

Original Paper

The Effect of Translators' Gender on Translation from a Contrastive Linguistic Perspective

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Abstract

Based on two self-constructed translation corpora, this paper carries out a comparative analysis of two translations by Yang and Zhu, examining the translation styles of the two translators in terms of the standardized type/token ratio, lexical density, high-frequency words, individual words, and the degree of hypotaxis. It also tries to analyze the differences based on different genders of the translators and differences in the translators' awareness of feminism. By the corpus analysis, this article finds that the lexical richness, lexical density and syntactic explicitness of female translators' translations are higher than those of male translators. Also, the differences in feminist interpretations in translators also have an impact on the translators' translation style.

Keywords

corpus quantitative study, English and Chinese, translator's style, Feminism

1. Introduction

The rapid development of computer technology has provided a new method for linguistic research -- corpus-based language research. A corpus is a large-scale electronic text database with scientific sampling and processing, which stores actual language materials. With the help of corpus and corpus tools, a quantitative study can be carried out on the text, which effectively avoids the bias brought by subjective differences of the researcher and is more objective than the traditional qualitative research. Corpora can be divided into monolingual corpus, multilingual corpus, comparable corpus and parallel corpus, among which, parallel corpus is mostly used in translation for comparative study of languages. This study conducts a comparative analysis through self-constructed Chinese-English double-language text corpora of the English novel *The Bell Jar* by two translators of different genders, examining the lexical and syntactic differences between the the original English text, Chinese translations and the original Chinese text and by quantitative analysis.

2. Method

2.1 The Construction of Corpora

The Bell Jar is the only autobiographical novel written by American poetess Sylvia Plath and it has been translated into Chinese by a number of translators. Taking translator's gender, authority, education level and terminology preference into consideration, the translations of Yang (2014-version) and Zhu (2014-version) are chosen to construct the comparative corpus (hereinafter referred to as Yang's translation and Zhu's translations respectively). On the one hand, both translators have received systematic training in literary theory, shared similar educational backgrounds, professional experiences (Cheng, 2012), and both translations have been republished in 2014, so it eliminates the differences caused by other reasons except gender. On the other hand, two translators' own life experiences may bring about the differences in the translator's style, which provides a possibility for the study of differences.

Meanwhile, the Lancaster Corpus of Mandarin Chinese Novel (LCMC-N) is chosen as the reference corpus to reflect the similarities and differences in the lexical features between the Chinese translations and the original Chinese novels, which can reflect the lexical features of the Chinese translations in a more objective way (Xiao, 2010).

2.2 Research Method

In this research, we mainly search the data at the level of lexical composition and syntactic structure.

2.2.1 Lexical Richness

Lexical richness is reflected mainly by the Type/Token Ratio (TTR) and Standardized Type/Token Ratio (STTR). Type is the number of first appearance of each word form in the corpus, and token is the number of appearances of all word forms in the corpus. Type/Token Ratio reflects the richness of the lexical used in the corpus: the higher the ratio, the greater the lexical richness, and the lower the ratio, the smaller the lexical richness. However, the size of the corpus also affects Type/Token Ratio (Bian, 2020; Yu, 2010), and the larger the capacity of the corpus, the smaller the ratio will be. However, when comparing corpora with different capacity sizes, TTR is not comparable, and it is more appropriate to use STTR to make comparisons.

2.2.2 Lexical Richness of Translation Text

The lexical richness of translation text is mainly reflected by lexical density. Lexical density refers to the proportion of content words in the corpus, and the formula is: number of content words/total number of words*100%. Content words are words with stable lexical meaning, generally including nouns, verbs, adjectives and some adverbs. The more content words there are, the higher the lexical density is, and the more information that can be conveyed, thus the higher the degree of linguistic formality (Ure, 1971).

2.2.3 Translator's Style

Translator's style can be presented by analyzing the occurrence rate of high-frequency words,

individual words through wordlist. Wordlist is one of the basic functions of corpus index tool, which is sorted according to the frequency of tokens from high to low. According to different frequencies, lexical can be categorized into high-frequency words and individual words. High-frequency words can clearly reflect the commonality of the language, while individual words can better reflect the personal language style of the translator.

