

# **Adult Translators for Child Readers: A Case Study of *The Wind in the Willows* in Chinese Translation**

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to explore variations in translations of children's literature, taking *The Wind in the Willows* by Kenneth Grahame (1975) as the basis for a case study. *The Wind in the Willows* is a classic of children's literature, with various published versions. By adopting textual and visual analysis of three contemporaneous Chinese translations of *The Wind in the Willows*, the article analyzes different approaches used in the verbal texts and covers of these three versions. Based on the analysis of translating and packaging of the three Chinese versions, the article examines how the image of childhood adopted and communicated by translators, illustrators, and publishers, affects linguistic choices, and how these choices are reflected in the relationship between adult translators and child readers.

KEYWORDS: children's literature, *The Wind in the Willows*, rewriting, Chinese translation, visual analysis

## **1. Introduction**

Children's literature translation is a relatively young area in translation research (Leonardi 2020:21). One of the reasons for this may be that children's literature is considered to be on

the margins of the literary system (Shavit 1981:171). As such, although it has always been an indispensable part of literary translation, children's literature translation has long been overlooked by scholars. However, children's literary translation offers a rich ground for academic research. Because children's literature translation holds a marginal position in the literary polysystem, it allows translators of children's literature to take tremendous liberties in modifying the text (ibid.). Translators alter the text based on societal considerations about what is "good for children" and their understanding of the child's ability to comprehend and read (Shavit 1981:172).

According to Leonardi (2020:11), when researching children's books, scholars should consider the age of the target readers, the level of language simplification, as well as pragmatic and ideological features. Compared with adult literature, children's literature generally has a more precise target readership (Xu 2004:33). However, the writing, translation, and purchase transactions representing child readers are all carried out by adults (Briggs 1989:4, as cited in Leonardi 2020:12). Furthermore, children's literature carries an educational function, and the educational focus of different editions of children's literature varies. These factors create a need for studying different versions of children's literature translations and discussing the relationship between adult translators and child readers. Within this context, the translation of children's literature classics deserves particular attention because of the numerous retranslations of these texts with different readers and intentions in mind.

*The Wind in the Willows* is one of the world classics of children's literature, written by Kenneth Grahame in 1908. The story portrays four lovable animals as main characters - the Mole, the Water Rat, the old Badger and the Toad - who live and overcome difficulties

together. As times have changed, what was originally a bedtime story that the author told to his son has been modified by translators and publishers across the globe. In Chinese alone, the book has been published in different translations more than 90 times so far. Among them, the translations of Yang Jingyuan (2013) and Ren Rongrong (2020) are the most popular (Gu 2016:22), and many scholars have focused on discussing these two editions (e.g., Song and Yang 2019; Yuan 2023; Gu 2016). But the reality is that there are many different editions on the market for consumers to choose from. These editions are inevitably rewritten and adapted by translators based on their respective understanding of the target audience (Leonardi 2020:2). It is therefore also necessary to study different translations and rewritings.

In this article, three renditions of *The Wind in the Willows*, namely Ren Rongrong's version, published in 2020, Gong Xun's version, published in 2016, and Tong Tianyao's version, published in 2020, are selected as case studies for analysis. These three editions were published in the same period but employed different translation and packaging approaches, which cater for different target readers. Ren Rongrong's version is a complete translation published by Shanghai Translation Publishing House. The selected version is included in the E. H. Shepard illustrated literary classics series designed for all age groups. Moreover, Gong Xun's version is an abridged and trans-edited version. It was published by Beijing Daily Publishing House. This translation is published within the series of International Prize for Children's Literature (Collection of Aesthetic Paintings). According to the publisher, the target readers of this series are primary school students in grades 3, 4, 5, and 6 (around 9 to 12 years old) who can read independently. Tong Tianyao's version is also a complete translation of the original text but focuses on poetic language. It was published by Zhejiang Literature & Art Publishing House. This translation is part of a classic collection series called Writers'

Lists. The publisher describes Tong's version as suitable for children aged 3 to 7 reading together with adults, and for primary and secondary school students to read independently.

This article will first review the studies about children's literature translation and visual elements in children's literature. Then, it will take *The Wind in the Willows* as a case study and compare the differences between English and Chinese texts by analyzing the linguistic features, covering the phonological, lexical, and syntactic levels, as well as visual features in three Chinese translations published within four years of each other. The visual analysis is primarily based on the analysis method developed by Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen in *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* (2005) to analyze images from center to edge, then left to right, and top to bottom (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2005:4). This approach fits the analyzed texts as the reading order of the three Chinese versions is done in the same manner as the European writing order in grammar and visual design: from left to right and from top to bottom. Finally, it will discuss the findings and offer a brief conclusion. This article aims to bring attention to how translators and rewriters of children's books intend to shape the target readers' reading experience and the relationship between adult translators and child readers.

