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IMAGE SCHEMA ANALYSIS OF C-E TRANSLATION OF LI BAI'S POETRY

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ABSTRACT

Li Bai, a famous poet in the Tang Dynasty in China, created the peak of the ancient positive romanticism. He also created the golden age of classical poetry with his unique poetry style. Li Bai's achievements on poetry, to a great extent, depend on his image system. As one of the most important research fields of cognitive linguistics, Image Schema Theory has been paid more and more attention in recent years. Based on the Image Schema Theory, this paper analyses the C-E translation of Li Bai's poetry by front-back schema, verticality schema and cycle schema. By the contrastive analysis, the research shows that these three image schemas in the C-E translation of Li Bai's poetry are corresponding. Although poetry is untranslatable, this paper provides a new perspective to interpret the C-E translation of Li Bai's poetry by image schemas.

**Key words:** Li Bai's poetry; C-E translation; image schema; image

1. Introduction

Li Bai is a great and romantic poet in the Tang Dynasty in China, regarded as a poetic genius. Li Bai's poetry is lyric and images play important roles in the creation of poetry. And there are some vivid images in Li Bai's poetry, such as flowing water, moon, sword, and so on. His poetry reflects the prosperity of the era exposes the corruption of the ruling class and shows the pursuit of freedom and ideal positive spirit by some images.

The Image Schema Theory is put forward by Mark Johnson. He defines an image schema as a recurring, dynamic pattern of our perceptual interactions and motor programs that gives coherence and structure to our experience. There are some image schemas such as center-periphery schema, container schema, cycle schema, force schema, link schema, part-whole schema, path schema, scale schema and verticality schema. Among these image schemas, some of which are clearly manifested in Li Bai's poetry, such as verticality schema and front-back schema.

Based on Image Schema Theory, the paper analyzes the image schemas in Li Bai's poetry and then explains how Li Bai describes the images in poetry, expresses his emotions and expresses the theme of poetry

by different kinds of image schemas. In this way, this paper can provide a new perspective to understand Li Bai's poetry and other poets' works.

This paper consists of four parts. The first part briefly introduces the definition and the classifications of image schema. The second part describes images and the features of images in Li Bai's poetry. The third part is the central part, which analyzes the major image schemas in Li Bai's poetry. The last part combines Li Bai's character and his poetry style with image schemas, analyzing Li Bai's character and poetry style in the poetry. According to the images and image schemas, Li Bai's character and poetry style are vividly reflected.

## 2. An Introduction to Image Schema Theory

Image Schema Theory is proposed by Mark Johnson in metaphor theory. The Image Schema Theory shows that image schemas exist at a level of abstraction and operate at a level of mental organization between propositional structures and concrete images. This theory retains a fascination for modern researchers and has become one of the most popular theories in cognitive linguistics.

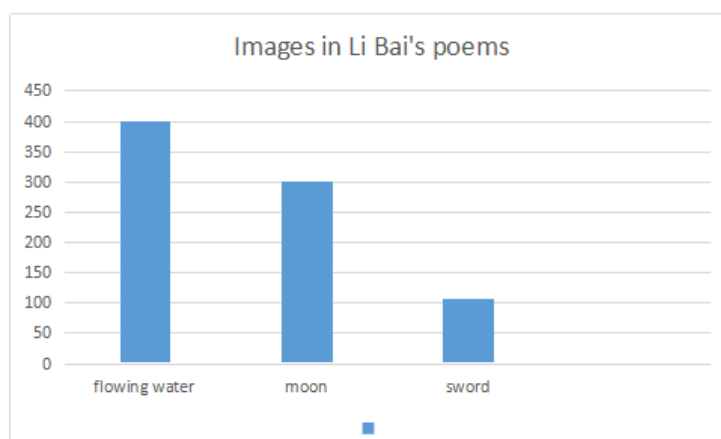
Common image schemas consist of center-periphery schema, container schema, cycle schema, force schema, link schema, part-whole schema, path schema, scale schema and verticality schema.

