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翻譯季刊

Translation Quarterly

香港翻譯學會

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編者的話：

本期共收錄研究論文六篇及書評兩篇，涵蓋數字時代翻譯實踐形態演變、翻譯文本的風格與概念研究，以及翻譯教育的理論建構與實踐探索等多元議題，較為全面地呈現了翻譯研究在數字時代語境下跨學科對話的新拓展。

于爽以《譯叢》過去半世紀以來的選集編纂為線索，透過副文本分析，將香港文學選輯實踐置於具體的歷史語境中，揭示了選輯實踐如何成為文學身份建構的能動力量，為理解香港文學在全球化與本土化交織語境中的自我定位提供了重要的學術參照。

陳雪梅以歷史視角系統梳理了中國網絡文學翻譯的四個演進階段，揭示非專業翻譯實踐與制度化文化體系之間權力關係的持續重構，為重新審視數字技術對翻譯職業邊界及翻譯教育的深遠影響提供了重要的歷史參照。

羅康特系統梳理了 2016 至 2024 年間中國八大本土媒體平臺的音頻描述資源，揭示該領域快速增長背後供給結構的顯著失衡，呼籲突破口述影像以影視為主的局限，拓展其媒介形態，並提升其促進無障礙文化參與與社會包容的公共價值。

劉夢禎採用 Biber 多維度分析法對比《列子》兩英譯本的語域變異，發現譯者策略取向對風格生成的深刻影響。

徐莉娜從漢語語法學史視角切入，考察了馬建忠在《馬氏文通》中為“subject”創譯的“起詞”一說的適用性問題。研究主張從類型學視角引入“話題”概念替代“偽主語”，為漢語句法分析提供更具解釋力的理論視角。

黎雅途聚焦譯學核心術語對“source language”與“target language”的中文翻譯問題，系統考察其可回譯性、形式一致性與語用能產性，揭示該術語對在實際使用與傳播中的多樣性及變異性對術語標準化與譯學知識傳播的制約，為術語翻譯研究從規定性走向描寫性提供了新的分析路徑。

林曉玲評劉康龍所著《實務翻譯研究》，肯定其在系統梳理實務翻譯核心概念、理論體系與研究方法方面的學術價值，同時指出其在翻譯技術細節、譯後編輯等議題上仍有深化空間，呼籲未來加強多模態翻譯、機器翻譯倫理與跨學科整合等方向的探索。

駱霖綜合評述了宋歌與陳雪梅主編的《多語環境下翻譯作為變革的推手》一書，肯定其在拓展翻譯概念邊界、豐富教育應用場景之貢獻，亦指出該書對大語言模型等生成式人工智慧技術與翻譯教學融合的探討尚顯不足，為未來研究指明了人機協同教學模式與 AI 素養培育等新方向。

本期聚焦翻譯實踐在歷史、技術與教育維度中的發展脈絡，涵蓋數字時代翻譯活動的組織機制、翻譯文本的風格與概念建構，以及智能化背景下翻譯教育與多語實踐等議題，不僅回應了新媒介與新技術帶來的實踐轉向，也拓展了對翻譯社會、文化與

教育功能的理解，為智能化時代翻譯教育轉型提供了理論參照與實踐啟示。

李德超

二零二五年三月

The Formation of Literary Identity of Hong Kong in Half-century Anthologies of Renditions (1973-2024)

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Abstract

In view of the cultural importance of literary anthologies in identity formation, the article makes an attempt to delve into the socio-cultural role of translation anthologies of Renditions in constructing and exhibiting the literary identity of Hong Kong. Through examining and analyzing paratextual elements of a corpus of Renditions anthologies between 1973 and 2024, the article places the anthologizing of Hong Kong literature within specific socio-historical context in which it is embedded, explores its underlying cultural agendas and gains important insights into how multiple-author translation anthologies of Rendition have been utilized to forge, exhibit and assert the literary identity of Hong Kong before and after the reversion of Hong Kong to China in 1997. It concludes that anthologizing not only proves to be an effective means of literary identity formation of Hong Kong but also reflects the journey Renditions' anthologizing has embarked on: from an awakening of local consciousness of a literary self, through a quest for and an exploration of, to an articulation of a literary identity of Hong Kong, and then, to a gradual merging into a national identity of Chinese literature. Consequently, Renditions' effort to anthologize Hong Kong literature has formed and manifested a literary identity which has become increasingly hybridized between the local, the national and the international.

1. Introduction

The cultural importance of anthologies has been frequently acknowledged and largely proven. Seruya (2013, 1) points out that anthologizing is a recognized process of cultural

identity formation. Korte (2000, 3) also believes that anthologizing has played an important role in identity formation. Apparently, anthology has been considered an eminently useful form of publication: as means of “constructing and exhibiting identity” (Korte 2000, 3).

Some scholars in China have ventured into the field of literary anthologies in English translations. Liu (2014) examines the anthologies and collections of English translations of Taiwanese literature and explores how English translations create the image of Taiwanese literature. Zhou (2016) delves into the selection and editing of Chinese literary works in world literature anthologies. He (2019) examines the text selection of translation anthologies of contemporary Chinese literature published in America and analyzes the reception course of contemporary Chinese literature in America. He (2021) explores the vital role translation anthologies of modern Chinese literature play in constructing the image of national literature. Liang (2023) proposes a field of translation anthology compilation studies to promote Chinese literature worldwide. It is noteworthy that the systematic interest in the subcategory of translation anthologies is very recent in China and few of these studies devote considerable attention to translation anthologies on Hong Kong literature. Though recent studies by Ge (2016a; 2016b; 2020) have researched on *Renditions* issues, Paperbacks and Books, the research focus is centered on the selection for translation, the models of translation and the dissemination of Chinese literature. The cultural role *Renditions* anthologies play in the identity formation has seldom been addressed.

In view of the cultural importance of translation anthologies and the scant attention accorded to the socio-cultural function of *Renditions* anthologies, the article delves into *Renditions* anthologies from a new perspective, addressing the wider cultural impact they have always made and examining the socio-cultural function they have fulfilled in the formation of literary identity of Hong Kong within specific historical context.

2. Anthology and *Renditions*

The word *anthology* has evolved from the Greek word *anthologia*, a word denoting a flower-gathering, a garland or bouquet of flowers. Metaphorically, it means a collection of poems, stories, etc. that have been written by different people and published together in a book. Its meaning is therefore associated with a selection and arrangement of literary texts. Frank (2004, 13) defines a translation anthology as “a collection of translated texts, often literary, and indispensable in the study of translation and literary culture”.

The translation anthologies the present article will focus on include multiple-author anthology of *Renditions* as well as its special issues and special sections. According to Hung (1995, 239), special issues or sections of a periodical may be regarded as a kind of continuing literary anthology since the structure and editorial policy of special issues or sections devoted to specific topics are likely to be more consistent and explicit, and thus function very much

like anthologies.

Hong Kong of the 1970s witnessed a keen sense of mission; it is “to preserve China’s cultural heritage” and “to introduce it to the world” (Heijns 2013, 30). In this climate, *Renditions* was created under the influence and facilitation of a proposal by its founding editors George Kao and Stephen Soong in 1973 and had been identified as the flagship journal of Research Center for Translation, Chinese University of Hong Kong (RCT CUHK). Since then, anthology has long been one of the major types of publication of RCT, in the form of both traditional printed books and audiobooks on CD-ROM.

Anthologies of *Renditions* manifest themselves in a wide range of types, which are determined by the scope of selection: its literary genres and themes, or regional focuses. In terms of literary genres, all types of classical, modern and contemporary literature have been included, such as prose, poetry, fiction and plays. In terms of literary themes, women life, cultural revolution, urban-youth life, Hong Kong and Taiwan life and life in contemporary China are among the themes that have been frequently featured. As for the regional focus, Hong Kong and Taiwan are two regions that seem to be given special emphasis. Variation in literary genres often interconnects with literary themes. Two-volume anthology *To Pierce the Material Screen*, which is devoted to fiction, essays and poetry, is arranged according to different themes. Each theme is represented by different works of different authors.

3. The role of *Renditions* anthologies in the formation of literary identity of Hong Kong

The translation anthology is a literary genre in and of itself, for it constitutes a kind of rewriting of literary tradition and reconstructing of literary identity. As is the case with *Renditions*, its translation anthologies have played a crucial role in the formation of literary identity of Hong Kong since its early days, and it is not surprising that they continue to fulfill an active role nowadays.

Paratexts that surround the works within and outside the literary anthologies have been shown to provide useful clues to “reconstruct the publishing histories of particular authors” or “formulate clearer pictures of the flow of literary works across borders” (Batchelor 2018, 32). What is more, paratexts can also shed some light on the socio-historical context in which anthologizing happens and provide some insights into the cultural agendas underlying the anthologizing. Gérard Genette considers two kinds of paratextual elements: “peritext” and “epitext” (Genette 1997, 5). A peritext appears in the same location as the text, including preface, foreword and introduction. An epitext is any paratextual element not materially appended to the text within the same volume but circulating in a virtually limitless physical and social space, such as book reviews (Genette 1997, 344).

The article draws on Genette's definition to regard paratext as material that is appended to the core texts of anthologies and fulfill a vital role in providing and explaining background information on the anthologizing or the relevant opinions, attitudes or stances of editors, translators and reviewers. Thus, paratexts in this article include not only front and back covers, preface, foreword or introduction (or what Genette termed peritexts) but also reviews and criticism (or what Genette termed epitexts). Through examining the paratextual elements of *Renditions* anthologies between 1973 and 2024, the article places the *Renditions* anthologies in the socio-historical context in which they are embedded, derives information about cultural agendas underlying the anthologizing and gains important insights into how multiple-author translation anthologies have been utilized to forge, exhibit and assert the literary identity of Hong Kong before and after the reversion of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty in 1997.

3.1 An awakening of local consciousness of literary identity of Hong Kong (1973-1984)

The first twelve years since the founding of *Renditions* witnessed the publication of ten anthologies, among which seven are on classical Chinese literature and three on contemporary Chinese literatures from different regions, including mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan^[1].

