



**TRANSLATOR'S VOICE IN TRANSLATING NARRATIVE SPACE IN  
CHINESE CHILDREN'S FICTION *BRONZE AND SUNFLOWER* INTO  
ENGLISH**

By

**ZHAO MEIJUAN**

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra  
Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy**

**January 2023**

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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**January 2023**

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Translating narrative space is a necessity due to its fundamental role in children's literature. Narrative space refers to the physical environment in which the characters of narrative live and move. However, there are scarce studies on how narrative space is translated and how the translator's voice is perceived during this process. The current study thus seeks to explore the rendering of narrative space and to trace the translator's voice in the English translation of narrative space in Chinese children's fiction *Bronze and Sunflower*. The theoretical framework of this study is based on Ryan et al.'s (2016) model of narrative space, Baker's (2006) framing strategies and E. O'Sullivan's (2005) translator's voice. The novelty of this study is in its focus on the translation of narrative space from the Chinese language to English. Methodologically, an interpretive qualitative approach was designed and a total of 1,581 samples were selected from Cao Wenxuan's 青铜葵花 (2005) and *Bronze and Sunflower* (2017), the English translation of W. X. Cao's work by Helen Wang. Qualitative content analysis was used and it was found that translation did alter the structure of narrative space in terms of omission, addition, permutation, and substitution. Furthermore, selective appropriation was the most frequently used framing strategy in rendering narrative space. It was evident that the translator preferred to omit some repeated spatial frames even though the source text elaborated on them many times. The translator's preference consequently softened the sense of space in the target context, and that influenced readers' reading experience. Moreover, it was observed that the translator's voice was specifically loud in the way of reductive narration. The reason may be that the target text was only graded for readers aged 9-12, while the source text was classified into children's literature without specific age limitations. These findings not only enhance the awareness of the translator's visibility and creativity, they also extend the applicability of Baker's framing strategies, which may provide new insights into a better understanding of spatial issues in the translation of children's literature.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia  
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**SUARA PENTERJEMAH DALAM PENTERJEMAHAN RUANG NARATIF  
DALAM FIKSYEN KANAK-KANAK CINA *BRONZE DAN SUNFLOWER*  
DALAM BAHASA INGGERIS**

Oleh

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Penterjemahan ruang naratif merupakan suatu keperluan disebabkan peranan asasnya dalam kesusasteraan kanak-kanak. Ruang naratif merujuk kepada persekitaran fizikal di mana karakter naratif hidup dan bergerak. Walau bagaimanapun, terdapat kajian yang kurang mengenai bagaimana ruang naratif diterjemah dan bagaimana suara penterjemah ditanggap ketika proses tersebut. Kajian ini oleh itu cuba untuk meninjau penterjemahan ruang naratif dan mengesan suara penterjemah dalam penterjemahan bahasa Inggeris mengenai ruang naratif dalam fiksi kanak-kanak Cina *Bronze and Sunflower*. Kerangka teoretikal kajian ini berdasarkan model ruang naratif Ryan et al. (2016), strategi pembedaan Baker (2006) dan suara penterjemah O'Sullivan (2005). Novelty kajian ini adalah pada fokusnya ke atas penterjemahan ruang naratif daripada bahasa Cina kepada bahasa Inggeris. Secara metodologi, pendekatan kualitatif interpretif telah direka bentuk dan sejumlah 1,581 sampel telah dipilih daripada *青铜葵花* (2005) oleh Cao Wenxuan dan *Bronze and Sunflower* (2017), terjemahan bahasa Inggeris karya Cao Wenxuan oleh Helen Wang. Analisis kandungan kualitatif telah digunakan dan didapati bahawa terjemahan telah mengubah struktur ruang naratif dari segi peninggalan, penambahan, permutasi, dan penggantian. Di samping itu, pengasingan selektif merupakan strategi pembedaan yang paling kerap digunakan dalam penterjemahan ruang naratif. Terbukti bahawa penterjemah lebih gemar meninggalkan beberapa rujukan ruang walaupun teks sumber memperincikannya beberapa kali. Pilihan penterjemah akhirnya melembutkan makna ruang dalam konteks sasaran, dan ini mempengaruhi pengalaman bacaan pembaca. Tambahan pula, kajian mendapati bahawa suara penterjemah secara spesifik adalah lantang dari segi kisah reductif. Alasan tersebut mungkin disebabkan teks sasaran hanya digred untuk pembaca berumur 9-12, manakala teks sumber diklasifikasikan dalam kesusasteraan kanak-kanak tanpa limitasi umur yang spesifik. Dapatan ini bukan sahaja dapat meningkatkan kesedaran visibiliti dan kreativiti

penterjemah, ia juga memperpanjangkan keterterapan strategi pembedangan Baker yang memberikan pandangan baharu ke arah pemahaman yang lebih baik mengenai isu ruang dalam terjemahan kesusasteraan kanak-kanak.



