

Eco-translatology: A study on the English Translation of Gayo's Narrative "The Legend of the Origin of Depik"

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ABSTRACT

Eco-translatology, an emerging field focusing on ecological-themed texts and sustainable translation practices, was explored in the translation of the Gayo narrative--"The Legend of the Origin of Depik"-- The study investigated the strategies employed in the translation process through qualitative content analysis. Interpretation is examined from linguistic, cultural, and communicative dimensions using Hu's (2001) three-dimensional adaptation and selection theory. The findings showed that strategies like "emptying," "compensating," and "leaning on" were used, however, the translation faced challenges in attaining accuracy, cultural connotations, and effective communication. Translators must prioritize these aspects to achieve a faithful rendition, aligning eco-translatology's three-dimensional adaptation and selection theory. This research emphasizes the importance of environmental awareness in translation and highlights the need for further attention to ensure successful ecological and culturally sensitive translations.

Keywords: *Eco-translatology; Narrative; Depik.*

INTRODUCTION

Eco-translatology is a subfield of translation studies that emerged in response to the increasing global focus on environmental issues and sustainability. The shift from industrial to ecological civilization has introduced an ecological dimension to social science research, including translation studies Luo, (2018). Eco-translatology can be understood as an interdisciplinary, and cross-disciplinary study that uses an ecological approach to translation studies or translation studies from an ecological perspective Zhai, (2019). The concept of eco-translatology was first proposed by Hu Gengsheng in 2001. Since then, it has been widely recognized and applied in various fields such as history, literature, translation ethics, applied translation studies, and translation education Dong and Qiu, (2018). This approach of translation puts the translator at the center of the process and gives priority to maintaining ecological integrity. There are two steps in the translation process of eco-translatology: the translator's selection and adaptation. The translation environment, which includes both the original text's and

the target language's environments, is referred to as the translator's adaption. Using a "three-dimensional" adaptation approach that takes into account the linguistic, cultural, and communicative aspects of the translational eco-environment, the translator selects the best translational eco-environment. The approach uses a macroscopic eco-reason that prioritizes unity/diversity, translation ethics, dynamics, wholeness, relevance, balance, and eco-aesthetics to accomplish the goals of eco-translatology Hu, (2021).

Further, Hu, (2021) outlines eco-translation strategies: transplanting texts considers linguistic, cultural, and communicative aspects for accuracy. Emptying the mind aids fresh perspective. Compensating for missing elements ensures cultural relevance. Balancing between source and target ecology aids translation coherence. Greening translation ensures environmental consciousness. Overall, following eco-translatology principles aligns with ecological responsibility (Dollerup, 2010; Fang, 2018; Hikita, 1951; M.Ji, 2014).

As the theory implies, eco-translatology can be used as a framework for translating narrative texts as literary works that deal with the environment and as a powerful means of promoting environmental awareness and sustainability. As Dahlstrom, (2014) asserts, translating narratives possesses inherent persuasive power as they depict specific experiences that can convey ecological values to a wider audience. A narrative's structure, through cause-and-effect relationships between events, can give the impression that the conclusion was inevitable, despite the possibility of multiple outcomes. It recognizes the importance of considering the cultural and linguistic context of the source text and how it may affect the translation process.

Only few researches exist regarding eco-translatology. Most of them are from Chinese setting. Eco-translatology emphasizes the importance of preserving the cultural and environmental values of the source text, while also ensuring that the translation accurately conveys the intended message to the target audience Wang, (2014). When translating a narrative text, an eco-translator would consider the environmental themes present in the source text and how they relate to the culture and language in which the text was written. They would also consider the cultural and environmental values of the target audience and how the translation can accurately convey these values. With its focus on maintaining the integrity of the translation process, it takes an ecological perspective on the translation ecosystem. The narrative approach in eco-translatology provides descriptions and explanations of the nature, process, standards, principles, methods, and phenomena of translation Dong and Qiu, (2018).

A thorough explanation of culture is given by Newmark, (1988) in his book "A Text Book of Translation," which defines it as the unique ways that members of a community express themselves and go about their daily lives while speaking a particular language. In addition, he divides terminology from foreign cultures into five categories. First among them is ecology, which includes all facets of the natural world, including plains, hills, winds, flora, and wildlife. The second domain is material culture, which deals with material things like clothing, food, shelter, and

transportation. Examining the social facets of a culture, such as employment and leisure pursuits, is the third domain, or social culture. Organizations, practices, rituals, actions, and ideas including everything from political and administrative issues to religious and artistic components make up the fourth category.