2.2.4 Degree of Syntactic Explicitness

The degree of syntactic explicitness is mainly reflected by the index of hypotactic level. The concept of hypotactic level was proposed by Hu (Hu, 2009). From a linguistic point of view, English is hypotaxis and Chinese is parataxis (Nida, 1982). Since Chinese lacks morphological changes, Chinese formalization is mainly realized with functional words or grammatical markers, whereas English realizes it with functional words, such as conjunctions. The formula for calculating the degree of hypotactic is as follows: the number of functional words/total number of words*100%. By comparing the hypotactic level of the original English text and different Chinese translations, we can judge the tendency of parataxis and hypotaxis and further analyze whether the difference of genders have a tendency towards domestication and foreignization.

2.3 Statistical Tools and Research Questions

2.3.1 Statistical Tools

WordSmith Tools 8.0.0.194 and AntConc 4.2.0.0 are used as the main statistical tools to count the data of TTR, STTR, Wordlist, Word Cluster, etc., and charts and graphs are generated by Microsoft Excel. However, there is no space between Chinese characters, which creates an obstacle for the corpus tool to recognize, so we plan to use CorpuswordParser and TreeTagger to divide the lexical segmentation and annotation for Chinese and English.

2.3.2 Research Questions

This paper aims to answer the following three questions through quantitative research:

- 1) Are there any differences in vocabulary and syntactic structure between the two Chinese translations and the original English version?
- 2) What are the differences between the two Chinese translations?
- 3) What differences in translation style of the two translators are reflected through the differences above?

3. Result

Based on the research methods, WordSmith Tools 8.0.0.194 and AntConc 4.2.0.0 are used to retrieve the statistics of the original English text, the two translated texts, and the Chinese comparative corpus. Microsoft Excel was used to draft the charts and graphs. The following are the results.

3.1 Type/Token Ratio vs. Standardized Type/Token Ratio

As shown in Table 1 below, the STTR of the original English text is 43.53%, of Yang's translation is

52.07%, of Zhu's translation is 51.34%, and that of LCMC-N is 49.63%. The STTR of the Chinese corpora are all higher than those of the original English text, which reflects that Chinese vocabulary is richer than English. The statuses above are in line with the feature that Chinese has fewer functional words and emphasizes parataxis. The STTR of two Chinese translations are all over 50%, higher than that of LCMC-N, which is in line with the feature that the larger the corpus's size is, the smaller the STTR is.

Table 1. Type/Token Information about Four Corpora

	English version	Yang's translation	Zhu's translation	LCMC-N
Type	7169	10635	9951	19996
Token	70189	75176	73475	193571
TTR	10.21%	14.15%	13.54%	10.33%
STTR	43.53%	52.07%	51.34%	49.63%

The number of type in Yang's translation is 10635, and the number of type in Zhu's translation is 9951, which means the sizes of corpora are roughly equal, so the two corpora are comparable. In terms of TTR, that in Yang's translation is a little higher than that in Zhu's translation, but they are roughly equal, and both are 3-4 percentage points higher than that in LCMC-N. The above data reflect that two translators both use richer words than the original author. However, this finding is inconsistent with "the lexical richness of Chinese translations is lower than that of original Chinese works (Zhao, 2018)", which will be further analyzed in the subsequent lexical and syntax analysis. Also, Yang's lexical density is richer than Zhu's, which is probably because female translators are more able to express their emotions with flexible words than male translators. The status also shows that the lexical use in two translations is richer than that in original English novels.

Example 1

English version: I decided to practice my new, normal personality on this man who, in the course of my hesitations, told me his name was Irwin...

Yang's translation: 既然我刚获新生, 我决定在这个男人身上试试看滋味如何。正当我犹豫不决的当儿, 他告诉我他名叫欧文.....

Zhu's translation: 我决定在这个男人身上试一下我这个新生的正常人格, 正在我犹豫不决的当儿, 他告诉我他叫欧文.....

From example 1, we can see the lexical richness of two translations are higher than that of the original English text. The first clause of the original text does not reflect the significance of a turning point, while Yang makes an additional translation as "since", but Zhu does not translate the hidden meaning, which also shows that the lexical richness in Yang's translation is higher than that of Zhu's. This also shows that Yang Jing's translation is richer in terms than Zhu Shida's translation. In the first

clause of the translation, Zhu just makes word-for-word translation as "try out (试一下) my (我这个) newborn normal personality (新生的正常人格)", while Yang translates it more vivid and interesting as "try out (试试看) how it tastes (滋味如何)", which is not bound by the original text.

