A STUDY OF THE TRANSLATION OF FAIRY TALES FROM ENGLISH INTO VIETNAMESE- A COGNINITIVE SOCIOLINGUISTICS PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract - This article investigates the problems appearing in the translation of fairy tales from English into Vietnamese in light of Cognitive sociolinguistics. The study aims to find out the typical features of English fairy tales, the achievements and the downsides in Vietnamese translational versions. The theoretical framework is based on the theory of Cognitive sociolinguistics proposed by Gitte Kristiansen and René Dirven [4], and from researches of John Cunnison Catford's [2], Peter Newmark's [3] and Nguyễn Quốc Hùng's [5]. For data analysis, contrastive and inductive methods have been used. The result shows that besides the achievements obtained, there are some problems that should be pointed out. This paper suggests three kinds of errors defined as under-translation, over-translation and unnaturalness found to be common in the translational versions. The findings then serve as a foundation to put forward some possible suggestions for Vietnamese translators and some implications for Vietnamese learners of English.

Key words - English fairy tales (EFTs); typical features; Vietnamese translational versions (VTVs); achievements; under-translation; over-translation; unnaturalness.

1. Rationale

In all genres of literature, folklore has remained valid both in terms of contribution to the general knowledge and to the intellectual, social, moral development and the universal appeal to the emotions. These stories form the basis for many works of more modern literature, drama and other art forms. There is a tendency that more and more translators have taken fairy stories into concern. The contribution of their work to enabling Vietnamese readers in general and children readers in particular to learn more about English literature is undeniable. Many methods of translation have been resorted to in order to get high effects. Readers of the translational fairy tales can grasp either a part or the entire content. However, to some extent, in such translational versions, typical features reflecting cultural and social elements have not been translated appropriately.

Writing in literature field cannot be detached from cultural, social and cognitive elements. The translating of fairy tales from English into Vietnamese is not simply the rendering of the syntactic or structural features. The more decisive factors are the ways in which how social elements are conveyed. Therefore, this study is carried out with the purpose of discovering the problems in VTVs from EFTs and suggesting some possible solutions to the problems.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Background

2.1. Literature Review

There have been many published works on fairy tales by English and Vietnamese researchers so far. Vladimir Propp made several interesting observations and suggestions about fairy tale representation. He proposed

31 functions, each denoting "the action of the character from the point of view of significance for the progress of the narrative" [7, p74]. There have also been some master theses proposing an overall view of the features of English fables and English fairy tales comparing with Vietnamese ones in light of discourse.

There has been no contrastive analysis exploring the problems in VTVs from EFTs in light of Cognitive sociolinguistics. This paper is an attempt to discover the untouched problems, making some contribution to the translation of EFTs and the study of English as a foreign language.

2.2. Theoretical Background

2.2.1. Concept of Fairy Tales

A fairy tale is a type of short story that typically features folkloric characters and often involves a far-fetched sequence of events. Fairy tales are subgenre of folktales involving magical, fantastic or wonderful episodes, characters, events or symbols. Fairy tales is defined by Linda Degh as "A magic story which cannot be true" [9].

2.2.2. Cognitive Sociolinguistics

Cognitive sociolinguistics is an emerging field of linguistics aimed to account for linguistic variation in social settings. Cognitive sociolinguistics is proposed to understand how social meaning is transmitted and changed, all with a mental model framework. It is the social perspectives in cognitive linguistics combined with the cognitive perspectives in sociolinguistics that make the features of Cognitive sociolinguistics.

3. Research Methods

English Vietnamese bilingual fairy tales can be found available here and there but the ones with British English origin are not popular. For conducting the study, 20 original EFTs were collected and 20 corresponding VTVs were gathered. The contrastive method was then employed to point out the achievements and the drawbacks held in VTVs from EFTs. And the inductive method was carried out to synthesize the findings and draw out the generalizations as well as the conclusions.

4. Findings and Discussions

4.1. The typical features of English fairy tales

Being different from other genres of literature, English fairy tales possess a distinctive plot generalized into 5 parts: Preparation, Complication, Donors, Struggles + Return and Dénouement. EFTs consistently include some of the most familiar and traditional archetypes of folk

tales such as heroes, villains, mentors, tricksters, sages, shape shifters, heralds or talking animals. Human characters are simply the people who lived in the castles, cottages and hovels such as kings and queens, princes and princesses, knights and ladies, poor farmers, youngest sons, wise old women, beggars and tailors. Therefore, EFTs are found to use rich and evocative vocabulary. It is the language of the fairy world with magic spells, incantations or charms. The language in EFTs is believed to be memorable thanks to the rhetorical device of rhythm, alliteration, assonance, repetition and the use of idiomatic expressions. These features can be reflected in the examples below:

(1) Snow-White grew up and became ever more beautiful. When she was fifteen years old she was *as beautiful as the light of day*, even more beautiful than the queen herself.

