanatory power of ecological translation on the foreign translation of contemporary Chinese literature, and provides a theoretical reference for improving the international dissemination efficiency of local literature.

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Current status of Domestic Research

The research on the translation and introduction of Jia Pingwa's works in the domestic academic circles started early, and the results mainly focused on the two dimensions of translation strategy research and ecological translation application. In terms of translation strategy research, most of the existing results focus on Ge Haowen's translation of "Impetuous" and Han Bin's translation of "Happy". Wu Yun (2013) [1] systematically sorted out the translation trajectory of Jia Pingwa's novels in the English-speaking world, and pointed out the evolution and reception differences of Jia Pingwa's

novels. Ji Jin and Wang Xiaowei (2018) [2] discussed the future possibilities of overseas translation of contemporary literature, and analyzed the role of translator's subjectivity in cross-cultural communication using "Happiness" as an example. These studies mostly use text comparison to reveal the complexity of culturally loaded word processing, but they are limited to the single translator model, and the collaborative mechanism of multi-translator co-translation is insufficient. In terms of the application of ecological translation, domestic research focuses on traditional classics and their cultural words. For example, Sun Lin and Han Caihong (2021) [3] analyzed the English translation strategy of cultural loading words in *Beijing Folding*, and Ren Yunzhong and Zhou Xiaoqin (2020) interpreted the English translation of Min Fu's *I Ching* (2020) [4]. Although these studies have enriched theory and practice, they have not yet fully covered contemporary rural novels with strong regional characteristics and complex historical backgrounds. For a work such as "Ancient Furnace", which has a high dialect density and complex folk events, existing research has not yet explored in depth how translators can achieve ecological balance in three-dimensional transformation.

## 2.2 The Current Situation of Overseas Research

From the perspective of historical context, Western sinologists' attention to Jia Pingwa began in the 80s of the last century. Ge Haowen's translation of "Impetuous" (1991) won the Mobil Pegasus Literary Award in the United States, marking the official entry of his work into the English-speaking world. Ge Haowen's translation strategies tend to be naturalized and rewritten to suit the reading habits of Western readers. From the perspective of theoretical foresight, Jin Jiefu once pointed out that there are significant obstacles to translating Jia Pingwa's works, and it is recommended to adopt a collective translation method, which is confirmed in the practice of multiple translators of "Ancient Furnace". The multi-translator model is considered to cover the complex knowledge system of the original work more comprehensively.

Judging from the current acceptance status, after the publication of the English translation of "Ancient Furnace" in 2025, the Western mainstream media will evaluate it positively. The Financial Times commented that it "fills the silence with narrative", and "The Spectator" called it a "superb translation", giving the novel a "new life outside the territory". However, overseas reviews mostly focus on the interpretation of literary themes, and there is relatively little discussion on specific language conversion strategies and multi-dimensional balance mechanisms in the translation process. The acceptance of Chinese literature by Western academic circles often has an "Orientalist" perspective, and how to preserve the local characteristics of China in translation while avoiding falling into the trap of "exoticism" is an urgent problem to be solved in current research. To sum up, there are double gaps in the existing research on the translation of Jia Pingwa's works: first, the research object is lagging behind, and the systematic research on the English translation of the 2025 version of "Ancient Furnace" is still blank; Second, the theoretical application is single, and the three-dimensional dynamic balance mechanism under the multi-translator mode cannot be explained. Based on this, this study will use the three-dimensional transformation theory of ecological translation as the framework to fill the above research gaps and provide a new theoretical perspective for the cross-cultural translation of Chinese local epics.

## 3 Analysis of the Three-dimensional Transformation Mechanism of Ecological Translation Theory

### 3.1 Language Dimension Conversion: Form Adaptation and Meaning Fidelity

Language dimension conversion refers to the translator's adaptive choice of language form in the translation process. This includes the reconstruction of phonetics, vocabulary, syntax, discourse and other levels. Semantic restoration and reconstruction of dialect vocabulary Shaanxi dialect is an important part of the language ecology of "Ancient Furnace", which is not only a communication tool, but also a carrier of character, identity and regional culture. In translation, translators face the contradiction between "dialect" and "readability". Balance between transliteration and paraphrase: For dialect words with strong cultural specificity and no counterpart in English, translators often employ transliteration annotations or paraphrase restructuring strategies. For example, in the original text, "Ah hurts, ah hurts? It is a typical Shaanxi dialect interjection, carrying sudden pain and grievances. The translator translated it as "Ow! That hurt! Ow! That hurt!"。 Here, the translator abandoned the transliteration and chose the common pain interjection "Ow" and the verb "hurt" in English. This choice is based on the adaptive consideration of the linguistic dimension: although the dialect form of "ah hurt" is lost, "hurt" accurately captures the dynamic feeling of physical pain, and the split sentence structure "Ow! That hurt!" It conforms to the natural rhythm of spoken English and retains the vividness of the original text. Naturalization processing: For animal and plant nouns, translators often use naturalization strategies to achieve functional equivalence. For example, "neem tree" is translated as "neem tree". Although the two are not the same plant, in English-speaking culture, "neem" carries cultural associations of medicinal and insect repellent, which is in line with the practical value of the Chinese "neem" (wood, medicine). This conversion avoids the defamiliarization of words caused by transliteration and ensures the viability of plant imagery in the translation ecology.

