

A review of a Corpus-based Study on Yu Hua's Novel Translation Style

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Abstract: *A Corp-based Study of Yu Hua's Translation styles* takes *Brothers*, *To Live* and their English versions as the object, and analyzes translation styles from five dimensions of language, rhetoric, narrative, pragmatics and culture-specific items by constructing analogies and parallel corpora. It is found that the language features of the English translation are simplified, but the literal translation retains the rhetorical style of repetition and onomatopoeia. Narrative translation is based on literal translation, supplemented by the balance of fidelity and readability. Culture-specific items adopt transliteration and interpretation, taking into account cultural transmission. The research innovation lies in the multi-dimensional framework and interdisciplinary corpus approach to reveal the mixed characteristics of translation. The limitation is that the sample is concentrated in two works and English translation, and it can be expanded to multi-language translation and reader-acceptance research in the future. This book provides an important reference for translation studies and literary translation.

1. Introduction

As one of the most influential contemporary Chinese writers, Yu Hua's works have been translated into more than 20 languages and widely disseminated internationally since the 1990s. However, in sharp contrast to the scale of foreign translation of Yu Hua's works, the domestic academic research on the translation of Yu Hua's novels is relatively lagging behind, and the number of research results is limited. Zhou Zhongliang's work comes at the right time and fills the gap in this research field, which has important academic value and practical significance.

From the perspective of academic value, the book integrates multi-disciplinary theories such as corpus linguistics, stylistics, translation studies, culturology and literature, adopts an interdisciplinary research path, and provides new ideas and methods for promoting the integration and development of related disciplines. Through an in-depth analysis of the translation style of Yu Hua's novels, this book reveals the changing rules of language style in the process of cross-cultural communication of literary works, and enriches the theoretical system of translation style studies. At the same time, the research results of this book also provide a wealth of empirical data and analytical framework for other scholars, which is helpful to further expand and deepen the study of Chinese literary translation style.

From a practical point of view, this book is of great significance for understanding the mechanism of dissemination and reception of Yu Hua's novels outside the territory. In the context of globalization, spread of Chinese literature has become an important strategy for cultural development. The successful foreign translation of Yu Hua's novels provides valuable experience and reference for the overseas dissemination of other Chinese literary works. The research results of this book will help us better grasp the style adaptability of literary works in cross-cultural communication, provide more targeted strategies and methods for the overseas promotion of Chinese literary works, and enhance the international influence and communication effect of Chinese literature.

2. Research methods and corpus construction

This book adopts various research methods, such as corpus research method, text comparative analysis method and quantitative and qualitative combination method, to ensure the scientific and systematic research.

Corpus research is the core research method of this book. The author constructs a self-constructed corpus of Yu Hua's novel translation style, which consists of an analog corpus and a parallel corpus. The analog corpus includes the original corpus, which selects 10 original British and American novels, and the translated corpus, which covers the English versions of *Brothers and To Live*. The parallel corpus consists of the original texts of *Brothers and To Live* and their English translations. Through this huge corpus, the author can conduct a large-scale and systematic empirical research on the linguistic style of Yu Hua's novel translations, which provides a solid data foundation for the research.

3. Research content and findings

3.1. Macro language style

The study finds that the English translation of Yu Hua's novels generally presents the characteristics of more prominent interlingual simplification and less obvious analogical simplification. Specifically, the translation shows a simplification trend in terms of lexical density, recurrence rate of high-frequency words, recurrence rate of word clusters, etc., while in terms of the total frequency of meaning words, the frequency of use of conjunctions and pronouns, etc., the translation shows a manifestation and standardization characteristics. These findings show that compared with the original text, the translated text is less difficult to read and more readable, while compared with the original English text, there are significant differences in some linguistic features, reflecting the mixed characteristics of the target language.

