



Child-orientation Principle in Fairy Tale Translation Based on *The Trumpet of the Swan*

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Abstract: Fairy tales enable children to cruise around a world full of wonder and imagination. As a special group, children readers are different from adults for their unique development phases of language and cognition. Therefore, fairy tale translation should give close attention to children's special demand. Basically, translation works of fairy tales require their translators to stand on children's point of view and spark children readers' interests. For quite a long time, as an acknowledged principle in fairy tale translation, child-orientation puts more emphasis on observing and appreciating the world with the child-like appetite. Translators should take account of children's language ability as well as their cognitive condition and aesthetic preference. This essay is mainly about child-orientation principle. A comparative study has been made between *The Trumpet of the Swan* by E·B·White and its Chinese translation version by a famous translator Ren Rongrong. Through several concrete translation examples and with an analysis of its language style including conciseness, vividness and musicality as well as its rhetorical device such as simile and overstatement, a simple conclusion could be drawn. It is extremely important to follow child-orientation principle in fairy tale translation. Translation works based on this principle will bring an essence of fun and interest for children.

Keywords: fairy tale translation, child-orientation principle, *The Trumpet of the Swan*

1. Introduction

Fairy tales, also called as children's literature, are believed to be one of the best literary genres to foster children's imagination, which have successfully attracted children's interests. Due to the fact that children are the target readers of fairy tales, children have played a significant or even a decisive role on the creation of children's literature. Whether the creation or translation versions of fairy tales are successful or not, the ultimate judges are children. Their likes and dislikes are an essential element. Fairy tales are mainly written for children, so they must suit readers' language ability as well as cognitive condition. As what Klingherg puts that "literature produced specifically for children." (Oittinen, 2000, p.23)^[1]

Actually, as an acknowledged principle, child-orientation has dominated children's literature in china. With the enhancement of social progress, this principle has been increasingly enriched. The principle requires literary works to be focused on children's language ability and cognitive condition as well as children's aesthetic preference. "The concept in actuality originates from American educationist, John Dewey's proposition of child-centeredness, which stresses that the practice of education must weave around children's realities, not outside of them." (Chen Xia, 2004, p.20)^[2] Though the meaning of a fairy tale narrows down due to the narrative methods, and decreasing scope of material chosen, translators should follow child-orientation principle.

This paper tries to illustrate the fairy tale translation and the principle of child-orientation, and it is also a tentative study based on *The Trumpet of the Swan* and its Chinese translation version by Ren Rongrong.

2. Fairy tale translation

2.1 A brief history of fairy tale translation in China

Derived from the late Qing Dynasty, fairy tale translation possesses a relatively short history. From the late Qing Dynasty to the year of 1941, a series of historical events took place in the vast land of Chinese territory. Wars broke out and countless Chinese people were in turmoil. Translation works of western's thoughts, science and technology, therefore, have become a tool for awakening and rejuvenating Chinese nation. Literature translation including fairy tale translation brought advanced thoughts and ideas of western world. English-Chinese fairy tale translation has played a vital role in the establishment of Chinese native fairy tale. In retrospect of this short history, it is obvious to see that child-orientation is a principle that translators of fairy tales are inclined to follow.

The first translation of fairy tales can be traced back to 1872 when a translated chapter of Gulliver's Travels by J. Swift (Fang Weiping, 1993, p.73)^[3], followed by a massive trend of literature translation after 1985, and then a completely new literary style-fairy tale translation was produced. Many classic works started to reach children in China. For instance, one of the most notable fairy tales written by Hans Christian Anderson had attracted enormous translators. Liu Bannong's *The Emperor's New Suit* in 1914. Zhou Zuoren's *The Little Match-seller* in 1919. Periodicals for children also emerged like *Beginners*, *Children's World*. These translation works have largely broadened the views of children and nourished their little brains.