## 3. Images in Li Bai's Poetry

Images play important roles in poetry. As the basic element of the poetry, images are the reflection of the nature of poetry and poetry will lose lasting charm without images. What's more, lyric is one of the characteristics of poetry and lyric is realized with the help of images. Appreciation of poetry is also realized by images. So attention should be paid to images if the readers really want to understand poetry. Li Bai's achievements on poetry, to a great extent depend on his image system.

### 3.1 Different kinds of images

Images are specific forms which are described in poetry, blending in the author's emotions. Authors create the images and express thoughts and feelings by images. In Li Bai's poetry, there are a lot of vivid images, such as mountains, water, moon, wine, sword, cloud, star, and so on. For Li Bai, he describes many images in his poetry. There are over 900 poems in his creation, about 400 of which are describing flowing water. About 300 poems are about moon in his poetry. And also there are 107 poems describing sword. The bar chart is as follows respectively.



#### 3.1.1 Moon

The moon carries countless human imagination and emotion and the moon is popular in writing from the ancient time to modern society. In Li Bai's poetry, the considerable proportion of the poetry comes from the description of moon. Li Bai shows the romanticism and his feelings by moon.

For example, in his work, *Drink Alone under the Moon*, there is “I sing and the Moon lingers to hear my song; My Shadow’s a mess while I dance along” (我歌月徘徊，我舞影零乱)<sup>[1]</sup> in which Li Bai seems to sing and dance with the moon. The moon can communicate with people and the mystery of moon is shown clearly. From this poem, the readers can see that Li Bai shows the romanticism by moon. “Wildly singing I waited for the moon to rise; when my song was over, all my senses had gone. (浩歌待明月，曲进已忘情)”<sup>[2]</sup> in *Waking from Drunkenness on a Spring Day* shows his deep his dissatisfaction with the world and his own free and easy state of mind through the description of the moon.

Therefore, Li Bai not only realizes the traditional significance of image in poetry, but also develops and enriches the form and function of images in poetry. The moon in Li Bai’s poetry has personality and vitality. The moons described by Li Bai in different time and places have different meanings, showing different emotions and different artistic conceptions.

### 3.1.2 Sword

As one of the most commonly-used weapons of ancient time, sword is a symbol of power and force. However, In Li Bai’s poetry, it has its own special meaning. In addition, Li Bai is a romantic poet as well as a swordsman.

For example, “Pushing aside my cup and chopsticks, I can’t eat; Drawing my sword and looking round, I hear my heart beat” (停杯投箸不能食，拔剑四顾心茫然)<sup>[3]</sup> in *Hard Is the Way of the World* shows his sadness and dissatisfaction by the sword.

### 3.1.3 Flowing water

In Li Bai’s poetry, flowing water is a common image. It is regarded as time in poetry, bringing people awareness of unexpected development. At the same time water is also the symbol of melancholy.

For example, “But when we cut water with sword, still it will flow; when we drink to lighten grief, heavier it will grow” (抽刀断水水更流，举杯消愁愁更愁)<sup>[4]</sup> in *Farewell to Uncle Yun, Imperial Librarian*. It shows us that people felt helpless at that time and people couldn’t cut off the water by a sword, which seemed that people couldn’t get rid of sorrow by drinking.

## 3.2 Features of images

The features of images reflect Li Bai’s aesthetic standard and thinking pattern. Images in Li Bai’s poetry have clear features, including combination of images and subjective symbolism.

### 3.2.1 Combination of images

In Li Bai’s poetry, combination of images is rich. For example, “I can’t cross Yellow River: ice has stopped its flow; I can’t climb Mount Taihang: the sky is blind with snow” (欲渡黄河冰塞川，将登太行雪满山)<sup>[5]</sup> in *Hard Is the Way of the World* shows that there are two different images, Yellow River and Mount Taihang, in different times and spaces. Combination of Yellow River and Mount Taihang reveals the theme of the poem.

