

# On the Role of Translators of Children's Literature from the Perspective of Social Learning Theory: A Case Study of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*

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**Abstract:** Translation of children's literature is an important subject in translation studies. Most studies in China focus on textual analysis of the translation of children's literature. Foreign scholars have systematically studied the translator's role in children's literature, and paid more attention to the translator's role as a cultural mediator and active participant. From the perspective of Albert Bandura's social learning theory, this study takes the two Chinese translations of the Western classic children's literature *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* as the case and applies the quantitative method to explore the role of translators in the translation of children's literature and the promotion of social learning among child readers in the target culture. This thesis then discusses the improvement of the quality of children's literature translation at the following aspects: the enhancement of readability, fun, figurativeness and social education, in the hope that the practice of children's literature translation can enrich the social learning theory, generate certain inspiration for children's literature translation, and promote cross-cultural communication.

**Keywords:** Translation of Children's Literature, Social Learning Theory, The Role of Translators, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*

## 1. Introduction

Children's literature translation is the translation of literature, suitable for children, from the original language to another. It shall take into account the cognitive level, cultural background and language ability of target readers, while maintaining the plot, language style and literary features of the original work.

With the development of globalization, children's literature translation has gained more and more attention. It is regarded as a bridge of cultural exchange, allowing the young readers to see the commonalities and differences between different cultures, which promotes cross-cultural understanding. And children's literature translation is an important topic in the Translation Studies and worthy of discussion. Most of the domestic researches focus on the linguistic features and textual effect of the children's literature translation, while the diversified roles of translators are less analyzed. Foreign researchers have more systematic and in-depth discussions on the roles of translators of children's literature, but paid more attention to the translator's role as a cultural mediator and active participant.

This study looks into the translation of children's literature by taking *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* as the object of study, considering its wide influence and long history. This work is one of the classics of children's literature written by Roald Dahl. It tells the story of Charlie Bucket's adventures in the magical chocolate factory, led by the chocolate maker Willy Wonka. Willy Wonka issues five golden vouchers inviting five lucky children to visit his factory and he would choose a successor among them, but they all have different flaws, leading to a series of fantastic and dangerous events. The book has had a global impact, being translated into many languages and widely read. Its influence is mainly reflected in the following aspects: First, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* is regarded as one of Roald Dahl's most famous works, bringing joy and inspiration to many readers. Its humor, creativity and challenge to children's imagination have made it highly praised in the field of children's literature. Secondly, the book has been adapted into films and stage plays many times. It was first adapted into a film in 1964. The 1971 film version of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* has gained wide recognition. In 2005, another film version directed by Tim Burton was a success. In China, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* is also a hit. Its compelling storyline and rich imagination make it one of the reading

choices for many Chinese children. At the same time, the promotion of films and other forms of media has also increased the popularity of the work in China. The translation of this book is well recognized, so this thesis chooses this book as the research object.

And the study is conducted from the perspective of the social learning theory proposed by Albert Bandura. It analyzes the role of translators of children's literature, with the quantitative method. The following questions are addressed:

(1) How do translators of children's literature influence the social learning of child readers in the target culture?

(2) How does social learning influence the role of translators of children's literature?

It is hoped this study by answering the above questions, could enrich the social learning theory with children's literature translation practice, and also improve the quality of children's literature translation. Applying the social learning theory to children's literature translation is important to both the social learning field and the translation field. The significance of the study lies in the following aspects: First, this study introduces social learning theory into the field of children's literature translation, which could enrich the theoretical framework of literary studies and translation studies. Second, previous studies have looked into the important role of translators in educating child readers and discussed how they influence children's comprehension and ability from a cultural and linguistic perspective. Based on previous studies, this study tries to research how translators influence child readers from the perspective of social learning theory in detail and how the translator's decision is influenced by social learning theory. Finally, this study summarizes the insights for children's literature translation, aiming to improve the quality of children's literature translation and promote cross-cultural communication.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Previous Studies on Children's Literature Translation at Home

