

# **Research on the English Translation of Urumqi Municipal Museum's Introduction in the Perspective of Ecological Rationality**

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**Abstract:** The Urumqi Municipal Museum boasts a rich collection of resources, including 16 first-class cultural relics, 29 second-class relics, and 102 third-class relics, embodying the historical and cultural memories of Urumqi and narrating its captivating stories. However, through the author's on-site investigations, three major issues were identified in the translation of the museum's introductory materials: semantic and grammatical errors, reliance on machine translation, and misalignment in cultural information. This paper aims to analyze the translation errors and inadequacies found in the English versions of the museum's introduction from the perspective of the five dimensions of "Ecological Rationality." It also proposes measures for improvement to enhance the quality of English translations, thereby promoting the international dissemination of Chinese culture.

**Keywords:** Ecological Rationality; Introductory Translation; Improper Translation

## **1. Introduction**

In 2007, the International Council of Museums adopted the revised "Statutes of the International Council of Museums," defining a museum as "a non-profit, permanent institution serving society and its development, open to the public for the purpose of collecting, conserving, researching, communicating, and exhibiting tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment". As an important cultural institution in Xinjiang, the Urumqi Municipal Museum possesses a rich collection that spans various artifacts from ancient times to the present, showcasing the history and culture of Urumqi and its surrounding areas. As a vital venue for cultural inheritance and dissemination, the translation of public signage holds

multifaceted social value, including the provision of public information and the shaping of social image and cultural communication (Chen Xiaowei, 2018). The quality of the introductory translations directly impacts international audiences' understanding and perception of the exhibits and the cultures they represent.

## **2. Overview of the Urumqi Municipal Museum**

The Urumqi Municipal Museum is located in the Urumqi Cultural Center (Building No. 2), covering a total area of approximately 34,500 square meters, with an exhibition area of 8,500 square meters. The museum houses 16 first-class cultural relics, 29 second-class relics, and 102 third-class relics, along with over a thousand other artifacts. Guided by its mission to "give voice to history and let artifacts speak," the Urumqi Municipal Museum showcases that Xinjiang has always been an inseparable part of China. Urumqi has consistently played a crucial role in the historical development of the region, serving as a vital hub for interaction, communication, and integration, thereby illustrating the diverse and unified narrative of Chinese culture as it pertains to Urumqi.

## **3. Eco-Translatology and Ecological Rationality**

Eco-Translatology, as an interdisciplinary approach to translation studies, employs Ecological Rationality to conduct a comprehensive and holistic study of translation from an ecological perspective [1]. From 2017 to 2023, Eco-Translatology experienced a rapid development phase, with its research methods and theoretical discourse system becoming increasingly mature, establishing itself as one of the internationally influential disciplines within Chinese translation theory [2]. Eco-Translatology is a quintessential

representation of contemporary Chinese innovative translation theories and is one of the most active and proactive participants in the “going global” process. Its guiding significance for both domestic and international translation theory research cannot be underestimated [3].

Eco-Translatology encompasses nine research foci and theoretical perspectives, specifically: (1) Ecological Paradigm; (2) Associative Sequence; (3) Ecological Rationality; (4) Doing things with translations; (5) Translation Eco-Environment; (6) Translator-Centeredness; (7) Adaptation/Selection; (8) Three-Dimensional transformations; and (9) Post-Translation Review [4]. Hu Gengshen points out that Eco-Translatology’s nine research foci and theoretical perspectives include Ecological Rationality, which can be summarized as: emphasizing holism/association, advocating dynamics/balance, embodying ecological aesthetics, considering the “translation community,” and promoting diversity/unity. These five aspects of Ecological Rationality form the macro-guiding concept for constructing the discourse system of Eco-Translatology. Guided by Ecological Rationality, Eco-Translatology manifests as holistic thinking, organic thinking, associative thinking, and process-oriented thinking. It emphasizes the integration and unity of analysis and synthesis, the influence and constraints of the translation eco-environment on translator behavior, the coherence and coordination of “Translation Studies”, “Translation Theory” and “Translation Practice” and the integration of “Translator”, “Text” and “Environment” [4].

