

Analysis of Stylistic Features in Children's Literature Translation: Taking the Chinese Translation of *The Wind in the Willows* by Sun Fali as an Example

Qiwen Wang *

College of Foreign Languages, Shanghai Maritime University, Shanghai, 201306, China

* Corresponding Author Email: 202210810111@stu.shmtu.edu.cn

Abstract. In the era of globalization, the exchange and integration of different cultures have deepened, and children's literature, as an important carrier of culture, has increasingly attracted the attention of the academic community. As a unique literary form, children's literature appeals to a specific audience and possesses distinctive stylistic features. Therefore, the translation of children's literature involves both the conversion of language and the reflection of its uniqueness in regard to stylistic features. Based on the perspective of translational stylistics, this study aims to explore the stylistic features of Sun Fali's translation of the famous work *The Wind in the Willows* written by the famous British writer and novelist Kenneth Grahame. This work is a classic fairy tale renowned for its beautiful and lyrical prose that flows with the grace of pastoral symphony, which grants it high artistic value. Characterized by its vivid and delicate language, it masterfully incorporates a mystical religious ambiance into its depictions of natural scenery, creating a distinctive style. Sun Fali's translation fully restores and reproduces the stylistic features of the novel, but also cleverly amplifies some of the features by incorporating the distinctive charm of the Chinese language, giving the translation its own unique appeal.

Keywords: Children's Literature Translation, Sun Fali, the Wind in the Willows, Translational Stylistics, Stylistic Feature.

1. Introduction

In the era of accelerating globalization evolution, global children's literary works have been translated into different languages, gradually becoming a common spiritual sustenance for children around the world. As a unique literary form with a special audience, children's literature works not only feature simple language, vivid plots and rich imagination, but also carry educational significance and cultural value. It undertakes the responsibility of shaping children's outlook on life and the world, enabling them to learn the virtues of truth, kindness and beauty while enjoying the pleasure of reading stories. Therefore, children's literature translation has become a complex task that involves both language conversion and the reconstruction of style, emotion, and culture. Translating children's literature becomes even more challenging when cultural backgrounds differ.

The Wind in the Willows is one of the most popular books of the 20th century, hailed as the crowning achievement of the Golden Age of British children's literature. Since its publication in 1938, it has been translated into dozens of languages and has won the love of readers worldwide. The book tells the story of a group of animals living in the countryside, including the innocent Mole, the enthusiastic Rat, the mature Badger, and the self-righteous Toad. Despite different identities and distinct personalities, four animals embark on an adventurous journey, sharing each other's joys and sorrows, which embodies the themes of friendship, responsibility, courage, and homeland. The text of this book is both accessible to children and rich in philosophy and depth.

Currently, the domestic translation studies of *The Wind in the Willows* are primarily concentrated on comparative studies of translations and analysis of translation strategies through the perspectives of Skopos theory, functional equivalence theory, and reception aesthetics. Research based on the perspective of translational stylistics for analysing the stylistic features of the translated text is relatively scarce. This research aims to explore the stylistic features of Sun Fali's translation of this novel from the perspective of translational stylistics, using a systematic approach to analyse how the

translator handles language style, emotional expression and cultural differences, and provide insights and ideas for improving the quality of Chinese children's literature translation.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Stylistics and Translational Stylistics

Stylistics, as a branch of text linguistics, reveals the stylistic features of a text by exploring the interrelationships between the characteristics of the text [1].

The study of stylistics has a long history, and in the early 20th century, it combined with linguistics to form an independent interdisciplinary field. Since the emergence of modern stylistics marked by the Swiss linguist Bally's work *Stylistique du français*, it has been closely connected to linguistics, utilizing linguistic theories and methods for research. Furthermore, new linguistic theories have driven the development of various stylistic schools [2]. For instance, in the 1960s, Saussurean structuralist linguistics became mainstream, which promoted the development of formal stylistics; in the 1970s, functional stylistics based on Halliday's systemic functional linguistics flourished. It was not until the 21st century that Simpson, in his book *Stylistics*, proposed a new definition of stylistics as "a text interpretation method that places language at the forefront", shifting the emphasis from linguistic methods to language itself, that stylistics gradually separated from linguistics [3].

