

Original Paper

The Study on Localization of *Bronze and Sunflower*

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Abstract

*Cao Wenxuan's works are a typical representative of "going out" in Chinese children's literature. In April 2016, Cao Wenxuan won the Hans Christian Andersen Award, the highest award for children's literature in the world. This achievement is closely related to the translator's translation ability. This paper takes the English translation of *Bronze and Sunflower* by Cao Wenxuan (translator Helen Wang) as the research object, and aims to explore the translation strategies suitable for the localization of *Bronze and Sunflower*, which can be divided into three aspects: landscape description, folk poetry, eastern sensibility. This paper explores the advantages and disadvantages of the English translation of *Bronze and Sunflower*, and provides a new perspective and possibility for the English translation of Chinese children's literature.*

Keywords

*children's literature, localization translation strategy, *Bronze and Sunflower*, Cao Wenxuan, English translation*

1. Introduction

In April 2016, Cao Wenxuan's masterpiece, *Bronze and Sunflower*, won the Hans Christian Andersen Award, the world's highest award for children's literature, marking the first time that China's children's literature opened up the international market and won praise on the world stage. This was a groundbreaking success and was inseparable from Helen Wang, the translator of the *Bronze and Sunflower*. The translator has given the work a new vitality in the English language environment, and has played an indispensable role in the overseas dissemination of *Bronze and Sunflower*. Therefore, taking *Bronze and Sunflower* as a typical research object of localization translation strategy will help to provide reference for the translation of more Chinese literary works in the future.

The famous translation theorist, Hans Vermeer, argues that, "The first factor that determines the translation process is the purpose of the translation. The purpose determines that the translator must

clearly understand and choose a certain translation strategy. On the basis of a full understanding of the source text, the translator must communicate and communicate with the original author and the target reader through the target language. On the one hand, the translator should accurately understand and interpret the original author's intentions, and on the other hand, the translation should be accepted by the reader. ” (Xie, 2000) In the context of the increasingly globalized world, the translation of our Chinese literary works should be one of the main purposes of overseas dissemination. Although *Bronze and Sunflower* has attracted wide attention around the world, there is still much room for expanding the depth and breadth of the study and strengthening exchanges and cooperation at home and abroad, in order to promote Chinese works to the world. Localization can meet the needs of emphasizing and disseminating local cultural identity and regional characteristics in cross-cultural communication in various countries. It can also integrate the cultural characteristics of the translated place and the needs of readers, which is the key factor to successfully promote various cultural products to the world.

Localization refers to the translation of the local language, habits, and customs, without giving up the characteristics of the local language, habits, and customs, emphasizing the important position of the local culture, "In the context of globalization, re highlighting local identity and endowing local cultural identity awareness with the ability to reconstruct, highlighting differences, and promoting the formation of regional and ethnic cultural diversity patterns." (Sun, 2008) Based on this, the research will focus on the localization of landscape description, folk poetry, and oriental emotions in *Bronze and Sunflower*, and sort out and analyze the advantages and disadvantages of the translation.

2. Localization of Landscape Descriptions

One distinctive feature that distinguishes Cao from other contemporary children's literature writers is his poetic language expression. He once proposed a literary proposition that "beauty and thought are equally important" (Cao, 2002). Cao is skilled at infusing the emotions of characters and the author's own aesthetic pursuit in numerous landscape descriptions. Landscape descriptions reflect Cao's unique writing style, rendering the rich emotional atmosphere in the work and conveying a fresh and simple aesthetic feeling to readers.

In the first two chapters of *Bronze and Sunflower*, landscape descriptions occupy a large amount of space, depicting both the spiritual yearning for the blooming sunflower fields and the deep attachment to the river, depicting the unique Chinese style landscape of Damaidi Village (originally a water town in northern Jiangsu).