Few studies have been conducted on translators of children's literature for the current generation in China; most of the studies on the subject concentrate on translators who were influential in the emergence and growth of children's literature translation, such as Lu Xun, Zhou Zuoren, Zheng Zhenduo, and others [1]. According to previous studies, domestic scholars mainly summarize the role of translators of children's literature in the following two points:

First, translators of children's literature are reproducers of "childishness" of children's literature. Xu Derong analyzes the role of children's literature translators from the perspective of stylistic and communicative theories, and believes that translators of children's literature have to establish a successful communicative relationship between the translators and child readers by using understandable, image-specific and lively language; the reproduction of "childishness" is the core issue of children's literature translation [2]. This childishness is inevitably realized through certain lexical, grammatical and rhetorical means. Translators must carefully understand and describe the fun, and try to create a functionally equivalent translation [2]. Given that children are the intended audience for translations of children's literature, translators should approach the source text with a playful sense that differs from adult psychology. They should then select translation strategies that are appropriate for the target reader's expectations as well as children's psychology, cognition, and aesthetics. Inspired by Xu's study, this thesis tries to look into the roles of translators of children's literature by calculating and comparing data at lexical, sentential and other aspects, to see how they reproduce the "childishness", a core issue of children's literature translation.

Second, translators of children's literature also assume the role of social educators. Translators often engage with children's literature that addresses social justice issues such as inequality, discrimination, and human rights [3]. By translating stories that raise awareness of these issues, they contribute to social education and advocacy efforts aimed at promoting equality, justice and compassion. Translated literature can empower children to become agents of positive social change by inspiring empathy, critical thinking, and a sense of social responsibility. For example, Zhang Kunqun examines the impact of Lu Xun's translations on the development of children's literature and points out that Lu Xun emphasized the educational and social significance of children's literature and hoped to help children and teenagers understand the difficult reality of that time through literature [4]. Based on these studies, this thesis would discuss how translators of children's literature assume the role of social educators.

In a word, previous studies have laid a solid foundation for the further discussion on the role of translators of children's literature as "childishness" reproducers and social educators, which would be conducted from the perspective of social learning theory in this thesis.

## ***2.2 Previous Studies on Children's Literature Translation Abroad***

The unprecedented boom of translated children's books over the last few decades and the remarkable rise in the quality of these translations were accompanied by a significant growth in scholarly interest [5]. Foreigner scholars have done a lot of researches on the role of translators of children literature and summarized two main functions:

First, it is common practice today to describe the role of translators as mediators, one who facilitates the negotiating "dialogue" between source text and target audience. Nowhere else is the mediating role of the translator so strongly felt as in the translation of children's literature [5]. Translators, for instance, enable youngsters from all over the world to enter Alice's surprising and mind-boggling Wonderland and the enchanted realm of Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales by passing through the magical looking-glass. For children who do not master foreign languages, translations are the sole means of entering into genuine contact with foreign literatures and cultures [5]. Therefore, translators of children's literature serve as mediators by not only translating the text but also bridging cultural gaps, ensuring the content remains relatable and understandable to the target audience. They navigate linguistic nuances, cultural references and age-appropriate language to convey the essence of the original work while making it accessible and engaging for child readers which involves careful considerations of cultural context, age appropriateness and maintaining the author's voice and style.

At the same time, translators are not as neutral as the term "mediator" initially seems to suggest [5]. Translators do not simply stand in between source text and target audience, from the beginning they are always an intrinsic part of the negotiating dialogue itself, holding a fragile, unstable middle between the social forces that act upon them, their own interpretation of the source text and their assessment of the target audience. Translators certainly mediate, but they also have a big say in how young readers or listeners perceive the translated material. According to Oittinen, translation ways of children's literature are determined by the norms and values of a given society, and by the norms and values that lie dormant in the translator's personal childhood image [6]. Moreover, translators bring their own understandings of the original text and writing style, which can influence their choices of words, phrasing and tone in the translated version.

In a word, translators of children's literature are negotiators and active participants in the translation process, meaning that translators play an important role in cross-cultural communication. And this thesis would further explore how translators improve the quality of children's literature translation as a way to promote cross-cultural communication from the perspective of social learning.

