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# Translating Detective and Mystery Stories: A Skopos Perspective

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## Abstract

The mysteries or the detective fictions are one type of popular novels which mainly describe the process of reasoning and detection of the case. With translation practice examples of two mysteries and detective fictions—*A Philosophical Difference* and *Phoney Friend*, the paper describes the translation skills on the titles, rhetorical devices and references of the mysteries from the perspective of Skopos theory and functional equivalence theory in details. It is found out that liberal translation is the best way to translate the titles with the guidance of Skopos theory, which is easy to attract the readers' attention. The rhetorical devices like alliteration, pun and acrostic puzzle, can be translated in two ways—literal translation and amplification according to the functional equivalence theory. References can be translated in a repetitive way to realize the coherence in the text. This paper describes the translation skills of the titles, rhetorical devices and references in mysteries and provides a first-hand corpus for theoretical studies of translation, as well as methodological guidance for translation practice. It shows that flexible application of theories in translation can reach a better effect in translation practice.

**Keywords:** Mysteries Translation, Skopos Theory, Functional Equivalence Theory, A Philosophical Difference, Phoney Friend

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## 1. Introduction

Mysteries or detective fictions, one of the best-known literary sub-genres, are highly favoured by a diverse range of people. Nowadays, great foreign detective books are in high demand among Chinese readers. Also, Chinese novelists strongly desire access to authentic Western detective literature. The reason is that Chinese detective novels have neither formed a systematic scale nor played a decisive role in developing the world's detective literature and lack representative writers and works (Chu, 2022: 317). In order to satisfy modern readers' requirements and help improve the growth of domestic detective writing, this report aims to provide translation suggestions for mysteries in classic models.

With two mysteries extracted from *Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine (EQMM)*, the world's leading mystery magazine, *Phoney Friend* and *A Philosophical Difference*, this paper focuses on the translation of titles, rhetorical devices and references in classic types of mysteries and thus assists in the improvement of imported mysteries translation quality. Meanwhile, it displays flexible application of Skopos theory and functional equivalence theory. Mysteries belong to popular literature, so the readers' satisfaction is the top priority with adherence to mysteries' distinctive features. In translating titles, liberal translation strategy is used to better link with the detection; literal translation and amplification is applied in translating rhetorical expressions to attain interlingual coherence and repetition in Chinese is used in translating discourse references pronouns to realize coherence in the text.

## 2. Mysteries and Detective Stories

A mystery is referred to a book, film, or play, especially about a crime or a murder, with a surprise ending that explains all the strange events that have happened.<sup>1</sup> The mystery or the detective novel is born in the context of modern Western justice and has a natural connection to the reader's imagination of social justice (Zhan, 2022: 124). "Detective" can be traced back to the word "sleuth" in 1194 in the English world whose meaning changes from "a trail" to "the protagonist in mysteries who investigates and solves cases". The word "detective" appears in Charles Dickens's writing in the middle of the twentieth century and it primarily refers to the type of text Edgar Allen Poe creates. The mystery is not an indigenous product in China; it is imported. Ancient koan novels are similar to the mystery to some extent but primarily serve as warning and enlightenment texts through characterization in stories where clues, logic, reason, and other detective story components frequently take a backseat (Chu, 2022: 6, 318). There are two classic models for detective novels: physical evidence reasoning and mental evidence reasoning.



**Figure 1. Mysteries Classic Models**

Two types of deduction have steadily evolved in detective stories. Physical evidence reasoning is a successful model for everyone because the clues are all objective, even if they don't immediately point to the real culprit. It is difficult to understand the psychology of crime, yet from a different angle, a murderer can fool everyone but himself. Mental evidence reasoning is the opposite of physical evidence reasoning. Mental thinking provides the creator with more freedom and flexibility than physical reasoning. The Ellery Queen style takes advantage of mental evidence reasoning and it creates a mystery with a clear presentation of all possible results at the beginning in order to reach a fair-play effect with readers (Chu, 2022: 44, 47, 81).