However, in the process of translating landscape descriptions, the translator clearly faces the problem of being straightforward, lacking interests and aesthetics. American translator Eugene A Nida proposed the theory of functional equivalence, which aimed to achieve functional equivalence between two languages instead of pursuing literal equivalence. (Nida, 2004) Therefore, translators can unleash their personal creativity and adopt Free Translation based on the original meaning of the source text. The translator should first deeply immerse themselves in understanding the beauty of light, sound, color,

and the combination of motion and stillness in the source text, and experience the profound emotional foundation beneath the surface of the text in expressing emotions through scenery, embodying emotions in scenery, and blending emotions and scenery, before proceeding with translation. The following text will discuss through two translation examples. For example:

2.1 Example 1

Source text:

大河，一条不见头尾的大河。流水不知从哪里流过来，也不知流向哪里去。昼夜流淌，水清得发蓝。两岸都是芦苇，它们护送着流水，由西向东，一路流去。流水的哗哗声与芦苇的沙沙声，仿佛是情意绵绵的絮语。流水在芦苇间流动着，一副耳鬓厮磨的样子。但最终还是流走了——前面的流走了，后面的又流来了，没完没了。芦苇被流水摇动着，颤抖的叶子，仿佛被水调皮地胳肢了。天天、月月、年年，水与芦苇就这样互不厌烦地嬉闹着 (Cao, 2011, p. 6)

Target text:

Between Sunflower and the village was the river, a big river with no beginning or end in sight, flowing all day and all night, never ending. The reeds on either side stood guard over its journey from west to east. The river and reeds whispered and chuckled like best friends, teasing and twitching. Day after day, month after month, year after year, they played together tirelessly. (CAO, 2015, p. 5)

In the example 1, “流水的哗哗声与芦苇的沙沙声，仿佛是情意绵绵的絮语”，“哗哗”and“沙沙” are unique onomatopoeic words in Chinese, which directly imitate natural sounds. It is difficult to find highly equivalent substitute words in the English language, demonstrating the characteristics of Chinese. The translator chose not to translate here to avoid a decline in translation quality, but this cannot directly solve the root cause of the problem. However, linguistic facts tell us that no matter how lifelike onomatopoeic words simulate sound, the sound produced by objective things may not necessarily be exactly the same as the sound of language, because the connection between language symbols and objective things is not necessarily, directly, and all-in-one, but is agreed upon, thought through, and only includes some (essential) features.” (Fu, 2001) Therefore, translators can still exert their subjective initiative and use English onomatopoeic words such as dingdong, rustling, bubble, etc. to fill in gaps. At the same time, onomatopoeic words are formed through thinking and, through the application of thinking, are imbued with emotions in sound, onomatopoeic objects, and make people feel emotional when listening to sound. On the one hand, they display the strength and image of language, greatly enhancing its expressive power; on the other hand, they also demonstrate the national and personal nature of thinking.” (Bao, 2020) In the source text, the word“胳肢”comes from the dialects of Northeast China and Beijing. As a gesture of gently touching others with fingers or other objects, it often occurs when intimate and friendly people are playing and laughing. For vocabulary that reflects Chinese characteristics, translators can directly use the Chinese pinyin “胳肢”to supplement and explain the meaning of the action, in order to compensate for the language features in the source text. The onomatopoeic words that appear in Bronze and Sunflower often serve to convey the fun and rhythm of the work, and cannot be deleted arbitrarily.

2.2 Example 2

Source text:

他看到空中飘满了葵花。

这些画稿在空中忽悠着，最后一张张飘落在水面上。说来也真是不可思议，那些画稿飘落在水面上时，竟然没有一张是背面朝上的。一朵朵葵花在碧波荡漾的水波上，令人心醉神迷地开放着。当时的天空，一轮太阳，光芒万丈。(Zheng, Wang, & Zhang, 2022)

Target text:

The painted sunflowers fluttered briefly, then floated down, one by one, onto the water. One yellow flower after another, they landed face upwards, drifting on a river of jade. As the golden sun filled the sky, casting its brightness far and wide, he felt intoxicated, invigorated, liberated. (Wang, 2010)