The true combination of stylistics and translation only emerged from the 1980s and reached its peak after entering into the 21st century. According to Shao Lu, the stylistics defined by linguist Leach in 2008, that is, "stylistic X is the totality of linguistic features related to textual or discursive samples within Y, defined by a specific combination of contextual parameters", emphasizes the stylistic features of the text rather than the individual attributes. The translator's style is neither an objective feature of the translation nor the author's style. Although this definition applies to the analysis of translations, it is not suitable for the study of the translator's style, which has led to the gradual independence of translational stylistics [4]. In her work *Stylistic Approaches to Translation*, British scholar Boase-Beier pointed out the importance of style in constructing and interpreting text. Boase-Beier proposes that style is the result of selection, and in the process of repeated creation, the translator's personal style will become an integral part of the style of the target text [5]. In 2010, Chan Tak-hung Leo defined translational stylistics as "choices made by translators based on aesthetics or themes", which further promoted the development of translational stylistics as an independent discipline [6].

2.2. Children's Literature Translation

Children's Literature can be defined as "literature that is specifically created for children", while children's literature translation as "literature that is translated specifically for children", with both texts ultimately needing to be linguistically, psychologically, and sociologically suitable for child readers [7]. The research on children's literature translation abroad has shown a prosperous development since the 21st century, gradually moving away from its historically long-standing marginal position and achieving significant development. Li Wenna, Zhu Jianping pointed out that in foreign research of children's literature translation, its uniqueness, complexity and richness have increasingly attracted attention, and the emphasis of the research has progressively moved from the original work to the translated work [8]. Lan Hongjun, Xiong Jinru argued that the foreign children's literature translation has undergone an evolution from comparative literature and comparative cultural studies to descriptive translation studies, and then to the diversification of research methods. It has now become a widely recognized branch of translation studies [9]. In contrast, although the study of children's literature translation in China dates back to the late 19th century and has gone through over a century of development, it has been making slow progress. According to Zhang Huiping, the domestic research on the translation history and translators of children's literature focuses on modern times, and there are few studies on the contemporary era [10]. Wang Xueyao and Zhou Lixin pointed out that currently, the attention paid to children's literature translation in China is insufficient, and

there is great room for improvement in both quantity and quality of translated works [11]. Wang Lei argued that the quality of translated children's literary works currently available in the domestic market is uneven, and the translation market lacks unified standards. Additionally, most of the research on children's literature translation in China employs descriptive translation methods or provides general descriptions of translation phenomena, lacking systematic approaches. This is the reason why the translation quality is not up to expectations [12].

In conclusion, domestic children's literature translation study still has many gaps, and there is a need to increase attention to relative research, applying more systematic and multidisciplinary theories to the practice of children's literature translation. Translational stylistics focuses on the analysis of linguistic features and textual form, which can provide more scientific and systematic guidance for translation practice, and help to raise the standard of children's literature translation.

3. Analysis of Stylistic Features in Sun Fali's translation

The uniqueness of children's literature requires that translators must fully adapt to the needs of child readers. They need to thoroughly understand the stylistic features of children's literature and effectively convey these characteristics.

From the perspective of translational stylistics, this article analyses the original English text of *The Wind in the Willows* as the source text and the translation by Sun Fali as the target text. Specifically, the linguistic features and stylistic characteristics of the translated text will be examined across four dimensions: vocabulary, sentence, rhetoric, and context, focusing primarily on the description of natural scenery, religious metaphors, and atmosphere creation, thereby reflecting that the style of the target text is a result of the translator's choices.

3.1. On the Vocabulary Level: Concise and Vivid

The choice of vocabulary directly reflects the translator's language proficiency and translation skills, and is a direct manifestation of the translator's language style. Considering the limited language cognition and comprehension abilities of child readers, Sun Fali employs a large number of simple, clear, and vivid words in his translation.

Example 1:

Source Text: All was a-shake and a-shiver—glints and gleams and sparkles, rustle and swirl, chatter and bubble.

Target Text: 一切都在摇摆.颤动——明亮.闪光.耀眼.哗啦哗啦.打旋子.说闲话.冒泡.