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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of the Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the background of the study, problem statement, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, theoretical framework, conceptual framework, scope of the study, definition of key terms, and structure of the thesis.

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

From the end of the nineteenth century onward, translated texts from the West such as The Brothers Grimm's folktales and Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales have flooded unprecedentedly into China. This trend, to some extent, has stimulated the growth of indigenous modern Chinese children's literature such as Ye Shengtao's *Scarecrow* (1922). Ye's *Scarecrow*, which is believed to have been influenced by Andersen's *The Hardy Tin Soldier* (1983), marks the beginning of Chinese children's literature (Xu, 2013; J. Zhang, 2019). Further, in 1999, the marketing success of the Chinese translation of the Harry Potter series inspired a commercial tidal wave of children's literature in China (Tang, 2006). These influences of Western children's literary works on Chinese children's literature imply that Western children's literature has gained popularity in China.

Conversely, however, Chinese children's literature is little known to the readers in the West. This could be due to the lack of attention given to Asian texts for young readers (Nelson & Morris, 2014). According to Yao (2016), very few English children's books translated from Asian languages can be seen in bookstores overseas, with even fewer of those works having been reviewed by influential literary journals. David Jacobson's (2017) survey on Chinese, Japanese and Korean children's literature further revealed the fact that the translated versions of these Asian books into the English language have remained far below the number of Western books translated into Chinese, Japanese and Korean languages. Jacobson (2017), based on the CCBC's (Cooperative Children's Book Center) annual diversity statistics for children's literature, stated that:

Of the 44,700 titles they catalogued between 2003 and 2016, only 2,557, or 5.72%, were about Asia and Asian-Americans or by Asians and Asian-Americans [...] nearly 55% of all translations noted by the CCBC come from just three languages—French (27%), German (19%), and Spanish (8%). (p.1)

Jacobson particularly stressed that the most significant gap occurred in the case of Chinese children's literature, with only 64 translated children's books from Chinese into English since 2005, and "nearly 60% of the Chinese titles came from just three small publishers"(Jacobson, 2017, p. 4). At least up until 2018,

US publishers have been importing only a very small number of Chinese children's literature (Springen, 2018). It is hoped that this phenomenon will be changed with the recent winning of Cao Wenxuan's fiction 青铜葵花 (*Pinyin, Qing Tong Kui Hua*; English translation, *Bronze and Sunflower*), which went on to receive more than ten national and international awards, among which were the 2007 National Five Top Project Award in China, the 2005 "Good Books for All to Read" prize for novels, the Freeman Book Award in 2017, the New York Times Notable Children's Book of 2017, and the 2018 Global Literature in Libraries Translated YA Book Prize. In addition, *Bronze and Sunflower* became the bestselling Chinese children's literary work hitting the English-language bookshelf in 2015 (Zoe, 2015) and it was included in "the voice of the world - the world's most beautiful novel series" ("Chinese children's literature shines on the world stage", 2018). Since the awards, *Bronze and Sunflower* has been reprinted 170 times in different languages (M. Z. Zhang, 2016) and sold in 14 countries, such as the UK, the US, France, Vietnam, Italy, among others (China Publishers Magazine, 2018).

The children's novel, *Bronze and Sunflower*, was originally written in Chinese by W. X. Cao in 2005. Subsequently, it was translated into English by Helen Wang, published by the UK's Walker Books in 2015 and republished by the US's Candlewick Press in 2017. The author W. X. Cao is the first Chinese writer who won the Hans Christian Andersen Award in 2016, the world's top prize in the field of children's literature. This award recognises lifelong achievement and is given to an author or illustrator whose works have made significant and lasting contributions to children's literature. Hence, this honour not only affirms W. X. Cao's remarkable literary achievements, it also helps to direct global attention to the long-neglected Chinese children's literary works. A case in point is that *Bronze and Sunflower* did not gain international attention until it was translated into English, which won the author the Hans Christian Andersen Award.