### 3.2.2 Subjective symbolism

Li Bai chooses images which are consistent with his character. When the image is integrated with his inner world, it will be beyond its original meaning. For example, “Do you not see the Yellow River come from the sky, rushing into the sea and ne’er come back?” (君不见黄河之水天上来，奔流到海不复回)<sup>[6]</sup> in *Invitation to Wine*. As is known to all, the water of Yellow River may not come from the sky. The image, the water of Yellow River from the sky, shows the magnificence of the Yellow River.

## 4. Image Schemas in Li Bai’s Original and Translated Poetry

As is known to all, image is very important in poetry and Image Schema Theory is used to analyze poetry. Through the analysis of images in Li Bai’s poetry from the perspective of image schemas, the readers

can have a better understanding of the theme of poetry and the emotion of author. Image schemas in Li Bai's original and translated poetry mainly include front-back schema, verticality schema and cycle schema.

#### 4.1 Front-back schema

Front-back schema can be understood by the structure, foreground-background. Usage of some images as a background highlights an important image. Front-back schema is clearly reflected in two original poems, *Seeing Meng Haoran off at Yellow Crane Tower* and *Leaving the White Emperor Town at Dawn*.

黄鹤楼送孟浩然之广陵

故人西辞黄鹤楼，

烟花三月下扬州。

孤帆远影碧空尽，

唯见长江天际流。

*Seeing Meng Haoran Off at Yellow Crane Tower*

My friend has left the west where towers Yellow Crane,

For River Town when willow-down and flowers Reign.

His lessening sail is lost in the boundless azure sky,

Where I see but the endless River rolling by.<sup>[7]</sup>

This is a poem of four lines, regarded as one of the masterpiece in Li Bai's poetry. At that time, Meng Haoran, also a famous poet is Li Bai's good friend. Li Bai shows the feeling of the reluctance to be apart with his friend and the praise of the magnificent and beautiful motherland.

In the Chinese version, Li Bai uses some images as a background. In the first line, the yellow crane tower is a place where poets make the poem and immortals fly to heaven. Two poets have farewell with each other, full of poetic quality and romanticism. The yellow crane tower, as a background, highlights the poet's deep emotion with friends. In the second line, green willows and red flowers, as a background, highlight prosperous scene of Yang Zhou and the whole dynasty at that time. In the third line, the sail does not mean there is only a sail on the Yangtze River but the poet only focuses on the sail which his friend takes. Sail, as a background, highlights that it is hard to bear himself away from his friend. In the last line, Yangtze River, as a background, highlights the deep friendship between the two persons. The combination of images in *Seeing Meng Haoran off at Yellow Crane Tower*, “黄鹤楼”“烟花”“孤帆”“长江”, as backgrounds, highlight the reluctance and nostalgia in the face of parting and the praise of prosperous scene.

In the English version, however, front-back schema cannot be translated clearly. The readers may not realize some images, as a background, to highlight something from the English version. Maybe it is culture differences that cause this kind of situation.

The following is another example:

早发白帝城

朝辞白帝彩云间，

千里江陵一日还。

两岸猿声啼不住，

轻舟已过万重山。

*Leaving the White Emperor Town at Dawn*

Leaving at dawn the White Emperor crowned with cloud,

I've sailed a thousand miles through canyons in a day.

With monkeys' sad adieus the riverbanks are loud;

My skiff has left ten thousand mountains far away.<sup>[8]</sup>

This is also a poem of four lines, regarded as one of the masterpiece in Li Bai's poetry. At that time, Li Bai is banished to Sichuan but the court in the Tang Dynasty proclaims a general amnesty. As a result, Li Bai creates this poem, showing the feeling of gladness to this general amnesty.