3.2 Lexical Density

Lexical density is a measure of the information volume in a text, which expressed as the ratio of the number of content words to the total number of words in a percentage form (Baker, 1995). Content words (lexical word) refer to words with stable lexical meaning, including nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs (Biber, 1999), while functional words refer to words that play a role as grammatical markers, mainly including pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, articles and auxiliary verbs, etc.

As for the criteria for dividing content words and functional words, Chinese linguists have different views on the division of adverbs and pronouns with the English's division. Wang, Lyu and Zhu only categorize nouns, verbs and adjectives as content words, and the rest of the word categorize as content words, while other scholars categorize nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs as content words (Hu, 2007). Since this paper does not focus on the classification of content words and functional words in Chinese, but measures the information volume conveyed by content words, so the latter criterion is chosen in the following research. The frequency of using four-word categories in English version, the two translations and LCMC-N is shown in Figure 1:

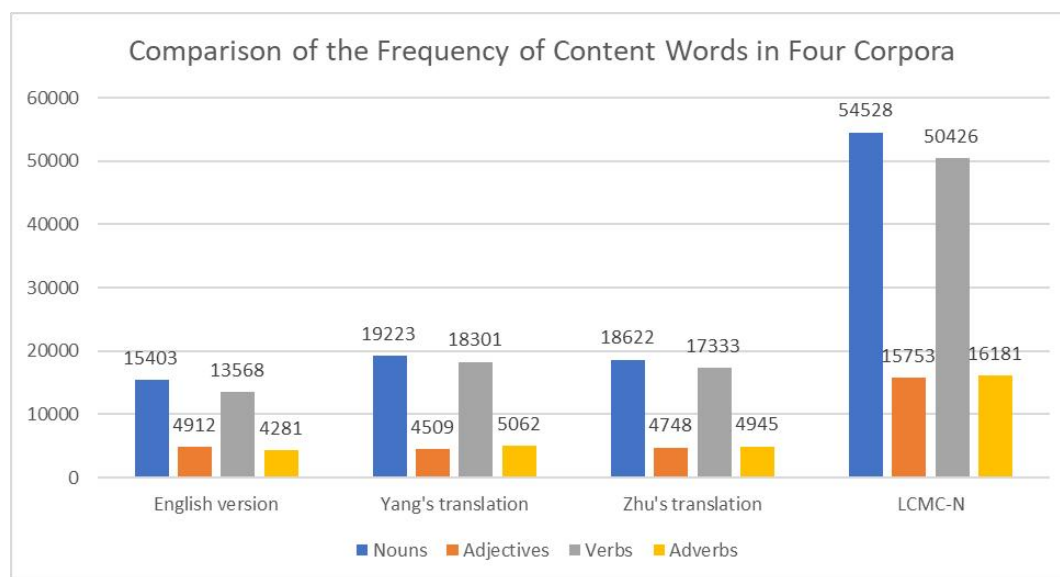


Figure 1. Comparison of the Frequency of Content Words in Four Corpora

The results of lexical density statistics based on the frequency of use are shown in the Table 2 below:

Table 2. Comparison of Lexical Density between Four Corpora

	English version	Yang's translation	Zhu's translation	LCMC-N
lexical density	54%	63%	62%	71%

According to Table 2, it can be seen that lexical density in two translations are all higher than that in English version, which indicating that the translations can convey more information than original texts. The lexical density of Yang's translation is slightly higher than that of Zhu's translation. Lexical density in English version, Yang's translation and Zhu's translation are significantly lower than that in the original Chinese novels, which is in line with the tendency of lexical density is lower in translated Chinese language than original Chinese (Xiao, 2008). Since the larger the proportion of content words in a text, the more information, the higher degree of formality, and the difficulty of translation increases accordingly.

Example 2

English version: For one crazy minute I thought Joan would refuse to call a doctor until I confessed the whole story of my evening with Irwin and that after my confession But I realized that she honestly took my explanation at face value, that my going to bed with Irwin was utterly incomprehensible to her, and his appearance a mere prick to the face. utterly incomprehensible to her, and his appearance a mere prick to her pleasure at my arrival.