One day when the queen asked her mirror:

Mirror, *mirror*, on the *wall*,

Who in this land is *fairest* of *all*?

It answered:

You, my queen, are *fair*; it is *true*.

But Snow-White is a thousand times *fairer* than *you*.

The queen took fright and *turned yellow and green with envy*.   [12, p.4]

(2) *Mix*, *mix*, *mixing*. The old women started to cook. *Stir*, *stir*, *stirring*. She added sugar and flour and continued cooking. *Mix*, *mix*, *mixing*, *stir*, *stir*, *stirring*. The old woman didn't stop.

[12, p.6]

Another feature of EFTs is the way to express the flow of the tales. The tales are narrated naturally; supporting characters and leading details are told objectively. And VTVs have shown significant success in conveying these features.

4.2. The achievement of the translation

In terms of setting, fairy tales are distinctive from other literature styles. The tales generally occur in an unspecified place and in an undefined and far-off time. The best known introductory phrase in English is "*Once upon a time, there was…*".The special plot of EFTs, as mentioned above, includes the five schemed parts. These features are preserved in all VTVs. EFTs are well-known for rhythm, alliteration and assonance which are also maintained in VTVs. The two examples below can demonstrate the point:

(3a) Maiden green and *small*

Hoping *toad*

Hoping toad's *puppy*

And quickly see who *is* there   [14, p.3]

(3b) Này các thiếu nữ thanh *tú*

Này bà già béo *ụ*kia

Cả con chó của bà *nữa*

Mau mau mở *cửa* xem ai đứng chờ   [14, p.4]

(4a)"Bleat, my little goat, *bleat*,

Cover the table with something to *eat*,"   [13, p.5]

(4b) "*Be* lên bê *ơi*

Bày lên bàn *ơi*"   [13, p.6]

Fairy tales in English are found to be rich in syntactic features consisting of direct and indirect speech, in lexical choice containing static words with nouns and adjectives. The achievement of VTVs is gaining vividness with the shift from direct into indirect speech, from nouns to verbs and vice versa. These are two of many examples:

(5a) **"*Now give me your hand!*"** he said. "We'll get home safely, you'll see!" The tiny white pebbles gleamed in the moonlight, and the children found their way home.

[14, p.11]

(5b) Khi trăng mọc, *Hansel cầm tay em* lần theo vết sỏi trắng long lánh mà Hansel đã rải, tìm về đến nhà.

[14, p.12]

(6a) Once there was a gallant and kind prince, *the favourite* of the whole country.   [14, p.1]

(6b) Ngày xưa, ở một vương quốc nọ có một hoàng tử rất khôi ngô và tốt bụng, thần dân trong vương quốc *yêu quý chàng vô cùng*.   [14, p.2]

It can be concluded that English and Vietnamese share the same cognition about the language of fairy tales. Once fairy tales are mentioned, the language of rhythm, alliteration and assonance must be employed. Being aware of this, Vietnamese translators have made great efforts to maintain the typical feature of EFTs and to satisfy the language of fairy tales in Vietnamese. Nevertheless, aside from the achievement pointed out, there are some problems in VTVs. Under-translation, over-translation and unnaturalness are the three easily seen causes resulting in the drawbacks of VTVs.

4.3. Under-translation in VTVs from EFTs

Under-translation is the translation that gives less detail and is more general than the original. It is under-translation presented in many VTVs that makes EFTs drop many interesting features and lose the communicative value. Many details acting to set up the flow of the narration or the supporting characters are skipped and several conversations are transmitted into reported sentences. Another typical characteristic of EFTs is the way to develop actions. Adverbs are rarely employed but the repetitions of actions are used instead. This is not rendered properly in VTVs because many recurring actions are reduced and many cultural features reflected in the tales are omitted or translated in an unsatisfying way. Here is an instance:

(7a) Many years ago there was an Emperor so exceedingly fond of new clothes that he spent all his money on being well dressed. He cared nothing about reviewing his soldiers, going to the theatre, or going for aride in his carriage, except to show off his new clothes. *He had a coat for every hour of the day, and instead of saying, as one might, about any other ruler, "The King's in council," here they always said, "The Emperor's in*

his dressing room." [13, p.3]

