

A Study on the English Translation of the "Yaoguai King Portraits" in Black Myth: Wukong from the Perspective of Eco-Translatology

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Abstract. In recent years, China's video game industry has grown very fast. Black Myth: Wukong is a high-budget, high-quality game made in China and it has won wide attention across the world. This game takes traditional Chinese mythology as its storybase. The English translation of its game text is very valuable for research when spreading Chinese culture abroad. This study uses the theory of Eco-Translatology to study the English translation of the Portraits. These contents tell the life stories of the Yaoguai Kings in *Black Myth: Wukong*. The study analyzes the translator's changes and choices in language, culture and communication. It also explores translation ways to pass on culture-related information in games and their communication results. The study finds that the English translation of this game usually works well in language, culture and communication. This is because the translator makes proper changes and choices in many ways while translating. It helps build good communication between Chinese culture and foreign cultures. To some degree, it also makes Chinese games and traditional Chinese culture more popular and influential in the world.

Keywords: Black Myth: Wukong, Eco-Translatology, Three-dimensional Conversion, Translation Strategies, Subtitle Translation

1. Introduction

In recent years, China's game industry has grown very fast. It has become more and more important in the world game market. Many Chinese games with rich local culture and global influence have come to the world market. For example, Honor of Kings and Genshin Impact are well-known. They are loved and praised by many foreign players. These games show the technical progress of China's game industry. They also help spread Chinese culture to other countries.

At the same time, China's game industry pays more attention to using and showing traditional Chinese culture in making game content. These cultures include Chinese old stories, history and traditional beauty. Under this situation, Chinese games are not only for fun. They also play an important part in spreading culture and building national image. They help Chinese culture spread and communicate with the world [1]. So it is very important to study how to let foreign audiences understand and accept the culture in Chinese games. We need good language changes and proper

cultural expression. This is a key question in cross-cultural communication and game translation research.

There are many games with Chinese culture as their theme. *Black Myth: Wukong* is one of them. Its culture comes from *Journey to the West*. It uses many special monster characters and old myth stories to build a special world view [2].

Ecological Translation Studies is a translation theory. Hu Gengshen put forward this theory in 2004. The theory says translation is a changing process. In this process, people need to fit and choose in a special "translation ecosystem". The theory tells us that translators must fit in many sides well. These sides include language, culture and communication. Then the translation can be best accepted by foreign readers.

Based on the above ideas, this paper uses Ecological Translation Studies as guide. It focuses on the English translation of the Yaoguai Kings parts in *Black Myth: Wukong*. The paper studies how translators keep balance among language, culture and communication. They use different ways in translation. The paper wants to give good ideas for translating games with Chinese culture. It also brings new views for using Ecological Translation Studies in digital game translation.

2. An overview of ecological translation studies

2.1. Origins and basic definitions

Eco-translatology is a well-known translation theory that was put forward by Chinese scholar Hu Gengshen in the early 21st century [3]. Up to now, this theory has been widely used in many different fields of translation practice. These fields mainly include literary translation, the translation of political texts, and the translation of traditional cultural classics. From the theoretical view of eco-translatology, the translator plays a central and important role in the whole translation process. Translators have to make proper and reasonable translation decisions. These decisions are influenced by many different factors at the same time, such as language elements, cultural elements and communicative elements. The theory strongly stresses that the translation process is holistic and systematic. It believes that the finished translation is the result of a dynamic balance. This balance is achieved by translators when they face different environmental factors. This theory also provides an important analytical tool and framework for translation studies under cross-cultural communication situations.

Adaptation and selection are the core parts of eco-translatology. This theory learns from the ecological idea called "survival of the fittest". It clearly points out that the translation process is actually a process. In this process, the translator keeps adapting to the environment and making careful choices in a certain translation ecosystem [3]. During this whole process, translators have to deal with the influences from many different factors. These factors include the language system, cultural background, communication purpose and the real needs of the target audience. After fully considering and evaluating all these factors, translators can make specific translation strategies and proper ways of expression. Under the theory of eco-translatology, adaptation mainly means that translators fully understand and actively adjust to different factors in the translation ecosystem. These factors include the features of the source text, the expression habits of the target language and the cultural differences between languages. Selection means that translators make final and specific translation decisions from several possible expression ways. These two important concepts are closely related and affect each other. Together they form the dynamic and complete process of translation. By using this theoretical view, people can give a more comprehensive and clear explanation of different translation strategies and the real reasons behind these strategies.

