

A Report on the C-E Translation of Running Like Wind (Excerpts) Based on Reception Aesthetics



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Abstract: This is a report on Chinese-English translation. The source text is selected from the children's literature *Running Like Wind* by Deng Xiangzi, a Hunan children's literature writer. There is no English translation of this book yet. The book tells the life experience of the fifth-grade girl Juduo in her grandmother's hometown, Hongfengping. It depicts Juduo's kindness and diligence, guiding children to find the truth of life. Under the guidance of Reception Aesthetics (Eugene, & Taber, 1969), this translator fully considers children's mind, thought and reception level. The translation keeps the subjectivity of target readers, meeting their horizon of expectation, and balancing the indeterminacy and vacancy of text meaning. The difficulties in the translation are discussed in case analysis from three levels of vocabulary, sentence and rhetoric, which aims to provide certain reference for the translation of similar children's literature.

Key Words: Reception Aesthetics; children's literature; translation of children's literature

1. Introduction

With the development of China's power and international status, China sees a great trend of exporting excellent Chinese culture to foreign countries. But compared with the introduction, the scale of translation and export of Chinese children's books is still limited (Cai, 2018). Children's literature, as a special literature, needs to be deeply studied and spread.

Running Like Wind was a children's novel which wins the 9th National Outstanding Children's Literature Award. And the author is Deng Xiangzi, a famous writer in Hunan province, China. This paper is based on the translator's experiences in translating *Running Like Wind*. The target readers of the book are children around 6-12, who have relatively stronger capabilities of understanding and receptance. Under the guidance of Reception Aesthetics proposed by Hans Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser (Fluck, 2002), this paper discusses the translation strategies and skills chosen for children's literature by giving

examples from the translator's task, which allowing the text to meet the demand of children. Then, the paper could make certain contribution for the study of children's literature translation and help spread the excellent Chinese culture.

2. Difficulties in Translation

The translation process includes pre-translation preparation, while-translation and post-translation proofreading. The difficulties in translation are focused on.

In the translation process, the first difficulty lies on the translation of culture-loaded words. For example, the word “老天爷” means the celestial being in Chinese mythologies. Due to the differences of culture background between Chinese and English, it is hard for foreign children to understand what “老天爷” is.

The next difficulty is the sentence with serial verbs. The language structure of Chinese is like bamboo and there are usually many verbs in one sentence. The existence of verbs makes the sentence

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more vivid, but the English grammar allows only one predicate in a sentence. Hence the translator is supposed to do a lot of conversion on the top of conserving the vivid pictures of the text.

The final difficulty is the translation of rhyme. For example, the sentence “哈，铁西瓜，路上埋，虚虚实实，真真假假，到处开花，炸得日本侵略者滚回老家” (Deng, 2009) is a kind of folk song, which is closely related to the local customs and culture. The word “铁西瓜” means landmine, and the whole sentence depicts the scene that the Japanese invaders were defeated due to the force of landmines. The translator finds it hard to conserve both the image and the beat of the catchy song.

3. Case Analysis

Three representative translation issues in the source text are analysed in the following part. Firstly, the translator discusses the translation of words from three aspects, including the translation of culture-loaded words and address forms. Secondly the translation of sentences is elaborated from three parts: translation of sentences with serial verbs and non-subject sentences. Lastly, the translator analyses the translation of rhetoric, including metaphor and rhyme.

3.1 Translation of Words

Simple and vivid language presents the characteristic of children's literature. (Newmark, 2002) *Running Like Wind* is a typical folk children's literature. The language of it boasts special styles. Therefore, under the guidance of Reception Aesthetics, the translator deals with the translation of culture-loaded words and address forms.

3.1.1 Culture-loaded Words

Culture is the way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language are its means of expression (Zhen, 2018). Culture-loaded words reflect a certain culture. The translation of them needs to be handled carefully, or it is easy to cause misunderstandings for target readers.

Case 1

ST: 每天下午，菊朵都陪着芹香和卫红到新坟上去烧稻草火暖坟，一连要烧七天，叫作“烧头七”。 (Deng, 2009)

TT: Every afternoon, Juduo accompanied

Qinxiang and Weihong to burn straw to warm their mother's grave for seven consecutive days. This was called *the First Seven Days' Mourning*.

