

Original Paper

A Study on E-C Translation Strategies of Culture-Loaded Words in Dialogues of *The Wind in the Willows* from the Perspective of Text Typology Theory

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Abstract

Children's literature, as an important vehicle for cross-cultural communication, embeds culture-loaded words as core elements that convey distinctive national cultural traits, and translation just serves as a critical pathway to achieving young readers' cultural understanding while preserving the textual charm and child-appropriate playfulness. Taking the Yang Jingyuan Chinese translation of the classic children's literary work The Wind in the Willows as the research material, this study focuses on translation strategies for culture-loaded words under the guidance of Newmark's text typology theory. Through a deep analysis of the Chinese translation of culture-loaded words—particularly those related to social interaction and dietary culture words, it clarifies that the Chinese translation of dialogues in children's literature must balance the transmission of cultural connotations, alignment with children's cognitive level, and the colloquial nature of dialogue in children's literature. The findings aim to provide theoretical insights and practical guidance for the translation of children's literature.

Keywords

dialogue texts, Newmark's Text Typology Theory, cultural-loaded world

1. Introduction

Children's literature has both educational and entertaining values, which can spread good culture and help develop children mentally. The quality of its Chinese translation will directly affect how literary and educational content from the original work is transmitted to Chinese children. Thus, it affects their world view and cultural foundation. With the increase in frequent global exchanges, a large number of foreign children's literary works have been brought into China via Chinese translation and have gradually been

read and admired by the public. However, contemporary Chinese translations of children's literature have shown a dual trend of active development and continuous theoretical exploration, but problems still exist. Specifically, translations often find it difficult to balance the demand for simplification from adults with the need to maintain the childlike nature of the original work, and research in this area is relatively scarce. Basic problems in this area, such as how to convey the "childlike perspective" and cultural adaptation (Gan, 2025), have not been fully solved. Among all the foreign children's works, the well-known fairy tale, *The Wind in the Willows*, is a typical work in which Kenneth Grahame, a British writer, created a wonderful world with people and animals and the peaceful English countryside. In this story, the dialogue accounts for more than 40% of the text, containing many culturally loaded words related to daily life, food and social interaction, and it is in line with children's reading situations, and fully demonstrates the features of dialogue in children's literature.

Based on the above, this study, under the guidance of Newmark's text typology theory, will take Yang Jingyuan's famous Chinese translation of *The Wind in the Willows* as the research material, focus on the translation strategies of culture-loaded words in dialogues, and explore how to achieve both children's cultural understanding and textual playfulness to offer theoretical support and practical ideas for translating children's literature.

2. Overview of Newmark's Text Typology Theory

Peter Newmark, a well-known British translator, proposed the theory of text typology in 1934 based on the three functions of language proposed by the German linguist Karl Bühler. Newmark has divided the functions of language into three categories: expression, information and address. According to these classifications, there are also three types of texts: informative, expressive and vocative (Newmark, 2001). Informative texts need to be truthful and objective, aiming to present specific information from the original text; expressive texts aim to convey the emotions and ideas of the writer, focusing less on how readers will be affected by the translation. While vocative texts are reader-oriented, so translations should be easy to read, smooth and natural, encourage readers to think independently, and act upon that thought. According to the theory of text types, translators should select appropriate translation strategies based on the characteristics of the discourse and the reasons for translation in order to better achieve the main functions of the original texts in translation. It can be seen that text typology theory can help translators identify the functions of texts and understand the language features of different types of texts.

Based on the theory of text typology, Newmark put forward the ideas of communicative translation and semantic translation in *Approaches to Translation* (2001). The aim of communicative translation is to achieve a translation that can move the readers in the same way that the original text can. Communicative translation is mainly for the purpose of the target language and its readers, so it should effectively transmit information. The translator should try to make the translation concise, clear and easy to understand. On the other hand, semantic translation focuses more on the form of the original text and the author's intent, trying to reproduce the contextual meaning of the original as accurately as possible under the constraints

of semantic rules and syntactic structures in the target language. It follows the principle of “author first” and needs to be kept close to the original in terms of word collocation and sentence structure to retain its uniqueness. The two translation strategies are not mechanically associated with specific types of texts; rather, they provide translators with two essential values and methods to address the problem of balancing faithfulness to the original text with service to the readers of the target language (Yan & Guo, 2025) when dealing with all parts of the text.

