A Study of Mistranslation in English-Chinese Text of Fashion from the Perspective of Eco-Translatology

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Abstract: China's apparel industry occupies an important proportion in the world, thus the development of apparel industry is fundamental to the well-being of world's apparel sector. Whether it is to promote the development of the international apparel trade industry, or to learn and absorb the advanced fashion culture of other countries, all countries need to communicate with each other. Therefore, language has become one of the most important factors. This paper aims to promote the development of translation research in fashion English and the reference to the clothing knowledge and culture abroad. Based on the theory of Eco-translatology, this paper takes Alison Lurie's *The Language of Clothes* and Li Changqing's Chinese version as the research objects. Then it mainly adopts induction method, descriptive method and case analysis method to sort out and analyze mistranslations in the study objects from the three-dimension perspectives of language, culture and communication. And finally, the feasible translations are put forward to perfect the translation.

Keywords: Eco-translatology, Clothing English, Mistranslation

1. Introduction

As the world's largest consumer and producer of clothing, China's apparel industry has become a major domestic industry, and its development has greatly promoted the development of China's national economy. At the same time, the domestic and international exchanges in the apparel industry have become very important. More and more foreign clothing books and periodicals have been introduced into China, and become the main medium to acquaint oneself with the western apparel industry and clothing culture.

After consulting relevant materials, it is found that there are few original works about clothing English books in China, which are basically imported from abroad and translated by domestic scholars. In the field of fashion translation, there is a lack of professional translators with certain professional background and guiding translation theories. Although in recent years, some scholars have turned their attention to the field of translation in fashion, most of the studies have focused on the Chinese-English translation of characters 'clothing in classical literature, such as clothing translation of *Dream of Red Mansions*, *Jin Ping Mei*, *Water Margin* and other classical works. In the current related studies, some scholars have made different studies on the translation of clothing brands, clothing trademarks, clothing advertisements and so on. For example, in the article *On the Translation of Clothing Terminology*, Zhang Hongping focuses on the problems in clothing terminology translation, especially the nonstandard translation caused by thinking differences. [1] Besides, Zhang Lin explores the translation of clothing trademarks from the perspective of cultural differences, and points out that brand translation should cater to the culture of the target language and satisfy the target audience so as to achieve the goal of cross-cultural communication. [2] And the author analyzes the clothing-related advertisement translation from the perspective of Eco- translatology, which aims to proving that the Eco-translatology is conductive and feasible on translation of clothing-related advertisements. [3] Some scholars also study the translation of clothing idioms from the perspective of cultural translation. For example, the article, *Cultural Semantic Information and Translation of English and Chinese Clothing Idioms,* analyses and interprets a large number of semantic information of clothing Idioms in English and Chinese and their translation. [4] Moreover,

based on theories of conceptual metaphor and metonymy, selecting English and Chinese clothing idioms as research object, Song Meimei makes studies on conceptual metaphor and conceptual metonymy of clothing idioms and on the function of metaphatonymy on constructing clothing idioms. [5] However, there are only a few papers on the translation of clothing books. In general, the field of domestic fashion English translation is not matured, and many clothing books have a large number of mistranslations, making these excellent articles and works unable to realize the value of cultural communication.

Based on the new perspective of Eco-translatology, this paper examines the mistranslation in clothing translation from English into Chinese, which takes Alison Lurie's *The Language of Clothes* as the reference book and Li Changqing's Chinese version as the study object to explore those mistranslations and try to re-translate to achieve the perfection.

In this paper, the induction method, the descriptive method and the case analysis method are mainly adopted. And the middle is used for explaining the theoretical points about Eco-translatology and fashion English. The first and last method are used to sort out the mistranslations and analyze the translator's own translational adaptation and selection on translation strategies and methods in his translational eco-environment from the view of three-dimensional transformations. Therefore, these three methods are adopted together to study the translated version and guide the retranslation of mistranslation in fashion English.