In the source text, the language is concise, the meaning is rich, and the paragraph is easy to use. “他看到空中飘满了葵花” uses the writing technique of blank space, forming a separate paragraph. “At the level of language use in the novel, blank space is manifested as the suppression and deletion of modifiers, adjectives, and uncertain vocabulary, with a simple and concise style” (Yuan, 2005). The sentence “他看到空中飘满了葵花” only uses the word “看” to describe the actions of the sunflower father, omitting adjectives with personal emotions, deliberately hiding the emotions of the characters, leaving emotional gaps, laying the foundation for the description of the sunflower painting in the following text. When translating paragraphs with implicit and tactful emotional expressions in Chinese, translators can use compilation techniques to clarify the emotions of the article, “re-edit the content of the source text, adjust the word order of the source text, with the aim of making the translation more organized, the main idea clearer, and the structure more compact. The translation is easier for the target language readers to read through compilation. The sentence.” (Chen & Wang, 2011). “他看到空中飘满了葵花” hides his father's surprise, admiration, and intoxication towards the sunflowers in the sky, but this is not reflected in the translation, which creates a certain understanding obstacle. It can be presented more directly using the compilation method. “说来也真是不可思议” and “竟然没有一张背面朝上” are surreal descriptions.

However, the textual response to this magical scene is still relatively subtle. When Literal Translation enters an English context with exaggerated and bold emotional expressions, it appears plain and without twists and turns. Therefore, the translator can translate this as an exclamation sentence structure. As the conclusion of the description of the scenery at that time, “当时的天空，一轮太阳，光芒万丈”. The author treated it as a beautiful and stagnant freeze frame image to give readers a spiritual shock, which cannot be merged arbitrarily. Therefore, the translator can also separate sections here and then perform landscape description translation to present an emphasis effect.

3. Localization of Folk Poetry

“Folk songs are the songs of the people, which have gradually formed and developed through extensive oral transmission and practice among the general public in social life.” (Wang, 2004) For thousands of

years, the Chinese folk people have created many beautiful and simple artistic melodies through social life practice, carrying and recording the stories, experiences, consciousness, and emotions encountered in life, praising the labor spirit, lifestyle, marriage, regional characteristics, customs and traditions of the folk people. The lyrics often contain unique ethnic culture and strong ethnic emotions, and showcase the vibrant feast of Chinese culture.

As the prototype of *Bronze and Sunflower*, there are a large number of traditional folk songs in the water towns of northern Jiangsu. Cao uses the method of interweaving traditional folk song lyrics and paragraphs in many parts of his works, deeply showcasing the true flavor of the landscape characters in the barley field. Traditional folk songs are an indispensable touch of local charm in *Bronze and Sunflower*, playing a role in promoting and spreading traditional Chinese culture in the process of translation into English language and going abroad.

“Contemporary British translation theorist Newmark also believes that different translation strategies should be adopted for different literary texts. He divided the text into three types: expressive, informative, and vocative. Expressive literary works such as novels, poetry, and other literary works aimed at introducing the source language culture should adopt semantic translation, which aims to convey the semantic content of the source text and maintain the author's personal emotional color, literary style, structural form.....” Therefore, when translating folk poetry, it is necessary to have a deep understanding of the cultural customs of the translated language and adopt semantic translation.

3.1 Example 1:

Source text:

四月蔷薇养蚕忙，
姑嫂双双去采桑。
桑篮挂在桑树上，
抹把眼泪捋把桑...

Target text:

When roses bloom in the spring
And the silkworm season begins,
The women go out to pick mulberry leaves In pairs, in pairs.
Their baskets hang from the mulberry trees And they strip the branches bare
In tears, in tears.

This song constructs a scene of working women in rural areas picking mulberry trees together in April, showcasing a fresh and simple folk flavor. “四月蔷薇采桑忙” highlights the time background with scenery, while “抹把眼泪捋把桑” showcases the bitterness and helplessness of rural women's lives at the bottom, reflecting the author's humanistic care.

The four lines of lyrics in the example sentence are concise and meaningful, with coordinated sound and rhyme, making it easy to spread. In the translation, the sentences are concise and the structure is restored using “in pairs” and “in tears”. Each sentence ends in rhyme, taking into account the three

aspects of imagery, form, and rhythm, making it a high-quality translation.

3.2 Example 2

Source text:

粽子香，
香厨房。
艾叶香，
香满堂。
桃枝插在大门上，
出门一望麦儿黄。
这儿端阳，
那儿端阳.....

Target text:

The rice cakes smell sweet,
Their scent fills the kitchen.
The leaves smell so sweet,
Their scent fills the house...