The translation and creation of modern mysteries lay the foundation for Chinese mystery novels (Yang, 2008: 113). On the one hand, mysteries introduce Western modernity, such as the Western legal system, which criticizes Chinese cultural tradition; and on the other hand, it chooses and changes Western modernity. Here, translation becomes a field of conflict and negotiation, and a clue from which we could observe the process of the birth of modern Chinese thought (Zhao, 2012: 35). In brief, the initial wave of the May 4th Movement saw the creation of detective fiction, which served as a template for the era's authors. A number of elements, including society, history, and culture, as well as the second wave of translation literature in the new age, substantially aid the growth of original Chinese detective writing. We can be certain that this time in the new period, in a more suitable literature system and social and cultural context, Chinese mysteries literature will play a greater role for the development of Chinese popular literature, even though it is undeniable that the current and future development direction and speed are still dependent on the dynamic relationship of mutual selection and promotion between translation and social and cultural context (Zhang, 2002: 55).

Once the characters and language of a novel leave the circle of the meaning of the "group" of countries, they are bound to face the translator's conscious cultural intervention in the process of translation, and thus lose their original lustre (Zhang, 2021: 73). Only after finding the target audience receptive to the content did the translator gradually reproduce faithfully the narrative style of the original text, which is very different from the Chinese tradition (Qi & Li, 2019: 49). The shift in narrative mode is already evident in Zhou Shoujuan's pseudo-translation (Qi & Li, 2020: 144). When Zhang Kunde first translated detective novels, his trouble was representative. As a discourse style and structure, the cultural interpretation of translated novel genre involves three aspects: firstly, it is the product of the translator's re-creation on the basis of the original genre, which is related to the translator's cultural mentality and translation attitude; secondly, the genre of translated novel is also related to the receiver, because the acceptance of the text involves the reader in order to complete the literary communication; finally, the creation and acceptance of translated novel genre always take place in a certain historical and cultural environment, and there is a corresponding interaction between them (Du, 2014(03): 151).

### 3. Skopos Theory and Functional Equivalence Theory

Skopos theory and functional equivalence theory share a common focus on readers' responses and the realization of textual functions in the target language, yet they differ in several key aspects. This translation practice seeks to leverage both theories to achieve optimal effects.

Functional equivalence theory centers on attaining linguistic equivalence, meaning that the translation should evoke the same response in the target reader as the original text does in its audience. Nida (1964) moves beyond the traditional debate between literal and liberal translation, emphasizing the importance of effect reciprocity and resolving the apparent conflict between these two approaches. He argues that translation should maintain the original language form as much as possible; only when the meaning becomes unclear or ambiguous following a literal translation should alterations be made, allowing for a more liberal approach (Nida, 1964: 164). This pursuit of equivalence extends from the lexical and syntactic levels to encompass semantic and stylistic dimensions. The concept of "Functional Equivalence" or "Dynamic Equivalence" uniquely prioritizes target readers, emphasizing their comprehension, appreciation, and reactions.

Skopos theory, a cornerstone of German functional translation theory, introduces three main principles: purpose, coherence, and fidelity. Among these, the principle of purpose holds paramount importance; it posits that all actions within the translation process must align with the intended purpose of the translation (Reiss & Vermeer, 1984). The principle of fidelity, on the other hand, asserts that there should be interlingual coherence between the translation and the original text. To fulfill communicative objectives and achieve this coherence, a translator may imitate or adapt the original, remaining faithful to the source text. However, the degree and form of fidelity depend on the translation's purpose and the translator's understanding of the original text (Nord, 2001: 27). Skopos theory liberates translation studies from the confines of "text-centrism," suggesting that equivalence is no longer the primary criterion for evaluating translations. Instead, the focus shifts to the adequacy of the translation in fulfilling the intended communicative purpose.

In general, the purpose of translation refers to its communicative function within the social context and the target language (Venuti, 2000). Translation is inherently a communicative act, and the entire process hinges on the overarching purpose of the translation activity, which in turn dictates the means and strategies employed (Nord, 2001).

While Skopos theory emphasizes translation purpose and readers' responses, functional equivalence theory stresses the constraints imposed by the source text to achieve linguistic equivalence. The application of these theories in translating mysteries is grounded in a thorough understanding of the genre's definition and distinctive features. Both Skopos theory and functional equivalence theory can effectively guide translators in their treatment of literary target texts, thereby better meeting the needs of readers.