Yang's translation: 刹那之间, 我有一个疯狂的想法, 在我和盘托出晚上跟欧文厮混一事之前, 她一定拒绝去给大夫打电话的。而且, 即使我全供出来, 作为一种惩罚, 她仍然会拒绝。但我继而意识到, 她其实无意深究我的托词, 我跟欧文上床一事对她来说完全不可理喻, 欧文的出现只是对她因我到来而产生的喜悦的刺伤。

Zhu's translation: 在一刹那的疯狂之中, 我想, 在我和盘托出晚上跟欧文厮混的事之前, 她一定会拒绝去给大夫打电话的; 然而, 即使我全说出来, 作为一种惩罚, 她仍然会拒绝。但我随即意识到她完完全全、一字一句地相信我的解释, 我跟欧文上床寻欢对于她来说是完全不可理解的, 欧文的出现只是稍稍冲淡了一点我的到来带给她的欢乐。

Example 2 is a longer than Example 1 in the original text, which can better reflect the application of content words in translation. Taking the sentence at the beginning of the Example 2 "For one crazy minute I thought" as an example, Yang translates it as "In a split second (刹那之间), I had a crazy idea (我有一个疯狂的想法)", Zhu Shida translates it as "In a split second of madness (在一刹那的疯狂之中), I thought (我想)". There are only three content words in the original text, five in Yang's translation, and four in Zhu's. In the translation of "But I realized that she honestly took my explanation at face value", there are only three content words in the original text, five in Yang's translation, and four in Zhu's translation. The last sentence, translated by Yang as "a mere prick of joy (产生的喜悦的刺伤)", is more vivid than Zhu's translation, which is "diluted a little of the joy that my arrival had brought to her (冲淡了一点我的到来带给她的欢乐)", and allows Chinese readers to clearly feel the sense which

original text sent to the reader. The examples above show the richness of the Chinese language in using content words.

3.3 Lexical Frequency Calculation

AntConc 4.2.0.0 is used to calculate the lexical frequency of two translations and LCMC-N through wordlist, and the top ten highest frequency are selected to show in Table 3.

Table 3. Top Ten of Frequency of Four Corpora

	Eng lish vers ion	frequ ency	perce ntage	Yang' s transl ation	frequ ency	perce ntage	Zhu's transl ation	frequ ency	perce ntage	LCM C-N	frequ ency	perce ntage
1	the	3448	4.91	的	4734	6.29	的	4933	6.71	的	9750	5.03
2	I	3105	4.42	我	4254	5.65	我	4348	5.91	了	4673	2.41
3	and	2732	3.89	了	1356	1.80	在	1532	2.08	是	2835	1.46
4	a	1964	2.79	在	1318	1.75	了	1252	1.70	一	2762	1.42
5	to	1585	2.26	一	1112	1.47	一	1039	1.41	我	2633	1.36
6	of	1550	2.21	她	748	0.90	她	748	1.01	他	2579	1.33
7	in	1147	1.63	他	701	0.93	他	693	0.94	在	2307	1.19
8	my	979	1.39	是	646	0.85	是	594	0.80	不	1831	0.94
9	was	916	1.31	着	578	0.76	着	564	0.76	她	1732	0.89
10	me	742	1.06	说	537	0.71	说	515	0.70	你	1717	0.88

As shown in Table 3, the top ten words in two Chinese translations and LCMC-N are all single characters, which is correspond to the pattern that Chinese language usually has a high frequency in using single characters. Comparing the two Chinese translations in order of frequency, it is easy to find that the top ten words are identical. Only "了" and "在" have a different frequency ranking, and the rest

of the words have the same frequency ranking.

Further comparison reveals that all the top ten words in the English corpus are functional words except for the ninth “was”. Since the novel is autobiographical, the frequency of first-person pronoun, first person possessive pronoun and first-person object is higher than that of the second and third-person pronouns and possessive pronouns.

The frequency of first-person pronouns in the translated text (nearly 6%) is significantly higher than that in the LCMC-N (about 1.36%). The feature of using first-person pronouns is consistent with the original English text, suggesting that the translators respected the original textual features in the translation. The proportion of third-person female pronouns in both translations is higher than that of third-person male pronouns, which is contrary to the ranking of third-person male and female pronouns in the original Chinese novels. This difference may relate that the inner monologue of the main character runs through the plot in *The Bell Jar*, and the characters involved in the storyline are mostly female, so the English text uses first-person pronouns and third-person female pronouns many times.

The ratio of high-frequency words higher than 1% has been added to do further calculation, and the result is shown in Table 4 below:

Table 4. Comparison of Four Corpora

	English version	Yang's translation	Zhu's translation	LCMC-N
Ratio of high frequency words	25.87	16.99	18.85	14.22

As Table 4 shows, the ratio of high-frequency words in English is higher than that in Chinese, and the ratio of high-frequency words in two translations is higher than that in LCMC-N, which is consistent with the view that translations usually use more high-frequency words (Laviosa, 1997). The ratio of English high-frequency words (25.87%) is almost twice as high as that of Chinese (14.22%). However, the status in Table 3 shows that English high-frequency words are mostly prepositions and Chinese high-frequency words are mostly pronouns.

