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Translation of Character Names in Dual-readership Texts-A Case Study of Chinese Translation of *Peter Pan*

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ABSTRACT

As texts read by both children and adults, dual-readership texts are sometimes translated into different versions depending on their intended readership in the target culture. This paper discusses how character names are translated in dual-readership texts with examples taken from different Chinese translations of a classic dual-readership text: J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*. Three target texts are selected for analysis: the translation by Liang Shiqiu (1929), the translation by Yang Jingyuan (1991) and the translation by Ren Rongrong (2011). After comparing the translation of character names in these target texts, it is found that while different translations do sometimes adopt similar strategies when translating common everyday names and surnames, there are also quite a few instances when differentiating strategies are used in different translations. It is argued that the choice of translation strategy for character names is influenced by the intended readership of the target text. When translating for children, the target text tends to prioritize the descriptive function of names, producing translations that are more culturally-familiar to children or with more colloquial expressions.

Keywords: Dual-readership text, children's literature, translation, *Peter Pan*, Chinese

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1. Introduction

In the field of translation studies, a shift of focus can be observed from the source text to the target text, from inter-lingual replacement to extra-lingual power relations, from equivalence to manipulation (Hermans, 1985). The cultural turn of translation, as first articulated by Lefevere and Bassnett (1990, pp.3-4), entails a move from the preconceived notion of linguistic equivalence to the source text to a descriptive approach, acknowledging cultural and political factors in the target

culture context that influence the outcome of translation.

A similar move can be observed in studies about the translation of children's literature. While early works tend to place a heavy emphasis on equivalence and fidelity (Klingberg, 1986; Shavit, 1986; Stolt, 1978), recent research starts to focus on the target culture and the target audience. Without assuming that what is suitable for children in the source culture must be suitable for children in the target culture, researchers start to analyze the function of the source

text (Reiss, 1981), the needs of the target audience (Oittinen, 2000), as well as the cultural and linguistic conventions embedded both languages (O'Sullivan, 2005). Just like translators of adult literature, translators of children's literature are faced with a network of power relations, complicated by the specific requirements of children's literature (pedagogic and didactic concerns, for instance). Decisions have to be made about the sometimes competing norms and contradictory requirements.

The competing norms that are at work in the translation of children's literature can perhaps be best illustrated with a particular genre: texts that have a dual-readership of both children and adults. As dual-readership texts are read by two groups of readers, a comparison of target texts intended for different readers can highlight the differences between translating for adults and translating for children. This paper aims to explore the translation of character names by focusing on a classic case in dual-readership texts: J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*. The particular text is chosen because it is a classic dual-readership text, delivering two separate layers of meaning to adults and children on different levels (Holmes, 2009). In China, the various translations of the text can be roughly classified into two types. There are, on one hand, translations intended essentially for adults, produced by publishing houses that do not normally publish children's texts, the most influential versions being Liang Shiqiu's translation published in 1929 and Yang Jingyuan's translation published in 1991. There are also, on the other hand, translations produced specifically with child readers in mind, produced by children's publishing houses, one of the most popular versions being the translation by Ren Rongrong published in 2011. From this perspective,

the text provides an excellent opportunity to explore whether and how the intended readership of the target text (children versus adults) influences translation.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The translation of dual-readership texts

Dual-readership texts, as the term itself suggests, refer to texts intended for a dual-audience of both children and adults. First coined by U. C. Knoeflmacher (Beckett, 1999, p.xii), the term is now widely used in the field of children's literature. When researchers speak of a text as having a dual-readership, however, they can refer to two entirely different occasions. The first is the fact that children's books in general address two groups of readers on different levels, with children as the primary, or overt reader, and adults as the hidden or covert reader (O'Connell 1999, p.209). As Puurtinen (1994, p.19) observes, examples of adults as the hidden reader include editors, publishers, parents, educators, academics and critics, who are far more influential than the first group of readers, as it is adults who edit, publish, praise, purchase, and, as is often the case with picture books, read books with children. Dual-readership can also refer to the phenomenon that some texts are simultaneously read by children and adults, or, as Shavit (1986, p.63) phrases it, texts with an ambivalent status in both children's and adult literature.