### 4. Text Features of *A Philosophical Difference* and *Phoney Friend*

According to translation theorist Newmark, there are three main categories of texts: expressive texts, which primarily serve to convey the thoughts and feelings of the original author to readers; informative texts, which primarily serve to convey accurate information; and persuasive texts, which primarily serve to persuade readers to act in accordance with the source language author's preconceptions (Newmark, 1981: 176-180). In *A Philosophical Difference*, the author honors two luminaries of the golden era of science fiction by constructing a murder case that exhibits the reader's attraction to the "game" of investigation and explains how the dead always leave clues at the end of their life. *Phoney Friend*, on the other hand, highlights the eternal appeal of the "mental evidence model" in mysteries—that is, the most singular comprehension and control of human nature—by using police procedural reasoning as its subject matter. The project text falls within the persuasive category as a result.

### 5. Difficulties in Mysteries Translation

Unlike other literary genres, the detective fiction has its own rules to develop plots in a logical way (Chu, 2022: 95); therefore, when translating mysteries, it's crucial to properly cope with various forms of clues. This part classifies the difficulties of clues in titles, rhetorical devices and references encountered in the translation, makes definitions respectively and analyses the reason why they are difficult to be translated.

#### 5.1. Translation Difficulty of Titles

Titles are the name of the mysteries. For the author, the title of a work is a keyword chosen after pondering and has an essential ideographic function; and for the reader, it is not only the "brand identity" of the work, but also a guidepost for the theme (Yu, 2008: 68). Titles meanwhile give aid to the reader in finding clues, so their translation should not only show the type of literature and attract the target reader but also echo the clues and essence in the mysteries. The title with a vague indication of story types may confuse the target reader and they choose to quit reading it at the beginning or have a wrong expectation. As to the text, an unclear title cannot have interaction with the clues in the text, thus even loose coherence with the plot.

- Example: a. *A Philosophical Difference*  
 b. *Phoney Friend*

Analysis: Mysteries' titles set the tone for the whole settings in tales, and readers make a useful judgements of stories types at first sight through titles. The word selection is challenging. For example, "philosophical", a neutral word, cannot connect the

title with the detection. “Phoney” is a punny word in the text, for it can also be deemed as phone-y, and its original meaning with no clear indication to the criminal may confuse the reader as well. The content or reference of titles is an essential message assisting titles translation and the translator must figure it out clearly.

5. 2. Translation Difficulty of Rhetoric Expressions

Rhetoric is the study of the ways of using language effectively. Since the root purpose of translation is to convey the information of the source text, rhetorical devices translation is subject to this purpose. So whether or not we adopt the rhetorical devices in translation is determined upon the fulfillment of the translation purpose (Cai, 2022: 181). It is a dilemma for the translator to decide on the reservation of the devices or to equal the effect of the text and the translation.

Example 1:

Arthur Merriweather  
Treetops House, Old Chester Road,  
Banbury Cross, Oxfordshire  
25th May 1951  
Theme of this week’s  
Murder Will Out puzzle: “Last Things First, or Have You  
Figured Out the Ending?”  
CRAWL  
DRAMA  
ADORED  
CARD  
BRANDY

Analysis The best plot of A Philosophical Difference is the puzzle, especially the use of word games to leave the dying clue to solve the case. The climax of the novel is at the end of the text, and if the translation of this paragraph is handled well, the novel’s essence will be seen. This puzzle is involved an acrostic formed by vocabularies, and figuring out the dying clue is the first step to equal the English puzzle to the Chinese translation. The puzzle reveals the criminal’s name-- Laddy and the location of the crime scene. But due to the difference that English is a phonetic script and Chinese is an ideogram, the literal translation of “CRAWL”--“爬行” cannot reveal the clues of the syllable “L” of the criminal’s name. The adoption of a proper translation strategy sets an obstacle for the translator to present the dying clue in Chinese concerning names and syllables.

Example 2: a. Short coughed again. “So I was the friend he phoned, and, like I said, he was my phoney friend. But he had it coming.”

b. Let’s call it a philosophical difference, shall we, and leave it there?

Analysis: Two punch lines producing the titles are tricky for the translator to determine whether to adopt the original meaning of words or the implied meaning. “Phoney” here has its original meaning as well as the meaning generated from “phone”. It is a critical plot for the criminal to state the truth and it is the evil victim who not only breaks the promises but also disparages the criminal at first. After reading, the second punch line evidently refers to the dying clue, so it is a hard choice for the translator to have a different solution for one phrase that appears in the title and in the text.

