

## Original Paper

# Comparative Analysis of the Chinese Versions of *Never Let Me Go* under the Translation Theory of Lin Yutang—Taking the Translations by Zhu Qiji and Zhang Kun as Examples

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### Abstract

Based on Lin Yutang's translation theory, this article conducts a comparative analysis of two Chinese versions of Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* - the translation by Zhu Qiji and the translation by Zhang Kun. It explores how the two translators, while maintaining the spirit of the original text, employ different strategies to deal with cultural differences and language expressions. Zhu Qiji's translation focuses on accurately conveying the original information, while Zhang Kun's translation pays more attention to the reading experience of the readers. Through comparison, this paper analyzes the differences between the two translation versions in terms of translation accuracy, fluency, and style reproduction.

### Keywords

Lin Yutang's translation theory, *Never Let Me Go*, Comparative Analysis

## 1. Introduction

In the practice of translation, translation theories not only guide the translator's strategies but also determine the overall style of the translated works. Lin Yutang, as an outstanding representative in the modern Chinese translation field, has been deeply influenced by both Western and Eastern translation theories, forming unique and profound insights. He emphasizes faithfulness to the original text in translation, and focusing on the natural fluency and aesthetic appeal of language, a viewpoint that holds significant guiding significance for translation practice.

Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* is a science fiction novel that explores the complex relationships between technology, humanity, and ethics, attracting the attention of numerous readers with its unique narrative style and profound thematic ideas. The book tells the life experiences of a group of clones and

their fate as human organ donors. From the perspective of bioethics, the novel discusses the impact of cloning technology on human society, condemns the narrow-minded thinking of human being, and advocates for ethical considerations in the research and application of cloning technology, promoting the care and reverence for life. The work was nominated for the Booker Prize in the UK and was hailed as one of the best novels of 2005 by Time magazine.

As this work has been translated into various languages, the Chinese translation has become an important focus of translation studies. Zhu Qiji and Zhang Kun, as two senior translators, each bring unique characteristics to their translated versions of *Never Let Me Go*, adding rich nuances to the Chinese translation of the novel. This paper, guided by Lin Yutang's translation theories, will conduct a comparative analysis of Zhu Qiji's and Zhang Kun's Chinese translations of *Never Let Me Go*. By delving into the translation strategies, methods, as well as the understanding and conveyance of the original text by the two translators, the paper is to explore the impact of different translation styles on the dissemination and reception of the work, and how the two translators achieve a harmonious balance between maintaining the spirit of the original text and achieving natural fluency and aesthetic appeal in language. This study not only aids in a deeper understanding of the practical application of Lin Yutang's translation theories but also provides valuable insights for translation practice and translation studies.

## 2. Comparative Analysis of Phrases

In Lin Yutang's book *On Translation*, he elaborated on his translation theory, considering translation not only as a technical skill but also as an art. He outlined the basic qualities required of translators and the three standards of translation: faithfulness, fluency, and beauty. He advocated for translators to be faithful to the original meaning while maintaining accuracy and integrity, as well as ensuring the translated text is natural and fluent, conforming to the expression habits of the target language. His translation theory had a profound influence on future generations and laid a solid foundation for the development of the translation field in China.

Lin Yutang also emphasized the artistic nature of translation, aiming for aesthetic appeal in the translated text by elegantly reproducing the style of the original work. The "sense of beauty" is an important criterion for evaluating the effectiveness of style reproduction, and translated works should strive to give readers an aesthetic experience equal to that of the original work, "making readers know it, like it, and enjoy it." (Xu Yuanchong, 1999:75)

Zhu Qiji's translation of *Never Let Me Go* focuses on conveying emotions, delicately depicting characters' inner thoughts, and preserving cultural details; while Zhang Kun's translation emphasizes the accuracy and fluency of language, striving to express the meaning of the original text directly and concisely, possibly innovating in language expression. Both translators have their own characteristics and are dedicated to conveying the essence of the original work.

### Example 1

Her voice sounded almost sarcastic, but then I saw, with a kind of shock, little tears in her eyes as she

looked from one to the other of us.