The translation strategies chosen by translators reveal a strong inclination to child-orientation. Many translators have paid attention to the significance of translation quality. Since the establishment of new China in 1949, translation of fairy tales has been enhanced dramatically. It has been estimated that there were over 850 Children's literary works of different kinds translated during the year of 1949 to 1955, which can be called as the First Golden Period. After 1976 "children's literature was once called a garden." (Farquahar, Mary Ann, 1999, p.150)^[4]. With the passage of time, both the quality and quantity of fairy tale translation have increased, so as to better satisfy child's unique demands. Translators pay an increasing attention to Chinese child readers from various aspects which include language style, source texts, and forms of translation. Gradually, as an acknowledged principle, child-orientation was virtually followed in fairy tale translation in China.

2.2 Researches on fairy tale translation

Despite the fact that many aspects of children's literature have been studied by some scholars, a relatively systematic and theoretical explanation has not yet been formed. Excellent foreign fairy tales were translated by many Chinese prominent translators, while there were very few theoretical researches of fairy tale translation.

Major devoted translators and writers, such as Lu Xun, ZhaoYuanren, Ye Junjian, and Ren Rongrong had their own translation thoughts. Lu Xun believed that translation should be simple for children so that better understanding could be achieved among children. In what has been depicted in New Beijing News Press Huang Yiqing pointed out that translators should have a clear idea of children in their minds when translating (Lin Yun, 2004)^[5] Children's literature is mainly to enlarge and broaden the horizon of children. Zhao Yuanren is one of the notable translators who have made an early theoretical study on fairy tale translation. He is the first one who translated *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. He thought that achieving the aim of original work is important. Translators that hold similar opinions are represented by Ye Junjian and Ren Rongrong. Ye Junjian claimed that fairy tale translation was a process of re-creation, and translators should consider the author as a creative poet and prominent writer. Translation works should reveal the uniqueness of their works. Ren Rongrong believed that the translated version should be colloquial due to its special reader. Meanwhile, she insisted that wonderful words should be used to make children think about the story after they finished reading.

3. Child-orientation principle of in fairy tale translation

3.1 A brief introduction of child-orientation

Child-orientation, as a principle of translation, has its own requirements. So there is a need to make a short introduction about child-orientation, which has its own development both in China and western world. And with the passage of time, this principle has gained constant development.

3.1.1 Connotation of child-orientation

The uniqueness of fairy tale translation lies in its particular reader. Child-orientation, therefore, has gradually been a well-recognized principle in fairy tale translation. Generally, child-orientation is to satisfy the need of children's psychological characters and aesthetic preference.

In the first place, child-orientation demands a translator stands on children's point of view and get rid of adult's vision. Emotional condition that stands in a source text as well as the translation process should be found. In terms of using baby language, translators should pay more attention to discovering the joy in the eye of children.

In the second place, child-orientation requires the language style faithful and readable. For a faithful translation work, the ultimate aim is to maintain the classic masterpiece fresh and alive to their target reader's minds and hearts, and culturally influence them. For a readable translation work, it is virtually important for translators to create it in natural language. Undeniably, language in children's literature can influence the language of a child enormously.

In the third place, child-orientation takes account of children's cognition condition as well as their aesthetic preferences, which are of great significance to form the meaning in children's little mind. Translators should not ignore the fact that physical and psychological ability are different from adults. They should choose relatively beautiful and simple

words, or we can say baby words for children.

In conclusion, with the efforts of scholars and researchers to explore more and more understandings about children, the meaning of child-orientation is getting more affluent. It is helpful and meaningful to explore the original nature of mankind, and discover the features and uniqueness of children, so as to nourish children in a better way.

3.1.2 Development of child-orientation in China

The principle of child-orientation was initially proposed by an American educationist John Dewey. In the year of 1919, he delivered many speeches and lectures in cities, and made a huge contribution to propelling the progress of children literature movement. His speeches and lectures are primarily involved in child education. He held that children to education is what the sun to the circling earth, which means education should be carried out according to children's realities instead of what the teacher or the school plan to finish. (Zhao Xianglin, Wang Chengxu, 1982, p.32)^[6]

Virtually, some Chinese scholars deemed child-orientation as the center that separated children's literature from adults. With this new view of children-orientation, scholars were encouraged to create a fresh style of fairy tales in children's literature. After that, fairy tale creation flourished in China. Ye Shentao, as a pioneer, wrote a collection of fairy tale named *The Scarecrow*, who ended Chinese history of imitating foreign fairy tales and paved the path for Chinese writers to create more brilliant works. There were many well-known fairy tale writers such as Bing Xin, Lu Xun, Shen Yanbing etc. Meanwhile, magazines and some newspapers based on child-orientation have come into sight.