3.2. Rhetorical Style

3.2.1. English translation of overlapping words

An overlap is when the same word, morpheme or syllable is used in overlapping ways. Li Jingguo extracts all 2,595 verbs from the *Dictionary of Modern Chinese Frequency* and determines that 1,842 of them can form overlapping words, accounting for 70% of the examined verbs (Yu, 2004).[8] Among the many classics of pre-Qin Dynasty, the *Book of Songs* has a very high frequency of repetition, with 189 poems using repetition, accounting for 61.9% of the whole text. The absolute number of repeated words is as high as 395 (Zhang, 2007).[9] The use of repetitive words in literary works can enhance the musical beauty of language (Liu, 2012).[4] In Yu Hua's

novels, repeated words are used with high frequency, rich types and powerful rhetorical functions. For example, in *Brothers*, repeated words such as “hey hey” and “ha ha” appear frequently, enhancing the musical beauty and emotional expression of the language. In the English version, the translator mainly uses literal translation to deal with these overlaps. For example, “hey hey” is translated as “giggle” or “chuckle”, and “ha ha” is translated as “laugh” or “ha ha”. This literal translation not only retains the semantics of the original, but also tries to reproduce the rhetorical effect of the original. However, for those overlaps which cannot be directly reproduced in English, the translator adopts the principle of “choosing meaning instead of form” to preserve the meaning, syntactic and pragmatic functions of the source words as much as possible. For example, “lightly” is translated as “lightly”, with changes in form but a good preservation of meaning and function.

3.2.2. English translation of repetitive figures

In literature, proper use of repetition can vent the author’s emotions, depict the psychological state of the characters, express the complex hearts of the characters, create and render artistic conception, and promote and deepen the theme of the works (Tan, 2009).[6] Repetition is a commonly used rhetorical device in Yu Hua’s novels, which has the functions of strengthening emotion, highlighting theme and rendering atmosphere. For example, in *Brothers*, the word “bastard” is used repeatedly, enhancing the power of the language and the expression of emotion. In the English version, the translator mainly uses literal translation to deal with repetitive figures. For example, “bastard” is translated as “fucking” or “bastard”, retaining the crude style and emotional intensity of the original. However, for some words with excessive repetition frequency, the translator also used substitution and omission methods to make appropriate adjustments. For example, in some passages, parts of “assholes” were omitted to avoid reading fatigue caused by excessive repetition.

In terms of specific statistics, the book statistics show that the word “bastard” appears 167 times in “*Brothers*”, of which 109 are translated literally as “fucking”, 50 are omitted, and eight are replaced with “bastard”. These data show that literal translation plays a dominant role in the translation of repetitive figments, effectively retaining the emotional intensity and rhetorical effect of the original text, while avoiding excessive repetition through appropriate ellipsis and substitution.

3.2.3. Translation of figurative figures into English

Metaphor is a commonly used rhetorical device in Yu Hua’s novels, which is rich in expression and appeal. When using metaphor, Yu Hua also integrates other rhetorical devices such as exaggeration, synesthesia, and curtain, etc., which form a very tense expression effect in a multi-pronged manner (Xu, 2002).[7] For example, in “*To Live*”, the parable “His heart hurts like it's been cut by a knife” vividly expresses the character’s painful emotions. In the English version, translators mainly use literal translation to deal with figurative figures. For example, this sentence is translated as “His heart ached as if it were being cut by a knife”, which preserves the figurative image and emotional expression of the original. For some metaphors with Chinese cultural characteristics, the translator adopts the free translation to deal with them. For example, “He's like a lost dog” is translated into “he looked like a homeless dog”, which conveys the metaphorical meaning of the original text through the free translation, while taking into account the acceptability of the translation.

In terms of specific data, statistics in the book show that the total number of metaphorical sentences in *To Live* is 201, of which 182 are literal translation and 19 are free translation. These data show that literal translation plays a dominant role in the translation of figurative figures, effectively preserving the figurative image and emotional expression of the original text, and

enhancing the acceptability of the translation through appropriate free translation.

3.3. Narrative Style

3.3.1. English translation of violent narrative

Violence is an important theme in Yu Hua's novels. The use of violence as a metaphor to express concern for the value of human survival has profound symbolic significance and critical value (Lu, 2009).[5] For example, in *Brothers*, the scene in which Song Fanping is beaten to death by a red armband reveals the ugliness of human nature and the cruelty of society through detailed depictions of violence. Translation is the reproduction of source language information from semantic to stylistic in the most appropriate, natural and equivalent language (Nida, 1969).[1] In English translations, translators mainly use literal translation to deal with violent narrative markers. "beat" has 12 English equivalents, and beat is used the most frequently, reaching 65 times, accounting for 59.63% of the total corresponding words in literal translation. The provincial translation was used 50 times, accounting for 29.94% of the total. The word "beat" was used 125 times, of which 81 were literal translation, accounting for 64.80% of the total.

