

Literature Review on the Studies of the English Version of Shen Shixi's Literary Works

Yiting Shen^{1,a,*}

¹*School of International Studies, Hangzhou Normal University, Hangzhou, Zhejiang, 311121, China*

^a*shenyiting@stu.hznu.edu.cn*

^{*}*Corresponding author*

Abstract: *Shen Shixi, a prominent figure in Chinese children's literature, has contributed significantly to the literary landscape for young readers in China. With the increasing globalization of literature, there has been a growing interest in translating Shen Shixi's works for international audiences. However, the scholarly examination of his translated works remains limited in scope. This article seeks to address this gap by providing a comprehensive overview of the existing research on Shen Shixi's translated works. It not only highlights the common themes and characteristics found within these studies but also identifies their inherent limitations. Through this analysis, we aim to contribute to a deeper understanding of the global impact of Shen Shixi's literary contributions to children's literature.*

Keywords: *Shen Shixi's Literary Works; English version; Children's Literature*

1. Introduction

Shen Shixi, originally known as Shen Yiming, stands as a distinguished luminary in the realm of children's literature. For nearly two decades, he immersed himself in the enchanting environs of Xi Shuang Ban Na, a region in southern China teeming with a rich tapestry of wildlife. It was in this vibrant setting that he acquired a profound understanding of animals and their behaviors. Drawing upon these observations and experiences, Shen Shixi crafted a plethora of captivating animal novels tailored for young readers. As his novels graced the pages and spread across the nation, he garnered immense popularity among children, eventually earning the esteemed title of 'The King of Animal Novels' in China.

As the 21st century unfolded, Chinese children's literature underwent a rapid evolution amidst the backdrop of globalization. An increasing number of Chinese children's books, including those authored by Shen Shixi, found themselves translated into multiple languages and embraced by international audiences. While the translation of Chinese children's literature has garnered growing attention, the scholarly exploration of their translated counterparts remains relatively scarce. This article embarks on an exhaustive quest into the archives of CNKI and Wangfang databases, diligently scouring Shen Shixi's corpus of children's literature. Our aim is to unveil the current landscape of his works and glean valuable insights for the study of their translated renditions.

2. Introduction to the studied English version literature of Shen Shixi

Animal fiction constitutes a distinctive literary genre characterized by its focus on the intricate lives and behaviors of animals in their natural habitats. Shen Shixi, acclaimed as the 'King of Animal Novels,' has contributed significantly to this genre through his notable works. These works distinguish themselves by their primary thematic emphasis on the depiction of the animal world, encompassing facets such as animal behaviors during pursuits of sustenance, courtship rituals, quests for shelter and security, narratives of fate and chance encounters within the natural ecosystem, interspecies relationships, and the interactions between animals and humans. Shen's animal novels serve as a conduit, gradually immersing readers in the pursuit of the enigmatic and captivating facets of nature, while simultaneously offering valuable insights and enjoyment. His literary creations compel readers to contemplate the intricate interplay between humanity and the animal kingdom.

Linguistically, Shen's works are replete with an array of rhetorical devices, proverbs, sagacious aphorisms, culturally resonant expressions, repetitive structures, onomatopoeic elements, and other distinctive features bearing the hallmark of Chinese literary tradition. The examination of their translation

is of paramount importance, not only to foster the evolution and refinement of animal novel translations but also to facilitate the global dissemination of Chinese children's animal literature.

A search conducted in the CNKI and Wangfang databases has yielded a total of six scholarly studies pertaining to the English translations of Shen's literary works. These studies encompass an exploration of notable works, including *Wild Boar King*, *A Fox Good at Doing Business with People*, *Deceived by a Fox Once Again*, *The Dhole Hound*, and *Hong Cha*. In the following sections, a concise overview of the main narratives of these novels will be presented. Subsequently, a logical analysis of the existing research on their translations will be provided.