Analysis: *First Seven Days' Mourning* is the funeral custom of the Chinese nation. The seventh day after the death of the deceased is the first memorial-day, which is called *First Seven Days*. On this day, the family will offer sacrifices to the deceased to express their condolences. After inquiry, there is no corresponding official translation for this folk word. Considering the horizon of expectancy (Jauss, & Benzing, 1970), the text is difficult to receive for target readers if the word is totally strange to them. Hence the translator chooses the liberal translation and translates it as *First Seven Days' Mourning*. The word “烧” in this term refers to visiting the grave. It is translated as “mourning” instead of “burning”, which makes the translation more concise and accurate. The conversion promotes the understanding of the target readers, helps them to learn Chinese folk culture and shortens the distance between readers and the original text.

Case 2

ST: 几个女人走来，给芹香和卫红戴上用粗糙的家织布缝制的白帽子，还在他们腰上系上稻草绳子。那是让他们给母亲“戴孝”。 (Ashby, & Turnbull, 2010)

TT: Several women came. They dressed Qinxiang and Weihong with white hats sewn with hand-woven fabric, tied straw ropes around their waists and asked them to *mourn* their deceased mother.

Analysis: “戴孝” is a Chinese folk funeral custom. After the death of a relative, descendants should wear plain filial piety clothes and white scarves to see off the deceased in the funeral. After Qinxiang's mother died unexpectedly, Qinxiang and Wei Hong should wear filial piety for her and stood beside the coffin to mourn her mother. The funeral customs in foreign countries and China are very different. The target readers lack such cultural background. Moreover, as children, they are rarely exposed to such events. Even if the meaning of the word is explained, it is difficult for readers to understand the behaviour of “戴孝”. Considering the

horizon of expectancy, the translator chooses the strategy of domestication and the method of liberal translation. Therefore, the translator chose to omit the action of “戴孝” and translate it into “mourn”, which expresses the core meaning.

3.1.2 Address Forms

Address forms, as important messages in communications, hints the interpersonal relationships. Due to differences in cultural backgrounds, values, and thinking patterns between English and Chinese, English and Chinese addresses show different characteristics. Therefore, the translator should handle the translation of address forms carefully.

Case 3

SText: 菊朵擦了眼泪, 说: “我想起同年娘了, 她在这里的工地做工, 被神仙土压死了。”(Deng, 2009)

Translation: Juduo wiped her eyes and went on, “I just remembered miserable aunt Guihua. She was crushed to death when she worked at this construction site.”

Analysis: “同年娘” is Juduo’s name for Qinxiang’s mother. It refers to the fact that she and Qinxiang were born in the same year, so she called Qinxiang’s mother the “同年娘”, which literally means the mother of the same year, expressing the harmonious and intimate relationship between the two families. In English, there is no term for the mother of the same year. Considering the indeterminacy and vacancy of text, the text should adapt to the cultural background of readers (Iser, 1988). In order to avoid misunderstandings, the translator adopts omission. The special meaning of “同年娘” is replaced by a common address, which is translated as “Aunt Guihua”. After meaning deletion, the cognitive load of readers is greatly reduced. Misunderstandings and the difficulty of reading caused by different cultural backgrounds are prevented, which can shorten the distance between readers and the work, thus to achieve a better reading experience.

Case 4

ST: “队长婆”正趴在店板上打瞌睡, 她揉了揉眼睛, 见了菊朵就笑着说: “哎呀, 媳妇妹子, 你怎么不到我家来玩呢?”(Deng, 2009)

TT: Duizhangpo was dozing off. She rubbed her

eyes and saw Juduo, smiling, “Alas, that’s my little daughter-in-law. Why don’t you come visit?” Juduo blushed and she kept silent. Qinxiang was in no mood for joking.

Analysis: “媳妇妹子” is the name of the captain’s mother-in-law to Juduo. Because Juduo’s mother and Duizhangpo was joking for a marriage between Juduo and Qiuming. Duizhangpo often ask Juduo “媳妇妹子” to make fun of her. “媳妇妹子” here literally has several meanings. It can refer to the daughter-in-law’s sister, or her own daughter-in-law. According to the whole text. the “媳妇妹子” here refers to her future daughter-in-law. Considering the indeterminacy and vacancy of the text meaning, the text needs to be concise for readers and prevent misunderstandings. Therefore, the translator chooses the liberal translation and translates it as “my little daughter-in-law”, in which “my little” expresses the ridicule of Duizhangpo when addressing Juduo. It expresses a cordial and gentle tone, which can make people feel intimacy and increase the expressiveness of language.