In the Chinese version, Li Bai also uses some images as a background highlights an important image in this poem. In the first line, it shows that the terrain of the White Emperor Town is high and the departure time is morning. Cloud in the morning, as a background, highlights the poet's deep emotion to first light of morning which is poet's hope. In the second line, a thousand miles and a day, as backgrounds, highlight long distance and short time, which shows the poet's eager feelings. In the third line, monkeys' sad adieu is the symbol of desolated situation and suggests that the current is swift in three canyons. In the last line, the skiff refers to the author and ten thousand mountains stands for the desolated situation. The skiff and ten thousand mountains, as backgrounds, highlight that author is out of desolated situation and feels relaxed after the general amnesty.

There are some images in *Leaving the White Emperor Town at Dawn*, “云”“千里”“一日”“猿声”“轻舟”“万重山”, as backgrounds, highlight the deep emotion of author in the Chinese version. But front-back schema in the English version cannot be translated clearly.

In a word, front-back schema, foreground-background, is clearly reflected in the Chinese version of the two poems, *Seeing Meng Haoran off at Yellow Crane Tower* and *Leaving the White Emperor Town at Dawn*. Through the description, the readers can understand the theme of the poem and the emotion of poet by front-back schema.

#### 4.2 Verticality schema

Verticality schema emphasizes the perspective, from high to low or from low to high, in the process of observation. In metaphor, the social structure and family structure can be understood by this schema. Verticality schema can be found in two poems, as *The Waterfall in Mount Lu Viewed from Afar* and *The Moon over Mount Brow*.

望庐山瀑布

日照香炉生紫烟,

遥看瀑布挂前川。

飞流直下三千尺,

疑是银河落九天。

*The Waterfall in Mount Lu Viewed from Afar*

The sunlit Censer Peak exhales incense like cloud;

Like an upended stream the cataract sounds loud.

Its torrent dashes down three thousand feet from high,

As if the Silver River fell from the blue sky.<sup>[9]</sup>

This is a poem of four lines. The poem is created when Li Bai lives in seclusion, mount Lu. At that time, the society is revolting. This poem vividly describes spectacular waterfall at mount Lu, expressing the poet's deep love for the motherland. The language of the poem is clear, easy to understand and meaningful.

As for the Chinese version, in the first line, censer refers to censer peak at mount Lu, which lays foundation for describing the waterfall. In the second line, it suggests that the waterfall outpours from the top to the down. In the third line, the poet describes the waterfall in details, showing steep cliff, swift current and high mountains. In the last line, the poet doubt that the waterfall is outpouring from the Milky Way. The verticality schema in this poem is demonstrated by “down” in the last sentence. Chinese words, as “望”, “遥看”, “直下”, “落”, show the scene that from the up to the down.

Verticality schema is also clearly translated in the English version. For example, “望”—“viewed”, “直下”—“from high”, “落”—“fell”. The waterfall out pours from the top to the down, as for the poet, Li Bai’s point of view is from the down to the top. In this poem, the readers can really know about the points of view by image schema and also they will have a better understanding of poet’s emotion and the theme of poem.

The following is another example:

#### 峨眉山月歌

峨眉山月半轮秋，

影入平羌江水流。

夜发清溪向三峡，

思君不见下渝州。

#### *The Moon over Mount Brow*

The crescent moon looks like old autumn’s golden brow;

Its deep reflection flows with limpid water blue.

I’ll leave the town on Clear Stream for three canyons now.

O Moon, how I miss you when you are out of view!<sup>[10]</sup>

*The Moon over Mount Brow* is created by Li Bai, the great poet in Tang Dynasty. At that time, Li Bai is in the Sichuan. This poem shows what the poet sees in the boat at night.