Moreover, H. Wang's English translation of *Bronze and Sunflower* earned her the 2017 Marsh Christian Award for Children's Literature in Translation, a biennial literary prize which has been awarded in the UK since 1996. Not only that, she was honoured by the *Chen Bochui* International Children's Literature Awards in 2017 for her remarkable contributions towards bringing Chinese children's literature into the English-speaking world. The publisher of *Bronze and Sunflower* Walker Books was further awarded the PEN Translation Award for publishing such an excellent work in 2015 (Zoe, 2015). Once again, making the author, translator and publisher all win prizes for the same literary work was not an easy accomplishment. These awards, to a great extent, attested to the success of the English translation of *Bronze and Sunflower* which became an important hallmark in the realm of children's literature for both the author and the translator.

However, translating children's literature is a challenging task. Essentially, the translation for adults and children is the same because it is an act involving translators' mediation between the source and target texts (Coillie & Verschueren, 2006). Notwithstanding this, some features distinguish translating

of children's literature from translating for adults. One of the most demanding aspects of translating for children is that the translator must adapt the text to the young readership in terms of linguistic competence, life experience, practical and encyclopaedic knowledge, cognitive capacity, and psychological maturity (Nikolajeva, 2011), a factor which is not likely taken into consideration in translating for adults. Furthermore, the childness – which refers to “the quality of being a child – dynamic, imaginative, experimental, interactive and unstable” (Hollindale, 1997, p. 46) – of texts for children requires the translator to understand the child's language and have a special empathy with the imaginative world of the children (Coillie & Verschueren, 2006; Lathey, 2016). These challenges consequently encourage the translator to be more sensitive to the young readership and to childhood concerns.

In addition, when adults translate for children, they instinctively create an adult-to-child communication which lies at the core part of all successful translating for the young (Lathey, 2016). It is noted that this communication is asymmetrical because adults and children are unequal in terms of language level, life experience and social ranking (E. O'Sullivan, 2003). Due to the asymmetrical nature of the communication between adults and children, the translator's voice, as an index of the translator's discursive presence in a translated text (Venuti, 1995), is particularly tangible in children's literature (Cruz, 2015; E. O'Sullivan, 2005; Q. X. Zhang, 2014). In children's literary works adults always act on behalf of the children, thereby resulting in the audibility of the translator.

Influenced by the spatial turn in the disciplines of humanities and social sciences in the late twentieth century, a growing number of narrative theorists turned towards narrative space in literary studies (Buchholz & Jahn, 2005; Hones, 2011) and recognised its powerful role in understanding “the cognitive processing of stories and the role of space in narrative structure” (Ryan et al., 2016, p. 3). Narrative space is defined as “the physical environment in which the characters of narrative live and move” (Ryan et al., 2016, p. 3), extending from “the individual object described in a narrative to the cosmic order in which the story takes place” (Ryan et al., 2016, p. 23). Here, narrative space can be understood on two levels: “on the topographical level, space is a container for all the sites mentioned in the story, on the chronotopic level these sites are linked into a network” (Ryan et al., 2016, p. 21) through the character's movement. In view of this, narrative space is not confined to a static container delimited by boundaries. It is dynamic and closely linked with time since movement from one site to another takes time to happen. Specifically, narrative space is an important element in representing the idyllic nature and rural scenes which are unique aesthetic aspects of beauty in *Bronze and Sunflower* (Tan, 2014). As such, the exploration of narrative space in *Bronze and Sunflower* may shed light on the spatial issues in the field of children's literature.

It is thus a worthwhile effort to investigate the translator's voice in translating narrative space in *Bronze and Sunflower* from Chinese to English. One motivation for this study is to increase the empirical data for tracing the translator's presence in children's literature. Another motivation is to investigate

the extent to which spatial issues play an important role in children's literary works, such as in the English translation of *Bronze and Sunflower*. The third motivation is to shed a new light on the interdisciplinary field of narrative theory and translation studies.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

Despite *Bronze and Sunflower's* wide recognition in the field of children's literature, few studies have been devoted to the English translation of this novel (Dong, 2017). This is partly due to the long-neglected position of children's literature (Shavit, 1981; Thomson-wohlgemuth, 1998; Nodelman, 2008), which subsequently relegated their translated counterparts to a marginalised status. Another possible reason may be that translating for children, to some extent, is more difficult than translating for adults (Thomson-wohlgemuth, 1998). H. Wang, the only English translator of *Bronze and Sunflower*, emphasised in an interview that:

[w]e often think about language and culture when translating, but the story-telling is just as important. Things like timing, tension, suspense, length, rhythm, humour, and dialogue are crucial elements of a story. We learn these when we are very young, and we all know how little children will complain if you don't tell the story properly. Chinese stories often provide more information, and more repetition, than the English reader is used to. It doesn't mean that one style is better than another, but rather that we have different expectations and tolerances. (Zoe, 2015)

According to her, narration is one of the hardest parts in translation. Some elements in narration such as time, space and focalisation should be underlined in translation. The current research thus highlights the issues that involve narrative space in the translation of *Bronze and Sunflower*, which reflects the challenges and struggles that the translators of children's literature are increasingly encountering.

Fiction happens in space (Hones, 2014). Without space, a characters' existence would lose much of its significance. Space is a complex narrative element which is produced through a set of interrelations between characters, objects and events (Kujundžić, 2020). Hence, a consideration of narrative space may shed light on the understanding of the interaction between space and other narrative elements. However, narrative space in children's literature is mostly overlooked primarily because of the traditional view that space is a static backdrop or container designed simply to receive whatever is poured into it without influencing it in any way (Lefebvre, 1991). Due to this, space exists simply for providing somewhere for the story. Another reason for the long-lasting disregard of space in narrative is that narrative literature is broadly considered as a temporal art conveying a story or narrating a sequence of events (Lessing, 1984).



As such, the privileged position of time leads to a scholarly preference for temporal aspects of narrative rather than spatial ones.

Notwithstanding the neglect of narrative space, it actually plays a significant role in children's literature. Children's literature is always action-oriented (Nikolajeva, 2005) and links with a variety of space. Pullman (2015) points out that the inbuilt space in children's literature, either imaginary or material, indicates the potential profile of childhood. Cases in point are the fairytale lands of Wonderland and Neverland which are often seen as childhood worlds with their own logic and landmarks (Cecire et al., 2015). Furthermore, narrative space is an important feature of modern children's literature. Nikolajeva (2016) states that the chronotopic aspect of narrative space, referring to the unity of time and space, and offers a convenient genre approach to distinguishing the types of children's texts since different texts have different forms of chronotopes. For instance, the chronotope in books for girls is that space is confined, and time is marked by recurrent time indications (for example, most actions occur indoors). Moreover, space in narrative interweaves with an individual's identity-formation and the development of interpersonal relationships (Bradford & Baccolini, 2011). In the light of this, narrative space in children's literature is more than a geographical element; it is childhood-related, genre-related and identity-related.

While the issue of narrative space in literary works has gained growing awareness, the translation of narrative space remains a subject of debate. H. Li (2015) points out that the translated narrative space should be in line with the original one, in order to offer the target readers the same reading experience as what the original readers enjoy. However, it is not an easy task. De bleeker (2014) reveals that translation does alter narrative space in the fictional universe, either subtly or explicitly. These views on translating narrative space seem to contradict each other, a situation which calls for more attention and urgent research work.

Studies on literary translation have shown that not only are language and culture altered when a literary text is rendered from one linguistic, cultural, and narratological context into another, the narrative structure is also changed (Alvstad, 2014; Venuti, 2013). Indeed, the translation is often not identical with its source text due to the difference between languages, cultures, and narrative preference. In this light, narrative space would be altered by translation either on the micro-level or macro-level.

As for the translation of *Bronze and Sunflower*, some scholars have identified that excessive omissions occur in the target text (Dong, 2017; Wang, 2019; Xu & Fan, 2018). These omissions will ultimately result in a different configuration of narrative space and a loud translator's voice in translation.