At the same time, some scholars have carried out researches on the principle of child-orientation. Hu Yuzhi emphasized the significance of fairy tales for children's literature in China in *Fairy Tale and Mythologies*. He also insisted that children's literature should be child-oriented by the way of satisfying their desires and free their mind. Yan Jicheng believed that regarding children as children, grown-ups as grown-ups in the books, *Values of Fairies in Books for Children* and *The Values of Children's Literature in Children's Education*.

Fang Weiping made the conclusion that child-orientation proposed the initial theoretical studies on the one hand, and constituted the theoretical foundation for the development of modern society on the other hand. Their agreement on the conception of child-orientation has built its key role in children's literature, and then the principle of child-orientation has been established in fairy tales and their translation.

Zhu Wenying thought that a prominent fairy tale work should spark the interests and inquisitiveness of children in the first time. Chen Bochui asserted that fairy tales should reveal the contemporary world to the little child and that fairy tale stories should stop to idolize individuals and start to reach their heart and ear to a whole society as well as our own legislative world. In short, all the thoughts and ideas of these writers and scholars provided the means to broaden the understanding of the principle.

Fairy tales have two indispensable functions: amusement and education, which are closely related. Nevertheless, amusement is the central goal in fairy tale. According to J.K.Rowling, the writer of Harry Potter, the prime purpose of fairy tales is to amuse children, not to teach them. (Xing Yuhao, 2003, p.17)^[7]

After 1949, interfered with the politics of that time, child-orientation has been ignored and even abandoned. At that period of time, people have an inclination to learn the things from Soviet Union. It is quite natural that the views of the principle in Soviet Union were introduced to China. During the seventeen years after 1949, many prominent works were released and got published, whereas many of these works tended to be formularized and conceptualized due to the influence of political needs of that particular time. Some scholars held the view that education was an actual political preaching. In this way, political education has substituted child-orientation.

After the Cultural Revolution and with the implementation of opening-up policy, child-orientation has been reaffirmed in China. Scholars and writers started to reappraise the significance of child-orientation. They emphasize the uniqueness of children's characteristics in children's literature. Although writers and scholars attempt to educate children at the time when they appreciate the books, amusement and recreation are the key goals in order to satisfy the real needs of children. With the development of child-orientation, the principle is endowed with new ideas and thoughts and shows immense vitality.

3.2 Fairy tale translation due to child-orientation principle

Children's literature should be child-oriented. In comparison with adult literature, it contains particular features of its own. Myles Mcdowell asserts that "Children's books are generally shorter... language is child-oriented; plots are of a distinctive order, probability is often disregarded; and one could go on endlessly talking of magic and fantasy, and simplicity, and adventure". (Peter Hunt, 1998, p.29)^[8] As a bright pearl in children's literature, child-orientation has helped form the features of fairy tale translation.

First, in consideration of the fact that fairy tale readers are children, language style of fairy tale translation should be vivid, accurate. Language needs to be especially clear for children readers. Sometimes what seems clear to the adult...may

actually be confusing to a child. (John W. Stewig, 1980, p.89)^[9]

Second, apart from the aspect of linguistic style, other vital features of fairy tale translation include fantasy. In the view of children's world, real world can be described as a fairy tale because the world is alive. Children can enjoy a world full of imagination. Wonderful works like *The Little Mermaid*, *The Emperor's New Clothes*, *Alice in Wonderland*, etc. enable children to gain enormous joy.

Third, it is essential to deal with culture that has different characters and backgrounds. As we know, works of the writers are created under the background of his own culture. Hence, it is hard for translators to translate all the essence of the words and expressions with its particular cultural background. Actually, factors like the purpose of translation, readers' reception and the enhancement of individual translator about culture are the crucial points to influence the selection of foreignization and domestication. Yet the author believes that translation strategy domestication is a better choice guided by the principle of child-orientation.