As they simultaneously address two groups of readers, different translations for dual-readership texts are often produced in the target culture for different readers. By comparing these translations, we are able to explore whether the same source text is rendered differently depending on the readership it is intended for, hence uncovering various constraints in operation for translating for children. Rudvin and Orlati's (2006) comparison of the Italian



and Norwegian translations of Salman Rushie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* reveals how the same source text can have different readership in different target cultures. The original story can be read both as a children's story and as a political satire about freedom of speech. However, while the Norwegian translation appears as a straight-forward children's book, the Italian version is clearly aiming for a higher audience. Rudvin and Orlati (2006) believe that the difference can be attributed to the translator's personal preference, the difference in political and cultural environment, as well as the status of children's literature in the literary polysystem: since children's literature enjoys a much higher status in Norway than in Italy, it seems natural to translate the source text as a book for children. The researchers also note that different styles are used in different translations depending on the intended readership of the target text. The Norwegian translator matches the style of the target text to the reading competence of children, whereas the Italian translator interprets the source text as a high-status classic, translating with a formal, sometimes archaic discourse resembling adult literature.

Another study that explores the translation of dual-readership texts is the diachronic analysis of the Italian translations of *Peter Pan* by Ciancitto (2010). Ciancitto selects three translations for analysis, published respectively in 1939, 1951 and 1976. As Ciancitto observes, both the historical context and the projection of readership influence the translation outcome. Of all three translations, the 1951 version is specifically intended for children, as indicated by the introduction on the back cover. As such, alternation of the source text is observed on many levels to transform it to a version acceptable to Italian children of

the 1950s. Many elements in the source text that are considered controversial are deleted in this version, including the passage portraying the ridiculous behavior of Mr. Darling, offensive language use and the scene in which Peter refuses to go to school. On the other hand, the 1976 translation is produced for adults, which uses complex lexicon and syntax to make the translation appealing to adult readers. Ciancitto's (2010) study presents an interesting angle of the interaction between the historical context, readership and methods used in translation.

2.2 Translating character names in children's literature

From a translator's perspective, Hermans (1988, p.88) divides names into two categories: conventional names and loaded names. Conventional names do not carry a semantic load, whose function is mainly to identify the literary character. Loaded names, on the other hand, often play a descriptive role, revealing information about the literary character. When translating children's literature, loaded names often pose challenges for translators. As Nord (2003) argues, while personal names are in most cases mono-referential, they are hardly ever mono-functional. Apart from identifying an individual referent, personal names can serve as the indicator of the gender, age, geographic origin, or other special features of the referent. Van Coillie (2006) also observes that personal names can serve to impart knowledge, amuse the reader or evoke emotions. However, translation may interfere with the non-referential function of personal names. While some functions performed by proper names are lost, other functions can be created in translation.

When translating character names in children's books, an important issue to take

into consideration is the readability of the name, which involves both phonological readability and semantic readability (Fernandes, 2006). As Puurtinen (1995) argues, the presence of unusual phonological sequences in a target text may create linguistic barriers for children. Therefore, translators sometimes give native names to characters so as to ease the difficulty for child readers to pronounce foreign-sounding names. The semantic readability of names is related to the idea that names need to be memorable in order to fulfill their referential function (Tymoczko, 1999). This means foreign-sounding names may need to be adapted so that they can be easily recognized and remembered by young readers.

In empirical studies, translators are often found to adapt names when they are translating for children. The translator of the Brazilian version of the Harry Potter book, for instance, explains that as young Brazilian readers who are not yet proficient in English experience difficulty in pronouncing English names, native names are given to some characters to avoid creating linguistic barriers (Wyler, 2003). Epstein (2009) finds that when translating descriptive names, two of the most frequently used strategies are either to translate the semantic meaning of names, or to replace them with native names. In their study about the translation of English and German children's literature into Lithuanian, Jaleniauskiene and Čičelytė (2009) also find that if proper names convey description of their bearers, they are usually translated literally. However, this is not always the case. As Ahanizadeh (2012) reports, when translating English children's books into Persian, character names are often preserved or represented with phonetic or morphological adaptation. It is found that names with specific connotations

are seldom translated literally, as literal translation would result in a change of the emotional function of names.

