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Article

Ecological Adaptation in English Translations of *The Analects*: A Translator-Centered Perspective

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Abstract: As a translation theory from China, eco-translatology goes past the "source-text centred" and "target-text centred" views, and puts the translator at the centre. From this view, translation is an ecological activity. Translators keep adapting to the ecological environment for translation, and make choices that fit this environment. *The Analects* is the most important classic of Confucianism, and a key book for spreading Chinese culture to the world. But its English translations are quite different - in writing style, how they explain the culture, and how well they communicate. Using Hu Gengshen's eco-translatology as a framework, we look at three classic English versions of *The Analects* - by James Legge, Arthur Waley, and D. C. Lau. We study how each translator adapts and makes choices in their own translational environment, across three areas: language, culture, and communication. We found that a translator's cultural background, their ideas about translation, and the readers they target all work together to shape how they translate. How ecologically balanced a translation is all comes down to the choices the translator makes as they adapt. We compare what works and what doesn't in all three translations, from an ecological point of view. From this, we pull out some general rules for how to adapt when translating ancient Chinese classics into English. These rules can help both researchers and translators who want to share traditional Chinese culture with the world.

Keywords: Eco-translatology; Translator-centeredness; English Translation of *The Analects*; Three-dimensional Transformation; Ecological Adaptation

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

As Chinese culture becomes increasingly global, the English translation of traditional Chinese classics has become an important bridge for cross-cultural exchanges. As the core classic of Confucianism, *The Analects* embodies the traditional Confucian philosophical ideal of "self-cultivation, family regulation, state governance, and world peace". It has long served as a representative work to present Chinese culture to the world. Over the past century, scholars at home and abroad have produced a variety of English translations of *The Analects*. These translations feature diverse styles and interpretations, which together form a rich corpus for translation research. However, their differences are manifested not merely at the linguistic level. More fundamentally, they stem from translators' active adaptation to, and selection within, the temporal, cultural, and audience-related ecologies of their respective eras.

For a period of time, fidelity to the original text has been considered the main standard in translation studies. The authority of the source text has been paid more attention than the translator's individual view and the dynamic and ecological characteristics of translation itself [1]. A change of viewpoint came about with Hu Gengshen's eco-translatology, which formally set up a research paradigm centered on the translator. The translator, who was previously ignored in the field, is now at the center and is regarded as the only subject in the translation modification and selection [2].

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Ecologically speaking, translation is a changing procedure: translators firstly adapt to the translation ecological surroundings, then carry out translation creation through three-dimensional transformation and finally make the target text reach ecological balance. Therefore, eco-translatology offers a new theoretical perspective for the translation of classical Chinese texts.

Due to the theoretical background, many studies have been done on the English translations of *The Analects*. Currently, most research focuses on the comparison of translations, translation methods and the representation of culturally loaded words. Although some of these studies use eco-translatology as their theoretical foundation, not many of them deeply investigate the internal coherence of ecological adaptation from the viewpoint of the translator. Fewer still explore the correlation between the translator's agency and the adaptation effect of the target texts. In order to bridge this research gap, our paper starts from the perspective of the translator. By using a three-dimensional transformation framework, we analyse the ecological adaptation in the canonical English versions of *The Analects*, thus elucidating the connection between the translator, the ecological environment for translation and the translation quality.

1.2. Research Significance

Eco-translatology is a theory originating in China, and this paper takes its core proposition - translator-centeredness - as the point of departure.

Theoretically, this study extends eco-translatology to the English translation of Confucian classics. Comparing several translations allows us to refine how three-dimensional adaptation works for classical Chinese texts-a body of work that existing scholarship has not quite pinned down. Most studies of *The Analects* stay close to the text itself and leave the translator's role underexplored; this paper pushes back against that imbalance and, in doing so, sharpens the ecological analytical framework for Chinese classics.

Practically, a close reading of how different translators adapt surfaces recurring patterns across the linguistic, cultural, and communicative dimensions when classic texts are translated. These patterns offer working references for translators of traditional Chinese classics today. They also speak to the ongoing tension between fidelity to the original and readability for foreign readers-a tension that, if navigated well, can carry Chinese cultural narratives to a wider international audience with greater precision.