## **3. Theoretical Framework**

### ***3.1 Introduction to Social Learning Theory***

Social learning theory, proposed by Albert Bandura in 1952, emphasizes the importance of observing, modeling, and imitating the behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others. It considers how both environmental and cognitive factors interact to influence human learning and behavior. In this theory, Albert Bandura adds two important ideas: (1) Mediating processes occur between stimuli & responses. (2) Behavior is learned from the environment through the process of observational learning. Observational learning could not occur unless cognitive processes were at work. These mental factors mediate (i.e., intervene) in the learning process to determine whether a new response is acquired. Therefore, individuals do not automatically observe the behavior of a model and imitate it. According to McLeod, there is some thought prior to imitation, and this consideration is called the mediational process. This occurs between observing the behavior (stimulus) and imitating it or not (response) [7].

There are four mediational processes proposed by Albert Bandura [8]. According to Albert Bandura (1969), each of these components is crucial in determining whether or not imitation occurs upon exposure to a model: (1) Attention. Attentional processes are crucial because mere exposure to a model doesn't ensure that observers will pay attention. The model must capture the observer's interest, and the observer must deem the model's behavior worth imitating. This decides if the behavior will be modeled.

The individual needs to pay attention to the behavior and its consequences and form a mental representation of the behavior. For a behavior to be imitated, it has to grab our attention. Attention is, therefore, extremely important in whether a behavior influences others to imitate it. (2) Retention. Bandura highlighted the retention process in imitation, where individuals symbolically store a model's behavior in their minds. For successful imitation, observers must save these behaviors in symbolic forms, actively organizing them into easily recalled templates. The behavior may be noticed, but it is not always remembered, which obviously prevents imitation. It is important, therefore, that a memory of the behavior is formed to be performed later by the observer. Much of social learning is not immediate, so this process is especially vital in those cases. Even if the behavior is reproduced shortly after seeing it, there needs to be a memory to refer to. (3) Motor Reproduction. Motor reproduction processes use internal symbolic images of observed behaviors to guide actions. We see much behavior daily that we would like to be able to imitate, but this is not always possible. Our physical ability limits us, so even if we wish to reproduce the behavior, we sometimes cannot. This influences our decisions whether to try and imitate it or not. An observer internally replicates a behavior using these symbols as a reference, even if it's not externally shown. (4) Motivation. Motivational and reinforcement processes refer to the perceived favorable or unfavorable consequences of mimicking the model's actions that are likely to increase or decrease the likelihood of imitation. The observer will consider the rewards and punishments that follow a behavior. If the perceived rewards outweigh the perceived costs (if any), the observer will more likely imitate the behavior. If the vicarious reinforcement is unimportant to the observer, they will not imitate the behavior [7].

### 3.2 Social Learning Theory in Children's Literature Translation

The application of social learning theory in children's literature translation is based on its principle that individuals learn through observation, imitation and participation in social interaction. Riitta Oittinen examines how the norms and values of a particular community, as well as the norms and values that are dormant in the translators' own childhood image, influence how children's literature translations are made [6]. The translator's work involves translating elements of socio-cultural situations, moral codes and interpersonal relationships in the original work into equivalent expressions in the target culture in order to facilitate the target audience's acceptance and understanding of the literary work. Therefore, translators need to be sensitive to the differences between different cultures to ensure that the translated literary works can effectively convey the social learning values of the original works in the process of cross-cultural communication. This process not only requires translators to have profound cultural literacy and intercultural communication skills, but also requires them to have an in-depth understanding of children's psychological development and educational theories, so as to better present the educational significance and social value of the original works.

Social learning theory divides social learning into four phases -- attentional phase, retention phase, motor reproduction phase, and motivation phase [8]. Among them, the third phase, motor reproduction phase, has a negligible impact on translation practice because the degree of completion of this stage mainly depends on the children themselves, while the other three phases have the most profound impact on children's literature translation practice.

