

A Comparative Study of The Adventures of Tom Sawyer's Chinese Versions Based on Skopos Theory

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Abstract

Skopos theory proposed by Han Vermeer pointed out that the choice of strategy in the translation process is determined by the purpose of the translation. This not only makes up for the shortcomings of traditional translation theory, but also provides a theoretical basis for the translation of children's literature. Taking Mark Twain's The Adventures of Tom Sawyer as an example, the two Chinese versions are compared and analyzed in this article from the perspective of Skopos theory. Moreover, the guiding role of Skopos theory in the translation of children's literature is explored.

Keywords

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer; Skopos theory; Characteristics of Children's Literature.

1. Introduction

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer is a novel written by the famous American novelist Mark Twain. In children's eyes, this novel reveals the dull and rigid life of the southern American society in the 1850s and 1960s, and satirizes the vulgarity of citizens and the hypocrisy of bourgeois morality and religion. With its humorous, humorous language and keen observation of characters, the book has become the greatest children's literature work. Since its publication, the novel has been popular with readers and is an excellent children's novel. Therefore, studying the translation of The Adventures of Tom Sawyer from the perspective of Skopos theory helps Chinese readers better understand the meaning of the original text and the author's true purpose of writing, and experience the subtleties of the language concept of foreign literary works, to appreciate the local culture shown in the original text. This article selects the earliest translations, Zhang Yousong's translation published in 1960, and Zhu Jianxun's and Zheng Kang's translations published by Yilin Press in 2001 for comparative analysis. The two are nearly half a century apart, so translators and readers have different backgrounds, and translation methods and strategies in terms of vocabulary, grammar, and culture will also be different.

2. An Analysis of Skopos Theory

In the 1970s, functionalist translation theory emerged in Germany, and Skopos theory is the core theory of functionalism. First of all, in the book "Possibilities and Limitations of Translation Criticism", Catarina Rice proposed the idea of functionalist translation theory. Later, Han Vermeer founded the foundation theory of functionalist translation—Skopos theory. In Han Vermeer's theoretical framework, the most important factor determining the purpose of translation is the audience—the intended recipient of the translation. Skopos theorist believes

that translation is a cross-cultural human communication activity based on the original text. For Vermeer, translation is a type of human action, intentional, purposeful behavior that takes place in a given situation. It is a form of translation action based on a source text. He holds that any action has an aim, a purpose, so does the translation activity. The Greek word “skopos”, which was introduced into translation theory by Vermeer in the 1970s, is a technical term for the goal or purpose of a translation, that is what a translator is aiming at in the translation process. The core concept of Skopos theory is that translation strategies must be determined by the intended purpose or function of the translation. Vermeer proposes that translation is a human activity and any action has a purpose, so “translation is a purposeful activity”. Therefore, translation is “a text that is produced for a certain purpose and a target audience in the target context.” Skopos theorist believes that translation should follow the following three rules — Skopos rule, coherence rule and fidelity rule.

2.1. Skopos Rule

According to Skopos theory, the principle of all translation activities follow the “objective principle”, namely the translation should be in context and culture, according to the target text receivers' expected function types. The purpose of translation is to determine the whole process of translation, that is to say, the method of determining the outcome. But the translation activities can have multiple purposes, which are further divided into three categories: (1) the basic purpose of the translator; (2) the communicative purpose of the translation (such as enlightening); (3) to use some special means of translation purpose (such as to illustrate the special grammatical structure a language in a literal way) according to its structure. However, under normal circumstances, the “objective” refers to the communicative purpose of the translation, namely “translation of the target readers in the target language in the social-cultural context of communicative function”. therefore, the translator should make clear its specific purpose in a given translation context, and in accordance to determine the - between literal translation and free translation or between the translation method.

2.2. Coherence Rule

It refers to the translation must conform to inter-textual coherence standard, namely with readability and acceptability, can make the recipient understand and have significance in the target culture and the communicative context. Fidelity rule means that there should be interlingual coherence between the original and the translation (intertextual coherence). This is equivalent to what other translation theories call fidelity to the original text, but the degree and form of faithfulness with the source text depend on the purpose of the translation and the translator's understanding of the original text.