3. Methodology

In order to investigate the translation of character names in *Peter Pan*, three target texts in Chinese are selected for analysis: Liang Shiqiu's translation published in 1929, Yang Jingyuan's translation published in 1991 and Ren Rongrong's translation published in 2011. These translations are selected because the year of publication ranges from the 1920s to recently, reflecting the extended translation history of the text in China. In addition, these translations are intended for different readers: Liang's (1929) and Yang's (1991) translations mainly address adult readers; Ren's translation (2011), on the other hand, is specifically marketed for children. Hence comparisons can be made between target texts intended for children and target texts intended for adults. Finally, these translations are completed by renowned translators in China from distinctive backgrounds. Liang Shiqiu is an important figure in modern Chinese literary history, who is best known for his translation of Shakespeare in the field of translation. Yang Jingyuan is a well received translator, who mainly translated for adults before she started to translate *Peter Pan*. Ren Rongrong is an important figure in Chinese children's literature, who has written and translated a large corpus of works for children. The background of the translators therefore help to enhance the dual-readership perspective of the study.

Qualitative methods are adopted to investigate the translation of character names in *Peter Pan*. Character names in the source text are first identified, and then classified into three categories according to the roles these characters play in the story: the names of Peter and the Darlings children



(the protagonists), the names of the pirates (Peter's enemies) and the names of the lost boys and Tinker Bell (Peter's friends). Next, the translation of these names in each target text are elicited. Translations of character names in the same category are listed in the same table for the shake of comparison. Translation strategies used to render these names are analyzed and discussed. When necessary, comparisons are made between translations in target texts intended for different readers, in order to investigate whether intended readership plays a role in the choice of translation strategies.

4. Analysis and Discussion

In the source text, everyday names are used for Peter and the Darling children (except for *Wendy*, which was back then a name coined by Barrie but has now become a common name for girls). These names belong to what Hermans (1988) classifies as conventional names. In the target text, a frequently used strategy to render these names is to represent them phonetically with Chinese characters. Table 1 provides a summary of these names and their translation in the target text. As the table shows, although there are slight variations across different translations, the way these names are represented phonetically are by and large comparable.

Table 1: Translation of the names and surnames of Peter and the Darling children

Source text	Liang's translation (1929)	Yang's translation (1991)	Ren's translation (2011)
Peter	<i>Bide</i>	<i>Bide</i>	<i>Bide</i>
Wendy	<i>Wendai</i>	<i>Wendi</i>	<i>Wendi</i>
John	<i>Yuehan</i>	<i>Yuehan</i>	<i>Yuehan</i>
Michael	<i>Maikē'er</i>	<i>Maikē'er</i>	<i>Maikē'er</i>
George	<i>Qiaozhi</i>	<i>Qiaozhi</i>	<i>Qiaozhi</i>
Darling	<i>Dalin</i>	<i>Dalin</i>	<i>Dalin</i>

There are also instances when different strategies are used in the three translations, in which case the intended readership of the target text seems to

influence the translation strategy. This is often observed for the translation of loaded names, which either carry descriptive functions or allude to previous literary texts. Table 2 provides a summary of some examples:

Table 2: Translation of pirates' names

Liang's translation (1929)		
Source text	Target text	Rough meaning in Chinese
The Sea Cook	<i>Haikuke</i>	kuke at sea
Barbecue	<i>Babeijiu</i>	no specific meaning
Flint	<i>Fulintuo</i>	no specific meaning
James Hook	<i>Qiesi Huke</i>	no specific meaning
Yang's translation (1991)		
Source text	Target text	Rough meaning in Chinese
The Sea Cook	<i>Haishang Kuke</i>	kuke at Sea
Barbecue	<i>Babike</i>	no specific meaning
Flint	<i>Fulinte</i>	no specific meaning
James Hook	<i>Zhanmu Huke</i>	no specific meaning
Ren's translation (2011)		
Source text	Target text	Rough meaning in Chinese
The Sea Cook	<i>Haishang Chushi</i>	cook at sea
Barbecue	<i>Kaofeizhu</i>	grilled fat pig
Flint	<i>Dahuoshi</i>	flint
James Hook	<i>Tiegou Zhanmusi</i>	"Hook" James

In Table 2, the first three names, *the Sea Cook*, *Barbecue* and *Flint*, allude to fictional pirates, which are translated directly without providing adequate background information. Apart from the fact that they are all undertranslated, however, the treatment of these names does differ depending on the readership group they are intended for. In both Liang's (1929) and Yang's (1991) translations, which are intended for adults, *Cook* is translated by orthographically adapting it into Chinese based on its pronunciation: neither translation carry any specific meaning in

Chinese. In contrast, in Ren's translation (2011), *Cook* is translated by its descriptive meaning, providing young readers a more tangible image of the character the name represents.