Attentional phase is the first and most important step of social learning theory, because if this step cannot be accomplished, then the subsequent steps cannot happen. Attentional process is centered on attracting the individual's attention to build an imitation model, which leads to the need for translators to give priority to stimulating the children's interest in reading when translating. Therefore, translators need to pay extra attention to the readability and fun of the translation. So that's why the concept of the child image is applied to children's literature as in Riitta Oittinen's *Translating for Children*, if we translate children's literature from an adult's perspective, then we are likely to ignore the readability and fun of translation and fail to attract the interest of child readers, resulting in the failure of this step [9]. The core of retention phase is to make the individual remember the behavior and store the behavior in the imitation model, which requires symbolic forms to make the individual have a deeper impression. Therefore, children's literature translation also needs to pay attention to maintaining figurativeness, through which children's memory storage time can be prolonged. Otherwise, if children's memories do not reach the next stage, the whole process of social learning will not be realized. As for motivation phase, it emphasizes the feedback for the results. In the practice of children's literature translation, it is embodied in the function of social education. In order to accomplish this stage, the translator needs to connect the translated content with the social environment where the target culture is located, which requires the translator to utilize the subjective initiative and make trade-offs of the original text when translating [8]. For example, Thomson-Wohlgemuth demonstrates how books were selected for

translation to play a role in the creation of an ideal socialist society and how they enjoyed a high status because of the indispensable role they played in educating the masses [10].

In general, readability, fun and figurativeness are important indicators for social education in the different social learning phases, including the attentional phase, retention phase and motivation phase, so this thesis examines the diverse roles of translators of children's literature translation mainly in the three aspects.

#### 4. Data Analysis

*Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* is taken as a representative case for analyzing children's literature translation. There are two well-received translation versions of this work, respectively translated by Ren Rongrong [11] and Zhang Binjiang [12]. Ren Rongrong's translation, first published in 2009, is the most popular and best-selling edition in China. Zhang Binjiang's translation was first published in 2016, and is often analyzed in translation researches. The comparison of the source text and two translation versions would well demonstrate the decision-making process of translators in the actual work and thus reveal the translators' role in the translation of children's literature. Due to limited time, this study takes the first three chapters for analysis.

This study builds a small corpus and collects the following data, including the frequency of the use of punctuation, the rhythm of the text, etc. This part is going to analyze the collected data.

##### 4.1 Lexical Density

There are two frequently used methods to calculate lexical density to reflect the richness of a text's vocabulary in corpus linguistics. One is measuring the ratio of the total number of types in the text to the total number of tokens [13]. Here is Standardized Type/Token Ratio (STTR) of the selected chapters of the book.

Table 1: STTR of the Source Text and Two Translations

|       | Source Text | Ren's translation | Zhang's translation |
|-------|-------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Type  | 725         | 1619              | 417                 |
| Token | 2631        | 3582              | 914                 |
| STTR  | 27.56%      | 45.20%            | 45.68%              |

The low STTR of the source text indicates a lower degree of vocabulary variability and more repetitive use of words, which suggests that a conscious effort was made to reduce the reading load of the child readers [14]. The STTRs of the two different translations are very close to each other, indicating that the word difficulty of both translations is close to each other. However, it is worth noting that the large difference between the STTR of the source text and those of the two Chinese translations is due to the nature of the Chinese and English themselves. Chinese is a hieroglyphic script while English is an alphabetic one, which therefore results in the STTRs of the two Chinese translations being much higher than that of the original English text.

The other method is to measure the proportion of actual words to the token. The classification of Chinese words is still controversial, and this study adopts word categories given by Lv and Zhu, which includes two kinds -- actual words (nouns, verbs and adjectives) and imaginary words (pronouns, adverbs, conjunctions, tone words and pictograms) [15].

Table 2: Proportion of Actual Words of the Source Text and Two Translations

|              | Source Text | Ren's translation | Zhang's translation |
|--------------|-------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Actual Words | 401         | 131               | 38                  |
| Token        | 2631        | 3582              | 914                 |
| Proportion   | 15.24%      | 3.66%             | 4.16%               |

As is shown in the table, the proportion of actual words of source text and two different translations is all very low. A smaller proportion of actual words indicates that the text is less informative, less lexically rich, and thus more accessible and understandable to child readers [14]. The English source text has a low percentage of actual words, and both Chinese translations have restored this feature as much as possible.