The high featuring of classical Chinese literature, with classical prose, poetry and lyrics as the main literary genres, reflects a prevailing view held by *Renditions* that the classical Chinese literature is the cultural heritage which bears the great Chinese literary tradition and needs to be preserved and introduced to the world. RCT, which established *Renditions* and started its literary translation during the Cultural Revolution when China's cultural heritage seemed in great peril, was undertaking to "interpret China's literary tradition for an English readership, and in effect, ... to preserve and recreate that tradition" (Hung 2001a, 80). Despite its prominence in the development of Chinese literature, the classical essay remains somewhat consistently neglected. Therefore, *Chinese Classical Prose: The Eight Masters of the T'ang-Sung Period* can be understood as a systematic effort to provide the English readers with a full access to this "highly representative type of writing" and a representative view of "this important genre in Chinese literary history" (Wells 1979, vii).

In addition to classical literature, contemporary Chinese literature is another type that began to be featured during this period. The year 1983 witnessed the publication of *Special Issue: Chinese Literature Today*, which was the first substantial collection of contemporary Chinese literature. It was published, a year later, as a hardcover *Renditions* Book entitled *Trees on the Mountains: An Anthology of New Chinese Writing*. The book, which is divided into four sections: prose, fiction, poetry and drama, brings together new Chinese literature written in mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. What is particularly noteworthy is that in the sections of fiction and poetry, writers from the three regions are all included. The writers

featured in the section of fiction are Chen Yingzhen from Taiwan, Xi Xi from Hong Kong and Zhao Zhenkai from mainland, who is also the featured poet in the book (Bei Dao). For each writer, two representative stories are included. It is the same case with the section of poetry. Works of ‘misty’ poets - Bei Dao, Gu Cheng, Hong Huang, Jiang He, Mang Ke, Shu Ting, Yang Lian, and Yan Li - from mainland are included, while the works of six young poets - Du Ye, Li Nan, Luo Qing, Wu Deliang, Wu Sheng, and Xiang Yang - from Taiwan are selected; and twelve poems by Huang Guobin from Hong Kong are also presented. The selection and arrangement indicate writers from three regions are on a par and predict a trend that regards the literary development of each region as separate literary entity. This trend, which appears to be more prominent in the subsequent anthologies, can be regarded as an awakening of local consciousness of literary identity of Hong Kong. In other words, Hong Kong has become aware that it can develop and perhaps, has begun to develop a literature which has distinctive features of its own.

It can be argued that from 1973 to 1984 *Renditions*’ editorial efforts to anthologize Hong Kong literature manifest a significant transformation in its perception of Chinese literature: shifting from viewing classical literature as the sole embodiment of the Chinese literary tradition to recognizing the value of contemporary Chinese literature and evolving from a lack of awareness of the existence of Hong Kong literature to an awakening of local consciousness of the literary identity of Hong Kong.

3.2 A quest for literary identity of Hong Kong (1985-1997)

Though Hong Kong reunited with its motherland in 1997, it had been under the shadow of “1997” long before its reversion to Chinese sovereignty. One of the major watersheds was the signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984, in which the United Kingdom’s government affirmed that it would hand over Hong Kong to the People’s Republic of China with effect from 1 July 1997. Ever since then, Hong Kong has been concerned with preserving its unique characteristics and obsessed with the issue of cultural identity. Such concern and obsession also find their way into the literary sphere of Hong Kong and can be discerned in *Renditions*’ editorial attempt to anthologize Hong Kong literature during this period. From 1985, translation anthologies with titles containing ‘Hong Kong’ began to appear. The year 1988 witnessed the publication of a special issue on Hong Kong, the first ever anthology of Hong Kong writings in the history of *Renditions*. Nearly a decade later, *Special Issue: Hong Kong Nineties* came out.

Long before the territory’s return to its motherland, Hong Kong people had some doubts about their future after 1997, which they feared might be “drastically different from its present condition” (Hung 1988, 7). Although Chinese government had stipulated the policy of “three no-changes” i.e., no changes in Hong Kong’s economy, social system and lifestyle after 1997, [2] “a good deal of doubt about its implementation remained” (Hung 1997b, xi). The grave

doubts about “a more narrowly defined future”, together with the fear of change, led to “an overall re-evaluation of every aspect of life in the territory”, and the discussion on Hong Kong culture and Hong Kong literature could be considered “part and parcel of this general process” (Hung 1997b, x; 1988, 7). Moreover, the looming reversion to Chinese sovereignty in 1997 has triggered questions about Hong Kong identity. Accordingly, to search for an identity for Hong Kong, including a literary identity, has become one of the main purposes in the anthologizing of Hong Kong.

Liu Yichang’s (劉以鬯) “Intersection” (對倒), a novellas originally serialized in a Hong Kong newspaper in 1972, and then translated into English and included in *Special Issue: Hong Kong* in 1988, delves into “the nature of the Hong Kong urban space” and contributes to the forging of “a postcolonial identity for Hong Kong” (Cheung 2016, 408).

In a similar way, the attempt to explore issues of cultural identity also find echoes in Leung Ping-kwan’s (梁秉鈞) poems, essays and stories, which try to challenge “clichéd images for Hong Kong” imposed mainly from the outside and find fresh image for Hong Kong in the drastic changes triggered by 1997 handover (Cheung 2016, 409). The Lotus Leaves Poems series, which are also included in *Special Issue: Hong Kong*, inspire us to reflect upon the problem of “center-periphery opposition” (Cheung 2012, 4). Five poems by Leung appear in *Special Issue: Contemporary Fiction and Poetry* (1993). “At the North Point Car Ferry” (北角汽車渡海碼頭), one of most-quoted poems by Leung, allows the readers to reflect upon “social and political changes” in Hong Kong (Cheung 2012, 4). What is noteworthy is that all these poems reappear in *City at the End of Time* (2012), which is one of his single-author collection of poems in English translation.

Wilson (1988, 6), the governor of Hong Kong before 1997, expresses his hope that *Special Issue: Hong Kong* will serve to build “a consciousness of Hong Kong’s unique cultural heritage, and unique cultural role, as a fusion of Chinese and Western traditions and experiences”. Hung (1988, 8) openly declares that the intention in publishing *Special Issue: Hong Kong* is “to reflect this richness and diversity” of “Hong Kong literature” and it is the ripe time “to assert that the territory boasts as many cultural activities as any other Chinese society”, which includes “literary creation”.

It can be argued that both the selection of core texts of anthologies mentioned above and the paratextual elements manifest an attempt to start talking more about Hong Kong as a unique cultural identity and an unprecedented search for Hong Kong identity.

Despite a strong yearning for a cultural identity of Hong Kong, *Renditions* has never severed the cultural link between Hong Kong and mainland China. *Special Issue: Hong Kong* consists of eight sections. The first section, which is devoted to folklore and traditional songs popular in Hong Kong as well as southern China, serves as “a reminder of the strong cultural link between the territory and the mainland” (Hung 1988, 8).

Shortly before 1997, the impending change in Hong Kong’s political status brought

“considerably more exposure to all aspects of life in Hong Kong”, including its literature (Hung 1997a, 7). The increasing interest in Hong Kong’s literary scene led to prominent growth in Hong Kong authors’ series, but it is believed that the most up-to-date works have not received adequate attention (Hung 1997a). Thus, the editors of *Renditions* initiated *Special Issue: Hong Kong Nineties*, which includes only literary works published between 1990 and 1996.

It might not be a coincidence that Xi Xi’s “Flying Carpet” (飛氈), which can be read as parables of Hong Kong, appears in *Special Issue: Hong Kong Nineties*, since it uses a fable “to reconstruct the history of Hong Kong” and to search for multiple identities of *Fertillia*, an allegorical representation of Hong Kong (Ng 2016, 359).

It is also hoped that *Special Issue: Hong Kong Nineties* can serve as “a road sign for further exploration” instead of “a final summing up” (Hung 1997a, 7). In other words, *Special Issue: Hong Kong Nineties* can be understood as an attempt to establish a landmark for Hong Kong people to recognize the distance Hong Kong literature has covered and the destination it is going to reach, just as the editor has observed, “in producing an anthology of literature of the nineties at this stage, we are not suggesting that the best work of the decade is over, but since we are at a political crossroads it is surely opportune to look back at the last stretch of road we have travelled, to get our bearings” (Hung 1997a, 8). It can be said that *Special Issue: Hong Kong Nineties* is a great effort of *Renditions* to forge and exhibit the unique identity of Hong Kong literature before the imminent reversion to Chinese sovereignty.

In addition to Hong Kong literature, Taiwan literature is another type that was highly featured in *Renditions* anthologies from 1985 to 1997. The year 1991 witnessed the publication of *Special Issue: Contemporary Taiwan Literature*, which was the first anthology of *Renditions* with titles containing ‘Taiwan’ and exclusively devoted to contemporary Taiwan literature. It is believed that Taiwan literature is as “synonymous” with contemporary Chinese literature at a time when mainland Chinese writings were “generally devoid of literary interest” (Hung 1991, v). It can be said that the anthologizing of Taiwan literature is not only a reflection of preferences of the editorial staff of *Renditions* but also an assertion of their literary stance - Taiwan literature and Hong Kong literature can be considered as literary counterparts since both have been bestowed the privileges of “unexpected freedom of expression” as well as “extensive exposure to innovative literary techniques” (Hung 1991, vi). It is a stance that will become more explicit in the following decades.

The attempt to search for the literary identity of Hong Kong also finds its way into the anthologizing of Chinese women authors. The year 1987 witnessed the publication of *Special Issue: Contemporary Women Writers*, which was followed by the publication of *Contemporary Women Writers: Hong Kong and Taiwan* in 1990 and its reprint in 1992. What is particularly noteworthy is that *Special Issue: Contemporary Women Writers* is arranged according to the region and thus, divided into three sections, including authors from Taiwan, Hong Kong and China. Such a way of arrangement is also echoed in *Special Issue: Chinese*

Literature Today and reflects again the literary stance of *Renditions*: to view the literary development of each of three regions as literary entity which has formed its own literary conventions and possessed its own distinctive features. Such a literary stance is also manifested in *Contemporary Women Writers: Hong Kong and Taiwan*, which not only represents the achievements of Hong Kong and Taiwan women writers, but also gives “a glimpse into the changing attitudes and social structures of Hong Kong and Taiwan” (Hung 1990, vii).