1.3. Research Methods and Innovations

This research employs two main methods: literature review and comparative analysis. Firstly, it organizes the previous studies on eco-translatology, translator subjectivity and the English version of *The Analects* systematically to provide a strong theoretical basis for our study. Secondly, three authoritative English translations are selected for comparative analysis, including James Legge's version (published in 1861 and reprinted in 2009) [3], Arthur Waley's version (published in 1938 and reprinted in 1998) and D. C. Lau's version (published in 1979 and reprinted in 2008) [4,5]. Based on the three-dimensional transformation framework of eco-translatology, this paper compares the three translations and investigates how the translators adapt and select ecologically in the translation process.

This study has two main new points. First, we put the translator's role back into the wider translation environment. Instead of just comparing texts in isolation, we look at why translators make the adaptation and choice moves we see in three-dimensional transformation. Second, we look at three important English versions of *The Analects* from all three sides: language, culture, and communication. From these, we pull out main rules for ecological adaptation and practical ways to improve, and fill the gap left by earlier studies that only looked at one side.

2. Theoretical Foundation and Literature Review

2.1. Core Theory: Eco-Translatology and Translator-Centeredness

Hu Gengshen first proposed eco-translatology in the early 2000s. It is a theory that grew out of Chinese translation practice. In his key book, Hu laid out the theory of "Translation as Adaptation and Selection" - he brought ideas of adaptation, selection, and survival from ecology into translation studies [6]. For him, translation is a process of making choices, where the translator adapts to the translation environment. This environment includes everything around the translation: the original text, the target culture, the readers the translator wants to reach, the historical time period, and the accepted translation rules of the day. Together, all these factors make up the ecological space where translators work [7].

Notably, the translator forms part of the translational eco-environment and meanwhile acts as the subject performing adaptive and selective acts - a point that has sparked debate among some Western scholars.

In his subsequent study, Hu Gengshen put forward a new concept of translator-centeredness, which changed the traditional views of source-text-centeredness and author-centeredness [8]. In the traditional system, the translator was considered as merely an extension of the source text, and exact fidelity was regarded as the highest standard. On the contrary, translator-centeredness holds that the translator is the only subject in translation and the one who carries out adaptation and selection. The whole translation process is based on the translator [9].

From this viewpoint, translation is not merely a mechanical copying of the original text. It is an innovative process in which translators modify according to their own understanding, translation ideas and audience requirements, and then produce the target text by selective alteration. The achievement of a translation and its conformity to the translational eco-environment mainly depend on the translators' individual evaluations and strategic decisions.

The main analytical device in eco-translatology is three-dimensional transformation. It requires translators to make adaptations and transformations in three aspects: linguistic, cultural and communicative. The linguistic aspect involves the modification of language forms, syntactic structures and word choices. The cultural dimension stresses balancing and conveying values embedded in source and target cultures. The communicative dimension aims to achieve effective cross-cultural communication and realize intended communicative purposes. Only when translators achieve a high level of ecological adaptation across all three dimensions can a translation be deemed excellent [10].

2.2. Literature Review

2.2.1. Domestic Research

In China, research on eco-translatology and Chinese classics translation has grown a lot in the last few decades. On the theory side, Hu has kept improving eco-translatology and the idea of putting the translator at the center [2,7,9]. His work set what the theory studies, how it looks at things, and where it's going - and made it possible for later researchers to test these ideas in real translations. Luo answered questions people had about putting the translator at the center. He explained what this idea really means, and why the translator should be the main focus [11]. In a later paper, Luo looked at how complex eco-translatology is, using ideas from complex adaptive systems [12]. This made the theory more solid.

On the empirical side, Zha and Tian looked at how translator subjectivity was pushed to the sidelines, and showed that the translator is a proper topic of study [1]. This laid the groundwork for later translator-centered work on classic texts. When it comes to English translations of *The Analects*, Li and Li gave a full picture of how domestic research in this area has developed, and where it might go next [13]. Wang compared Chinese and foreign research on this topic [14]. She found that Chinese studies focus more on cultural interpretation, while foreign studies pay more attention to adapting to the target readers.

Overall, though, most existing studies stay at the surface level of comparing translations. Many papers that use eco-translatology just apply the three-dimensional framework to specific translation cases, but rarely ask: why did the translator make these

particular choices? In other words, few researchers connect the translator's historical background, target readers, and translation ideas to the actual translation choices they made. What hasn't been studied enough is how and why translators adapt the way they do - the ecological reasons behind the three-dimensional transformation.