#### 4.2 Average Sentence Length & Text Rhythm

The quantitative analysis of Chinese corpus should be based on the syntactic characteristics of Chinese, and take clauses (namely zero sentences, running sentences or sentence segments) as the basic unit to investigate the linguistic features. The average sentence length and rhythm of the text reflect the readability of the text to some extent. The average sentence length is one of the important indicators to measure the fluency and idiomatic degree of sentences [16]. The average sentence length is calculated by the segmental word. The shorter the average sentence length, the lower the word content of the sentence paragraph. Then the stronger the colloquial character, and the higher the comprehensibility. The rhythm of the text is mainly represented by the number of pauses in the sentence, which can reflect the degree of dispersion of the sentence. The more written the text, the fewer the number of pauses in a sentence, the slower the rhythm; vice versa. The calculation formula is as follows [17]:

$$\text{Average sentence length} = \frac{\text{Token}}{\text{Sentence Pauses}} \quad (1)$$

$$\text{Text rhythm} = \frac{\text{Sentence Pauses}}{\text{Total Sentence}} \quad (2)$$

The statistics of the total number of sentences in the corpus study mainly calculate periods, exclamation points, apostrophes and question marks; the number of sentences' pauses counts the use of four kinds of punctuation: semicolons, commas, colons and caesura signs. The statistical results are as follows:

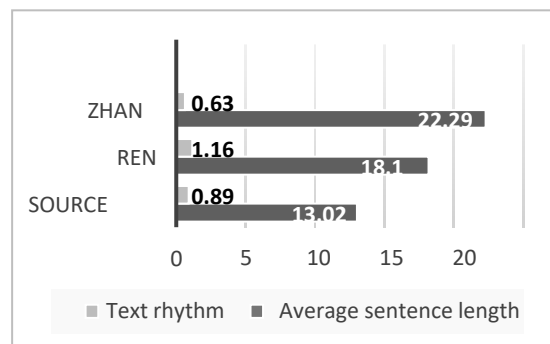


Figure 1: Average Sentence Length & Text Rhythm of the Source Text and Two Translations

According to the data, the average sentence length of two translations is both short and the text rhythm of two translations is both fast, meaning that both Chinese translations are colloquial and easy for target readers to comprehend [14]. It is also obvious that the two Chinese translations try to match the source text in terms of text rhythm and average clause length, but there are still some differences due to the different nature of the language itself.

#### 4.3 Frequency of Repetitive Words

The use of repetitive words in children's literature can accurately and vividly describe the modality of characters and the shape of scenery, imitate various sounds, enhance the appeal of the original language stories, and improve children's language and culture cognition as well as aesthetic experience of stories [18]. The higher the frequency of repetitive words, the more interesting the translation.

This study uses the method of dividing the number of repetitive words by token to calculate the frequency of repetitive words in two Chinese translations. The results are as follows:

Table 3: Frequency of Repetitive Words in Two Translations

|                  | Ren's translation | Zhang's translation |
|------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Repetitive Words | 81                | 20                  |
| Token            | 3582              | 914                 |
| Frequency        | 2.26%             | 2.19%               |

According to the table, the frequency of repetitive words in the two translations is similar. There are few repetitive words in the English text but both translators add them to the target texts, since Chinese children literature favors repetitive words, which means that the two translations not only have phonological characteristics but can also stimulate readers' sensory feelings and enhance children's reading interest.

#### 4.4 Use of Four Punctuation Marks

Punctuation is a necessary component of written language and an auxiliary symbol that aids in the accurate expression of ideas and sentiments as well as language comprehension [19]. In the translation of children's literature, the use of punctuation marks is one of the expressions of fun because exclamation points, apostrophes, and question marks can also reflect thoughts and feelings, so this study adopts the method of calculating the ratio between the four punctuation marks and the total complete sentence mark.

