

Metaphor Translation in the English Version of *Bronze and Sunflower*

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Abstract: Metaphor, which is ubiquitous in children's literature, has always been a difficult point in understanding and translating. Therefore, the choice of metaphor translation strategies varies much for person to person. This article explores metaphor translation in Wang's version of *Bronze and Sunflower*, which aims to provide reference for the future translating Chinese children's literature through the analysis of metaphor translation strategies in excellent award-winning translation. In order to retain to the greatest extent the unique conceptions, designs, styles, techniques, flavors and cultural implications of the original metaphors, Wang gives priority to metaphor foreignization by which transplantation of images and mapping modes from source domain to target domain can be successfully achieved on the basis of the overlap zone of understanding between the source text (ST) readers and the target text (TT) readers. However, due to the great differences between the two languages and cultures as well as the consideration for child readers, metaphor domestication and partial even complete metaphor omission should be resorted to in order to make the sense and functions of the original metaphors accessible to TT readers. At the same time, it is also worthy of attention that the abandonment of metaphors, caused by the translator's misunderstanding of some local culture, customs or/and shortage of the relevant knowledge about the connotations of the original metaphors, leads to the loss of unique thinking style, emotional characteristics and aesthetic implication behind the original language. It is concluded that high-quality translation reflects in the choice of the strategies of metaphor translation which depends on the translator's comprehensive understanding of the source text, translation objectives, the manipulation on the basis of the translator's own views on children's literature translation.

Keywords: Metaphor Translation, Halen Wang, *Bronze and Sunflower*, Children's Literature

1. Introduction

In order to cater for the growing needs of people all over the world to understand Chinese culture, more and more Chinese literary works have been translated into various foreign languages. Chinese children's literature today has gained more attention than ever before in terms of the number of translations and the breadth and depth of translation studies. Cao Wenxuan, who won the Hans Christian Andersen Prize in 2016 and then is regarded as one of the leading figures in contemporary Chinese children's literature, has successfully attracted the attention of the world to his works. In addition, One of his works *Bronze and Sunflower* translated by Halen Wang, who is a British translator proficient in Chinese, won the Marsh Translation Award in 2017. Wang's translation received a series of positive

comments from some influential media, such as *The Horn Book Magazine*, *New York Times Book Review*, and *Booklist*. Up to now, *Bronze and Sunflower* has been collected by many libraries in the world and translated into several different languages. Some Chinese scholars have done research on the English version of *Bronze and Sunflower* and gained some findings. Xu Derong and Fan Yawen argue that "the English version fails to recreate its style faithfully because of the improper change of sentence structure, the inaccurate choice of words and excessive omission of information in the source text [1]." Xu Derong and Fan Yawen also consider that the English version of *Bronze and Sunflower* fails to grasp the unique style behind the Chinese folk language such as dialects, slang, idioms and four-character idiomatic phrases so that the distinctive ways of thinking of the local people in the original work are not

reflected, the emotions contained in the original are weakened or even completely deviated, and the aesthetic characteristics of Chinese folk language as natural, simple, interesting and vivid are deficiently recreated [2]. Zhou Ya and Guo Bin make a classification, summary and analysis of the metaphors in *Bronze and Sunflower* [3]. Zhou Ya and Guo Bin also discuss how Wang's translation achieves transcoding between the source language (SL) and the target language (TL) through de-metaphorization of some basic taste words such as "sour", "sweet" and "bitter", in order to help better understand the differences between Chinese and Western cultures [4]. The awards the English version of *Bronze and Sunflower* won proved its success. Meanwhile, the studies the domestic scholars have made reflect its shortcomings in dealing with the cultural differences between SL and TL. Nowadays, the number of translations of Chinese children's literature is increasing, but few of them are recognized as excellent. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct in-depth studies of the excellent translated works from different perspectives. This article explores the gains and losses of metaphor translation in the English version of *Bronze and Sunflower* through analysis of the metaphor translation strategies with the aims of enriching the existing research on it as well as of providing reference for the future translating Chinese children's literature.