2.2.2. International Research

Research outside China looks a bit different. Foreign studies mainly look at translator subjectivity and how classic texts get translated across cultures. Most of them use Western theories like Descriptive Translation Studies and Reception Aesthetics to study what the translator does and how readers receive the translation - they don't usually use Hu Gengshen's eco-translatology, which comes from China.

Looking at classic English versions of *The Analects*, Lo said that translating Chinese classics should balance staying true to the culture with matching how target readers usually read [15]. He also pointed out that how well a translation gets received mostly depends on the choices the translator makes. So foreign researchers have paid a lot of attention to how translations are received and how they adapt to the target culture - which actually fits well with the idea of putting the translator at the center. But what they don't have is a full ecological adaptation framework that brings together the translation environment, the translator's role, and the three-dimensional transformation model.

2.3. Research Gap

To conclude, previous research has recognized the importance of the translator in the translation of Chinese classics and has proved the feasibility of eco-translatology in Chinese-English classic translation. However, there are still two main research deficiencies. Firstly, most investigations separate the translators from their translation eco-environment and only concentrate on the textual features without studying the reasons for the translators' adaptive choices. Secondly, the eco-translatology studies about *The Analects* mainly analyze the translation strategies from one aspect; a comprehensive three-dimensional examination of ecological adaptation is insufficient. In this paper, we fill these gaps by using a translator-centred viewpoint and carrying out a systematic analysis of the canonical English versions of *The Analects* by means of a three-dimensional transformation.

3. The Translational Ecology of *The Analects* and Translator Profiles

3.1. The Overall Translational Ecology of The Analects

The translation ecological background gives translators the space to adapt and make choices. It also shapes how they think about translation and what strategies they use. When it comes to English translations of *The Analects*, this environment has its own special time-period features and cultural gaps. We can look at it from three sides: the ecology of the original text, the ecology of the target text, and the ecology of how the translation spreads.

The Analects include some phrases from the Pre-Qin period. The language is concise and contains many terms of Confucian origin. The meanings are usually ambiguous and the sentence structures vary, providing translators with some flexibility but requiring a good understanding of the culture. Moreover, readers from different times have various cultural backgrounds, reading habits and artistic preferences. In the nineteenth century, the foreign readers knew little about Chinese culture, thus the translators focused on the cultural transmission and precise translation. In the twentieth century, the development of Western Sinology reached a high level and the readers demanded deeper philosophical ideas and higher culture. At present, people prefer shorter and easier to understand versions which are suitable for mass communication. At the dissemination level, English versions of *The Analects* have changed from research subjects in Western sinology to important means of international cultural exchange. Their roles have changed from academic investigations to cultural communication and mutual learning among different civilizations, which greatly influences the perspective of translators.

3.2. Translators and Their Ecological Positioning

This research concentrates on three typical translations made by James Legge, Arthur Waley and D. C. Lau. The three translators come from different periods with different cultural backgrounds, thus their mental attitudes and translation points are quite different. Consequently, these differences lead to distinct adjustment methods and make the three versions very typical.

Legge's translation, published in 1861, reflects the academic translation in Western sinology during the late nineteenth century. As an early scholar in sinology, he regarded his work as an academic task. He had a great interest in the Chinese traditional culture and attempted to introduce Confucian classics to the western scholars in an orderly and comprehensive manner. According to the principle of faithfully reproducing the original text, he made efforts to make the structure and cultural connotations of *The Analects* as similar as possible to the original one, which was suitable for the strict academic atmosphere in Western sinology in the late nineteenth century. The reprint edition referred to in this paper was printed by Foreign Language Press in 2009 [3].

Waley's translation was published in 1938, at a time when more and more common Westerners were interested in the literatures of eastern cultures, and sinology had already gone beyond the range of academic study. He brought his translation out with a specific audience in mind: readers who wanted accuracy without the academic overhead. Obscure scholarly notes were removed, and passages were rewritten that a reasonably educated Westerner could follow without a specialist's help. The goal, in his own words, was to make *The Analects* accessible beyond the seminar room. This paper uses the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press reprint from 1998 [4].

Lau's 1979 translation belongs to a later moment. Having grown up in both Chinese and Western cultural worlds, Lau approached the text from a vantage point that neither Legge nor Waley quite occupied. He translated for cross-cultural communication-meaning he was trying to hold the line between cultural fidelity and how readily an international reader could follow along. His rendering keeps the core Confucian message intact while aligning with contemporary English norms and the publishing environment of its day. It has since established itself as a standard text for cross-cultural exchange. The Zhonghua Book Company reprint cited here dates from 2008 [5].