3.2 Translation of Sentences

Sentence structure adjustment appears most in the translation process. It results from the different grammatical systems between Chinese and English. This chapter includes sentences with serial verbs and elliptical sentences.

3.2.1 Sentences with Serial Verbs

A sentence with serial verbs means that a sentence is composed of two or more verbs (phrases). There is no grammatical mark in it to indicate the structural relationship between the two verbs (phrases). Academic circles often describe it in the form of NP-VP1-VP2(Zhen, 2018).

Case 5

ST: 他抽出钢钎, 丢在一旁, 双手抓起那只猪脚, 嘴凑近猪脚上的口子, 使劲地吹气, 吹得自己满脸通红, 吹得猪身子慢慢地鼓起来, 吹得像一个鼓鼓的气球, 一根根猪毛都立起来了。(Deng, 2009)

TT: Then Guisheng’s father pulled it out, threw it aside, grabbed the pig’s foot with both hands and blew air into the opening. His face reddened all over and the pig was inflated like a full balloon. The pig hair stood up.

Analysis: Case 5 describes Guisheng's dad "blowing a pig" to shave its hair. Blowing the pig is a folk technique for killing pigs. The pig's skin is blown up to facilitate shaving. Each short sentence in the original text contains verbs, such as "抽", "丢", "抓", "凑", etc.. Considering the horizon of the expectation and indeterminacy of Reception Aesthetics, the translator should keep the verbs to introduce the whole process of "blowing pig", but should cut the sentence to reduce the difficulties of reading. Therefore, the translation divides the whole sentence into two parts. The first part describes the action of Guisheng's father blowing the pig, and the latter part describes the result. The translation is easy for readers to understand and the culture can be conveyed in an unnoticeable way.

Case 6

ST: 要是以前，不上学的日子，男孩子们早就成群结队地腰挎柴刀，肩扛锄头，身边跟着一群狗，兴高采烈地到山野里去。可是这一天，久久不见他们的身影，也听不到他们的一点声息。(Deng, 2009)

TT: In the no-school day before, boys would have gone into the mountains gaily in groups with wood choppers at their waists. They might carry their hoes on their shoulders, dogs following them. But today, none of them showed up.

Analysis: Case 6 depicts the circumstance that after the death of Yunfu, many boys dare not to go into mountains digging things. The source text is a typical serial-verb sentence with seven verbs but the translation has only three. Chinese lay stress on parataxis while English on hypotaxis. Due to the indeterminacy of the literary text, the structure of English should be as clear as possible to avoid misunderstanding. Moreover, the source text "久久不见他们的身影，也听不到他们的一点声息" implies Juduo the subject. According to the readers' subjectivity, children would feel strange if the subject changes abruptly, so the translation "but today, none of them showed up" changes the subject into "they".

3.2.2 Elliptical Sentences

Elliptical sentences include ellipse of subject, verb, adverb and so on. Literally, the non-subject sentence is the sentence without subject. This sentence pays more attention on the action rather than the

people who play it. Generally, a non-subject sentence can express its tact and exact meaning.

Case 7

ST: 又搬来一张桌子，架起放映机，上面盖着一块大红的绸子。(Deng, 2009)

TT: They fetched a table to place the projector, which was covered with red silk.

Analysis: Case 7 describes the two projectionists' preparation before showing a movie. The source text is an elliptical sentence, which omit the subject. The complete sentence is "(他们) 又搬来一张桌子，架起放映机，(放映机) 上面盖着一块大红的绸子". Considering the readers' subjectivity (Zhou, 2021), the translator chooses the skill of addition. The translation text adds the subject "they" and change the active voice "上面盖着" into passive voice "be covered with", which ensures the fluency of the text and keeps children's reading interest.

Case 8

ST: 跳下车来，脚在车斗里窝久了，走动起来有点别扭。(Deng, 2009)

TT: Juduo hopped off the tractor. Her legs felt like jelly so it was uncomfortable to walk around.

Analysis: Case 8 describes a serial of actions taken by Juduo. This sentence has no subject literally, but its subject can be conjectured through the paragraph. Considering the readers' subjectivity, the translator should add proper subject to conform to the reading habit of target readers. Moreover, owing to reader's horizon of expectation, "脚在车斗里窝久了" has been translated into "her legs felt like jelly", which produces a reasonable image of the legs, thus rendering readers to think that why the legs are like jelly. They can clearly know it from "Juduo hopped off the tractor", which increases the interaction between readers and the text.