In the first line, the crescent moon points out the season of travel, autumn. And also, “autumn”, at the end of this line shows the beauty of moon. In the second line, moon’s deep reflection flows with limpid water. Life experience tells that the position of the moon’s deep reflection cannot be changed. So this line not only reflects the beauty of the river, but also points out the night sailing. In the third line, the poet leaves the town on Clear Stream for three canyons and in the last line; through the sentence “how I miss you when you are out of view”, we can clearly see the poet’s deep missing to his old friend.

Verticality schema is clearly seen in the Chinese version of the poem. According to Chinese words, “月” “影”, the poet observes the moon from the down to the top and Li Bai’s points of view are from top to the down when he sees the deep reflection in the water. The beauty of mountain and river are showed clearly by verticality schema in the Chinese version of the poem. What’s more, language is fluent and artistic conception is clear and elegant, fully showing Li Bai’s artistic talent. But verticality schema is not translated clearly in English version.

In addition, the Chinese words, “上” “下” in “上有六龙回日之高标，下有冲波逆折之回川” show verticality schema in the Chinese version of the poem. Also in the English version, “Above stands peaks too high for dragons to pass over; below the torrents run back and forth, churn and roar” in *Hard Is the Way to Shu*<sup>[11]</sup> can be appreciated by this schema, showing the praise of motherland. For example, the word “上” is corresponding to the word “above”, and the word “下” is to the word “below”.

In a word, verticality schema, from the top to the down or from the down to the top, is clearly reflected Li Bai’s two poems, *The Waterfall in Mount Lu Viewed from Afar* and *The Moon over Mount Brow*,

and is clearly reflected in the Chinese version. Therefore, the readers can have a better understanding of the theme of poem and the emotion of poet by verticality schema. As for the English version, verticality schema is not always translated clearly.

#### 4.3 Cycle schema

In cycle schema, all kinds of continuous relationship can be explained by this schema. This schema emphasizes association in the cognitive process, associating with the other images by one image. Cycle schema can be seen in the *My White Hair*.

##### 秋浦歌

白发三千丈，

缘愁似个长。

不知明镜里，

何处得秋霜？

##### *My White Hair*

Long, long is whitening hair ;

Long, long is it laden with care.

I look into my mirror bright:

From where comes autumn frost so white? <sup>[12]</sup>

This poem was created by Li Bai when he was about 50 years old. At that time, the Tang Dynasty was full of political corruption and the poet was deeply concerned about the whole situation.

In the first two lines, the poet connects the white hair with sorrow. The first line makes a wonderful hyperbole, because it is impossible for people to have so long hair. When the readers read the second line, they understand why the author has so long hair. That is his feeling of sadness. So long hair is the symbol of the poet's low spirit. In the last two lines, the poet connects the mirror with the autumn frost. The autumn frost refers to poet's white hair. That is to say, the poet finds his hair white when he looks into his mirror, which further strengthens the depiction of sorrow. The Chinese words, such as “白发, 愁, 镜, 秋霜”, show cycle schema clearly in the Chinese version of the poem.

Cycle schema is also translated clearly in the English version. By the analysis of cycle schema, readers can clearly understand the structure of image association, white hair--care and mirror--autumn frost in this poem. The autumn frost refers to poet's white hair. It also can be demonstrated by white hair--sorrow--mirror--white hair--much sorrow. What's more, readers can also understand the emotion of poet by this cycle schema.

In a word, cycle schema, association with the other images by one image, is clearly reflected in the two version of the poem. The readers can have a better understanding of the theme of poem and the emotion of poet by cycle schema.

The above analysis shows that Chinese classical poetry can be appreciated with the help of Image Schema Theory in cognitive linguistics. Chinese classical poetry has the beauty of artistic conception which cannot be replaced by other languages. Poets tend to show emotions by images in the picture. And as the cognitive basis in cognitive linguistics, Image Schema Theory can demonstrate the spatial relationship of images and readers can understand the Chinese classical poetry. This section only has analysis on Li Bai's six representatively original poetry and the translated version by Image Schema Theory, *Seeing Meng Haoran off at Yellow Crane Tower* and *Leaving the White Emperor Town at Dawn* in front-back schema, *The Waterfall in Mount Lu Viewed from Afar* and *The Moon over Mount Brow* in verticality schema and *Thoughts on a Tranquil Night* and *My White Hair* in cycle schema, so the further study is needed on other poetry by Image Schema

Theory. At the same time, the structure of images and the understanding of poetry are also affected by different cultures and contexts. When the readers have analysis of Li Bai's poetry by Image Schema Theory, they should also pay more attention to cultures and contexts.