4. Three-Dimensional Ecological Adaptation in English Translations of *The Analects*: A Translator-Centered Analysis

In eco-translatology, the three-dimensional transformation is how translators reach ecological balance. They adapt to the translation environment, and make selective changes along three lines: language, culture, and communication. Putting the translator at the center, this section looks at the choices each of the three translators made, and compares how their translations adapt along these three lines. In this way, we can see how strategic choices help translators make the target text fit well with the translation environment around it.

4.1. Linguistic Dimension: Selective Transformation of Linguistic Form

Linguistic adaptation is the most basic level of ecological adaptation. It means the translator adjusts word choice, sentence structure, grammar, and style so that the translation follows the rules of the target language and fits in well with how that language works. *The Analects* was written in the pre-Qin period. It's a collection of short, parallel, old-style sayings, and it doesn't follow strict grammar rules very tightly. Faced with a text like this, different translators make different language choices. Their choices depend on how they understand language, and who they're translating for.

Legge's linguistic strategy is, at its core, literal restoration-his adaptation all points toward the archaic register of the source text. Formal, academic vocabulary is the norm here; colloquialism has no place. In syntax, he holds the original's short line, preserving its brevity and rarely padding the sentence. The opening of Xue Er-"Is it not pleasant to learn with a constant perseverance and application?"-is a case in point: Legge clings to the

original's tight pattern, and the result reads as grammatically sound and perfectly at home in late 19th-century Western scholarly prose. The trade-off, however, is that some lines feel overly elaborate. They satisfy the academic register, yes, but at the cost of readability for anyone outside the seminar room.

If Legge writes for the scholar, Waley writes for the general reader. His linguistic adaptation is essentially a simplification project-loosen the original's tight syntax, make the grammar follow English as it is actually spoken, and surface the logic that the Classical Chinese leaves implicit. The vocabulary is everyday, modern; the scholarly note is played down wherever possible. When the original repeats itself or leaves out what English readers would consider a necessary link, Waley fills the gap so the prose reads naturally to a native speaker. The payoff is a text that flows and reads easily-very much the mid-20th-century trade book. The drawback, however, is that all this smoothing erodes some of the old, classical edge of the original. On the linguistic front, it fits less well with the source text's own ecology.

Lau, as it were, strikes a balance. His translation holds onto the archaic flavour of the original while speaking modern English. He picks words that are exact and carry a literary charge-neither obscure to the point of frustration, nor so casual that they slip into the vernacular. In sentence structure, the original's short lines stay, but modern English grammar governs, and the logic is tidied so nothing trips the reader up. Measured against Legge's academic density and Waley's popularising drive, Lau's choices sit more evenly on the scale. He recovers *The Analects*' plain elegance without losing touch with how contemporary English reads, or how the general reader reads it. On the linguistic dimension, then, his version adapts more fully to the present-day translation environment.

4.2. Cultural Dimension: Mediation of Cross-Cultural Differences

Cultural adaptation sits at the heart of translating Chinese classics. The translator, in effect, mediates between two cultural systems-explaining what needs explaining, filling gaps where meaning drops out, swapping cultural images for ones that land better with English readers, or deploying whatever other strategies get the point across. The aim is simple enough: strip away cross-cultural friction and let the cultural meaning come through.

The Analects is dense with Confucian terms that carry specific cultural weight-ren (benevolence), yi (righteousness), li (ritual), zhi (wisdom), xin (trustworthiness), junzi (the noble person), xiaoren (the petty person). None maps cleanly onto an English equivalent. Each one forces the translator into a decision that has to weigh the cultural context on both sides.

Legge's cultural strategy is full-bore restoration-his priority is the source culture, above all. As a Western sinologist, he set out to deliver Confucian culture to the West whole, as he understood it. Culture-loaded terms get translated literally, and he layers on extensive annotations to preserve the authenticity of Chinese culture as completely as he can. Take ren: he renders it as "benevolence" and then buries the reader in notes unpacking its multiple layers-love, virtue, moral cultivation-so that the core of Confucian thought comes through intact. Judged from the source culture's side, this is precise, high-level translation that keeps the original's cultural substance. The catch is that all those annotations make the text heavy going for the ordinary Western reader. His adaptation to the target cultural side, in other words, is limited; the version lives mostly in academic circles.

