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Chinese Translations of *The Little Prince* in Taiwan: Problems, Errors and Misunderstandings

「小王子」的台灣中文譯本問題、錯謬與誤解

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孟丞書

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Bernard Montoneri

Abstract

The Little Prince, written by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry while he was renting a house in New York, on Long Island, was published in 1943, just one year before the world renowned aviator disappeared on a reconnaissance flight over the Mediterranean. Since World War II, this classic has been translated into more than 180 languages, making it one of the best selling books ever. In Taiwan, *The Little Prince* has been translated many times.

This paper aims at exploring whether Chinese translations are accurate and if they have improved over the years. It will analyze 20 Chinese translations published in Taiwan from 1987 to 2010 and show that most of these translations contain all kinds of errors. Books editing the French text are filled with typos and most of these translations are English to Chinese translations. Using secondary sources and not the original French text causes various problems. By choosing precise examples, this paper will show that using an English translation as source text without questioning its accuracy and without exploring the cultural background can only result in making numerous errors and misunderstandings.

Keywords: Chinese translations, Taiwan, *The Little Prince*.

「小王子」的台灣中文譯本問題、錯謬與誤解

孟丞書

摘要

安東尼·聖修伯理所撰寫的「小王子」是當時他在紐約長島的房租中完成，此書發表於 1943 年，也是身為世界著名飛行員在某一次飛越地中海偵察任務失蹤的前一年。自第二次世界大戰以來，這個經典作品已被翻譯成超過 180 種語言，使其晉身為史上最暢銷書之列，在台灣，「小王子」也被多次翻譯過。

本文旨在探討「小王子」中文翻譯是否準確，這些年來譯本精確度得以改善否。分析了 20 本自 1987 年至 2010 年間在台灣出版的中文譯本後，顯示大多數這些翻譯本所包含的錯誤有各種類型，包含了不少拼字錯誤，而這些中文翻譯錯誤多源自於英翻中之故。中文譯本所充斥的各種問題，主要是使用二手資料而非法文原本所導致。透過本文所選擇的精確例子，可證明只用英文翻譯文本為基礎，而不無懷疑它的準確性和探索文化背景，將可能導致翻譯作品許多錯訛和誤解。

關鍵字：中文譯本、台灣、「小王子」

Chinese Translations of *The Little Prince* in Taiwan: Problems, Errors and Misunderstandings

1. Introduction

As a writer he was a perfectionist. The simple beauty and purity of his prose was the result of hours of painstaking distillation of his thoughts to their irreducible essence. His friends were accustomed to being awakened at three in the morning to listen to rewrites of chapters they'd heard a dozen times before in wordier versions. He even invaded printers' workshops to make changes to "final" copy. Such an author deserves careful translation. Wakeman (1994).

When Antoine de Saint-Exupéry published his masterpiece, *The Little Prince*, in 1943, he was in a foreign country, America, missing his family, his friends, and his countrymen. He wrote a modern fairy tale, a philosophical novella, that was dedicated to his best friend Léon Werth (1878-1955), “quand il était petit garçon” (“when he was a boy”; Saint-Exupéry, 1997, dédicace). If Saint-Exupéry tried his best to make his story as beautiful and simple as possible, it is probably because, in it, he regretted how complicated grow-ups were and how ugly the World had become during World War II.

This paper would like to contribute to a better understanding of *The Little Prince* and to highlight some of the errors found in various editions and translations of Saint-Exupéry's novella. Over the years, many Chinese translations have been published, notably in Taiwan. However, they seem to repeat the same errors and to show little improvement. Some of these translations edit the French text, but it is filled with typos. Most of the translators do not speak French and publish English to Chinese translations. Very few translators acknowledge their sources and provide a bibliography. What English version are they using? Is this version reliable? What if the English translation contains mistakes and misunderstandings? What if not knowing French leads to an even bigger quantity mistakes? This paper will analyze 20 Chinese versions published over a period of 23 years, from 1987 to 2010.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows: the literature review presents in part 2 a few studies in relation with this paper. Editing problems concerning the French text are analyzed in part 3. The following section presents some problems concerning English to Chinese translations of *The Little Prince*. Part 4 discusses the *tu/vous* distinction in the novella, notably in chapter 21 ("S'il vous plaît...dessine-moi un mouton!"). Part 6 is the conclusion.

2. Literature Review

Lin Shu 林紓 (1852-1924) helped introduce Western literature to China at the end of the Qing Dynasty, despite his self-acknowledged ignorance of any foreign language. His secret was simple: he collaborated with Chinese men of letters such as Wang Shouchang 王壽昌 (1864-1926), who had studied in France. Thanks to Wang's help, Lin published in 1899 a memorable translation of *La Dame aux camélias* (*The Lady of the Camellias*) entitled 巴黎茶花女遺事 *Bali chahuanü yishi*. As Wang interpreted the novel, Lin was able to put what he heard into Literary Chinese. It was an immediate success and helped Lin's career as he eventually went on to translate more than 170 titles (Waley, 1963: 188; Guo, 1998: 299-301). Since 1899, most of the great French novels have been translated into Chinese, including the works of Victor Hugo and Alexandre Dumas père (She: 1999). Since its publication in 1943, *The Little Prince* (Antoine de Saint-Exupéry) has been translated into more than 180 languages. There are now many Chinese translations published in Mainland China as well as in Taiwan.

