



Classifiers for Animals in Vietnamese and their Translation into Modern Chinese (Based on the Work “Đế Mèn Phiêu Lưu Kí”-The Adventures of a Cricket)

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Abstract: This article presents the characteristics of the use of classifiers for animals in Vietnamese through an examination of the literary work "The Adventures of a Cricket" by the author Tô Hoài and its corresponding translation into modern Chinese. Based on the results obtained, we analyze the translation methods and propose recommendations and solutions that are appropriate for specific linguistic contexts.

Keywords: Classifiers, Animals, Translation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Classifiers (also known as measure words or quantifiers) used for animals in Vietnamese constitute a special category of words that play a crucial role in classifying and describing the animal world. Vietnamese linguists such as Cao Xuân Hạo, Hoàng Dũng, Bùi Mạnh Hùng, and Nguyễn Văn Phổ define classifiers as words that represent objects isolated in space, time, or some dimension according to the way language structures the world into units and individuals.

The primary function of this word class is to distinguish quantity, expressed through words like “con” (indicating a single individual), “đàn” (indicating a large number), and “bọn,” “lũ” (indicating plural, often with a negative connotation). According to Nguyễn Thị Hai (2006), “con” is a common classifier for animals, often used to divide animals into countable units such as: con chó (a dog), con mèo (a cat). The use of classifiers adds vividness and familiarity to the language, especially in folklore and children’s literature.

In this article, we will discuss the use of classifiers for animals in Vietnamese from semantic and pragmatic perspectives, using the work "The Adventures of a Cricket" (DMPLK) as the basis; at the same time, we will examine the translation methods into modern Chinese through the corresponding translation. The results help readers, particularly Vietnamese-Chinese translators, to better translate this subject matter.

2. THEORETICAL BASIS

2.1 Research on Animal Classifiers in Vietnamese

According to our observations, classifiers have been a subject of interest and research by many Vietnamese linguists. However, there has not been any specific study dedicated to the classifiers used exclusively for animals in Vietnamese. Based on the findings of previous researchers, this category of classifiers can be divided into two basic types: individual classifiers and collective classifiers.

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Individual classifiers are commonly used, such as “con” and “cái.” For example:

- "A firefly flitted over the sweat-drenched musical instrument." (Chùa Đàn. Nguyễn Tuấn)
- "Two eggs hatched into two chickens that crowed 'cock-a-doodle-doo...,' right?" (Côi cút giữa cảnh đời. Ma Văn Kháng)
- "The stork goes out at night" (Vietnamese folk song)

Collective classifiers are often used for animals, such as “bầy” (herd) and “đàn” (flock). For example:

- "The governor had a herd of cows, and among them, there was one particularly large, fat, and strong cow that often wandered off on its own and would destroy the vegetable and banana gardens wherever it went." (Con bò của ông tổng đốc. Phan Khôi)
- "A pack of fierce dogs, like a swarm of tigers, suddenly rushed out." (Tất đèn. Ngô Tất Tố)
- "The crowd gradually split into two sides like two flocks of ducks." (Lều chõng. Ngô Tất Tố).

Overall, the classifiers specifically used for animals in Vietnamese are not very diverse, mostly reflecting how Vietnamese people classify and perceive the animal world. For instance, “con” is used for individual animals (as small as an ant or as large as an elephant); “đàn” is typically used for species that live in groups, such as chickens (đàn gà) or ducks (đàn vịt).

2.2 On the Work "Đế Mèn Phiêu Lưu Ký" and Its Chinese Translation

"Đế Mèn Phiêu Lưu Ký" (The Adventures of a Cricket) is a work by the author Tô Hoài, written in the genre of fable or allegorical tales. The work employs personification to transform various insects such as crickets, ants, praying mantises, cicadas, etc., into characters that exhibit emotions, thoughts, and actions akin to those of humans. In this story, the animal world is portrayed as human society, depicted in a vivid and detailed manner through their movements and developments (in terms of appearance, speech, actions, etc.). Each animal character embodies a human trait, and these traits represent different types of people in society.