5. 3. Translation Difficulty of Discourse References

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), any discourse that can become a discourse must have a texture. What they mean by discourse consists of two aspects: structural and non-structural features. Structural features are complete sentences and complete information. The unstructured feature refers to the upward and downward articulation within the discourse. Articulation is the interconnection of two components within the discourse that are not bound by syntactic structure. In the book *Cohesion in English*, Halliday and Hasan (1976) propose a classification of articulation: reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion. Reference is the prominent method of articulation and it can be divided into endophora and exophora. Exophora has a referent item in the context but not in the discourse. Endophora means the opposite and it contains personal reference, demonstrative reference, comparative reference and clausal reference.

**Table 1. Cohesive Devices**

cohesive devices	grammatical cohesion	reference	personal;demonstrative; comparative;clausal
		substitution	nominal;verbal;clausal
		ellipsis	nominal;verbal;clausal
		conjunction	addictive;adversative;causal;temporal
	lexical cohesion	reiteration	repetition;synonym;near-synonym; superordinate;general word
		collocation	——

Halliday notes that the most direct way of lexical cohesion is the repetition of lexical items (Halliday, 1994: 330). Since mysteries have four key components: mysterious surroundings, a suspenseful plot, character relationships, and unique contextual settings, the scenery description must be well processed to assist the readers’ imagination of crime settings. The proper observation of indefinite articles and definite articles is essential for surroundings recognition or the reader may be confused.

Example 3: Post began to retrace his steps, and he walked back along the verge until he was level with the small wood, and he then exploited a narrow gap in the hawthorn, whereupon he walked to the trees, with the crows still circling and cawing loudly.

Analysis: The mind map for the reader to follow the figure's step is quite clear in English, but due to the differences in English and Chinese word choices, it is hard to judge the same object if the translator cannot recognize the linguistic reference. The mysterious surrounding in English used to alternate the referent objects' descriptions with articles changing from indefinite to definite and modify the objects key words into their synonyms. The translator may confuse the reader with different translations of one object.

## 6. Translation Strategies in Mysteries Translation

Starting from the awareness of the mysteries' characteristics, the chosen strategies assist the readers in reaching the essence and follow the logic of the mysteries. The use of the Skopos theory in literary translation also takes into account the author, the translator and cultural factors, which makes literary translation activities more reasonable and perfect (Gu, 2015: 497).

### 6.1. Liberal Translation

For a story, especially a mystery, its title sets the tone for its plots and above all intrigues readers. Thus, first and foremost, the reader is supposed to be able to recognize the category of this novel from the title, so it is pivotal to avoid literal translation but attempt to link the translated title with components of mysteries, such as choosing from the word bank of criminals. Secondly, titles carry a heavy weight in literature. Titles translation in mysteries must assist in revealing the clues in physical evidence reasoning type of mysteries and emphasize the character's feature as well as echo with deep sense in mental evidence reasoning type.

Example 1: ST: *Phoney Friend*

- TT: a. 假朋友  
b. 冒牌朋友  
c. 骗子朋友

Analysis a. is the preliminary version of automatic translation. Phoney in dictionary means not sincere or not real. Translations of “假” or “伪” are both negative words but they have no link with the word bank of criminals to indicate their attribute of mysteries, which is the purpose of the titles translation. Therefore, based on the purpose principle in Skopos theory, the aim of the translation is the most important. So the author picks “冒牌” and “骗子”, which own the more obvious attribute of criminals. And the author finally chooses “骗子”, for it forms a pair of antonym with “朋友” in the text. This title is also an extracted phrase in the text:

Short coughed again. “So I was the friend he phoned, and, like I said, he was my phoney friend. But he had it coming.”

Translation: 又一阵急促的咳嗽, “我接听了汤姆·克莱顿的电话, 也为他提供场外帮助, 我真的是他的“在线朋友”而他却是一个骗子, 这一切都是他咎由自取。”

Thus, “phoney” has two kinds of comprehension; one is its original meaning, and the other is considered as phone-y, for -y is an adjective suffix. The translation respects the rhetorical effect of oxymoron, which means two words used together that have, or seem to have, opposite meanings.<sup>2</sup> In oxymoron apparently contradictory terms are combined to produce a special effect (Ding, 2009: 20). “骗子” is the criminal cause in the mystery, and readers can have a rough impression of the mystery and are interested to find out the conflict themselves. In order to achieve this purpose, c. version is the best which manifests the attitude of the author as well, for the phoney victim even carries the most guilty. The conversion of word class reflects the purpose of writing, which helps reveal the features of detective fictions.