## **2. Translating Children's Literature as Rewriting**

Many scholars (e.g., Dybiec-Gajer and Oittinen 2020; Epstein 2012; O'Sullivan 2003) acknowledge the unequal relationship between adult translators and child readers. O'Sullivan indicates the communication asymmetry in children's literature (2003:199). She uses the narrative communication model, demonstrating that an adult author produces an implied reader according to their (culturally defined) assumptions about readers' preferences, proclivities, and capacities at a specific developmental stage. Translators should examine the

unequal communication between the adult (implied) author and child (implied) reader in the original text to slip into the child's position (O'Sullivan 2003:201). She thinks translators usually convey adult-approved information to children (O'Sullivan 2003:205). In addition to the perspectives of communication, Epstein discusses the relationship between adult translators and child readers from the perspective of postcolonialism in the book *Translating Expressive Language in Children's Literature: Problems and Solutions* (2012). Epstein considers children to be the colonized and adults to be the colonizers. Adults view children as the colonized natives who need their help to develop a civilized way of life (2012:11). Epstein argues that "children should not be disempowered through literature" (2012:17). However, Epstein only concentrates on analyzing how translators translate expressive language without explaining the relationship between adult translators and child readers in greater detail. Furthermore, Lathey (2016) considers children's literature to have the function of education. Lathey (2016:93) believes that young children eagerly imitate whatever sound systems surround them; they acquire languages organically from children's literature, with the aid of proficient adults. However, in *Negotiating Translation and Transcreation of Children's Literature: From Alice to the Moomins* (2020), Dybiec-Gajer et al. hold the opinion that children's literature has shifted from teaching children to delighting them, and authors attempt to capture the attention of modern children with increasing creativity (2020:3). Due to this kind of shift, they believe that the function of translation and translators in this particular context is to let adults assist readers in reimagining the initial realms depicted in children's literature.

Because of the unequal relationship between adult translators and child readers, children's literature translators are more susceptible to modifying the translation based on their own understanding of childhood. According to Li (2023:370), the extent of adaptation to the

source text is largely determined by the translator's multidimensional understanding of children. For example, Borodo (2020:21) suggests that to make the activity of children more accessible to the new reader, translators may not only choose to simplify it but also to make the original text more straightforward. Lathey (2010) proposes that the translator is the "invisible storyteller" in children's literature. She uses the term "mediators" (2010, 2016) to describe the role of translators, which means that their translation is based on contemporary childhood expectations in the target culture. They rewrite ideological messages from publishers, government institutions, or religious organizations interested in children's welfare or educational politics (2016:27). Ketola (2017:15) agrees with Lathey's view and also argues that children's literature translation is a refraction of the original that has been processed via the translator's knowledge (and misinterpretation) of what the translator considers to be best for the young addressees. In addition, Lathey (2016:114) distinguishes the role between translator and rewriter and points out that a translator usually works from the source material. Still, a rewriter may create a new translation based on an existing version. However, Borodo (2017:120-121) argues that adaptations of children's literature in the context of globalization have been very different. A characteristic of contemporary adaptations is that they mix local and global cultures and become "the glocal text" for young readers (2017:205).

Alongside textual adaptations for child readers, translations of children's literature are usually published with new images, including book covers and inside illustrations to attain product distinction (McKenzie 2012:128). This article will also examine the visual elements within children's literature translation. While there have been some studies on children's literature translation, few researchers have considered the interaction between verbal and visual elements (Todorova 2022). In the book *How Picturebooks Work*, Nikolajeva and Scott (2001:51) point out that book covers suggest an addressee and convey the content, tone, and

style of the story. If each book introduces the reader to the story for the first time, their expectations of what will occur will vary greatly based on the cover (ibid.). According to Sonzogni's book *Re-Covered Rose: A Case Study in Book Cover Design as Intersemiotic Translation* (2011), the book cover gives a visual description of the book's contents to potential readers. The connections between the content and the cover can be treated as a translation (Sonzogni 2011:4). Lathey (2016) emphasizes the translators' role in packaging children's literature. Translators should participate in discussions on a book's visual and structural aspects if possible. This ensures that the end result closely aligns with the original vision of the author and artist of the source material or, alternatively, provides a cohesive and innovative reinterpretation (2016:39).

From the above discussion, we can conclude that many scholars have revealed the problem of the translator's role in translating children's books. They accept the translator's manipulation and rewriting of the original text and analyze the issue from different perspectives.