Sun Fali's translation uses a string of Chinese words, including verbs, adjectives and onomatopoeia that correspond to the English words in the source text. The four terms "摇摆", "颤动", "打旋子" and "冒泡" vividly depict the appearance of a gently flowing river on a spring day when the ice and snow melt; "明亮", "闪光" and "耀眼" show the shimmering state of a river flowing under the sunlight; "哗啦哗啦" and "说闲话" describe the flow of water from the perspective of sound, making readers feel as if they can hear the whispering melody of the river flowing by, creating a sense of being immersed in the moment. The description of the whole sentence has a strong sense of picture, reflecting a relaxing and lively atmosphere.

Example 2:

Source Text: He ran up against things, he fell over things and into things, he darted on the things and dodged round things. At last, he took refuge in the dark, deep hollow of an old beach tree.

Target Text: 他绊着,磕着,钻着,躲着,最后是一株老山毛榉让他避进了一个深深的黑洞里.

The author Grahame uses a series of verb phrases in this sentence, but Sun simplifies them as a sequence of single-character Chinese verbs, which not only preserves the essence of the source text but also aligns with the conventions of Chinese expression. Although Sun doesn't directly translate the word "things" from the source text, by employing "绊", "磕", "钻" and "躲" the four verbs, he enables readers to sense the various obstacles the Mole encounters during its escape and evasion.

These four verbs are short but strong, with a sense of rhythm and cadence, vividly creating a tense atmosphere and depicting the Mole's panic and the awkwardness of its flight after entering the wild wood and hearing strange sounds.

3.2. On the Sentence Level

3.2.1. Concise and clear

Considering the particularity of child readers, children's literature requires its syntactic structure to be as concise and clear as possible, avoiding long sentences and complex structures in order that child readers can easily understand and follow the rhythm of the story.

Example 3:

Source Text: First with brooms, then with dusters, then on ladders and steps and chairs, with a brush and a pail of whitewash till he had dust in his throat and eyes, and splashes of whitewash all over his black fur, and an aching back and weary arms.

Target Text: 先是用扫帚.用鸡毛掸子,然后是拿一桶白灰浆和一把刷子爬梯子.上台阶.踩椅子,直干到腰酸背疼,胳膊也软了,嗓子和眼睛里满是灰尘,黑色的毛皮上洒满了灰浆.

This is a description of one of the main characters in the book, the Mole, during his spring cleaning. A series of parallel phrase structures are used in the source text, and long sentences and complex structures are deliberately avoided, reflecting a continuous sequence of actions through juxtaposed relationships. Sun uses the unique Chinese running-on sentence in the target text to clearly convey each action, and the series of actions are tightly connected together, making the whole description simple and clear, the rhythm brisk, and the actions coherent, so that the readers can feel the heavy labour and tiredness of the Mole in the cleaning. The use of running-on sentences here reflects the unique advantage of Chinese in expressing continuous actions, making the translation conform to the language habits of Chinese child readers and easy for them to understand and accept.

3.2.2. Poetic

As a prose fairy tale, the language in *The Wind of the Willows* is as quiet and beautiful as an idyll, full of love and praise for nature. Sun's translation is exquisitely written, depicting the picturesque natural scenery of the English countryside incisively and vividly, which has a strong artistic appeal.

Example 4:

Source Text: Rocks and brambles and tree roots behind them, confusedly heaped and tangled; in front, a great space of quiet fields, hemmed by lines of hedges black on the snow...

Target Text: 身后是岩石.荆棘和树根,纠缠重叠,盘根错节; 面前是一大片宁静的原野,叫雪地上——排排黑色的树篱包围着.

The sentence in the source text consists of three parallel short sentences, with multiple paratactic noun phrases used in each clause to create a balanced contrast and hierarchy. In the target text, although the sentence length is divided into two sentences, the parallel structure is also adopted to vividly depict this pastoral landscape in winter. Sun's translation vividly expresses the chaos and complexity of thorns through two four-word words "纠缠重叠" and "盘根错节", bringing to the page the intricate picture of rocks, thorns and roots intertwined in the snow. Sun uses the four-character words commonly used in Chinese, which not only makes the description vivid, but also gives the translated language a poetic sense of rhythm and rhythm, which reflects the poetry of the target text language.