It can be explained that English usually uses definite article in front of the nouns to designate things, and makes the logical connection between the sentences through other functional words such as the preposition (mostly and). Chinese is used repeating personal indication, so the high-frequency words are mostly pronouns.

The ratio of high-frequency words in Yang's translation is nearly two percentage points lower than that in Zhu's translation, but the number of tokens in Yang's translation is higher than that in Zhu's translation, which may explain Yang's translation has the lower repetitiveness, and the fact that the translator shows more of their own personal style in translations, reflecting the translator's flexible translation style.

3.4 The Differences between Hypotaxis and Parataxis

The proportion of function words in translated text can be calculated by the number of function words/total number of words, which can show different language characters in English and Chinese. As mentioned in the previous sections, English focuses on hypotaxis and Chinese focuses on parataxis. In translation studies, translations that tend to adopt foreignization show a higher proportion of function words, and those tend to adopt domestication show a lower proportion of function words (Xu, 2011).

The number of each type of functional words and the proportion of functional words in English text, two translations and the LCMC-N corpus are calculated as shown in Table 5 below:

Table 5. The Proportion of Functional Words in Four Corpora

	English Version	Yang's translation	Zhu's translation	LCMC-N
modal particle	147	73	57	70
conjunction	3353	291	352	695
pronoun	9093	2210	2180	3599
numeral	465	398	399	1012
prepositions	7737	628	674	1186
quantifier	-	257	301	503
auxiliary word	1175	5174	5396	11016
function word	21970	9031	9359	18081
Proportion of functional word	31.30%	12.01%	12.74%	9.34%

As shown in Table 5, English version has the highest proportion of functional words, and the proportion in both translations are significantly higher than the that in original Chinese. As the proportion in Zhu's translation is slightly higher than that in Yang's, which may be related to the translators' translation style and habits. In terms of the degree of foreignization, the two translations are generally similar. Zhu's translation has a higher proportion than Yang's, so it is assumed that Yang's translation is more suit for the habit of original Chinese and tends to be a domestic translation.

4. Discussion

Based on the above data analysis, it is easy to find that there are certain differences in vocabulary and syntactic structure among the English text, two Chinese translations and the original Chinese novels in LCMC-N.

First, Yang's translation has a richer vocabulary than Zhu's, and the lexical richness of two translations is higher than that in both original English and Chinese novels. The lexical richness of the translations is higher than text written in the target language. This phenomenon is contrary to the previous studies'

findings, and now we intend to explain this difference through the differences between the novels' theme and the translators' styles.

Second, the lexical density of Yang's translation is slightly higher than that of Zhu's translation, and the lexical density of both translations are higher than those of the English novels, but lower than that of the original Chinese novels. This phenomenon is in line with Chinese translations have a lower lexical density than original Chinese text. Since English text uses functional words to connect passages, it has more functional words and less content words with a lower lexical density.

Third, there is no obvious differences between the two Chinese translations, and the use of pronouns is nearly the same. However, the frequency of pronouns in the Chinese translation is higher than that in the original Chinese text, and the frequency of conjunctions in English is higher than that in the Chinese translation and the original Chinese novel. This phenomenon can be explained by the difference in syntactic structure of the English and Chinese languages.

Fourth, the proportion of functional words in two Chinese translations is significantly higher than that in the original Chinese text and lower than that in the English text. Zhu Shida prefers the foreignization, which conform to the English language habit, and Yang Jing prefers domestication, which is in line with the Chinese expression.

The differences above may be caused by the translator's life background, the time in translating works, and the differences in the translator's personal terminology habits (Liu, 2015). They are now analyzed one by one.

The authors of the two translations are Yang Jing and Zhu Shida, the former is a woman who is a teacher at Xiamen University, and the latter is a man who graduated from Fudan University and has worked as an English reporter and editor for the external department of Xinhua News Agency. In terms of personal growth and career development, Yang Jing worked on campus, a relatively simple environment, and as a female translator, her emotions are more delicate, and her similar growth background allows her to understand the environment of the heroine in *The Bell Jar* (Lyv, 2017), so she can express her thoughts more unreservedly when translating. However, Zhu Shida, who used to be a reporter for the external department of the Xinhua News Agency, will naturally be more objective in his writing (his objective is illustrated in the preceding examples), and as a male, he could not experience the heroine's emotional changes and could not have actual feelings like the heroine in *The Bell Jar*, so his word tends to correspond to the original text one by one, with fewer variations.