The *Renditions* anthologies published between 1985 and 1997 represent an ongoing quest for literary identity of Hong Kong. What is more, the coming decade is about to witness a solemn declaration of the literary identity of Hong Kong.

3.3 A deeper exploration and an articulation of literary identity of Hong Kong (1998-2008)

The decade after Hong Kong’s reversion to its motherland witnessed an outburst of enthusiasm in translating and anthologizing of Hong Kong literature. A brief survey of titles included in RCT publications catalogue proves that the publication of *Renditions* anthologies explicitly mentioning ‘*Hong Kong*’ in the title shows a predominant increase from 1998 to 2008 and “Hong Kong literature became one of the main focuses” of RCT’s literary publishing work as well as selections of *Renditions* (Hung 2001a, 77-78). Five anthologies of exclusively Hong Kong literature were published during this decade. They are *Hong Kong Stories: Old Themes New Voices* in 1999, *Special Section: New Hong Kong Poetry* in 2001, *Special Section: Hong Kong Essays* in 2006 and two-volume anthology *To Pierce the Material Screen: An Anthology of 20th-Century Hong Kong Literature* in 2008.

Hong Kong Stories: Old Themes New Voices is a collection of local short stories by young Hong Kong writers. For one thing, literary historians of Hong Kong acknowledge the connection between Hong Kong literature, fiction in particular, and mainland Chinese literature by pointing out that early Hong Kong writers once “looked to the new mainland literary movement for guidance” and “imitated the creative approach of mainland Chinese writers” (Lo 1999, 7-10). For another thing, the editors highlight the fact that there is something new about the approach of the writers featured in this anthology in that these writers make efforts to “break away from the ‘old’ practice of their predecessors” and “draw sustenance from Western literary theories and creative approaches” (Lo 1999, 10). It can be said that *Hong Kong Stories: Old Themes New Voices* represents “a conscious effort” of younger generation of Hong Kong writers “to explore their own identity from a Hong Kong perspective” and serves as an offering of *Renditions* in such a direction: to describe Hong Kong’s special way of life from a Hong Kong perspective and to further forge the identity of Hong Kong literature that is believed to be brought to bear the imprint of cultural heritage of Hong Kong, just as the title ‘Old Themes New Voices’ indicates, younger generation of Hong Kong writers discuss the old themes by having “their roots firmly planted in Hong Kong”

while “speak in a new voice about the life and thoughts of Hong Kong”, thus, “giving the old theme a new angle” (Lo 1999, 10-14).

The publication of *Special Section: New Hong Kong Poetry* in 2001 can be understood as an effort to showcase the latest developments in Hong Kong poetry scene, which “has been at its most vibrant in the last few years” and to provide its readers with an image of Hong Kong as a region which has made its own literary achievements and formed its own literary conventions (Hung 2001b, 5).

Besides Chinese poetry, Chinese essay is another literary genre that has been highly featured in *Renditions* anthologies. Despite “its prominence in traditional China and former popularity in the West”, recent decades witness “the shrinking market for the literary essay”, which naturally has “an adverse effect on the translated essay” (Hung 2006, 5). *Special section: Hong Kong Essays* just serves as an offering of *Renditions* to ameliorate the situation of “the dearth of the Chinese essay in translation” (Hung 2006, 6). Then why is Hong Kong essay highlighted in *Renditions*? Two factors probably contribute to the featuring of Hong Kong essays of the latter half of the twentieth century: first, it is due to “freedom of expression and commercial inclinations” in Hong Kong that the tradition of the short essay has flourished in this region; second, the essay in Hong Kong has evolved to be “exceptionally short, full of topical references, and linked closely to newspaper columns” (Hung 2006, 6). It could be argued that, in anthologizing Hong Kong essays, the anthologists not only acknowledge the imprint of Chinese literary tradition Hong Kong has long borne but also insist on the uniqueness of Hong Kong essays.

What is more, the selection of *Special Section: Hong Kong Essays* also lays a great emphasis on the distinctive cultural identity Hong Kong maintains. “Spring Garden Lane” (春園街), a chapter from *Atlas: Archaeology of an Imaginary City* by Dung Kai Cheung (董啟章) is a case in point. *Atlas*, first published as *Dituji—yi ge xiangxiang de chengshi de kaoguxue* (地圖集：一個想象的城市的考古學) by the Unitas in Taipei in 1997, was translated into English and published by Columbia University Press in 2012. *Atlas* gives an account of the City of Victoria (Hong Kong), rediscovers the Hong Kong past that is neither British nor Chinese mainland but uniquely Hong Kong, and rewrites the history of Hong Kong.

For more than three decades, Hong Kong literature, which explores different aspects of life in this cosmopolitan city, has become a focus of interest of *Renditions*. This seems to culminate in the two-volume *Renditions* Book, *To Pierce the Material Screen: An Anthology of 20th-Century Hong Kong Literature*, which can be regarded as the first and most comprehensive collection of Hong Kong literature. ‘To Pierce the Material Screen’ first appears in the preface to Special Issue: Hong Kong in 1988, in which the editor, by offering the quotation from “A House of Silence,” a poem by Thomas Hardy, convinces the readers that Hong Kong is not a cultural desert.

But I see nobody there, —

*Nobody moves about the green,
Or wanders the heavy trees between.”
—Ah, that’s because you do not bear
The visioning powers of souls who dare
To pierce the material screen.* (Hung 1988, 9)

By quoting the line ‘To pierce the material screen’ to serve as the title of the anthology, the editor implies that to penetrate the material life of Hong Kong and to explore the innermost depth of Hong Kong people is a power possessed by Hong Kong literature.

To Pierce the Material Screen: An Anthology of 20th-Century Hong Kong Literature, on the one hand, never severs Hong Kong’s connection with the modern Chinese literary tradition, and on the other hand, insists on the uniqueness of Hong Kong literature.

By sorting out the political events in Chinese history, the editor reveals the considerable influence of such events on the literary development of Hong Kong and the inherent ties between Hong Kong writers and the Chinese literary tradition. As a consequence of the Japanese invasion of China, Hong Kong saw an influx of writers from the mainland, many of whom “carried with them the mission to secure the continued development of the new literary tradition in Hong Kong which was still sheltered from the war” (Hung 2008, 3). When the CCP gained control of the Chinese mainland in 1949, Hong Kong witnessed another population influx which far exceeded that at the beginning of the Anti-Japanese War. Bearing their sense of literary mission in mind, the large number of writers who arrived in Hong Kong founded many literary magazines, which were to “have a considerable influence on the next generation” (Hung 2008, 4). Thus, it is not surprising that throughout history Hong Kong’s Chinese writers have always “considered themselves a natural part of Chinese culture” and their literary works included in *To Pierce the Material Screen* “develop as part of the modern Chinese literary tradition” (Hung 2008, 2-3).

Despite the fact that Hong Kong literature evolved as part of the Chinese literary tradition, certain characteristics of Hong Kong society have such a direct bearing on the literary development of Hong Kong that Hong Kong is entitled to assert for a literary identity that enriches the diversity of Chinese literature. Chief among these are the freedoms and a global vision. It is believed that Hong Kong is the only major Chinese community where one has a full access to the whole modern Chinese literary tradition as well as the classical tradition. The local education system also enables two generations of writers to have a good command of foreign languages and therefore, to gain relatively easy access to literary developments worldwide. What is more, the second influx of writers to Hong Kong marked a watershed in the development of Hong Kong literature since many of these writers began to adopt “a Hong Kong—rather than a Chinese—point of view” in their work and a younger generation of writers they helped to nurture contribute to the emergence of “a critical mass that was necessary” for

Hong Kong “to assert a self-identity” (Hung 2008, 4).

“Marvels of a Floating City” (浮城誌異), one of Xi Xi’s best known fables about Hong Kong, originally serves as the title story of her single-author collection *Marvels of A Floating City and Other Stories* and later reappears in the first volume of *To Pierce the Material Screen*. It is believed that ‘Marvels of A Floating City’ creates “a sense of heterogeneity which is representative of Hong Kong culture”, a blend of Eastern and Western traditions (Hung 1997b, xii). It can be said that Xi Xi’s literary creation “represents the vibrant struggle of Hong Kong” in forming “a self-identity neither simply constrained by British colonialism nor purely impelled by Chinese nationalism” (Ng 2016, 355).

To Pierce the Material Screen can be considered a successful culmination of the long struggle of Hong Kong to proclaim its own literary identity, just as the editor claims, “... in the 20th century, through a tortuous route that sometimes seemed to be leading nowhere, Hong Kong managed to find her literary identity” (Hung 2008, 5).

In addition to Hong Kong literature, Singaporean Chinese literature and Taiwan literature became another two focuses in the anthologies of this period. The year 2001 witnessed the publication of *Special Section: Singaporean Chinese poetry* and a *Renditions* Paperback entitled *City Women: Contemporary Taiwan Women Writers*. Three years later, *Special Section: New Taiwan Poetry* came out.

The anthologizing of Singapore Chinese literature can be viewed as an attempt to demand for identities for regional literatures written in Chinese. The existence of Singapore Chinese literature has been recognized as one of the literary centers that have been founded by Chinese who have taken up residence and established their own cultures and literatures in Singapore. Wang Yoon Wah (2001, 93) explicitly states in the introductory note that once a regional literature establishes its own indigenous tradition, that literature can no longer be called ‘Chinese literature’, neither can it be called an offshoot of Chinese literature. Wang (2001, 93) further suggests viewing Chinese language literature “from the perspective of a plurality of literary centers” and acknowledges that such centers as Singapore Chinese literature are quite numerous. It can be implied that Wang not only speaks for Singapore Chinese literature but also proclaim a conspicuous position for other centers of regional literature written in Chinese language, such as Hong Kong literature and Taiwan literature. More importantly, the plurality or diversity of Chinese literature began to be highlighted from this period. Such a trend will become more explicit in the following period.