The translation of *Barbecue* and *Flint* follows a similar pattern: both Liang's (1929) and Yang's (1991) translations represent only the sound of the name, whereas Ren's translation (2011) renders the descriptive function of the name: *Barbecue* is translated as *Kaofeizhu* (grilled fat pig), and *Flint* as *Dahuoshi* (flint). There are a couple of possible reasons for such a change. Firstly, the cluster of foreign-sounding names can be quite challenging for young readers (Epstein, 2012). By replacing them with more familiar-sounding names with more tangible meaning, the text may become less alien, hence less cognitively challenging for young readers. Secondly, as discussed previously, personal names can serve to amuse the reader or evoke emotions (van Coillie, 2006). In the examples above, the humorous effect of *Kaofeizhu* (grilled fat pig) can help to attract and engage the reader.

A similar contrast can be found in the translation of *Hook*. In the source text, *James Hook* functions as a pun, implying the iron hook that replaces the character's right hand. In Liang's translation (1929), the name is translated by orthographically adapting it as *Huke*, which does not remotely remind the reader the symbolic iron hook of the character. Yang's translation (1991) renders the name as the same; a footnote, however, is added, explaining the connection between the iron hook and the character's name. In Ren's translation (2011), *Hook* is translated by its descriptive meaning, as *Tiegou* (iron hook). Although the pronunciation is sacrificed, the more important descriptive function of the name is preserved without burdening the

reader with excess extra-textual distraction.

The adjustment of personal names for children is perhaps best illustrated in the translation of the lost boy's names. There are six lost boys on Neverland: the twins (whose names are not specified in the source text), Nibs, Slightly, Curley and Tootles. The translation of these names in each version is presented in Table 3:

Table 3: Translation of the names of the lost boys and Tinker Bell

Liang's translation (1929)		
Source text	Target text	Rough meaning in Chinese
Nibs	<i>Nibusi</i>	No specific meaning
Slightly	<i>Silaitelai</i>	No specific meaning
Curly	<i>Juanmao'r</i>	Curly
Tootles	<i>Tutu</i>	Hairless
Tinker Bell	<i>Dingke Zhong'r</i>	dingke bell
Yang's translation (1991)		
Source text	Target text	Rough meaning in Chinese
Nibs	<i>Nibusi</i>	No specific meaning
Slightly	<i>Silaiteli</i>	No specific meaning
Curly	<i>Juanmao</i>	Curly
Tootles	<i>Tutu</i>	No specific meaning
Tinker Bell	<i>Dingdingling</i>	ding-dong bell
Ren's translation (2011)		
Source text	Target text	Rough meaning in Chinese
Nibs	<i>Xiao Jianjian</i>	Little pointy
Slightly	<i>Xiao Budian'r</i>	Little tiny
Curly	<i>Xiao Juanmao</i>	Little curly
Tootles	<i>Xiao Dudu</i>	Little pouty
Tinker Bell	<i>Dingling Xiaoling'r</i>	ding-dong the little bell

As the table shows, the strategies used in Liang's (1929) and Yang's (1991) translations are largely comparable. Both translations render *Nibs* and *Slightly* by their pronunciation, and *Curly* by its descriptive meaning. The translation of *Tootles*, however, is more interesting. While both Liang's (1929) and Yang's (1991) translation choose to orthographically adapt the name into Chinese, the characters they



choose are quite different. Liang's translation (1929) makes a very interesting choice by selecting the character “秃(*tu*)”, which means “hairless” or “bald” in Chinese. Although phonetically this is still a close imitation of the original name, the descriptive meaning of the word stands out in a text for children — one can hardly associate any child with baldness. A possible explanation is that Liang's translation (1929), as a text primarily intended for adults, gives less consideration to the expectations of child readers. In a text for adults, *Tutu* (hairless) makes an interesting contrast with *Juanmao'r* (curly) to amuse the reader. Yang's translation (1991) uses the character “图(*tu*)”, which has multiple meanings, but does not seem to carry any specific meaning in this case.

