A Comparative Analysis of Two Chinese Versions of *Gulliver’s Travels* From the Perspective of Eco-translatology

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With the development of eco-translatology, translators have more referential guidance in their translation. The core translation method, namely from the perspective of linguistic dimension, culture dimension and communication dimension, is to adapt to the overall translation environment. This article attempts to explore the translator’s adaptation and choice behavior from the perspective of eco-translatology from the above three-dimensional translation analysis of the two Chinese versions of *Gulliver’s Travels*.

*Keywords*: eco-translatology, *Gulliver’s Travels*, Chinese versions, comparative analysis

### Introduction

In the 18th century, it was the satirical novelists full of realism like Swift that left a distinctive mark on the stage of European literature. Like most literary works of the same period, *Gulliver’s Travels* is undoubtedly deeply influenced by Defoe’s pioneering “desert island literature”, in which the typical vagabond-like hero, who is full of endless yearning for the sea at the beginning, is forced to drift alone to a desert island or a foreign country due to natural or man-made disasters. The novel, with vivid description and imagination, is full of imagination and vivid description, is full of exotic and wonderful things for young people. What makes *Gulliver’s Travels* still widely spread up to now should be the author’s profound literary satirical skills. In Swift’s writing, the corruption of the British court struggle can be seen, and the British invasion and exploitation of the author’s home country Ireland is described to the utmost. The last volume is the most profound critique of all human beings, and Swift’s unsparing prose has brought literary rivals to bear and is still the most controversial part of the book.

The Chinese translation of *Gulliver’s Travels* has been well received by the majority of readers in China since it was first published. Many scholars have also studied the Chinese translation of *Gulliver’s Travels*, either from the perspective of the theory of purpose, analyzing how the language characteristics of different versions can better achieve the purpose of the translation, or from the theory of functional equivalence, focusing on how the choice of vocabulary in the translation reflects the functional equivalence. This paper intends to interpret and analyze how the translations of Zhang Jian’s and Yang Haocheng’s versions are adapted and selected from the three perspectives of eco-translatology.

### Eco-translatology

Ecological translation theory is still one of the relatively new theories in translation circles at home and...
abroad. As the initiator of the act of “adaptation and choice”, the translator must, under the premise of eco-translatology, make the act of understanding the environment, adapting to the environment and choosing which translation to present in that environment. In the process of translation, the subjectivity of the translator is reflected in the translation method adopted by the translator. The eco-translatology law of “eliminating the weak and keeping the strong” requires the translator to have solid basic translation skills first, and then gain sufficient knowledge of the linguistic, communicative, cultural, and social elements in the translation ecological environment. Finally, the translator needs to build a bridge between the author and the reader, break the barriers of the linguistic, cultural, and communicative dimensions, and realize the transformation of these three dimensions, so as to translate a text that conforms to the culture of the target language. The “adaptation and choice” made by the translator in the linguistic, cultural, and communicative dimensions is not a single inorganic one; in fact, these three constitute an internal cycle to some extent. The successful transformation of the linguistic dimension can lead to the exchange and borrowing of the cultural dimension, and finally achieve the intercultural communication behavior between the source language culture and the target language culture.

**Adaptation and Selection of the Chinese Translation of Gulliver’s Travels**

This paper will analyze the translation of two Chinese translations of *Gulliver’s Travels* in linguistic, cultural, and communicative dimensions, with a view to exploring the translators’ adaptation and selection behavior under the perspective of eco-translatology.

**Linguistic Dimension**

The linguistic dimension means that the translator should be familiar with the expression forms of source language and target language and be able to integrate them into one another. How to transform the linguistic differences between them and whether the target readers can read the target text smoothly depends on the translator’s ecological translation behavior of faithfully conveying and skillfully transforming the original text.

Example (1) ... but the charge of maintaining me (although I had a very scanty allowance) being too great for a narrow fortune...

Zhang: ……很少的学费，但是这项负担对于一个贫困的家庭……

Yang: ……补贴少的很，但对于一个贫困的家庭来说，这项负担……

This sentence appears in the first paragraph of the book, which only briefly introduces the family situation of “I” in the book, and the translation of “allowance” by the two translators is slightly different. The basic meaning of “allowance” is “津贴；补贴；补助”, but Zhang Jian translates it as “学费”, which is a big difference from the original meaning of the word. In the novel, because of the harsh living conditions, in addition to tuition fees, “I” also have difficulty in maintaining some other daily expenses. That’s why “I” go to the clinic to help with the internship. Therefore, Yang’s translation is reasonable in terms of the conversion of Chinese and English language forms, and the word “补贴” can clearly tell the reader the context. In the second half of the sentence, Yang translates the prepositional phrase at the beginning of the sentence as “对于……”, and then translates the subject, which is in line with the Chinese expression habit. The position of “the charge of maintaining me” makes the article read with a slightly heavy translation accent. Thus, the translator must carefully consider the wording of the translation and the order of the sentences, so that the translation can achieve a good conversion between Chinese and English language forms and allow the reader to read a translation that is both faithful to the original text and fluent in expression.
Example (2) In ... Indies we were driven by a violent storm to ... Van Dieman’s Land. By an observation ...
Zhang: ……我们被一阵强风暴刮到了……根据一次观察，……
Yang: ……一阵强风暴把我们刮到了……据观测，……

In English articles, passive sentences are often used to show the objectivity of something happening. This is the case for Example (2). “I” objectively described the cause of this natural disaster as a sudden strong storm. However, passive sentences are rarely used in Chinese prose, so Yang pays attention to the linguistic differences in Chinese-English translation and turns passivity into activity to make the translation conform to the reading habits of target language readers. “By an observation” of the sentence, Zhang translates it word by word, and even the article “an” is also translated, which seems a little rigid. Obviously Yang’s “据观测” is more natural to Chinese readers. The translator’s adaptation and choice reflects his concern for the ecological environment of translation.

