

On Children's Literature Translation from the Perspective of Manipulation Theory—A Case Study of the Ren Rongrong's Chinese Translation of *Charlotte's Web*

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Abstract—With the cultural turn in translation studies in 1970s, the focus of translation studies was gradually changed from traditional linguistics to culture. André Lefevere put forward to Manipulation Theory that has further broadened the field of translation studies. It holds that translation is not to realize the meaning equivalence between source text and target text, but to realize the compromise between the source cultural system and the target cultural system, in which the translation will be manipulated by some factors. Because Children's Literature is classified specially, it may be influenced by different cultural system. Therefore, this paper chooses Chinese translation of *Charlotte's Web* as a case study from the perspective of Manipulation Theory, which draws a conclusion that ideology, poetics and patronage have impacts on translation strategies of children's literature, in order to facilitate new theoretical researches and improve Chinese translations of Children's Literature.

Index Terms—Manipulation Theory, *Charlotte's Web*, Children's Literature

I. INTRODUCTION

Children's Literature, which is regarded as a special angle that provides children with necessary knowledge about growth, society, and life, enjoys a short history of more than one hundred years in China and has its prosperity after China's reform and opening in 1978. During dozens of years, numerous foreign Children's Literature works that have been translated into China, for example Snow White, The Little Mermaid and The Ugly Duckling, still have attracted young readers' attentions, which could prove translated children's Literature works play an essential role in Chinese children's growth with their interesting and meaningful stories. However because of audience's education, people may simply assume that translators only use some simple expressions to reproduce the main meaning of original texts without taking into account the conflicts between different cultural systems and the manipulation of dominant ideology. In fact, "Translators never translate words in isolation, but whole situation. They bring to the translation their cultural heritage, their reading experience, and, in the case of children's books and their own child image." (Oittinen, 2000, p. 3) Since these works are not complicated to understand, translators can completely know the whole meaning of work to faithfully reproduce real style and meaning of the text. However, when translators are manipulated by dominant ideology, poetics and patronage of the original work, they may recreate a totally different translation from the source text to cater to target readers with diversified translation methods. It is necessary to analyze these manipulations how to influence translators choose different translation methods to deal with cultural conflicts between the source text and the target one. Nevertheless, it is a prosperous atmosphere that studies have been researched by various theories on translating for adults, while the study on translation of Children's Literature remains a slow step. The paper studies the representative Ren Rongrong's Chinese translation of *Charlotte's Web* from the perspective of Manipulation Theory, which might not only brings enlightenments to translators and scholars who have not paid attention to Children's Literature before, but also provides practical experience for translators who want to translate better and high-quality foreign versions of Chinese Children's Literature in order to let Chinese culture "go global".

II. MANIPULATION THEORY

Since the 1970s, translation studies have shown a trend of diversification and become cultural reflection, which indicated a fact that many scholars have realized that natural science cannot be completely equaled with translation, whose fundamental attributes are humanity and sociality. Even-Zohar put forward the polysystem that is a multiple system which interests with each other and function as one structured whole with concurrently different options under

the circumstance. Based on polysystem, the term “manipulation” was first mentioned by Theo Hermans, one of the representatives of Manipulation School. “From the point of view of the target literature, all translation implies a degree of manipulation of the source text for a certain purpose.” (Hermans, 1985, p. 11). The Belgian-American scholar André Lefevere moves further the research of manipulative factors that influence translation into “Manipulation Theory”. “Translation is, of course, a rewriting to the original text. All rewritings, reflect a certain ideology and a poetics and as such manipulate literature to function in a given way” (Lefevere, 2004, p. vx). Lefevere also holds the view that he believes that the positive aspect of rewriting can promote the evolution and development of a genre of literature and a society by introducing new concepts and new manipulative factors. And later Jeremy Munday summarizes the manipulations of translation into three factors: professional within the literary system, patronage outside the literary system and the dominant poetics (Munday, 2010).