Example 2: ST: *A Philosophical Difference*

- TT: a. 一个哲理的差异  
b. 理念差异  
c. 临终线索

Analysis a. is the automatic translation. Due to the difference between English and Chinese, English is a language that is equipped with clear individual boundary consciousness (Wang, 2019), so it has a specific word category of articles. Chinese has quantifiers but with not have the same effect as English indefinite articles. *A Philosophical Difference* is an extracted phrase within the dialogue between “me” and “him” and the indefinite article here just to indicate that this concept appears for the first time in the novel. And it appears only once for Laddy to stop “the subject of dying clues” with “Let's call it a philosophical difference, shall we, and leave it there?”, so there is no need for the Chinese quantifier “一个” to stress.

Let's call it a philosophical difference, shall we, and leave it there?

Translation: 我们理念不同, 不再讨论, 好吗?

And the punch line which includes the title is processed with the trick of converting the none phrase in English to a subject-predicate structure in Chinese.

a. version gets rid of the literal translation of “philosophical” and translates with the comprehension of the dialogue in the story. The criminal has a divergence of opinion with Laddy on the validity of truth in mysteries and the divergence starts from questioning the existence of dying clues. Thus, c. version chooses to directly replace the title with its original indication in the

story without misleading readers but pointing out the clue to them in order to solve the puzzle. The principle that guides this choice to rewrite the titles is Skopos theory. The theory of purpose provides a new way of thinking about literary translation, which can be used to guide literary translation activities and generate new perspectives. In fact, literary translation activities also have certain purposes, and the application of Skopos theory to literary translation does not depart from the text-centrism or reader-centrism that traditional translation theory has always advocated, but combines the two organically to make up for each other's shortcomings. At the same time, the use of Skopos theory in literary translation also takes into account the author, the translator and cultural factors, which makes literary translation activities more reasonable and perfect (Gu, 2015: 497).

### 6.2. *Literal Translation and Amplification*

In this part, the author displays a translation strategy in aid of rhetorical devices, such as alliteration, pun and acrostic. According to Nida, translation consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message in terms of meaning first, and then in terms of style (Nida, 1982).

Example 1: ST: Short coughed again. "So I was the friend he phoned, and, like I said, he was my phoney friend. But he had it coming."

TT: 又一阵急促的咳嗽, "我接听了汤姆·克莱顿的电话, 也为他提供场外帮助, 我真的是他的 "在线朋友", 而他却是一个骗子, 这一切都是他咎由自取。"

Analysis "Phoney /'fəʊni/ friend, phone /'fəʊn/ the friend", two phrases display the rhetoric of alliteration which means the use, especially in poetry, of the same sound or sounds, especially consonants, at the beginning of several words that are close together and alliterated words are emphasized to be with related meaning in the context (Ding Wangdao, 2009: 20). Therefore, when Short describes himself as a phone-y friend, "phoney" are supposed to have similar meaning with "phone" in the first half of the sentence. Therefore, "phoney" is translated with the effect of a pun--one is the original meaning and the other is the artificial textual derivative meaning. Amplification is adopted to supplement the artificial meaning. Pun is a rhetoric that is a humorous use of a word or phrase that which several meanings or that sounds like another word. Thus the translation deals with the pun with the utmost fidelity degree.

Example 2: ST: "I don't like dying messages," Laddy said. "They strike me as preposterous."

TT: "我不喜欢临终线索," 拉迪·梅里韦瑟 (Laddy) 说, "我觉得这很荒谬。"

Arthur Merriweather  
Treetops House, Old Chester Road,  
Banbury Cross, Oxfordshire  
25th May 1951  
Theme of this week's  
Murder Will Out puzzle: "Last Things First, or Have You  
Figured Out the Ending?"  
CRAWL  
DRAMA  
ADORED  
CARD  
BRANDY

亚瑟·梅里韦瑟  
老切斯特路, 翠托普斯屋,  
牛津郡, 班伯里克罗斯  
1951年5月25日  
本周谜案  
《谋杀真相》"从尾至首, 或许你  
已经找到了真相?"  
考拉  
白兰地  
酸梅  
屋里  
余威  
毛瑟