It needs to point it out that fairy tale translation also has many other characteristics, such as conciseness, musicality, humor, etc. In short, translation works should commonly serve children and meet the need of children for they are the reflection of child-orientation.

4. Child-orientation as the principle of fairy tale translation Based on *The Trumpet of the Swan*

4.1 A brief introduction of *The Trumpet of the Swan*

The beloved book *The Trumpet of the Swan* is written by E·B·White, the most outstanding essayist in twentieth Century in America, who is also the author of *Charlotte's Web* and *Stuart Little*. As a classic of children's literature, *The Trumpet of the Swan* perfectly describes what it's like to march to the beat of your own drummer. It was convinced as "one of the most convincing fable about growth" by Updike — an American contemporary writer.

The Trumpet of the Swan, formerly known as the *Swan Trumpet*, is the last work of children's literature by White. The fairy tale describes a small trumpeter swan who was born without a voice and trying to overcome it by learning to play a trumpet. It is a big worry for a trumpeter swan without voice to woo his beloved Miss swan. However, the little swan was not discouraged; instead, it turned to its old friend Sam, a ranch child for help. Sam managed to let it go to school and learn to read and write. It even backed with a pen hanging around its neck. But still, it did not work because Miss Swan could not read the words written on the slab stone and then fly away. In order to help the little swan, its father went to the city and broke into a music store, and finally fetched a trumpet for its son. The little swan knew the trumpet was not paid, which then became another worry for it. After it learned to play the notes, accompanied by its old friend Sam, it went to the summer camp as a trumpeter to pay off the debt. In the summer camp, it heard a lot of beautiful songs. After the summer camp, it went to Boston and Philadelphia to play the trumpet with an increasing number of trumpeter skills, and then it became well-known as the Lewis second in the USA, and the name of this trumpeter was also called Lewis. In this way, it made a lot of money. Coincidentally, a storm forced Miss swan to land down to Philadelphia Zoo Lake, where the little trumpet temporarily lived. As the trumpet swan was a kind of rare animal, the zoo tended to cut the wings feathers of Miss Swan so as to keep Miss Swan in the zoo. Lewis negotiated with the responsible person of the zoo, and it successfully freed Miss Swan by making a commitment — when needed, they would give the zoo some little new born swan to take care of. Lewis won the heart of Miss Swan through its sound of trumpet and took Miss Swan back to its fathers'. Lewis gave the money to its father and asked its father to pay off the debts. Finally, Lewis returned to its birthplace with Miss Swan in a happy ending.

This is the story of *The Trumpet of the Swan*. As you can see, the story describes a swan that has a fatal defect of soundless fighting against its own fate. The swan overcomes enormous challenges and difficulties and achieves success. This story shows the most convincing and courageous growth fables for children.

4.2 Characteristics of fairy tale translation in *Trumpet of the Swan*

Ren Rongrong is the translator of *The Trumpet of the Swan*, who is a famous Chinese contemporary children's literature writer, poet, translator as well as a children's literature theorist. Many of his children translation works have fully reflected the principle of child-orientation and are prevalent among children. The language style of *The Trumpet of the Swan* and its rhetorical device has reflected the uniqueness, which reveals the principle of child-orientation. The following are selected from *The Trumpet of the Swan* by E·B·White and the translation version by Ren Rongrong. Through these concrete translation examples, we can probe into the child-orientation principle and the importance of child-orientation principle when translating fairy tales.

4.2.1 Choice of words and sentences

The choice of words and sentence of a translation work can tell translator's view of translation. In this way, the features of fairy tale translation in *The Trumpet of the Swan*, or we can say, the language style of fairy tale translation can be represented by conciseness, vividness, and musicality.

4.2.1.1 Conciseness

Characterized by its unique readers, the language of fairy tale stories always has an inclination to be simple and concise. It is so natural for children to abandon the book with prolonged and complicated expressions. Mostly, the uninterested reading is caused by improper choice of words and sentence which often set barriers for understanding. Therefore, fairy tale translation should give priority to the application of conciseness.