Taiwan literature is another regional literature that is highly featured in *Renditions* anthologies during this period. Thirteen years after the publication of *Special Issue: Contemporary Taiwan Literature*, *Special Section: New Taiwan Poetry* was published.

It has been emphasized in *Special Issue: Contemporary Taiwan Literature* that the selection of material has been “representative” and “variety”, not only in terms of “subject matter”, but also in terms of “techniques and style” (Hung 1991, viii). It is probably not

a coincidence that editors of *Special Section: New Taiwan Poetry* have followed a similar principle in text selection: “the diversity of voices and subject matter” should be a core consideration (Hung 2004, 5). A consistence in the principle of selection for translation—the diversity should be the foremost consideration—reveals a firm belief that Taiwan literature, including its poetry, has been so diverse that it deserves more recognition. William Tay (2004, 50-51) points out that after half a century of uninterrupted growth, poetry in Taiwan has spun its own norms, tropes, and conventions and the vitality of Taiwan poetry definitely deserved recognition.

The recognition accorded to Taiwan poetry as well as Taiwan literature as a whole goes back to the earliest days of *Renditions*. The first fifteen issues of *Renditions* offered, in terms of contemporary literature, exclusively works by Taiwan writers. Then why is Taiwan literature so highly featured in *Renditions*? It is probably due to the following two reasons.

Firstly, it is a prevailing view held by *Renditions* that there was a time, especially during the Cultural Revolution, when “contemporary Chinese literature was synonymous with Taiwan literature”, which could stay away from the influence of ideological struggles in mainland and gradually form its own literary norms and interest (Hung 1991, v).

Secondly, there is a close affinity between Hong Kong and Taiwan literatures. Such an affinity can be accurately explained by the facts that Hong Kong and Taiwan are both “nexus of diverse linguistic, economic, social, and cultural crosscurrents” from Asia and Europe and both Hong Kong and Taiwan writers have a full access to innovative literary techniques from the West (Yeh 2000, 1).

It can be said that to anthologize Taiwan literature, in fact, is to seek some alliance in its strenuous attempt to forge the literary identity of Hong Kong and to justify for a general recognition deserved by regional literatures written in Chinese, such as Hong Kong literature.

3.4 An emergence of Hong Kong literature in a new profile (2009-2024)

After a long phase of strenuous exploration, Hong Kong succeeded in finding its literary identity, which was finally declared in *To Pierce the Material Screen* in 2008. However, the path taken by Hong Kong literature seems to have undergone a dramatic change since 2008: the sense of difference Hong Kong felt and valued seems to diminish. Consequently, *Renditions*’ attempt to insist on difference and to emphasize uniqueness does not continue. Such a change is explicitly manifested in the selections of *Renditions* anthologies from 2009 to 2024. Ever since 2009, there has been a great drop in the number of anthologies on Hong Kong literature, with only *Special Section: Hong Kong Classical Poetry* being published in 2010. Then how can such a change be explained?

In fact, Hong Kong has got involved in a dilemma since 1997. On the one hand, it tries to maintain its unique role as a cultural fusion between China and the West. On the other hand, it acknowledges itself as an inseparable part of China despite the policy that allows

Hong Kong to retain its way of life after its reversion to Chinese sovereignty for fifty years, just as McDougall (2012, xxviii) has argued, “Hong Kong still has an expiry date - it used to be 1997 but is now 2047, when its political and legal system is to give way to mainland rules”. Consequently, the reversion of Hong Kong to China in 1997 has a twofold influence on the literary development of Hong Kong. For one thing, it arouses an intense interest in the literary and cultural specificity of Hong Kong, awakens a local consciousness of a literary self, fosters the emergence of Hong Kong literature as a distinct yet integral part of Chinese literature and facilitates the identity formation of Hong Kong literature. For another thing, it reinforces a shared national consciousness among Hong Kong people and ensures that Hong Kong literature will continue to thrive as a vibrant component of Chinese literary tradition. Though Hong Kong people have always been keenly aware of and insisted on the differences of Hong Kong, it clearly knows Hong Kong literature will probably emerge in such a new profile as a piece of the jigsaw of Chinese literature and together with other regional literatures written in Chinese, contribute to the vigorous diversity of Chinese literature, just as the editor of *To Pierce the Material Screen* has observed, though Hong Kong felt and valued the sense of difference, that does not mean the insistence on difference will necessarily continue, since Hong Kong and its people are constantly changing (Hung 2008, 5).

Another two reasons probably contribute to the diminishing sense of difference on the part of Hong Kong.

Firstly, Hong Kong’s highly original and vigorous popular culture, which contributed to the emergent Hong Kong identity in the 1970s and 1980s, have been in decline after 1997. *Special Issue: Chinese Film* published in 2009 serves as a fitting example to illustrate the dramatic change in the self-perception of Hong Kong concerning about its cultural identity more than a decade after its return to China. Despite the fact that Hong Kong is renowned as one of the major film producing centers in Asia, only one excerpt from script of a film made in Hong Kong is included, while the other nine excerpts are from scripts of films made in mainland China. What is particularly noteworthy is that unlike previous anthologies, *Special Issue: Chinese Film* is not arranged according to the region. Though it is mainly due to various reasons that scripts of film are to some extent redundant in Hong Kong, the selection indicates the transformation of the role of *Renditions* anthologies from highlighting Hong Kong culture as an international visibility to bridging the cultural gap between China and the West (Clark 2009). Such a transformation derives from a change in the self-perception of Hong Kong: from viewing itself as a unique cosmopolitan city with a distinctive cultural identity to positioning itself as a Special Administrative Region under Chinese sovereignty with its cultural identity gradually receding away and merging into the mainstream of national culture.

Secondly, urban developments in the new millennium, as well as the Hong Kong government’s decisions to demolish the old Star Ferry Pier and the Queen’s Pier, led to movement of protest at Hong Kong’s urban planning policy. The demolition and gradual disappearance

of historical buildings and old neighborhood have removed people's collective memories. Despite widespread demands for preserving cultural heritage sites and a common urge to reconstruct the collective memories, the distinctive cultural identities maintained by Hong Kong people have been undermined. Although some creative writers have written poems with reference to the demolitions of two piers, few of literary works of this kind have found their way into translation anthologies. Only Liu Waitong's (廖偉棠) *With a Ghost Roaming in Hong Kong* (和幽靈一起的香港漫遊) was translated into English and published by Zephyr Press in 2016.

Special Section: Hong Kong Classical Poetry is the first and the only substantial anthology dedicated to the work of Hong Kong-based poets from 2009 to 2024. It is designed to rectify the neglect of one genre of Hong Kong literature, namely Hong Kong's classical poetry, which has been conspicuously absent in previous *Renditions* anthologies or miscellaneous issues (Ip 2010). What is particularly noteworthy is that a stronger affinity to China's classical poetic tradition has been foregrounded and a closer cultural connection with Chinese mainland strengthened, while the visibility of Hong Kong's literary identity has been downgraded and the internationalized nature of Hong Kong relegated, as Hung (2010, 9) states, "Despite the commonplace perception of Hong Kong culture as westernized and internationalized, China's classical poetic tradition has had a much firmer footing here than on the Chinese mainland, partly because many of those who sought refuge in Hong Kong were steeped in traditional Chinese culture and literature."

Since 2009, Taiwan literature has remained one of the focuses and strengths of *Renditions*. *Special Issue: Modern Taiwan Poetry*, which has been the second of its kind since the publication of *Special Section: New Taiwan Poetry* in 2004 and is devoted virtually in its entirety to translations of modern poetry from Taiwan, includes a variety of authors spanning a long period of time and highlights "the vital role poetry plays in contemporary writing from Taiwan" (Huters 2023, 6). It not only showcases Taiwan's achievement in modern poetry but also points out that Taiwan is one of the few regions where literary development has not been interrupted and "the cultural legacy - including the classical literary tradition - of China" has been well preserved and developed due to "a relatively open and free environment" in Taiwan (Yeh 2023, 10). It could be argued that the anthologizing of Taiwan literature not only maintains an affinity between Taiwan and Hong Kong literatures but also further elevates the literary status of Taiwan literature, and accordingly, pushes the regional literatures written in Chinese from the periphery to the center of the Chinese literary system.

4. Conclusion

Anthologizing is an effective means of and a recognized process of literary identity formation of Hong Kong. The multiple-author anthologies have been utilized to forge, exhibit

and assert the literary identity of Hong Kong in the half-century history of *Renditions*. The anthologizing of Hong Kong literature also reflects the journey *Renditions*' anthologizing has embarked on: from an awakening of local consciousness of a literary self, through a quest for and an exploration of, to an articulation of the literary identity of Hong Kong, and then, to a gradual merging into a national identity of Chinese literature which is plural and diverse in nature.

The contribution made by the anthologists, such as Eva Hung, who was the longest-serving editor of *Renditions*, needs to be briefly acknowledged. Hung played a pivotal role in compiling and editing translation anthologies of Hong Kong literature, which contributed to the formation of literary identity of Hong Kong and made its unique literary voice heard by a global audience.

Renditions' effort to anthologize Hong Kong literature has formed a literary identity which has become increasingly hybridized between the local, the national and the international. These three strands of elements are manifested in *Renditions*' half-century history of anthologizing. First, *Renditions* highlights the distinctive local features of Hong Kong literature. Second, *Renditions* never severs the connection of Hong Kong literature with Chinese literary tradition nor does it deny the fact that Hong Kong literature has been an inherent segment of Chinese literature. Third, *Renditions* never ignores the influence from the international world which imposed its imprint on the literary identity of Hong Kong in its colonial and postcolonial history.

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Notes

- [1] Seven anthologies on classical Chinese literature include three special thematic issues on Tz'u, Middlebrow Fiction, Poetry and Poetics, and four multiple-author anthologies, including Chinese Classical Prose: The Eight Masters of the T'ang-Sung Period, Song without Music: Chinese Tz'u Poetry, 25 T'ang Poets: Index to English Translations and Chinese Middlebrow Fiction: From the Ch'ing and Early Republican Eras.
- [2] It is quoted from the translation of an editorial from *Ming Pao*, a Hong Kong daily newspaper.