3.3.2. English translation of death narratives

Death is another important theme in Yu Hua's novels, which has rich philosophical connotation and emotional expression. There are 237 marked words in the narrative of death. By analyzing the translation methods of "die". For example, in "To Live", the successive deaths of the Fugui family, through the delicate description of death, express the profound reflection on the impermanence of life and the tenacity of human nature. In the English version, the translator mainly uses literal translation to deal with the death narrative markers. For example, "die" is translated as "die" or "pass away", and "cry" is translated as "cry" or "weep", preserving the atmosphere of death and emotional expression of the original. At the same time, the translators also help the target language readers better understand the symbolic meaning and emotional depth of death by adding some explanatory statements. For example, in the passage describing the death of a family treasure, the translator added "with a peaceful and clean death" to explain "Die peacefully and cleanly", which enhanced the comprehensibility and appeal of the translation.

3.4. Pragmatic style

3.4.1. English translation of degree adverbs

The adverbs of degree play an important pragmatic role in Yu Hua's novels. By modifying adjectives or adverbs, they enhance the expressive force and emotional intensity of the language. The adverbs of degree differ in order to represent the degree of adjectives and mental verbs (Han, 2000).[3] For example, in *Brothers*, adverbs of degree such as "very" and "extremely" appear frequently, emphasizing the emotions of the characters and the seriousness of the events. In the English version, the translator mainly uses the corresponding method to deal with the adverbs of degree. For example, "very" is translated into "very" or "extremely", and "extremely" is translated into "extraordinarily" or "incredibly", preserving the expression of degree and emotional intensity of the original. However, in order to adapt to the expression habits of the target language, the translator has also made appropriate adjustments. For example, some degree adverbs have been slightly weakened to avoid undue emphasis that may cause discomfort to readers. For example, "extremely" is translated as "quite" or "rather", which appropriately reduces the emotional intensity and enhances the naturalness and readability of the translation.

3.4.2. English translation of frequency adverbs

The adverbs of frequency play an important pragmatic role in Yu Hua's novels. They enhance the vividness and realism of language by expressing the frequency of action. For example, in *To Live*, adverbs of frequency such as "usually" and "always" appear frequently, expressing the characters' behavior habits and living conditions. In the English version, the translator mainly uses the corresponding method to deal with frequency adverbs. For example, "usually" was translated as "often" or "frequently", and "always" was translated as "always" or "constantly", preserving the frequency and lifestyle of the original. However, in order to adapt to the expression habits of the target language, the translator has also made appropriate adjustments. For example, some adverbs of frequency are slightly strengthened or weakened to enhance the naturalness and readability of the translation. For example, "always" is translated as "sometimes" or "occasionally", and "usually" is translated as "usually" or "generally". The frequency expression is adjusted appropriately to enhance the fluency and naturalness of the translation.

3.4.3. English translation of indeterminate quantifiers

Indefinite quantifiers, often used before nouns, are components of an uncertain description of the quantity or degree of a thing or condition (Bi, 2007).[2] Indefinite quantifiers play an important pragmatic role in Yu Hua's novels. By expressing the number of nouns vaguely, indefinite quantifiers enhance the vividness and imageability of language. For example, in *Brothers*, indefinite quantifiers such as "some" and "several" appear frequently to express the uncertainty of the characters' actions and events. In the English version, translators mainly use the corresponding method to deal with indefinite quantifiers. For example, "some" is translated as "some" or "a few", and "jige" is translated as "several" or "a couple of", retaining the vague expression and vividness of the original. However, in order to adapt to the expression habits of the target language, the translator has also made appropriate adjustments. For example, some indefinite quantifiers are slightly strengthened or weakened to enhance the naturalness and readability of the target language. For example, "many" is translated as "many" or "a lot of", and "some" is translated as "a little" or "a bit of". The quantitative expression is appropriately adjusted to enhance the fluency and naturalness of the translation.

3.5. Translation of culture-specific items

3.5.1. English translation of personal names

In Yu Hua's novels, names have important cultural connotations. Through careful selection and use, names express the characters' personality, destiny and cultural background. For example, in *Brothers*, Song Gang's name has an ironic meaning, expressing the character's weakness and helplessness. In the English version, the translator mainly uses transliteration to deal with the names of people. For example, "Song Gang" was translated as "Song Gang" and "Li Guangtou" was translated as "Baldy Li", preserving the form and cultural connotation of the original names. However, for some historical figures or cultural symbols with specific cultural backgrounds, translators have also adopted the method of transliteration plus interpretation. For example, "Lu Xun" was translated as "Lu Xun, a famous Chinese writer", and "Zhuge Liang, the famous Three Kingdoms strategist", by adding explanatory statements, To help target language readers better understand the cultural background and symbolic significance of the names of people.