2. English-Chinese Translation in Fashion from the Perspective of Eco-translatology

2.1. An Overview of Eco-translatology

Peter Newmark once said that "translation theory is concerned with choices and decisions, not with the mechanics of either the source language text…or the target text" [6]. It describes the translation well and truly. Under the influence of the global ecological culture academic trend, Professor *Hu Gengshen* of Tsinghua University tried to explore translation theory from a new perspective. In June 2001, *Hu* began the exploration of adaptation and selection in translation at Hong Kong Baptist University. In same year, Professor *Hu* participated in the first translation related lecture, which is *From the Darwinian Principle of Adaptation and Selection to Translation Studies*. In 2004, *The Theory of Adaptive Selection in Translation*, known as the foundation of Eco-translatology, was published. In this book, Professor *Hu*, based on Darwin's theory of "adaptation/selection" in biological evolution, explored the adaptation between translators and translation eco-environment in the process of translation from the perspective of translator-centered. It also gave a new interpretation and description of the nature, principles, methods and evaluation criteria of translation, and then constructed a new theoretical system -- *Translation as Adaptation and Selection*. In 2008, Professor *Hu* sublimated this theory into *Eco-translatology*. In 2009, Professor *Hu* declared the "ecological view" of translation studies in *An Ecological Turn in Translation Studies from the Perspective of Relevance Sequence Chain*. In 2010, Professor *Hu* founded the International Conference on Eco-translatology. In November, the First International Symposium on Eco-translatology was held, which meant that the research on domestic ecological translation studies had entered a stage of comprehensive development, and then the Journal Eco-translatology was launched in 2011. In addition, five international seminars on Eco-translatology have been organized to make eco-translatology more international.

Translation activities cannot be carried out without the different languages of different nationalities. Language is a part of culture, culture is the accumulation of human communication activities, and human beings are part of nature. It can be seen that there is an "associated sequence chain" [7] among translation, language, culture, human beings and the biological world. Professor *Hu* Genshen shows this internal relationship between them as follows:
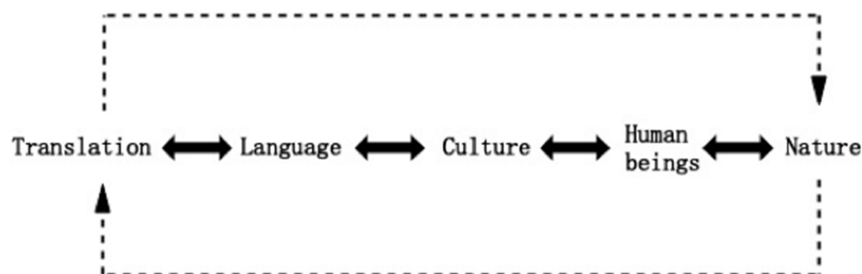

Figure 1. Associated sequence chain.

Through this chain, it can be seen the relationship between translation activities and the biological world is interconnected and accommodated. Therefore, the laws applicable to the biological world can also be applied to translation activities, the *Darwinian Theory of Adaptation/Selection*. This "related sequence chain" is "an important prerequisite and basis for the formation and development of Eco-translatology". [8]

From the perspective of ecological translation studies, Professor *Hu* divides the translation process into two stages.

First, the translators "adapts" to translational eco-environment with "source text" being its typically important element. Second, translational eco-environment "selects" the form of the final target text with "translator"

being its typically important element. [9] The process of translating comprises the translator's selective adaptation and adaptive selection. It could illustrate the two steps of the process of translating as follows.
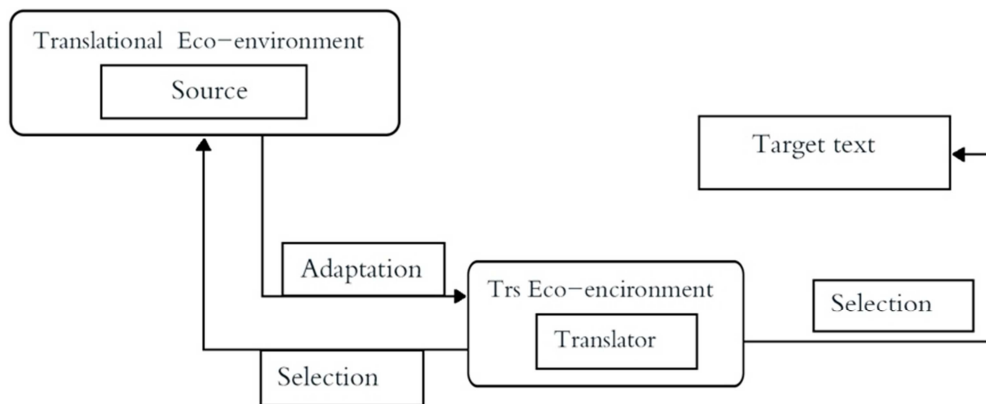

Figure 2. The two steps of the process of translating.