Waley takes the opposite tack: simplify the culture, and let the target cultural environment call the shots. He translates at the cultural comprehension level of the average Western reader-stripping out the complicated layers of Confucian meaning and skipping the obscure cultural explanations. For ren, he opts for "goodness", which drains the term's philosophical weight and turns it into a familiar Western notion of kindness or virtue. The upside is obvious: far fewer cross-cultural barriers, and the text fits comfortably into the cultural cognitive world of the general Western reader. The downside is just as obvious: a lot of Confucian content gets lost in the process. The

simplification runs so deep that meaning leaks out, the adaptation to the source culture suffers, and the intellectual depth of *The Analects* never really comes through.

Lau charts a middle course, trying to balance the source and target cultures rather than throw in with either. His mixed Chinese-Western background makes him skeptical of both extremes: the heavily-annotated literalism of Legge, and the aggressive simplification of Waley. What he settles on is "precise translation with moderate explanation." Key cultural terms get rendered consistently so the concepts stay coherent, and unnecessary annotations are folded into the context itself-readers pick up the cultural meaning without being buried in footnotes. For ren, he chooses "humanity," which keeps the Confucian sense of altruism and moral cultivation while also resonating with the Western humanist tradition. The result is a version that holds the line on cultural authenticity without making itself inaccessible across cultures. On the cultural dimension, Lau's adaptation comes across as the most balanced of the three.

4.3. Communicative Dimension: Realization of Communicative Purpose

Communicative adaptation is the final goal of translation. It means the translator adjusts their strategies to fit how ideas spread and what the audience needs in a cross-cultural setting. The aim is to get the ideas across and share the culture. From the translator-centered point of view, this kind of adaptation shows how the translator positions the translation for spreading ideas, and what choices they make. These different orientations then shape how much value the translation has. It helps to be clear about who each translation was written for, what the translator wanted to achieve with it, and what was happening in the world at the time. Legge targeted the academic community of Western sinologists; Waley catered to the educated general Western public; Lau designed his work for both academic researchers and general-readership audiences.

Legge's communicative adaptation is tuned to academic communication-it fits the ecology of scholarly research. Nineteenth-century Western sinology was still in its early days, and scholars needed complete, reliable Confucian texts to work from. Legge took academic dissemination as his core communicative goal: completeness, accuracy, rigour-research demands drove every translational call. The translation slots neatly into the academic communicative environment, serves as a foundational reference for Western sinological work, and delivers on its academic communicative promise. What it can't do, though, is carry mass cultural dissemination. His adaptation for popular communication stays thin.

Waley's communicative adaptation points toward the popular end of the spectrum. The 20th century had created a readership hungry for Eastern culture but unwilling to wrestle with academic prose-accessible cultural books were becoming mainstream. Waley assumed that Confucian culture would only travel if it was reduced to its essentials: the simplification of dense scholarly content, the lowering of cultural barriers, and the removal of a wall of notes so the ordinary Western reader could get to the heart of *The Analects*. His translation works as intended-it brings *The Analects* into Western public conversation on a scale that Legge never attempted. The trade-off is real, though: the exchange it enables stays shallow, and it can't carry the weight of serious academic debate or sustained cultural engagement.

Lau, writing in 1979, faced a different communicative landscape. Cross-cultural communication by then had to do several jobs at once-serve scholarship, feed popular reading, and support cultural exchange. His response was to steer a middle course: keep the scholarly rigour but make the prose readable enough for a general audience. The result is a translation that works in more than one setting-book publication, cultural exchange, classroom use-because it is concise enough to be flexible and precise enough to be trusted. Along the communicative dimension, then, Lau's version achieves a fuller ecological adaptation and stands as a workable model for how *The Analects* might travel across cultures in the present day.

5. Principles of Ecological Adaptation and Optimization Paths for the English Translation of *The Analects*

5.1. Core Principles of Ecological Adaptation in the Translation of Chinese Classics

Looking across all three translations from a translator-centered angle, three principles emerge as the backbone of ecological adaptation in the English translation of Chinese classics.

First, the translator is the driving force behind ecological adaptation. The translation environment sets the stage, but it doesn't call all the shots on its own. How well a translation adapts ultimately comes down to the choices the translator makes-choices shaped by how they see the world, what they think translation is for, and who they're writing to. Legge, Waley, and Lau worked from the same source text and similar target cultures, yet their different outlooks pushed them down very different adaptation paths. That contrast is itself the clearest evidence of the translator's central role.