The translator's personal style may also be influenced by the invisibility of feminism, which shows in the preface, footnotes, and translations. Yang Jing, a female translator, is firstly attracted to Plath's status as a feminist writer, and she writes in the preface of her translation, "I have some confidence in my translation because, like the author, I am also a woman, and I have a sensitive heart." These words reflect Yang Jing's initiative in translating this work, while Zhu Shida defines Plath's identity in the preface to the translation as "a famous female poet of the American Confessional School", not "a feminist writer". Although, the title of the preface to the translation is "A Twisted Life in a Bell Jar," it

is not a clear definition of Plath's identity in the translation, but Zhu stood at the height of the society, focusing on the depressing feelings brought by the American society to all the human beings at that time, and did not reflect the despair of the women under the control of the patriarchal power. Therefore, in the translation of the text, Yang Jing pays attention to highlight the female's identity, using extensive vocabularies to accurately convey the feelings that the author wants to convey to the readers, while Zhu Shida blurs the female characteristics, and omits or neglects the features in translation.

Example 3

English version: And when my picture came out in the magazine the twelve of us were working on - drinking martinis in a skimpy, imitation silver - lame bodice stuck on to a big, fat cloud of white tulle, on some Starlight Roof.

Yang's translation: 等到我们十二个女孩工作的那家杂志刊出我的照片——我的行头上身是仿银丝缎子，绷得紧紧的，下面的裙身是尼龙薄纱做的，蓬蓬松松，好似一团云雾。我在一个叫什么“星光屋顶花园”的地方喝着马提尼酒。

Zhu's translation: 我的照片登在我们 12 个人正在为之工作的杂志上，我穿着一件廉价的、仿银线织物背心，背心外围着一条偌大的、肥厚的雪白薄纱女围巾，在一家名叫“星光屋顶花园”的地方，呷饮马提尼酒。

Yang Jing describes the skirt on "me" as "fluffy (蓬蓬松松)" and "like a cloud (好似一团云雾)", which gives readers expectations of beauty, while Zhu Shida describes it as "cheap (廉价的)" and "fat (肥厚的)", which is not beautiful and even brings readers a little disgust. Those above shows the manifestation of feminism in translation. In terms of translation order, Yang Jing puts "girl" at the beginning of the sentence as a subject, which fully emphasizing the female consciousness, while Zhu Shida directly translates "us" as "person (人)", ignoring the gender characteristics of "girl".

To summarize, there are differences in vocabulary and syntactic structure between the original English text, the two Chinese translations and the original Chinese text, which are specifically reflected in the fact that English emphasizes on hypotaxis and Chinese emphasizes on parataxis. English mostly uses functional words to connect the sentences and Chinese mostly uses content words to connect the sentences. The novel selected for this paper is autobiographical, and the difference in narrative perspective would also cause the difference in the use of high-frequency words. At the same time, the original author, Plath's emotional narration also makes the translator's translation inevitably take on their personal feelings, so female translators use rich and varied words with delicate emotions, and male translators choose to translate from a more macroscopic point of view, which is the main reason for the difference in translators' styles.

5. Conclusion

Based on the corpus analysis of the original English text, two Chinese translations and LCMC-N, this paper finds that there are big differences between English and Chinese in terms of linguistic forms, which may affect the choice of foreignization and domestication in translation. Meanwhile, the

translator's comprehension of the original author's expression of emotions in the text will also have an impact on the lexical choice and syntactic structure of the translation.

In this study, the lexical richness, lexical density and syntactic explicitness of Yang's translation are higher than those of Zhu's translation, and it indicates that Yang's translation needs a higher ability on vocabulary use. However, we also find that "the lexical richness is higher than that of the original Chinese text", which is different from that of the previous researchers. This probable explanation about the difference is the text in LCMC-N is old and has fewer lexical variations, but the two translations of *The Bell Jar* were published at 2014, a relatively new time, and have more lexical variations. Also, the occurrence of this phenomenon could also be a new development trend arising in modern Chinese translations. In the future, more comparisons can be made between such English languages and translations to discover new commonalities.

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