3.5.2. English translation of specific items of folk custom and politics

Specific items of folk custom and politics are of great cultural significance in Yu Hua's novels. Through detailed description and use, the characters' living environment and social background are expressed. For example, in "To Live", the concepts such as "people's commune" and "work points", which Fugui participates in, have strong characteristics of Chinese rural culture. In the English version, the translator mainly adopts the literal translation method to deal with these proprietary items. For example, "people's commune" was translated as "people's commune" and "work point" was translated as "work points", preserving the cultural form and semantic content of the original. However, in order to help target language readers better understand the cultural context of these proprietary items, translators also adopt both intralingual and extralingual methods. For example, in the paragraph describing "people's commune", the translator added "a collective farm system in rural China" to explain its cultural background; In the paragraph describing "work point", in the footer the translator added "a unit indicating the quantity and quality of labor performed and the amount of payment earned in rural areas communes" to explain its cultural connotation in detail, enhancing the cultural adaptability and understandability of the translation.

3.5.3. English translation of local language

Local language has important cultural characteristics in Yu Hua's novels. Through its extensive use, it expresses the characters' local identity and life atmosphere. For example, in *Brothers*, the words "local dialect" and "slang" used by Li Baldy have strong characteristics of Zhejiang dialect. In the English version, the translator mainly uses literal translation to deal with these local languages. For example, "local dialect" is translated into "dialect" or "local speech", and "slang" is translated into "slang" or "colloquialism", which retains the local characteristics and cultural atmosphere of the original. However, for some local languages that are difficult to be translated literally, the translators also adopt the method of absolute generalization and intralingual interpretation. For example, "Without a single stroke of the Eight Characters" is translated as "nothing has been decided" or "it's still up in the air", which conveys the semantic content of the original text through generalization processing; "not for the monk's sake" is translated as "for the sake of the occasion" or "considering the special circumstances", which helps readers of the target language better understand its cultural connotation and pragmatic function through the in-text explanation.

4. Research Limitations

Although this book is innovative and valuable in many ways, there are some research limitations. For example, the research mainly focuses on Yu Hua's two masterpieces, *Brothers* and *To Live*, with relatively little research on the translation style of Yu Hua's other works, which may affect the universality and representativeness of the findings. In addition, the study mainly focuses on English translations, and there is insufficient research on translations of other languages. In the future, the scope of research can be further expanded to compare the differences in translation styles of translations of different languages. At the same time, the research can further analyze the actual communication effect of the translation in the target language culture by combining the reader feedback and market acceptance, so as to provide more targeted guidance for translation practice.

5. Conclusions

From the perspective of research, the author constructs a set of analysis system for translation style, which is aimed at embodying the cross-language translation of Yu Hua's novel style from

the perspectives of macro language features, rhetoric, narrative, pragmatics and culture-specific items. This multi-dimensional research perspective breaks through the limitation of previous single-dimensional studies and provides a new framework and ideas for a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of translation style.

In terms of research content, this book examines the translation and representation of Yu Hua's novel style from five dimensions, including macro linguistic features, rhetoric, narrative, pragmatics and culture-specific items. In particular, adverbs of degree, adverbs of frequency and indefinite quantifiers are taken as pragmatic style markers, and the differences in the frequency and magnitude distribution of these markers between the translated text and the original text are compared. To analyze the translator's methods and strategies for reproducing the original language style. This combination of pragmatics and stylistics of translation makes the research content of this book innovative.

A Corpus-based Study on Yu Hua's Novel Translation Style deeply analyzes the translation style of Yu Hua's novels in English translation by constructing a corpus of his novels' translation style, and reveals the changes in language style of literary works in cross-cultural communication. The application of corpus provides a solid data foundation for the research. By comparing the original text, the translated text and the original English text, the use frequency and effect of literal translation and free translation are quantitatively evaluated, which supports the in-depth study of multiple dimensions such as macro language features, rhetoric, narrative, pragmatics and culture-specific items. Its innovation and depth provide an important reference for the field of translation studies and literature studies, as well as a new perspective and method for future studies, and deepen the understanding of the cross-cultural communication of Yu Hua's novels.

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