2. Metaphor Translation in Children's Literature

Lathey regards *Translations of Children's Books* edited by Persson in 1962, which consisting of the professionals' views on contemporary translation practices, as the earliest publication on translation for children [5]. So children's literature translation theory less than 60 years old is a relatively "young" branch which originates from comparative studies. In the late 20th and very early 21st centuries, the studies on children's literature translation experienced such a process as Tabbert points out that the translation of children's literature shifted "from source orientation to target orientation [6]." In the last decade, the achievements of cognitive linguistics have been gradually applied to the study of translation. Researchers focus on translation process and translator's cognitive processing mode. Meanwhile, the translation of children's literature should take into account child readers' cognitive and linguistic abilities.

In the process of interpreting and translating with the help of cognitive linguistics, metaphor is a term of great concern. Translation scholars have focused on "problems of transferring metaphors from one language and culture to another [7]." The discussion on these problems is reflected in three areas [8]: (1) metaphors are untranslatable; (2) metaphors are translatable and (3) metaphors are translatable with partial inequivalence. In search for solutions to these issues, the researchers propose some procedures for metaphor translation. For example, Van den Broeck lists the following possibilities [9]:

(1) Translation 'sensu stricto'. A metaphor is translated

'sensu stricto' whenever both SL 'tenor' and SL 'vehicle' are transferred into the TL.

(2) Substitution. The SL 'vehicle' is replaced by a different TL 'vehicle' with more or less the same 'tenor'.

(3) Paraphrase. An SL metaphor is paraphrased whenever it is rendered by a non-metaphorical expression in the TL.

Newmark extends Broeck's metaphor translation procedures in order of preference [10]:

(1) Reproducing the same image in the TL.

(2) Replacing the image in the SL with a standard TL image which does not clash with the TL culture.

(3) Translating metaphor by simile, retaining the image.

(4) Translating metaphor (or simile) by simile plus sense (or occasionally a metaphor plus sense).

(5) Converting metaphor to sense.

(6) Deleting redundant or otiose metaphor.

(7) Same metaphor combined with sense.

Toury considers that Newmark's procedures only discuss metaphor translation from ST to TT, and ignore the fact that metaphor would be added in TT, so he proposes six translation procedures [11]:

(1) Metaphor into "same" metaphor

(2) Metaphor into 'different' metaphor

(3) Metaphor into non-metaphor

(4) Metaphor into 0 (i.e., complete omission, leaving no trace in the target text)

(5) Non-metaphor into metaphor

(6) 0 into metaphor (i.e., addition, pure and simple, with no linguistic motivation in the source text)

These translation procedures are proposed on the basis of the comparative studies between ST and TT in terms of cultural differences and TT recipients.

As a matter of fact, metaphor is no longer just a rhetorical concept, but an universal way of thinking. Lakoff and Johnson put forward some important points about metaphor, such as (1) metaphor is not only a linguistic phenomenon, but reflects our thinking and actions; (2) the conceptual system by which we think and act is metaphorical; (3) "the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another [12]." Alvarez believes that metaphor mainly appears in literature, and the main difficulty in literary translation is that the form of metaphor is deeply rooted in specific language and culture [13]. Therefore, metaphor translation requires translators to mobilize the previous knowledge about culture, thinking modes, images, cognitive habits in ST. At the same time, the target child addressees' acceptance should be taken into account. Newmark states that translation of metaphor is the epitome of all translation because of the consideration of sense, image, context, strategies, procedures and metaphor itself [14].

3. Metaphor Translation Strategies in *Bronze and Sunflower*

Metaphor, as an universal existence, can be seen not only in literary works but also in non-literary works. It is generally

believed that literary metaphors are of great value, because the metaphors in literature are the products of the author's painstaking efforts. Dagut defines metaphor as "an individual creative flash of imagination fusing disparate categories of experience in a powerfully meaningful semantic anomaly [15]." Therefore, translators should consider the specific culture in which the metaphor is rooted and the specific author who created it.

3.1. Metaphor Foreignization

Foreignization is a translation strategy of making readers adapt to the author, and by which the style and characteristics of the original can be preserved [16]. Metaphor foreignization indicates transferring the same image, sense and mapping mode into TL.