Zhang's translation: 她几乎是冷嘲热讽的语气, 但这时我却有点震惊地发现, 当她目光从我俩中的一个转到另一个人的时候, 眼中有小颗的泪水在闪。

Zhu's translation: 她的话音听起来几乎在讽刺, 可是接着, 带着某种震惊, 我看到, 当她对着我们从一个看到另一个的时候, 她的眼睛里含着星星泪花。

From the perspective of vocabulary, the translation of "Her voice sounded almost sarcastic" is as follows: Zhang translated it as “她几乎是冷嘲热讽的语气”, while Zhu translated it as ““她的话音听起来几乎在讽刺”” Both translators accurately conveyed the original meaning, though the choice of words slightly differs.

Zhang's translation of "冷嘲热讽" is more emotional and vivid compared to Zhu's "在讽刺." According to Lin Yutang's translation theory, "the standard of beauty" carries the "responsibility of the translator towards art" (Lin Yutang, 1984:418). It is not difficult to see that Zhang's version aligns more with the viewpoint of "beauty." Zhang translates "sarcastic" into a four-character phrase, which adds symmetry and rhythm to the structure, making the translation more rhythmic and artistically expressive in language. This rhythmic sense not only enhances the artistic effect of the language but also contributes to improving the reader's reading experience. Zhang translates “with a kind of shock as ‘这时我却有点震惊地发现’,” In contrast Zhu translates it as “可是接着, 带着某种震惊”. Zhang clearly portrays 'shock' as 'my' feeling, while Zhu combines 'shock' with 'my observation,' but not as direct as Zhang's translation." Zhang translates little tears as ““眼中有小颗的泪水在闪”” while Zhu renders it as “她的眼睛里含着星星泪花” Zhang's "小颗的泪水在闪" provides a more direct description of tears' appearance, whereas Zhu's "星星泪花" carries a poetic and metaphorical tone, making the expression more vivid.

From the perspective of syntax, Zhang's translation maintains the chronological order of the original sentence, first describing the tone and then the shocking discovery. While Zhu's translation slightly adjusts the sentence structure, combining "my" shock with observation to make the sentence more concise. Zhang translates one long sentence from the original text into two clauses, connecting them with "but at this moment" for clarity. However, Zhu retains the original long sentence structure, separating it with commas to make the sentence more concise but slightly more complex. Zhang uses "turn" to describe the movement of the gaze, which is more direct. In comparison, Zhu uses the verbs "facing" and "seeing," which also convey the movement of the gaze but seem somewhat redundant. In conclusion, both translators accurately convey the meaning of the original text, but they each have their own characteristics in terms of vocabulary and syntax. Zhang's translation uses more direct and vivid words with clear sentence structure, while Zhu's translation carries a poetic and metaphorical tone, making the expression more vivid but slightly more complex in syntax.

#### Example 2

If she'd asked this in a certain way, like the whole idea was completely crazy, then I'm sure I'd have felt pretty devastated. But she hadn't quite said it like that. She'd asked it almost like it was a test

question she knew the answer to; as if, even, she'd taken other couples through an identical routine many times before. That was what kept me hopeful.

Zhang's Translation: 如果她问话的方式流露出仿佛这念头压根就是荒诞不经的意思, 那么我肯定会感到伤心失望。然而她不是那样说的。她问话的方式几乎像是测验提问一样, 而问题答案她是知道的; 甚至她还曾多次引领其他情侣经历过完全一样的这套程序。因为如此, 我才一直没有失去希望。

Zhu's Translation: 如果她问这个问题用的是某种方式, 比如说这整个儿就是彻头彻尾的疯狂的想法嘛, 那我肯定觉得非常泄气了。可是她并未以那种腔调说话。她问这话的语气几乎就像问一个她已经知道答案的测试题; 甚至就好像她此前已经用同样的方式问过许多其他的情侣了。这让我怀有希望。

From a lexical analysis perspective, in Zhang's translation, the use of words like "流露出" and "压根就是" in the phrase "'流露出仿佛这念头压根就是荒诞不经的意思'" enriches the sentence with literary nuances, conveying the speaker's feelings towards the other person's way of speaking. "伤心失望" is a relatively neutral expression, closer in emotion to the original "pretty devastated," but without emphasizing a strong sense of loss. "Using terms like '引领' and '程序' in '引领其他情侣经历过完全一样的这套程序' makes the expression more formal and written." Zhu's use of colloquial expressions like "这整个儿就是" and "彻头彻尾的" in the sentence "这整个儿就是彻头彻尾的疯狂的想法嘛" makes the sentence more colloquial and vivid, in line with Lin Yutang's translation principle of "fluency". Colloquial expressions are closer to people's daily communication habits and carry more emotional colors. In Lin Yutang's translation theory, "fluency" refers to the need for the translated text to be smooth, natural, and easy to understand. Specifically, he emphasizes that the translation should be done on a sentence basis, focusing on conveying the overall meaning of the sentence rather than just a literal translation. He believes that if a translator simply translates word for word without considering the overall meaning, it will inevitably lead to many translation errors. Therefore, "fluency" requires translators to fully consider the grammar rules and expression habits of the target language (in this case, Chinese) during the translation process, making the translation natural, smooth, and easy for readers to accept and understand. "Feeling '非常泄气了' is stronger emotionally than '伤心失望' and is closer to the sentiment expressed by the original text as 'pretty devastated'."