In Mainland China, the work was initially referred to as “Lâu cô phiêu lưu ký” [螻蛄漂流记] in the Anthology of Modern Vietnamese Literature. However, this title was later changed to “Tất xuất mạo hiểm ký” [蟋蟀冒险记] to better suit the context. Currently, there is only one complete translation of the work into modern Chinese by the translator Lý Doanh.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper employs a descriptive method to differentiate between the unit nouns used for animals in Vietnamese. During the description, we also use supplementary techniques, including describing distinctive features to highlight the unique characteristics of the research subjects and using statistical and classification techniques to process the linguistic data.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1 General Characteristics of Unit Nouns for Animals in "Đế Mèn Phiêu Lưu Ký"

In the work, names (specific) of 71 species of animals are mentioned, out of which 09 species are not accompanied by unit nouns (details can be found in the appendix). The unit nouns used include specialized unit nouns for animals (con), unit nouns used for both humans and animals (cái, mống, loài, loại, thứ), and unit nouns used for humans. Unit nouns for humans are generally divided into three types: unit nouns specifically for humans (đứa, ả, thằng, tay, bọn), unit nouns as terms of address (cô, cậu, bác, anh, ông, cụ), and unit nouns for administrative units (xóm, làng, chi họ, họ nhà). It can be observed that unit nouns in "Đế Mèn Phiêu Lưu Ký" are quite diverse. However, within the scope of this paper, we will focus on the group of unit nouns used for animals (including unit nouns used for both humans and animals), rather than the group of unit nouns used for humans.

Unit nouns specialized for animals have the characteristic of usually preceding a mass noun (proper noun) that denotes animals and following specific numerals (one, two, three, etc.) and indefinite numerals (some, many, every, etc.). If there is no numeral preceding the unit noun, the number of subjects is often considered singular (one). "Con" is the most common unit noun specifically used for animals:

- "Hai đứa trẻ kia sẽ bắt tôi đem về làm miếng mồi béo cho con gà chọi, con họa mi, con sáo mỏ ngà của chúng xơi ngon."
- "Thằng Thịnh hôm nọ cũng có một con đế, nó khoe đế nó khỏe nhất, cho đánh nhau, đánh thằng đế nào cũng phải thua."

If the animals are in a group, Vietnamese often uses the collective unit noun "đàn":

- "Cóc cứ dấm dớ lý sự và lảm bảm một mình nghĩ, một mình nói thể trong khi cả đàn cóc nhô nhộp nháy ra lại nháy vào, vừa kèng kẹc, vừa gật gù: Có thể chứ!"
- "Một đàn cá Săn Sắt đương rầm rập kéo đến."

In Vietnamese, there are some unit nouns used for both humans and animals (cái, mống, đám,

loài, loại, thứ). Generally, these words often carry a neutral or derogatory connotation:

- "Cái Cò, cái Vạc, cái Nông

Ba cái cùng béo, vật lông cái nào?"

- "Thách cũng chẳng mống Cá nào dám lên bờ đuổi."
- "Một cô nhón chân vào đất hai cô bạn đương lúng túng ra khỏi đám Kiến rồi đưa xuống suối rửa chân."
- "Các loài Chuồn Chuồn suốt đời kiếm ăn nơi đầu sông cuối bãi, những tay Chuồn Chuồn giang hồ ấy mà mở hết tốc lực phi cơ thì phải biết."
- "Cả đàn mấy chục các loại Cá đuổi theo, chen nhau đánh sóng và quẫy đuổi ngoáp miệng bắn nước lên đầy mặt tôi, ướt cánh và ướt cả bụng tôi."
- "Nhiều thứ Kiến: Kiến Gió, Kiến Mun, Kiến Càng, Kiến Cỏ, Kiến Cánh, Kiến Mốc, Kiến Lửa, Kiến Đen, Kiến Vàng, Kiến Kim, Kiến Muối,

Kiến Bọ Dọt... trăm nghìn chi phái nhà Kiến, nhiều không kể xiết.

Thus, although "Đế Mèn Phiêu Lưu Ký" is considered a miniature portrayal of the animal world, the number of specialized unit nouns and unit nouns used for both humans and animals in the work is not overly abundant. These unit nouns are mainly concentrated in two groups: those denoting individuals and those denoting collectives. For individual unit nouns, "con" is the term commonly used for all animal species; "cái" is an archaic term, used as a unit noun in old folk songs. For collective unit nouns, "đàn" is used for all animal species that live in groups.

4.2 Survey on the Translation of Animal Unit Nouns in the Corresponding Chinese Version

We conducted a survey on how the translator, Lý Doanh, translated the animal unit nouns in the Chinese version, with the following results:

Classification	Unit Nouns for Individuals	Collective Unit Nouns	Other Words
Specialized Unit Nouns for Animals	只, 条	群	们, 所有, 大量
Unit Nouns for Both Humans and Animals	个	种, 些, 类	

This table categorizes the unit nouns used in the Chinese translation of animal terms from "Đế Mèn Phiêu Lưu Ký." It shows the classification of these nouns based on whether they are specific to animals or applicable to both humans and animals, and it also lists the collective unit nouns and other related words used in the translation.