We commence our journey with *Wild Boar King*, a narrative that unfolds the remarkable tale of a formidable and seemingly untamed boar, characterized by human-like emotions. This boar valiantly rescues its master from captivity, an act driven by profound gratitude. *A Fox Good at Doing Business with People* delves into the escapades of a cunning fox, striving to secure the release of her young offspring held captive by humans in exchange for the prized red tragopans she has captured. Meanwhile, *Deceived by a Fox Once Again* revolves around Shen Shixi's personal experiences, recounting two instances in which he was cleverly outfoxed by a sly fox in the Xi Shuang Ban Na region. *The Dhole Hound* narrates the enduring and intricate relationship between a hound named Loga and a female jackal named Darvia, who ultimately form an unlikely yet enduring family bond after numerous trials and tribulations.

3. The state of the art in domestic research on the English translation of Shen Shixi's literature

As of January 13, 2023, a comprehensive search of the CNKI and Wangfang databases has yielded a total of six scholarly studies dedicated to the literary works of Shen Shixi. Among these studies, five take the form of master's theses, while one is published as a journal paper. Notably, all of these studies are contemporaneous, having been published within the 21st century. Among them, two were published in 2015, while the remaining four were disseminated in the years 2018, 2020, 2021, and 2022, respectively.

This limited number of studies underscores the relatively modest attention accorded to the translation of Shen Shixi's literary oeuvre. In the ensuing section, I shall categorize these studies based on their typology as either master's theses or journal papers and proceed to provide a detailed exposition of their respective content and contributions.

3.1 Master's thesis

Among the six identified studies, a significant majority, encompassing five, take the form of master's theses. Further scrutiny allows for their categorization into two distinct types. The first category comprises the following works: 'The Translation Strategies of Proverbs in *The Dhole Hound* (2015) by Yang Fang, 'Translation Strategies of Imitative Words in the Animal Novel *The Dhole Hound* (2015) by Feng Xin, 'A Report on the C-E Translation of *A Fox Good at Doing Business with People*: from the Perspective of Reception Theory' (2018) by Ren Zhixiang, and 'A Report on Translating the Novel *Deceived by a Fox Once Again* (Excerpt) from the Perspective of Translator Behavior Criticism' (2020) by Wang Yejun. These studies share a common attribute, characterized by their adoption of the format of a translation report to facilitate their investigations. Notably, all the authors belong to the esteemed cohort of Master of Translation students

Yang's comprehensive translation report was meticulously grounded in a practical translation endeavor. [1] Her investigation centered on the inaugural chapter of *The Dhole Hound*, which she had personally translated. This study served as an exemplar, offering an in-depth exploration of English translation strategies for proverbs present in the source text. Through a systematic analysis encompassing the discernment of distinctive traits and functions exhibited by Chinese proverbs in the original narrative and the categorization of salient examples, Yang derived insightful conclusions pertaining to the nuanced strategies and methodologies to be employed under varying circumstances and contextual settings. Notably, Yang posited that, in instances where the Chinese proverbs within the original text possessed vividness and did not impede readers' comprehension, a literal translation approach was deemed preferable. This choice served to maintain fidelity to the original content, form, and essence, thereby averting potential losses incurred in translation. By endeavoring to encapsulate Chinese idiosyncrasies to the greatest extent feasible, Yang aspired to facilitate optimal communication and foster the most efficacious cultural transmission.

Feng's meticulous translation report was conducted within the same translation program as Yang's,

forming a complementary study. [2] Building upon a foundational understanding of the core concept and function of imitative words, Feng conducted a meticulous analysis, drawing examples from chapters 4, 5, and 6 of *The Dhole Hound*. Her inquiry revolved around the exploration of translation strategies and the application of translation theories when dealing with imitative words. This analytical process enabled her to elucidate the intricacies inherent in rendering these linguistic elements into English effectively. Central to her study was the clarification of the imitative words' conceptual framework, allowing for a critical reflection upon and the subsequent synthesis of the specific challenges encountered during the translation process. Feng's commitment to ensuring the translation's appeal and alignment with the psychological characteristics of children, who constitute the primary readership for Shen's animal novels, was evident in her efforts. This concerted approach aimed at crafting translations that not only retained the essence of the source material but also resonated with the sensibilities and interests of young readers.