From a syntactic perspective, Zhang's sentence structure is more rigorous, following the syntax of the original text with clear logic using conjunctions like "If...then...However...even..." The sentence "Because of this, I have not lost hope" is a causal sentence that clearly conveys the logical relationship between the preceding and subsequent text. Nevertheless, Zhu's sentence structure is relatively flexible, using expressions like "such as" and "it was as if", making the sentence more colloquial and vivid. The phrase "This gave me hope" is a concise summary sentence that directly conveys the speaker's feelings, echoing the original text "That was what kept me hopeful". Both translations accurately convey the meaning of the original text, differing only in style and expression.

### 3. Comparative Analysis of Rhetorical

Rhetoric is a variety of expressive techniques used in language to enhance the effectiveness of expression, including metaphors, personification, exaggeration, parallelism, antithesis, repetition, rhetorical questions, irony, quotations, comparisons, metonymy, and sarcasm, among other methods. The use of rhetorical devices can give text vivid images and rich emotions, making translations more beautiful, poetic, and expressive. The use of rhetoric can enhance the expressive power of language, allowing translations to convey information while also providing readers with aesthetic enjoyment, thus improving the accuracy of expression.

Lin Yutang believed that translation is not only the conversion between languages but also the exchange of culture and ideas. Therefore, he required translators to have a deep linguistic foundation and intercultural communication skills to achieve a thorough understanding of the original text and accurate conveyance. In the book *Never Let Me Go*, Kazuo Ishiguro utilizes various rhetorical devices to enhance the expressive effect and underlying meanings of the text. Here is an analysis of some of the main rhetorical devices used.

#### Example 1

Original text: That was what had happened to Sylvie C. once on the second-floor landing, and on that occasion Miss Emily had gone into one of her rages. She never shouted like, say, Miss Lucy did when she got mad at you, but if anything Miss Emily getting angry was scarier.

Zhu's Translation: 有一次西尔维 C.在三楼的楼梯平台上就发生过这样的事,那一次惹得埃米莉小姐愤怒无比。她对我们发火的时候,从不像露西小姐那样大叫大嚷,可是一旦埃米莉小姐生气却更加吓人。

Zhang's Translation: 有一次在三楼的楼梯上, 希尔薇 C 就遭遇了这样的事, 那一次艾米丽小姐难得的大发雷霆。你惹她生气的时候, 她从来不会像露西小姐等导师那样大喊大叫, 可是艾米丽小姐发火只有更可怕。

Zhu and Zhang both successfully utilized the rhetorical device of contrast, highlighting the terrifying extent of Miss Emily's anger by comparing her behavior with that of Miss Lucy when they are both angry. Zhu's translation is more direct, contrasting "她对我们发火" with "露西小姐大叫大嚷" and then drawing the conclusion that "埃米莉小姐生气更吓人". While Zhang added the conditional clause "你惹她生气的时候" making the context of comparison slightly more complex, but still effectively conveying the original text's contrast relationship. Zhu's translation provides a more coherent context, directly stating the different reactions of Miss Emily and Miss Lucy when they are angry, without introducing additional information. On the other hand, Zhang introduced a new context by using the conditional clause "你惹她生气的时候" which helps readers understand who is making Miss Emily angry. This information is not present in the original text, making it potentially redundant. Zhu's translation is more precise in expression, directly using words such as "大叫大嚷" (shout loudly) and "更吓人" (more frightening), which correspond with the original text's "shouted" and "scarier".

Although Zhang conveyed the original meaning, the addition of "等导师" was not present in the original text, which may cause some confusion for readers. Additionally, while the phrase "只有更可怕" is concise, it may not be as direct and clear as "却更加吓人".