It can be seen that the number of words translated into Chinese is quite limited. In the translation, 24 unit nouns were omitted in terms of vocabulary, most of which are unit nouns referring to people, accounting for 38.7%. This is considered a relatively large percentage. The remaining cases were translated using different lexical methods, as shown in the table above. Below, we will summarize the translation methods for unit nouns used for animals in specific contexts. In Chinese, the equivalent term for unit nouns used for animals is called [量词].

4.2.1 Specialized Unit Nouns for Animals: Classifiers 只, 条, 群

- 在我的众多邻居中, 有一只名叫阿佐的蟋蟀。

Translate the Original Text: Trong vô số những người hàng xóm của tôi, có một cậu để tên là Choắt.

Translate the Sense: Bên hàng xóm tôi có cái hang của Đế Choắt.

- 他们总是在水潭边上追逐争斗, 有时仅仅是为了争夺一只小小的虾米。

Translate the Original Text: Bọn họ đuổi bắt nhau bên bờ đầm suốt ngày, có lúc chỉ vì tranh nhau một mồi tép.

Translate the Sense: Suốt ngày, họ cãi cọ om bốn góc đầm, có khi chỉ vì tranh một mồi tép.

Here is the English translation for the provided text:

In these two examples, 只 is used as a classifier for the noun 蟋蟀 (cricket). Generally, in Chinese, not all animals can use the classifier 只; it is mainly used for small animals and birds. The position of 只 follows the basic structure of noun phrases in Chinese, which is: numeral + classifier + noun.

- ...只剩下少得可怜的小动物居住, 比如: 雨蛙家族, 扳树蛙兄弟, 一只幼蛙以及一条蛇。

Translate the Original Text: Dân cư chỉ có vài loài động vật nhỏ: họ nhàẾch, anh em nhàẾnh Ương, một chúẾch nhỏ và một chú Rắn.

Translate the Sense: Dân cư chỉ có vài nhà Cóc, mấy anh em Ếnh Ương, Châu Chàng, Nhái Bén, một Ếch Cốm và một chú Rắn Mòng.

- 还有几条红眼皖鱼，身子长瘦，张开尖嘴，不知从何处快速地窜出来，停靠在眼前的岸边，张嘴等待着。

Translate the Original Text: Còn có mấy con cá Ngao mắt đỏ, thân hình thon dài, mồm nhọn ngoác ra, ở đâu bơi chóp nhoáng đến, đỗ kề ngay bờ trước mặt, há miệng chờ đợi.

Translate the Sense: Rồi mấy bác cá Ngao mắt lồi đỏ, dài nghêu, mồm nhọn ngoác ra, ở đâu bơi chóp nhoáng đến, đỗ kề ngay bờ trước mặt, há miệng đợi đóp.

The classifier 条 is commonly used for animals with a long shape: 一条狗 (a dog), 一条鱼 (a fish).

- 那群乌鱼凶猛地用力跳起来，想要抓住我们的脚。

Translate the Original Text: Đàn Cá Chuối đó hung hãn nhảy lên, cổ tím lấy chân chúng tôi.

Translate the Sense: Đàn Cá Chuối hung hăng sẽ ngoi lên tận bờ bùn này đóp chân chúng tôi.

- 一看到我，那群蝗虫吓得四处逃窜。

Translate the Original Text: Vừa nhìn thấy tôi, đám Cào Cào đó đã sợ hãi chạy tán loạn khắp nơi.

Translate the Sense: Rồi các ả chạy trốn hết vào nép im trong bụi.

The classifier 群 in Chinese is used to refer to a group of animals. It is a common classifier when talking about animals that live or move in groups, such as wild animals, livestock, birds, and insects. For example: 一群狼 (a pack of wolves); 一群羊 (a flock of sheep); 一群鸟 (a flock of birds); 一群蜜蜂 (a swarm of bees); 一群蚂蚁 (a colony of ants).

4.2.1 Classifier Nouns Used for Both People and Animals: 个, 种, 些, 类

- 这个飞蛾妹妹看起来非常瘦弱，全身沾满花粉。

Translate the Original Text: Chị Nhà Trò này trông rất gầy và người phủ đầy phấn hoa.

Translate the Sense: Chị Nhà Trò này đã bé nhỏ lại gầy gù, yếu đuối quá, người bụ những phấn, như mới lột.

The classifier 个 in Chinese is a common classifier used in many cases, including with animals. However, the use of 个 with animals is not common and usually only applies in specific contexts or when the speaker wants to emphasize individuality or non-standard usage."

- 各种蜻蜓一辈子都在江头或者草丛谋生,对这片区域最了解。

Translate the Original Text: Các loài Chuồn Chuồn dành cả cuộc đời để kiếm sống nơi đầu sông cuối bãi nên chúng biết rõ nhất về khu vực này.