Allasonnière (2006) studied seven translations of *The Little Prince* published in Taiwan (2 French to Chinese and 5 English to Chinese translations). Her paper was presented in June 2006 at Tamkang University, during a conference organized by the French Department and entitled "La traduction et le sens du mo(n)de." She notably analyzed the state of the translation industry in Taiwan and noted that only 2.19% of the books published by Taiwanese translation companies were French to Chinese translations while 79.39% were English to Chinese translations (Allasonnière, 2006: 389). Her findings are significant, but it is imperative to analyze more versions, over a longer period of time, in order to reach a deeper and a clearer understanding of the problems facing translators

and translations companies in Taiwan. The most recent version she analyzed dates from 2000.

The 20 versions analyzed in our paper will help answer various questions. Have the standards of translation improved over the years? Some translators have published 2 or 3 translations of *The Little Prince*. Are they really different? Do they contain less or more mistakes? What types of errors are they making? Are the latest translations translating the source language, French, or are they still translating Katherine Woods' English version published in 1943?

Pringle (2006) is not an academic paper. It is a study posted on the Internet which analyzed some Chinese, Japanese, and Vietnamese translations of *The Little Prince*. It demonstrates, like Allasonnière (2006), that most of these versions are English to Chinese translations, even if very few translators acknowledge it. Pringle (2006) tried to demonstrate this by providing five tests. These tests show that some errors contained in the English version published by Katherine Woods are also found in most of the Chinese translations. His study also shows problems of translation concerning the secret of the fox in chapter 21¹ and the sunset passage in chapter 6.²

There are at least 5 different English translations of *The Little Prince*. The most ancient is Katherine Woods' version from 1943. Wakeman (1995a) criticizes Woods' translation and claims that his new English translation of *The Little Prince* is more accurate and can capture the essence of the original text. For example, he translates "La seconde planète était habitée par un vaniteux." (chapter 11) by "On the second planet lived a show-off.", instead of "The second planet was inhabited by a vain man." proposed by Woods.³

Chazal (2003) is a Master Thesis analyzing the differences between Woods' translation and Wakeman (1995b). It is a survey investigating the impressions and preferences of a range of readers. She notes that Wakeman's "translation was not 'approved' by Gallimard and the Saint-Exupéry Foundation" (Chazal, 2003: 2). Wakeman himself acknowledged the problem: "It sold extremely well for a couple of years before a dispute between my publisher and the copyright owner

1 Cf. <http://www.cjvlang.com/petitprince/foxsecret/foxsecret.html>.

2 Cf. <http://www.cjvlang.com/petitprince/sunset/sunset.html>.

3 Cf. <http://www.awakeman.co.uk/Sense/Books/labouroflove.htm>.

resulted in its suppression two years later.”⁴ Chazal (2003:11-12) says that Wakeman (1995b) is target-oriented as he uses a lot of contractions. She also qualified his approach of more faithful and meaning based. By comparison, she considered Woods’ translation to be language-based and literal. Chazal (2003) shows that about half the respondents preferred Woods’ translation while the other half preferred Wakeman’s version. Even if she recognizes his merit, she states:

Subjective critical statements such as Wakeman’s should be avoided or at least formulated in a more constructive way. Wakeman could have restricted himself to speaking about his translation. Instead he chose to criticize Woods’ version in a totally unnecessary and subjective way in order to glorify his own. (Chazal, 2003: 59-60)

While very few English translations of *The Little Prince* have been published in the West, a very large number of Chinese versions have flooded the bookstores of Mainland China, Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong. These translations are far from being as accurate and carefully edited as Wakeman’s version. The following parts will show some of the problems, errors, and misunderstandings found in 20 versions published in Taiwan between 1987 and 2010.

3. Editing problems concerning the French text

Most Chinese translations of *The Little Prince* published in Taiwan provide only the Chinese text and the original drawings made by Saint-Exupéry. Very few versions contain information concerning the author and the translator, an introduction, notes, a commentary, and a bibliography. This is the case for the majority of foreign books translated in Taiwan and *The Little Prince* is no exception. This part focuses on some problems concerning the books editing the French original version. In 20 translations studied in this paper, only 4 include the French text. Ruan Ruoque 阮若缺 (1998) is a bilingual Chinese-French edition.