Furthermore, many scholars discuss the relationship between content and cover in children's books (Lathey 2016; McKenzie 2012; Nikolajeva and Scott 2001; Sonzogni 2011). In its analysis of the unequal adult translator-child reader relationship and the adaptation of both verbal and visual texts, the present article is informed by these discussions. The following section will analyze the three Chinese versions of *The Wind in the Willows*.

### **3. Analysis of *The Wind in the Willows***

With the aim of showing the differences in approach of three Chinese retranslations of *The Wind in the Willows*, the article adopts textual and visual analysis to compare the source and three target products. The analysis focuses on the first, second, and twelfth chapters of the book. These three chapters include the beginning and end of the story and allow for a

representative example when discussing the linguistic choices made by the three translators. The textual analysis includes the phonological, lexical, and syntactic levels. The visual analysis includes the covers of the three translated texts. The following analysis is presented from the phonological, lexical, syntactic, and visual perspectives, respectively.

### *3.1. Phonological level*

As children's books can be read aloud by adults or children themselves, it is necessary to analyze the text at the phonological level, especially regarding onomatopoeia and alliteration. Onomatopoeia is a common technique used by children's writers. Three versions show different approaches to dealing with onomatopoeia in the source text. Ren Rongrong maintains onomatopoeia in the source text while adding even more onomatopoeic expressions in the target text. Here are some examples to illustrate this.

Example 1:

When far behind them they heard a faint warning **hum**, like the **drone** of a distant bee. Glancing back, they saw a small cloud of dust, with a dark centre of energy, advancing on them at incredible speed, while from out the dust a faint “**Poop-poop!**” wailed like an uneasy animal in pain. (Grahame 1975:38-39)

正在这时候，他们听到后面远远传来一阵微弱的嗡嗡声，就像是远处一只蜜蜂在嗡嗡响。他们回过头去，只见后面有一小股灰尘，中间是一个旋转着的黑点，以无法相信的速度向他们直奔而来，而在那股灰尘中发出微弱的“噗噗”声，像是一只受伤的动物在哀号。(Ren 2020:40)

At this moment, they heard a faint **hum** sound coming from far behind, like a bee **droning** in the distance. They turned around and saw a small cloud of dust behind



them, with a rotating black spot in the middle, running towards them at an unbelievable speed, and making a faint **“Poop-poop” sound** in the dust, like a wounded animal crying. (back translation)

In example 1, “hum”, “drone”, and “poop-poop” are onomatopoeia, and the translation keeps the onomatopoeia and renders these words into “嗡嗡声” (hum), “嗡嗡响” (droning) and “噗噗” (poop-poop) respectively. Moreover, the source text uses “hum” and “drone” as two different words to describe the same sound, and the target text also employs different Chinese terms “嗡嗡声” (hum) and “嗡嗡响” (droning). The example shows that Ren Rongrong retains the onomatopoeia, noticing the differences between different words and keeping this feature of the English text in the Chinese translated text.

Furthermore, Ren not only translates the onomatopoeia in the source text but also adds onomatopoeia in the target text even when it is not present in the original. The Chinese version uses onomatopoeia as an adjective, which is the supplementary content in the target text, offering an interpretation of the source text. For instance, the source text “a wonderful day” (Grahame 1975:11) is translated into “呱呱叫的好日子” (Ren 2020:7), (a croak wonderful day, back translation). There is no onomatopoeia in the source text, but the translator adds the onomatopoeic word “呱呱叫” (croak) in the Chinese text, which is an adjective that means excellent and superior. It supplements “a wonderful day” in the source text and explains the degree of “wonderful”. Moreover, “呱呱叫” (croak) represents a duplication of words, which is appealing for children because children tend to use duplication words when talking. The translator seems to be aware of the function of word duplication and adapts to how children speak, making the translated language more vivid and increasing the rhythmical effect.

In Gong Xun's translation, the translator tends to keep onomatopoeia. However, this translated adaptation occasionally also summarizes the meaning of onomatopoeia instead of translating it into Chinese onomatopoeic words in the target text. For example, "murmur" is an onomatopoeic word in English (Grahame 1975:238), which is translated into "嘈杂声" (noise) (Gong 2016:142), which is used to describe the disorder and mix of voices. The word "嘈杂声" (noise) gives the onomatopoeic word "murmur" a specific explanation by directly pointing out what kind of chaotic sound it is. The target text summarizes the meaning of the onomatopoeic word, which does not affect the plot of the story, and the translator tries to use less expressive words with the assumed intention of making readers focus on the content.