3.3 Translation of Rhetoric

According to the Contemporary Chinese Dictionary, rhetoric can decorate the words. It makes expression more accurate, vivid and powerful through various ways. Rhetoric requires the control of language and knowledge of culture. In many cases, rhetoric is used for certain purpose.

3.3.1 Metaphor

Metaphor is a word or phrase used to describe

somebody/something else, in a way that is different from its normal use, in order to show that the two things have the same qualities and to make the description more vivid and powerful (Ashby, & Turnbull, 2010).

Case 9

ST: 菊朵说：“我是你肚子里的虫子，当然知道了。” (Deng, 2009)

TT: Juduo answered, “Of course I know. I can read your mind.”

Analysis: The source text uses the metaphor by comparing Juduo as a worm in Qinxiang’s stomach. In China it means know someone clearly. Considering the indeterminacy and vacancy of the text meaning, the translator chooses the skill of omission. The translation keeps the intonation while abandons the metaphor. If it is literally translated into “I am the worm in your stomach”, readers will find it confusing and even feel scared. Due to cultural differences, they can hardly understand the actual meaning of the phrase. Therefore, it is translated into “I can read your mind”, which corresponds to the indeterminacy of the text, moreover, it leaves the blank for children to imagine: why and how can she read Qinxiang’s mind?

Case 10

ST: 戴医生见了菊朵，故意皱起了眉头，说：“你这个跑来跑去的女孩子，又带了条尾巴来啊！” (Deng, 2009)

TT: Seeing Juduo, Dr. Dai frowned on purpose and said, “You the runner, who do you bring this time?”

Analysis: There is a metaphor in Case 10, which compares Landuo as a tail of Juduo. In Chinese, we describe somebody usually following others as a “尾巴”, but it is not known in other countries. According to readers’ subjectivity, the translation should conform readers’ reading habits. It’s hard for readers to understand why Dr. Dai said Juduo brought a tail, hence the translation omits the image and maintain the internal meaning.

3.3.2 Rhyme

Rhyme is the use of words in a poem or song that have the same sound or ends with the same sound as another word. (Eugene, & Taber, 1969) (Cai, 2018) It makes the discourse more vivid and helps intrigue

readers’ interest.

Case 11

ST: 工地上人来车往，

同志们斗志昂扬，

准备着奋战一场，

.....

定叫这巍巍大坝锁龙江！ (Deng, 2009)

TT: Construction site people go n come,

Fighting spirits soar above storm,

We’re all set, here I am,

.....

Dragon River we’re sure to dam!

Analysis: Case 11 is a folk song sung by the heroine Jiang Shuiying in the movie Ode to the Longjiang broadcast by the commune film team. The source text has the rhymes “ang” and each line obtains a certain image. Considering the horizon of expectancy, the text should excel the expectancy of children so that intrigue their reading interest. Hence the translator chose the method of “literal translation as the main and free translation as the supplement” at the language level, while “foreignization as the main and domestication as the supplement” at the cultural level. The translation rhymes /ɔ:/ with “come” and “storm”, and /æm/ with “am” and “dam”, which preserves the original style. The images of “工地”, “斗志”, “奋战”, “大坝”, “龙江” in the original text are preserved to ensure that the target readers have the same aesthetic feeling as the readers reading the source text.

4. Conclusion

Through this translation, the translator realized that the translation of children’s literature is not an easy task. Any subtle issues need to be treated with caution. Child readers are significantly different from adult ones in terms of language expression, psychological behaviour, knowledge reserves, etc. Therefore, while translating children’s literature, translators should focus on how the text can be better accepted by readers. Under the guidance of Reception Aesthetics, the translator analyses the cases. She finds that the major translation strategy used in this translation is domestication, and various skills like addition, conversion and omission can be adopted to

conform to children's reading habits.

The Reception Aesthetics proposed by Jauss and Iser provides a rich theoretical basis for this translation, which has a high reference and introduction significance. However, the research on the translation of children's literature under the guidance of Reception Aesthetic theory is not sufficient yet. The researches on *Running Like Wind* are scarcer, hence the channels for those data are limited. The translator is still in the exploring stage for the Chinese-English translation of children's literature, and the examples in the text all come from her, so there are inevitably mistakes and deficiencies in the translation. All in all, becoming a qualified translator of children's literature need to strengthen theoretical and practical study, consolidate language skills, fully understand cultural differences at home and abroad, and improve translation ability.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest to this work.

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