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Evolution of Online Literary Translation in China: Reflections on the Translation Profession

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Abstract

The Internet and digital technologies have fundamentally transformed translation practices and the translation profession. The proliferation of diverse online translation forms poses new challenges to traditional working methods and professional boundaries. This article provides a historical overview of online literary translation in China, seeking to identify its development patterns and analyze their broader implications for the translation profession. Drawing on empirical evidence, it delineates four evolutionary stages: freely shared online translations, the republication of online translations in print, paid translation crowdsourcing, and the outbound translation of Chinese Internet literature. The study argues that online literary translation has evolved from grassroots, amateur initiatives into organized, commercialized enterprises, and finally into government-sponsored cultural diplomacy projects. This historical evolution reflects the changing power dynamics between online literary translation and institutionalized cultural systems. By highlighting the value of online literary translation, the article underscores its potential to bridge the gap between non-professional and professional spheres and invites renewed reflection on digital technologies on translation education.

1. Introduction

The rise of online platforms has diversified translation modes and significantly challenged the established workflows and economic models of professional translators. Across the scholarly literature, a range of overlapping terms has been used to conceptualize translation activities facilitated by digital platforms, such as translation crowdsourcing, online collaborative

translation, community translation, user-generated translation, non-professional translation, volunteer translation, amateur translation, and online social translation (see Jiménez-Crespo 2017; McDonough Dolmaya and Sánchez Ramos 2019; Yu 2022). Despite their terminological variation, these concepts share a defining characteristic: online translation relies on the Internet and other information and communication technologies for the production and distribution of translated content. It is often carried out by non-professionals who translate as a leisure activity, out of personal interest, or for community contribution rather than direct remuneration. Although non-professionals lack a clear definition due to their versatility, they generally refer to people who have no formal training and work without remuneration (Pérez-González and Susam-Saraeva 2012, 151; Antonini and Bucaria 2015, 7). The remuneration explicitly denotes that professionals translate for a living while non-professionals often do not. Notably, there is no clear-cut demarcation line between professional and non-professional translation because there are many borderline cases. For example, professional translators could also be motivated to translate for free, and non-professionals, recruited by companies or organizations, may abide by a specific code of conduct and receive a certain amount of payment. Michał Borodo aptly comments that the boundary between professional and nonprofessional translation is increasingly permeable and porous (2020, 192).

Within the growing body of research on online translation, few studies adopt historical lens. Minako O'Hagan delineates the evolution of user-generated translation from unsolicited fan translation (such as fansubbing, scanlation, and translation hacking) to solicited translation crowdsourcing, the latter seeking to legitimize amateur translation through copyright authorization and institutional endorsement (2009, 111). Similarly, Cao (2015) outlines the progression of Chinese online translation communities from user-initiated, volunteer translation to organized, profit-driven crowdsourcing models. Both scholars focus on multimedia genres (such as anime, films, TV series, online courses, video games, comics, and news) while paying less attention to literary translation. Cao argues that multimedia texts are easier to translate than lengthy literary works by non-professionals in the context of collaborative translation (2015, 81). Yet, this view underestimates the vibrant ecosystem of online literary translation in China, a field where literary works have been translated, shared, and increasingly published online by non-professional communities.

Addressing this gap, the present study offers a historical overview of Chinese online literary translation, examining its evolutionary trajectory and professional implications. It delineates four developmental stages through which non-professional literary translation has progressed: from freely shared fan and amateur translations to institutionalized and globally disseminated cultural products. Before analyzing these stages, the next section provides a concise background on the rise and characteristics of Chinese Internet literature, which forms the socio-cultural and technological conditions from which online literary translation emerged.

2. Development of Internet Literature in China

Internet literature refers to literary works created, published, and circulated through the Internet (Ouyang 2008, 4). The origin of Chinese Internet literature can be traced to the early 1990s, beginning with literary writings by overseas Chinese students published in electronic journals and magazines. The *China News Digest*, launched in 1991, is often regarded as the first electronic magazine to include literary content. This signaled the emergence of a new digital mode of authorship and readership. Influenced by overseas Internet literature and the introduction of the Internet in 1994, Internet literature in China began to emerge in the late 1990s, a development exemplified by the remarkable success of the first Chinese online novel, *First Close Contact*, authored by a Taiwanese student Pizi Cai in 1998. Simultaneously, several young writers in mainland China who shared their works on Bulletin Board Systems gained prominence within online communities. Figures such as Li Xunhuan, Ning Caishen, Xing Yusen, Yu Baimei, and Anni Baobei, were collectively known as the “Five Dark Horses” in the history of Internet literature (Ouyang 2008, 32). As Chen Jing summarizes, these authors typically discovered the Internet during their university years, began writing after engaging with online communities, and identified reader feedback and digital participation as their primary creative motivation (2012, 541). Early Internet literature thus embodied a grassroots and participatory ethos, characterized by self-expression and open sharing rather than profit. Notably, this participatory model mirrors the contemporaneous rise of freely shared online literary translation, which likewise grew from community enthusiasm rather than institutional or commercial structures (see the following section).

At the turn of the millennium, however, Chinese Internet literature, entered a new phase of commercialization and platform economy. The founding of major platforms such as *Qidian* institutionalized the production of online literature by recruiting experienced authors with regular compensation. *Qidian* introduced China’s pioneering “pay-to-read” model, offering free access to opening chapters while monetizing subsequent installments through payments. This business innovation marked the shift from amateur enthusiasm to industrial production, aligning Internet literature with broader trends in China’s digital cultural economy. Over time, the sector developed a sophisticated intellectual-property (IP) ecosystem, in which online novels serve as transmedia source material for film, television, animation, and gaming adaptations. By the late 2010s, Chinese Internet literature had evolved into a market-driven global industry. Through translation, copyright export, and transmedia adaptation, online fiction platforms have extended the reach of Chinese narratives beyond national borders. A prominent example is Webnovel, the international version of *Qidian* launched in 2018 by China Literature Ltd., a subsidiary of Chinese tech giant Tencent. Beyond disseminating translated Chinese works, Webnovel also invites overseas users to create original fiction, thereby exporting the Chinese online writing model itself. According to the 2023 Report on the Development of Chinese Internet Literature (Chinese Social Science 2024), by the end

of 2023, Webnovel had cultivated approximately 410,000 overseas writers who produced over 620,000 original works. These figures illustrate that the Chinese model of participatory, serial, and monetized authorship has entered global cultural circuits, reshaping creative labor and platform economies worldwide.

The trajectory of Internet literature also reflects shifts in state regulation and cultural policy. What began as an informal, counter-institutional practice of self-expression and occasionally a “transgressive” challenge to official publishing hierarchies (Jiang 2021, 900) has gradually been incorporated into the apparatus of state-supported cultural management. The 2020 Blue Book on the Development of Chinese Internet literature highlights a coordinated governmental effort to steer the field toward “healthy development,” including organizing seminars and forums to encourage the creation of realistic works (instead of fantasy works) that could pass on Chinese culture (China Writers Association Internet Literature Center 2021). Likewise, the National Press and Publication Administration also organized and implemented the Excellent Realistic Theme Online Literature Publishing Project for 2022-2023. Their influence is evident: the 2023 report on the Development of Chinese Internet literature (Chinese Social Science 2024) identifies realistic-theme narratives as the fastest-growing category on female-oriented branch of China Literature’s platform, with a five-year compound growth rate leading all genres.

The historical evolution of Chinese Internet literature reveals a comprehensive transformation from grassroots amateur expression to state-endorsed, industrialized, and globalized cultural production. This evolution forms the socio-technological and institutional backdrop against which online literary translation in China has developed. The following section examines how translation practices, shaped by similar dynamics of participation, commercialization, and regulation, have paralleled and intersected with this trajectory.

3. Four Stages of Online Literary Translation in China

This section adopts a socio-historical approach to the periodization of online literary translation. The proposed four-stage framework is grounded in three interrelated analytical dimensions: (1) the organization of translation production (from individual to collective to institutional); (2) the economic mode of operation (from voluntary to hybrid to commercial); and (3) the sociocultural function of translation (from personal expression to professionalization to cultural diplomacy). Drawing on O’Hagan’s (2009) model of the evolution of user-generated translation and Cao’s (2015) chronology of Chinese translation communities, the following stages are delineated as analytical categories rather than rigid chronological markers. Each stage represents a dominant translation ecology that emerged at a particular historical moment, supported by empirical cases and platform data (e.g., Yeeyan, Douban, Webnovel). The four stages—freely shared online translations, republication of online translations in print, paid

translation crowdsourcing, and outbound translation of Chinese Internet literature—should thus be read as coexisting yet progressively integrated forms reflecting the transformation of Chinese online translation from grassroots voluntarism to organized institutional practice.

3.1 Freely Shared Online Translations (from early 2000s)

The earliest stage of online literary translation in China corresponds to what O'Hagan (2009) terms the unsolicited phase of user-generated translation, defined by spontaneous, non-remunerated, and community-driven participation. As Cao observes, early Chinese translation communities exhibited a distinct utopian autonomy, operating beyond institutional publishing structures and largely indifferent to economic or hierarchical constraints (2015, 81). Emerging in parallel with the rise of Chinese Internet literature, these freely shared translations constituted a grassroots alternative to the state-controlled, commercially oriented publishing system, driven by the ethos of sharing and collective learning. Amateur translators and fans translated texts they liked and circulated them through mailing lists, discussion forums, and personal websites—spaces that privileged peer recognition and cultural exchange over formal validation. This socio-technological ecology fostered the notion of translation as a participatory act of reading and rewriting, anticipating later developments in networked creative production.

Among the notable cases of this stage is the fan translation of the *Harry Potter* series, widely regarded as a landmark in contemporary Chinese fan translation practice. While the fan translations of the fifth (2003) and sixth (2005) volumes initially attracted limited attention, the collective fan translation of the seventh volume, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (2007), became a national media event, capturing extensive newspaper coverage (Chen 2008) and subsequent scholarly analysis (Chan 2010). This episode demonstrated that online readers—motivated by impatience, enthusiasm, and participatory literacy—could momentarily challenge the authority of the official publishing system through collaborative translation.