Based on a search through CNKI, it has been found that current research in Eco-Translatology primarily focuses on seven areas: “Ecological Paradigm,” “Translation Eco-Environment,” “Translator-Centeredness,”

“Adaptation/Selection,” “Three-Dimensional Transformations,” and “Post-Translation Review.” However, studies guided by the “Associative Sequence” are relatively scarce, and there is not a single theoretical or applied research paper guided by “Ecological Rationality.” In light of this, this paper aims to systematically explore the English translation of the introductions at the Urumqi Municipal Museum using the macro-guiding concept of “Ecological Rationality” in Eco-Translatology. The goal is to enhance the internationalization of the Urumqi Municipal Museum, fill the gap in

applied research in this field, and expand the theoretical and practical dimensions of Eco-Translatology.

#### **4. Analysis of Translation Issues in Urumqi Municipal Museum Introductions from the Perspective of “Ecological Rationality”**

Ecological Rationality emphasizes the study of translation issues from five major perspectives: focusing on “Holism/Interconnectedness,” emphasizing “Dynamics/Balance,” embodying “Ecological Aesthetics,” considering the “Translation Community,” and advocating for “Diversity/Unity.” However, based on my investigation, the quality of the introductions in Urumqi Municipal Museum varies significantly, directly affecting the reader’s experience. The following analysis will detail the translation errors and inadequacies found in the museum’s exhibits under the guidance of Ecological Rationality.

##### **4.1 Emphasizing Holism/Interconnectedness**

Emphasizing Holism/Interconnectedness means adhering to Ecological Rationality. When studying the translation ecosystem, one should not be confined to isolated sub-ecosystems (such as the translation ontology ecosystem) or specific stakeholders (such as sponsors of translation activities). From the perspective of Ecological Rationality, it is essential to consider the interconnections and overall coherence between different ecosystems [4].

##### **Example 1:**

SL: “汉之号令班西域矣，始自张骞而成于郑吉。”

TL: “The order of the Han Dynasty to carry out the Western Regions began in Zhang Qian and became in Zheng ji.”

During the translation process, translators need to adopt a holistic approach, focusing not only on linguistic equivalence but also on the cultural and contextual factors of both the source and target languages. Translation is not merely a word-for-word conversion but an interaction between two cultural systems.

##### **4.1.1 Lack of a Holistic Perspective**

The translation of “汉之号令班西域” as “The order of the Han Dynasty to carry out the Western Regions” is overly direct and fails to convey the historical background and cultural connotations. “汉之号令班西域” actually refers to the complex process through which the Han

Dynasty, starting with Zhang Qian's opening of the Silk Road, gradually established influence and spread political and cultural values in the Western Regions. The translation does not reflect the macro significance and background of this historical event, overlooking the interconnectedness of historical, cultural, and political aspects. Translators should consider the broad significance of “汉之号令班西域” in the context of Chinese history, diplomacy, and cultural development, rather than treating it as an isolated event. This lack of historical background and cultural connection results in a translation that lacks holistic understanding.

#### 4.1.2 Lack of Coherence

The original Chinese phrase “始自张骞而成于郑吉” highlights the different roles and the succession relationship between Zhang Qian and Zheng Ji in the Han Dynasty's governance and development of the Western Regions. However, the translation “began in Zhang Qian and became in Zheng Ji” completely overlooks the historical connection between their actions. Zhang Qian was the pioneer sent by the Han Dynasty to explore the Western Regions, while Zheng Ji was the official who later consolidated the Han Dynasty's position there. Their actions were not isolated but closely related, forming a continuous historical process. The translation fails to convey the inheritance and continuity between the two figures, making the overall narrative appear disjointed and lacking coherence. A better translation might be: “The Han Dynasty's influence over the Western Regions began with Zhang Qian's expeditions and was later consolidated by Zheng Ji.” This translation uses more precise vocabulary (such as “influence over” instead of “order”) and “expeditions” to represent Zhang Qian's pioneering actions, reflecting the continuity and overall coherence between their roles. Additionally, this translation is more concise and fluent, making it semantically and culturally coherent.