Ren embarked on a rigorous scholarly endeavor that entailed the selection of three exemplar narratives for translation and in-depth analysis through the lens of reception theory. [3] The chosen texts included *My Tiger Daughter: Dandelion*, *A Fox Good at Doing Business with People*, and *Snowslide*, which served as pivotal case studies. To facilitate a nuanced examination of translation dynamics, Ren employed three foundational concepts drawn from reception theory: vocabulary translation, phrase translation, and the translation of onomatopoeic words, colloquial phrases, and sentences. Through meticulous translation practice and analytical scrutiny, Ren identified and expounded upon five distinctive translation techniques with relevance to the genre of animal novels. These techniques encompassed amplification, omission, and three forms of conversion. Furthermore, Ren underscored the significance of preservation in paraphrasing as an indispensable facet of effective translation practice within the domain of animal novels. Her comprehensive inquiry not only provided valuable insights into the intricate art of translation but also laid the groundwork for the application of these techniques to the broader realm of animal literature, fostering enhanced communicative and cultural resonance.

As for Wang, her research centered on the comprehensive analysis of the initial three chapters of *Deceived by a Fox Once Again*. [4] Employing 'Translator Behavior Criticism' as the guiding theoretical framework, she meticulously explored the intricacies of her translation endeavor. Within the ambit of this theoretical approach, Wang elucidated the prominent characteristics encompassing culture-loaded words, idiomatic expressions, repetition, and succinct continuous clauses present within the text. Drawing upon her own experiential and cognitive insights, Wang subsequently devised and proposed a set of nuanced translation methods and strategies. These strategies included annotation, literal translation, transliteration, and word order adjustment, among others. These approaches were tailored to preserve the original meaning and cultural nuances while effectively conveying the narrative to the target audience. In the concluding segment of her thesis, Wang extrapolated a series of practical implications pertinent to future translation practices and research endeavors. Her aspiration was to contribute to the enhancement of the current state of English translation, emphasizing the pursuit of precision and accuracy as paramount objectives in the field.

After briefly introducing these four theses, it becomes evident that each of the authors has successfully identified valuable translation methods and strategies. These insights have been gleaned either through a meticulous analysis of existing translations or guided by specific theoretical frameworks. Furthermore, it is apparent that a common objective shared among these authors is the promotion of Chinese cultural transmission through their translation endeavors. However, it is worth noting that the primary source materials for analysis in these studies are the authors' own translations. Consequently, the analyses in these theses, to some extent, exhibit a degree of subjectivity.

The second category includes Su Shaoting's thesis titled 'On the Translation of Some Rhetorical Devices in *Hong Chai* from the Perspective of Relevance Theory'. [5] This scholarly work delves into the intricate translation of rhetorical devices, adopting a qualitative methodology to explore the attainment of optimal relevance in the translation process. Utilizing relevance theory as a guiding framework, this thesis scrutinizes Wang Hailan's translation in 2012, offering a comparative analysis of rhetorical devices. Through this examination, the study underscores the translator's need to adeptly leverage contextual information to discern the original author's intent while also giving due consideration to the cognitive environment, language proficiency, reader interests, and reader expectations of the target audience. A notable distinction between this thesis and the four aforementioned works in the first category lies in the choice of translated materials. Su's analysis focuses on Wang Hailan's translation, whereas the other four studies rely on their own translated versions. Analyzing a translation from the perspective of an observer allows for a more comprehensive assessment of its strengths and weaknesses. However, it's important to acknowledge that Su's thesis primarily highlights the strengths of Wang's translation.