The original:

雨季已经结束,多日不见的阳光,正像清澈的流水一样,哗啦啦漫泄于天空。一直低垂而阴沉的天空,忽然飘飘然扶摇直上,变得高远而明亮[17]。

The translation:

The rainy season was over and the sky, which had hung so low and so dark, had lifted. Now it was big and bright and the sun, which hadn't been seen for days, seeped across it like fresh water [18].

It is not often that sunlight is compared to water both in Chinese and English. This metaphor is to a certain degree born out of a larger context--the rainy season, which has made people be accustomed to the phenomenon that all falls from the sky should be water. This time it is no longer water but sunlight. This image metaphor reflects the people's joy when the sky is clearing after the rain. Because of this happiness, the people feel that the sky lifted and turned big and bright. As Lakoff and Johnson point out that orientational metaphors have to do with spatial orientation. For example, HAPPY IS UP, SAD IS DOWN; GOOD IS UP; BAD IS DOWN [12]. Wang appropriately keeps the original image metaphor and orientational metaphors by means of metaphor foreignization, which not only successfully reproduces the author's unique way of thinking but the people's excitement about the changes in the natural surroundings.

The original:

嘎鱼有点不好意思,结结巴巴说:“我爸让、让我送、送两、两只鸭、鸭、给奶奶煨、煨汤、汤喝。我爸说、说了、奶奶喝、喝了鸭、鸭汤,就会好、好起来、来的.....[17]”

The translation:

Gayu was evidently embarrassed, and kept tripping over his words. "My f-father told me... to b-bring them, these t-two d-ducks, f-for N-Nainai, s-so she c-can have s-soup. He says sh-she'll f-feel b-better after s-some d-duck s-soup...[18]"

Wang's translation perfectly reproduces the content and form of the original. There is a conceptual metaphor---EMBARRASSMENT IS VOICE. Gayu's stuttering shows his inner sense of guilt and the wrongs he had done to the Bronzes. The English version reshapes the English words in order to maintain equivalence with the original both in the form and meaning, which vividly presents the target readers how Gayu is speaking and in what way his

embarrassment is displayed.

In fact, there is an overlap of the metaphor understanding of the ST readers and of the the metaphor understanding of the TT readers, which constitutes the zone of mutual understanding or translatability. The realization of metaphor foreignization actually depends on the overlap zone. It can be discovered that Wang adheres to this principle that no matter what kind of metaphor should resort to foreignization in translation as long as it can be understood by both the ST readers and the TT readers. In this way, the image and sense of the original metaphor can be well preserved. Outside the overlap zone, the other zones will probably be difficult for both the ST and TT readers to mutually understand, so other translation strategies should be adopted.

3.2. Metaphor Domestication

Domestication is "a term used by Venuti to describe the translation strategy in which a transparent, fluent style is adopted in order to minimize the strangeness of the foreign text for TL reader [19]." Metaphor domestication indicates replacing the original metaphor with a similar one in TL or with other rhetorical devices, or keeping only the original sense.

The original:

那鞋很厚实,像只暖和和的鸟窝。土话称它为“毛鞋窝子”。冬天穿着,即使走在雪地里,都很暖和[17]。

The translation:

They were known locally as “fluffy birds' nests” because they were thick and sturdy like a bird's nest, and the fluffy panicles kept your feet warm, even in the snow [18].

“窝”in Chinese has several meanings, such as a den of beasts or other animals; a makeshift shack; a metaphor for the place occupied by a person or an object. “毛鞋窝子” also called as “茅窝子” (plaited reed shoes) is well known in the rural areas of northern Jiangsu province in China. Its original meaning refers to a metaphor for a place occupied by feet rather than a nest for birds although it does look like a bird's nest. Wang obviously knows the real meaning of “毛鞋窝子”, but she does not want to literally translate it simply into “plaited reed shoes” which are as same as the title of the Chapter. She prefers keeping the metaphor here in order to achieve some degree of equivalence to the original. As a result, she rendered it into “fluffy birds' nests” according to the context, another image metaphor more easily accepted by the target readers. The metaphor substitution not only retains the vivid original image, but increases readability. Puurtinen states that “the educative function of children's literature and aim at high readability in translation may sometimes be contradictory [20].” That is to say, if the translator wants to retain the specific cultural elements of the original, the readability of the translation will be reduced. Readability is doomed to be a criterion that translators of children's literature must consider in the process of translating metaphor. In order to meet this criterion, some common techniques of metaphor domestication are often employed, such as cultural adaptation, replacing with familiar domestic metaphors, choosing target

equivalents provoking similar association or cognition.