A lesser known but even earlier example is Xiao Mao's translation of E. B. White's *Stuart Little*, *Charlotte's Web*, and *The Trumpet of the Swan*. These translations were produced and self-published online from 2000 to 2001. As Chen Xuemei (2021; 2023; 2025) details, Xiao Mao, a non-professional translator with no formal training, undertook the project out of personal admiration for White's style and dissatisfaction with existing Chinese versions. He consulted overseas Chinese readers from the New Threads mailing list for linguistic advice, using early Internet communication as a decentralized editorial network. Once completed, he shared his translations freely online, where readers further redistributed them. In 2003, the widespread circulation of such works prompted netizens to coin the term "Xiao Mao Phenomenon," referring to the voluntary production and dissemination of translations outside commercial publishing (Chen 2021, 161).

These early efforts, whether individual or collaborative, expanded readers' access to

world literature and redefined translation as a form of cultural participation rather than a professional service. Yet their emancipatory potential also exposed structural tensions. Chief among them was copyright infringement, as many works were translated without authorization. Chinese fan translators of *Harry Potter and The Deathly Hallows* faced legal threats from the publisher of the official translation, resolved only after J. K. Rowling's lawyer confirmed the permissibility of non-commercial fan translations (Chan 2010, 138). In other contexts, legal enforcement proved harsher: a French fan translator was arrested (Willsher 2007), and Polish websites hosting *Harry Potter* translations were shut down (Borodo 2017, 197). Similar uncertainties surrounded other online translations, such as amateur English renditions of Bruno Schulz's works later superseded by authorized versions (Ziemann 2016). While Xiao Mao's case escaped explicit legal challenge, it remained unacknowledged within formal publishing and academic circuits. The gap between participation and institutional recognition underscores the fragility of freely shared translation as a form of cultural production operating at the margins of legality and visibility. Only when publishers began to reissue online translations in print, a phenomenon that emerged in the mid-2000s, did such practices begin to transition from informal enthusiasm toward professional validation.

3.2 Republication of Online Translations in Print (from Mid- and Late 2000s)

This period represents a hybrid stage between non-professional enthusiasm and professional validation, in which the symbolic capital accumulated through grassroots visibility gradually translated into institutional recognition. During this time, the Internet functioned as a new recruitment channel for publishers seeking fresh talent amid a stagnating professional translation market. As online translations gained popularity and demonstrated increasingly sophisticated quality, publishers began to republish selected works in print, transforming informal volunteer efforts into tangible professional opportunities.

A representative example is Tang Wei (screen name is Xiao'er), whose Chinese translation of *Where I'm Calling from: New and Selected Stories*, a collection of short stories by Raymond Carver was published by People's Literature Press in 2009. According to news reports (Urban Express 2009; Shenzhen Special Zone Daily 2012), Tang Wei was then working as a research and development director at a Shanghai-based company. Beginning in 2006, he translated Carver's short stories and shared them serially on the blog "We Love Raymond Carver" and in the Douban group "Raymond Carver Fans," part of an emerging network of literature-oriented online communities. In interviews (Urban Express 2009; Shenzhen Special Zone Daily 2012), Tang identified three motivations for his translations: 1) to introduce Carver's works previously unavailable in China, 2) to correct perceived errors in earlier translations, and 3) to develop his translation skills for his own creative writing.

Tang's online visibility eventually attracted mainstream media attention. In 2008, he was interviewed by *Life Week*, whose associate editor-in-chief Miao Wei later introduced him to

People's Literature Press, leading to the print publication of *Where I'm Calling from: New and Selected Stories* in 2009. This collection comprises 37 short stories, 15 of which first appeared on *Douban* between 2007 and 2008. Tang's growing reputation also led Yilin Press to commission further works: *What We Talk about When We Talk about Love* (17 short stories, one previously shared on *Douban*) in 2010 and *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?* (22 short stories, 12 initially posted on *Douban*) in 2013.

Tang's translations, together with other contemporaneous amateur translations, received much media attention in the late 2010s and early 2010s. For example, *Beijing Daily* (2010) emphasized their shared characteristics (overseas experience, science education, and strong intrinsic motivation) and stressed the need to guide such translators toward professional standards. The following day, *Beijing News* highlighted how grassroots translators, driven by genuine literary interest, were revitalizing a declining field of literary translation. This surge of amateur activity unfolded against a backdrop of structural challenges in China's literary translation industry. The field faced chronic low remuneration, compressed timelines, a shortage of highly skilled literary translators, and inconsistent quality control. Typical translation fees ranged from 60 to 90 RMB (8–12 USD) per 1,000 words, a rate that has remained largely unchanged since the 1980s and mirrors the modest earnings of literary translators worldwide (Fock et al. 2008, 69). Such economic constraints make it difficult to sustain a livelihood solely through translation. Furthermore, in their pursuit of quick market turnover, publishers often press translators to work rapidly, further discouraging experienced professionals and compounding the sector's decline. In contrast, a new generation of educated Internet users, benefiting from China's long-term emphasis on English education, has increasingly taken up translation as an intellectually rewarding hobby. College students and young professionals, motivated by curiosity and cultural engagement, began publishing self-initiated translations on blogs and social platforms. Amid the contraction of professional literary translation, the online sphere became a site of creative growth and experimentation.

Against this background, the boundaries between the professional and amateur spheres have gradually blurred. For example, Yilin Press published Pan Pa's (a biochemistry PhD) online translation of *The House on Mango Street* in 2006 and later commissioned him to translate *A Christmas Memory* (2008). In the late 2000s, Shanghai Translation Publishing House, the country's largest translation-specialized press, launched a series of genre literature, about half translated by grassroots practitioners. These translators came from diverse professional backgrounds—software engineer Ding Ding Chong translated Japanese science fiction, and IT engineer Yao Xianghui focused on English spy novel and horror novel. Their deep affinity with specific genres often gave them an advantage over academically trained translators.

The republication of online translations in print and the integration of amateur translators into professional workflows thus played a significant role in revitalizing China's literary translation industry. By bridging grassroots creativity with institutional recognition, this hybrid

stage paved the way for new forms of participation and recruitment within the translation ecosystem.

3.3 Translation Crowdsourcing (from late 2000s and early 2010s)

From the late 2000s onward, literary translation in China entered a new phase characterized by the institutionalization of online participation. Publishers not only republished online amateur translations but also began to outsource translation tasks directly to online communities through crowdsourcing mechanisms. As Miguel A Jiménez-Crespo defines it, translation crowdsourcing entails “a call by an organization, institution, or collective to a large undefined online community to perform a translation task collaboratively” (2017, 18). This model may operate on either non-profit or commercial terms; in China, its evolution reveals a gradual shift from participatory volunteerism toward the marketization of collective translation labor.

The most influential example of this transition is Yeeyan, founded in 2006 as China’s largest online community of volunteer translators. Conceived as a platform to “discover, translate, and share the essence of foreign information to Chinese readers,” Yeeyan has grown into a hybrid socio-commercial model that combines community participation with professional publishing partnerships. By 9 August 2024, Yeeyan boasted 712,769 registered users, and had translated and e-published 472,614 articles along with 300 books in public domain (Yeeyan official website, <http://about.yeeyan.com/#/5>). While Yeeyan has garnered some scholarly attention (Yu 2022; Yang 2024), these studies have not specifically focused on its literary translation endeavors. The 2011 translation of *Steve Jobs* represents one of the initial cases illustrating how the paid translation crowdsourcing model operates within the realm of literary translation. The organizers, Yeeyan and CITIC Press, initially posted a call for translator recruitment online in July 2011. Following three rounds of evaluations, five translators (only two have language training background) were chosen from approximately 400 applicants to participate in the project.

Based on the afterword of the Chinese translation (Isaacson 2011), translator interviews (Hu 2011), and the coordinator Zhao Jiamin’s (2011) notes on the translation, the collaborative translation process unfolded as follows (see Figure 1). Yeeyan and the publisher received the English source texts in three installments and distributed different chapters to the translators based on their strengths. The translation progressed concurrently with the creation of the source content. The translators worked independently without direct communication, thus operating in parallel. They commenced translating in late August and completed their sections by early October. Throughout this period, they submitted their drafts chapter by chapter to Yeeyan and CITIC for review. The entire translation underwent multiple rounds of editing and proofreading by Yeeyan and the publisher between October 7th and 9th. “Apple4.us”, a group of Apple fans, voluntarily participated in the proofreading process. On October 11th, quality

control was conducted by numerous experienced editors from the publisher, with the final proof being completed the following day. This translation, comprising around 560,000 words, was finalized within a month and a half. It was ultimately released alongside the English original version on October 24, 2011, achieving instant bestseller status with over one million copies sold within 20 days (Liu 2013, 117).

Rather than highlighting mere operational speed, this case illustrates a reconfiguration of translation production within a networked economy: Yeeyan functioned as a mediator between the unpaid participatory culture it had fostered and the institutional demands of a commercial publisher. Although collaboration occurred under a crowdsourcing framework, the workflow remained hierarchically organized—divided into discrete segments, reviewed by platform editors, and finalized under the publisher’s quality control. Contributors worked independently rather than cooperatively, their individual outputs integrated through centralized editorial supervision. This structure departs from the egalitarian ethos of earlier online collaborations, illustrating that crowdsourcing appropriates collective enthusiasm within managerial logics of control and efficiency.