And the translational Eco-environment does not mean a simple language environment, but "refers to the world which comprises the source language text, the target language text, and the linguistic, communicative, cultural, social aspects of translating, as well as the author, the client, and the reader". [10] Therefore, according to Eco-translatology, the translation process is also described as an alternating cycle process of the translator's adaptive selection and selective adaptation. In this process, the purpose of adaptation is to survive, the means of adaptation is to optimize the selection, and the rule of selection is to "eliminate the weak and retain the strong". [11] Eco-translatology summarizes translation method as three-dimensional adaptive transformation, which is from linguistic dimension, cultural dimension and communicative dimension. Eco-translatology emphasizes the translator's subjectivity. During the translation, the translator, who plays an important part in the Eco-environment, selects different translation methods and specific sentence pattern or words to cater to certain readers.

The domestic research on Eco-translatology is on the rise, especially in recent years, more and more scholars have made use of Eco-translation theory to conduct related researches and studies. At present, most of these articles on Eco-translatology published in China focus on taking the theory to guide translation practice. For example, one of the scholars analyzed *Gu Hongming*'s translation of the *Analects* from the perspective of *Adaptation and Selection Translation Theory*; [12] and another scholar explored Yan Fu's translation of *Tianyan Lun* from the perspective of *Adaptation and Selection Translation Theory* and so on. [13] In addition, the study of political literature, news and publicity translation from Eco-translatology is also very popular, and there are a few studies on interpretation strategies, subtitle translation, sign translation and so on. For example, Professor *Hu* discussed the adaptation of interpreters in consecutive interpretation from the perspective of Eco-translatology. [14] All the studies show the

application of eco-translatology is more and more extensive, and provide a new perspective and method for the study of translation.

2.2. Translation of Fashion English

The research on clothing is interdisciplinary, which means it needs to synthesize the research methods of philosophy, economics, sociology, folklore, psychology, history, physiology, art and textile science and engineering. Therefore, fashion English, as an ESP (English for Specific Purposes), is different from other English disciplines. It is not only interdisciplinary but also has the characteristics of clear objectives, strong pertinence and high practical value. Analyzing from the lexical level, it is found that fashion English has a great number of professional words, synonyms, synthetic words, foreign words, abbreviations and so on. From the syntactic level, the usage of passive speech sentences in fashion English texts is frequent, and as same as long and compound sentences. Moreover, there is a lot of professional knowledge related to the clothing art or clothing culture in fashion English. Therefore, when dealing with fashion English texts, the translator should take into account the grammatical features, such as morphology and syntax, as well as how to convey cultural connotations correctly and how to explain clothing terms to readers, especially amateur. *The Language of Clothes* and its Chinese version («解读服装») are classic textbooks of compulsory courses in many top universities, and also are referred by many clothing researchers. The readers of *The Language of Clothes* include consumers, students, researchers, fashion commentators and so on. Therefore, the translation needs to express what the author wants to convey in easy-to-understand words, so that even a layman without relevant professional background can understand and master it. In the process of translating, the translator needs to consider not only the effect of translation on linguistic dimension, such as the original information and language style, the cultural dimension, such as the specific

cultural knowledge and so on, but also the acceptance of target language readers and other communicative dimension factors, to produce a translation with the highest integrated adaptation and selection. According to Professor *Hu Gengshen*, the evaluation and measurement of "integrated adaptation and selection" can be summarized as "three reference indexes"—the degree of multi-dimensional transformation, the feedback of readers and the quality of translators. [15]

3. An Analysis of Mistranslation in Fashion English from the Perspective of Eco-translatology

Fang Mengzhi explained the mistranslation in the *Dictionary of Translation* as follow: "A deviation from the original works in thought or in writing usually resulting from improper understanding or expression by translators." [16] Base on the above, the "mistranslation" from the perspective of Eco-translatology is the translation under the deviation of the translator's adaptation and selection in linguistic, cultural and communicative dimension. This paper mainly analyzes the typical mistranslations from linguistic, cultural and communicative dimension. However, the translational eco-environment is composed of multiple dimensions and multiple elements, and during translating, various factors such as language, culture and communication are often intertwined, interconnected, and sometimes it is difficult to separate these factors. Therefore, when it comes to emphasizing a certain dimension or a certain factor for the convenience of description, it does not mean other factors do not take part in the translation process.