Wang Dongfeng is the first Chinese scholar who gave a comprehensive introduction of the Manipulation Theory from his article *An Invisible Hand: Ideology Manipulation in the Practice of Translation*, which brought much attention to manipulation of ideology in translation. It pointed that faithfulness is the highest criterion of traditional translation, most of which focuses on contrastive analysis between the source text and the target one. However, the author points out in an indisputable tone that there is an invisible hand, ideology, which influences translation (Wang, 2003). In 2008, Xie Tianzhen introduced manipulation school and its representative André Lefevere in detail and especially pointed out that Lefevere’s Rewriting Theory and his three manipulative constraints become the main theoretic pillar of western translation studies after the cultural turn, which indicates that Manipulation Theory’s status and advancement in contemporary translation theories (Xie, 2008)

Lefevere treats translation as the rewriting of the original text, which emphasizes translation is a sort of activity of the original reflecting the literary form that the target culture can accept and also a kind of mediation between a literary system and a cultural system. And because most translators of Children’s Literature are adults while its readers are children, translation of Children’s Literature is a special form of literary translation that differs from the adult literature, which is influenced indispensably by these manipulations. It is necessary to pay attention to these manipulative constraints in translation of Children’s Literature. The paper chooses Ren Rongrong’s Chinese translation of *Charlotte’s Web* to do a research from the perspective of Manipulation Theory.

III. THREE MANIPULATIONS IN THE CHINESE TRANSLATION OF *CHARLOTTE’S WEB*

A translated version of one literature may pass on an understanding of the original text to target language readers in their own language, even more to meet the current needs of cross-culture communication between countries, which indicates that the translation could be embedded in the prevailing ideology in society. And because of different language characteristics between English and Chinese, long and complex sentences in English are hard to understand for Chinese, which implies that poetics must be a challenge for translators. Especially, it is patronage that also plays an essential role in translating when the purchasers of literature are different, which lets translators apply appropriate translation methods to do translations for fulfill the readers’ needs. In light of Lefevere’s Manipulation Theory, the paper analyzes manipulated demonstrations from Ren Rongrong’s translation of *Charlotte’s Web*, in terms of the three manipulations: ideology, poetics and patronage.

A. Manipulation of Ideology

Lefevere classifies two types of ideology: the social ideology and the individual ideology. The former one is a prevailing belief, the most important of which is politics that can even guide the process of translation, while the later one is translator’s ideology that is his personal experience and aesthetic. When the social ideology is superior to the individual one, especially when politics is prevailing in social ideology, translator has to abandon his preference and to translate a suitable target text for the authority. Likewise, when the individual ideology is superior to the social ideology, the condition will reverse. Since the reform and opening up in 1978, the center of Chinese life has gradually shifted from the class struggle to economic and cultural construction, which has a remarkable impact on the current domestic ideology that emphasizes children’s psychological development and turns to the value of child-orientation. Therefore, aiming to bring entertainment to child, respecting children’s rights, Ren Rongrong prefers domestication which may not cause difficulties for children when he is translating foreign Children’s Literature works.

Example 1:

The original:

“What do you think I am, a message boy?” grumbled the rat. (White, 2010, p. 85)

The translation:

“你把我当什么了，一个差来遣去的听差？”老鼠抱怨说。(Ren, 2011, p. 177)

Analysis: When translating “message boy”, Ren applies domestication to make the word more expressive. In English, message boy is to do some trivial matters, just like deliver message. So Ren could have directly translated “邮差”, which can be understood by Chinese. Nevertheless, because the rat Templeton has a disgusting mood to be bossed from the original text and the word “grumble” implies Templeton’s emotion, Ren not only uses the domesticating method to translate “听差” that means servant who has a rather low status in ancient China but also adds “差来遣去” to the front of the word in order to highlight his feeling. What’s more, the real meaning and feeling of “听差” may cause some

cognitive difficulties for children to understand, and the added word“差来遣去”can indirectly express the meaning of the ancient Chinese word for children to understand.