Cultural Dimension

Readers choose to read the works of writers from other countries in order to imagine and experience the foreign culture hidden behind the words through writers’ descriptions and writing style. Then the translator must transplant the cultural information in the source language society to the target language society, that is, “the translator should pay attention to the transmission of bilingual cultural connotation in the translation process”, so that the readers can read the translation that meets their cultural expectation vision.

Example (3) On the fifth ... parts, the weather being very hazy, the seamen spied a rock within half a cable’s length of the ship, but ... split.

Example (3) is a typical environmental description, explaining the antecedents of the accident. The difference between the two translators’ translations is mainly in the underlined part. First of all, let’s look at the description of weather conditions. “The weather being very hazy” is an independent nominative structure used to modify the weather. The original meaning of “hazy” is “有雾的;薄雾蒙蒙的”. Both translators translate it into the four-character structure of Chinese. “沉霾多雾” and “雾塞霾布” concisely express the dense clouds and the bad weather, which is the cause of the storm below. The translation makes full use of the linguistic and cultural advantages of the target language, which makes the reader accept the translation more readily. As for the treatment of “half a cable’s length of the ship”, the two units of measurement “寻” and “英尺” in Zhang’s translation “五十寻(三百英尺)” give consideration to the cultural connotation of the source language and the target language, so that readers can clearly understand the difference of the units of measurement between the two countries, while Yang’s version uses the contemporary sea-level unit “半链” which is in line with the character traits of “I”, obsessed with sea navigation in the text. And Yang also adds notes to introduce the concept of the sea to readers, breaking the translator’s reading barriers. Both translators have achieved the transformation of cultural dimension in their translations.

Example (4) that plenty ... a machine prepared to carry me to the capital city.

In Example (4), “the capital city” can be translated as “皇城;皇都” according to the literal meaning. Despite the 16-year gap, Yang also chooses to translate it as “京城”, which is the same as Zhang’s version. In other words, although the ecology of time influences the translator’s adaptation and choice, the cultural dimension does not just change. The translators should always put the first priority on how to make the readers understand the original text better and get the same cultural reading experience as the source language readers.
Both translators choosing “京城” instead of “皇城” illustrate this point. The translators’ adaptation and selection fully reflect the principle of cultural dimensional transformation.

Communication Dimension

Both the transformation of linguistic and cultural dimension should ultimately serve for the communication between two languages and two peoples. The translation should not only arouse the resonance between the reader and the author, but also improve the reading compatibility between the original text and the reader as much as possible. Therefore, the translator must accurately and adequately interpret the content of the original text, and make it interesting and enjoyable for the reader.

Example (5) It ... reasons, to trouble the reader with the particulars of our ... seas.

Zhang: ……详情细节告诉读者似乎不太恰当。

Yang: ……细枝末节全都告诉读者扰其视听是不合适的。

Zhang’s translation is more restricted by the original text so the translation is often straightforward. “Particulars” is translated as “详情细节” to illustrate that point. Obviously, “细枝末节” is more natural to the reader. Zhang’s removal of “trouble the reader” does not affect the understanding of the context, but Yang’s translation not only retains the original meaning completely, but also forms a four-character antagonistic structure with the previous “扰其视听”. The communicative intent of the translation is realized by the translator’s selective translation, and the reader is able to better understand the context.

Example (6) ... being almost famished with hunger, having not eaten a morsel for some hours before I left the ship.

Zhang: 我……，已经十几个小时没有吃一点东西，快饿坏了

Yang: 我……已有好几个小时没吃一点东西了，饥肠辘辘

In the process of translation, the translator should understand that this is a voyage log, and most of the descriptions of psychological activities should be another major focus of this novel, in addition to the descriptions of the environment of the four countries. Therefore, in the author’s opinion, the expression “快饿坏了” is more colloquial and can immediately make the reader feel the physiological state of “I” being completely hungry at the moment. “饥肠辘辘” is more written, and Zhang’s translation is more resonating to readers. Regarding the translation of “some hours”, Zhang’s and Yang’s translation are quite different. In the context, the total time of the accident of the storm, “I” fell asleep on the deserted island, held hostage by the inhabitants of Lilliput, and finally sent to meet His Majesty the Emperor, was definitely more than a few hours. Therefore, Zhang’s translation conveys the meaning of “some hours” in the original text more faithfully and achieves the good communicative function of the translation.

Conclusion

In order to prevent translation from being “eliminated” easily, the theory of eco-translatology requires translators to adapt to and select the language, culture, and communication in the society of source language and target language from the perspective of the ecological environment of translation, and finally carry out the transformation of these three dimensions to achieve the goal of harmonious coexistence with the ecological environment of translation.

Generally speaking, Zhang Jian adopts the literal translation method and the translation is plain and straightforward; while in Yang Chenghao’s translation, there are more techniques of conversion and addition.
The three dimensions are well adapted, so the writing is natural and friendly, which is more acceptable to the reader. It is concluded that if the translator pays attention to all the elements of eco-translatology and makes good use of the transformation of the three dimensions of eco-translatology in the process of translation, the translation will gain a long-lasting vitality.

References