Tong Tianyao's translation uses some more literary words while retaining the original onomatopoeia. For instance, she translates "rustle", an onomatopoeic word, into "窸窣 (xī sū)" (rustle), onomatopoeia in Chinese describing a soft sound. This may be a complex word for some children, because these two characters do not often appear in written Chinese texts. The State Language Commission of China produced the Modern Chinese Corpus Character Frequency List, which shows that these two Chinese characters (i.e., 窸 and 窣) occur 28 and 26 times respectively in a corpus of 20-million-character tokens. It demonstrates the frequency of these characters is very low. Therefore, children may not recognize the word or be unable to pronounce it correctly, so the target text provides pinyin intending to teach readers how to pronounce the word and enrich their vocabulary.

In addition to onomatopoeia in the source text, the author tends to use alliteration in sentences to create rhythm and add fun to the children's reading experience. Here is an example.

Example 2

So he **scraped** and **scratched** and **scrabbled** and **scrooged** and then he **scrooged** again and **scrabbled** and **scratched** and **scraped**” (Grahame 1975:7)

他用他的小爪子忙着又是扒，又是挖，又是掘，又是抓，接着又是抓，又是掘，又是挖，又是扒” (Ren 2020: 2)

He was busy with his little paws crawling and digging, excavating, and scratching, followed by scratching, excavating, digging and crawling. (back translation)

鼹鼠的小爪子在地面下忙个不停，又是挠又是抓 (Gong 2016:1)

The mole’s little paw was **busy** under the ground, **scratching** and **clawing**. (back translation)

鼹鼠拼命地挥舞着他的四只爪子，又是扒又是掏又是抓又是刨，又是刨又是抓又是掏又是扒，使出了浑身力气。(Tong 2020:1)

The Mole waved his four paws desperately, crawling, hollowing, scratching, digging, then, digging, scratching, hollowing and crawling with all his strength. (back translation)

In example 2, the source text adds a strong audio-visual effect to the Mole’s movement by using the same alliteration. There are eight words beginning with “sc” and English consonants [sk], which are used to express that Mole is eager to climb up from the ground. Ren’s translation retains the effect in the Chinese text by using rhyme. In the target text, Ren uses rhyming Chinese characters to show that the Mole is very busy. The characters “扒”(pa), “挖”

(wa) and “抓” (zhua) end with the final [a]. This creates an aural experience for the reader, who seems to be able to hear the friction sound between Mole’s claws and the land.

In Gong’s translation, the feature of alliteration is not presented in the target text. Gong chooses to simplify the text by using the word “忙个不停” (busy) to represent the stylistic figure of alliteration and the verbs “挠” (scratching) and “抓” (clawing) to describe the action of the Mole. This translation strategy effectively reduces the number of words while retaining the meaning.

Tong applies a similar strategy to Ren’s version, using rhymed language in Chinese to deal with alliteration in the source text. The translator uses rhyming Chinese characters to represent the effect. “扒” (pa) and “抓” (zhua) finish with the final [a], but “掏” (tao) and “刨” (pao) end with the final [ao]. In this example, the translator adds “四只爪子” (four paws) and “使出了浑身的力气” (with all his strength). It specifies the numbers of the Mole’s paws, providing readers with additional information. Moles are animals that exist in reality; therefore, the additional information serves the purpose of promoting science among child readers. The additional information “使出了浑身力气” (with all his strength) stresses the Mole’s engagement in his task.

### *3.2. . Lexical level*

As *The Wind in the Willows* is written by a Scottish author and situated within British and even European culture, there will inevitably be some culture-loaded words. Culture-loaded words can either be an obstacle for the readers of the translation or increase the readers’ interest in understanding a foreign culture. The source text includes content related to monetary units, food culture and myth. For example, there are three words, “sixpence”, “onion-sauce”, and

“Ulysses”, bounded by culture. They are rendered into “六便士” (sixpence), “洋葱酱” (onion-sauce) and “尤利西斯” (Ulysses) respectively, in Ren’s version. Ren adopts the foreignization translation strategy to translate these three culture-loaded words and adds footnotes at the end of the text to make further explanations. For example, Ren explains the conversion rule among shilling, pence and pound, the application of onion sauce and who Ulysses is. Therefore, in terms of culture-loaded words, Ren chooses to take the target text away from Chinese readers, which causes some difficulties for readers to understand. Then, he adds footnotes to elaborate so that readers can better understand the words used in the source text and learn the cultural connotations behind them.