(7b) Ngày xửa ngày xưa, có một vị hoàng đế sống cuộc đời vương giả trong lâu đài lộng lẫy tráng lệ. Dù người dân của ngài sống trong đói khổ thì hoàng đế vẫn mặc kệ, ngài chỉ quan tâm đến quần áo đẹp mà thôi. Hoàng đế thích quần áo đẹp đến nỗi ngài sẵn sàng chi không tiếc tay cho việc ăn mặc. [13, p.4]

The image of an emperor who was "*so exceedingly fond of new clothes*" is portrayed with many impressive details such as "*He had a coat for every hour of the day*" or " *instead of saying, as one might, about any other ruler, "The King's in council," here they always said, "The Emperor's in his dressing room.*". It is thanks to these details that creates the satire for the tale. But they are regrettably omitted in the translated version.

In addition, what makes EFTs distinctive is its repetitive patterned language. This feature is also disregarded in most VTVs. Here are some examples:

(8a) 'What!' says Jack's mother, 'have you been *such a fool*, *such a dolt*, *such an idiot*, as to give away my Milky-white, the best milker in the parish, and prime beef to boot, for a set of paltry beans? *Take that*! *Take that*! *Take that*! And as for your precious beans here they go out of the window. And now off with you to bed. *Not a sup shall you drink*, and *not a bit shall you swallow* this very night.' [12, p.9]

(8b) Mẹ của Jack *rất* giận dữ, bà *mắng* Jack và *ném hạt đậu* qua cửa sổ, hạt đậu rơi xuống khu vườn. Bà *phạt Jack không được ăn* tối hôm đó. [12, p.10]

In the extract above, the words "*a fool, a dolt, an idiot*" are used in a gradually increasing nuance to express the mother's anger to her son. The reappearance of the imperative "*Take that! Take that! Take that!*" shows Jack's mother's serious fury. Nevertheless, reading the translational version with the very simple words "*rất giận dữ, mắng, ném hạt đậu, phạt Jack không được ăn tối*", readers cannot feel her rage.

Besides, some details describing the supporting characters are also left out in VTVs. Many features of English cultures as well as leading details creating the smooth narration of EFTs are also ignored in VTVs. The transformation shows that in Vietnamese people's cognition, details and climax are important in narratives while to English people, it is more crucial to have experience that make the life diversified and colorful.. The omitted details are classified and tabulated as in table 1.

Table 1. *The Omitted Details Causing Under-translation in VTVs from EFTs*

Kinds of details	Occurrences	%
Introducing details	28	48
Cultural features	10	17
Details of supporting characters	8	14
Conversations	5	9
Repetition	7	12

4.4. Over-translation in VTVs from EFTs

Over-translation is the translation in which the information or meaning of the original may be possibly gained or the version gives more information than the original. EFTs are narrated naturally, the supporting characters and leading details are reported objectively. English tellers do not insert their own subjective opinions into the tales and the stories are let to develop as they must be. But in most of the VTVs proposed, there are 71 details found to be added into 11 translational versions. These details are mostly derived from the subjective judgment of the translators and spoil the English cultural features implied. The subjective judgments focus on 8 categories and are classified as in table 2.

Table 2. *The Subjective Judgment Causing Over-translation in VTVs from EFTs*

Kinds of details	Occurrences	%
Regret	6	10
Brotherhood / sisterhood	9	12
Greed for money	20	28
Wicked witch	5	8
Adjectives	9	13
Gentleness of mother	12	17
Inhumane stepmother	4	6
Comparing the advantages and disadvantages	4	6

As can be seen from the table, motherhood is highly dignified in VTVs. This reflects the cognition of Vietnamese people about motherhood. It can be the thoughtful attitude of a duck mother for her unsightly duckling children or the moral advice of a mother for her greedy son. Yet, these details are overstated in many VTVs and confuse readers of bilingual stories. The two examples below are for illustration:

(9a)The mother jumped into the water and all the ducklings copied her one after the other. Even the ugly grey duckling followed them.

- No, he is not a peacock. He can swim well - said his mother pleased - Look how he's moving his little feet under the water. [14, p.13]

(9b) Vịt mẹ nhảy xuống nước, từng chú vịt con lần lượt bắt chước theo. Vịt út xấu xí cũng nhảy theo mẹ và các anh chị.

- Không, nó không phải là công vì nó bơi rất giỏi - vịt mẹ hài lòng nói- Nhìn bàn chân nhỏ xíu của vịt út đạp nước kìa, trông mới khéo léo làm sao chứ. [14, p.13]

(10a) And when he got home, he showed his mother the wonderful hen, and said 'Lay' to it; and it laid a golden egg every time he said 'Lay.' [12, p.15]

(10b) Jack mang con gà về nhà cho mẹ. –"Mẹ xem này, con gà này đẻ ra những quả trứng vàng thật đấy."