4 Cf. <http://www.awakeman.co.uk/Sense/Books/labouroflove.htm>.

Zhang Yi張譯 (1999), Li Shuzhen李淑貞 (2002), and Zhang Yi張譯 (2006) are trilingual Chinese-French-English editions. It is not acknowledged in these books, but their English version is identical to Katherine Woods' translation.

The problem of typos in the French version has not been addressed yet, at least not in Allasonnière (2006) or Pringle (2006). The problem of reliability of some of the books studied in this paper is at stake. French publications, such as Saint-Exupéry (1997) are very carefully edited and do not contain typos. The three books analyzed below contain hundreds of typos in the French text. Some of these typos are quite disturbing. What are the odds of finding the same mistakes on the same words in different books? Here are a few examples (mistakes are underlined):

Example 1 (in chapter 7)

"Les fleurs sont faibles" (Saint-Exupéry, 1997: 28)

"Les fleurs sent faibles" (Zhang Yi 張譯, 1999: 61)

"Les fleurs sent faibles" (Li Shuzhen 李淑貞, 2002: 23)

"Les fleurs sent faibles" (Zhang Yi 張譯, 2006: 198)

Example 2 (in chapter 7)

"Je m'occupe, moi, de choses sérieuses!" (Saint-Exupéry, 1997: 28)

"Je m'occupe, moi, de choses seriéuses!" (Zhang Yi 張譯, 1999: 62)

"Je m'occupe, moi, de choses seriéuses!" (Li Shuzhen 李淑貞, 2002: 24)

"Je m'occupe, moi, de choses seriéuses!" (Zhang Yi 張譯, 2006: 229)

Example 3 (in chapter 15)

"Le géographe" (Saint-Exupéry, 1997: 55)

"Le géogrophe" (Zhang Yi 張譯, 1999: 94)

"Le géogrophe" (Li Shuzhen 李淑貞, 2002: 56)

"Le géogrophe" (Zhang Yi 張譯, 2006: 223)

Example 4 (in chapter 15)

"Les livres de géographie" (Saint-Exupéry, 1997: 55)

"Les livres de géographie" (Zhang Yi 張譯, 1999: 94)

"Les livres de géographie" (Li Shuzhen 李淑貞, 2002: 56)

"Les livres de géographic" (Zhang Yi 張譯, 2006: 223)

Example 5 (in chapter 18)

“La fleur, un jour, avait vu passer une caravane” (Saint-Exupéry, 1997: 62)

“La fleur, un jour, avait vu passer une caravans” (Zhang Yi 張譯, 1999: 103)

“La fleur, un jour, avait vu passer une caravans” (Li Shuzhen 李淑貞, 2002: 65)

“La fleur, un jour, avai vu passer une caravans” (Zhang Yi 張譯, 2006: 229)

The examples above show first that Zhang Yi 張譯 (1999) and Li Shuzhen 李淑貞 (2002) contain the same mistakes. It means they probably used the same French version. The example of “*seriéuses*” also shows that the person who typed the French text did not pay attention enough. One cannot possibly type an “*é*” before a “*u*” without feeling puzzled.

We secondly notice that Zhang Yi 張譯 (2006) contains more typos than Zhang Yi 張譯 (1999): in example 4, “*géographie*” becomes “*géographic*”; in example 5, instead of correcting the typo (“*caravans*”), Zhang Yi 張譯, 2006 adds one more in the sentence (“*avail”*). A new edition by the same translator should at least correct previous mistakes, not add new ones.

Ruan Ruoque 阮若缺 (1998) does not contain the mistakes mentioned above. There are less typos. It shows that the translator really understands French. However, some mistakes remain, such as “*tu possède*” in chapter 13, p. 59 (it should be “*tu possèdes*”).

What is the point of adding the French original text in books publishing a Chinese translation of *The Little Prince*? Few people can read fluently French literature in Taiwan. The only readers who could be interested would be French teachers and students of French in secondary schools and in university. Why is it important to address this problem? For teachers who use Saint-Exupéry’s novel in their class, this plethora of typos is unacceptable. It makes all these books unreliable: how can students learn French with books filled with mistakes? To solve this problem, translation companies should ask French native speakers to proofread books editing French novels.

4. English to Chinese translations of *The Little Prince*

There are currently at least 5 different English translations of *The Little Prince*. Woods' version of 1943 was followed by Cuffe (1995), Testot-Ferry (1995), Wakeman (1995b), and Howard (2000). Among the 19 books studied in this paper, not including the DVD of the musical, 7 edit an English translation. A quick comparison between Katherine Woods' version and these books show that it is the same text. As Pringle (2006) mentioned:

In their haste to put their own version of *The Little Prince* on the market, it's not surprising that some publishers in China and Taiwan have taken shortcuts. Since translators who understand English are much easier to find than those who understand French, one common expedient is to translate from the English version (usually that of Katherine Woods) rather than the French original. The differences that arise from this can be quite conspicuous.