The Gayo ethnic group in the highlands of Aceh Province, Indonesia, has a rich cultural narrative related to the environment, passed down through generations. One of them is “The Legend of the Origin of *Depik*”, a folk tale narrated by an elderly member of the Gayo community named Aman Pinan, and translated by an Australian scholar named Domenyk Eides in his book entitled “A Grammar of Gayo: A Language of Aceh, Sumatra,” Eades, (2005). The translation of cultural narratives related to the environment might pose significant linguistic and cultural challenges for translators, who must convey the meaning of the source text while maintaining its cultural and ecological knowledge. Thus, the researcher finds it attractive to conduct research in this area, and it is believed as a novel thing to enrich the knowledge and experience about this issue. The three-dimensional adaptation and selection theory of eco-translatology was used to explore its linguistic, cultural, and communicative translation strategies. This paper will provide specific translation examples to illustrate these strategies. Thus, the research question used to guide this research was: how is the adaptation and selection of the linguistic, cultural, and communicative dimension in the translation of the narrative “The Legend of the Origin of *Depik*”?

METHOD

Qualitative content analysis was used as a research method for the study. According to Kondracki & Wellman, (2002), qualitative content analysis is a research method used to analyze text data, focusing on language's meaning as communication. This method considers the content or context of the text and can be used for verbal, print, or electronic forms of data. The text data can be obtained from various sources such as narrative responses, open-ended survey questions, interviews, focus groups, observations, or print media. Additionally, Hsieh and Shannon, (2005) state that content analysis is a research method that entails counting and comparing keywords or content, to interpret the underlying context.

To conduct this research, the first step was collecting relevant data, such as translations of the narrative, documents related to eco-translatology, and any other relevant sources. The data was carefully read and analyzed to identify key themes and concepts related to eco-translatology and the translation of the narrative. Then, the researcher analyzed the narrative text data and its English translations, identifying the use of both domestication and foreignization strategies, and local strategies for culture-specific items. Finally, the researcher used the three-dimensional adaptation and selection theory of eco-translatology to go beyond traditional translation analysis. This allowed the examination of ecological aspects in the target text, highlighting the importance of considering the environment and its relationship with culture in translation (Rabab’ah, 2008; Sahayu et al., 2020; Shread, 2023; Thesis and Klaver,

2018). While there was a lot of observed data, only examples were presented to represent the findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Linguistic Dimension

In the linguistic dimension, adaptive selection transformation involves the translator adjusting to the linguistic characteristics of the text being translated. This includes considerations of sentence structure, rhetorical style, and literary elements S. Dong and Zhang, 2018; Zhang, (2021). To achieve successful translation, the translator must possess a deep understanding of the source language and be mindful of the linguistic norms and preferences of the target audience. Deliberate decisions are made to adapt and transform the linguistic form, ensuring accurate and effective communication of the intended message Hu, (2011). Here is an example:

Example 1: “*Kekebereni, gerald e geluni item, ke nge...*”

“This folk tale, its name is ‘*Geluni item*’, all right then...”

In Example 1, the translator employed word-for-word translation strategies and made an adaptation by using the equivalent term "folk tale" to translate the word "*kekeberen*" in the source text. "*kekeberen*" derived from "*keber*," which signifies information, news, or story. Through affixation with the prefixes "*ke*" and "*en*," it transforms into "*kekeberen*," conveying the idea of something retold or passed down through generations, often associated with elements of unreality or mysticism. By selecting "folk tale" in the target language, the translator aimed to maintain a balanced eco-environment of translation.

Example 1 demonstrates the translator's strategy of adhering closely to the original text without incorporating their interpretations Hu, (2021). The focus is on maintaining faithfulness to the source material and avoiding personal biases in the translation process. This is called “leaning on the source text strategy”; leaning on the ecology of the source text entails a highly foreignizing strategy where the translator adjusts to the ecological context of the original language Hu, (2021).

Furthermore, Hu Yike and Zhang Le, (2020) state that the adaptive transformation of linguistic dimension refers to the translator’s adaptive transformation of language form in the translation. The transformation is carried out in different aspects and at different levels. Hypotactic language concerns the integrity of the sentence structure Abdurrahman, 2016; Chu and Sun, (2022); Gayo Language, on the other hand, is a paratactic language with concise language forms and many sentences without the subject. A translator should adjust the sentence structure and improve the content in the translation process. The following are some examples of paratactic language use in Gayonese and its translation into English:

Example 2: “*Mungaro akang, giongen, ke beta, segele. Oya ikaroe kone ... rongkilen ke deba ke beta segele macam.*”

“(They) hunt deer, hunt Giongen, it's like that, lots of things. That's what they hunt over there, all kinds (of things).”