Translate the Sense: Các loài Chuồn Chuồn suốt đời kiếm ăn nơi đầu sông cuối bãi, những tay Chuồn Chuồn giang hồ ấy mà mở hết tốc lực phi cơ thì phải biết.

The classifier 种 in Chinese is used to indicate the type or variety of animals, helping to distinguish between different species or categories. For example: 这种猫很友好 (This type of cat is very friendly.); 世界上有很多种狗 (There are many types of dogs in the world.)"

- 飞蛾妹妹恐惧地紧紧抓住我，缩着身子躲在我的身后，可能那些蜘蛛还并未发现她。

Translate the Original Text: Em Nhà Trò sợ hãi bám chặt lấy tôi, thu người trốn sau người tôi, có lẽ lũ Nhện đó chưa phát hiện ra cô ta.

Translate the Sense: Chị Nhà Trò bấu lấy tôi, nấp sau càng tôi, khiếp quá thu mãi người lại.

The classifier 些 in Chinese is used to indicate an unspecified quantity or a small group. When used with animals, 些 often implies 'a few' or 'some' animals, rather than specifying a precise number."

- 这类小蚂蚁整日忙碌干活，非常勤快。

Translate the Original Text: Những chú Kiến Gió này suốt ngày bận rộn làm việc và rất siêng năng.

Translate the Sense: Kiến Gió giỏi khâu vác và xây dựng, đôi khi chạy tin cần kíp.

The classifier 类 in Chinese is used to indicate a type, group, or category of animals, often referring to a broader classification compared to classifiers like 种. While 种 typically refers to a specific species or breed, 类 usually denotes a larger group that includes several related species. For example: 犬类 (canines) - includes all types of dogs; 鱼类 (fish) - includes all types of fish."

4.2.3 Some Alternative Translation Options: //], 所有, 大量

- 难道就要变成小鸡、小鸟们的盘中餐了吗？

Translate the Original Text: Chẳng nhẽ (mình) sắp trở thành bữa trưa cho bọn gà, bọn chim ư？

Translate the Sense: Sắp làm mồi cho gà, cho chim chăng？

Trong tiếng Hán 们 là từ vĩ, đứng sau danh từ để chỉ số nhiều.

- 所有的蟋蟀被我踢几脚，就落荒而逃了。

Translate the Original Text: Tất cả lũ dế đều bị tôi đá cho mấy cái, rồi chạy bán xác.

Translate the Sense: Phải, dế nào tôi cũng chỉ phóng vài cái đập hậu, cậu ta đã chạy bán xác.

所有 chỉ tất cả đối tượng trong phạm vi nhất định, nhấn mạnh về số lượng của đối tượng.

- 蟋蟀的预料是准确的，大量的蚂蚁援兵——牛蚁赶过来。

Translate the Original Text: Trũi dự đoán rất chính xác, một lượng lớn viện binh kiến – Kiến Bọ Dọt đã tới.

Translate the Sense: Như Trũi biết, bữa nay thêm viện binh: Kiến Bọ Dọt.

大量 có nghĩa là “số lượng lớn”, được sử dụng để chỉ một lượng lớn động vật. Ở đây, 大量 được sử dụng để diễn tả quy mô lớn của loài Kiến.

5. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Through the survey and analysis of materials from the DMPLK work and the corresponding modern Chinese translation, we have identified some similarities and differences in the use of unit nouns for animals between the two languages. Regarding similarities, both languages generally use a limited number of unit nouns for animals. The unit noun “con” is commonly used in Vietnamese, while the classifier “只” is widely used in Chinese.

When translating from Vietnamese to Chinese, there are instances where a direct translation is necessary to retain the meaning; other instances require equivalent translation; and some cases may warrant free translation: changing the unit noun or adding supplementary words to convey the true spirit of the work. During translation, translators

can apply flexible methods depending on the specific case to ensure the accuracy and aesthetic quality of the translation.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Thus, unit nouns specifically used for animals in Vietnamese are not numerous and are focused on two groups: unit nouns for individuals and unit nouns for groups. Additionally, many unit nouns are used for both people and animals; these unit nouns may carry neutral or dismissive meanings (toward the mentioned subject).

Through the translation by translator Lý Doanh, we see that unit nouns in Vietnamese are translated into modern Chinese using various methods. The most common approach is using the classifiers 只 and 条 for individual animals; using the classifier 群 for groups of animals. For unit nouns applicable to both people and animals, the common methods are using the classifier 个 for individuals and 种, 些, 类 for groups. Additionally, other terms such as 们, 所有, 大量 can also be used to describe a collection of animals.

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