2.3. Fidelity Rule

Fidelity rule was put forward by Nord. She found that Skopos theorie has two drawbacks: first, because of the differences in cultural patterns, people with different cultural backgrounds have different views on good translation; in addition, if the intention principle required by the communicative purpose of the translation and the original author of the opposite, then we will abide by Skopos rule and fidelity rule. Therefore, Nord put forward fidelity rule to solve the relationship between cultural differences and the participants in the translation process. Nord believes that the translator has a moral obligation to the receiver and must explain to them what he has done and why.(Munday, 2010) This is part of fidelity rule. On the other hand, the translator is required to be loyal to the original author. The translator should respect the original author and coordinate the target text and the author's intention. Therefore, fidelity rule focuses on the relationship between the translator and the author, the customer, the receiver, and the participants in the translation process. Nord proposed that the translator should follow the guiding principle of “function plus fidelity”, which let the theory become more perfect.

Skopos rule explains that translation is determined by the purpose. Coherence rule mainly focuses on the coherence of form and meaning. Fidelity rule is faithful to the original writing. If there is a contradiction among the three principles, skopos rule should be put in the first place. The advantage of Skopos theory is that it allows the possibility of the same text being translated in different ways according to the purpose of the TT and the commission which is given to the translator.

3. Characteristics of Children's Literature

"Children's literature refers to various forms of literary works that are suitable for children's age, suitable for them to read, and beneficial to their physical and mental health." (Chen, 2003) Like other literary works, the creators and translators of children's literature are both adults, and their target readers are children. Therefore, the creators and translators of children's literature must fully consider the specificity of the target readers.

There are five characteristics of children's literature. The first is educational. Children's age determines that children are more susceptible to the influence of the surrounding environment, so children's literature pays more attention to education. The second is figurative. Children's age determines their psychological characteristics and thinking ability. Children are more willing to accept figurative and vivid things, but they are not easy to accept abstract sermons. Therefore, the education of children must consider whether the content or form is vivid. The third is fun. Because children are not rich in knowledge and life experience, and their understanding is relatively weak, children are not easy to understand more complicated things. This requires that children's literature works best to put educational content in interesting storylines and narrate more profound knowledge simply and understandably. The fourth is highly narrative. Children's age and experience determine that children prefer to listen to stories, which requires children's literature to have a clearly storyline. The fifth is intellectual. Children's instinctive and curious nature determines that children's curiosity is particularly strong, so literary works need to intersperse some intellectual things to increase the artistic charm of children's literary works and satisfy the curiosity of children.

4. A Comparative Analysis of Two Chinese Versions of The Adventures of Tom Sawyer

Language is the medium of literature, and different types of literary forms should adopt different forms of language. Children's psychological and physical aspects have not yet developed, and many factors such as limited social experience and common sense make children's literature translation different from other types of literary translation. The Adventures of Tom Sawyer is a masterpiece of the famous American writer Mark Twain. It is a treasure in children's literature. There are many translations of this book. Among them, the most representative are Zhang Yousong's translations, published in 1960, and Zhu Jianxun and Zheng Kang's translations, published in 2001. Since Skopos theory was not yet introduced to China in the 1980s, Zhang's translation was not completed under the guidance of it. He mainly adopted domestication and foreignization as a supplement. Based on the understanding of the original, Chinese and English, and the characteristics of children, Zhang's translation not only achieves the effect of delighting children and educating children, but is also popular with adults. Therefore, in the process of translation, Zhang Yousong has unconsciously embodied the basic principles of teleology. The translation of Zhu and Zheng published by Yilin Press in 2001 was about half a century later than Zhang's. Under the guidance of Skopos theory, Zhu Hezheng's

translation takes into account factors such as contemporary culture, children's reading interests, and language habits, and then adopts a more spoken and popular language. In order to prevent children from reading obstacles, they also abandoned obscure words. Zhang's version and Zhu and Zheng's version have similar translation purposes. Vermeer believes that "the purpose of translation determines the entire course of translation." However, under the influence of factors such as time, culture, and social background, translators have adopted different translation strategies, and the translations are also different.