3.3. On the Rhetoric Level: Accurate and Vivid Use of Personification

Rhetoric is a common technique to enhance the vividness of the text. The extensive use of rhetoric in children's literature can provide convenience for child readers to understand the content and emotions of the text. There are lengthy descriptions of the natural scenery in *The Wind in the Willows*, using various rhetorical devices to portray a vibrant and lively nature, praising and celebrating the beauty of the natural world.

Example 5:

Source Text: ...a yellow moon, appearing suddenly and silently from nowhere in particular, came to keep them company and listen to their talk.

Target Text: 黄澄澄的月亮不知从什么地方突然悄悄冒了出来, 是来跟他们做伴, 听他们谈话的。

Personification rhetoric is used in this sentence, endowing the moon with human actions and emotions, and depicting the scene where the moon quietly emerges in the night sky, coming to accompany and lend an ear to the dialogues of the animals as they embark on their journey. This description breathes life into the natural element, imbuing the text with a beautiful, poetic atmosphere. It also enhances the reader's sense of immersion, making them feel as though they are part of the journey.

Example 6:

Source Text: ...the sky still clung to and retained some lingering skirts of light from the departed day, and the sullen heats of the torrid afternoon broke up and rolled away at the dispersing touch of the cool fingers of the short midsummer night.

Target Text: 天空还留着晚霞的一片裙角, 依恋着已经消逝的白昼。仲夏的夜虽短, 经它清凉的指头一驱赶, 午后那炎热的暑气也终于煞住, 一浪浪地消逝了。

The imagery of the sky and midsummer night comes to life with emotion in this sentence through its brilliant use of personification. The sky is reluctant to part with the daylight, as if it is willing to extend time repeatedly just to keep the day, adding a touch of tenderness and poetry to the sunset. The short but refreshing summer night arrives swiftly and drives away the heat, imbuing the shift in temperature with vibrant vitality. This sentence brings the beautiful natural scenery to life, vividly embodying the poetic nature of the text's language.

3.4. On the Context Level

A text or its components should not be contained to itself, but should also consider its connection to the outside world, which is regarded as the context for the social interaction between the author, the reader, and the characters of the novel. *The Wind in the Willows* is not only a story about the adventures of several animals, but also reflects the social environment and people's living conditions at that time, reflecting the life of different classes.

3.4.1. Sense of belonging to home

Although the storyline of this novel is mostly filled with adventure, there are many descriptions about the home environment of the characters, which reflects the author's attitude towards family. For the middle-class people of the Victorian era, home was a place of elevated status, a harbour for the soul, and a refuge for the spirit. It is a symbol of comfort, peace, love, and tranquility, free from the corruption of external competition, money, and power. Through precise use of language, Sun vividly embodied the sense of homeland in the source text.

Example 7:

Source Text: ...and at once they found themselves in all the glow and warmth of a large fire lit kitchen. The floor was well-worn red brick, and on the wide hearth burnt a fire of logs, between two attractive chimney corners tucked away in the wall, well out of any suspicion of draught.

Target Text: 他们立刻发现自己进入了一个被火光照耀的大厨房的光明与温暖之中。用红砖铺成的地板已经破烂不堪, 两个诱人的烟囱角落里夹着一个宽阔的壁炉, 壁炉埋在墙壁里, 丝毫不用担心有风。

This description is of the Mole and the Rat's first visit to the Badger's house. The two have just gone through a storm and unexpectedly entered a joyful environment, finding great satisfaction. The depiction of the warm firelight, the details of the floor and the fireplace creates a cozy atmosphere. Sun's translation fully retains these elements that bring the readers a warm feeling, and portrays a real, cozy and comfortable home, which is in sharp contrast to the cold winter outside, conveying the author's deep affection for home.

3.4.2. Mysterious aura of religion

Not all the depictions of natural scenery in *The Wind in the Willows* are peaceful and tranquil, some have shaped a mysterious atmosphere. While fully conveying this mysterious atmosphere, Sun's translation strengthens the metaphorical connotations of religion.