These were the pleasantest days of Sam's life, these days in the woods, far, far from everywhere — no automobiles, no roads, no people, no noise, no school, no homework, no problems, except the problem of getting lost and of course, the problem of what to be when he grew up. Every boy has that problem. (E·B·White, 2012, p.195)^[10]

Translation:“ 这些日子，这些在森林中的日子，是萨姆生活中最快乐的日子，它们远离一切 — 没有汽车，没有马路，没有人，没有喧闹声，没有学校，没有家庭作业，没有问题，除了一个问题，就是不要迷路。当然还有一个问题，就是他长大了干什么。这个问题是每个孩子都有的。”(E·B·White, 2012, p.4)^[10]

Sam is a boy who is fond of nature and adventure. Every year Sam and his father go camping in Canada. They observe wild animal's life, and Sam deems it is the happiest time of his life. The choice of words in this translation paragraph is simple. Mostly, it selects short sentence, concise expression, warm words and rich rhythm. In this way, with these short phrases, it embodies the childlike innocence lively and completely, which is in full compliance with the basic principle of children's literature translation.

4.2.1.2 Vividness

Actually, using vivid and lively words in fairy tale writing and translation is a requirement. Considering children's language ability and faculty of understanding, a translator should take account of all the possible factors to make the translation works more suitable. To fully display the context meaning is not an ultimate goal, while to let the language in fairy tale translation be as full of pleasure as possible is also crucial.

Example: “One, two, three, four, five,” Sam counted, “One, two, three, four, five, five cygnets, just as sure as I'm alive!” (E·B·White, 2012, p.222)^[10]

Translation: “一，二，三，四，五，”萨姆一只一只数。“一，二，三，四，五，一共五只小天鹅，跟我是活人一样错不了！”(E·B·White, 2012, p.26)^[10]

When Sam and his father go camping in Canada, he goes to the lake to observe the hatch of little swans by himself. Sam is fond of animals and he has observed the little swan for several days. At the moment when he saw five cygnets hatched in a row, he got excited. He confirmed the number without doubt, it is five. He used “just as sure as I'm alive” to express, which has reflected a child's innocence and simple way of thinking by using this lively and vivid language. This translation will produce the same effect among Chinese readers that determine things like he is alive. If you translate “just as sure as I'm alive” as “如同我确信自己还活着”，it has a faithful meaning, but the language of it is adult-orientation language, which has not follow the principle of child-orientation.

4.2.1.3 Musicality

The translation of fairy tales should not only provide recreation and enjoyment visually but also amuse children acoustically when fairy tales are read by their parents or teachers. Musicality is a vital language feature in fairy tale translation, and also it plays a significant role in capturing and fascinating children owing to the aesthetic value of children. It is acceptable that if the words and sentence sound melodious and musical, these beautiful expressions will stimulate children's imagination. What's more, the rich rhyme can bring happiness to children.

Example: A small sparrow with a white throat arrived and sang, “Oh, sweet Canada, Canada, Canada” (E·B·White, 2012, p.200)^[10]

Translation: 一只白喉咙的小麻雀飞来了，还唱着：“噢，可爱的加拿大，加拿大，加拿大” (E·B·White, 2012, p.200)^[10]

Words and sentences like this are quite common in *The Trumpet of the Swan*. The example above is a representative expression of musicality. Sometimes, musical repetition in fairy tales is necessary.

4.2.2 Rhetorical device

Figure of speech, simile, alliteration, overstatement, pun, etc, are indispensable to institute a particular fantastic, funny and happy atmosphere of fairy tale. But, this rhetorical device has also brought difficulties for translators when translating fairy tales. The following examples will concentrate on simile, overstatement. Considering the length of this

paper, not all figures of speech are discussed here.

4.2.2.1 Simile

Simile may present relatively different images because of cultural differences. As we know, the same things that are put in Chinese may have different meaning when they are put in English. It is because children have relatively smaller language storage in their little brain that some images should be translated into what Chinese children are familiar with.