Example 3: “*Ipakatie ponge. 'Boh, kune kiteni? 'kene, 'gere ke mungaro mi kite? ' "*
He gathered his friends, “All right then, what should we do? (he) said,”
Why don't we go hunting?”

Example 4: “*'Pakat', geh kene ponge, 'Ke nge beta 'kene pawang. "*
“(We) are gathered”, said his friends. “That is so”, said the hunter.

Example 5: “*Nge itose beluh ter Kamis. "*
“They made it that (they would) go on Thursday.”

In the given examples, the translator adjusted the sentence structure and improved the content by adding subjects ‘they’, ‘he’, ‘we’, and ‘they’, verbs ‘would’, and objects ‘of things’ missing in the original Gayo language. This was done to make the translation more comprehensible and natural in the target language, which likely uses a more active sentence structure compared to Gayo.

In the Gayo language as shown in the example 2 to 5, passive voice constructions such as “*ikaroe*” (hunted by him/her), “*ipakatie*” (asked by him/her), and “*itose*” (made by him/her) are often used, where the focus is on the action rather than the subject performing the action. However, in English or other languages that rely more on active voice constructions, it is necessary to include subjects, verbs, and objects to ensure clarity and proper sentence formation. Therefore, the translator introduced these elements to convey the intended meaning effectively in the target language.

Examples 2 to 5 demonstrate the translator's use of the 'making up' or 'supplementing' strategy to address the absence of certain linguistic elements in the source text. He also used additional explanations in the target text. These examples highlight the limitations and deficiencies in the translational eco-environment, which can result in ecological defects in the target language and incomplete transmission of the original intention. To overcome these challenges, translators should employ supplementation strategies to compensate for these deficiencies and enhance cross-cultural and cross-linguistic communication Hu, (2021).

Nevertheless, the translator faced challenges translating specific vocabulary from the source text culture to the target text culture. The following examples illustrate some of these challenges.

Example 6: “*Jadi, sara ketike, ara mi we sara pawang. "*
“So, one day, there was a hunter.”

In Gayo culture, the word “*pawang*” does not simply mean 'hunter' in English. It refers to an elder who possesses knowledge of Gayo culture and is a leader in hunting activities. The *pawang* is responsible for performing pre-hunting rituals, such as determining the auspicious day, hunting direction, and assigning duties to each

member. Therefore, the generalization of “*Pawang*” as a hunter fails to capture its nuanced cultural connotations in the adaptation and selection process in the linguistic dimension.

Example 7: “*I engon pakene sara tempat. Aneh, genancing tempat a sine*”

“They saw a place. The place was strange and unusual.”

In example 7, the translation of the word “*genancing*” as “unusual” falls short of capturing its nuanced meaning in the Gayo language. In Gayo, “*genancing*” conveys a sense of something extraordinary, incredible, or stunning. Therefore, “unusual” is too weak to depict the intended meaning accurately. A better translation choice would be a term that conveys the awe-inspiring and remarkable nature of “*genancing*”.

Example 8: “*Jadi, bur Kelietni, memang i wan bur Kelietni, macam hal sebage terjadi One*”

“So, this Mount Kelieten, in fact, at Mount Kelieten something happened.”

In example 8, there is a significant disparity between the original phrase “*macam hal sebage terjadi*” and its translation as “something happened.” The original phrase suggests that many things occur or happen at Mount Kelieten, indicating a broader scope of events. However, the translation “something happened” fails to convey the full nuance of the original phrase, which implies a multitude of occurrences. A more accurate translation would capture the idea that numerous events take place at Mount Kelieten.

The translation examples 6 to 8 illustrate the “leaning on the target source text strategy” employed by the translator, who can vary the degree of reliance on either the source-text ecology or the target-text ecology Hu, (2021). However, the analysis reveals an excessive “leaning on” of the target text ecology, resulting in a “polarization” between the two ecologies. This approach violates the principle of “Translation as Eco-balance” and contradicts Liu's assertion that translators should adapt the vocabulary and sentence patterns to the translation's ecological environment, preserving the original work's language features and charm Liu, (2021).