Example 8:

Source Text: Helper and healer, I cheer—Small waifs in the woodland wet—Strays I find in it, wounds I bind in it—bidding them all forget!

Target Text: 我抚慰林中流浪的孩童，我帮助迷路的小羔羊，我抚平他们身上的创伤，然后嘱咐他们全遗忘！

This is the song that the Mole and the Rat hear from the reeds on their way back from their search for a lost otter. In the mist of the river, the two helpful, tireless searchers who stayed up all night looking for the little otter, heard this sacred and solemn song, which seemed at once a soothing and mysterious call. The word "strays" in the source text literally means "lost animals" and does not refer to any particular animal, but Sun translates it as "迷路的小羔羊 (lost lamb)", a term originally used in the Bible's Old Testament book of Isaiah. This method of translation takes into account the important position and profound influence of Christianity in Western culture, and the metaphors with religious connotations complement the mysterious ambiance depicted in the text, reflecting an enigmatic but fascinating style.

4. Conclusion

The Wind in the Willows, as a classic children's literary work that has endured over time since its inception, retains the common characteristics of children's literature in its stylistic features, while also possessing a unique style. Based on the perspective of translational stylistics, this article analyses the translation through multiple examples. The study found that Sun Fali's translation is very faithful to the original work, retaining a large number of rhetorical devices from the original, and accurately conveying the atmosphere of the original. In the meantime, Sun skillfully incorporates the unique charm of Chinese into his translation, making his translation possess a distinctive language feature and artistic appeal. Sun makes full use of the rhythm of Chinese to choose words, so that the language of the translation is more poetic, and the use of running-on sentences is more in line with the expression habits of Chinese, which adapts to the way of thinking of domestic children's readers. At the level of context, Sun manifested the religious metaphors in the original work and embodied the theme of the source text more profoundly.

This research further demonstrates that from the perspective of translational stylistics, systematic methods for translating children's literature can provide translators with a clear theoretical framework, thereby enhancing overall translation efficiency and promoting the improvement of text translation quality. When facing cultural differences, translators can make rational judgments, achieve better cultural adaptation, avoid confusion in language style, and at the same time meet the reading needs of child readers.

References

- [1] BUSSMANN H. Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2000.
- [2] Shen Dan. The Centennial Development of Western Modern Stylistics. *Foreign Language Teaching and Research*, 2000, 32(1): 7.
- [3] Shen Dan. Reflections on the New Developments in Western Stylistics - With a Review of Simpson's Stylistics. *Foreign Languages*, 2005, 28(3): 56-64
- [4] Shao Lu. A Study on Western Translational Stylistics (2006—2011). *Chinese Translators Journal*, 2012, (5): 10-15.
- [5] Boase-Beier J. Stylistic approaches to translation. Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, 2011.

- [6] Chan Tak-hung L. *Readers, Reading and Reception of Translated Fiction in Chinese: Novel Encounters*. Alanchester & Kinderhook (NY): St. Jerome Publishing, 2010.
- [7] Chen Zixuan. A Review of Research on Translation of Children's Literature. *Frontiers in Educational Research*, 2023, 6(11).
- [8] Li Wenna, Zhu Jianping. *Research on Children's Literature Translation: Current Status and Reflections*. *Foreign Languages and Their Teaching*, 2021, (04): 43-52+148.
- [9] LAN Hongjun, Xiong Jinru. *Research on Translation of Foreign Children's Literature: History, Current Situation, and Insights*. *Shandong Foreign Languages Teaching*, 2022, 43(06): 97-109.
- [10] Zhang Huiping. A Review of Domestic Studies on Children's Literature Translation. *Overseas English*, 2021, (11): 221-222.
- [11] Wang Xueyao, Zhou Lixin. A Brief Analysis of the Problems in Children's Literature Translation and Corresponding Strategies. *Overseas English*, 2022, (18): 50-51+65.
- [12] Wang Lei. A Review and Prospect of Chinese Children's Literature Translation under the Background of Cultural Confidence. *Comparative Research on Cultural Innovation*, 2024, 8(14): 184-187.