4.1. Lexical Level

Children's language has its own characteristics. Chen Zidian believes that "the language of children's literature is easy, imaginative, musical, inspiring and humorous." (Chen, 2003) Jiang Feng believes that "Children's literature requires easy-to-understand, lively, and adapt to the intelligence, interests and hobbies of children of different ages." (Jiang, 1982) Vocabulary is the basic material of language. When translators select words, they must take into account the characteristics of children's language, so that they are concise, vivid, and rhythmic, so that literary works can be interesting and infectious.

Eg1: Nudges and winks and whispers traversed the room, but Tom sat still, with his arms upon the long, low desk before him, and seemed to study his book.

Zhang's Translation: 教室里大家用胳膊肘互相推一推, 眨眨眼睛, 咬咬耳朵, 可是汤姆安安静静地坐着, 胳膊放在前面那条矮矮的长书桌上, 装作看书的样子。

Zhu and Zheng's Translation: 教室里的孩子们互相捅捅胳膊, 眨眨眼睛咬咬耳朵; 汤姆却安安稳稳的坐着,

Eg2: then he skipped out.

Zhang's: 然后他就跳着出去。

Zhu and Zheng's: 然后他蹦蹦跳跳的跑出去。

Reduplicated words, with a strong sense of rhythm, appear more frequently in children's literature, give readers a dynamic imagination, are in line with children's reading interests and are welcomed by children, however, there is no such expression in English. (Yan, 1998) According to the coherence rule, the translation should be meaningful in the target language culture and the communicative environment in which it is used, consistent with the reading habits and cultural background of the target language readers. Therefore, translators can choose domesticated translation strategies. In Eg1, the two translators used the reduplicated words to translate the original verbs "nudge", "wink", and "whisper", which made the translation more vivid. The readers will also draw a dynamic picture in their minds when reading. Eg2 describes the happy mood of Tom when he was praised by his aunt after finishing the wall. Zhang translated the word skip as "跳着", expressing the basic meaning of the original text so that readers can understand. And Zhu and Zheng chose "蹦蹦跳跳" which reads loud and dynamic. That word expresses Tom's mood vividly so as to resonate with children.

4.2. Grammatical Level

There are many differences between Chinese and English in terms of grammar. English habitually uses a passive voice, with the subject acting as the subject. The subject is acting as the agent and is usually a living object in Chinese. English pays attention to the completeness and logic of the structural form of a sentence. A long sentence may be composed of multiple clauses with many modifiers, among which there are many subordinate connectives, which are modified layer by layer. While in Chinese, the meaning is heavy, the structure of the sentence is loose, and the internal relationship of the components is relatively implied. Although the linguistic structure is different, the meaning of the deep structure is the same. (Zhao, 2017)

Therefore, translators should make appropriate adjustments according to the expression habits of children's readers when translating.

Eg3: Mary gave him a tub basin of water and a piece of soap, and he went outside the door and set the basin on a little bench there; then dipped the soap in the water and laid it down.

Zhang's: 玛丽给他一洋铁盆的水和一块肥皂, 他把水端到门外去, 把盆子放在那儿的一张小板凳上, 然后把肥皂放到盆里蘸点水, 又把它搁下。

Zhu and Zheng's: 玛丽给他端来一盆水, 还有那一块肥皂, 他把水端到门外, 放在只小板凳上, 然后把肥皂在水里蘸了蘸, 搁在旁边。

This scene happened before Tom went to Sunday school. Mary wanted to clean him up and let him wash his face. Tom took a series of actions after receiving the basin, "went out", "set...on..." "dipped", "laid...down", both translators have adopted domesticated translation strategies, using the "Ba" construction commonly used in Chinese to express. This scene happened before Tom went to Sunday school. Mary wanted to clean him up and let him wash his face. Tom took a series of actions after receiving the basin, "went out", "set ... on ..." "Dipped", "laid...down", both translators have adopted domesticated translation strategies, using the "Ba" clause commonly used in Chinese to express.