#### Example 2

Original text: Hailsham was full of hiding places, indoors and out: cupboards, nooks, bushes, hedges.

Zhu's translation: 黑尔舍姆到处都有藏身之处: 橱柜里、墙洞里、树丛里、篱笆下。

Zhang's translation: 在黑尔舍姆,无论是室内还是室外,到处都是可以藏身的地方: 橱柜、屋角、树丛、树篱。

The original text uses the parallel structure of "indoors and out" and lists four specific hiding places (cupboards, nooks, bushes, hedges) to emphasize the diversity and universality of Hershell's hiding spots. In the translation, while also listing four hiding places (cupboards, wall cavities, shrubs, under hedges), the parallel structure of "indoors and out" from the original text is not explicitly maintained. Instead, it broadly covers indoors and outdoors through the phrase "everywhere."

Zhu's translation, by listing specific hiding places, still to a certain extent embodies the effect of parallelism. While, Zhang's translation explicitly retains the original "whether indoors or outdoors" parallel structure, and further strengthens the parallelism effect by enumerating four specific hiding places (cupboard, corner of the room, bushes, hedges). This translation method not only preserves the original structure but also makes the Chinese sentences more fluent and easy to understand. Zhu's choice of vocabulary is more vivid, for example, the expression "墙洞里" (inside the wall hole) although not a direct match with the original "nooks," conveys a similar meaning in Chinese and adds a sense of amusement to the expression. While the expression "墙洞里" may seem somewhat abrupt to readers, as the original text does not explicitly mention "墙洞". Zhang's translation is more accurate and faithful his vocabulary selection reflects once again the "faithfulness" in Lin Yutang's translation theory, such as "屋角" corresponding to "nooks" in the original text, and "树篱" corresponding to "hedges". This translation method not only preserves the original meaning but also makes the Chinese sentences more natural and easier to understand. Zhu's translation, through vivid vocabulary selection and specific listing of hiding places, gives the sentences a certain sense of rhythm and imagery. However, due to the unclear retention of the original parallel structure, the overall effect may appear slightly loose. Zhang's translation explicitly retaining the original parallel structure and precise vocabulary selection, makes the sentences more concise and powerful. This translation method not only conveys the original meaning but also enhances the expressive effect of the sentences.

#### 4. Comparative Analysis of Style

The translation reflects the writer's style, which has been the relentless pursuit of translators throughout history. However, in the process of practice, there are inevitably many issues: to vividly reproduce the writer's style, it naturally requires translators to fully mobilize their creative abilities. How to balance the pursuit of style and the fidelity to content? Lin Yutang advocates a translation concept that

emphasizes both style and content. Although he particularly emphasizes the importance of style, he always regards faithfulness as the primary standard of translation. Translators can only fulfill the author's thoughts and intentions if they are faithful. (Lin Yutang, 1989:328).

#### Example 1

Original text: "You believe this? That you're deeply in love? And therefore you've come to me for this ... this deferral? Why? Why did you come to me?"

Zhang translated: "你们相信这个? 相信你们深深相爱? 所以你们就来找我申请这个.....延缓? 为什么? 为什么你们来找我?"

Zhu translated: "你们相信这样吗? 你俩深深地相爱? 因此你俩为了这个.....这个推迟捐献来找我? 为什么? 你们为什么来找我?"

In terms of language style, Zhang's version is more direct without excessive embellishments, effectively conveying the original questioning and surprise.

The use of simple words, such as "相信这个" and "申请这个.....延缓" reflects Lin Yutang's translation perspective of "faithfulness." Lin Yutang believes that the essence of "faithfulness" lies in conveying the meaning accurately. He emphasized that translators should not only convey the literal meaning of the original text but also its logical meaning and implied meanings. Zhang's translation, while using simple language and without excessive embellishments, is able to directly and accurately convey the original text's questions and surprises. In comparison, Zhu's translation is slightly more delicate in language expression, for example, "相信这样吗?" and "你俩为了这个.....这个推迟捐献来找我?" are more tactful in expression, also enhancing the grasp of the original text's emotions.

Although Zhang's translation uses simple words and lacks excessive narrative styles, Zhang's version adopts a direct narrative approach, without many transitions or embellishments, translating directly according to the original text's syntax, maintaining the original's conciseness and questioning tone. However, Zhu's version made slight adjustments in the narrative, such as emphasizing the character relationships more with expressions like "你俩深深地相爱?"