3.2 Journal paper

Notably, within the vast repositories of the CNKI and Wanfang databases, a solitary gem emerges: Zhou Fujuan's meticulously crafted journal paper titled 'Strategies for Translating Distinctive Vocabulary in Children's Literature – A Case Study of *The Wild Boar King*' (2022). [6] This scholarly endeavor stands as a significant contribution to the realm of translation studies, with a focal point on the intricate art of translating distinctive vocabulary within the context of children's literature. Zhou's research embarks upon a fascinating exploration, wherein the English translation of the timeless classic, *The Wild Boar King*, serves as a rich and captivating corpus. The central objective of this study is a painstaking investigation into the multifaceted strategies employed in translating the distinctive vocabulary that gracefully populates the narrative landscape of this beloved children's literary work. With meticulous attention to detail, Zhou aspires to uncover and elucidate the nuanced techniques employed by translators to capture the essence of these unique linguistic elements and convey them effectively in the target language.

Yet, the significance of Zhou's study transcends the confines of her chosen corpus. It serves as an invaluable reference point for the broader realm of translation practices, particularly those related to the translation of distinctive vocabulary encountered in Chinese children's literature. Her insightful analysis and findings pave the way for the enhancement and refinement of translation techniques in this specific domain, with a resolute aim to facilitate the broader dissemination of Chinese children's literature on the global stage. By delving into the intricacies of translating distinctive vocabulary, Zhou Fujuan's work not only enriches our understanding of translation theory and practice but also contributes significantly to the ongoing dialogue surrounding the internationalization of Chinese children's literature. In an era of increased cultural exchange and global literary appreciation, her research is poised to catalyze an appreciation for the nuances of translation and to foster an enduring legacy for these cherished works among young readers worldwide.

4. Conclusion

Based on the comprehensive elaboration and analysis presented earlier, we can discern two salient and noteworthy features characterizing the corpus of studies explored herein. Firstly, it is evident that all of these scholarly endeavors share a common quest: the pursuit of discerning and employing efficacious translation strategies and methods in diverse contextual scenarios. These strategies and methods have been meticulously devised with the ultimate objective of facilitating optimal communication with readers while ensuring the seamless transmission of cultural nuances. This alignment with the 'going global' policy underscores the commitment of these scholars to not merely convey narratives but to bridge the cultural chasm, thereby rendering the works of Shen Shixi accessible and relatable to international audiences.

Secondly, a critical observation reveals that a predominant focus of these studies lies in catering to the specific demographics of Shen's target readership—children. Given this focal point, most investigations within this purview prioritize the preservation of the inherent allure and fascination of the original texts. These scholarly efforts conscientiously align with the psychological and cognitive nuances associated with children's comprehension and engagement with literature. By doing so, these studies not only preserve the essence of Shen's narratives but also ensure that young readers find resonance with the translated versions.

Nonetheless, it is essential to acknowledge that, amid these laudable contributions, several limitations within the current body of research on the English translations of Shen's literature come to light. First and foremost, in terms of research forms, a substantial majority of these investigations adopt the format of translation reports, wherein the author's own translation serves as the primary material for analysis. While these reports offer invaluable insights, they also bear a degree of subjectivity that can potentially impact the objectivity of the analysis.

Secondly, even though certain studies delve into translations executed by other translators, they often fall short in critically identifying and addressing the limitations and shortcomings within these translations. A comprehensive assessment should encompass not only strengths but also weaknesses, as it provides valuable guidance for improvement in translation activities.

Lastly, when considering the number of papers dedicated to the English versions of Shen's literature, it becomes apparent that the existing body of research remains relatively limited. To further enrich our understanding and bolster the discourse in this domain, there is a compelling need to expand and intensify

research efforts. This expansion can yield a more profound comprehension of the intricate challenges and opportunities inherent in translating Shen's beloved works, ultimately contributing to the broader appreciation of Chinese children's literature on the global stage.

References

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