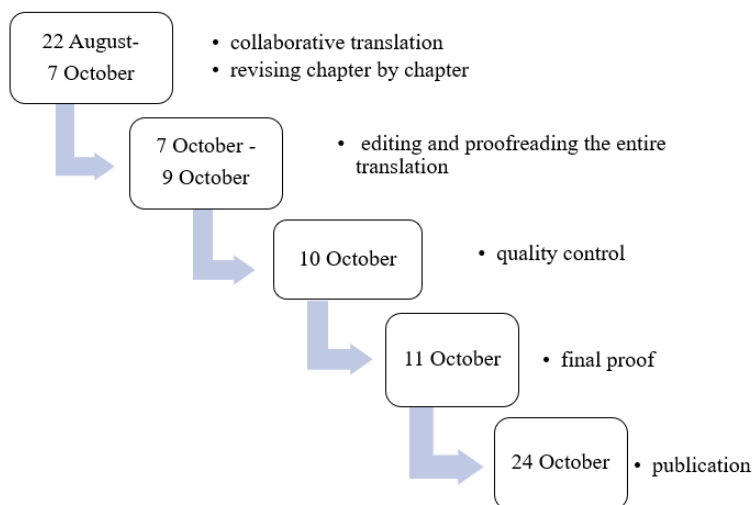


Figure 1: The Collaborative Translation Process of *Steve Jobs*

The collaborative translation process differs from the traditional professional translation practices that typically adhere to a linear “T-E-P” model (DePalma and Kelly 2011, 381). Similar to the online collaborative translation of short articles on Yeeyan, known for its cyclical approach within a linear translation and publication framework (Yu 2022, 86), the translation of *Steve Jobs* embodies both cyclical and linear elements, as revisions commenced during the translation process and even prior to the second round of translation. In contrast to Yu Chuan’s (2022, 87) findings about news translation in Yeeyan, where translators engaged in editing, revising, and proofreading each other’s work, the translators involved in the *Steve Jobs*

project worked independently. Yeeyan and the publisher assumed responsibility for editing, revising, and proofreading tasks. Consequently, the organizational structure is hierarchical and top-down, reflecting a typical model of paid translation crowdsourcing where control is centralized with the crowdsourcer (Jiménez-Crespo 2017, 21), leveraging the expertise of amateur translators.

Translation crowdsourcing presents a novel paradigm that has the potential to reshape traditional publication practices through features like online enlistment of grassroots translators, collaborative translation workflows, and streamlined, centralized project oversight. Within certain crowdsourcing frameworks, skilled professionals are remunerated at rates comparable to typical per-word charges, a concept recognized as “professional paid crowdsourcing” (Jiménez-Crespo 2021, 401). Ignacio García (2015) introduces the term “cloud marketplaces” to depict organizations that provide their network of professional translators as a “crowdsourcing community.” The *Steve Jobs* project thus demonstrates not merely a technical innovation in coordinating large-scale translation online but also a paradigm shift in the power dynamics of cultural production. Translators who had once constituted the periphery of the literary field such as volunteers and enthusiasts became instrumentalized as flexible labor within institutional projects. What began as a community-driven movement of knowledge democratization evolved into a platform-based labor regime responsive to commercial imperatives.

The progression from freely shared fan or volunteer translations (e.g., Xiao Mao’s individual initiatives or group translations of popular fiction) to corporate-led, remunerated projects (e.g., Yeeyan’s collaboration with CITIC Press) signifies a systemic repositioning of online translation within China’s broader platform economy. This transformation parallels developments in Internet literature, where participatory creativity was likewise professionalized and monetized. Translation crowdsourcing, in this sense, not only redefines production models but also restructures the translator’s agency, situating digital collaboration at the intersection of community engagement and market exploitation.

3.4 Global dissemination of Chinese Internet Literature (from mid-2010s)

The mid-2010s mark a decisive reversal in translation direction: from inbound translations introducing foreign works into China to outbound translations projecting Chinese digital culture globally. This transformation coincides with the state’s broader “Chinese Culture Going Global” strategy, in which translation becomes an explicit instrument of cultural diplomacy and soft power (Jiang 2021). The deployment of Internet literature within this policy framework signals a shift from spontaneous cultural participation to state-endorsed global storytelling.

Two emblematic platforms, Wuxiaworld (founded 2014) and Webnovel (launched 2017), illustrate a continuum from grassroots autonomy to institutional consolidation. Wuxiaworld

began as a fan-driven translation initiative organized by the Chinese-American translator Lai jingping, who sought to share Chinese web fiction with an international readership. Within a few years, the site evolved from an informal community into a professionalized, commercial platform, hosting 64 English-language translations of Chinese novels (and 46 of Korean titles) by August 2024. Its remarkable popularity demonstrates that the global circulation of Chinese Internet literature was initiated not by policy institutions but by participatory translation networks that converted fandom into transnational cultural capital.

Encouraged by this grassroots translation initiatives in Chinese Internet literature, China Literature Ltd. launched Webnovel in May 2017 as the global counterpart to *Qidian*. This marked the inception of an “official channel” for disseminating translated online fiction (Shao et al. 2018, 121). Unlike fan-based platforms like Wuxiaworld, which require collaboration with original copyright holders, Webnovel operates within a fully integrated publishing infrastructure, drawing upon China Literature’s extensive intellectual property portfolio. By the end of 2023, the platform hosted about 3,800 translated online works available on WebNovel (Chinese Social Science, 2024). The contrast between Wuxiaworld’s participatory translation culture and Webnovel’s institutionalized production model encapsulates the absorption of grassroots infrastructures into corporate and state frameworks, a process visible across China’s digital culture industries.

Governmental policy has actively supported this outward movement. The State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film, and Television (SAPPRFT) (2014) issued guidelines to promote the global dissemination of Chinese Internet literature. Later initiatives, such as the 2024 forum themed “Global Circulation of Chinese Good Stories,” further consolidated translation’s symbolic and economic significance within national cultural policy. Such institutional encouragement has domesticated the once-grassroots practice of online translation, transforming it into a state-sanctioned vehicle of cultural soft power. Empirical data affirm this strategic success. According to the 2023 Report on Chinese Internet Literature (Chinese Social Science 2024), Webnovel reached 300 million overseas users by the end of 2023 and generated 4 billion RMB (approximately 0.5 billion USD) in overseas market revenue. This report also frames Internet literature as “a platform for mass participation and global co-creation,” celebrating it as a new “cultural calling card” for narrating Chinese stories to international audiences. As Jiang Mengying observes, the increasing global appeal of Chinese online literature prompts policymakers to recognize it as “an instrument of Chinese soft power” and a component of cultural diplomacy (2021, 900). This recognition underscores that Chinese online literature has the capacity to enhance the global presence of Chinese culture, display China’s cultural confidence, and facilitate cultural exchange. Consequently, online literary translation has transitioned from grassroots amateur endeavors to state-sponsored and supported cultural diplomacy initiatives.

This stage reveals the culmination of a long-term institutionalization process traced

throughout the previous sections. In the early 2000s, amateur translators established small niches of resistance and creativity outside established publishing circuits. By the late 2000s, publishers began repositioning these communities as potential labor reservoirs through re-publishing and crowdsourcing initiatives. In the mid-2010s, with the rise of Wuxiaworld and Webnovel, translation became both a commercial export mechanism and a geopolitical tool, signaling the transition from individualized participation to state-aligned platform production. Taken together, these four developmental stages—ranging from grassroots voluntarism to institutionalized mediation, and ultimately to policy-driven globalization—map the progressive integration of online literary translation into broader regimes of digital labor and cultural governance. This trajectory situates cases such as the *Steve Jobs* project or Yeeyan’s collaborations not as isolated phenomena but as points along an evolving continuum in which translation practices mirror and materially enact the shifting power relations between community creativity, market logics, and state cultural strategy.

4. Reflections on the Translation Profession

Online literary translation occupies a distinctive position within the broader framework of non-professional interpreting and translation (NPIT) (Antonini et al. 2017). Digital and media technologies have enabled ordinary individuals to self-publish translations online, embodying the “democratizing potential” (Stenberg 2018, 583) of the shift from professional to non-professional translation. While some scholars express concerns that such practices might devalue the translation profession by depicting translation as a task requiring little formal training (McDonough Dolmaya 2011, 104) and could potentially lead to status anxiety among professionals due to “demonetization” or even “de-professionalization” (Cronin 2013, 136), the cases examined in this study suggest a more nuanced picture. Online literary translation not only democratizes cultural participation but also fosters pathways of professionalization, with non-professional translators evolving into recognized practitioners. The case of Wuxiaworld exemplifies that online literary translation can constitute an alternative route to professionalization. As Ji Yunfei notes, Wuxiaworld translators initially operated as enthusiasts who freely selected source texts (often without copyright authorization) and posted serialized translations for community readership (2019, 106). As the platform’s popularity surged, these translators began to generate income from advertising revenue and reader donations, while also being expected to maintain a rapid release schedule (ibid.). Collaborations with copyright holders formalized the model further, establishing a paid “early-access” system that allowed sponsors or VIP members to read unreleased chapters in advance (Cao 2021, 157). By 2018, with stable remuneration and legal licensing structures in place, nearly all Wuxiaworld translators had become full-time professional employees (Ji 2019, 107). This trajectory demonstrates that online participation and fan labor can foster sustainable translation careers, transforming

“prosumers” into cultural professionals through market legitimation.

Similarly, the professional journey of Xiao Mao illustrates another form of transition, from digital amateurism to formal professionalism in the offline publishing sector. His online translations (2000–2004) gained widespread attention and eventually attracted commercial publishers. By 2004, he left his day job to pursue full-time translation and produced over sixty literary translations for Mainland publishers and two for Taiwan between 2005 and 2018 (Chen 2021, 34). During his early online phase, Xiao Mao lacked professional training and remuneration. Upon entering the print industry, he redefined his role as a freelance professional, adhering to editorial norms and living from translation income. These transformations highlight that online literary translation operates as a transitional space enabling non-professionals to acquire credibility, networks, and career opportunities.

O’Hagan (2008) and David Orrego-Carmona (2014) both observe that fan translation environments, especially those built around audiovisual and literary content, serve as training grounds where aspiring translators develop practical competencies. From a socio-constructivist perspective, Jiménez-Crespo argues that crowdsourced or collaborative forms of translation cultivate translation competence through interaction, negotiation, and community feedback, suggesting that these spaces could be integrated into formal education as experimental learning contexts (2017, 238). In this sense, non-professional translation does not necessarily compete with professional practice; rather, it can complement and precede it, functioning as a preparatory stage where skills such as textual adaptation, audience awareness, and intercultural mediation are refined through informal, peer-regulated practice.