3.1. Analysis of Linguistic Dimensional Mistranslation

From a logical point of view, translation is the transformation of language, language is the carrier of culture, and culture is the accumulation of communication. Moreover, the translator begins with language in translation. Therefore, the feasibility of adaptively selecting and transforming from the linguistic dimension is self-evident. [17]

According to Eco-translatology, linguistic dimension mistranslation is the result of the deviation of translator's adaptation on linguistic level in process of translation. It is mainly reflected in the translator's selective adaptation and adaptive selection to the language habits and norms of the source language and the target language, that is, *Li Changqing*'s adaptation and selection to the linguistic factors (especially professional vocabulary), syntactic structure (long sentences and compound sentences), rhetoric and stylistic style in *The Language of Clothes*.

For example, *Li Changqing* translated the name of actress "*Madonna*" into "麦唐纳"[18], the brand name "*Gucci* shoes" into "古奇鞋"[19], and the names of designer "*Worth*" and "*Mary Quant*" are mistranslated as "华斯", "玛丽•柯温特"[20] and so on. Transliteration is generally adopted in the English translation of proper nouns such as names and brand

names. However, due to the large number of homophones in Chinese, even transliterating according to the Chinese pronunciation rules will lead to different translation names. In order to avoid confusing the target readers and make the translated names accurately refer to the object of the author's allegation. It is suggested to adopt the conventionalized translation, that is, to adopt the translated names have been agreed upon and has some influence among the target language community. Therefore, the translations of "玛丽•柯温特", "麦当娜", "古驰鞋", "沃斯" and "玛丽•匡特" are more adaptable. They have a larger scale in the domestic speech community and have been recognized by the broad audience. At the same time, they are accepted by more books, magazines and other media.

Transliteration strategy is generally adopted in the translation of proper nouns, such as names of persons and brands. However, English and Chinese belong to two completely different language families, and there are many homonyms in Chinese. Even transliterating according to the rules of Chinese pronunciation may lead to different translations because of different translators. Therefore, it is suggested to adopt the strategy of "*conventionalization*", that is, to adopt the translated names which have been conventionally accepted and have certain influence in target language community.

English emphasizes hypotaxis. Therefore, clauses or conjunctions are often used to balance sentence structure and indicate logical relation. However, Chinese emphasizes parataxis and prefers short sentences. So, the logical relationship and grammatical meaning are often reflected in word order and sentence pattern. If the translator fails to adapt to the syntactic differences in translating, it will easily lead to mistranslation. For example:

"In America, long trousers for small boys began to be available in the 1920s, but they were uncommon. Gradually the age at which one assumed one's first long pants was lowered, until by 1940 even three- and four-year-olds might wear them, especially for play." [21]

"在 1920 年的美国，开始有小男孩穿长裤，但是并不普遍。第一次穿长裤的年龄逐渐降低，到了 1940 年时，即使是三四岁的男孩也可能穿长裤了，特别是在玩耍的时候。"[22]

The above example is the result of translating only adapt to the word order of source text. The translator doesn't take into account syntactic differences between the two languages and neglect the adaptive selection and transformation of Hypotaxis and parataxis, which leads to a stiff and illogical translation. According to the translation principle of the linguistic dimension, it should be translated as "20 世纪 20 年代的美国，已经有小男孩开始穿长裤，但并未普及。逐渐地，越来越小的孩子开始穿长裤，到 1940 年，三、四岁的小孩也开始穿长裤，尤其在他们玩耍的时候。"

Literary form, the type or style of independent text, including expression techniques, subject types, structural types, morphological formats and so on. It can influence or emphasize the feeling what the author wants to express. If the style of the translated text is contrary to the original text, the

translation will fail to convey the author's meaning. There is an excerpt from *T. S. Eliot*'s *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* in the second chapter:

"I grow old... I grow old...
I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled." [23]
"我长大了……我长大了……
我应该穿卷裤脚的长裤了。"[24]

The translator interprets "grow old" as "长大" in the original text, but it is "变老" in the *Oxford Dictionary*, not "长大". The translator's bias in the choice of words leads to the deviation of the meaning of the original text from the original meaning, resulting in this mistranslation example. Moreover, there are plenty of images and rhetorical in this poem, in order to reflect the protagonist's confusion and powerlessness in the face of love and real life. And the main theme of the poem is pessimistic and helpless. Therefore, considering the original style and the main theme, its translation should reproduce the beauty of the original poem as much as possible on the basis of faithfulness to the original meaning.

In this book, when describing some past fashion phenomena, the author often quotes some children's songs or literary works to help readers understand the characteristics of those times and social situation. Therefore, when translating these quoted fragments, the literary form of the source text should be taken into account so that the translation can be as close as possible to the style of the source text. Eco-translatology follows the principle of "*balance and harmony*", which includes the balance of overall factors and the balance of factors in each dimension. This principle not only guides the translator's adaptation and selection of the target text, but also serves as a criterion of the target text quality, and a principle for translation modification.

