

The Application of Domestication and Foreignization in English-Chinese Translations of Children's Literature: A Case Study of the Secret Garden

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Abstract: Children's literature serves as a crucial gateway for children to delve into the literary world and understand the universe around them. Therefore, the translation of children's literature holds paramount importance. Throughout history, a myriad of translation methodologies have emerged. This article opts to analyze two distinct Chinese translations of the American children's novel, *The Secret Garden*, one by Zhang Runfang and the other by Zhang Ling and Huang Yong. By exploring the nuances in perspective, logic, and emotion between these versions, this study aims to discern whether a domestication or foreignization strategy is more apt for translating children's literature, ultimately drawing significant conclusions.

1. Introduction

The Secret Garden was first published in 1911 and quickly became a sensation, selling well in countries like the UK and the US. It has also been adapted into movies, plays, children's books, stage productions, and cartoons. The book tells the story of a lonely girl named Mary who goes to live with her uncle after the death of her parents. There, she discovers the key to a secret garden that had taken her aunt's life and befriends a boy named Dickon. Through the process of restoring the garden, Mary gradually becomes optimistic and cheerful. She also discovers her cousin Colin, who has been bedridden for ten years and is unable to stand. After meeting Mary, Colin is gradually influenced by her optimism and confidence, and he slowly recovers and becomes a healthy person. In the US, the book is often used as an English teaching material in schools because the language used by the author, Frances Hodgson Burnett, is accessible and vivid, making it suitable for children to read.

Zhang Runfang's Chinese translation of *The Secret Garden* and the translations by Zhang Ling and Huang Yong have their own unique features. Additionally, as *The Secret Garden* is a well-known children's book, translators need to consider the cultural level of children and make the language and words as simple and understandable as possible. By comparing the original text with the translations, this paper will analyze the methods used by Zhang Runfang, Zhang Ling, and Huang Yong in translating *The Secret Garden* from the perspectives of domestication and foreignization. It will also discuss the advantages and disadvantages of domestication and foreignization in children's literature

and evaluate the final expression effect of the translations.

2. The concepts of Domestication and Foreignization

(1) Development of domestication and foreignization strategies

The terms "domestication" and "foreignization" were first proposed by German scholar F. Schleiermacher in "On the Different Methods of Translating." He pointed out that there are two methods of translation: one that brings the reader closer to the author and one that brings the author closer to the reader. However, he did not give specific terms to these two translation methods. Later, renowned American translator Lawrence Venuti formally introduced the terms "domestication" and "foreignization" in his work "The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation" in 1995. "Domestication" requires translators to keep the author as unchanged as possible and guide the reader closer to the author, while "foreignization" requires translators to keep the reader as unchanged as possible and guide the author closer to the reader^[1]. In other words, domestication aims to make the target language readers feel as if they are reading in their native language, while foreignization aims to preserve the foreign elements and cultural nuances of the source language.

(2) The debate between domestication and foreignization

Venuti expressed his preference for the foreignization strategy. In the history of translation, there have been many binary oppositions, such as the "faithfulness" versus "formal equivalence" debate in China and the "literal translation" versus "free translation" debate in the West, which also includes the debate about "domestication" and "foreignization." Zhang Zhizhong (2005) discussed domestication and foreignization from the perspectives of cultural content and linguistic form, pointing out that "the strategies of foreignization and domestication are in a constant state of flux, with one advancing while the other retreats, resulting in a situation where there is no clear distinction between them^[2]." Zhu Anbo (2010) also pointed out that there is no clear boundary between domestication and foreignization in translation practice, and there is no absolute domestication or foreignization^[3]. Moreover, when domestication and foreignization proponents summarize their translation tendencies, they often rely on personal experiences and insights from a few individual examples, rather than objective facts. They have not fully proven their claims to occupy a dominant position in translation practice.

In light of this, it can be seen that both domestication and foreignization have their advantages in the practice of translation. Therefore, in actual translation processes, translators tend to combine domestication and foreignization. Excessive domestication can impact the transmission, communication, and mutual influence between cultures. On the other hand, excessive foreignization can result in translations that are difficult to understand, ultimately diminishing the reader's interest in reading (Tian Yaya, 2022)^[4].

3. Current Situation of Children's Literature Translation

Early research on the translation of children's literature was predominantly Western-focused. Paul Azzaro (2014) provided a comprehensive experiential review of the cross-cultural impact and international dissemination of children's literature, including translation. In its initial stages, the translation of children's literature was largely influenced by a "utilitarian" approach, constrained by prevailing views of children's literature. However, the development of children's literature theory and criticism also influences the academic perspectives of translation researchers. Influenced by the new critical theory, children's literature criticism in the 1960s mainly centered around the text, emphasizing that children's literature should be subject to the same literary critical standards as adult literature (Li Wenna, Zhu Jianping, 2021)^[5]. On the other hand, Hunt (1991:16) argued that children's literature translation should be child-centric, with adults reading as children do, shifting the research

perspective to "childist criticism"^[6]."