Second type of translation:

CRAWL  
DRAMA  
ADORED  
CARD  
BRANDY

Table 2. Puzzle's Translation Evidence

Puzzle	Translation Evidence	Translation
CRAWL DRAMA	Transliteration of CRAWL	考拉
ADORED CARD BRANDY	"This is excellent brandy, by the way. You might do with a splash."	白兰地 (迪)
(Laddy) Merriweather 拉迪·梅里韦瑟	Brandy's ingredient	酸梅
	"We're alone in the house."	屋里
	The rain freshened as I scribbled away.	余威 (韦)
	And he fires.	毛瑟

Analysis: The popularity of crime literature lies in the fact that it is the punishment of crime that is finally replaced by the investigation of crime, "a discovery of the beauty and sublimity of crime". The "crime-investigation-punishment" theme is broader than the traditional "crime and punishment" theme, with private or police detectives as protagonists and its rule-based plots. The "game" draws the reader into an intellectual competition, where the answers are based on known clues, inspired by the principles of fair play (Yuan, 2021: 82). Therefore, in order to realize this fair play, the translator creates two ways--one is to rewrite the puzzle in Chinese and maintain the acrostic style which means a text, usually a poem, in which particular letters, such as the first letters of each line, spell a word or phrase<sup>3</sup>, the other is to leave the text originally and in the translation of the first paragraph of the first sentence of the person's name, using the brackets while adding the English name (Laddy). And the active choice will be made by different reader groups depending on their extent of English proficiency. Non-translation is also a way to retain the original reasoning space for every "detective" reader.

The person's first name is in the first sentence of the first paragraph; the last name is hidden behind the fake first name Arthur in the puzzle and the full name, i.e., Laddy Merriweather. Due to the differences between English and Chinese syllables, the Chinese version retains the last name and thus amplifies the acrostic, but the first name just matches "拉" with "crawl" and "地 (迪)" with "brandy". Crawl's transliteration form is "考拉" in accordance with the fidelity rule. "白兰地" is the same reason. Transliteration is one kind of literal translation, which means translating cultural notes with Chinese spelling of similar pronunciation (Wang, 2019: 198). The rewritten form of the last name is chosen from the text-related items' translation. "酸梅" is an ingredient of some brandy, "屋里" refers to the state of Laddy and the criminal, "余威" is derived from the criminal's urge and Laddy has to "scribble away" under the remaining influence from the criminal, and "毛瑟" is a kind of pistol which aligns with "fire". This creative treatment fulfills the English puzzle's effect and even enriches the text's integrity. The "function" in the theory of functional equivalence emphasizes that texts' pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and discourse are different, but they have the same or similar expressive functions. As a result, the reader who may not know both the source language and the target language can respond to the text in the same way.

### 6.3. Repetition

When repetition serves as a cohesive device, in English to Chinese translation, English references are tend to be retored as the item they refer to, for Chinese is used to repetition (Sun & Zheng, 2010: 50).

Example 1: ST: The always too-kind reader will be gracious enough to envisage a winter's landscape in a flat land, at approximately 54°N and 1°W. The trees are leafless; the land is ploughed in readiness to receive the sowing of the winter wheat. The sky is low and grey and still, for there is no wind. It lacks three weeks to Christmas. The only sound at the location in question is the occasional cawing of a murder of crows in the branches of a small wood. If the kind reader will further envision a narrow grey road running in a straight line across the landscape with a hawthorn hedge to either side, between the hedges and the road surface is a broad grass-covered verge.

TT: a. 一些擅于顺沿笔者思路自主完善情境的读者朋友这时会设想出十分贴合的案发场景: 冬季, 大约位于北纬54度, 西经1度, 地势平坦, 这里土地翻耕, 正准备播种上冬季小麦; 四野无风, 阴寂的天空低低垂挂。还有三周就是圣诞节, 路上却很安静, 只有小树丛枝杈间偶然传来几声乌鸦凄厉的嘶鸣。若再细究, 眼前还横亘有一条笔直、狭长的灰色小路, 两侧是山楂树篱, 路边则覆以宽阔的草坪, 一名男子沿草坪边缘前行。