Overall, both translations accurately convey the meaning of the original text, but differ in language style and narrative approach. Zhang's translation is more direct and concise, while Zhu's is slightly more delicate and fluent.

#### Example 2

Original text: "I can see," Miss Emily said, "that it might look as though you were simply pawns in a game. It can certainly be looked at like that. But think of it. You were lucky pawns. There was a certain climate and now it's gone. You have to accept that sometimes that's how things happen in this world. People's opinions, their feelings, they go one way, then the other. It just so happens you grew up at a certain point in this process".

Zhu's translation: "我能明白," 埃米莉小姐说, "也许看起来你好像只是棋局中的一个小卒子。肯定可以这样来看问题。可是想一想, 你们是幸运的小卒子。曾经有过某种风气, 而现在这种风气

已经不复存在。有时候你必须接受这个世界上的事情。人们的想法，他们的感觉，先是这样，然后又变成那样。你凑巧生长在这个进程的某一个时期中。”

Zhang's translation: “我能理解，”艾米丽小姐说，“你们一定会认为自己只是棋盘上的棋子。当然你可以这样来看待。但想想看，你们是些幸运的棋子。曾有过某种气候，但现在没了。你们得接受，有时候世界上的事就是这样。人们的看法，他们的感受，一会儿朝这边，一会儿又改那边。只是你们碰巧在这个过程中的某一点长大了。”

The Zhu's translation tends to literal translation, preserving the original sentence structure and some vocabulary, overall maintaining a formal and traditional style that aligns with the precision required in literary translation. The narrative style of Zhu's translation is more fluently, following the original sequence of events without excessive embellishments or omissions. Phrases like “也许看起来你好像只是棋局中的一个小卒子” and “有时候你必须接受这个世界上的事情” are used, accurately conveying the original meaning but appearing somewhat stiff, lacking some emotional nuances. However, the translated version by Zhang involves appropriate adaptation, resulting in a more colloquial and natural style that is easier for readers to comprehend. The expressions are more flexible, such as “你们一定会认为自己只是棋盘上的棋子” and “你们得接受，有时候世界上的事就是这样” which are closer to Chinese oral habits, making the translation more fluent and natural. In terms of vocabulary, Zhang opts for more everyday words, like “棋子” instead of “小卒子” and the term “气候” also suggests the changes in the era rather than just the literal meaning of weather changes. Regarding sentence structure, Zhang's version is more concise, such as “人们的看法，他们的感受，一会儿朝这边，一会儿又改那边” using parallel structures to make the expressions more vivid and forceful.

In a word, both versions have their strengths in translation. Zhu's version remains faithful to the original text, retaining the sentence structure and wording, suitable for readers with high demands on literary translation; In comparison, Zhang's version, although maintaining the original meaning, has made appropriate adaptations and modifications, making the translation more in line with Chinese expression habits and easier for readers to understand. In terms of narrative style, Zhang's version is more flexible and natural, while Zhu's version is somewhat stiff.

## 5. Conclusion

Under the guidance of Lin Yutang's translation theory, this article conducts a comparative analysis of two translations of *Never Let Me Go*. In previous studies on the translation of this novel, no scholars have utilized Lin Yutang's translation theory for analysis of *Never Let Me Go*. Translators like Lin Yutang tend to pursue the unity of form and spirit (Yang Liu & Heng Liuhua, 2011:23). We should inherit the excellent research achievements of our predecessors and strive for the unity of form and spirit. The Chinese translations by Zhu Qiji and Zhang Kun each have their own characteristics. Zhu's translation “别让我走” is straightforward, while Zhang's translation “莫失莫忘” is more implicit. In terms of vocabulary choice, Zhu's translation stays close to the original text (faithful to the original), while Zhang's translation pays more attention to Chinese conventions (elegance). In syntax, Zhu's



translation retains the sentence structure of the original text, while Zhang's translation makes appropriate adjustments for smoother expression. In terms of language style, Zhu's translation faithfully captures the depth and delicacy of the original work, while Zhang's translation incorporates more personal style, making the translation more distinctive. In the narrative, both adhere to the narrative perspective of the original work, but Zhang's translation is more subtle in describing the characters' inner thoughts, enhancing the expressive power of the translation. In terms of rhetorical techniques, Zhang's translation is more direct and faithful to the original text, while Zhu's translation is more adept at expressing the aesthetic quality of the original text.

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