Cultural Dimension

Given Domyk Eides' extensive experience and deep understanding of Indonesian culture, including the unique Gayo traditions, it is essential to acknowledge that English and Gayo languages differ significantly regarding thinking patterns, religious beliefs, political and social cultures, and values. As a translator, Domyk Eides is responsible for maintaining fidelity to the original text while also considering the cultural background of the target readers. To achieve this, a combination of domestication and foreignization strategies is employed during the translation process. As Snell-Hornby, (1988) asserts, translation is a communicative process that bridges cultural boundaries, as language and culture are intertwined. Cultural adaptation is

crucial for translators, who consider bilingual and bicultural connotations Papadakis et al., (2022). They analyze the source text culturally and understand the differences between languages. Using suitable translation methods enhances reader comprehension of both language and culture Sun, (2011).

This study identified various instances of cultural word categories in “The Legend of the Origin of *Depik*.” To illustrate, the researcher examined these examples within the narrative from the perspective of the cultural dimension in the eco-translatological approach.

Example 9: “*Kerone teridah renyel mujadi gule Astaghfirullah!* “

"The rice had visibly turned into fish! Oh, dear! (lit. I ask God's forgiveness! (Arabic)."

The translator's adaptation and selection process in Example 9 involved not only considering the phrase's literal meaning but also its cultural connotation and intended meaning. By recognizing the cultural nuance of "*Astaghfirullah!*" and its function in expressing surprise or disbelief, the translator selected an appropriate expression in the target language to convey the same nuance and function as 'I ask God's forgiveness!' The translator aimed to maintain the communicative intention behind the phrase while also adapting it to the target audience's cultural environment. In this way, the translator's adaptation and selection process ensured the balance of the phrase's intended meaning and cultural implications in the target language Tian, (2018).

Example 10: “*Pertama-tama, si selalu, jema ku geniring ni Bur Kelietni mungaro.*”

“Firstly, People are always (going) to the edge of Mount *Kelieten* to hunt.”

In Example 10, the translator's adaptation and selection process demonstrate a keen understanding of the cultural connotation embedded in the source text. By recognizing the cultural significance of hunting in the Gayo community, the translator adeptly captures and conveys this connotation to the target audience. The translator carefully selects expressions that resonate with the cultural environment of the target audience. By choosing the phrase "People are always (going) to the edge of Mount *Kelieten* to hunt," the translator effectively mirrors the cultural connotation of hunting. The strategy used by the translator in translating the sentence in Examples 9 and 10 is also the 'leaning on the source text strategy'. In this case, he fully leaned on the source text ecology without giving his interpretation. Adopting the "leaning on" strategy towards the source-text ecology ensures a more faithful representation of the original meaning by aligning with the translational eco-environment of the source language and prioritizing its preservation Hu, (2021).

Example 11: “*Pengarehni, gerale 'Geluni Item'. Tumbuh-tumbuhen ara batang geluni, we item. I karih urum oya, kin senuk, kin senuk korek*”.

"The spoon, it was called '*Geluni item.*' (Of) all kinds of plants, there is the *Geluni* tree. It is black. (The rice) was stirred with that, as a large spoon, as a large stirring spoon."

In the case of Example 11, it seems that the translator generalized by translating the term "*Pengareh*" as "spoon." However, "*Pengareh*" refers to a rice stirring tool made of wood and coconut shell (also called *Senuk*), which differs from a traditional spoon. This adaptation process overlooks the cultural specificity and fails to convey the term's intended meaning and cultural connotation accurately. It seems that the translator used the word "spoon" as a general term to refer to kitchen utensils used for stirring rice. This could be because "spoon" is a more commonly known term in English, while the specific tool used in the Gayo community may not have a direct equivalent in English. However, in doing so, the translator may have overlooked the cultural specificity of the rice-stirring tool in the Gayo community. A more precise translation, such as "rice stirring tool" or "rice ladle," could have been used to capture the cultural context and differentiate it from a regular spoon.

Example 11 showcases the utilization of the 'leaning on the target text strategy' by the translator, which involves making adjustments to the target language's ecosystem and strongly domesticating the translation Hu, (2021). However, this approach overlooks the cultural distinctiveness and fails to accurately represent the intended meaning and cultural connotation of the term. To effectively convey bilingual cultural connotations in translation, the translator should prioritize adapting the entire cultural system of the target language while transforming the source language, according to Hu Yike and Zhang Le, (2020).

