Translation of Fairy Tales In "Children" from the Perspective of Translation Variation

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Abstract: The essay analyzes the Chinese translation of fairy tales in the Children, a famous magazine in modern China, and tries to provide some suggestions for optimizing children's reading materials translation. The fairy tales published in this magazine are highly readable for children and are equipped with strong sense of Chinese characteristics through applying the translation variation strategy. It can be revealed that this translation strategy is manifested in three aspects——title variation, structure variation and content variation which has imposed a great impact on children's reading experience. When it comes to children's books as well as fairy tales, the first impression of many children is Hans Christian Andersen's Fairy Tales rather than Chinese children's books. Although excellent foreign cultures can broaden children's horizons, the translation without Chinese characteristics may not only create reading barriers for children but also weaken the presence of Chinese culture. Given that the innovative and localized Children was founded at a time when the East began to meet West and the content published in the magazine is of high quality with great influence on the literary enlightenment of children. Therefore, it's worthwhile to study the Chinese translation of fairy tales in Children.

Keywords: Children's Books; Children; Cultural Introduction; Fairy Tale Translation

Introduction

Reading children's books is an initial stage for kids to understand the world and it's also an efficient way for them to acquire language and literature. Currently, children's books are diversifying in terms of content and design. With the increasing introduction of Western culture and related reading materials, children at the early stage of their growth are also influenced by pluralistic cultures. The current academic researches on fairy tale translation mainly focus on three categories:translation characteristics of a certain fairy tale, comparative study of fairy tales translation and the study of the relationship between translators and readers of fairy tales. For example, Ge Gao analyzed the two versions of the Happy Prince through the Skopos theory.[1] Chengzhi Zhang and Tian Dong analyzed the relationship between fairy tale translation and translator's consciousness of readers.[2] Wei Hu analyzed the translation strategy of Looking Glass.[3] However, few scholars have analyzed fairy tale translations in publications of modern China and used them as the guide. Man Zhang analyzed the fairy tale translation features during the May Fourth period.[4] Wenge Zhang and Xiaomei Xing analyzed the fairy tale translation of Shengtao Ye, a famous Chinese writer during the May Fourth period. Since few scholars have studied the translation of fairy tales in magazines of modern China. Therefore, the author believes that it's meaningful to analyze the translation of fairy tales in this Magazine.

1. The use of translation variation strategy

In terms of the overall structure of the published fairy tales, the translators had either rewritten the titles of some of the published Western children's works or added and deleted the content of the stories according to the Chinese cultural background so as to make the stories more hierarchical and the content more in line with the cultural knowledge of the target readers. In this way, little readers can clearly know about the storyline of the fairy tales and understand the core of each

paragraph. Zhonglian Huang (2002) once pointed out that the main differences between the full translation and the translation variation can be divided into five aspects,[5] which also include the setting of new titles, the change of the general genre and the expansion of the content. Therefore, the above-mentioned changes in the fairly tales translation in Children all belong to the translation variation to meet the reading needs of children readers.

1.1 Title Variation

The title is the eye of the text. The feeling after reading an impressive title translation should be the same as the one after reading the original text so as to arouse the anticipation of readers before they open the book and produce the amazing aftertaste of reading.[6] As a typical children reading material, fairy tales need to emphasize the important role of title translation. At present, the titles of many fairy tales are translated in a literary way, for example, the classic Andersen fairy tale Little mermaid is translated as The daughter of the Sea. The Tinder Box is translated into The Flintlock. Hidden, Not Forgotten is translated into Hidden Does not Equal to Forgotten. These translation versions all have the sense of literature, but for younger children, these translations are inevitably a little bit rudimentary which may decrease children's interest in reading further. On the other hand, the titles of the children's stories published in Children are more straightforward. For example, the fairy tale The Demon's Pants Are Broken published in the aforementioned Children is about a demon in the forest who used to catch children to as his food. But one day his pants are broken when he carelessly dipped in pine tree resin. The original title is The story of the pine stump, which should be translated directly as The Story of the Pine Root, but the translator Boyou Lu translated it as The Demon's Pants Are Torn which allows children to understand the story at the moment they see the title, avoiding children's misunderstanding of the word "pine stump" without losing the sense of humor. The main idea of the text can also be clearly pointed out through the title translation. Another example is The Mermaid Princess where the translator changed the original version and added the identity of the major character who was a princess which also helps children understand the story.