Example 2:

The original:

That's a fine spider and I'm going to capture it. (White, 2010, p. 64)

The translation:

这是一只呱呱叫的蜘蛛，我要捉到它。(Ren, 2011, p. 115)

Analysis: We will use the word “fine” to describe something we admire, which almost can be used in any situations. In Chinese,“好”that has the same meaning seems to replace its function. But Ren's version may be quite plain if“好”is translated in the sentence. Therefore, Ren translates into a special Chinese word“呱呱叫”to describe a vivid image to children, which means excellent and superb. And as a colloquial expression, the word can amuse child when it is read by them, which makes text full of wit and humor.

Example 3:

The original:

“He's yours,” said Mr. Arable. “Saved from an untimely death. And may the god Lord forgive me for this foolishness.” (White, 2010, p. 30)

The translation:

“它是你的了”，阿拉布尔先生说，“是你让它免于生而即死。愿老天爷原谅我做了这傻事。”(Ren, 2011, p. 45)

Analysis: As we all know, because of different cultural backgrounds, western people worship the god in western cultures while Heaven is Chinese “god” from ancient to modern times, which indicates that there are different religious beliefs between them. Considering children's immature linguistic competence and limited cultural awareness, Ren use the word“老天爷”，a native Chinese expression, to fill up the religious gap, which can shorten the distance between the target text and little readers so that children can accept the translation.

Example 4:

The original:

“I was just thinking,” said the spider, “that people are very gullible.”

“What does ‘gullible’ mean?”

“Easy to fool,” said Charlotte. (White, 2010, p. 63)

The translation:

“我正在想，”蜘蛛说，“人是阿木林。”

“‘阿木林’是什么意思？”

“就是傻瓜，容易上当受骗。”夏洛说。(Ren, 2011, p. 69)

Analysis: Ren chooses“阿木林”to translate the word “gullible”, the expression of Shanghai dialect, which means awkward and foolish, because Ren was born and studied in Shanghai. When the translation is read by children who are from Shanghai, they would quickly get the meaning of the word and the vivid image of a fool. However the domestication only could be understood by readers who are from Shanghai, which is not shared with other children who live in the other areas. So Ren follows the original text to give its deeper explanation that is“傻瓜，容易上当受骗”for the others, which provides the best of both parties.

B. Manipulation of Poetics

The second manipulation constraint is poetics in Manipulation Theory. Lefevere holds his view that “A poetics can be said to consist of two components: one is an inventory of literary devices, genres, motifs, prototypical characters and situations, and symbols; the other is concept of what the role of literature is, or should, in the social system as a whole.”(Lefevere, 2004, p. 26). In one word, poetics is a language characteristic of specific literary system and form. It could even determine which proper translating strategy should be applied while making sure that the translation can still express the same function. English is a hypotactic language while Chinese belongs to paratactic language, therefore, long and complex sentences are preferred in English, which are rare in Chinese. They are beyond children's understanding ability, which may hinder child's interest in reading. So adjustments of the sentences must be done in the translation in order to make it understood by little readers.

Example 5:

The original:

She knew from experience that if she waited long enough, a fly would come to her web; and she felt sure that if she thought long enough about Wilbur's problem, an idea would come to her mind. (White, 2010, p. 59)

The translation:

它从经验当中知道，只要等得够久，苍蝇自然就会飞到它的网上来；它断定，威尔伯的问题也一样，只要等得够久，好主意就一定会来到它的脑子里。(Ren, 2011, p. 211)

Analysis: There are two object clauses behind the main clause in the original text and the author also uses “and” to link two parts, which both prove that the sentence is a subordinate compound. But the translator will obey Chinese characteristics, if he wants to let his translation understood by the target language readers. Translator must deal with the

challenge so that little readers can continue to read. Based on the punctuations of the original sentence, Ren still divided the sentence into several parts to translate, because the short sentence is easier for child to understand and belongs to Chinese expression. He cuts the sentence in the position of object clause, then puts“威尔伯的问题也一样”in front of the object clause, which made the translated sentence more logical and accurate. So the adjustment of sentence is successful and meet child’s requirement.