Eco-translatology pays special attention to the central position of the translator in translation activities. It builds a new theoretical view that focuses on the translator. Traditional translation theories often center on the source text or require the equivalence of the target text. However, eco-translatology regards the translator as the most important actor in the translation ecosystem. The cognitive ability, cultural background and translation experience of translators all have a great and important influence on the final translated text. Therefore, in the real translation process, translators are not only people who finish language transformation. They are also the key people who make decisions in translation. In real translation work, translators need to make full judgments. They need to judge language forms, cultural details and communication goals according to real translation cases. After that, they pick the best way from different possible expressions. This idea that focuses on translators helps people learn more about how translation strategies are formed. It also gives a new way to study the differences between different translated texts.

In the theory of eco-translatology, three-side change is an important idea to explain the translation process clearly. This theory says that translators must finish full adaptation and choice in three sides when translating. The three sides are language side, culture side and communication side. This can make sure the translation works well in the language environment of the target readers. Specifically, language-side change mainly deals with changes in language. These changes include words, sentence structures and ways of expression. Its goal is to make the translation correct and easy to read in both form and meaning. Culture-side change focuses on passing cultural images and deep cultural meanings from the original language. It helps target readers understand hidden cultural information through proper cultural adaptation. Communication-side change cares about the communication effect of translation in real situations. It asks the translation to fit the reading habits and communication goals of the target readers.

In real and specific translation work, these three sides are not separated from each other. But they are closely connected and influence one another. Translators have to balance and adjust these three sides properly according to specific situations. The aim is to reach an overall balance in meaning expression, cultural transmission and communication effect of the translation. With the help of the three-dimensional conversion framework, eco-translatology provides a relatively clear theoretical way. This way can be used to analyze the choice of translation strategies and the real motivations behind these choices.

2.2. Applied research in ecotraductology

Ecological translation studies have been successfully put into use in many different fields of translation work. These fields include film subtitle translation [4], translation of official political documents [5], translation of public diplomacy texts [6], and translation of public signs and notices [7]. For example, He [4] carried out a careful study on translation ways of culture-loaded words in the subtitles of the movie *Hi, Mom*. The study was done from three important dimensions, which are language, culture and communication. The researcher pointed out that translators often use methods like changing images and adjusting expressions. These methods help translations keep the cultural meanings of the original work. At the same time, they can fit the reading habits of foreign audiences much better. For instance, Liu Chunling [5] made a deep analysis on English translation of political documents. The researcher found that translators need to reach multi-dimensional adaptation. The adaptation includes language expression and cultural communication. This can make sure translations are easy to understand and work well in international situations. In the study area of translation for *external publicity texts*, Zhao Jing and Zhao Qiurong [6] looked into translation methods of political external publicity language in cross-cultural communication. They believed that

translators should keep balance between correct language use and effective passing of cultural meanings during translation. In this way, translations can show cultural confidence of China and Chinese political ideas more clearly in the world. Besides, Ling Jianyi, Li Song and Hu Lexin [7] studied translation ways of English version in Shanghai's city promotion video. They analyzed special features of urban public diplomacy texts from the view of ecological translation. The researchers said that translators need to fully balance language expression, cultural showing and communication effect. By making multi-dimensional adaptation and right choices, translations can show the city's image correctly. They can also help international audiences understand and accept the content more easily.

On the whole, current research results show that ecological translation studies provide very useful theoretical support. It can explain translation strategies used in literary works and public diplomacy texts clearly. However, different from traditional text types, digital game translation is a new research area. Related research in this field is still not enough. Nowadays, games with Chinese cultural elements are becoming more and more popular in global market. Their international influence is increasing day by day. So it is very valuable to study translation strategies of game texts under cross-cultural background. This research direction has important meaning and wide development space.

3. Black Myth: Wukong

Against this backdrop, the Chinese mythology-themed action role-playing game *Black Myth: Wukong* provides a very typical example for us to study the translation of digital game texts. This game has drawn wide attention all over the world. It mixes traditional Chinese mythology with modern story-telling ways in games. It also uses high-quality pictures and good story design to make itself attractive. As the game becomes popular in foreign markets, its English version is very important. It helps foreign players learn about Chinese mythological culture and traditional story images. So the quality of the game's translation has a direct influence on how well Chinese culture spreads in cross-cultural situations [8].