The original:

青铜的妈妈撩起衣角擦着眼泪:“不作兴这样糟蹋人。我们是穷,可我们不会去偷鸡摸狗的.....[17]”

The translation:

She wiped her tears on the corner of her jacket. “He tramples all over people. It’s not right. Yes, we’re poor, but we’re not thieves or cheats [18].”

“偷鸡摸狗”(Stealing chicken and dogs) is a Chinese idiom, which means both stealing and immoral activities. Conceptual metaphor indicates MORALITY IS AN ACT. In English, it is impossible to find an equivalent or similar idiom to replace “偷鸡摸狗”, and let alone to literally translate it into “stealing chicken and dogs”. Because a sharp quarrel about duck theft is going on between the Bronzes and the Gayus. If “偷鸡摸狗” is translated in “stealing chicken and dogs”, the target readers with little understanding on this Chinese idiom will certainly confuse about it, and even directly consider that not stealing chicken and dogs does not rule out the possibility of stealing ducks. This then distorts the original meaning. Wang here skillfully translated it into “*thieves or cheats*” by means of metaphor domestication, which makes the target readers clear at a glance. “偷鸡摸狗”(Stealing chicken and dogs) is, in other words, a generic-level conceptual metaphor which is instantiated in culture-specific ways at a specific level [21]. Domestication largely eliminates the strangeness and foreignness of the original by conventional and accepted target forms, models and expressions.

3.3. Partial Metaphor Omission

The original:

那是初夏,芦苇已经长出长剑一般的叶子,.....

起风了,芦苇荡好像忽然变成了战场,成千上万的武士,挥舞着绿色的长剑,在天空下有板有眼地劈杀起来,四下里发出沙拉沙拉的声音。.....

大芦苇荡,既吸引着葵花,也使她感到莫名的恐惧[17]。

The translation:

The young reed leaves pointed up at the sky like swords,.....

A sudden gust of wind turned the reed marsh into a battlefield. The long swords slashed the air.....

She was drawn to the reed marsh, but it filled her with a mysterious terror [18].

Contrasting the original with the translation, it can be found that this part “成千上万的武士,挥舞着绿色的长剑,在天空下有板有眼地劈杀起来,四下里发出沙拉沙拉的声音”(thousands of warriors, wielding long green swords and practising methodically under the sky, were making a series of rustling noises around) is omitted. Here are two image metaphors (REEDS ARE WARRIORS; LEAVES ARE SWORDS). A little girl seeing the reeds for the first time was full of curiosity. Standing in the dense reeds, the little girl was attracted by the straight tall reeds, which also made her feel a trace of fear. When a gust of wind blew through the reeds, a series of rustling noises caused by the swaying reeds aggravated the little girl’s fear. The omitted part in the translation is originally used to set off the atmosphere in order to pave the way for the following description of that

mysterious terror inside the little girl. The metaphor omission in Wang’s translation is perhaps due to the consideration for the target readers, but fails to fully represent the original intention. Maybe in Wang’s opinion, the omitted part, which describes too many details of the battlefield, is not good for children. Partial metaphor omission not only mainly retains the original scene, but makes the version more simple and smooth. Lefevere states that translation is a kind of rewriting of the source text and manipulated by ideology, poetics and patronage [22]. Oittinen advocates translating for children in stead of translating children’s literature, and stresses that the significance of the translator’s own child image [23].

3.4. Complete Metaphor omission

The original:

然而,过不一会儿,疲倦就会沉重地袭来,爸爸含糊了几句,终于不敌疲倦,打着呼噜睡着了,而那时的葵花,还在等着爸爸将故事讲下去[17]。

The translation:

He would begin to tell her a story but would only manage to slur a couple of sentences before nodding off. Sunflower would be left waiting for the next part of the story,..... [18]

In the translation, two important parts consisting of metaphor are omitted. One is “疲倦就会沉重地袭来”(Tiredness would attack hard), the other is “终于不敌疲倦”(Dad was finally defeated by tiredness). Here lies a conceptual metaphor---TIREDNESS IS ENEMY. It is because of this metaphor that readers surely realize that the father was managing to tell his daughter Sunflower stories while fighting against the enemy (tiredness). Metaphor describes a vivid picture of fatherhood. Without the metaphor here, it seems that the father is unwilling to tell his daughter stories or he is just perfunctory as a storyteller. The translation with metaphor omission deviates too far from the original, which leads to an unsuccessful operation.