Example 6:

The original:

She said: “I am sure that every one of us here in the barn cellar will be gratified to learn that after four weeks of unremitting effort and patience on the part of the goose, she now has something to show for it.”(White, 2010, p. 40)

The translation:

它说：“我想我们仓底这儿的每一位都会很高兴知道，我们的母鹅老朋友经过四个礼拜不懈的努力和耐心照料，它现在有些宝贝要给我们看看了。”(Ren, 2011, p. 193)

Analysis: There are also two object clauses in the sentence, which is the same as the above example. But Ren does not do the same action but translated directly following the original structure, because subject and object of the sentence is simpler than the former sample. And if it is translated completely with the original structure, little readers will out of breath when they read the rather long sentence. Then under the guidance of children’s cognitive features, Ren also punctuates at the second object clause for setting a pause in the long sentence, which can attract child’s attention to focus on what happen in the next text. There are quite adjustments in the translation for not making children confused, for example, the adverbial “in the barn cellar” that is translated“仓底”is put in the front of every one in Chinese, and the subject “goose” in the object clause runs to the beginning.

C. Manipulation of Patronage

As another important manipulation, patronage is defined by Lefevere as “any kind of force that can be influential in encouraging and propagating, but also in discouraging, censoring and destroying works of literature”(Lefevere, 2004, p. 15). Patronage could be groups of people such as the publishers or the media, some powerful institutions which are in charge of the distribution of literary, and the readers who are actually the purchasers of these translations, which all can provide the economic support for translators. In fact, acceptance of patronage implies the choice of book and translation style. In order to meet acquirements of patronage, translators have to choose appropriate translation strategies. Because children possess their finite understanding and limited range of knowledge, translation of Children’s Literature is had to apply extratextual annotation when there are cultural differences between two countries in the book. Moreover, the translator also uses repetition to emphasize the emotion of protagonist for attracting child’s attention to explore the story.

Example 7:

The original:

And now, Fern, it’s time to get ready for Sunday School.(White, 2010, p. 47)

The translation:

不过现在，弗恩，该上主日学校了。

注释：主日学校是星期日到儿童进行宗教教育的学校，大多附设在教堂里。(Ren, 2011, p. 200)

Example 8:

The original:

Did you ever hear of the Queensborough Bridge?(White, 2010, p. 60)

The translation:

你听说过昆斯伯罗大桥吗？

注释：昆斯伯罗大桥，在纽约皇后区，是曼哈顿中城跨东河连接皇后区的干桥。(Ren, 2011, p. 61)

Example 9:

The original:

“She was still thinking about the pig when the teacher said: ‘Fern, what is the capital of Pennsylvania?’ ‘Wilbur’, replied Fern, dreamily.”(White, 2010, p. 7)

The translation:

“她当时正想着她的小猪，这时老师问道：‘费恩，宾夕法尼亚州的首府是哪里？’‘威尔伯’，费恩像做梦似的说。”

注释：美国宾夕法尼亚州的首府应该是哈里斯堡。(Ren, 2011, p. 8)