## 4.2 Emphasizing Dynamics/Balance

Emphasizing Dynamics/Balance means adhering to Ecological Rationality. When studying the translation ecosystem, this involves focusing on the interactions and mutual influences between the subject and object of translation activities, as well as between the translation subject and its external ecological environment. This approach

aims to form a dynamically balanced system of interdependence within the translation ecology [4].

### Example 2:

SL: 明·陈洪谟: (河西)“守臣相继抚驭, 诸夷一遵旧规, 不敢坐视启衅。所以百五十年来, 西陲晏然无事”。

TL: Chen Hongmo in Ming Dynasty stated (Hexi) “The defenders successively caressed him, and all the barbarians did not dare to watch the provocations once they followed the old rules. Therefore, the western border has been fine for a hundred and fifty years.”

To emphasize dynamics/balance, translators must focus on maintaining a balance between the source text and the translated text, while also considering the dynamic changes in the cultural ecosystems of both languages. This ensures that the translation remains faithful to the original text and flows naturally within the target language culture. Translation is not a static process; it evolves with changes in time, environment, and culture. Translators need to seek balance in this dynamic environment, maintaining adaptability and flexibility in their translations.

#### 4.2.1 Dynamic Imbalance in Vocabulary and Expression

In the original text, the phrase “守臣相继抚驭” is deeply rooted in ancient Chinese culture, signifying that local officials at the time managed and pacified ethnic minorities or foreign tribes through appropriate governance methods. However, translating it as “The defenders successively caressed him” is inaccurate. The term “caressed him” implies an inappropriate personal touch, deviating from the original meaning of governance and management. Moreover, it fails to convey the deeper connotation of “抚驭,” which encompasses both governance and pacification of foreign tribes or local ethnic minorities. This translation is imbalanced at both the cultural and lexical levels, failing to find an appropriate equilibrium between the two cultures.

#### 4.2.2 Imbalance in Cultural Adaptation

In the original text, the term “诸夷” during the Ming and Qing dynasties referred to foreign tribes or ethnic minorities on the borders, carrying specific historical and cultural connotations. Translating it directly as “the barbarians,” while seemingly accurate in a literal sense, carries strong negative and racially

discriminatory connotations in modern English. This could lead to misunderstandings among readers, especially in today's context of cross-cultural communication. Therefore, this translation does not adequately consider the sensitivities of the modern English cultural ecosystem, lacking dynamic adjustment and balance.

### 4.3 Embodying Ecological Aesthetics

Embodying ecological aesthetics means adhering to Ecological Rationality. When studying the translation ecosystem, whether at the macro or micro level, the pursuit of beauty is constant. This involves emphasizing aesthetic elements and principles such as "symmetry," "balance," "contrast," "order," "rhythm," and "harmony" throughout the translation studies process.

#### Example 3:

SL: 据《西域闻见录》记载，乾隆时期的迪化城发展为“故字号店铺，鳞次栉比，市衢宽敞，人民杂糅，茶寮酒肆，优伶歌童，工艺技巧之人无一不备，繁荣富庶，甲于关外”的繁华之地。

TL: According to the records of *Tales from the Western Regions*, "there were shops row upon row, spacious market, crowded people, teahouses and bars, actors and singers, craftsmen, everything people wished for. It was prosperous and wealthy, and famous for borderland." the city of Dihua during the Qianlong period developed into prosperous place.