Concerning the possible changes in the translation of narrative space, the current study focuses on the agency of such changes - the translator - since translation is contingent upon the decision and negotiation made by translators (Baker, 2000; Hermans, 1996). The translator is not a neutral conveyor of

messages; he or she is someone who is involved in the negotiation and power interplay between the source and target texts. Hence, the translator will leave his/her own voice in the translated text. E. O'Sullivan (2005) stresses that translator's voice or discursive presence can be:

identified in texts which aren't nonfluent, nonstandard and foreignized; it can be located on a theoretical level in a model of narrative communication, as shown by Giuliana Schiavi in 1996, and on the level of the text, where the translator's presence is evident in the strategies chosen and in the way a translator positions himself or herself in relation to the translated narrative. (p. 89)

According to E. O'Sullivan's view, the translator's voice is different from Venuti's (1995) visibility which is discerned by "the use of nonfluent, nonstandard and heterogeneous language, by producing foreignized rather than domesticated texts" (E. O'Sullivan, 2005, p. 89). The term of translator's voice is broader than visibility since it can also be traced in fluent, standard and domesticated text. Drawing from that, the current study focuses on the translation of narrative space to perceive and locate the translator in the translated text.

One thing worth noting is that Chinese narratives prefer space while Western narratives favour time (S. J. Zhang, 1999; Wang, 2016). In general, Chinese fiction is inclined towards using narrative space to locate the story and move the plot forward, whereas, Western fiction tends to unfold the story according to narrative time. In the Chinese version of *Bronze and Sunflower*, W. X. Cao makes the effort to select or create space to present the separations and reunions, as well as the unique beauty of rural landscapes in China (W. X. Cao, 2003; Tan, 2014). Furthermore, space is the most crucial element constituting the whole story in *Bronze and Sunflower*. Considering the difference in preference between Chinese and Western narratives, it is necessary to investigate whether the narrative space in the source text is transformed into temporalised elements in the translation.

In translating children's literature, didactic purpose and the target readership are two important elements that should be considered (Alvstad, 2010; Cermáková, 2018; Lathey, 2006). Shavit (1981) particularly proposes two guiding principles to be followed in the translation of children's literature: (a) adjusting the text to make it appropriate for children; (b) adjusting the plot and language to the level of the children's understanding level. The first principle emphasises the pedagogical purpose of the children's literature. Children's literature has always been considered to be an essential educational tool, thus leading to the adaptation of some "inappropriate" information for the child readers. The second principle is concerned with the expectation of the child readers. The translator would assume what kind of knowledge or what level of understanding the target readers have and consequently adapt the plot or language to meet the children's level of understanding. This is common in translation work.

Aware of the excessive alterations in the translation of children's literature, Venuti (1995) delves into translation strategies and reveals that the alterations mainly result from strategies of domestication. He further emphasises that domestication is the most common strategy in this endeavour. According to him, translation strategies are dichotomised as domestication and foreignisation. Venuti (1995) explains that domestication refers to assimilating the source text to the target linguistic and cultural norms while foreignisation refers to retaining the strangeness or foreignness of the source text. However, Venuti's classification polarises translation strategies and ignores the narrativity which refers to the construction of narrative embedded in the text (Baker, 2006).

Further, Baker (2006) links narrative theories to translation to address the varied translational shifts between narrative source and target texts. She defines translation as a form of (re)-narration in which the focus is to construct the world in another language rather than to accurately transfer semantic content. Based on this definition and the features of narrativity, she proposes four framing strategies, namely temporal and spatial framing, selective appropriation, labelling, and repositioning of participants in the narrative. In this sense, Baker's framing strategies move beyond Venuti's dichotomisation of translation strategies, hence offering multi-dimensions to explore the adaptation in the target text.

Specifically, the current study discusses how narrative space is translated through four framing strategies which provide multidimensional ways for exploring the construct of narrative space from Chinese to English language. It should be noted that in previous studies, framing strategies have always been considered to be effective tools for dealing with the narratives of a conflict circulating in society (Bernaerts et al., 2014; Qin & Zhang, 2018; Sanatifar & Daghigh, 2018). Despite that, the current study attempts to extend Baker's framework into the translation of children's literary works, which is also a future direction emphasised by Baker (2014).

There is also a deficiency of research data that shows how narrative space is translated and how the translator's voice is traced in this process. Although Wang (2019) has conducted research on the translator's voice in translating *Bronze and Sunflower*, she ignored the translation of spatial issues and the specific translation strategies that cause the changes in the translated text.