3.2. Analysis of Cultural Dimensional Mistranslation

Because the cultural ecology of the source language and the target language often differ in nature and content, to avoid misinterpreting the source text from the view of the target language culture, the translator should not only pay attention to the linguistic transformation of the source language but also adapt to the whole cultural system which the source language belongs to. Therefore, when translating, the translator should pay attention to the transmission of bilingual cultural connotations, which is "*adaptive selection of cultural dimension*".

Adaptive selection of cultural dimension requires the translator to pay attention to cultural factors, such as the differences in cultural background and cultural habits between bilinguals, and to maintain the ecological balance between the bilingual's culture to the greatest extent. Fashion English often contains a lot of fashion cultural expressions and information, which requires translators to select appropriate translation strategies. Therefore, based on the Eco-translatology, the mistranslation of cultural dimension is due to the translator's deviation in the process of translation

selection, which destroys the ecological balance of bilingual culture and produces a non-optimized translation. Here are the examples elected from *The Language of Clothes*.

Example 1,

"In the sixties, some hippies and mystics scorned overly clean and tidy dress as a sign of compromise with the Establishment and too great an attachment to the things of this world." [25]

"在 60 年代, 有些嬉痞和神秘主义者对过度洁净的装扮不屑一顾, 他们认为那是与教会妥协的象征, 并且太过于依恋这个世界的事物。"[19]

From the perspective of cultural dimension, the translator's translation of "hippies" and "mystics" doesn't adapt well, because readers, who are unfamiliar with western culture, know nothing about "hilarious" and "mysticism". Thus, it is suggested that translator should add a note after the word to explain more about its connotations, so that all readers can accept and understand the cultural connotation, and the functions of cultural transmission and communicative intention transmission in translation can be realized. So it should be translated into "在 60 年代, 有些嬉痞(即嬉皮士, 拒绝西方生活方式的人, 常留长发、衣着鲜艳、吸毒)和神秘主义者(通过祷告和冥想和上帝建立联系的人, 他们通常能理解常人无法理解的一些事件)对过度洁净的装扮不屑一顾, 他们认为那是与教会妥协的象征, 并且太过于依恋这个世界的事物。" It is more convincing to note the characteristics of hippies and mystics, the annotations in brackets, and it is also more relevant to the author's central idea in this paragraph.

In addition, there are two titles, *LAMB DRESSED AS MUTTON* and *MUTTON DRESSED AS LAMB*, which are also typical of cultural dimension mistranslation. These two titles are the quotation and variation of an English idiom, *mutton dressed as lamb*, which means "an old woman dressed as a young girl". The translator adopts literal translation strategy and translates it into "小羊扮母羊" and "母羊扮小羊". Although the literal meaning of the translation is correct, it fails to convey the cultural connotation of the source text. In English idioms, "lamb" is often used to refer to "young girl, young man" and "mutton" to "adult, old man". Therefore, if translating the two titles into Chinese proverbs "Lao Lai Qiao" (老来俏) and "Xiao Da Ren" (小大人), the cultural connotations of "lamb" and "mutton" in Western culture can be more appropriately conveyed.

In clothing English, Eco-translatology requires translators to consider the bilingual content related to clothing, fashion and so on, and choose different translation strategies according to different situations. If the translator wants the target language reader to accept the translation without destroying the cultural elements in the source language text, the translator needs to appropriately alienate or domesticate the translation. For this study, all the explanations and concepts of the original text are based on the Western fashion history and phenomena. Therefore, the translator should try his best to retain the foreign culture in the original text, so

that readers can increase their knowledge of Western history and culture in their reading.

3.3. Analysis of Communicative Dimensional Mistranslation

The adaptive selection transformation of the communicative dimension requires the translator to focus on the communicative level, which includes the communicative intention of the author, and the transmission degree, the communicative intention of the original language / culture form and language / culture connotation and so on. (Hu Gengshen, 2013: 238) Only when the translator has a certain cultural knowledge of clothing and is familiar with the cultural phenomena about the target language nation and the source language nation, can the fashion English translation proceed smoothly, the sentences be transformed selectively and the information be transmitted accurately. Based on Eco-translatology, the mistranslation of the communicative dimension in fashion English translation is mainly due to the fact that the translator fails to meet the needs of the target readers or fails to adapt to the communicative dimension factor in the "translation Eco-environment" during the translation of fashion English, which leads to errors in the selection process. Therefore, the original information cannot be conveyed correctly and the translation cannot be accepted by the readers.