Table 4: Four Punctuation Marks in the Source Text and Two Translations

|                    | Source Text | Ren's translation | Zhang's translation |
|--------------------|-------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Periods            | 63.16%      | 56.89%            | 60.12%              |
| Exclamation Points | 24.56%      | 25.15%            | 24.26%              |
| Apostrophes        | 6.58%       | 5.99%             | 5.42%               |
| Question Marks     | 10.53%      | 12.57%            | 11.58%              |

As the table shows, the frequency of use of the four punctuation marks is similar in the source text as well as in the two translations. In terms of emotional intensity, the exclamation point, apostrophe and question mark can express stronger emotions than the period. The two translations use the exclamation point and question mark more frequently than the source text. And the period is less frequently used than the source text. These indicate that the two translations seem to be more interesting than the source text on the basis of restoring the interest of the source text.

#### 4.5 Frequency of Reverse Figurative Words

This study measures whether the two translations are in line with the concrete and tangible features of children's literature by examining reverse figurative words, such as pronouns.

The more pronouns are used as reverse figurative words, the less figurative the text is. This study uses the number of pronouns divided by the total number of Token to calculate the frequency of reverse figurative words.

Table 5: Frequency of Reverse Figurative Words of the Source Text and Two Translations

|                          | Source Text | Ren's translation | Zhang's translation |
|--------------------------|-------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Reverse Figurative Words | 296         | 193               | 44                  |
| Token                    | 2631        | 3582              | 914                 |
| Frequency                | 11.21%      | 5.39%             | 4.81%               |

According to the table, the frequency of reverse figurative words in the two Chinese versions is much lower than that in the source text, indicating that the two translations have less pronoun content and reference relationships, which is of course related to the nature of the Chinese and English languages themselves [14].

#### 4.6 Best Sales & Good Reviews

According to the copyright page of Ren Rongrong's translation book, it was first published in March 2009 and had been printed 94 times by October 2023 -- averagely 9.7 times a year, making it the most common and popular version on the market at present. It is available on China's three major online bookselling apps (Taobao, Dangdang and JD.com). Zhang Binjiang's version was first published in January 2016, which is relatively new. It has only been printed once so far, and it is only sold on Taobao application, indicating that the popularity and recognition of this version is low. Therefore, when calculating the sales volume and praise rating on the three bookselling platforms, this study only takes the version of Ren as the research object.

Table 6: Best Sales and Good Reviews of Ren Rongrong's Translation in Three Apps

|              | Taobao | Dangdang | JD.com |
|--------------|--------|----------|--------|
| Best Sales   | 480000 | 428000   | 200000 |
| Good Reviews | 98%    | 99.99%   | 99%    |

Based on the data, the Chinese translation of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* by Ren Rongrong has achieved outstanding sales across all three platforms, totaling over 1.1 million copies, with almost no negative reviews. Its huge number of publications reflects the recognition of this translated version by parents, teachers and child readers, which has a positive and profound impact on social education,

and the translator's professional competence and influence in the field of literary translation.

## 5. The Role of Translators on Children's Literature

### 5.1 The Reproducer of "Childishness"

Translated texts of children's literature should be easy to understand, interesting and vivid, meaning the three dimensions of readability, fun and figurativeness [14]; therefore, this study discusses how children's literature translators, as reproducers of "childishness", render the text from these three dimensions in the target language.

At the same time, for the social learning process, these three dimensions are crucial for attentional phase and retention phase. The goal of the attentional process is to get someone's attention in order to create an imitation model; hence when translating, the translator must prioritize getting the kids interested in reading. As a result, translators must focus particularly on making their work enjoyable to read. For the retention phase, the primary goal is to help the person retain the behavior and store it in the imitation model. To retain the behavior more deeply, symbolic forms are needed [8]. Therefore, in order to increase children's memory retention time, translations of children's literature must also keep the text figurative.