Translation is an art form. A translated work should remain faithful to the original content while also embodying beauty and artistry. Translators must strive to produce translations that meet the aesthetic standards of the target language culture, ensuring that the translation not only accurately conveys the information but also provides readers with a pleasurable aesthetic experience.

#### 4.3.1 The Absence of Linguistic Rhythm and Cadence

The original Chinese text employs parallelism, such as in the phrase “故字号店铺，鳞次栉比，市衢宽敞，人民杂糅，” which conveys a sense of prosperity and orderly arrangement through its rhythmic structure. However, the translation “there were shops row upon row, spacious market, crowded people” lacks this rhythmic quality, appearing somewhat flat and failing to capture the layered and orderly beauty of the

original phrase “鳞次栉比.” Peng Ping (2009) [5] in “Practical English-Chinese Contrast and Translation” suggests that when translating from English to Chinese, it is sometimes necessary to add verbs to better align with Chinese expressive habits and to further highlight the dynamic characteristics of the language. Therefore, restructuring the sentence can help recreate this aesthetic. For example: “Shops stood in neat rows, streets were wide, bustling with people, and teahouses and bars flourished.” This retains the rhythmic feel of the original while making the translation more dynamic and engaging.

#### 4.3.2 Lack of Symmetry and Balance

The original text emphasizes the symmetry and layering of a prosperous scene, such as “茶寮酒肆，优伶歌童，工艺技巧之人无一不备” (teahouses and taverns, actors and singers, craftsmen, all are present). This description not only highlights commercial prosperity but also depicts the richness of cultural entertainment, creating a balanced symmetry. However, the translation “teahouses and bars, actors and singers, craftsmen, everything people wished for” lacks symmetrical expression and appears somewhat disorganized, failing to convey the orderly sense and contrast of the original. English sentences are tree-structured, emphasizing the main clause and often using conjunctions and clauses; Chinese sentences are bamboo-structured, using fewer conjunctions [6]. A more ideal translation could be: “Teahouses and taverns were lively, actors and singers entertained the crowds, while skilled craftsmen showcased their expertise, completing the picture of a flourishing and orderly society.” This better reflects the aesthetic features of symmetry and balance in the original text.

#### 4.3.3 Simplification of Detail Handling Leading to Insufficient Aesthetic Appeal

The original phrase “繁荣富庶，甲于关外” not only emphasizes the prosperity of Dihua but also highlights its exceptional status beyond the borderlands, conveying a sense of grandeur and elegance. The translation “It was prosperous and wealthy, and famous for borderland” is overly simplistic and lacks the subtlety and dignity of the original, thereby diminishing its aesthetic value. A more refined translation for “甲于关外” could be: “It was a thriving, prosperous city, unrivaled beyond the borderlands.” This better conveys the original's aesthetic sophistication and the city's distinguished status.



#### 4.3.4 Lack of “Order” in Ecological Aesthetics

In the original Chinese text, descriptions such as “市衢宽敞，人民杂处” (spacious streets, crowded with people) and “茶寮酒肆，优伶歌童” (teahouses and taverns, actors and singers) present readers with an orderly and organically integrated scene, reflecting the beauty of order behind the prosperity. However, the translation “spacious market, crowded people, teahouses and bars, actors and singers” is relatively disjointed and fails to fully convey this sense of orderly imagery. To better highlight this order, the sentence structure can be enhanced, for example: “The wide streets were lined with bustling markets, where people gathered, teahouses and taverns brimmed with life, and actors and singers entertained, all forming a harmonious and orderly scene.” This approach better conveys the sense of orderly prosperity.

#### 4.4 Attending to the “Translation Community”

The term “translation community” refers to the people involved in translation activities, previously known as “various agents,” including translators, readers, authors, sponsors, publishers, reviewers, and others, with the translator being the primary representative. Attending to the “translation community” means considering the “translation community” as a whole, with the translator as its representative. This approach is driven by the holistic, interconnected, dynamic, and balanced “Ecological Rationality” of the translation ecosystem. It is also a distinctive feature and advantage of ecotranslatology, which emphasizes the importance of translators and the human elements in translation studies (Hu Gengshen, 2011).