Since being put forward, Newmark’s theory of text types has had extensive use in the field of international translation studies. Foreign scholars have mainly studied the theoretical system and its application. At the level of theory, Western scholars have continuously studied Newmark’s division of semantic translation and communicative translation, and some scholars have compared it with Reis’s text typology theory to better understand the relativity and multiplicity of translation norms. Foreign research has had all sorts of applications and cross-cultural applications. Recently, scholars have applied the theory to studies of translation between different languages. Based on the theoretical system, Nematullayev (2024) has investigated how Newmark’s strategies can be used to carry forward the elements of culture in Uzbek literature and whether they can solve problems related to meaning and culture. At home, research on the theory of text typology began with the introduction and explanation of the theoretical system, and then moved on to exploring practical applications. Xin (2001) is one of the Chinese scholars who has taken the theory of text categorization to discuss the relativity and multiplicity of translation standards in the field of theory and evaluation; he pointed out that different types of texts should be treated with various translation standards. Some research has compared and analysed the theories of Newmark and Nida, clarified the internal connection between semantic translation, communicative translation and functional equivalence (Wang, 2002), etc. In terms of research on the application of this theory in actual practice, it has been broadly applied to the translation practice of literary works such as novels (Li, 2022), biographies (Jin and Sun, 2022), as well as informative and vocative texts (Jia, 2004).

3. Case Analysis

Culture-loaded words refer to words, phrases and idiomatic expressions that have cultural connotations. These lexical items are representative of the distinct modes of life and activities that have gradually accumulated over the long history of a particular nation and are different from those in other countries (Liao, 2002). In the translation of culture-loaded words, translators usually focus on transmitting the content. Due to the differences in language, culture and social system, it is not feasible for translators to find completely equivalent expressions for culture-loaded words. Therefore, translators need to have a deep understanding of the meaning of culture-loaded words with Chinese characteristics and should select various translation strategies flexibly to reconcile the differences in cultural systems between Chinese and English (Wang, 2025). The dialogues in *The Wind in the Willows* contain a considerable number of such culture-loaded words that include customs, history, values, etc. Translators need to fully consider how the translated text will be accepted by the culture of the target language and find ways to

transmit these cultural elements effectively across languages and cultures without losing their original cultural connotations, thus promoting the spread of Chinese culture around the world (Zheng, 2016). Taking the dialogue texts from *The Wind in the Willows* (Grahame, 1908) and its Chinese translation by Yang (1997) as the research material, the following section will provide a case study of the translation strategies used for three general types of culture-loaded words.

3.1 Types and Distribution Characteristics of Culture-Loaded Words

Eugene Nida, a translator, was the first to put forward the idea of culture-loaded words and proposed five categories: material, ecological, social, religious and linguistic culture-loaded words (Nida, 1945). According to Nida's five-category division of culture-loaded words, a total of 87 representative culture-loaded words were selected from *The Wind in the Willows*, and they were classified into the three main categories of socio-cultural, material-cultural and eco-cultural (see table below).

Table 1. Classification of Culture-Loaded Words

Category	Number	Percentage	Main Content Covered	Examples
Socio-Cultural	42	48.3%	Folklore activities, social etiquette, festivals, etc.	“hullo” “frosty tide”
Material-Cultural	35	40.2%	Diet, clothing, housing, etc.	“coldtongue” “sherry” “waistcoat”
Eco-Cultural	10	11.5%	Specific regional, natural landscapes, flora and fauna, etc.	“Wild Wood” “river bank”
Total	87	100%		

From the distribution characteristics, the culture-loaded words in the dialogue texts of this work are mainly socio-cultural and material-cultural, which is closely related to the creative background and content theme of the work.

3.2 Case Analyses of Chinese-English Translation of Culture-Loaded Words

3.2.1 Social Culture-loaded Words

Example 1: “Hullo, Mole!” said the Water Rat.

“Hullo, Rat!” said the Mole.

“Would you like to come over?” enquired the Rat presently.

TT: “嘿，鼹鼠老兄！”水鼠兰特说。

“嘿，水鼠！”鼹鼠说。

“你愿意过来吗？”水鼠过了一会儿问道。

“Hullo” in the original text is an informal greeting used in spoken English and falls under the category of socially cultural words. According to the theory of text typology, dialogue texts have both expressive

and vocative functions, and they can show the emotions of characters and attract the attention of readers. In the translation of “Hullo”, Yang Jingyuan does not use semantic translation to write “你好” but instead employs a communicative translation strategy and translates it as “嘿，鼯鼠老兄”. The interjection “嘿” maintains the casual tone of the original greeting, and “老兄” is a local Chinese expression that can help Chinese children’s readers better feel the intimacy between the characters. It can be seen that the main idea of communicative translation is to achieve a similar effect for readers in the target language as that experienced by readers of the source language. At the same time, the translation has preserved the simplicity and friendliness of the dialogue, which is in line with the style of children’s literature.

Example 2: “Villagers all, this frosty tide, Let your doors swing open wide...”

TT: “众乡亲，在这霜冻时节，请把你们的门儿敞开……”

Here, “villagers” and “frosty tide” together create a festive atmosphere in the setting of a rural English Christmas and are thus considered words loaded with social culture. A poem can be expressed, and at the same time, it may attract the attention of people, such as a Christmas song. Yang Jingyuan uses the strategy of communicative translation to translate “villagers” as “众乡亲”, which is a term of address for a local Chinese concept that often has a sense of closeness and group consciousness. “Frost and Snow” in free translation is used to keep the sense of a cold day and also meets the requirements of Chinese poetry. The translated version is fluent and natural, so Chinese children can feel the warmth of the festival and thus achieve the same effect of vocative transmission.