## 5. The Reflection of Li Bai's Character and His Poetry Style from the Image Schema Theory

Image schema in poetry is a mirror of the poet's characteristic and poetry style. The success of Li Bai's poetry lays in his skillful description of the image schemas. This part will mainly analyze Li Bai's character and his poetry style from the perspective of the Image Schema Theory.

### 5.1 Li Bai's character

There are three image schemas mainly introduced in his poetry, front-back schema, verticality schema and cycle schema. These image schemas are connected with his character. First of all, Li Bai is a bold and unconstrained poet. For example, "Its deep reflection flows with limpid water blue" shows the verticality schema in *The Moon over Mount Brow*. Limpid water is the symbol of unconstrained feature. And also Li Bai likes traveling and enjoys landscape. During his travel, he tends to show his bold and unconstrained feature, just like the limpid water. Second, Li Bai is innocent, which is reflected clearly by the moon in verticality schema and cycle schema. For example, "I sing and the Moon lingers to hear my song; My Shadow's a mess while I dance along" (我歌月徘徊, 我舞影零乱) in *Drink Alone under the Moon*. He regards the moon as his best friend and communicates with it. He shows his thought and emotion by moon.

From the main image schemas, Li Bai's character is clearly reflected. He is not only bold and unconstrained but also innocent. There is a correlation between his character and image schema in his poetry.

### 5.2 Li Bai's poetry style

First of all, Li Bai's poetry is full of romanticism. For example, Li Bai creates a mysterious atmosphere by the dim of the moon. And his poetry often conveys the theme of romanticism by image schemas. Second, his poetry style is that he also shows emotions by image schemas. For example, front-back schema in original poetry, *Seeing Meng Haoran off at Yellow Crane Tower* and *Leaving the White Emperor Town at Dawn*. Li Bai uses different kinds of images to express his emotions, and at the same time, the images make a romantic atmosphere for readers when they read the poet. In a word, Li Bai conveys his emotions and the theme of poetry by image schemas.

Image schemas play an important role in Li Bai's poem. His character and poetry style are clearly reflected by image schemas.

## Conclusion

Li Bai is a great poet in Tang dynasty. He vividly depicts the images and shows deep emotion in his poetry. The language and images in Li Bai's poetry are wonderful. As a kind of perspective of appreciation, image is paid more attention in poetry.

The paper makes a brief introduction of the definition and classification of Image Schema Theory. In the meantime, it gives a general statement to images in Li Bai's poetry and the features of those images. With the basis of the Image Schema Theory, the paper makes a detailed analysis on image schemas and the emotion of poetry. During the analysis, examples are taken from the target materials and statistics and charts are worked out for the discussion. With the application of image schemas in the poem, the poet's description of scene and his emotions could be obviously reflected. The aim of the paper is to provide a new perspective to interpret Li Bai's poetry and then have a better understanding on Li Bai's poetry and image schemas.

Admittedly, this thesis is far from perfection which still needs to be improved, and there are some limitations in the study. This study only has an analysis on Li Bai's six representative works by Image Schema Theory. The further study is needed on other poetry by Image Schema Theory. At the same time, the structure of images and the understanding of poetry are also affected by different cultures and contexts. If Li Bai's

poetry is only analyzed by image schemas, the readers could not really understand poetry. The readers should also focus on cultures and contexts when they appreciate Li Bai's poetry.

### Notes

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