Bronze and Sunflower contains rich emotions. Child readers can get influenced by those emotion descriptions and develop their own feelings and attitudes towards the world. In the process of translation, the translator should accurately grasp the subtle emotion conveyed by some specific words or metaphors in the original, so as to reproduce the emotional characteristics.

The original:

那些鸭,有一种相遇同类的兴奋,游归自己的队伍之后很长一阵时间,还处在兴奋之中。.....

这只公鸭,看上了人家鸭群里的一只母鸭,随了人家那支鸭群走了[17]。

The translation:

.....

This particular drake, however, had taken a fancy to one of the females in the other flock and followed that flock home [18].

Wang’s translation omitted this sentence “那些鸭,有一种相遇同类的兴奋,游归自己的队伍之后很长一阵时间,还处在兴奋之中。”(The ducks, with agitation of meeting each other, were still in a state of excitement for a long time even after they had rejoined their own flock.). The untranslated

original sentence employs personification metaphor to show that the ducks have the same emotions as humans do. Even if they are well trained, they may still be attracted to the opposite sex and get lost on the way home. In fact, the omitted part clearly implies the reason why the drake will be lost. Inappropriate metaphor omission creates a gap in the coherence and cohesion of the development of the event, and at the same time damages the author's style of description.

3.5. Inequivalent Metaphor Reproduction

The original:

五更天，爸爸出窝棚解小便，揉着眼睛朝远处一看，不禁大惊失色：有三堆大火，山一般高，正在燃烧[17]。

The translation:

In the early hours, Baba stepped out of the shelter to relieve himself and caught sight of something in the distance: three large fires were burning away, as high as the sky. The colour drained from his cheeks [18].

The Chinese idiom “大惊失色” in the original means “the face turned pale with fright”, which implies a conceptual metaphor --- FRIGHT IS COLOUR. To some degree, the level of panic is reflected in the change of face colour. “The colour drained from his cheeks” in the translation just only reproduces the change of face colour, but ignores the reason (fright) for the change which is an important clue to the situation at that time. In addition, as Xu Derong and Fan Yawen point out that there are some deficiencies in the style reconstruction and feature reproduction of some dialects, slang, idioms and four-character idiomatic phrases in Wang's translation [2]. Metaphors in Chinese dialects, slang, idioms and local phrases always have strong expressive force, emotional characteristics and aesthetic implication, and reflect the unique way of thinking of the local people. Through in-depth understanding of Chinese culture and customs, completely reproducing these metaphors will no doubt improve the quality of the translation and cultural exchange.

4. Conclusion

As can be seen from the above discussion, The metaphor translation strategies employed by Wang vary according to the degree of recipients' cognition and understanding on the source culture. In order to keep the freshness and originality of the metaphors in the original as well as its own cultural flavor, Wang tends to choose metaphor foreignization with the aim to reproduce the unique Chinese culture and the personalized ways the author thinks about things. Moreover, for the sake of solving untranslatability, overcoming the cultural barriers as well as bridging cognition gaps, metaphor domestication, and even partial or complete omission are used in the translation of *Bronze and Sunflower*. Through maintaining equivalence, adjustment, adaptation and manipulation, Wang makes the translation vivid, simple and accessible to the target audiences, which won her version success and high remarks. Chen Xianghong and Xu Liujuan discuss that Wang's high-quality version keeps consistent with the original work in terms of genre and style and has a high level of readability [24]. In

addition, the reviews on Amazon and Goodreads reveal that *Bronze and Sunflower* is well received among general readers. Of course, it should be pointed out that some metaphor omissions and inequivalent metaphor reproductions, which seem to have made the translation more obvious, simple, succinct and understandable to the target child readers, actually have to some degree destroyed the intertextuality of the original and the subtle and exquisite conception of the author.

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