In a nutshell, excessive omissions in the translated text, inconsistent views on tracing the translator's voice, inapplicable translation strategies in the translation of children's literature, and a lack of studies on the translation of narrative space all contribute to the problem statement in the present study. As such, there is a need to focus on the translation of narrative space in *Bronze and Sunflower* and to investigate the translator's voice in translation.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To examine the similarities and differences in narrative space between the source and target texts;
2. To explore framing strategies adopted by the translator to translate narrative space in the target text;
3. To investigate the translator's voice in the translation of narrative space.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

Based on the above objectives, the study attempts to address the following questions:

1. What are the similarities and differences in narrative space between the source and target texts?
2. How are framing strategies employed by the translator to translate narrative space in the target text?
3. How is the translator's voice manifested in the translation of narrative space?

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

It is acknowledged above that in translating children's literature, narrative space has long been overlooked (Kujundžić, 2020; Lefebvre, 1991). This study will place emphasis on the issue due to its fundamental role in children's literature, and the existing distinction between Chinese and Western narrative focus. This study hopes to offer fresh insight into how the narrative space is transferred from Chinese into English. Hence, the current study aims to contribute a better understanding of spatial issues in the translation of children's literature. As such, it would facilitate to an increase in empirical data on the rendering of narrative space when translating literature from the Chinese language to the English language.

Furthermore, the findings of the current study are expected to contribute to the body of theoretical and practical knowledge in the study of translator's visibility. Translators for the children are traditionally seen as having lower status as they are not the original creators of the texts (Lathey, 2010). However, they play an important role in the target text since they decide the quality of the translation and what the target readers will read. Furthermore, the translation strategies which the translator adopts influence the constructions of childhood (Lathey,

2010). It is hoped that this study will strengthen the awareness of the translator's role, enlightens the translation strategies in children's literature and enhances the acceptance of translated Chinese literary works into the English language.

Additionally, the Chinese government formally proposed an initiative called "telling China stories well and spreading China's voices" (Xi, 2013, p. 2) to broadcast stories about China to the rest of the world. This was an effort to introduce Chinese literary works to other countries, which would benefit the cultural exchange between the East and the West. Moreover, many original Chinese children's books have been exported to international markets (Xie, 2022). *Bronze and Sunflower* is one of these books which have successfully penetrated the global market. It offers the English-language readers opportunities to learn the values, beliefs, and customs of the Chinese culture. Moreover, studying *Bronze and Sunflower*, a work which has won many prestigious awards, will encourage more and better translations from China to be available in English-speaking countries.

## 1.6 Conceptual Framework

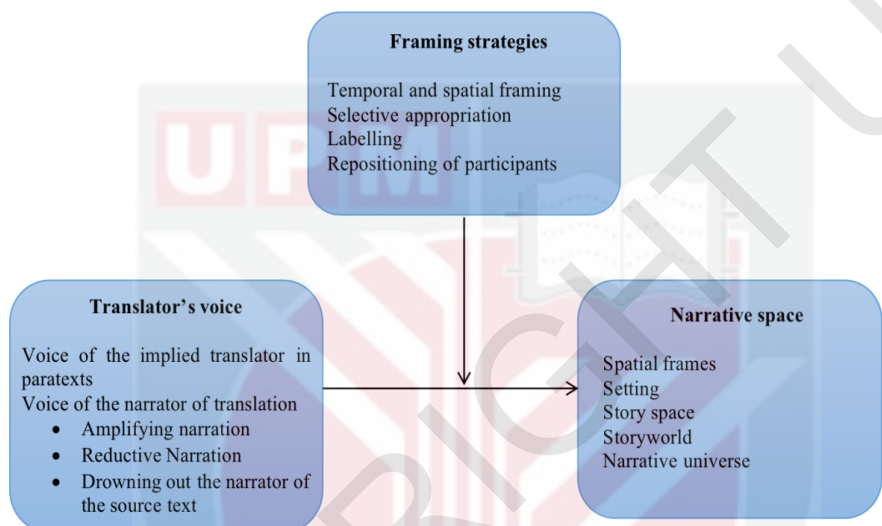
The conceptual framework was constructed based on the concepts derived from Ryan et al.'s (2016) model of narrative space, Baker's (2004) framing strategies, and E. O'Sullivan's (2005) translator's voice. Ryan et al. (2016) highlights that narrative space is dynamic as the character moves from one site to another, which is different from the traditional view that narrative space is only a passive background. According to their view, narrative space can be divided into five different layers, namely: spatial frames, setting, story space, storyworld, and narrative universe. These categories of space offer a comprehensive and integrated framework for studying the structure of narrative space in this study.

