

Analysis of Ecological Discourse in Animal Novels from the Perspective of Systemic Functional Linguistics

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Abstract: This article analyzes the ecological discourse of animal novels from ecological ethics, ecological aesthetics, and ecological reflection from the perspective of systemic functional linguistics. Taking the novel *The Call of the Wild* as an example, this paper delves into the transitive structure, ergative structure, and grammatical metaphors involved in the ecological discourse in the novel. By leveraging the power of literature, it calls for humanity to treat animals well and protect the environment.

1. Introduction

Animal novels, as a form of literary creation, have unique value and significance in exploring and presenting ecological issues. They flexibly use diverse creative methods to showcase the intricate relationship between humans and nature to readers. By analyzing the ecological discourse of animal novels through systemic functional linguistics, we can gain a deeper understanding of the ecological consciousness and environmental values conveyed in the works, and further recognize the role of animal novels in shaping environmental awareness, advocating ecological protection, and promoting harmonious relationships between humans and nature. Not only does it help enrich the understanding and interpretation of animal novels, but it also provides new ideas and methods for human thinking and promoting environmental protection.

2. Characteristics of Ecological Discourse Based on Systemic Functional Linguistics

2.1 Characteristics of Animal Novels from the Perspective of Ecological Ethics

In animal novels, ecological ethics are often reflected in the concern for animal rights and the ecological environment. These works depict the living conditions, threats, and environmental changes of animals, triggering readers to think about animal rights and ecological balance. Through the narration and actions of animal characters, these works convey the values of respect and protection for animal life. Meanwhile, ecological ethics focuses on the relationship between humans and the natural environment. Animal novels often depict conflicts, destruction, and consequences between humans and the natural environment, reminding people of the importance of rational utilization of natural resources and environmental protection. By showcasing human encroachment on nature and destruction of animal ecosystems, readers can reflect on human behavior and

ecological responsibility. In addition, ecological ethics focuses on the autonomy and independence of animals. Animal novels often depict the emotions, wisdom, and behavior of animals, presenting their uniqueness and value. Through animal perspectives and experiences, they highlight the dignity and rights of animals as autonomous individuals, reflecting the concept of animals and humans sharing the Earth equally. Through the study of ecological ethics, it is possible to gain a deeper understanding of the ethical issues and values related to humans, the natural environment, and animals contained in animal novels. This helps humans examine the relationship between humans and nature, reflect on the impact of human behavior on ecosystems, and the importance of protecting the rights of nature and animals. It also explores innovative paths for sustainable development and harmonious coexistence between humans and nature ^[1].

2.2 Characteristics of Animal Novels from the Perspective of Ecological Aesthetics

Animal novels often create a moving sense of beauty through vivid descriptions of natural landscape. The natural landscape in the works can include the magnificent scenery of nature, the habitat of wild animals, and the balance of natural ecosystems. These descriptions are not only to provide background and situation, but also to arouse readers' resonance and praise for the beauty of nature. Meanwhile, the animal images in animal novels have symbolism. By depicting animal images, the author can showcase the beauty, wisdom, courage, or other characteristics of animals, as well as the harmonious relationship between animals and the natural environment, aiming to arouse readers' praise and attention to the beauty of animals and nature. In addition, the description of the environment in animal novels can incorporate aesthetic elements such as color, music, smell, etc., creating a rich sensory experience. Through the artistic description of the environment, these works create an emotional resonance and aesthetic enjoyment, allowing readers to develop emotional bonds with the natural environment. In addition, the ecological aesthetic perspective also focuses on the aesthetic and ethical relationship between humans and the natural environment. The depiction and praise of the beauty of nature in the work aims to arouse readers' protection and respect for the natural environment, and promote harmonious coexistence between humans and nature. By experiencing beauty and reflecting on environmental ethics, people examine their relationship with nature and inspire a sense of responsibility for environmental protection. Through research from the perspective of ecological aesthetics, people can delve deeper into the relationship between aesthetic elements and ecological themes in animal novels, further understand the presentation of natural beauty and environmental ethics in the works, help enhance the appreciation and interpretation of animal novels, promote people's awareness and action towards environmental protection, and further explore the interrelationships between ecological themes, aesthetic elements, and environmental ethics in animal novels, to enhance understanding and appreciation of these works ^[2].

2.3 Characteristics of Animal Novels from the Perspective of Ecological Reflection

Animal novels often present various environmental issues such as deforestation, species extinction, and ecological destruction through storylines, character behavior, and environmental descriptions. By revealing and describing these issues, readers can gain a deeper understanding of the severity and urgency of environmental issues. At the same time, animal novels can focus on the issues of animal rights and animal protection, explore the ethics and moral responsibility of human treatment of animals, and the image of animals in the works can become a symbol and representative of criticism of human treatment of animals, triggering thinking and discussion on animal rights and protection. In addition, animal novels can also reflect on the injustices and inequalities in society, and raise demands for environmental justice. The environmental issues presented in the works and criticism of the relationship between humans and nature can awaken

awareness and action towards social change, and achieve a more just and sustainable environment. By conducting in-depth research on the characteristics of ecological reflection perspectives, it is possible to comprehensively analyze the environmental awareness, ecological issues, and the relationship between humans and nature in animal novels. This helps to reveal the significance of environmental reflection in the work, promote readers' attention and action on environmental issues, and promote society's pursuit of environmental justice. Meanwhile, the perspective of ecological reflection also provides a critical tool for literary theory to explore the role and influence of animal novels in the field of environment^[3].