In the whole story of *Black Myth: Wukong*, the *Yaoguai Kings* are very important character types. Their looks, designs and life stories often mix many different cultural parts. These parts include old Chinese myths, religious culture and local folk stories. The life stories and descriptions of the *Yaoguai Kings* are really special. They not only include many classic images of Chinese traditional culture, but also show the values and aesthetic ideas in Chinese myth stories. But when these texts are shown to global players, people still need to think deeply about one question. How can these texts with strong Chinese culture be translated well into English for cross-cultural communication? We need to keep their special cultural features and make sure communication works well at the same time. This is a question worth studying carefully.

Based on the situation above, this paper mainly studies two things. One is the life story texts of the *Yaoguai Kings* from the *Yaoguai King Portraits* part in *Black Myth: Wukong*. The other is their English translations. Using the theory of ecological translation studies, this paper carefully analyzes the methods and choices made by translators in three dimensions. It tries to find out good translation ways for game texts that are based on Chinese myths in cross-cultural communication.

4. Translation of the Yaoguai Kings in Black Myth: Wukong

4.1. The linguistic dimension

Within the framework of ecological translation studies, linguistic dimension transformation mainly means the adaptations and selections that translators make at the language level. These include vocabulary, sentence structure and text organization. The purpose is to make sure that readers who use the target language can understand the translation correctly in both form and meaning. At the same time, the stylistic features of the original text should also be well kept [3]. The translation of game texts needs to achieve two main goals. One is to pass on the basic meaning of the original content clearly. The other is to keep the narrative style and artistic expression of the original text. In Black Myth: Wukong, the texts about Yaoguai Kings and Monster Compendium often mix poetic language with narrative description. Because of this feature, their English translations show clear stylistic changes at the linguistic level. More specifically, the translator has made proper and targeted adjustments in three aspects. These aspects are end-rhyme, word choice and sentence structure.

4.1.1. End rhymes

In the narrative texts about *Yaoguai Kingss* in *Black Myth: Wukong*, the original text frequently employs poetic expressions, using rhythm and meter to enhance the literary expressiveness of the text. Table 1 presents the introduction to the *Yaoguai Kings* Black Bear Guai from the Divine Shadow Atlas.

Table 1. Original text and translation of the introduction to the Yaoguai Kings Black Bear Guai

original text	Translation
紫竹难定俗尘心	In Guanyin's grove, his greed won't cease,
潮音未改风与云	Southern tides bring no release.
知机未必真机灵	Schemes cloud his sight,
倚天才知无天命.	On Bodhi Peak, he learnt life's worth is peace.

The description of *Black Bear Guai*, one of the *Yaoguai Kings*, is written as a tidy four-line poem. It uses words like "heart", "cloud", "spirit", and "life". These words create a gentle rhythmic echo and make the whole text read like a short classical poem. But we should not take it as a strict rhyming poem. These words do not share a fixed and complete rhyme pattern. Instead, the rhythm mainly comes from the smooth flow of the lines and the nice sound matching between words.

When it comes to the rhythmic structure, the English translation changes the ending rhyme pattern in a clear way. The translated text uses words such as "cease", "release", and "peace". These words form a close and continuous rhyme. As a result, the English version has a strong and clear musical rhythm. The original Chinese text has a rather free and loose rhythm. But the translation builds tighter links between lines by using focused rhymes. This creates a more obvious and pleasant rhythm in the English language environment.

From the view of linguistic dimension conversion in ecological translation studies, this way shows the translator's wise choices in form adaptation. Chinese poetry and English poetry follow very different metrical rules. So the translator did not copy the sound structure of the original text directly. Instead, the translator rebuilt the rhyme system to bring back the poetic effect. We can say

that the translator used a method of "rhyme intensification" in translation. That means the translator used a clearer rhyme structure to strengthen the rhythm and literary beauty of the English text. This method keeps the poetic style of the original in form. It also fits the reading habits of English readers who enjoy narrative poems. So it completes a successful translation change at the linguistic level.