Example: The boy seems to have very big eyes today, whispered the cob, "His eyes are enormous." (E·B·White, 2012, p.220)^[10]

Translation: "那男孩今天好像有一双大眼睛,"熊天鹅悄悄说,"他那双眼睛像铜铃似的。"(E·B·White, 2012, p.27)^[10]

Sam came to the pond early in the morning, and sitting on the edge of a large wood. In order to see every movement of the swan, he brought a telescope, which surprised the swan couples. The literal translation of "His eyes are enormous" can be "他的眼睛特别大". However, the translator translated it as "他那双眼睛像铜铃那么大", using the rhetorical methods of simile, which vividly expressed the outlook of a telescope in the eye of a swan. "特别大" is quite abstract, while "铜铃似的" is more specific. It is difficult for children to understand and grasp the meaning of abstract expression. Therefore this simile allows readers to form a vivid picture in their mind and stimulate imagination. Figurative language enables children to establish contact between their own life experience and the depiction in literature so as to obtain the new things. (Fang Weiping, Wang Jiankun, 2013, p.84)^[11] From the translation of this sentence, we can see that translator translated the sentence under the guidance of child-orientation, which also embodies the reader's reception theory.

4.2.2.2 Overstatement

Overstatement is a commonly used rhetorical device in fairy tale translation, for the exaggerated way of expression often creates vividness and humor appealing to children. Like many fairy tale translators, Reng Rongrong constantly employs the rhetorical device in *The Trumpet of the Swan*.

Example 1: "I don't wish to be observed," complained the cob. "I did not travel all this immense distance into the heart of Canada to be observed." (E·B·White, 2012, p.208)^[10]

Translation: "我不希望被人看",雄天鹅抱怨道。"我飞了十万八千里来到加拿大的心脏,可不是给人看的。"(E·B·White, 2012, p.24)^[10]

When the swan couple found that the hatch location they carefully selected had been found, the cob got furious. "All this immense distance" in the target language means a far distance. However, the translator translated it as "十万八千里". "十万八千里" is an abstract concept which means a far distance. But Chinese children are particularly familiar with this expression. Because many children have read *Journey to the West*, and in this book, one somersault of Monkey King can reach "十万八千里". Translators used this kind of expression to convey abstract meaning with which children are more familiar and easy to grasp. At the same time, the translator added the translation intertextuality and freed reader's imagination, which also embodied the innocence and interest of fairy tale translation. From the perspective of children, translator appreciates with the children's heart and eyes. When under the guidance of child-orientation principle and aimed with this thoughts, the translation version will be interesting and popular.

Example 2: "What a sight!" Sam said to himself. "What a terrific sight!" (E·B·White, 2012, p.224)^[10]

Translation: "多么好看啊!"萨姆心里说,"真是好看得没命!"(E·B·White, 2012, p.27)^[10]

Swan father taught five baby swans to swim, and then the seven swans were lined up. In the end, the father swan arched above the beautiful long neck to protect the baby swans. Seeing this picture, Sam got toughed deeply. "What a sight!" "What a terrific sight!" in these two sentences, the latter add a "terrific" words, while the mood has been strengthened, resulting in a progressive effect. Children always choose simple and exaggerated language to express their views, so it is necessary and proper to use exaggeration.

5. Conclusion

In the above discussion of the principle of child-orientation in fairy tale translation based on *The Trumpet of the Swan*, efforts have been made to illustrate the brief history of fairy tale translation, child-orientation principle, and the characteristics of fairy tale translation in *The Trumpet of the Swan*. A retrospective conclusion can be drawn. In brief, the language of Fairy tale translation should be child-oriented and idiomatic to children's thinking mode and reading habit. Also, it is of great significance to follow the principle.

As what Zou Zuoren said, children are not the miniature of adult, for they have their own independent characteristics, which are quite different from adults. So translators should have a clear knowledge about works they choose that contain the characteristics of the children audience. The content of translation works should cater to the needs of children growth,

the choice of translation strategies and methods should be beneficial for the reception of children, and the language style of fairy tale and its translation works should suit the requirement of children aesthetic preference. In the translation of children's literature, translators should have a thorough research on the uniqueness of children readers. By a careful choice of words and sentence, child-orientation principle can help reproduce the original innocence and interests of children.

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