### 3.2 Reorganization and Logical Manifestation of Sentence Structure

Integration of flowing sentences: Flowing sentences describing smells and actions often appear in the original text. For example: "Some are like camphor, some are spoiled, some are like shoes, some are vinegar, and some are like six-six-six powder, uh, it's just so mixed, the taste is indescribable." The original text creates a chaotic and complex olfactory experience through the stacking of noun phrases. In the language dimension transformation, the translator reconstructs

it into the formal-master-slave structure of English: "It was a bit like camphor... with a whiff of worn shoes... By establishing "It was a bit like..."; and using a whiff of and adverb phrases (maybe even) to modify it, the translation retains the stack of original imagery while constructing a clear logical framework, so that English readers can smoothly perceive the mixed smell.

### 3.3 Cultural Dimension Transformation: The Integration of Local Characteristics and Global Understanding

Cultural transformation refers to the transmission and interpretation of bilingual cultural connotations by translators in the translation process. Its core lies in overcoming the barriers of understanding caused by cultural differences and achieving an organic integration of local characteristics and global understanding.

### 3.4 In-depth Interpretation of Folk Symbols

Folk symbols are the cultural identifiers of a specific regional community. In "Ancient Furnace", the "kiln" is not only a place of production, but also a microcosm of social relations. Case study: The original text mentions "Zhujiayao" and "the nephew of the Ye family". The translator translates "Zhu family kiln" as "Zhu family kiln", which adopts the structure of "surname + family + kiln", which not only retains the folk characteristics of family business, but also allows English readers to clearly understand that it is a handicraft place named after the family. For "nephew", a typical patriarchal symbol of Chinese culture, translators face great challenges. In the Chinese patriarchal system, "nephews" often involve complex family power and skill inheritance relationships. Instead of literally translating (nephew), the translator creatively uses "an offshoot of the Hei family" (a branch of the night surname family). This transformation jumped out of the limitations of blood relations and instead emphasized "the derivative relationship in the inheritance of culture and skills". This interpretive translation not only overcomes the cultural gap, but also accurately conveys the deep meaning of the original text in the context of kiln inheritance. 3.5 Communicative Dimension Transformation: Emotional Resonance and Cross-cultural Communication. Communicative dimension transformation refers to the translator's adaptive choice of the original communicative intention during the translation process. Its core lies in enhancing emotional resonance and ensuring precise cross-cultural communication effects. Translation is not just about conveying information, it's about conveying emotions and intentions. 3.6 The Reproduction of Interpersonal Interaction in Rural Society.

Case study: The party secretary said to the dog pee moss: "Don't cause trouble for me!" In the vernacular context, this sentence is both an order and a certain protection ("I cover you, but don't cause me trouble"). Translators translate it as "don't want to cause me trouble." The euphemism "don't want to" is used here, replacing the literal translation of "Don't" in a softer tone. This transformation accurately captures the dual meaning of "discipline" and "human feelings" in the discourse of the party secretary. It not only reflects the authority of the party secretary, but also implies a certain community of interests between the two. If translated literally as "Don't cause me trouble", the tone will be too blunt and destroy the vague and complex human touch of the local society.

## 4 Conclusions and Prospects

Based on the theory of ecological translation, this study systematically analyzes the transformation strategies of the English translation of "Ancient Furnace" in three dimensions of language, culture and communication in 2025. It is found that the multi-translator collaboration model effectively reconstructs Shaanxi dialect and special sentence patterns through flexible adaptive selection, accurately interprets folk imagery, and successfully realizes cross-cultural emotional resonance. While retaining the local texture of the original work, this translation has significantly improved the acceptance of target language readers, and has become a typical case of cross-cultural dissemination of Chinese vernacular literature. Of course, there are still certain limitations in this study. For example, the evaluation of the acceptance effect of translations is mainly based on text analysis and media reviews, and there is a lack of large-scale empirical surveys of readers. Future research can further expand the perspective and extend the scope of research to other multi-translator collaborative literary translations to verify the universality of this translation model. It can also deeply explore the translation strategies of different types of cultural carrier words in local literature, classify and study dialect vocabulary, folk symbols, patriarchal expressions, etc., further enrich the application of ecological translation in the translation of contemporary literature, and provide more theoretical and practical reference for the cross-cultural translation and dissemination of contemporary Chinese vernacular literature.

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