

A Corpus-Based Study of Translator's Style - Taking the English Version of *Xiaoyaoyou* As An Example

Xiaotong Cui^{1*}

¹ Dalian University of Foreign Language, Dalian University of Foreign Language, Dalian, Liaoning, China

Email Address

wuxie523@163.com (Xiaotong Cui)

*Correspondence: wuxie523@163.com

Received: 9 February 2023; Accepted: 12 March 2023; Published: 17 July 2023

Abstract:

Corpus provides a more scientific tool for translation studies. The combination of qualitative and quantitative research in translation studies can not only decrease the individual personality, but also facilitate the study of translators' style. Based on the corpus software *Antconc*, *Lancsbox* and *Readability Analyzer*, this paper studies the translation styles of the two translators and explores their translation strategies and models from the perspectives of vocabulary, sentence and discourse.

Keywords:

Corpus, Translator's Style, Xiaoyaoyou

1. Introduction

Zhuangzi is a treasure of Chinese traditional thoughts. Different translators' translation of Chinese classics from different dimensions is not only conducive to the inheritance of traditional culture at home, but also conducive to cross-cultural communication and dissemination abroad. Xiaoyaoyou is a representative work of Taoism. Its philosophical thoughts and magnificent literary images still have great vitality. Lin Yutang is an outstanding writer and translator, who put forward three translation principles of faithfulness, obedience and beauty. "Faithfulness" means not absolutely confined to the form of the original text, but loyal to the spirit of the original work. "Obedience" means fluency, and the translator can decide whether to delete or add in translation for the smoother translation. "Beauty" is to raise the translation to the artistic level. An ideal translator should regard translation as an art and pay attention to the beauty of words. Watson's translation is generally recognized as the best English version. He has made an important contribution to the entry of ancient Chinese Philosophical Classics into the English world. As a Sinological translator, Watson has his own research and interpretation of Zhuangzi. When he translated Zhuangzi, he tried his best to translate according to the literal meaning of the original text, and the target language was faithful to the original words and sentence patterns. When he had to give up literal translation, he relied on his profound

Sinological research foundation to judge the meaning of the original words and translate them flexibly.

2. Translator's Style

The translator's style can be divided into broad sense and narrow sense. In a broad sense, it refers to the personal characteristics in the use of language, as well as the features including translation selection, translation strategy application and translation notes. The narrow sense of translator's style refers to the translator's language application or language expression preference. Translation is not only a linguistic phenomenon, but also a cultural phenomenon. The cultural differences promote the formation of the translator's originality. Most of the studies on translator's style are qualitative, subjective and lack of scientific quantitative research methods.

Since the 1980s, the use of corpus has been gradually rising, and more and more scholars have combined corpus research with translation studies. Mona Baker points out that the translator will consciously or unconsciously control the information of the original text to make the translation more convenient for readers to read. This can be seen from the statistical analysis of the original text and the translated version by corpus. This corpus enables translation studies to combine quantitative research with qualitative research, making the research results more scientific.

3. Translator's Style Based on Corpus

This paper uses Antconc, Lancbox and Readability Analyzer to build a small corpus for the English versions of Yang Xianyi and Xie Baikui and analyzes their translators' styles from the perspectives of vocabulary, sentence and discourse.

3.1. Vocabulary

Token, Type and the ratio between Type and Token are the important indicators of the translator's style. Each word form that appears independently in the corpus for the first time is called Type, and the frequency of the same word in the corpus is called Token. The ratio can be used to investigate the richness of words in a text. The lower the TTR value is, the smaller the vocabulary used by the translator, and the greater the TTR value is, the larger the vocabulary is and the more varied the vocabulary is. The difference of the ratio reflects the different translators' vocabulary habits and translation styles. The specific results are shown in Table 1. Compared with Waston's version, the vocabulary in Lin's version is more abundant and varied. There are only 1790 characters in the original text, but the two translation versions have more than 2000 characters, which shows that both the two versions are slightly lengthy compared with the original.

Table 1. Token, Type and the ratio between Type and Token.

	LIN	Waston
Token	2075	2189
Type	714	729
TTR	35.30%	33.30%

Lexical density is also an important indicator of translator's style, which refers to the proportion of content words within the corpus. Lexical density directly reflects the data carrying capacity in the translation. The upper the lexical density of a text is, the greater the amount of information it contains, and the greater the difficulty of the text has. On the contrary, the lower lexical density indicates that the functional words are

more important and the translation is more concise. Notional words mainly include nouns, notional verbs, adjectives and adverbs, while function words are mainly words that constitute grammatical functions, including prepositions, pronouns, conjunctions and articles. Lexical density is the number of notional words divided by the total number of words in the text, expressed in the percentage system. The statistical results are shown in Table 2. We can see that the lexical density of Lin's translation is 56%, and that of Waston's is 51.34%. Although there is little difference between them, we can still find that lexical density reflects the translator's unique translation style. In Lin Yutang's opinion, the translation should convey as much as possible the beauty of sound, form, meaning, spirit of the original text. Therefore translator will use a lot of adjectives and adverbs. From the comparison, we can find that the number of notional words used in Lin's version is higher than that in Waston's version. This is because Lin tried to be close to the original text directly in his translation and not to use function words as a turning point. This is consistent with what we found in the previous study.