Communicative Dimension

In the translation process, Hu, (2004) emphasizes the significance of the communicative dimension. While linguistic and cultural aspects are crucial, the communicative dimension centers on conveying the intended communicative purpose of the original text. Language serves as a means of communication, beyond transmitting information and culture. Translators must attend to pragmatic expressions, effectively conveying the intended meaning in the target language. The communicative adaptation necessitates awareness of the communicative intentions in both source and target languages, establishing effective communication between the texts Thesis & Klaver, (2018).

Example 12: "*I engone bahwa kero si itekar ne meh mujadi depik*".

"They saw that the rice they had discarded had all become depik fish".

In Example 12, the communicative dimension is crucial role in the translation process. The phrase "*I engone bahwa kero si itekar ne meh mujadi depik*" conveys a surprising or unexpected event. The translator must capture this communicative intention in the target language to ensure effective communication. By translating it as "They saw that the rice they had discarded had all become *Depik fish*," the translator

successfully conveys the element of surprise to the target audience. The adaptation process focuses on maintaining the intended communicative purpose of the original text, ensuring that the audience experiences a similar sense of astonishment.

Example 13: “*Yah! Sine gere mugule oya, seni nge mugule*”.

“Oh! Earlier that didn't have any fish, and now it has fish (i.e. the water).”

In Example 13, the communicative dimension of translation is of great importance. The phrase “*Yah! Sine gere mugule oya, seni nge mugule*” expresses a sense of surprise or realization. To convey the intended communicative purpose of the original text, the translator must ensure effective communication in the target language. By translating it as “Oh! Earlier that didn't have any fish, and now it has fish (i.e. the water),” the translator successfully captures the surprise element and conveys it to the target audience. The adaptation process focuses on bringing the intended meaning and evoking a similar emotional response in the target language.

Hu's study indicates that Example 12 to 13 exemplifies the translator's use of the “leaning on the source text strategy” by sticking closely to the original text without adding personal opinions or biases Hu, (2021). This strategy emphasizes the integrity to the original text. It is distinguished by a strong foreignization technique in which the translator modifies the source language's ecological setting.

Example 14: “*Sawah ku penarun, geluni sine i ceriten ku jema, Ini, geluni kin pengarih ng-kero ng-kami. Oyakati kami-ni meh mude engon jema*”.

“When they got to the *fireplace*, the *Geluni* was made into a story for the people, “This, the *Geluni* was our stirring spoon for our rice over there. That is why we are all young to look at”.

In Example 14, the communicative dimension of translation is significant. The phrase “*Sawah ku penarun*” is inaccurately translated as “When they got to the fireplace” instead of the intended meaning of “When they got to the Penarun village.” This misinterpretation affects the communicative purpose of the text. In this case, the translator's selection of “fireplace” instead of “*Penarun*” deviates from the original cultural context and misrepresents the intended meaning. This misinterpretation hinders effective communication between the source and target texts.

In Example 14, the translator employed the “leaning on the source text strategy”; however, an unfortunate misconception occurred with the use of the non-equivalent term “fireplace” instead of “*Penarun*” which is the actual name of a village. This highlights the importance of accurately conveying the original text's meaning Hu, (2004). When considering the linguistic ecology of the source text, it encompasses elements such as language, syntax, the author's ideas and emotions, the rhetorical purpose, and the cultural background Hu, (2021). The ultimate goal of translation is to achieve effective communication in the target language, bridging any gaps between the source and target texts. This requires the translator to be mindful of the communicative

intentions of both languages and employ adaptive transformations to enhance the communicative ecology (Dong and Qiu, 2018; Zhai, 2019; Shuyue and Feng, 2019)

CONCLUSION

The translation of the narrative text about the origin of *Depik* employed strategies such as "emptying," "compensating," and "leaning on." However, it fell short of achieving linguistic accuracy, capturing cultural connotations, and ensuring effective communication. This emphasizes the need for translators to be more attentive to these crucial aspects to perform a faithful rendition of the target language. Analyzing linguistic, cultural, and communicative dimensions highlights the importance of translators' awareness and proficiency in producing high-quality translations that effectively convey the original text's meaning, cultural connotations, and intended communication. As Wang, (2014) suggests, the translator's adaptation and selection process involves understanding the original text's ecological environment and selecting appropriate expressions for the target language. This adaptation requires a back-and-forth movement between the two languages. Therefore, translators must strive for accuracy, cultural sensitivity, and effective communication to deliver quality translations. The primary limitation of the study lies in its potential lack of generalizability due to a narrow focus on a specific text, which may restrict the broader applicability of its findings to diverse translation contexts. Therefore, Future research could explore a broader range of texts and include the perspectives of professional translators to address the limitation of narrow generalizability in translation studies.

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