First, it is difficult to understand why very few translators and publishers do not acknowledge their sources. None of the 19 books studied here include a bibliography. The publisher should include some information about the translator, his diplomas, credentials, and provide some information about the language of the source text, French or English. If it is a Chinese to English translation, the translator should be precise about what version he used. For example, publishers of the Caves Books 敦煌書局 in Taipei acknowledged in 1987 using Katherine Woods' translation.

Second, it seems that all of the translations studied in this paper use Woods' text. It means that none of them used one of the other English translations mentioned above. But why should Chinese translators use another version? After all, Woods' text is quite good, easy to find and it was published almost 70 years ago. It is probably time to clarify the question of copyrights. The French original is in the public domain in Canada (50 years after the death of the author),⁵ but not in Europe, especially in France (70 years after the death of the author). In fact, as Saint-Exupéry died in 1944, *The Little Prince* will be in the public domain in 4

5 Cf. http://www.wikilivres.info/wiki/Le_Petit_Prince.

years, in 2014. Katherine Woods published her translation in 1943. It is also in the public domain in Canada,⁶ even if there is no indication about when she died. It is just said she was born in 1886.⁷

The third problem is that, in fact, Woods' translation is not that accurate after all: it is filled with errors. Wakeman (1995a) says:

The so-called 'classic' English translation - by Katherine Woods - is literal, clumsy, twee and riddled with errors. (Ask yourself why Heinemann sell more copies of her translation in Japan than in Britain!)⁸

Pringle (2006) showed that by looking at these errors, it is possible to prove if all the versions he studied are French to Chinese or English to Chinese translations. This concerns of course the books that do not edit the English text and that contain only the Chinese translation. His argument is that if the same mistakes can be found in Woods' text and in the Chinese versions, then there is a high probability her English translation is the source text. The books studied by Pringle (2006)⁹ and the versions analyzed in this paper are different (except 李淑貞, 2002). This paper confirms that the mistakes found in Woods' translation are also found in all the translations mentioned in the references. For example, in chapter 4:

Il était une fois un petit prince qui habitait une planète à peine plus grande que lui, et qui avait besoin d'un ami... (Saint-Exupéry, 1997: 20)

Once upon a time there was a little prince who lived on a planet that was scarcely any bigger than himself and who had need of a sheep... (Caves Books 敦煌書局, 1987: 12)¹⁰

很久以前，有一個小王子住在一個比自己大不了多少的小行星上，他非常渴望有一隻綿羊……。 (Li Shuzhen 李淑貞, 2002: 32)

6 Cf. http://www.wikilivres.info/wiki/The_Little_Prince.

7 "Katherine Woods (1886 – unknown). American translator".

Cf. http://www.wikilivres.info/wiki/Katherine_Woods.

8 Cf. <http://www.awakeman.co.uk/Sense/Books/labouroflove.htm>.

9 Cf. <http://www.cjvlang.com/petitprince/petitprinceengfr.html>.

10 In this paper, Caves Books 敦煌書局 (1987) is used to quote Woods (1943).

The original French mentions “un ami” (“a friend”). However, all the Chinese translations follow the English mistake and mention “a sheep” (「一隻綿羊」). Translators who knew the French text could not possibly have made this mistake. It is a major misunderstanding because the little prince does not travel across the universe in search of a sheep. He is looking for friends, and he made many along the way, such as the fox and the pilot.

Table 1 shows one mistake in chapter 5: none of the Chinese translators were puzzled by “I am tried” found in chapter 5. Is it a typo for “I am tired”? The only way to know the answer is to have a look at the French original:

“La réponse est bien simple : J’ai essayé mais je n’ai pas pu réussir.”
(Saint-Exupéry, 1997: 24).

Clearly, it should be “I have tried”. Therefore, this is a case of a mistake in the source text that is correctly translated into Chinese (for example, 「我試過了」 in reference 1 below).

Table 1 (in chapter 5)

Reference ¹¹	English version	Chinese Translation
1	The reply is simple. <u>I am tried</u> . But <u>with the others</u> I have not been successful. (p. 18)	回答很簡單，我試過了，但是其他的畫都未成功。(敦煌書局, 1987: 18)
2	-	答案很簡單，我努力過，但畫別張圖時卻總不成功。(p. 33)
3	-	答案很簡單，我確實已經盡了力，但是其他的畫都不太成功。(p. 16)
4	-	答案很簡單。我試過，但其他的都不成功。(p. 38)
5	-	答案很簡單：我試過了可是沒成功。(阮若缺, 1998: 26)
6	-	答案很簡單：我試過了，但怎樣都沒辦法成功。(p. 31)
7	The reply is simple. I am tried. But with the others I have not been successful. (p. 306)	答案很簡單，我試過了，但沒成功。(張譯, 1999: 170)