##### Example 4:

SL: 新时代，新征程，一个个规划描绘着美丽家园的发展蓝图，乌鲁木齐正以昂扬的身姿在伟大祖国的怀抱中凝心聚力，踔厉奋发，阔步前行，迈向未来。

TL: New era, new journey, a planning depict the development blueprint for a beautiful home, Urumqi is in the arms of the great motherland to form coagulation hearts meet force, energetic energy and striding forward, to-wards the future. Translation is not an isolated activity but is embedded within a specific “translation community.” Translators, readers, texts, and original authors all play roles in this translation ecosystem. When handling texts, translators

must consider the needs, expectations, and acceptance of these groups.

#### 4.4.1 The Translation Does Not Align with the Target Readers’ Language Habits

Expressions in the translation such as “a planning depict the development blueprint” and “form coagulation hearts meet force, energetic energy” do not conform to the reading habits of native English speakers. Such expressions may appear awkward or even incomprehensible to English readers, failing to facilitate smooth communication between the translator and the readers. Ecological Rationality requires translators to consider the acceptability of the translation by the target audience, ensuring that the translation can be easily understood and accepted by them.

#### 4.4.2 Failure to Reflect the Translator’s Reconciliation of Cultural Differences

Expressions rich in cultural connotations, such as “凝心聚力，踔厉奋发” in the original text, are unique political phrases in Chinese, imbued with strong national sentiment and motivational force. However, the translation “form coagulation hearts meet force” bears the marks of mechanical translation, failing to convey the cultural essence of the original and lacking emotional resonance. The translator did not account for cultural differences in the translation, leading to a potential misunderstanding or lack of appreciation of the original text’s passion and cohesion by the target audience. When translating, the translator should pay more attention to reconciling cultural differences between the two languages and adopt expressions that align with the cultural background of the readers. For example, “Urumqi is uniting its people with strong will and energy” not only conveys the original meaning but also makes the translation more relatable to the target culture.

Ecological Rationality illuminates the “translation community,” indicating that the translator plays a crucial role throughout the translation process and is the core representative of the “translation community.” The translator’s abilities, attitudes, and personal experiences profoundly influence the final outcome of the translation. This is closely related to the “translator-centered” theory. Ecotranslatology studies the relationship between the translator and the translation ecological environment. From the translator’s perspective, he/she is an independent subject, and the translation activity

must be completed through the translator's subjective consciousness and leading role from beginning to end. The translator stands at the intersection of various forces between different languages and cultures, being both the main body of the translation process and the cornerstone of translation activities. The proposal of the "translator-centered" translation concept helps to extend the "research radius" of translator studies in translation studies and enhances its theoretical level. At the same time, it also promotes the translator's self-respect, self-discipline, and improvement of their own qualities.

#### **4.5 Advocating for Diversity and Unity**

The concept of advocating for diversity and unity reflects the law of dialectical unity found in both human life and the natural world. The entire universe exists as a harmonious whole characterized by diverse unity. "Diversity" represents the myriad individualities of various entities, while "Unity" signifies the commonalities or interconnections among them. Adhering to this Ecological Rationality, studying the translation ecosystem holds particular significance for the macro-structural framework of translation studies and the construction of a mid-level theoretical system aimed at achieving "Diverse/Unity." Thus, I propose that while any theory possesses a degree of universality, there should be one theory that embodies a universal perspective as a whole.

In my view, the principle of diversity and unity elucidates the relationship that must be navigated between diversity and uniformity during the translation process. It explains the law of dialectical unity within the universe and the translation ecosystem from the perspective of Ecological Rationality, highlighting the guiding significance of this law in the construction of macro and meso-level translation theoretical frameworks.