Readability refers to the degree or nature of a text's ease of reading and understanding, which is mainly reflected in the complexity of the text's vocabulary and sentence structure [20]. By examining the lexical density, average sentence length, and textual rhythm of the source text of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and its two translations at the lexical and sentence levels, this study assesses the readability of the translations and whether they reproduce the readability of the source text. Based on Table 1 and Table 2, the lexical densities of the two different translations selected meet the linguistic requirements of children's literature and strive to fit the lexical densities of the source text, which means that the translators also deliberately restore the readability of the source text and reduce the reading burden of the young readers in the target culture when translating the book, in order to meet the cognitive requirements of children's literature. According to Figure 1, in general, the text rhythm and average sentence length of the two Chinese translations are in line with the reading level and receptivity of young Chinese readers. Therefore, the two Chinese translations, readable for the targeted readers, restore the readability of the source text.

Fun refers to the artistic expression of children's thinking mode, behavior mentality and language action in literary works [21]. This study examines the frequency of repetitive words and four punctuation marks in the two translations to measure whether they meet the characteristics of rich fun in children's literature. According to Table 3, the frequency of repetitive words in the two Chinese translations is similar. The translators add repetitive words to the translations that are not included in the source text, suggesting that the two Chinese translations are rhythmically beautiful, more vivid and interesting to read, which can increase the fun of the article. Based on Table 4, the total frequency of exclamation points, apostrophes and question marks is roughly equal to the frequency of periods, implying that the emotional tone of the two Chinese translations is stronger, which can bring more resonance to young readers, so that children, more immersive, can increase emotional experience and fun. Therefore, both Chinese translations meet the young Chinese readers' requirement of fun. For Chinese children, both translations are interesting.

Figurativeness refers to a text's use of intuitive and figurative ways to reflect objective things, and the use of imagery combinations to make linguistic expressions rich in pictorialization [22]. This study examines the frequency of reverse figurative words in the two translations to measure whether they adhere to the figurativeness in children's literature. The lower the frequency of reverse figurativeness words, the stronger the figurativeness of the text [14]. Table 5 indicates that the two translations are more figurative for young Chinese readers than the source text on the basis of restoring the figurativeness of the source text. For children, such articles are more concrete and less difficult to read. They require less context, and read more smoothly and coherently. In this case, the text has a stronger sense of picture, and more iconic memory points. Its content will stay in the brains of young readers for a longer time, so as to deepen the reading impression of child readers and extend their memory time.

To sum up, this study interprets the "childishness" of children's literature translation from the three perspectives of readability, fun and figurativeness. According to the above statistics, it can be seen that children's literature translators consciously retain "childishness" of the original text and sometimes add "childishness" to translated texts, demonstrating that they assume the role of the reproducer of



“childishness”.

### **5.2 The Social Educator**

This study chooses to look into the social and educational roles of children’s literature translators by counting the number of publications and sales of children’s literature translations as well. These data can indirectly reflect the influence and popularity of translations in the society.

The number of publications of children’s literature translations can reflect the degree of commitment of the translators and publishers to this field and the size of the market demand. A higher number of publications implies a greater demand for children’s literature translations in society, which correlates with the role of translations in children’s education. The sales volume of children’s literature translations can reflect the popularity and market recognition of the translations. Translations with higher sales volume can demonstrate that their contents and quality are recognized by a wide range of readers. Good reviews can show that translations have a positive impact on children’s reading habits and education.

In most cases, children’s literature translations are often purchased by teachers and parents. Therefore, if a translated work has high publication and purchase volumes, it indicates a certain level of recognition and influence in the educational field. High publication and purchase volumes can imply that these translated works play a key role in meeting teaching and parental educational needs, possibly due to their profound and inspiring content, or their ability to cultivate children’s moral qualities and cognitive abilities.

Based on Table 6, high sales volumes and good reviews demonstrate that this translation plays an important role in promoting children’s literary reading, enhancing their cultural literacy and values, and contributing positively to the comprehensive development of children and the advancement of social civilization. In terms of social education, the tremendous success of this translation provides strong support for the dissemination and popularization of children’s literature. Firstly, the high sales volume implies that more children and families have access to this work, thus enabling them to experience cross-cultural and cross-regional reading. Secondly, the lack of negative feedback indicates the widespread recognition of the literary quality and educational value of the translation, likely due to its inspirational content and significant role in shaping values. Furthermore, as parents and teachers are the primary purchasers of the translation, they may actively recommend it to their children or students, further promoting the dissemination and acceptance of children’s literature.