Second, three-dimensional balance is the benchmark for a highly adaptive translation. You can't reach overall ecological balance by leaning on just one dimension. A good translation of Chinese classics has to hold the linguistic, cultural, and communicative dimensions in play at once. Legge, for instance, put his weight on linguistic and cultural adaptation but underweighted communicative clarity. Waley went the other way-communicative reach at the cost of cultural depth. Neither landed the balance. Lau, by contrast, keeps all three dimensions in play and, of the three, best fits the current ecological requirements.

Third, ecological adaptation is temporal-it shifts with time. The translation environment moves as history moves, and translators' adaptive strategies have to keep pace with the communicative demands of their moment. The arc runs from the academic orientation of the 19th century, through the popularizing turn of the 20th, to the comprehensive dissemination we see today. What this shows is that ecological adaptation in the translation of classical Chinese literature is a process of dynamic adjustment, not a one-shot achievement. It's worth saying, though: later translations are not automatically better than earlier ones. The older versions still hold their own value in the translation ecology of their own historical moments.

5.2. Optimization Paths for the English Translation of The Analects in the New Era

From the translator's side, and with an eye on what it actually takes for Chinese culture to reach global readers today, there are three moves translators can make to sharpen ecological adaptation in translating *The Analects* and other traditional classics.

First, translators need to sharpen their ecological awareness. That means cultivating a holistic ecological mindset and rejecting one-sided positions-whether "fidelity first, dissemination second" or "accessibility first, authenticity second." Working within the three-dimensional-transformation framework, they have to keep an eye on linguistic norms, cultural authenticity, and communicative effectiveness at the same time. They also need to put their own agency to work: draw on their cultural strengths, read the dissemination context accurately, and craft adaptation strategies that fit the situation.

Second, a bilaterally balanced model for cultural adaptation needs to be built. Cultural communication sits at the heart of translating Chinese classics, which means translators have to weigh preserving source-culture elements against adapting to target-cultural contexts. They walk a line on the cultural front: stay grounded in Chinese cultural roots and carry the core ideas intact-otherwise the source culture risks going silent in translation, what scholars call "cultural aphasia"-and at the same time, don't ignore how overseas readers actually think and read. Cross-cultural barriers have to come down, and the cultural communication has to land with precision.

The communicative landscape, too, keeps shifting. Cross-cultural exchange in the digital age is no longer confined to print-new media, short-video platforms, overseas social media, and international Chinese-language education have all opened up fresh contexts for translation to do its work. Translators have to adapt to these settings and think about not just what they write, but how they present it. What is ultimately needed

are translations that hold academic value, cultural depth, and communicative effectiveness at once-translations that can carry traditional Chinese culture to international readers without flattening it.

6. Conclusion

Starting from the translator-centered proposition of eco-translatology, this paper takes three-dimensional transformation as its analytical framework and compares how Legge, Waley, and Lau render *The Analects* into English from an ecological perspective. The central question guiding the comparison is the translator's role in adaptive selection. What the study shows is that translation, at bottom, is an ecological process: translators modify the source text along linguistic, cultural, and communicative lines so that the target text settles into the translation environment it operates in. The differences in how well each version adapts trace back to three factors-where the translator comes from culturally, what they believe translation should do, and who they are writing for.

Among the three, Legge stays closest to the source culture and serves academic research well, though his style presents real barriers to the general reader. Waley, by contrast, writes for a broader audience-his prose is fluent and approachable, but the cultural depth gets thinned out. Lau sits somewhere in between, and arguably lands in the best position for today's readership: his translation handles both scholarly and popular demands, and fits the current cross-cultural environment more closely than the other two. Drawing on this comparison, the paper distills three principles-translator-led adaptation, three-dimensional balance, and dynamic responsiveness-and outlines concrete steps for putting them to use. These findings offer both theoretical and practical insights for translating *The Analects* and other traditional Chinese classics into English, and for helping them reach readers around the world.

This research has some restrictions. It only investigates three canonical translations and ignores the more recent contemporary versions like Roger Ames' one. In the future, the study may include a larger corpus and consider the digital dissemination ecology in the analysis. Besides the textual examination, subsequent investigations could refer to overseas readers' book reviews, questionnaire data and other evidences related to reception to verify the ecological adaptability of the translations from the point of view of the audience. Thus, scholars can deepen the research on ecological adaptation in Chinese classic translation and add more applications of eco-translatology to this area.

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