

# Three-dimensional Transformation of Chen Bochui's Version of The Wizard of Oz from the Perspective of Ecological Translatology

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## **Abstract:**

The American writer Frank Baum created the fairy tale *The Wizard of Oz* in the early 20th century, known as the American version of *Journey to the West*. By now, there are many translations of this book in China, the first and the wildly praised of which was translated by Mr. Chen Bochui, a prestigious Children's literature writer and translator. It has been published for a long time and continues to be reprinted. This paper is designed to explore how the translator proactively chooses and adapts to the target language environment on the ground of the "three-dimensional transformation" model from the perspective of ecological translatology, and to provide a new approach for the research of juvenile literature translation.

**Key words:** Ecological Translatology; *The Wizard of Oz*; Three-dimensional transformation; Adaptation and selection

## 1. The introduction

*The Wizard of Oz* is one of the “Ten Greatest Children Literature Works in the United States” selected by the American Children’s Literature Association (CLA) as well as one of the “Best Children’s Books” recommended by the National Education Association (NEA) (Wang Mi, 2014). Besides, it is the first highly praised fairy tale in the history of American juvenile literature in the 20th century. Since its publication, it has been called American version of *Journey to the West*, which depicts that the little girl Dorothy and her puppy Toto take risks with scarecrow, tin woodcutter and timid lion in Oz. From ecological translatology, this paper attempts to study the Chen Bochui’s translation of *The Wizard of Oz* based on the “three-dimensional transformation” mode of language, culture and communication, in the hope of providing a broader communication platform for the translation of children’s literature.

## 2. Eco-translation Theory and “Three-dimensional Transformation” Mode

In 2004, Tsinghua University professor Hu Gengshen pointed out in “The Interpretation of Ecological Translation”: The translation has opened up a new ecological research way with the translator as the center of translation activities, whose study includes translation process, translation principles and translation methods, etc. (Hu Gengshen, 2004), in 2008 he further put forward the concept of translation ecology based on Translation Adaptation Choice Theory, and clarified that translation is “the activity of the translator’s adapting to the translation ecological environment”. He then gave three core ideas about the translation process: the translation ecological environment, the translator centered and adaptation or selection, among which the translation ecological environment refers to “the ‘world’ presented by the original text, source language and translation, namely a integration interconnected with language, communication, culture, society and the author, reader, entruster and so on” (Hu Gengshen, 2008). The fundamental idea of translation ecology is “the translator as the center”, which emphasizes that “translation must always be accomplished with the translator’s subjective consciousness and his predominance”. And the principle of “survival of the fittest” restricts the “the centered role played by the translator”.

According to the translation ecology, all translation activities compass the “three-dimensional transformation” mode of language, culture and communication, and the translation strategy of ecological translation is to focus relatively on the choices and adaptive conversions of language, culture and communication under “multi-dimensional adaptation and adaptive choice”(Hu Gengshen, 2006). More specifically, “the adaptive selection and conversion in linguistic dimension” refers to the translator’s adaptive choice and conversion of linguistic form in translating; “the adaptive selection and conversion in cultural dimension” refers to the translator tries to transmit and interpret the bilingual cultural connotation by overcoming the differences between the source culture and the target culture and avoiding the distortion of the original text; “the adaptive selection and conversion in communicative dimension” refers to the translator pays attention to the bilingual communication intention of the original text and its effective interpretation.

Translation ecology has constructed a new framework of translation theory for translation research with a unique macro-theoretical perspective. On this theory, this paper analyzes the adaptations and conversions of the Chinese translation of *The Wizard of Oz* in the three dimensions of language, culture and communication and the reasons why it has been widely accepted and favored by the target readers.

### **3. Analysis of the translation of “*The Wizard of Oz*” under the “three-dimensional transformation” mode**

#### **3.1 The transformation in the linguistic dimension**

The transformation in language dimension is the translator’s adaptive transformation of language form from style, rhythm, rhetorical technique, tone, etc., in order to untie the bondage of semantics of the original text and make appropriate adjustments according to the expression habits of the target language without destroying the original meaning. There are great differences between English and Chinese, as Wang Li (1984) said: the syntactic structure of foreign language is closely connected, and the syntactic meaning can be deduced from the sentence structure while that of Chinese is comparatively loose, the understanding of its syntactic meaning needs to be grasped by a whole analysis. Therefore, when translating, the determination of sentence function and meaning should depend on the analysis of sentence structure and form.