Compared to Ren’s solution, Gong applies different translation strategies to handle the problem posed by these culture-loaded words. In the target text, Gong uses a foreignization translation strategy to translate “pence” into “便士” (pence). Then, he adds “买路钱” (passing road money) to explain “sixpence” and helps readers understand that “pence” is a currency unit. Moreover, the translator uses a domestication translation strategy to translate “onion-sauce” and “The Return of Ulysses”. “Onion-sauce! Onion-sauce!” is translated into “笨蛋! 蠢货!” (Fool! Idiot!). The disdain and ridicule of rabbits in the text are directly translated. The target text uses different words to show that the dialogue in the source text is to laugh at rabbits, which emphasizes the tone. “The Return of Ulysses” is the name of the last chapter, and it is rendered into “夺回蟾宫” (take back the Toad Palace) in the target text. The translated version summarizes the main content of the last chapter but does not refer to the myth from ancient Greece.

Similarly, Tong uses the same strategy as Gong to translate culture-loaded words. Tong applies a foreignization translation strategy to translate “pence” into “便士” (pence) in the

target text. The translator assumes that the readers can understand the target text. However, she uses a domestication translation strategy to translate “onion-sauce” and “the return of Ulysses”. “Onion-sauce! Onion-sauce!” is translated into “蠢货! 蠢货!” (Fools! Fools!) to directly indicate the mockery of rabbits. “The Return of Ulysses” is the name of the last chapter and is rendered into “荣归故里” (return home with honor) in the target text. The translated version summarizes the major content of the last chapter, and the story of Ulysses is also summarized in the target text. However, the target readers lose the chance to learn more about the myth of Ulysses.

### *3.3. Syntactic level*

Because Chinese differs significantly from English, the syntactic characteristics of these two language systems are highly distinct. The Chinese stresses parataxis, whereas the English emphasizes hypotaxis. Here is an example illustrating the translators’ choices in the same sentence.

#### Example 3:

Green turf sloped down to either edge, brown snaky tree-roots gleamed below the surface of the quiet water, **while** ahead of them the silvery shoulder and foamy tumble of a weir, arm-in-arm with a restless dripping mill-wheel, that held up in its turn a grey-gabled mill-house, filled the air with a soothing murmur of sound, dull and smothery, yet with little clear voices speaking up cheerfully out of it at intervals. (Grahame 1975:17)

它两边是绿色的草坡，平静的水下闪现着像蛇一样弯弯曲曲的棕色树根。在他们前面是一个堤坝，那儿银波翻滚，泡沫飞溅，**并排**是个转动不停的水车

轮子，滴着水，水车轮子又带动着一只有灰色三色墙的磨坊里的磨盘，使空气中充满一种催人入睡的嗡嗡声，又单调又沉闷，然而里面不时响起很轻很清脆的快活说话声。(Ren 2020:14)

It is flanked by green turf slopes, and the calm water glistens with brown roots that bend like snakes. **In front of** them was an **embankment**, where silver waves rolled, foam splashed, **side by side** was a spinning **water wheel**, dripping water, and the water wheel drove a **mill-wheel** with gray tricolor walls in the **mill-house**, so that the air was filled with a sleepy hum, monotonous and dull, and yet from time to time there was a very light and crisp sound of happy talk. (back translation)

在幽静的水面下，蛇一般弯弯曲曲的褐色树根正发着光。在他们的前面，矗立着一座拦河坝，银色波浪高飞，落水泡沫翻滚，连接着它的是一个滴水的水车轮子。水车不停地转动，一直带动这一间灰色山墙磨坊里的磨盘，发出一种直叫人打瞌睡的嗡嗡声。而磨盘里却又不时传来清脆欢快的说话声。(Tong 2020:11)

Under the **quiet** water, the snake-like crooked brown roots of the tree were glowing. In front of them **stood** a barrage, with silver waves flying high and foam tumbling into the water, connected by a dripping wheel of a water wheel. The water wheel keeps turning, driving the mill-wheel in the grey gabled mill-house all the time, making a kind of buzzing sound that makes people drowsy. However, from time to time, there were crisp and cheerful voices in the mill. (back translation)

Example 3 shows a lengthy sentence in the source text. Ren rewrites the syntax in the translation to ensure fluency in Chinese, but he still mainly follows the word order of the

source text. He splits the sentence from “while” (bolded in the source text), which is the conjunction word to link two sentences in English. The second sentence is still very long from the perspective of Chinese writing, which provides too many items and the location of these items, for example, “前面” (in front of), “堤坝” (embankment), “并排” (side by side), “水车轮子” (water wheel), “磨坊” (mill-house) and “磨盘” (mill-wheel). It is complex for readers to imagine the scene, the relationship between these items, and their status. Although the sentence retains the original form, it will cause difficulties for readers, especially children.

As mentioned previously, Gong’s version is a simplified adaptation of the source text, so numerous items have been removed. In example 3, the sentences describe the scenery of the river using vivid language, but it is not the primary content that can affect the following plot. He chooses to omit the sentences, which reduces the burden on readers, but it also takes away the opportunities for children to enjoy the exquisite language and the vivid descriptions of nature.