According to social learning theory, translators of children’s literature can influence the motivation phase of the young readers; therefore, translators need to select and discard the values of the source text according to the social environment of the target readers, so as to make the translated text conform to the social values of the target culture and the selected content acceptable to the young readers. Translators should make sure that the translated text meets the social needs of the target culture and plays a positive and aggressive role in social education. This also requires translators of children’s literature to carefully consider the content of the translation, and choose the children’s literature to be translated. For example, in the face of foreign literary works that are contrary to the concepts of the times and social ideologies, translators should be careful in translating or adapting them for translation. Some translators also include analytical passages in their translations to guide child readers. For example, Zhang Binjiang’s translation, used as the case for analysis in this study, includes text and character analysis as well as life lessons at the end of each chapter.

To sum up, this study interprets the role of children’s literature translators as social educators in terms of sales volumes and good reviews, as these two indicators can illustrate the recognition of the translation by all sectors of society and thus indirectly show that translators play an active and important role in social education.

## **6. Conclusion**

Through the perspective of social learning theory, this study has explored the role of translators in children’s literature by answering the two questions: how translators influence the social learning of target culture child readers and how social learning influences the role of translators in children’s literature. With this study addressing the research questions posed at the outset, several key insights have been gained.

Firstly, the influence of translators on the social learning of target culture child readers is multifaceted. In order to facilitate the completion of attentional phase and retention phase for child readers, the translator consciously reproduces the readability, fun and figurativeness of the source text. The translator, as the social educator, influences the motivation phase by facilitating the transmission of values, norms, and cultural perspectives from the source text that are compatible with the target culture to the young readers of the target culture. Through their selection of expression, translation strategies, and cultural elements, translators shape the reading experience of children, providing them with opportunities for cognitive development, moral understanding, and cultural awareness. Moreover, translators play a crucial role in introducing diversity and multiculturalism to young readers, fostering empathy and tolerance towards different cultures and identities.

Second, social learning theory reveals the diversity of the role of children's literature translation. According to social learning theory, individuals learn through observation, imitation and modeling in the context of social interaction and environmental influence. In order to facilitate young readers' completion of the attentional phase, retention phase and motivation phase, translators need to assume the role of reproducers of "childishness" and social educators, adapting and interpreting the text in a way that resonates with the target reader's socio-cultural context by mediating between the source and target cultures. They should do more than just language transfer. The transmission of social values, attitudes and behaviors embedded in the source text should also be taken into account. In addition, in the process of translation, translators are subconsciously impacted by the social learning process so they work within a sociocultural framework that influences their decisions and strategies, reflecting social norms, educational ideologies and ethical considerations.

Moreover, exploring the intersectionality of translation studies and social learning theory can shed light on the future practice of children's literature translation. First, in order to improve the quality of children's literature translation and to facilitate the completion of children's social learning process, translators of children's literature are advised to spend effort in reproducing "childishness" at the three aspects: readability, fun and figurativeness. Second, to improve the educational value of children's literature, translators of children's literature are suggested to be more aware of their own role as "social educators" and pay attention to the comments from all sectors of the community about the translation, especially child readers, parents, and teachers. Translations should be more committed to helping child readers develop good morals, raise their level of cultural cognition, and improve their reading comprehension.

In conclusion, this study underscores the role of translators in children's literature from a social learning perspective. Translators influence the moral, cultural, and cognitive development of child readers by acting as social educators and reproducers of "childishness." On the other hand, social learning theory highlights the mutually reinforcing relationship between translation and social learning by illuminating the ways in which translators navigate their roles within the socio-cultural context of children's literature. As for future practice, investigating the translation studies from the perspective of social learning theory can strengthen the educational value of children's literature and improve its translation quality.

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