E.g.1:

Toward evening they came to a great forest, where the trees grew so big and close together that their branches met over the road of yellow brick.

将近黄昏，他们跑进了一座大森林里，那些树木长得这么高大，树干互相靠紧着，枝叶互相交错着，掩盖在黄砖铺砌的道路上空。

As a dynamic language, Chinese favors verbs and short sentences with many parallel structures while English, known as a static language, adores nouns, adjectives, prepositions and long sentences with a “multi-branch” structure. Although the translation of example 1 conforms to the original text in sequence, it mobilizes prepositions into verbs, such as “toward” into “将近 (get close to)”, “over” into “掩盖(cover)”, and shortens the English long sentences into Chinese short sentences, so as to cater to the reading habits of Chinese juvenile readers.

#### **3.2 The transformation in the cultural dimension**

To facilitate the comprehension of original text and the cultural interchange, the children’s literature translator needs to surmount cultural differences by interpreting cultural words in an original and adequate way. Besides, cultural expectations of target juvenile readers must be taken into consideration in translation with natural and cordial expressions so as to arouse readers’ curiosity and interests in different cultures.

E.g.2:

Green candy and green popcorn were offered for sale, as well as green shoes, green hats, and green clothes of all sorts.

译文：出售绿的糖果，绿的爆玉蜀黍，还有各种各样的绿鞋子、绿帽子和绿衣衫。

The word “玉蜀黍(Yu Shu Li, maize)” was originally derived from the ancient manuscript of “Atlas of herbs in Southern Yunnan” written by Fan Hong, a native of Jiajing, Bingchen (1556): “Yu Shu Li (maize), with a sweet smell, is non-toxic and can regulate the digestion and eliminate humidity...”. The version was published in 1950 when the reform and opening up wasn't implemented and the development of the Internet didn't arise, and Chinese people knew little about the Western world. The translator here translated “popcorn” into “爆玉蜀黍”, not only accurately interpreting the meaning of the word with a quaint form but well adapting to the target linguistic expression at that time when the classical Chinese was dominant in China. From the perspective of spreading Chinese culture, the translation is still adaptive to present social background of China where cultural “soft power” is much emphasized, which enriches vocabularies of children's readers, allows them to experience the freshness and fun of reading from these antique expressions, and deepens their impression of the content.

### 3.3 The transformation in the communicative dimension

The transformation of the translation in communication dimension emphasizes that the translator follows the communicative purpose of both the source and the target language. The focus of the translator's choice and conversion is on the communicative level, namely whether the communicative intention of the original text has been realized in the translated text (Hu Gengshen, 2004).

E.g.3:

..and the Lion whispered to them that it was in this part of the country that the Kalidahs lived.

狮子低声地对他们说，这部分的国土，是开力大住的地方。

“Kalidahs” is the name of the beast that appeared in Chapter 7-“The Thrilling Journey”. This vocabulary is a new word coined by the author for role setting. According to the significant and signifié

of the word, the word was naturalized into “Kai Li Da” which is a homonym of the original word and reflects this powerful image of the beast. The wording is simple and fits the language of children. It effectively helps children to digest this new role and new name, conducive to the communication between the readers and the author.

## 4. Conclusion

Since published in 1950, Chen Bochui's translation of The Wizard of Oz has been consecutively reprinted and highly praised by many readers and literary critics. As a pioneering translator, Chen has made great contributions to the translation of children's literature.

In general, Chen Bochui's work is a paragon of children's literature, which not only adapts well to the ecological environment of the target language, but successfully reproduces the ecological environment inherent in the original work on the vocabulary selection, syntactic characteristics and sentence structure through the “three-dimensional transformation” mode. From the linguistic aspect, the work is in line with the way of Chinese's sentence-making, and fits children's taste; From the

cultural aspect, the work greatly overcomes the barriers of bilingual cultural differences, and transmits the national culture to the Chinese juvenile readers. From the communicative aspect, the work meets the psychological needs of juvenile readers through simple and vivid expressions, and promotes bilingual communication and understanding. Thus, the “three-dimensional transformation” mode of eco-translation is of great practical significance to the translation research of children’s literature.

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