Cậu bắt chước người khổng lồ nói "Gà ơi, đẻ trứng vàng cho ta đi nào! Úm ba la, trứng vàng nở ra"

Con gà kêu lên quang quác rồi lại đẻ ra một quả trứng bằng vàng ròng. ***Mẹ Jack nói, "Jack, lấy trộm của người khác là không tốt đâu con. Con phải trao đổi một cách công bằng và sống lương thiện."***   [12, p.16]

The gentleness of the duck mother in (9) is dignified in the word *"khéo léo"* which contains her tenderness and includes her pride also. Or the teaching advice of Jack's mother for him, *"**Jack, lấy trộm của người khác là không tốt đâu con. Con phải trao đổi một cách công bằng và sống lương thiện.**"* reflects Vietnamese culture but these details cannot be found in the original English version.

Added to this, over-translation is stemmed from the personal opinion of the translator. Many phrases including the translator's feelings, emotions and attitudes towards the protagonists are inserted. Unintentionally, the translator imposes his own experience onto the readers. Below are some interesting examples:

(11a) "But he hasn't got anything on!" the whole town cried out at last. The Emperor shivered, for he suspected they were right. But he thought, "This procession has got to go on."So he walked more proudly than ever, as his noblemen held high the train that wasn't there at all.

[13, p.11]

(11b) "Hoàng thượng không mặc gì hết! Hoàng thượng không mặc gì hết."

Hoàng đế chợt choáng váng vì ngài thấy hình như họ nói đúng. Nhưng ngài không thể dừng cuộc diễu hành lại được, nên nhà vua tiếp tục đi, khuôn mặt cố tỏ vẻ bình thường. ***Đám đông thì cười chê bộ quần áo độc nhất vô nhị trên thế gian của hoàng đế***.   [13, p.12]

(12a) Shortly after, he married her. Cinderella, who was as good as she was beautiful, allowed her sisters to stay in the palace and gave them in marriage to two lords.

[14, p.26]

(12b) Ít lâu sau. đám cưới của Hoàng tử và cô gái Lọ Lem ***được tổ chức linh đình***. Vì Lọ Lem là một cô gái vừa xinh đẹp vừ tốt bụng nên cô đã cho phép hai cô chị sống trong cung điện và kết hôn cùng với hai công tước.

[14, p.26]

Above are apparent examples demonstrating Vietnamese cognitive viewpoint. English tellers let the tales develop naturally and successively as it must be while Vietnamese tend to emphasize the actions as well as the result, The detail "***Đám đông thì cười chê bộ quần áo độc nhất vô nhị trên thế gian của hoàng đế***" can be considered a reasonable inference for the detail "***Hoàng thượng không mặc gì hết!***" or in Vietnamese culture, a prince's wedding must be "***được tổ chức linh đình***".

4.5. Unnaturalness in VTVs from EFTs

Unnaturalness in translation can be described as a set of errors such as word use, grammar, syntax, semantics and structure. In some cases, unnaturalness in translation not only gravely spoils the general meaning but also distorts the writer's intention and disappoints readers. Unnaturalness is found in 9 out of

20 tales under study and 40 samples are discovered and classified as in Table 3.

Table 3. *The Factors Causing Unnaturalness in VTVs from EFTs*

Kinds of details	Occurrences	%
Word-for-word translation	14	35
Omission of conducting details	8	20
Faithful translation	3	8
Emphasis on protagonists	5	12
Word use	10	25

Word-for-word translation is the translation in which the source language word order is preserved and it is found to be common in VTVs. In EFTs, the main details as well as the supporting ones are told in an interleaving way. It is the omission of conducting details, the emphasis on protagonists and the faithful translation together with the use of words that result in unnaturalness in many VTVs proposed. Here are some examples:

(13a) The poor man's wife kept the egg in a piece of cloth and set for the jewelry shop. Both reached the shop and asked the jeweler, "Can you check this egg?" He said, "Yes" and examined the egg. He told it was a pure gold egg.   [14, p.15]

(13b) Người vợ giấu quả trứng trong miếng vải và tới cửa hàng kim hoàn. Cả hai bước vào và hỏi người thợ kim hoàn "Ông có thể kiểm tra quả trứng này được không?" Ông ta nói, "Được chứ" rồi kiểm tra. Người thợ kim hoàn khẳng định đây là một quả trứng bằng vàng nguyên chất.