The translator here only chose to translate “粽子香，香厨房。艾叶香，香满堂” and the subsequent content was translated. However, it is worth noting that between “桃枝插在大门上” and “端阳”，“端阳” is another name for China's Dragon Boat Festival, while “桃枝插在大门上” is a folk custom of the Dragon Boat Festival, used to ward off evil and protect the safety of homes. Both of these contents belong to the category of traditional Chinese culture and should be translated. In addition, “这儿端阳，那儿端阳” depicts the busy and lively atmosphere of every household during the folk Dragon Boat Festival, and is not omitted properly. At the same time, in the source text, the folk song emphasizes rhyme at the end of the sentence, and the structure is neat. Although the translation achieves a corresponding structure, there is still a lot of loss of the original meaning, which needs improvement. Therefore, research suggests that the technique of rhyme at the end of a sentence should be maintained, and additional explanations should be provided for the details that were not explicitly stated in the Chinese context of the source text due to its implicit nature.

4. Localization of Eastern Emotions

As a Chinese writer, Cao is deeply influenced by the implicit emotional concept, and his aesthetic pursuit is not limited to the description of scenery and environment, but also expressed in the emotional communication of language. He often focuses on portraying the emotional relationships of characters that are pure and beautiful, and in the perspective of children, he expresses profound and complex emotions that are difficult to summarize in concise words and sentences, making every plant and tree in the article a medium for emotional language. In 1999, Sun Zhili proposed the concept of "culture facsimile", which requires translators to “accurately reproduce the meaning, way, and style conveyed

by the original work from an emotional perspective, construct the same psychological pattern as the original work, and generate the same emotional resonance on this basis.” Therefore, translators need to rely more on the context of the entire text and immerse themselves in the story context to appreciate the deep emotions that the author intends to convey.

Merely appreciating is not enough to achieve high-quality translations, and methodological guidance is also needed. Firstly, translators should adopt flexible literary translation methods and follow Mr. Qian Zhongshu's Sublimation Theory, which states that "the highest ideal of literary translation can be said to be 'transformation'. Transforming a work from one country's writing to another can not only avoid the traces of hardness and tension due to differences in language habits, but also fully preserve the flavor of the original work, which is considered entering a state of sublimation.” During the translation process, translators should overcome the differences in language habits between the two countries, seek the natural sense of the translation, and avoid being too far fetched or choosing words too rigidly.

4.1 Example 1

Source text:

过路的船上，有人看到那么一条长长的岸上，坐了一个小小的女孩，心里就会觉得天太大了，地太大了，太大的天与太大的地之间太空了。

Target text:

They would feel the vastness of the sky and the vastness of the earth, a vastness that seemed to go on for ever.

In the source text, “天太大了，地太大了，太大的天与太大的地之间太空了” appeared when Kuihua boarded a ship to pick apricots in Jiangnan to raise money for her seriously ill grandmother. However, her personal strength was too small to withstand the heavy development of fate, which made readers feel helpless and sad. However, the translation here is simply treated as "空" in physical space, copying the literal meaning of it, but without analyzing the underlying meaning of desolation here. If using Free Translation, it can be translated as vastness, while the existence of the little girl is too insignificant, forming a direct contrast and expressing the potential meaning directly, making it easier for overseas readers to understand.

5. Conclusion

Under the guidance of translation theories or propositions by translators such as Hans Vermeer, Eugene A Nida, and Fu Jingmin, this study conducts a multi-level analysis of the landscape description, folk poetry, and Eastern emotions in *Bronze and Sunflower*. It is found that translators have shortcomings in understanding Cao's poetic language expression, local characteristic poetry language, and emotional transmission. These are the problems that exist in the English translation of *Bronze and Sunflower*, and are also the common and urgent challenges that need to be overcome in the entire Chinese children's literature. Translators need to improve their quality, deeply explore the deep information in the original language, and then use the advantages of their mother tongue to translate and convert, in order to

provide international readers of all ages with interesting, informative, and valuable reading experiences. They need to overcome regional and language barriers, convey the aesthetic concepts, emotional concepts, and Chinese characteristics of *Bronze and Sunflower*, and promote more excellent children's literature works in China to go abroad.

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