TT: b. 然而, 总有些过度解读的读者朋友会脑补案发地的氛围: 约北纬54度, 西经1度处有块一望无际的平地。那里满目萧然: 冬季的树林, 枝丫无叶, 翻耕过的土地还没种上冬麦。天空阴沉、旷野无风。尽管三周后就是圣诞, 可在这, 只有那片光秃秃的小树林, 偶尔传来的几声乌鸦叫, 令周围更加寂静。一些热心听众还会继续构想: 一条灰色的狭长小路径直穿过那块平地, 山楂树篱挺立在小路两旁, 在树篱与小路之间是片宽阔的草地。

Example 2: ST: It did not seem right to Sydney Post. In fact he thought it sounded very suspicious. Post began to retrace his steps, and he walked back along the verge until he was level with the small wood, and he then exploited a narrow gap in the hawthorn, whereupon he walked to the trees, with the crows still circling and cawing loudly.

TT: a. 实际上，这间隔不止不对劲儿，在他听来还十分可疑。波斯特开始掉头，沿草坪边缘往回走，来到案发的小树林附近。他在山楂树篱中拨出一条狭窄的缝隙，挤过身子，向大树走去。乌鸦仍在树上盘旋，厉声啼叫。

TT: b. 这太奇怪了，于是，波斯特原路折返，走到小树林附近，他扒开山楂树篱，从一条狭缝中钻过去，向小树林走去。惊魂未定的乌鸦还在空中盘旋，“哑哑”地尖声惨叫。

Analysis: a. version causes confusion with the translation of “平地”, “小树林”, so the reader cannot follow the passer-by in a clear mind map. Chinese is linguistically and cognitively weak in boundary, which is continuous, while English is strong in boundary, which is discrete (Wang 2020: 125). The Wood means an area of land covered with a thick growth of trees. So despite demonstrative reference and repetition, “the trees” is demonstrative reference and synonyms.

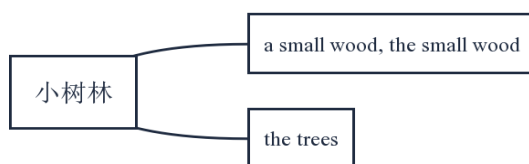


Figure 2 mind map of the meanings of 小树林

The reference expressed by the use of an indicative pronoun or the corresponding qualifier and its definite article is called demonstrative reference. The definite article *the* is a special one in the indicative system. It has no specific semantic content, but is used to indicate that the object is specific and can be found in the context. The inversion of *a* to *the* guides the Chinese translation to repeat the same description.

Table 2. Reference in the Text

First appearance	Reference
a winter’s landscape, a flat land	the landscape, the land
a small wood	the small wood, the trees
a hawthorn hedge	the hedges, the hawthorn
a broad grass-covered verge	the verge

Generally speaking, English tries to avoid repetition, while Chinese is the opposite (Lian Shuneng, 2010). Under the guidance of the semantic equivalence principle, the target text is supposed to convey the information of the original text accurately and appropriately in semantic coherence through repetition.

7. Conclusion

By engaging in this translation practice, the author is able to contribute to the *Translations* project both objectively and subjectively and attain some understanding of the elements of translating mysteries. The author substantially assisted in finding processing techniques and decoration tactics for the translation by straightening out the translation for titles, rhetorical devices and references. The study focuses on theories like Skopos, functional equivalence as well as the knowledge of text linguistics and the distinctions between English and Chinese to choose the translating methods. Under the guidance of Skopos theory, the titles’ liberal translation is involved with the conversion of word class in the word bank of criminal and the replacement of the titles directly with the clue in the text. With the aid of functional equivalence theory, the rhetorical devices, like alliteration, pun and acrostic, are processed with literal translation and amplification to serve the reader’s comprehension of clues better. The description of scenery reaches inner cohesion through demonstrative reference in English and the repetition in Chinese can guide the reader in an orderly manner. It is envisaged that the appropriate application of theories in this translation practice of mysteries, a literary form that in pursuit of translations satisfying the modern reader’s taste, would be able to offer new translation resources and research angles for theoretical studies.

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## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english-chinese-simplified/mystery> (search time : 02.14.2023)

<sup>2</sup> <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english-chinese-simplified/oxymoron> (search time : 02.14.2023)

<sup>3</sup> <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english-chinese-simplified/acrostic> (search time : 02.14.2023)