Furthermore, Tong splits the long sentences into several short sentences to make the information more straightforward and easier to understand. Still, she adds reading difficulty in the meaning of specific words to achieve an educational objective. In the target text, the translator divides the sentence into four Chinese sentences. The separation reduces the complexity of the sentences, allowing the readers to comprehend the content. In addition, the translator uses some complex and beautiful words to describe the view, for example, “幽静” (quiet) and “矗立” (stood). According to the Modern Chinese Corpus Word Frequency List, created by the State Language Commission in China, these two words appear 71 and 60 times in a corpus of 20 million-word tokens. It proves that these two words are not frequently used in written texts and may cause difficulty for child readers. Moreover, they serve as an



opportunity to learn some complex and new vocabulary. While reducing the complexity of the sentence, it increases the difficulty of some words to achieve the aesthetic education of readers in this way.

Moreover, in some situations, the author uses non-standard sentence structure to produce a particular, humorous stylistic effect. The following is an example.

Example 4:

“There’s cold chicken inside it,” replied the Rat briefly; **“coldtonguecoldhamcold beefpickledgherkinssaladfrenchrollscresssandwidgespottedmeatgingerbeerle monadesodawater—”** (Grahame 1975:13)

“里面有冷鸡，”河鼠简短地答道，“冷舌头、冷火腿、冷牛肉、腌小黄瓜沙拉、法国面包卷、水芹三明治、罐头肉沙拉、汽水、柠檬汁、苏打水……” (Ren 2020:10)

“There is cold chicken in it,” replied the Rat briefly, **“cold tongue, cold ham, cold beef, pickled cucumber salad, French rolls, parsley sandwich, canned meat salad, soda, lemon juice, soda...”** (back translation)

河鼠一口气回答道：“冷鸡肉、冷火腿、腌泡乳黄瓜、沙拉面包、三明治、牛肉罐头……” (Gong 2016:4)

The Rat replied in one breath, **“Cold chicken, cold ham, pickled cucumber, salad bread, sandwich, canned beef...”** (back translation)

“有冷鸡肉，”河鼠一口气回答说，“冷舌头冷火腿冷牛肉腌小黄瓜沙拉法国面包卷三明治罐焖肉姜汁啤酒柠檬汁苏打水……” (Tong 2020:8)

“There is cold chicken,” the Rat replied in one breath,

“coldtonguecoldhamcoldbeefpickledcucumbersaladFrenchbreadrollsandwich stewedgingerjuicebeerlemonadesodawater...” (back translation)

In example 4, there is no punctuation or spaces between the names of different foodstuffs in the source text, which playfully suggests that the Rat has prepared a lot of food. The writing method can easily attract the attention of readers and increase their interest. Ren’s translation adds punctuation and spaces between the food items, losing the potential intention of the author but reducing the difficulties of comprehension and the possibility of misunderstanding the text by readers. If the readers are not familiar with the foreign food items, they will find it challenging to divide individual words. For example, they may divide “冷牛肉、腌小黄瓜沙拉” (cold beef, pickled cucumber salad) into “冷牛肉腌小黄瓜、沙拉” (cold beef with pickled cucumber, salad).

As mentioned above, the source text omits spaces between words to indicate that Rat answers the question without a break to take a breath. However, Gong adds the punctuation between the different foodstuffs to help the readers understand the text easily. Moreover, the translator adds the phrase “一口气”, meaning “without a break”, which can be considered as compensation for the style of the source text. Furthermore, different food items do not affect what will happen next in the story, so the translator does not cover all the items in the source text and adjusts the sentence structure. He puts all the food items together, avoiding the mention of “cold chicken” before other foodstuff.

In terms of Tong's version, she chooses to continue using non-standard sentences and to produce the corresponding language effects. The translator keeps the original style of the source text by not showing the punctuation to target readers. In addition, Tong translates "briefly" into "一口气" (in one breath) instead of "简短地" (briefly) to describe the reason why the target text does not contain the punctuation marks between the food items. However, Chinese child readers may face challenges when dividing the Chinese text into correct phrases because they are unfamiliar with the foreign food culture.

### *3.4. Visual analysis*

In addition to language, images are an indispensable part of children's literature. This article therefore also analyzes the book covers of the three different translations to understand whether these visual elements follow the translation's intended relationship with the child reader.

Figure 1. Cover of Shanghai Translation Publishing House edition.