4.1.2. Lexical level

In terms of word choice, translators often use short and lively expressions to draw clear pictures of monster images. For example, in Table 1, phrases like "Sunswept hills" and "glint of steel" are good examples. These phrases create strong visual pictures for readers. They also make the narrative mood of the whole text stronger. If we use plain and common words to describe the same content, the effect will be much weaker. These expressions have a higher literary taste. They can make the living environment and fighting mood of monster characters become more real and lively.

In addition, when translators deal with monster names and special cultural ideas, they usually use two ways together. One is phonetic translation, which keeps the sound of the original words. The other is semantic translation, which explains the meaning clearly. For example, the Chinese word "妖怪" is translated as "Yaoguai" in many cases. Sometimes, according to the real look and features of a certain monster, it can also be translated as "Wolf Soldier". This way keeps important parts of Chinese culture. At the same time, it helps target language readers understand the features of these characters easily through simple and clear words. These word choices fully show the translator's smart language adaptation. The translator balances two important goals well. One goal is passing on Chinese culture correctly. The other goal is making sure foreign readers can understand the content easily.

4.1.3. Syntactic level

In terms of syntactic structure, the English translation of this group of verses uses short, tight and rhythmically attractive sentence patterns from the beginning to the end. For example, expressions like "his greed won't cease," "Schemes cloud his sight," and "Southern tides bring no release" in the translation all use short sentence parts. They have clear subject-verb relations and simple, neat sentence structures. This method avoids too many complex nested clauses. It makes the translation more like the concise expressions often used in English poetry. It also improves the quality and fluency of the whole text.

At the same time, in the narrative parts, the translator often uses clear sentence structures to organize information. This makes sure that readers can understand the narrative content very fast. For example, in the background story of the Black Bear Demon, the original Chinese sentence "紫竹林中,素日清闲" is translated into "In the Purple Bamboo Grove where Guanyin resided, life was usually tranquil." The original sentence is a typical Chinese elliptical sentence. It only uses two short parts to show the scene and the peaceful atmosphere. But the translation makes the sentence relation clear by adding the subject "life" and building a complete subject-verb structure. What is more, the translator adds the attributive clause "where Guanyin resided" to explain "the Purple Bamboo Grove." This adds clear background information. This method keeps the peaceful atmosphere of the original text. It also follows the English rule that narrative sentences need clear subject-verb structures.

In the same way, in sentences that describe what characters do, the translator changes sentence structures to make the narrative order clear. For example, the original text "Having spoken, he shook his body and transformed into a black wind; paying no heed to Red Boy's desperate shouts, he

swiftly vanished" is translated into English as "With that, he transformed his body into a black wind and swiftly vanished, paying no heed to Red Boy's desperate shouts." The original Chinese uses several parallel action phrases to show the order of what the character does. But the translation uses a "main clause + participle phrase" structure. It divides the main action and the extra information into different layers. This structure not only makes the sentence more connected but also makes the logical order of events clearer.

From the view of linguistic adaptation in ecological translation studies, this way of dealing with sentences shows the translator's proper choices at the language level. The translator does not just copy the sentence structure of the original text. Instead, the translator rearranges the sentences according to the expression habits of English. This improves the readability of the whole text and the efficiency of passing information. It also keeps the good narrative rhythm of the original text.

4.2. Cultural dimension

Within the framework of ecological translation studies, cultural dimension transformation mainly means that translators adjust and rebuild the cultural meanings of the source language during translation. This method makes sure that the text still keeps its original cultural features. At the same time, it can also be easily understood and accepted by readers who use the target language. *Black Myth: Wukong* takes its cultural background from old Chinese myths and the classic novel *Journey to the West*. The game has many character names, religious pictures and cultural ideas. All of them show strong and special Chinese cultural features. When these contents are translated into English, translators usually need to find a good balance. They must keep the original culture and help foreign readers understand the meaning at the same time. This paper studies the English translations of some *Yaoguai Kings* texts in the game. After careful analysis, the paper finds several cultural adaptation ways that translators use in their work. These strategies are listed and shown clearly in Table 2.