1.2 Structure variation

Chapter structure is the skeleton of a text and plays an important role in the reader's perception of reading. In his book Story Logic (2002), D. Herman[7] focuses on the reader's construction of story logic and explores the interaction between the reader and the structural features of the text.[8] The fairy tales in Children vary in length. As for the longer fairy tales, there are more plot twists in the stories and these fairy tales tend to develop according to the timeline as well as the development of the narrative while the overall chapter structure is more ambiguous.

Zhonglian Huang has pointed out in The Theory of Variant Translation that translation variation is a kind of translation method which will be used when translator tries to add, subtract, edit, describe, delete, combine or change the original text according to the requirements of target readers under specific conditions.[9] Since reading large amount of words is a big challenge for young children, so the translators of Children made adjustments to the structure of medium-length Chinese serialized fairy tales, such as adding subheadings and sub-titles according to the development of scenario in the story. To take the classic long serialized fairy tale The Mermaid Princess which was published in nine chapters since 1923 as an example. The translator added new titles for each chapter, namely The Palace at the Bottom of the Sea, The Princesses Journey to the Sea, The Travels of the Six Princesses, The Prince's Palace, The Grandmother's Answer, The Demoness' Help,The Little Princess Enters the Prince's Palace,The Prince's Marriage, The Death of the Mermaid Princess, The Death of the Mermaid Princess. These nine subheadings divide the fairy tale into several key plots and the title also acts as an overview of each plot so that young readers can understand the general idea of the paragraph. These subtitles also serve as the teaser, thus engaging the curiosity of young readers and guiding them to successfully complete the reading process. Compared with some of the current children's books which focus on the fancy translation versions rather than the reading experience, the author think that the translation strategy of fairy tales in Children has a great deal to offer.

1.3 Content variation

The colorful world of fairy tales often indicates some critical implications. This is also the the main reason why fairy

tales are so educational. The translators of Children modified some of the fairy tales to highlight the traditional Chinese virtues. To take the Chapter 7 of The Mermaid Princess as an example. When the mermaid princess and her grandmother discussed human longevity, the translator deliberately added the mental activity of the mermaid princess: "Although our life expectancy is longer than theirs, I always find it interesting to be a human being and if I could become a human being, I would be willing to reduce my life expectancy by 200 years." In the original text, the mermaid princess was still struggling between death and courageous pursuit of love because her grandmother told her that the life expectancy of mermaids was short. Only when a human loved you and was loyal to you could you get his soul. Through this kind of adjustment, the translator transformed an in-depth dialogue about life into a childish idea, making the words of mermaid princess more palatable to children. At the same time, it also warns the children of the importance of life. Another example is when the little mermaid went ashore, her grandmother dressed her carefully to show her dignity. The translator added the description of the mermaid princess——She was very reluctant and thought to herself: I am kind in nature so why should I decorate myself with these clothes and jewelries? If these decoration were not beautiful, I am afraid that it will tarnish my true nature. Whether I'm honorable or not is not that important and it's not worth suffering for vanity. The Mermaid Princess was meant to highlight the purity of love and the courage to pursue true love. But such implication about love was still a bit distant for the Chinese young children at that time. Therefore the translator highlighted the valuable virtues of the little mermaid to abandon vanity through this mental activity description. As far as the author concerned, due to the background, the Chinese translation of Western fairy tales had many limitations at the time because it's hard for editors and translators to select appropriate stories and it's much more difficult to keep the balance between the original text and the children readable translations. So the translator tried to use the strategy to get closer to the target readers. Although the translation expresses different opinions from the original text, this kind of rewriting is actually beneficial to the target audience at that time.

2. Conclusion

The author analyzes the features of translations of fairy tales which help children understand the culture in a subtle way. The Chinese translation of fairy tales in Children is a typical example which fully integrates Western stories with Chinese culture and the flexible use of the translation variation strategy in Children serves as the valuable reference for the fairy tales translators nowadays. To pursue complete domestication or westernization isn't the best choice, and translation variation should not be overused either. Only when we can combine different culture elements flexibly, can we present the better translation version. Since Children are where the hopes lie so it's vital to improve the quality of children's reading materials, making contribution to the literary and aesthetic development of children.

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