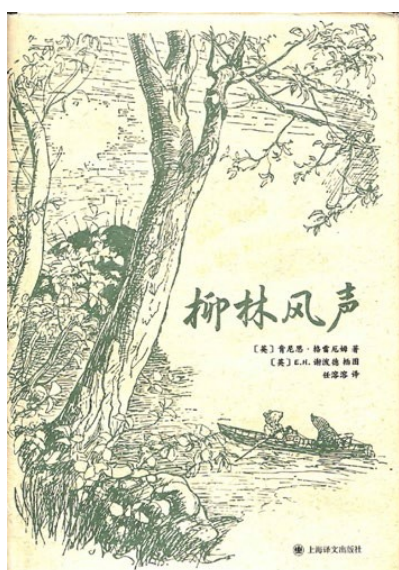


Figure 2. Illustration from Chapter 7 in the original book.



Firstly, the cover of the Shanghai Translation Publishing House edition (see Figure 1) is a decorative element intended to represent the book's content and style. The cover for this edition employs a part of an original illustration used in the original book in Chapter 7, drawn by Ernest Howard Shepard (see Figure 2). The image highlights the two animals that appear in the story -- the Rat and Mole -- in a small boat going downstream of what appears to be a river whose banks are lined with trees and grass. In the background, we see the arches of a bridge, which are partially deleted on the cover of the translated book to make space for the title. However, the protagonists in this book are not only the two animals featured on the cover but also the Badger and the Toad. In addition, the line color has been changed from black to green. Thus, we can conclude that the cover puts more emphasis on the lush green nature and reduces the importance of the relationship between the four main characters. Additionally, the cover is consistent with the original illustration style, focusing on the natural scenery and the classic aesthetic.

The cover puts the Chinese book title in the middle of the whole picture, which is the most prominent element. An inconspicuous gilded font is placed above it, with the English title *The Wind in the Willows*. This indicates the book is from a foreign country, emphasizing that it is a world classic.

In terms of visual elements of the Beijing Daily Publishing House edition, the cover (see Figure 3) is consistent with the story in the book's last chapter but not the illustration within this chapter. Firstly, the four characters are on the book cover: the Badger, the Mole, the Toad and the Rat. They went to take back Toad's home with sticks and pistols. Among them, the Badger is the elder, standing at the front with a firm look. The Mole and the Rat are confident,

but the Toad seems scared. The facial expressions are also related to the plot and reflect the characteristics of each animal.

Figure 3. Cover of Beijing Daily Publishing House edition



The image is dark in color, with black buildings, an owl, and a spider. There are also dim yellow lights in the buildings. The cover highlights a gloomy and terrifying atmosphere and depicts a dangerous scene. The owl is an ominous sign in China. The negative meaning of the owl image mainly comes from its habit of hunting in the dark. Darkness is always associated with death and murder. People fear everything that may happen at night, so owls are considered an ominous sign. Moreover, spiders are regarded as a symbol of danger, because in modern society people know that they can be poisonous.

From the tools they carry, the expression of the characters, and the background, it can be inferred that this cover focuses on describing the dangerous atmosphere and the protagonists' adventures instead of the natural environment. The words on the book cover include the title

in both English and Chinese, which suggests that this book is a translated work from a foreign country. The texts on the left illustrate the comments from the USA and UK about this book, which indicates international recognition in children's literature.

Regarding the cover of the Zhejiang Literature & Art Publishing House edition (see Figure 4), the Chinese title is placed in the most striking place in the middle. Some of the strokes of the Chinese characters in the title have been replaced by willow leaves, corresponding to the willow in the title. Furthermore, there are four main characters on the cover with happy smiles. They seem to be playing happily with the willows. The background is green, with a dark green trunk and willow leaves. Among them are some windows and doors on the tree trunk, which are modern designs achieved through cartoon drawings. Playful scenes and colorful settings attract children's attention. It is worth noting that the cover also explains the theme of the story: "Let warm friendship illuminate children's hearts and cultivate children to understand love, courage, and responsibility" (my translation), which shows that the cover emphasizes the theme of friendship.

Figure 4. Cover of Zhejiang Literature & Art Publishing House



Overall, the cover of this book focuses on attracting children's interests and achieving educational functions. This section explained three different language choices and analyzes three Chinese retranslations of *The Wind in the Willows* based on different examples. The following section discusses the strategies used in these three translations, the implications of the translators' decisions, and their relationship with the child readers.

### **3. Discussion**

This section compares the three target texts and analyzes the adult translators-child readers' relationship. However, as we know, the publication of a translation has been edited and reviewed by various agents in the publication process. Hence, "translators" here is a broad concept and refers to a team of translators, editors, publishers, and illustrators.