Table 2. Original text, translation, and translation strategies for culture-bound terms

Original cultural elements	translation method	translation strategy
取经人	journeyers	free Translation
黄风阵	Yellow Wind Formation	Literal Translation
天真地秀	the pure essence of the earth	Free translation + semantic reconstruction
灵蕴	Will	Free translation + simplified concept
盂兰盆会	The Ullambana Assembly	Transliteration + Explanation

Overall, translators usually handle cultural information with three common methods. These methods are free translation, literal translation, and transliteration with extra notes. Free translation is often used to explain abstract cultural ideas or story details. This makes it easier for target language readers to understand. Transliteration or literal translation is often used to keep religious or cultural words with clear cultural meanings.

For example, in some story texts about the *Yaoguai Kings*, the original phrase "取经人" is translated as "journeyers". In the special culture of *Journey to the West*, "取经人" refers to religious people who travel to the Western Heaven to fetch Buddhist scriptures. It has clear religious and story meanings. The translator does not use a word with strong religious meaning directly. Instead, the translator uses the neutral word "journeyers" to show the simple idea of people on a long trip. This helps foreign readers understand the text even if they know little about Chinese culture. This way proves that the translator balances cultural spread and readers' understanding.

In the same way, the original phrase "黄风阵" is translated as "Yellow Wind Formation". Here, "黄风" is *directly* turned into *Yellow Wind*, and "阵" is turned into Formation. This translation mostly keeps the original meaning and structure. It also uses the common English word "formation", which is used for wars or battle plans. This word clearly shows the meaning of battle array. So it restores the mythical battle scenes in the original text to some extent.

Besides, the original Chinese phrase "天真地秀" is translated as "the pure essence of the earth". This translation does not follow the word-for-word structure of the original. Instead, the translator rearranges the meaning to turn the classic Chinese phrase into a natural one that fits English views of nature. This helps foreign readers easily get the original meaning, which is the fine and spiritual power from heaven and earth.

In the same way, the original term "灵蕴" is translated as "Will". The original Chinese word has complex meanings of spiritual power and inner energy. But the translator simplifies this meaning properly. The translator picks the English word "Will", which has abstract philosophical meaning, to show the core idea. This makes the translated text far easier for foreign readers to understand.

Also, some words have strong religious and cultural background. A good example is the Chinese phrase "盂兰盆会". The translator uses the English name "The Ullambana Assembly". The word "Ullambana" is a widely known English word in Buddhist culture. Transliterating this part keeps the special religious and cultural meaning of the original. The word "Assembly" clearly tells readers it is a religious meeting or ceremony. This way uses both transliteration and explanatory translation. It keeps the special features of Buddhist culture and helps foreign readers understand its cultural meaning as well.

From the view of cultural dimension change in ecological translation studies, these translation methods show the translator's adaptive choices at the cultural level. When translating, the translator keeps important cultural signs with literal translation or transliteration. At the same time, the translator makes the text easier to understand with free translation and meaning rebuilding. In this way, the translator strikes a good balance between spreading Chinese culture and making foreign readers accept the content. This method not only helps keep the special cultural features of the game text but also provides an important language tool for foreign players to learn about Chinese myths and religious culture.

4.3. Communicative dimension

Within the theoretical framework of ecological translation studies, the communicative dimension mainly focuses on how well the translation works for communication in the language environment of the target readers. That is to say, it looks at how translators get used to the thinking habits and reading styles of foreign audiences so that information and cultural meanings can be passed on successfully during translation. The linguistic dimension pays more attention to changing language forms, and the cultural dimension focuses on passing on cultural meanings. But the communicative dimension cares more about whether the translation can finish its communication tasks well in the target language environment. In the translation of game texts, most readers are players from all over the world. So translators often need to change their expressions properly. They must keep the story atmosphere and make the translation clear and easy to read at the same time. This helps players understand the content better and improves their overall experience.

By studying the English translations of some *Yaoguai Kings* texts in *Black Myth: Wukong*, we can find a clear rule. At the communicative level, translators mainly use three ways to make the translation easier to understand. These ways include making meanings clearer, rearranging

information order, and simplifying expressions. All these methods are listed and explained in detail in Table 3.