Analysis: There are totally four extratextual annotations in the translation, three of which are presented in the above examples. In the process of translation, owing to the difference of cultural backgrounds, sometimes it is difficult to understand some nouns for little readers. As is known to all, Christianity, which is familiar with western people, are far from Chinese, which must cause some problems for little readers to understand the religious expression. What the source language reader takes for granted may be something that the target language one has never heard of or is difficult to understand. At this time, translator needs to add some necessary explanations for those readers. What’s more, compared with adults, children have limited ranges of knowledge, which, to a large extent, causes difficult for children

to understand about something foreign and exotic. The words “Sunday School”, “Queensborough Bridge” and “the capital of Pennsylvania” will be strange for children if they are directly translated with foreignization. But they will lose the exotic flavor if translated with domestication. So for helping the expansion of children’s knowledge, Ren adds extratextual explanation to the end of the page, with foreignization using. It is the last explanation that is the most interesting translation among those, because it tells children that the Wilbur is homophonic to Harrisburg, the capital of Pennsylvania, which can make little readers giggle when it is read by them. Therefore, when children read the translated sentence, they may feel strange at the first sight and then find its explanation, which can transfer the same function as the original text that also embodies the image of characters.

Example 10:

The original:

Wilbur grunted. He gulped and sucked, making swishing and swooshing noises, anxious to get everything at once. (White, 2010, p. 66)

The translation:

威尔伯呕呕地叫。它大口大口地吃，大口大口地喝，大口大口地吃，大口大口地喝，发出稀里哗啦、呼噜哗啦的声音，急着要一口气吃个精光。(Ren, 2011, p. 217)

Analysis: In order to describe a vivid image of the pig, Ren not only uses reduplicative adjectives such as “大口” but also repeats the first two phrases “大口大口地吃” “大口大口地喝” one by one, which highlights the eagerness and joy of the pig when eating. The repetition of these verbs enhances the sense of rhythm and gives people the enjoyment of beauty so that children get the feeling of hearing and being in the situation. When children read the translation, they could find that Wilbur is eager to eat and imagine the vivid scene to break into a smile, which makes the target language little readers enjoy the same feeling as the source language ones.

IV. CONCLUSION

The paper has provided a new insight into the researches on Ren’s Chinese translation of *Charlotte’s Web* from the perspective of Manipulation Theory and demonstrated that the translation is subjected to the manipulation of ideology, poetics and patronage, which lets the translator applies different translation strategies to deal with these situations. A conclusion can also be reached that translation is inevitably restricted with the three manipulations so that translators must ensure the translation conforms with Chinese children’s aesthetic standard and language habit. For translators of Children’s Literature works, it is necessary to clarify the purpose of translation, focus on the target language and face the target readers before translating. It also should be grasped that are children’s psychological characteristics, understanding ability and aesthetic ability. Translators should convey the style and aesthetic feeling of the original work, according to the characteristics of children’s language and their ranges of knowledge. Therefore, studying the influences of manipulation constraints can help translators of Children’s Literature understand these manipulations and how to do with these situations as well as motivate translators to provide more excellent translations for little readers.

There are some flaws in the paper, of course. The first one is that samples are not diversified of the paper, which may not comprehensively demonstrate these manipulation constraints’ influences. It is one reason that makes the research insufficient. There are more translation strategies that should be particularized in the paper because of the limited selections of the samples collected by the author. The second one is that because Manipulation Theory only gives a general direction in a macroscopic view, the attention should be paid to microscopic level of the text is not enough. The theory focuses on the influence of cultural factors hidden behind the text, such as ideology, poetics and patronage, on translation behavior and translators, which explores the peripheral factors rather than ontological ones of translation studies. However, translation is an act of language conversion so that discussion of the internal factors and rules, especially the subjective roles of different translators, should not be ignored. The detailed translation strategies still need the consideration of translators. Finally, the author of the paper is adult who looks at translation of Children’s Literature from the point of views of adults, so the analysis of these examples is influenced by adult’s subjective judgment and the comment of the paper may be not convincible.

Despite there are some limitations in the paper, the author attempted to do objective and inclusive research with careful selection samples and provided a new angle to analyze translation of Children’s Literature. And it is also found that the translation of Children’s Literature is not second to that of adult literature. Therefore, if following the guidance of the Manipulation Theory could translators rewrite more foreign excellent translation for children, which may help high-quality Chinese Children’s Literature “go global”.

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