[14, p.15]

(14a) They walked all round the poultry yard and although the n ducks laughed at him:

-Hey! That's a funny looking duck! We don't like it at all!

Even a wise old mother duck said that the grey duckling was ***the most unfortunate looking one she had ever seen in her own life***.

14, p.16]

(14b) Đàn vịt dạo bước trong sân. Dù vịt út cố gắng làm theo lời mẹ dặn nhưng cư dân nhà vịt vẫn cười nhạo chú. "Ồ, thằng vịt này trông buồn cười chưa!Nhìn mới tức mắt làm sao!"

Thậm chí một bà vịt nhiều chuyện còn nói rằng ***chú vịt xám chính là một điều không may mắn nhất mà bà đã từng gặp trong đời***.   [14, p.17]

It can be seen in the two examples that something sounds unusual in the use of words. It is not stated in Vietnamese that "***bằng vàng nguyên chất***", "***chú vịt xám chính là một điều không may mắn nhất mà bà đã từng gặp trong đời***". These expressions could be translated *"**bằng vàng ròng**"*, *"**đây là con vịt lạ đời nhất mà tôi từng nhìn thấy**"*. It is unnaturalness reflecting the perception of language in a certain society and at a specific time of the translators that makes the translation sound foreign and alien.

In conclusion, the three problems of under-translation, over-translation and unnaturalness bring about unsatisfactory transmission of EFTs. And the exciting fact

is that the three problems take up the relatively equal proportion. No problem dominates the others and can be displayed as in figure 1.

Figure 1. *The Percentage of Under-translation, Over-translation and Unnaturalness in VTVs from EFTs*
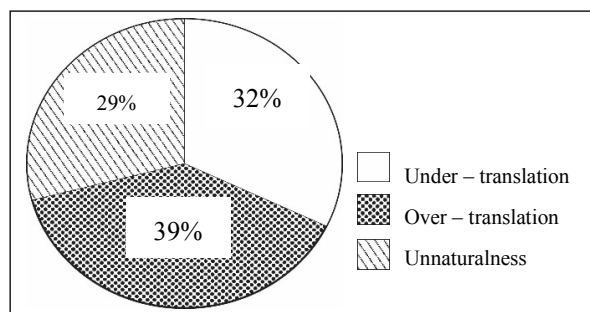
4.6. Some possible solutions

4.6.1. Style

Fairy tale is different from other kinds of literature in its style which leads readers to the "fairy world". In English's notion, this is a world where speaking animals live in harmony with people and a world where civilians enjoy their peaceful country life. Therefore, the language in EFTs is imaginary and legendary. Meanwhile, Vietnamese translators focus much on the details and pay little attention to the way English people choose, employ and combine words to make the language of their tales mythical. It could be suggested that translators should be equipped with more knowledge about English literature style so that the translational versions could preserve the original values in terms of literature and arts.

Another feature of EFTs is the objective narrative style. This should be the indispensable criteria which Vietnamese translators must take into consideration. It is the subjective judgments inserted in VTVs that make EFTs lose the neutral flow of expression. Therefore, translators should be advised to care for the objective style of EFTs.

4.6.2. Content

Conserving the content of EFTs is a matter that translators should concentrate on. A nation is a territory with one culture and one language. Fairy tales are commonly preserved as implausible but it is important to remember that in cultures where the inhabitants of the magical world are perceived as real, the stories may be interpreted more as legends so that story tellers and readers can understand the tales to have some historical, factual basis. Vietnamese translators should consider each sentence and each word thoughtfully. A highly appreciated translational version is the one that keeps the features of EFTs unchanged andreproduces English cultural and chronological characteristics of the" fairy society" as well as lets Vietnamese readers feel curious about foreign cultures and make comparison between English and Vietnamese ideology reflected in fairy tales.

5. Conclusions and Suggestions

Overcoming the problems of under-translation, over-translation and unnaturalness in VTVs from EFTs is proved not to be simple. The first possible idea suggested is that translators should preserve the cultural, historical and social features mirrored in EFTs as closely in VTVs as possible. Translators are advised not to insert their subjective judgments into their translation. Furthermore, applying the knowledge of cultural and social elements in EFTs is a crucial factor and also recommended to translators.

Being cognitive of the features of EFTs is useful to learners who are fond of fairy tales and want to improve their English by reading bilingual ones. Readers will find it more exciting to understand a tale once they know how the tale develops and what linguistic elements contain social, cultural values in this unique genre of literature. Understanding the problems encountered by translators also helps readers manage to acquire the tales in their own way, not by the way the translators imposed in their translational versions.

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