In Ren's translation (2011), the translation strategies used are quite different to Liang's and Yang's. The lost boys' names are translated in a way that they address children's needs both mentally and verbally. To begin with, all lost boys' names in Ren's translation begin with the adjective *xiao* (little), a high frequency word in Chinese children's texts which is psychologically close to the reader. Repetitive use of the same character in all four names also creates a rhythmic pattern, which is another important feature in children's texts, considering that many texts need to be read-aloud (Oittinen 2006). In terms of translation strategies, Ren's translation (2011) focuses on the meaning of the names. *Nibs*, *Slightly* and *Curly* are translated according to their descriptive functions, as *Xiao Jianjian* (little pointy), *Xiao Budian'r* (little tiny) and *Xiao Juanmao'r* (little curly). These names sound more familiar to Chinese children, and can also be easily visualized. Unlike other names, *Tootles* does not seem to have a specific descriptive function. The name is

translated as *Xiao Dudu* (little pouty) to phonetically resemble the original name. In Chinese, *du* is an onomatopoeia which is a rough equivalent of *toot* or *beep*. The word also means “to pout”. In Chinese children's books, cartoons and TV programs, *Dudu* is a frequently used name, usually for cute little characters with pouty lips. Like the translation of other names, the translation of *Tootles* also presents a vivid image for children.

Similarly, for the translation of *Tinker Bell*, although all three translations adopt similar strategies, translating *Tinker* by sound and *Bell* by meaning, Ren's translation (2011) adds in front of *Bell* the adjective *xiao* (little) and the particle *er*, offering a lively and colloquial translation that is more emotional appealing to children.

Through analysis of the translation of character names in *Peter Pan*, it is found that the intended audience of the target text plays an important role in determining the translation strategy. Ren's translation, which is intended for children, uses remarkably different translation strategies than Liang's (1929) and Yang's (1992) translations. The findings support previous observation that for the translation of dual-readership texts, differentiating methods tend to be used for target texts intended for children and target texts intended for adults (Ciancitto, 2010; Rudvin & Orlati, 2006). When character names carry a descriptive meaning, the descriptive meaning of the name is often preserved in Ren's translation (2011); whereas orthographic adaptation is generally used in Liang's (1929) and Yang's (1991) translations. The methods used in Ren's translation are similar to what has been observed for the translation of character names in other texts for children (Epstein, 2009; Jaleniauskiene & Čičelytė, 2009). By rendering the descriptive meaning of names, the semantic readability

of the text is enhanced, making names easier to understand and memorize by children. Another important aspect for translating character names in children's books is the phonetic readability of names (Fernandes, 2006; Puurtinen, 1995). In Oittinen's (2000, 2006) study about the translation of children's literature, both rhyme and readability are found to play essential roles in texts translated for children. Ren's translation of the lost boy's names shows sensitivity to both the phonetic readability and the rhyme of names. Foreign-sounding elements in names are avoided and a rhythmic pattern is created to increase the phonetic readability of names.

5. Conclusion

This paper discusses how the intended readership of the target text influences the translation of character names in *Peter Pan*. It has been observed that while these translations tend to use similar strategies when translating conventional names, differentiating strategies are used for the translation of loaded names in target texts intended for different readers. It is found that while Liang's (1929) and Yang's (1991) translations tend to orthographically adapt loaded names, Ren's translation (2011) adopts more creative strategies by focusing on the descriptive function of names. It is argued that the choice of translation strategy in Ren's translation (2011) is motivated by various concerns to make the target text more reader-friendly for children. The findings are discussed with relation to previous findings in the translation of dual-readership texts and the translation of character names in children's literature. In general, the translation methods observed in Ren's translation (2011) is highly comparable to findings in previous studies about the translation of character names for

children, whereas Liang's (1929) and Yang's (1991) translations show no such similarity.

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