Table 3. Original text and translation of the introductions to Black Bear Guai and Tiger Vanguard

Original text	Translation	Approach	Social purposes
紫竹难定俗尘心	In Guanyin's grove, his greed won't cease	Semantic Transformation	Enhance character development
前事得从数百年前,取经人经过黄风岭说起	The tale began centuries past, when the journeyers crossed Yellow Wind Ridge	Information Reorganization	Establish the narrative time and setting
村人为虎兄虎弟建了座卧虎寺,常常供奉	The villagers built a Crouching Tiger Temple for the brothers, offering rich tributes	Additional Information	Enhance the story's setting and the characters' roles

For example, in the description of *Black Bear Guai*, one of the *Yaoguai Kings*, the original line "紫竹难定俗尘心" has clear cultural and rhetorical meanings. The phrase "俗尘心" tells readers that the character finds it hard to give up the desires of the world. In the English translation, the translator changes this line into "his greed won't cease." This expression does not fully copy the structure of the original text. But it uses the easy-to-understand word "greed" to show the character's greedy nature clearly. This lets readers who speak English quickly learn about the character's personality. To some degree, this way makes the story more impressive. It also fits the way English readers understand texts better.

In the background story of the Tiger Vanguard, the original Chinese sentence "前事得从数百年前,取经人经过黄风岭说起" is translated into "The tale began centuries past, when the journeyers crossed Yellow Wind Ridge." The translator changes the order of the sentence. This makes the story's time and background clear. It helps foreign readers quickly get into the story easily.

Furthermore, the original Chinese phrase "村人为虎兄虎弟建了座卧虎寺,常常供奉" is translated into "The villagers built a Crouching Tiger Temple for the brothers, offering rich tributes." The translator adds the phrase "offering rich tributes" to explain the Chinese word "供奉." This makes it simpler for readers to know the respectful attitude behind this action.

From the view of the communicative dimension in ecological translation studies, these translation choices show the translator's adaptive decisions for good communication effects. The translator keeps the story atmosphere of the original text. At the same time, the translator makes meanings clear, rearranges information and adds proper details. These changes make the translation fit the reading habits of foreign readers better. They also improve the communication effect of the game text in cross-cultural situations.

5. Conclusion

Guided by the theory of ecological translation, this paper studies the English translation of texts about the *Yaoguai Kings* in *Black Myth: Wukong*. It analyzes the translation methods used from three dimensions, which are linguistic, cultural and communicative. The study finds that on the linguistic dimension, the translator uses rhythmic restructuring, lexical selection and syntactic adjustments. These methods improve the rhythm and readability of the English text and keep the original narrative style as well. On the cultural dimension, the translator deals with Chinese mythology elements by phonetic translation, free translation and proper explanations. These ways keep the unique cultural features and help target-language readers understand the content more easily. At the communicative level, the translator clarifies meanings and uses simple expressions. These changes make the translation fit the reading habits of global players better and lift the text's dissemination

effect. Overall, the English translation of the *Yaoguai Kings* texts in *Black Myth: Wukong* shows the translator's multi-dimensional adaptation and adaptive choices in the translation ecosystem.

From the theoretical perspective, this paper applies ecological translation theory to the study of digital game text translation. It broadens the application fields of this theory in the new media environment. Earlier research on ecological translation mainly focused on literary texts or publicity materials, and studies on digital game texts are quite few. By analyzing specific translation examples, this paper further proves the theoretical value of ecological translation in explaining translation strategy selection. It also provides a new theoretical view for the research of game text translation. From the practical perspective, this study offers useful suggestions for the translation of games with Chinese cultural themes. As China's game industry keeps expanding into global markets, game text translation plays a more and more important role in cultural spread. If translators use proper strategies like linguistic adaptation, cultural conversion and communicative optimization, they can help overseas players understand and accept the content better. Meanwhile, the characteristics of Chinese culture can be well preserved, which will better push the global spread of Chinese games and traditional Chinese culture. Although this paper makes a preliminary exploration of the English translation of the *Yaoguai Kings* texts in *Black Myth: Wukong*, it still has some limitations. First, the research texts chosen in this study mainly cover part of the *Yaoguai Kings* texts, so the research range is relatively narrow. Second, this study is mainly carried out from the perspective of English translation and does not make a systematic comparison with translations into other languages. Future research can compare Chinese game text translations in different languages based on a wider range of texts. It can further explore translation strategies and dissemination effects of Chinese cultural elements in multilingual communication, so as to provide more abundant research references for the international spread of Chinese game culture.

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