The second theoretical approach is Baker's (2006) framing strategies which emphasise the way translators accentuate, undermine, or modify aspects of the narrative embedded in the source text. Baker regards the framing strategy as a kind of translation strategy that contributes to the configuration of narratives, stating that framing is "an active process of signification by means of which we consciously participate in the construction of reality" (Baker, 2006, p.167). She further identifies four framing strategies: temporal and spatial framing, selective appropriation, labelling, and repositioning of participants in the narrative. These strategies apply narrative approaches to translation studies, which is suitable for the translation of narrative space.

What makes the translator's voice relevant to the current study is its focus on the translator's interpretation of the source text and the translator's presence in the target text. In E. O'Sullivan's (2005) study, the translator's voice was classified into two different voices, namely, the voice of the narrator of translation and the voice of the implied translator in paratexts. In particular, the voice of the narrator of the translation was more evident in children's literature than in other genres due to the asymmetrical communication between the adult translators

and the young readers (E. O'Sullivan, 2005). In this regard, E. O'Sullivan's of translator's voice would help to gain some insights in the translation of children's literary works.

The following diagram briefly shows the conceptual framework of this study. According to this framework, the translator's voice will influence the structure of narrative space in the target text. In this process, framing strategies adopted by the translator will make the translator's voice more evident in translation.



**Figure 1.1 : Conceptual framework**

### 1.7 Scope of the Study

The scope of the current study is restricted to the Chinese children's fiction 青铜葵花 (*Qing Tong Kui Hua*, 2005), written by W. X. Cao, and its English version *Bronze and Sunflower* (2017) translated by H. Wang. The reason is that W. X. Cao's *Bronze and Sunflower* sets a good example in introducing Chinese stories to English-speaking countries. When it was translated into English, in the main, *Bronze and Sunflower* received positive reviews from critics and it was also nominated for the New York Times Book Review Notable Children's Books of the Year 2017, YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults, and ALSC Notable Children's Books, among others. It was praised for its humanitarian themes, its idyllic writing and its aesthetic value (Mu & Shi, 2020). In particular, the uniting of the poetic landscape with the growth of children and the inevitability of suffering helped to open a new aesthetic field in Chinese children's literature (M. Z. Zhang, 2016).

This study examines the two texts with particular reference to the English translation of narrative space. The current study focuses on the translator's voice in the translation of narrative space from Chinese to English. To make sense of narrative space, the study employs Ryan et al.'s (2016) model of narrative space, which comprises spatial frames, setting, story space, storyworld, and narrative universe. Further, the study endeavours to investigate the rendering of narrative space through Baker's framing strategies such as selective appropriation, temporal and spatial framing, labelling, and repositioning of participants. This study also highlights the translator's voice to enhance the understanding of the rendering of narrative space. Based on E. O'Sullivan's (2005) communicative model of the translated narrative text, the study explores the translator's presence from the voice of the implied translator in paratexts and the narrator of the translation. As such, it may act as a preliminary inquiry into the spatial issues in the translation of children's literature.

### 1.8 Definition of Key Terms

The following key terms are central to the study. To establish the clarity of this study, their working definitions are provided below.

**Children's literature** refers to the works "released by the juvenile or junior division of a publisher intended for children from prekindergarten to about sixth grade" (Nilsen & Donelson., 2009, p. 3). All works of children's literature share some features in common such as "a childlike view" (Nodelman, 2008, p. 77), "unique qualities that relate to childhood" (Nodelman, 2008, p. 141).

**Framing** refers to "an active process of signification by means of which we consciously participate in the construction of reality" (Baker, 2006, p.167). That is, framing is a way to construct how the events are presented to others, rather than a strategy for presenting events.

**Framing strategy** refers to a type of translation strategy focusing on the reconfiguration of narratives (Baker, 2006). Further, Baker proposes four framing strategies to construct narratives in the target text: selective appropriation, temporal and spatial framing, labelling, and positioning of participants.

**Selective appropriation** is always achieved through omission and addition, by which the translator excludes or includes specific information. The aim of this strategies is to "suppress, accentuate or elaborate particular aspects of a narrative encoded in the source text or utterance, or aspects of the larger narrative(s) in which it is embedded" (Baker, 2006, p. 114).

**Temporal and spatial framing** mainly focuses on the sequential order in the narrative, either temporal or spatial order, which carries meaning in a narrative. According to Baker (2006, p. 112), temporal and spatial framing refers to the way of "selecting a particular text and embedding it in a temporal and spatial

context that accentuates the narrative it depicts and encourages us to establish links between it and current narratives that touch our lives”.