Table 2. *Lexical density.*

	LIN	Waston
Content Words	1134	1124
Lexical density	56%	51.34%

The average word length reflects the complexity of words used in a particular text. The longer the average word length, the longer words in the text. On the contrary, it means that there are fewer long words in the text. The average word length of a general text is about 4 letters. If it is less than 4 letters, it means that the use of words in the text is relatively simple. If it is much higher than 4, it means that the use of words in the text is more complex. According to Antconc, the average word length of Lin's version is 4.08 letters, and that of Waston's is 3.99 letters. However, the lexical complexity of Lin's version is higher than that of Waston's version. Therefore, through the statistical results of Readability Analyzer, we can see more intuitively that the lexical complexity of Lin's translation is 5.11, and that of Waston's is 4.44. The results are consistent with the previous statistical results. The statistical results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. *The average word length.*

	LIN	Waston
Total Words Length	8573	8918
Average Word Length	4.08	3.99
Percentage of Difficult Words	5.11%	4.44%

3.2. Sentence

The longer the average sentence length is, the more complex the sentence is. On the contrary, the smaller the average sentence length, the simpler the sentence. Butler divides sentences into short sentences (1-9 words), medium and long sentences (10-25 words) and long sentences (more than 25 words). The alignment of Chinese and English texts is based on sentence alignment, that is, the sentence that can fully express the contents of the two clauses in the original text is regarded as an alignment unit, and then the sentence is aligned with the two clauses of the original text. The average sentence length of the two English versions is calculated by Readability Analyzer. The average sentence length of Lin's version is 17.08 words, and that of

Waston's is 17.27 words. According to Butler's sentence division method, the two versions belong to medium and long sentences with little difference. The statistical results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. *The average sentence length.*

	LIN	Waston
Number of Sentence	118	124
Words Per Sentence	17.08	17.27

3.3. Discourse

The readability of the translation can be measured by the test index of text readability, which refers to the difficulty of the text and can be used to verify whether the translation tends to be simplified from a macro perspective. For the study of text readability, the readability analyzer can be used to analyze the translation. The calculation formula of text readability is a tool to detect the difficulty of reading a text, and it can play an effective role in predicting the readability. According to the statistical results, the readability of Lin's version is 80.3, and that of Waston's is 82.86. It can be seen that although there is little difference between the two versions, the readability of Waston's translation is higher.

The readability of the translation can be measured not only from the data, but also from the original text. Rhyme can make the poetry produce a harmonious auditory aesthetic satisfaction. Therefore, it's important to analysis how translators reproduce the rhyme or aesthetic feeling of the original text. Then we can know the differences of their translation styles. As we have mentioned before, Lin Yutang pursues "beauty" in his translation, that is, translation is an art, not only the beauty of words, but also the beauty of sound among the five beauties that Lin Yutang pursues. Waston, on the other hand, pays more attention to the meaning of the original text, and can add notes to break the structure of the original text if necessary. From the perspective of "beauty", the readability of Lin's translation is better than that of Waston's.

4. Conclusions

This paper combines corpus with translation studies, and applies the quantitative method of corpus to translation studies. The combination of quantitative research and qualitative research reduces the subjectivity of research and increases the scientific degree of the conclusions. This paper analyzes Lin Yutang's and Waston's two English versions of Xiaoyaoyou from the perspectives of vocabulary, sentence and discourse. It is found that Lin's version is more concise, with more complex vocabulary and higher information load within the same text. While Waston's version is better at literal translation, annotation or explanation, and the use of vocabulary is relatively simple. And the information load of the same text is lower, but its readability is better than that of Lin Yutang's translation.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

References

- [1] Carine, D. Instruction Dialogues in the Zhuangzi: An “Anthropological” Reading. *Dao*, 2012, 11, 4, DOI: 10.1007/s11712-012-9294-x.
- [2] Jiang, L.M. The Big and the Great: A Reconstruction of Zhuangzi’s Philosophy on Transcendence. *Religions*, 2019, 10, 1, DOI: 10.3390/rel10010030.
- [3] Wang, B.; Xu Z.X.; Huang, J.M.; Sun, T.; Mu, X.F. Construction of Entity and Entity Relationship Annotation Corpus for Test Identification. *Journal of Physics: Conference Series*, 2022, 2363, 1, DOI: 10.1088/1742-6596/2363/1/012018.
- [4] Huang, Y.T. Translation as Citation: Zhuangzi Inside Out. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 2019, 78, 3, DOI: 10.1017/S0021911819000792.
- [5] McEnery, T.; Brookes, G.; Clarke, I. Corpus studies of language through time. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics*, 2022, 27, 4, DOI: 10.1075/IJCL.00050.EDI.



© 2023 by the author(s); licensee International Technology and Science Publications (ITS), this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)