In the three translations of *The Wind in the Willows*, we can see three different approaches to translating phonological elements. Ren tries to stay close to the original text, adding onomatopoeic words to increase readers' interest. Gong, on the other hand, tends to summarize the meaning of the onomatopoeic words and alliteration. The content is simplified, and the original style of the source text is lost in Gong's version. His views seem to follow the idea that children's literature appears more accessible and traditional than adult books. It is also allegedly intended to "help" children while simultaneously entertaining them (Epstein 2012:6). In Tong's translation, she incorporates additional literary vocabulary while preserving the original onomatopoeic elements. However, recognizing that children may possess limited familiarity with these words, she incorporates pinyin as a pedagogical tool to facilitate vocabulary acquisition.

Translators often face the choice between two different translation methods: domestication and foreignization. For culture-loaded words, Ren employs the foreignization translation strategy to bring the texts closer to the author, which reveals the cultural difference of the foreign text and draws the reader's attention to the text as translation (Venuti 2008:20). He adds the footnotes to explain the culture-loaded words, which means that the translator's voice can be clearly heard (O'Sullivan 2005:109). Domestication is how Gong and Tong handle these terms. Although reducing and excluding certain cultural elements is unavoidable, translators still use domestication. While fostering understanding of different cultures is one of the primary goals of translating for children, Gong's and Tong's versions lose the opportunity to explain the meaning of certain words to children. In addition, Gong and Tong maintain some elements of foreign cultures, which are included discreetly so that children living in modern society can access and understand the culture-loaded words.

On the syntactic level, Ren follows the source text sentence structure. Gong's version tends to simplify the text by omitting the description of the natural view and adjusting the word order. The omission helps to foreground the adventure of the four animals. Gong supplements some sentences in the target text to explain the story more clearly. His translation reduces the reading difficulty for child readers. Tong shortens long sentences to enhance clarity and facilitate comprehension. However, she adds intricacy with difficult words, possibly for an educational purpose.

There are occasionally unconventional writing styles and syntactic forms in children's literature, which can attract readers' attention and enhance the sense of humor in the source text. This kind of writing is not standardized. Ren and Gong standardize it in the translation.



Tong chooses to continue with non-standard sentences and recreate corresponding language effects.

Moreover, the book covers are aligned with the translators' intentions of influencing child readers' reading experience. Ren's version considers this book a world classic and keeps the authentic illustrations in the translated book. Gong's version stresses the adventure plot to attract children's attention and persuade them to explore the book further (Sonzogni 2011:12). The cover of Tong's version provides a playful environment and suggests the atmosphere of the book by adding specific details of its content (Sonzogni 2011:23).

The previous discussion shows that the relationship between translators and readers in the three translated books differs. As mentioned earlier, Ren's version is directed toward readers of all ages, but specifically to adult collectors of classic books. This version can be identified both as a literary classic and as children's literature, providing an opportunity for adults to access childhood discourse. Adults read it for their enjoyment, not just at the request of youngsters (Appleton 1991:30, as cited in O'Sullivan 2005:116). On the one hand, compared with the other two translations, Ren's translation is more faithful to the original text. The other two have been rewritten to some extent. On the other hand, it is still accessible to child readers. Therefore, the translation of this book takes both adult and child readers into account. Ren's translation puts the translator and the reader in a relatively equal position and brings the translation closer to the source text, which indicates that the readers of Ren's version are assumed to have the ability to construct their own understandings of the target text. In Gong's version, readers are not considered to be as powerful as translators; they are assumed to be people who need special assistance to understand the text. Gong's version shapes the children's reading experience by making the story move toward adventure, anticipating that a

story needs to be simple and adventurous so that the text can attract the child reader's interest. Tong considers a child to be a child; children need to have fun. However, she is also interested in educating the children by providing them with occasional difficult and less frequent words. Tong provides a playful environment for child readers but also believes in educating them through the target text.

#### **4. Conclusion**

From the discussion above, we can conclude that Ren's translation represents the source text as closely as possible in both text and cover illustration. To suit the comprehension of primary school independent readers, Gong's version tends to explain and simplify the translation, which adjusts the theme of the story through deletion and addition, making the story move towards adventure to attract children's attention. Tong's translation retains the source text's interesting plots and language styles, creating a carnival atmosphere. Tong tends to furnish a playful environment for child readers, but she still attaches importance to educating child readers through the target text. Furthermore, as a form of translation, the three covers seem aligned with the linguistic choices of the three translations.

This study only discusses the relationship between adult translators and child readers from the linguistics perspective, avoiding the perspective of values triggered by specific plots. The understanding of the adult researcher also limits the analysis of children's acceptance of language, and, due to the length of article, this study does not include any objective test of child readers' responses. Follow-up research could expand this study by adding child readers' responses. Moreover, further research could investigate illustrations within the body of the book and the interaction between illustrations and texts throughout the translated book.

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