3.2.2 Material Culture-loaded Words

Example 3: “There’s cold chicken inside it,” replied the Rat briefly;

“coldtonguecoldhamcoldbeefpickledgherkinssaladfrenchrollscressssandwichesspottedmeatgingerbeerlemonadesodawater—”

TT: “里面有冷鸡肉，”水鼠简短地回答：“冷舌肉、冷火腿、冷牛肉、腌小黄瓜、沙拉、法式面包、水芹三明治、罐装肉、姜汁啤酒、柠檬汁、苏打水——”

The list of cold dishes in this example is a series of material culture-loaded words and shows the variety and richness of British rural dietary culture. As for the kind of text, this dialogue is mainly to convey information about British food to readers. Yang mainly uses a semantic translation strategy to translate the food items literally one by one, for example, “cold tongue” is translated as “冷舌肉” and “ginger beer” as “姜汁啤酒” to maintain the culinary imagery of the original text as much as possible. This translation method is in line with the original information, and Chinese readers will be able to learn about different food cultures in the UK. It also retains the quick pace of the original speech and is in line with the colloquial characteristic of the rat rapidly listing food items.

Example 4: “I’m going to get a black velvet smoking-suit myself some day, as soon as I can afford it.”

TT: “我总有一天要弄一套黑天鹅绒的吸烟服，等我有钱马上就买。”

The term “smoking-suit” in the above sentence is the formal Western evening wear for men and therefore belongs to material culture-loaded words. From the aspect of text type, this sentence has both an expressive function and an informative function; that is to say, it presents the Rat’s wishes and also offers

knowledge about clothing culture. Yang Jingyuan uses a semantic translation approach to translate it literally as “smoking clothes”. Although this expression may seem somewhat out of place in Chinese culture, it maintains the cultural particularity of the original clothing. Thus, it can be seen that the first purpose of translation is to reconstruct the meaning of the original language in a way that conforms to the structure and lexicon of the new language. At the same time, colloquial expressions such as “弄一套” and “等我有钱马上就买” add to the informality of the text through communicative translation and allow child readers to feel the Rat’s yearning and aspiration.

3.2.3 Ecological Cultural-loaded Words

Example 5: “Beyond the Wild Wood comes the Wide World,” said the Rat.

TT: “过了野林就是大千世界，”水鼠说。

“Wild Wood” is an essential ecological area of the novel, carrying connotations of the unknown and danger. Therefore, it should be included in the list of ecological culture-loaded words. In terms of the type of text, sentences mainly serve to express emotions and show a character’s view of the world; at the same time, they also attract readers’ attention and make them want to learn more. Yang Jingyuan translated “Wild Wood” as “野林” and used a semantic translation method to retain the natural image of the original work. “野” can be used to express the ecology of primitiveness and untamed wilderness. “Wide World” is translated as “大千世界” by means of communicative translation, on the other hand. This Chinese idiom has a deep culture and can make people feel the vastness of the world through an appeal to their imagination. The two strategies combined will still be in line with the ecological imagery in the original work and transmit the cultural ideas of that work in a new place.

Example 6: “The Willow-wren was twittering his thin little song, hidden himself in the dark selvedge of the river bank.”

TT: “柳莺正在唧唧啾啾地唱着它那细细的小曲儿，躲在河岸幽暗的角落里。”

“Willow-wren” is a typical British bird species and falls under the category of ecologically cultural words in the original language. Based on the type of text, this section mainly serves to express emotions and creates a poetic mood; at the same time, it also provides some information. Yang Jingyuan uses a semantic translation method to translate “Willow-wren” as “柳莺”, which is the correct name of the bird. At the same time, the use of the onomatopoeia “jijiujiu” is a childish way to add charm and phonological beauty to the text, which can make Chinese children feel the life of the riverside in the early morning. It is a case of communicative translation. In general, the translated text is natural and smooth. It retains the ecological images of the original work and also has the style characteristic of children’s books.

4. Conclusion

With Newmark’s text typology as the theoretical support, this study focuses on the translation strategies employed for three categories of culture-loaded words in Yang Jingyuan’s Chinese translation of *The Wind in the Willows*. It is found that different translation strategies are chosen based on the kind of lexical item and what the text aims to convey. To be specific, semantic translation is used in the translation of

material and ecological culture-loaded words in order to preserve the cultural images and information. Otherwise, communicative translation is adopted for social culture-loaded words to create a sense of locality and emotion. And in some cases, the translator use both semantic and communicative translation to balance the inheritance of culture with the acceptance of readers. Therefore, it can be concluded that the Chinese translation practice of culture-loaded words in dialogues of children's literature adheres to three main principles: preserving cultural connotations, adapting to the cognitive level of children, and conforming to the style of dialogue. However, the corpus of the present study is only one translated version, and the classification of culture-loaded words will inevitably have a certain degree of subjectivity. In the future, more different types of literary works with their different translated versions can be added to expand the range of this research and further deepen research on translation patterns in children's literature.

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