Zhang's translation used four "ba" sentences, and this series of actions impressed the young readers: The clean child who was not used to washing his face brought the water to the outside, only pretending to have washed his face with soap. This translation method shows a sense of rhythm, and produces a funny effect. Zhu and Zheng's translation uses two "Ba" construction. In this way, the basic meaning of the original text is also basically clear, but it is not as vivid as Zhang's translation.

4.3. Cultural Level

The act of translation is actually an act of intercultural communication. Culture is an important factor affecting translation behavior. In different cultures, people have different world views and values. Only when the translation is meaningful in the target culture can it convey the message to the reader and make the reader understand the western culture. To achieve this, translators should understand the cultural and social background of the original text, and even the author's life experience and values. Under the guidance of teleology, some special translation strategies are often needed to deal with problems caused by factors such as language and cultural differences. Language is the carrier of culture. Skopos theory believes that "translation is a cultural comparison, a cross-cultural communication in a certain cultural context, and a translation into a grand cultural context for examination." Generally speaking, most of them don't know much about foreign cultures. Therefore, translators should consider the acceptability and background of the target language readers when encountering translation culture-loaded words, proverbs and idioms.

Eg4: Tom sill bung fire.

"Now I know you'll tell me," said the lady. "The names of the first disciples were —" "DAVID AND GOLIAH!".

Let us draw the curtain of charity over the rest of the scene.

Zhang's: 汤姆仍旧不肯开口。"好吧, 我知道你会告诉我," 那位太太说, "最初两个门徒的名字是——""大卫和哥利亚!" 我们还是发点慈悲, 就此闭幕吧, 这出戏不必再往下看了(大卫是以色列王, 耶稣的祖先; 哥利亚是与以色列为敌的非利士巨人, 大卫少年时用飞石把他打死了。耶稣首先选定的两个门徒是彼得和安德鲁。汤姆答的是牛头不对马嘴。但是他自己很顽皮, 爱打架, 所以对大卫打死哥利亚的故事一定很感兴趣, 这时候就脱口而出, 把他们的名字说出来了)。

Zhu and Zheng's: 汤姆依然不吭声。“哦，我知道你会告诉我的”那位女士说，“最初两个门徒名叫——”“大卫和哥利亚!”我们还是发发慈悲,就此闭幕吧,这出闹剧不必再往下演了(古以色列国王,据基督教《圣经》载,系耶稣的祖先;哥利亚:《圣经·旧约》的《撒母耳记》中记载的非利士族巨人,为大卫所杀。耶稣首先选定的两个门徒是彼得和安德鲁。汤姆自己顽皮好斗,所以大卫对打死哥利亚的故事记得很清楚,情急之中把他们的名字脱口说出来了)。

Eg4 is a punchline in this novel. Tom was rewarded with a Bible, which was an honorable prize to be obtained by the recitation of two thousand verses. However, in fact, he would not recite the content at all. When asked who the first two disciples of Jesus were, he could not answer. With the encouragement of the judge, in order to save a little face, he made up two names that made people laugh. Although children and adolescents in China know the Bible, they know very little about its details. Therefore, if it is translated into David and Goliath, it will not be funny for children to appreciate the humor. Therefore, both translators made a long footnote explaining the origins of the two characters and why Tom answered the two names. In this way, children not only enrich their knowledge, but also meet their learning needs.

5. Conclusion

In the translation process of foreign literary masterpieces, the application of teleological translation theory has become more and more extensive. Skopos theory can guide translators to fully convey the original meaning of language use to readers on the basis of understanding the meaning of the original text. As an important part of the translation theory system, the application of Skopos theory has greatly helped translators expand their horizons when translating foreign literary works, and can implicitly convey the emotions behind the language to readers. However, children's literature translation requires the translators to consider the language habits and psychological behaviors of the target language children in the translation process to reproduce the childlike taste and style of the original text. However, children's literature translation requires the translators to consider the language habits and psychological behaviors of the target language children in the translation process to reproduce the childlike taste and style of the original text. In translation practice, Skopos theory is suitable for children's literature translation. Translators must always remember that the target audience of translation is children. In short, Skopos theory opens up a new perspective for cross-cultural communication and has a guiding role in the translation of children's literature.

Acknowledgments

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