11 Cf. Chinese translations, 1 to 20 (in chronological order from 1987 to 2010).

Reference	English version	Chinese Translation
8	-	答案很簡單，我確實已經盡了力，但是其他的畫都不太成功。(吳淡如，2000: 29)
9	The reply is simple. I am tried. But with the others I have not been successful. (p. 167)	原因很簡單，我也曾想把其他的畫畫得好一點，可是都沒有成功。(成維安，2001: 33)
10	The reply is simple. I am tried. But with the others I have not been successful. (p. 43)	答案很簡單。我嚐試過其他的畫，但是都沒有成功。(李淑貞，2002: 44)
11 DVD	N/A	N/A
12	The reply is simple. I am tried. But with the others I have not been successful. (p. 43)	答案很簡單。我嚐試過其他的畫，但是都沒有成功。(李淑貞，2004: 44)
13	-	答案很簡單，我試過，但沒有成功。(莫渝，2004: 24)
14	The reply is simple. I am tried. But with the others I have not been successful. (p. 117)	答案很簡單，我試過了，但沒成功。(張譯，2006: 27)
15	The reply is simple. I am tried. But with the others I have not been successful. (p. 16)	答案很簡單。我嚐試過其他的畫，但是都沒有成功。(李淑貞，2007: 16)
16	-	答案很簡單。我試過。可惜別的畫都不太成功。(宋碧雲，2007: 37)
17	-	別的畫我也曾經試圖畫得好些，卻沒有成功。(雅書堂文化，2008: 37)
18	-	回答很簡單：我也想畫好，但是沒有成功。(馬振騁，2008: 26)
19	-	我的答案很簡單：「我曾嘗試過，但沒有成功。(戴金蜜，2009: 25)
20	-	答案很簡單：我試過了，但沒有成功。(張家琪，2010: 42)

Note: “-” denotes that this book does not contain an English version.

Results of the analysis

Woods' translation says: "The reply is simple. I have tried. But with the others I have not been successful".¹² All the Chinese translations editing her English translation write: "I am tried". Interestingly, they translate it as if it were "I have tried." Neither Woods' version nor most of the Chinese translations respect the punctuation of the original French (there is only one full stop in French, there are 3 in English). Why would all these Chinese versions translate correctly a mistake in the source text (English)? And why most of them would forget to translate a part of the sentence? Around half of these translations omit "with the others." In fact, it was added by Katherine Woods. It cannot be found in the original French text. A more accurate translation of the French sentence should be:

"The answer is quite simple: I have tried but I did not succeed." (Or "I did try but could not succeed")

Among the 4 books editing the French text, only Li Shuzhen 李淑貞 (2002) makes a mistake by adding 「其它的畫」. The most correct translation is 「答案很簡單：我試過了可是沒成功。」 (Ruan Ruoque 阮若缺, 1998: 26). It respects both the wording and the punctuation.

Some of the translators who edit the English sentence do not translate it correctly. For example, Zhang Yi 張譯 (2006: 27) proposes 「答案很簡單，我試過了，但沒成功，」 ("with the others" is omitted). It also shows one more time that most of the translators have little respect for the punctuation of the source text.

Dai Jinmi 戴金蜜 (2009: 25) makes a major misunderstanding as shown by his misuse of the quotation mark: 我的答案很簡單：「我曾嘗試過，但沒有成功。」 (" " can be found at the end of chapter 5).

12 Cf. http://www.wikilivres.info/wiki/The_Little_Prince.

5. Lost in translation: *tu* and *vous*

The *tu/vous* distinction does not exist in English. The second person subject pronoun is always *you*, no matter how many people are concerned and no matter how close they are. In French, the second person subject pronouns can be:

- *tu*, the familiar and singular form, demonstrates a certain closeness and informality (「你」 in Chinese)
- *vous*, the formal or polite singular form (「您」 in Chinese)
- *vous*, the plural *you* addressing more than one person, no matter how close (「您們」 or 「你們」 in Chinese).

These distinctions are fundamental in French and should not be dismissed, especially when translating a classic of world literature such as *The Little Prince*. As we shall see, most of the Chinese translations of Saint-Exupéry's novel are not based on the original French text, but on English translations. Moreover, most of the translators of this book obviously never learned French.

Table 2. *tu/vous* distinction: how the little prince is addressing people and animals in the novel

Addressing	The little prince	Signification
The pilot	<i>S'il <u>vous</u> plaît</i> (Saint-Exupéry 1997: 12) <i>Dessine-moi</i> (1997: 12) <i>Tu vois bien</i> (1997: 14)	<i>Vous</i> polite when asking for something, addressing someone older. Become close friends, very intimate, son to father relationship.
The rose	<i>Que <u>vous</u> êtes belle!</i> (1997: 31) ¹³ <i>Je <u>te</u> demande pardon</i> (1997: 34)	Aristocratic, courtly and chivalrous (he is a prince). The rose also says <i>vous</i> to the little prince just as Consuelo and Antoine used to address each other. The rose to the prince who is about to leave her. In time of distress, they switch to <i>tu</i> .