In contrast, research on children's literature in China has not received much attention. In the history of translating children's literature in China, notable translators such as Lu Xun, Mao Dun, and Ye Junjian played significant roles. Children's literature differs from other forms of literature due to its specific audience. It possesses the following characteristics: Educational: Children's literature places a strong emphasis on education because children's age-related characteristics make them more susceptible to the influence of their surroundings. Imagery: Given children's limited cognitive capacities, it is crucial for educational content to be presented vividly and in an engaging manner. Entertainment: Since children have limited knowledge and life experience, and their understanding is still developing, children's literature works best when it conveys profound truths through interesting storylines and easily understandable language. Narrative: Children's age and life experiences predispose them to a preference for storytelling. Hence, children's literature needs to feature compelling storylines. Informative: Children's innate curiosity drives their strong desire for knowledge. Therefore, children's literature should aim to educate while entertaining (Wang Xueyao, Zhou Lixin, 2022)^[7].

4. The Use of Domestication and Foreignization Strategies in *The Secret Garden*

(1) Analysis of the Use of Domestication and Foreignization Translation Strategies at the Personal Pronoun Perspective

Example 1: When she opened her eyes in the morning it was because a young housemaid had come into her room to light the fire and was kneeling on the hearthrug raking out the cinders noisily.

This sentence is from the beginning of the fourth chapter and describes Mary's first encounter with the housemaid, Martha. Liu Miqing pointed out that English and Chinese differ in the frequency of pronoun usage, especially personal pronouns. English tends to use pronouns, whereas Chinese often uses repeated nouns (Liu Miqing, 1998)^[8]. In the original text, this sentence at the beginning of the fourth chapter uses the personal pronoun "she" directly without specifying Mary.

In Zhang's translation, a foreignization strategy is used to retain the original treatment, and the subject uses "她" (she). However, in Chinese expression habits, at the beginning of a chapter, specific names are often used to avoid ambiguity, instead of using personal pronouns. In Zhang and Huang's translation, a domestication strategy is employed to translate "she" as "玛丽" (Mary), which is more in line with Chinese expression habits and makes it easier for readers to understand.

Example 2: That reminded Mary of the first time she had seen him.

This sentence is from the fifth chapter, where Mary sees a robin flying freely in the sky. The use of domestication and foreignization strategies in translation depends on the focus of the narrative. English often uses object-oriented expressions, describing how objective things affect a person's perception, presenting things in an objective tone. Chinese, on the other hand, places more emphasis on subjectivity, describing objective things from the perspective of the self, or tending to describe people and their actions or states, often using personal pronouns. When personal pronouns can be omitted or implied, they are often omitted (Lian Shuneng, 2010: 104-105)^[9]. In the original text, the author uses pronouns as the subject, referring to the preceding description of the robin's flight. In Zhang's translation, a foreignization strategy is used to translate "that" as "这" (this), remaining faithful to the original expression. In Zhang and Huang's translation, a domestication strategy is employed, with Mary as the subject, which is more in line with the Chinese habit of describing objective facts from the perspective of the self and using personal pronouns. For children, whose language abilities are limited, excessive exposure to foreignized translation texts is not conducive to their language learning. Therefore, in cases like this, using a domestication strategy is more beneficial for children's learning and development.

(2) Analyzing the Use of Domestication and Foreignization Practices from a Logical Relationship Perspective

Example 3: Her father had held a position under the English Government and had always been busy and ill himself.

This sentence is from the first chapter, first section, and primarily introduces Mary's basic family situation, depicting her as having parents but being in a helpless predicament.

In the original text, "had always been busy and ill himself" refers to Mary's father being very busy with work and not in good health, without explicitly indicating a cause-and-effect relationship between his work and his health. In Zhang's translation, a foreignization strategy is used to translate it as "he himself was always sick," staying true to the original wording.

However, in Zhang and Huang's translation, a domestication strategy is employed, translating the sentence as "constantly busy and even wearing himself out," suggesting that Mary's father's health issues are a result of his busy work. English is an analytic language, so it often directly uses conjunctions like "because," "so," or "as a result" to indicate cause-and-effect relationships, while Chinese is a synthetic language where sentence relationships are often implicit and do not require the use of conjunctions like "因为" (because) or "所以" (so). The original text does not use explicit causal conjunctions, and, to some extent, the addition of such causal language is an instance of over-translation based on the translator's interpretation, not entirely faithful to the original.