3. An Ecological Discourse Analysis of the Call of the Wild from the Perspective of Systemic Functional Linguistics

3.1 Transitive Construction

The transitivity system has two modes in understanding experience and representing processes: transitive and ergative. It represents an action or event in language, including the executor (subject) and receiver (object) of an action. It focuses on the extension of the process, that is, whether the process extends to participants. The ergative model focuses on the "causative" meaning of the process, whether it is spontaneous or initiated by the agent. In animal novels, transitive structures are often used to describe the interactions and ecological relationships between animals. *The Call of the Wild* is an animal novel created by Jack London, depicting an ecological transformation from a family pet to a member of a wild wolf pack from the perspective of a dog named Buck. In animal novels such as *The Call of the Wild*, the transitive structure plays a critical role in depicting the interactive behavior and ecological relationships between animals. By analyzing the relationship between action executors and receivers, the ecological discourse of the novel is enriched, enabling readers to fully understand the operation of the animal world and the complexity of the ecosystem. For example, in the sentence "Buck bites the fox's tail", "Buck" is the executor of the action, and "fox's tail" is the receiver of the action. This transitive structure expresses the interaction and hunting behavior between Buck and the fox. In the sentence "Buck chases the rabbit", "Buck" is the executor of the action, and "rabbit" is the receiver of the action. This transitive structure describes Buck's behavior of chasing rabbits in the wild. In the sentence "Wolf pack attacks prey", "wolf pack" is the executor of the action, and "prey" is the receiver of the action. This transitive structure displays the hunting behavior between wolf pack and prey. By utilizing these transitive structures, readers can fully immerse themselves in the context created by animal novel stories^[4].

3.2 Ergodic Construction

From the perspective of systemic functional linguistics, ergative construction is a grammatical structure that constructs sentences through the executor (subject) of the action and the action itself (ergative). The ergative structure is often used in animal novels to describe the behavior and actions of animals, as well as their roles and interactions in ecosystems. For example, in the sentence "Buck jumps over a stream", "Buck" is the executor of the action, and "jumps over a stream" is the action itself (ergative). This ergative structure describes Buck's behavior of jumping over a stream in the wild. In the sentence "the wolf pack roar", "wolf pack" is the executor of the action, and "roar" is the action itself (ergative). This ergative structure displays the behavior of wolf pack emitting roaring sounds. In the sentence "birds fly", "bird" is the executor of the action, and "fly" is the action itself (ergative). This ergative structure describes the behavior of birds flying in the air. Through the flexible application of these ergative structures, animal novels can highlight the behavior and action of animals, as well as their roles and functions in the ecosystem, making animals the center of action in the story, highlighting the initiative and influence of animals, and ensuring that readers can more intuitively feel the characteristics of animal behavior and its position

in the ecosystem ^[5].

3.3 Grammatical Metaphor

From the perspective of systemic functional linguistics, grammatical metaphor is a kind of language phenomenon. By changing parts of speech or grammatical structure, concepts are transformed from one grammatical category to another grammatical category, so as to achieve the change of expression and the transfer of meaning. Grammatical metaphor plays a critical role in animal novels such as *The Call of the Wild*, transforming abstract concepts into concrete objects or body parts by changing parts of speech or grammatical structure, fully expressing the relationship between animals and the natural environment, enriching the expression methods of ecological discourse, and increasing the significance and literary value of animal novels, guiding the author to create unique images and metaphors to immerse themselves in the beauty and depth of the animal world and natural environment. For example, in the phrase “claw of the Earth”, “Earth” is an abstract concept, while “claw” is a concrete object. By transforming abstract concepts into concrete objects, it creates a metaphorical effect when expressing the relationship between the natural environment (earth) and animals (claws). In the phrase “the song of the wind”, “wind” is a material entity, while “song” is an abstract concept. By transforming the material entity into an abstract concept, the sound of the wind blowing is compared to the song, expressing the beauty of nature and the rhythm of the animal world. In the phrase “eyes of the moon”, “moon” is a celestial body, while “eyes” are a body part. By comparing celestial bodies with body parts, the moon is endowed with the human characteristics of having eyes, expressing the mystery and spirituality of nature. Through the use of these grammatical metaphors, the ecological discourse in animal novels is enriched and deepened, enabling the author to describe the natural environment and animal characteristics in a more concrete and emotional way, increasing the artistic and visual appeal of literary works. By perceiving the metaphorical relationships brought about by metaphors, readers can fully understand and experience the interweaving and interaction between the animal world and the natural environment ^[6].

4. Conclusion

From the perspective of systemic functional linguistics, this paper analyzes the ecological discourse in animal novels, and deeply discusses the relationship between the natural landscape, animal images, environmental description and aesthetic experience presented in the works. It can analyze how animal novels construct and express ecological issues from the perspective of language, and reveal the impact of these discourse on readers’ environmental cognition, emotional experience and behavioral intention.

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