13 阮若缺 (1998) is the most accurate French to Chinese translation, but it does not respect the *tu/vous* distinction. For example, pp. 37-38, *vous* (dialogue between the little prince and the rose) is translated by 「你」.

Addressing	The little prince	Signification
The king	<i>Approche-toi que je <u>te</u> voie mieux</i> (1997: 37) <i>Sire...lui dit-il, je <u>vous</u> demande pardon de <u>vous</u> interroger...</i> (1997: 38)	The king says <i>tu</i> to a subject. Very polite; respect for the king (protocol).
The Conceited Man	<i><u>Vous</u> avez une drôle de chapeau</i> (1997: 42) <i>Mais <u>tu</u> es seul sur ta planète!</i> (1997: 44)	Respect at first. This man just lost the prince's respect for being so egocentric and vain.
The Drunkard	<i>Que fais-<u>tu</u> là?</i> (1997: 44)	Difficult to respect someone who looks so bad. At the same time, friendly attitude toward a man who seems to be very sad.
The Businessman	<i><u>Votre</u> cigarette est éteinte</i> 1997: 45) <i>Hein? <u>Tu</u> es toujours là?</i> (1997: 45) <i>Et que fais-<u>tu</u> de ces étoiles?</i> (1997: 47)	Respect. Cannot spontaneously be friendly with this man. Disdain for the prince bothering him in his serious work. The Businessman lost the prince's respect; just like the Conceited Man.
The Lamplighter	<i>Pourquoi viens-<u>tu</u> d'éteindre <u>ton</u> réverbère?</i> (1997: 50)	The prince treats him like a close friend. Sympathetic towards his mission.
The Geographer	<i>Que me conseillez-<u>vous</u> d'aller visiter?</i> (1997: 57)	A geographer is not a traveler, but geography is very important to Saint-Exupéry who is a pilot. Respect.
The snake	<i><u>Tu</u> es une drôle de bête</i> (1997: 60)	In French, people say <i>tu</i> to animals.
The fox	<i><u>Tu</u> es bien joli...</i> (1997: 66)	
A railway switchman	<i>Que fais-<u>tu</u> ici?</i> (1997: 74)	Ordinary people. Friendly attitude (Allasonnière, 2006: 385).
A merchant of pills	<i>Pourquoi vends-<u>tu</u> ça?</i> (1997: 76)	

To sum up, the little prince says *tu* or *vous* according to the degree of respect and intimacy he has for the people he addresses. Only the Conceited Man and the Businessman lose his respect. So the prince chooses to break the social barrier. It gives a good idea of what kind of people Saint-Exupéry did not appreciate.

About the translation of "S'il vous plaît...dessine-moi un mouton!" (Saint-Exupéry, 1997: 12).

This beautiful and intriguing phrase is translated into English as follows:

“If you please — draw me a sheep!” (Caves Books, 1987: 3). Woods’ translation is correct.

“Please...draw me a sheep...” (Howard, 2000: 3). This translation does not respect the *tu/vous* distinction. The exclamation mark is replaced by an ellipsis.

Obviously, the French reader would expect the little prince to say: “S’il vous plaît...dessinez-moi un mouton!” But here, the prince is breaking the conventions. On the one hand, a young child would generally use “vous” to address an adult, especially on their first encounter. That is why the little prince says “s’il vous plaît”. The familiar form would be “s’il te plaît.” On the other hand, it is quite common for children to say “tu” to everybody.

Some translators seem to underestimate the importance of the ellipsis in French between “s’il vous plaît” and “dessine-moi”: it is connected to the problem of *tu/vous* distinction and it plays an important role in the understanding of this phrase. In English, the usage of the em dash (—) can overlap the usage of ellipsis. The prince shows respect to someone he does not know. The ellipsis shows that he remains silent for a while (a moment of hesitation perhaps?) and then addresses the pilot as if they were best friends or family members. The little prince probably recognizes himself, the traveler and pilot who left his rose: “dessine-moi” is the familiar form (imperative, second person). The exclamation mark at the end of the phrase makes the situation more dramatic. It seems both unexpected and urgent. Without “s’il vous plaît” or even “s’il te plaît,” it would sound very rude. So, clearly, this is not a child like any other. The author is using the *tu/vous* distinction to show that this prince is different. Later, the philosopher fox will quickly acknowledge the little prince’s difference with a swift “tu n’es pas d’ici” (Saint-Exupéry 1997: 67).

A more correct translation in Chinese would be: 「拜託您…你幫我畫一隻綿羊！」. It is important that this phrase sounds strange and unexpected. The reader here can feel that something happens between 「拜託您」 *baituonin* and 「你幫我畫一隻綿羊！」. The little prince’s attitude is changing, from formal to friendly. There is also a sense of urgency. We note that he does not introduce himself to the pilot. There is no time for that: he needs a sheep, quickly.

Table 3. “S’il vous plaît...dessine-moi un mouton!”