Children, during the concrete operational stage, already have the ability to engage in concrete logical reasoning. Since the original text does not clearly express a cause-and-effect relationship, it is suitable to use a foreignization strategy in such cases to respect the logical structure of the original and avoid affecting children's logical reasoning.

Example 4: When she opened her eyes in the morning it was because a young housemaid had come into her room to light the fire and was kneeling on the hearthrug raking out the cinders noisily.

This sentence is from the first sentence of the fourth chapter, marking Mary's first encounter with the housemaid Martha. In Zhang's translation, a foreignization strategy is used to maintain the direct cause-and-effect relationship of the original text, using "因为" as a direct causal conjunction to indicate that Mary was awakened by the noise of the maid Martha's cleaning. This approach is in line with the original style and expression habits.

In Zhang and Huang's translation, a domestication strategy is employed, and no direct causal conjunction is used. This approach is more in line with Chinese expression habits. However, this translation method does not convey the reason for Mary's awakening, and since children tend to use sensory thinking to understand and describe the world, with limited rational thinking abilities, they may not infer whether Mary woke up naturally or was awakened by the noise, resulting in an ambiguous meaning, not entirely faithful to the original.

(3) Analyzing the Use of Domestication and Foreignization Translation Strategies from an Emotional Perspective

Example 5: Her mother had been a great beauty who cared only to go to parties and amuse herself with gay people.

In the original text, the author used the expression "gay people," where "gay" means happy and colorful, referring to Mary's mother's enjoyment of socializing and having fun with others. In Zhang's translation, a domestication strategy is used to translate this as "寻欢作乐" turning an adjective into a verb phrase, which is more in line with the Chinese grammatical habits of using verbs. Additionally, the phrase carries a strongly negative connotation, while the original term "gay" is not negative. Compared to the original text, this phrase better conveys Mary's mother's indulgence in pleasure and her indifference to Mary.

Similarly, Zhang and Huang's translation uses a domestication strategy. This version does not carry the negative connotation found in Zhang's translation, aligning more with the emotional expression

of the original. This indicates that when translators encounter emotional content in the original text, they tend to use a domestication strategy to retain the emotional tone of the original or even intensify it, allowing children to experience the dramatic tension.

Example 6: The next day, the rain poured down in torrents again, and when Mary looked out of her window the moor was almost hidden by gray mist and cloud. There could be no going out today.

This sentence is from the sixth chapter. At this point, Mary has already fallen in love with the joy of the garden and hopes to play there every day. However, it rained that day, and she had to stay indoors.

In Zhang's translation, a foreignization strategy is used to preserve the original expression habits based on the content and expression of the original text. "There could be no going out today" is translated as "今天晚上没人会出去" meaning that no one could go out, including Mary.

In Zhang and Huang's translation, this sentence is rendered as "今天她无论如何也没办法出去了" using a domestication strategy and making the subject "她" which aligns more with Chinese expression habits. Child readers can immediately feel Mary's desire to go outside and her disappointment at not being able to. Children's thinking tends to be self-centered, with a strong assimilative nature, meaning that children, in the process of understanding the world, have not yet closely integrated objective analytical processes and often incorporate their subjective desires, considering themselves a central part of objective things (Wang Yuanyuan, 2022)^[10]. Based on this psychology, when reading, children tend to place themselves in the protagonist's emotions. Therefore, using a domestication strategy to highlight the subject "Mary" can be more emotionally engaging for child readers.

From the above example, it can be seen that in children's literature, when translators encounter passages with emotional content, they often use a domestication strategy to allow the emotional tone of the original text to be conveyed, and sometimes even enhanced.

5. Conclusion

The Secret Garden is a classic of romantic children's literature, healing generation after generation and inspiring people's awe for life and enthusiasm for living. For the Chinese translations of this work, there are many excellent versions available, each with its unique merits. However, their common goal is to allow Chinese readers to experience the charm of this classic literature. Translators may tend to use either domestication or foreignization strategies during the translation process. For example, Zhang Runfang tends to use a foreignization strategy, while Zhang Ling and Huang Yong lean more towards domestication. However, more often than not, domestication and foreignization strategies are blended in translation practice. This paper compared and analyzed six example sentences from two versions of the translation. The following conclusions were drawn: when translating emotional and personal content, it is advisable to use a domestication strategy, to avoid deviating from children's native language and comprehension. In cases of logical relationship content, it is preferable to use a foreignization strategy to prevent adverse effects on children's logical reasoning abilities.

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