Example 2,

"A few of these have been selected or adapted by manufacturers for mass production, but only a certain proportion of them have caught on." [26]

"这些款式中，只有少数会被厂商挑选并大量生产，但是也只有少量款式会被顾客接受。"[27]

The author did not emphasize those styles which are selected by the manufacturer and mass produced. But the translation,"只有少数会被厂商挑选并大量生产", has the intension of emphasis on only a few number will be selected by manufactures, which is contrary to the author's expression. In the *Oxford Dictionary*, "caught on" is "to become popular or fashionable", that is, "受欢迎，流行起来，变得时髦". The translators translate it as "被顾客接受", which means "accepted by customers". And the translation doesn't convey the information and expression correctly, that is, "these styles are not only accepted by customers but also become a popular trend".

In addition, when discussing the relationship between place and clothing expression, the author compares clothing to language. The specific meaning of words depends on the context, as well as the clothes. The meaning of the clothes to be worn depends on the place of attendance.

Example 3,

"Like the remark 'Let's get on with this damn business,' the two-piece tan business suit and boldly striped shirt and tie that signify energy and determination in the office will have quite another resonance at a funeral or picnic. "[26]

"像是'让我们和这件该死的事一起进步'那样的简评，若穿着二件式的褐色西装、搭档条纹的衬衫和领带(在办公室里象征活力和决心)去参加葬礼或野餐会，将得到相当

不同的回应。" [28]

The translation is very confusing. Because the source text is a metaphor, but the translation didn't clearly convey the relevance and similarity between the tenor and the vehicle. It can be seen that the translator fails to convey the author's communicative intention accurately. This translation is also deviated from the linguistic dimension. The word "boldly", as an adverb, has two main meanings: bravely and clearly outlined. According to the context, it is more appropriate to take the latter meaning, "clearly outlined". So, the author's meaning is the stripes of the shirt are big and obvious.

As mentioned before, the ecological environment of translation is composed of many dimensions and elements. And during the process of translation, various factors such as language, culture, and communication are often intertwined, interconnected, and sometimes difficult to separate. Therefore, the translator should not only maintain the balance of each dimension and each element, but also ensure the balance between the dimensions and elements, so as to keep the Eco-environment of fashion English translation in harmony.

4. Conclusion

Based on Professor *Hu Gengshen*'s Eco-translatology, this paper makes an exploratory study on the mistranslation of fashion English, taking Alison Lurie's *The Language of Clothes* and Li Changqing's Chinese version («解读服装») as the research objects. This paper makes a brief review of the background, development and connotation of Eco-translatology and the characteristics of fashion English translation. From the new perspective of Eco-translatology, this paper also analyzes and discusses the mistranslation of fashion English and tries to modify it. Most of the mistranslations in linguistic dimension are at the lexical level and the textual level, mainly because of the different language habits and writing modes between the translator and the author. Therefore, when re-translating, the textual feature of the source text should be summarized and analyzed at first, and then make appropriate linguistic dimensional adaptation and selection according to the source text. Cultural dimension mistranslation is mostly due to the translator's failure to take cultural differences into account when translating historical connotations or idioms. Therefore, the translator should totally devote himself to the culture of the source language, then select appropriate translation strategies to translate cultural words. In order to avoid mistranslating in communicative dimension, the translator should integrate the original meaning and the author's intention into the translation and pass them on to the readers, following the author's intention and not sticking to the language form of the original text. In the process of analyzing and retranslating mistranslation cases, due to the specialty, interdisciplinary and practical characteristics of fashion English, its translation process is complicated, it is realized that the translator should not only be familiar with bilingual language and culture, but also the author, the readers and the balance among each

factor in translation eco-environment. Therefore, for better translation, the translator should not only accurately convey the professional knowledge in the original text, but also be familiar with the relevant cultural factors in the bilingual field and correctly comprehend the author's communicative intention.

As a branch of clothing subject and a medium of communication in this filed at home and abroad, fashion English has a direct impact on the dissemination of clothing knowledge. In this study, the induction and analysis of mistranslation cases, as well as re-translation strategies, provide the possibility of producing better fashion English translation versions. At the same time, the emerging Eco-translatology provides a new perspective for fashion English translation studying. Fashion English, a relatively new field, also adds new applied disciplines to Eco-translatology and enriches the application fields of Eco-translatology.

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