##### **4.5.1 Diversity and Unity are Complementary**

"Diversity" represents the differences and individualities among entities. In the translation process, there are significant disparities between the source language, target language, and cultures. Each language possesses its unique grammar, semantics, and cultural background, which manifest as "Diversity" in translation. "Unity," on the other hand, refers to the necessity of seeking commonalities or overall connections within this diverse environment, as

translation is an activity that transcends languages and cultures. Translators must maintain linguistic and cultural differences while identifying the intrinsic connections and universal principles between them to ensure effective information transmission. Throughout the translation process, translators should respect the uniqueness of languages and cultures, reflecting their distinctive expressions (Diversity), while also ensuring the coherence of meaning and style with the source text (Unity). The interplay between diversity and unity is crucial for successful translation and serves as one of the cores of dynamic balance in ecological translation theory.

##### **4.5.2 Balance Between Universality and Specificity**

Every translation theory possesses a degree of universality, but it is essential to emphasize the need for a theory that demonstrates overall universality. This implies that translation theories should be capable of explaining and applying to translation activities across different languages and cultures, providing macro-level guidance. However, varying translation contexts and text types have their own specificities, necessitating that translators flexibly apply theories according to the particular circumstances rather than adhering rigidly to a single theory. The principle of "Diversity/Unity" is evident not only in translation practice but also in the construction of translation theory. There is a need for diverse theories to address various translation challenges, alongside a universal theory that provides overarching guidance. This suggests that ecological translation studies, as a framework, can accommodate the diversity of translation phenomena while maintaining overall unity.

#### **5. Conclusion**

Through an analysis from the five dimensions of Ecological Rationality, this paper explores the issues present in the English translations of the Urumqi Municipal Museum and proposes corresponding improvement measures. Firstly, from a holistic and relational perspective, as a core city of the Silk Road Economic Belt, the English guides of the Urumqi Municipal Museum not only bear the responsibility of showcasing local historical and cultural narratives but also play a crucial role in enhancing the international image and promoting cross-cultural exchanges.

Translations should emphasize the comprehensive conveyance of historical contexts and cultural backgrounds, avoiding isolated or one-sided expressions. Secondly, improvements from a dynamic and balanced viewpoint should ensure accurate transmission of historical information while considering the readability and cultural appeal of the museum texts, achieving a harmonious balance in a multicultural context. From the perspective of ecological aesthetics, the translations for the Urumqi Municipal Museum should reflect a sense of rhythm and harmony, particularly in paragraphs describing local culture and history, ensuring a unity of form and content that imbues the translations with beauty and attractiveness, aligning with foreign tourists' aesthetic expectations of exotic cultures. Moreover, the principle of "translation communities" reminds us that translations should not only consider the translator's expression but also account for the diverse audience's comprehension abilities and cultural background differences. As a vital window for international visitors to understand Urumqi, the museum's translation work should fully reflect inclusivity and respect for global readers. Finally, the advocacy for diversity and unity demands that museum translations retain local cultural characteristics while ensuring the acceptability of the translations within a global context, achieving a balance between linguistic diversity and international expression.

Through the analysis and improvement measures derived from these five perspectives, the translations of the Urumqi Municipal Museum will not only better showcase the city's rich historical and cultural heritage but also contribute to shaping Urumqi's image as an international city. As Huang Zhonglian(2010) [7] stated, "Translation is not only a transformation of language but also an exchange of culture and ideas". For a city like Urumqi, which plays a crucial role in the Belt and Road Initiative, museum translations should not only convey

historical and cultural narratives but also serve the city's international positioning, showcasing the rich connotations of cultural diversity[8]. Future translation research should place greater emphasis on the interaction and balance among various factors within the translation ecosystem, promoting the effective dissemination of museum texts in a global context. In this light, the translation efforts of the Urumqi Municipal Museum should not only meet current cultural communication needs but also aim to enhance Urumqi's standing on the international stage, providing global visitors with a deeper and broader cultural experience.

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