Chinese text	“S’il vous plaît...dessine-moi un mouton!” Translated into Chinese	“If you please – draw me a sheep!” Analysis of the Chinese translations
1	「請你—給我畫一隻羊好嗎？」 p.3	「你」 <i>you</i> familiar. <i>tu/vous</i> distinction not respected. Imperative form not respected. Exclamation mark replaced by question mark. 「好嗎？」 can be found neither in French nor in English.
2	「拜託你—幫我畫隻綿羊！」 p.18	「你」 <i>you</i> familiar. <i>tu/vous</i> distinction not respected.
3	「你—你願意替我畫一隻羊嗎？」 p.6	This translation is incorrect. 「你」 <i>you</i> familiar repeated twice. <i>tu/vous</i> distinction not respected. Imperative form not respected. Exclamation mark replaced by question mark. 「願意」 (want, be willing, wish) incorrect here.
4	「如果你願意的話，替我畫一隻羊！」 p.13	「你」 <i>you</i> familiar. <i>tu/vous</i> distinction not respected. The ellipsis is omitted, replaced by a comma. 「如果…的話」 can be found neither in French nor in English.
5	「拜託…畫隻綿羊給我！」 p.6	The pronouns are omitted. <i>tu/vous</i> distinction not respected.
6	「拜託，幫我畫一隻綿羊。」 p.9	The pronouns are omitted. <i>tu/vous</i> distinction not respected. The ellipsis is omitted. The exclamation mark replaced by a full stop.
7	「請你…畫一隻綿羊！」 p.147	「你」 <i>you</i> familiar. <i>tu/vous</i> distinction not respected. “dessine- <u>moi</u> ” (「我」) does not appear.
8	「你—你願意替我畫一隻羊嗎？」 p.11	Same translator as 3; same errors.
9	「請你…幫我畫一隻羊，好嗎？」 p.12	「你」 <i>you</i> familiar. <i>tu/vous</i> distinction not respected. Imperative form not respected. Exclamation mark replaced by question mark. 「好嗎？」 can be found neither in French nor in English.
10	「請你替我畫一隻綿羊，好嗎？」 p.10	The two parts of the sentence merged in one and the ellipsis omitted. 「你」 <i>you</i> familiar. <i>tu/vous</i> distinction not respected. Imperative form not respected. Exclamation mark replaced by question mark. 「好嗎？」 can be found neither in French nor in English.

Chinese text	"S'il vous plaît...dessine-moi un mouton!" Translated into Chinese	"If you please — draw me a sheep!" Analysis of the Chinese translations
11	拜託 請幫我畫一隻綿羊	No punctuation. The ellipsis is omitted. Separation between the two parts of the sentence. The pronouns are omitted. <i>tu/vous</i> distinction not respected.
12	「請你替我畫一隻綿羊，好嗎？」 p.10	Same translator as 8; same errors.
13	「請您…幫我畫一隻綿羊！」 p.5	This translation is more accurate: 「您」 you polite. Exclamation mark. But the <i>tu/vous</i> distinction is not visible.
14	「請你…畫一隻綿羊！」 p.11	Same translator as 6; same errors.
15	「請你替我畫一隻綿羊，好嗎？」 p.4	Same translator as 8; same errors.
16	「拜託一畫一隻綿羊給我！」 p.16	<i>tu/vous</i> distinction not respected. The pronouns are omitted.
17	「請…請給我畫一隻羊吧！」 p.41	<i>tu/vous</i> distinction not respected. The pronouns are omitted. Adding 「請」 before "dessine-moi un mouton!" is an error and a misunderstanding.
18	「請你…給我畫一隻綿羊…」 p.12	「你」 <i>you</i> familiar. <i>tu/vous</i> distinction not respected. Exclamation mark replaced by an ellipsis.
19	「請你…給我畫隻綿羊。」 p.4	「你」 <i>you</i> familiar. <i>tu/vous</i> distinction not respected. Exclamation mark replaced by a full stop.
20	「請…幫我畫一隻綿羊！」 p.26	<i>tu/vous</i> distinction not respected. The pronouns are omitted.

Results of the analysis:

1. The number of Chinese translations is increasing. It seems that all the versions we studied are English to Chinese translations.
2. None of these 20 versions correctly renders the *tu/vous* distinction. Only translation 13 translates the *vous* polite and formal (「您」) found in "s'il vous plaît".
3. Some versions are made by the same translator: 3 and 8 by 吳淡如; 10, 12 and 15 by Li Shuzhen 李淑貞; 7 and 14 by Zhang Yi 張譯. New editions do not show any improvement.

Allasonnière (2006: 381-382) analyzed 7 Chinese translations of the phrase “S’il vous plaît...dessine-moi un mouton!” In this paper, other translations are studied, except Ruan Ruoque 阮若缺 (1998). Among her 7 versions and this paper’s 20 versions, not even one translates correctly the French sentence above. In her study, only 2 versions seem to be translations of the original French text. The other versions are translations of the English version published by Katherine Woods. Sadly, these 2 versions are also incorrect. This case study shows that it is obviously indispensable to ask a native French speaker who has a good understanding of *The Little Prince* for help.