**Labelling** is defined as “using a lexical item, term or phrase to identify a person, place, group, event or any other key element in a narrative” (Baker, 2006, p. 122).

**Repositioning of participants** means that “participants can be repositioned in relation to each other and the reader or hearer through the linguistic management of time, space, deixis, dialect, register, use of epithets, and various means of self-and other identification” (Baker, 2006, p. 132).

**Narrative space** refers to “the physical environment in which the characters of narrative live and move” (Ryan et al., 2016, p. 3), extending from “the individual object described in a narrative to the cosmic order in which the story takes place” (Ryan et al., 2016, p. 23). It involves five layers such as spatial frames, setting, story space, storyworld, and narrative universe.

**Spatial frames** refer to “the immediate surroundings of the characters” as “shifting scenes of action” (Ryan et al., 2016, p. 24). From this point, spatial frames would change or flow into each other as the characters move.

**Setting** is “a relatively stable socio-historico-geographic category that embraces the entire text” (Ryan et al., 2016, p. 24).

**Story space** is labelled as “the space relevant to the plot as mapped by actions and thoughts of the characters” (Ryan et al., p. 24). Accordingly, it contains “all the spatial frames plus all the locations mentioned by the text that are not the scene of actually occurring events” (Ryan et al., 2016, p. 24).

**Storyworld** is the “story space completed by the reader’s imagination on the basis of the principle of minimal departure” (Ryan et al., 2016, p. 24). It superimposes the location in the text onto the places of the real world. To distinguish the story space and the storyworld, they further explain “while story space consists of selected places separated by voids, the storyworld of realistic texts is conceived by the imagination as a coherent, unified, ontologically full, and materially existing geographical entity” (Ryan et al., 2016, p. 24).

**Narrative universe** means “the world presented as actual by the text, plus all the counterfactual worlds constructed by characters as beliefs, wishes, fears, speculations, hypothetical thinking, dreams, fantasies, and imaginative creations” (Ryan et al., 2016, p. 25).



**Translator's voice** refers to the translator's discursive presence in a translated text (Venuti, 1995). It can be traced from two aspects: 1) the voice of the translator in paratexts; 2) the voice of the narrator in the translation (E. O'Sullivan, 2003).

## 1.9 Structure of the Study

The study consists of five chapters, as follows:

Chapter one covers the background of the study, problem statement, objectives of the study, and research questions as well as the significance of the study. It also gives overviews of the theoretical framework, conceptual framework, scope and limitations of the study. Also, a list of definitions of key terms is presented.

Chapter two reviews the previous studies available on the translation of children's literature, narrative theory and translation studies, translator's voice in translation studies, and related translation studies on *Bronze and Sunflower*. The discussion aims to trace the related scholarly studies of the current topic concerning the translator's voice in translating narrative space in *Bronze and Sunflower*.

Chapter three is devoted to present the research methodology comprising of research design, sampling process, and trustworthiness. It also offers the pilot study undertaken for testing the applicability and acceptability of this study. Additionally, some steps taken in the data analysis procedure are described.

Chapter four addresses the research questions which provide the results of the study. It presents the identification of narrative space and framing strategies. It also discusses the translator's voice manifested in the translation of narrative space.

Chapter five provides a summary of the research and contribution of the study. It further suggests recommendations for future research to expand the scholarship on W. X. Cao's works, as well as other Chinese children's literature. It is essential to promote more interdisciplinary research to highlight the significance of spatial issues in translation.

## 1.10 Conclusion of the Chapter

This chapter offers a brief overview of the study. It provides the background that Chinese children's literature is little known to the readers in the West due to a lack of attention given to Asian texts for young readership. This situation may be changed with the recent award-winning fiction *Bronze and Sunflower* written by W. X. Cao and translated into English by H. Wang. The chapter offers

justification of why selecting *Bronze and Sunflower* from the aspects of the renowned status (an important hallmark in the realm of Chinese children's literature), the high quality of the translation, and the unique aesthetics of narrative space. The chapter also presents the problem statement, the objectives and the research questions. Moreover, the significance of the study, theoretical framework, conceptual framework, scope of the study, definition of key terms, and the structure of the study are introduced in this chapter. The next chapter will elaborate on previous studies carried out on the topic of this study.



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