- A 譯：「拜託…畫隻綿羊給我！」(From French; *tu/vous* distinction not respected. Pronouns omitted)
- B 譯：「請你…給我畫一隻綿羊！」
- C 譯：「可否請你…幫我畫一隻綿羊…」
- D 譯：「請你…畫一隻綿羊給我好嗎？」(From French; 「你」 *you* familiar. *tu/vous* distinction not respected. Imperative form not respected. Exclamation mark replaced by question mark.「好嗎？」can be found neither in French nor in English.)
- E 譯：「請你…幫我畫一隻羊，好嗎？」
- F 譯：「請你…畫一隻綿羊給我好嗎？」
- G 譯：「拜託！幫我畫一隻綿羊。」

According to Allasonnière (2006: 381), the oldest Chinese translations mention the name of the translator while the most recent do not. As she studied only 7 versions, it is difficult to conclude anything. It looks like the publication date has nothing to do with the fact that the name of the translator is mentioned or not. Among the 19 versions studied in this paper (the musical not included), only the books published in 1987, 1991, and 2008 do not mention a translator. It does not look like there is a pattern.

From “s’il vous plaît” to “s’il te plaît”

The two following sentences are very similar:

“S’il vous plaît...dessine-moi un mouton!” (Saint-Exupéry 1997: 12)

“If you please — draw me a sheep!” (Caves Books, 1987: 3)

“S’il te plaît...apprivoise-moi!” (Saint-Exupéry 1997 chapter 21: 69)

“Please — tame me!” (Caves Books, 1987: 61)

Once more, we see that children and animals always say *tu* to each other (of course anthropomorphic animals speak French fluently). In the two sentences, there is an ellipsis, or a moment of reflection. The fox decides to accept the prince as his friend. Here are three different Chinese translations:

「請你——馴服我吧！」 (Caves Books, 1987: 61)

「拜託…親近我！」 Ruan Ruoque 阮若缺 (1998: 94)

「請你馴服我吧！」 Zhang Yi 張譯 (2006: 75)

“S’il vous plaît” and “s’il te plaît” are translated the same way into Chinese by 「請你」 *qing ni*, 「請」 *qing*, 「你願意」 *ni yuanyi* or 「拜託」 *baituo*. As to the verb “apprivoiser” in the novel, it does not mean “domestiquer” (“to domesticate”). Therefore, translating it by 「馴養」 is a misunderstanding. 「馴養」 (Caves Books, 1987) or 「馴服」 *xunfu* (Zhang Yi 張譯, 2006) mean “to tame”; “to domesticate”; “to break”; “to subdue”. In Zhang Yi 張譯 (2006), the ellipsis does not appear and the meaning of the sentence has changed. Ruan Ruoque 阮若缺 (1998) proposed 「親近」 *qin jin* (“to be intimate”; “to be close”; “to be familiar”), which is much more accurate: the fox is asking the little prince to become his friend; he does not want to be his pet. However, 「請你」 *qing ni* (“s’il te plaît”) is preferable to 「拜託」 *baituo*.

6. Conclusion

This paper notes that the number of French to Chinese translations of *The Little Prince* has not increased over the years, despite the fact that more students learn French at school, notably in secondary schools. Only one English version is used: Katherine Woods' translation published almost 70 years ago. The mistakes contained in this version are not challenged, the original French version not checked and, as a result, translation companies have been perpetuating these mistakes for at least the past 23 years.

It appears that none of the mistakes made in the oldest versions have been corrected. On the contrary, new errors and typos can be seen in the latest translations. Translators and translation companies should take the punctuation of the source text more seriously and respect it. The punctuation in the source language and in the target language is different. It sometimes leads to misunderstandings and errors.

It is true that more people speak English than French in Taiwan. In fact, most Taiwanese have access to French Literature only through Chinese or English: most French novels are published in English and most translators make English to Chinese translations of French books. However, without any knowledge of the original language and without checking if the English version is accurate, it leads to a plethora of unreliable books, filled with all kind of mistakes and misunderstandings. It would be best to make teams of translators. Translation of French novels should be a team work with at least one native French speaker and one native Chinese speaker. These translators should of course be aware of the historical and social background to avoid misunderstandings, as it is demonstrated by the example of the *tu/vous* distinction. By comparison, the 15 Japanese and the 5 Vietnamese versions analyzed by Pringle (2006)¹⁴ are all translations from the original French. Not even one is using an English translation as source text.

14 <http://www.cjvlang.com/petitprince/petitprinceengfr.html>.

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15 For convenience, the style of the references in Chinese is different. They are numbered chronologically from 1 to 20 to help the reader when looking at table 1 and 3 of this paper.