Training is indeed a cornerstone of professionalization, yet the trajectories of online literary translators illustrate that formal credentials alone are insufficient. Beyond institutional education, long-term engagement, linguistic self-learning, and personal devotion play crucial roles. Figures such as Xiao Mao and Tang Wei exemplify this pattern: both cultivated deep literary sensibilities long before translating professionally. Xiao Mao, despite limited English proficiency when first translating E. B. White’s novels in the early 2000s, pursued steady self-education to improve his linguistic competence. Tang Wei’s twenty-year residence in the United States and enduring passion for Chinese fiction likewise nurtured his bilingual literacy and cultural perspective. Such cases demonstrate that lifelong self-directed learning and sustained literary affinity are vital to developing professional-level translation competence outside traditional classroom settings.

The motivations of these translators often align with those of fan translators, whose activities are driven by admiration for source authors and a desire to share cherished texts with broader audiences. Their practice constitutes a form of participatory cultural engagement underpinned by passion rather than profit. This resonates with Rakefet Sela-Sheffy’s study of elite literary translators in Israel, whose narratives reveal an “inner urge and self-distinction” rooted in lifelong devotion to literature (2010, 59). These translators often voice skepti-

cism toward formal training, valuing inspiration, aesthetic sensitivity, and intellectual curiosity above institutional credentials (67–68). A similar affective discourse permeates the self-representations of non-professional translators, for whom translation signifies a labor of love sustained by intrinsic motivation and community recognition.

The rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI), particularly neural machine translation (NMT) and large language models (LLMs), is transforming the sociotechnical ecology of online translation. According to the 2024 Report on Chinese Internet Literature” (Chinese Social Science 2025), more than 3,200 new AI-translated works were added to the Webnovel platform, accounting for nearly half of all Chinese works translated on the site. The adoption of AI translation technology has increased translation efficiency nearly one hundredfold and reduced costs by over 90 percent, thereby accelerating the global dissemination of Chinese online literature (Chinese Social Science 2025). While earlier stages of online literary translation in China evolved through human collaboration and crowdsourcing, current practices increasingly integrate AI as a co-translator, editor, or productivity tool. The use of AI technology has blurred the boundaries between human and machine-assisted translation, influencing how translators construct professional expertise.

This transition reconfigures perceptions of authorship and labor. Translations produced collaboratively with AI challenge conventional notions of individual creativity and professional authority, raising questions about ethical crediting and the commodification of volunteer labor. From a pedagogical perspective, AI’s integration into online translation practices offers both challenges and opportunities. Translator training increasingly requires cultivating critical machine literacy, the ability to assess, edit, and ethically employ AI outputs rather than to resist technological mediation (Bowker and Ciro 2019). Future translation pedagogy may situate AI-assisted online environments as authentic learning spaces where students develop hybrid competencies combining linguistic sensitivity, technological awareness, and collaborative ethics (Sun et al. 2025). In this sense, online volunteer translation functions as an informal laboratory for adaptive translator education in the AI era.

The fusion of online participatory translation and AI technologies demands a re-examination of how translation competence is defined and developed. Traditional curricula emphasizing individual craftsmanship are giving way to models of collaborative, technology-mediated learning. In the Chinese context, volunteer translation communities such as Yeeyan exemplify that learners develop professional-level skills through non-formal, socially motivated environments that now increasingly involve AI tools. Incorporating such hybrid platforms into formal translator education may help bridge the gap between academic instruction and digital-era practice, nurturing translators who can navigate both human and AI-driven environments with critical literacy.

5. Conclusion

Digital media technologies have fundamentally reshaped the ecology of translation, empowering ordinary enthusiasts to translate and self-publish online. These non-professional practices are not peripheral but structurally transformative, redefining what translation is, who performs it, and where it circulates. Although previous research on online translation has predominantly examined multimedia genres, this study has sought to address the under-examined field of online literary translation. By tracing its historical evolution in China through four key stages—freely shared online translations, print re-publications, paid translation crowdsourcing, and the outbound translation of Chinese internet literature—the study demonstrates that online literary translation has gradually evolved from grassroots cultural participation into institutionalized, commercial, and state-endorsed activity. This trajectory illuminates the shifting power dynamics between non-professional translation communities and formalized publishing or policy systems in contemporary China.

The cases examined in this study reveal that online literary translators embody the democratizing potential of online non-professional translation while simultaneously paving new professional pathways. Their journeys from voluntary contributors to full-time practitioners illustrate how digital platforms can bridge amateur and professional spheres, creating spaces for skill development, recognition, and career formation. This study contributes to the growing body of research that re-evaluates non-professional translation not as a threat but as a catalyst for professional diversification and renewal (Antonini et al. 2017, 11). The presence of online literary translation also prompts contemplation on factors beyond formal training that contribute to becoming a literary translator. It further highlights that the making of a literary translator depends not only on formal training but also on lifelong self-learning, sustained engagement with literature, and affective commitment—factors that challenge conventional models of professionalization.

While the findings offer a comprehensive socio-historical account of Chinese online literary translation, they are not universally generalizable. The study's focus on Chinese-language platforms—such as Yeeyan, Webnovel, and Douban—necessarily limits its scope to one specific socio-technical and cultural context. To expand the analytical horizon, future research might undertake comparative studies of online literary translation across different cultural and geopolitical settings. Such inquiry could test the applicability of the proposed four-stage evolutionary model, revealing both convergent and divergent trajectories in other linguistic environments. The evolution of online literary translation in China reflects broader transformations in global cultural production—the interplay between technology, creativity, and institutional regulation in the digital age. As AI-assisted platforms and participatory communities continue to blur the line between professional and non-professional translation, future pedagogy and research must recognize online environments as dynamic spaces of innovation, learning, and professional redefinition.

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Audio Description on the Internet: A Data-Driven Review of Eight Chinese Online Media Platforms

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Abstract

By transforming visual information into verbal narration, audio description (AD) has been usually studied as a form of audiovisual translation and inter-semiotic translation. AD enhances the accessibility of audiovisual content for individuals with visual impairments and contribute to broader social inclusion. In the era of new media, AD consumption has increasingly shifted online. Yet, within the Chinese context, the scope and characteristics of AD provision across internet platforms remain largely unexplored. This study undertakes a systematic mapping of AD resources available on the Chinese internet. Data were collected from eight representative local media platforms between January 2016 and April 2024, resulting in a database of more than 1,400 AD products that documents both meta-information and contextual details. Findings reveal that over 80% of AD output was screen-based, around 10% addressed static forms such as pictures, and less than 1% covered live events. More than one-third of AD products were created by amateurs, about one-third were clips rather than full-length films, and roughly one-third were audio-only without accompanying images. These results highlight both the growth and imbalance of AD provision in China, reflecting its voluntary and promotional nature as well as the particularist perspectives on accessibility held by many practitioners. The study reveals an expanding yet uneven landscape of AD

across Chinese media platforms and underscores the need for practitioners and policymakers to extend AD beyond screen-based formats, promote inclusive dissemination strategies, and strengthen public awareness of AD's cultural and social value in advancing social inclusion.

1. Introduction

China is home to the largest number of people with disabilities in the world (Tor-Carroggio and Casas-Tost 2020; Wu and Xie 2015). Audio description (AD), a crucial media accessibility service that renders images into verbal words for individuals with visual impairments, has been gaining attention in China, and AD courses have been offered both within and outside of educational institutions (e.g., Yan and Luo 2022; Ye and Jie 2023). In addition, the internet has greatly facilitated the distribution of AD in China (Ai 2023; *People's Daily Online* 2020). The Chinese online media platform Bilibili reportedly has 272 million active monthly users (Bilibili 2021). However, the status quo of AD provision on the Chinese mainland remains unclear. The current study, which is based on a self-constructed database documenting AD resources across eight Chinese media platforms, provides empirical evidence outlining the landscape of AD provision on the Chinese mainland.

2. Literature review

2.1 AD in Translation Studies

Accessibility has become a pressing global concern. The World Health Organization (2011) reported that more than one billion people—around 15% of the world's population—live with some form of disability. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) underscores the principle that individuals with disabilities should be able to live independently and participate fully in society. Article 30 specifically affirms their right to “access to television programmes, films, theatre and other cultural activities, in accessible formats” (United Nations 2006). As Greco (2016) argues, enhancing accessibility is essential to protecting human dignity and ensuring equal rights.

Within Translation Studies, accessibility has increasingly attracted scholarly attention, particularly in the domain of audiovisual translation. This interest began to take shape in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Greco and Jankowska 2020). audiovisual translation has been described as “mainly concerned with the transfer of multimodal and multimedia speech (dialogue, monologue, comments, etc.) into another language/culture” (Gambier 2013, 45). Gambier (2003, 179) emphasized that “the key word in screen translation is now accessibility”. Expanding on this perspective, Greco and Jankowska (2020, 64) defined media accessibility as “access to media and non-media objects, services and environments through media solutions,

for any person who cannot or would not be able to, either partially or completely, access them in their original form”.

AD is one of the most representative accessibility services. Mazur (2020, 227) characterizes AD as “audio commentary that describes the visual elements of a work (as well as meaningful sounds that may not be clear to the target audience), so that the work constitutes a coherent whole for the audience”. Research in the United Kingdom shows that most people with visual impairments are elderly, as vision loss is often age-related (Fryer 2016). This makes AD particularly important in aging societies. Moreover, while AD is primarily designed for individuals with visual impairments, its usefulness extends to other groups, including older adults with cognitive decline, viewers who struggle with fast-moving images, immigrants, people with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and language learners (Mazur 2020; Perego 2016; Remael et al. 2015). As Fryer (2020, 3) notes, AD can also benefit sighted audiences “who want to be able to follow audiovisual material while their visual attention is occupied elsewhere or for those who need help in focusing their visual attention”.

AD can be conceptualized as a form of intersemiotic translation. Jakobson (1959) defined intersemiotic translation as the interpretation of verbal signs through nonverbal systems, whereas AD involves “the conversion of non-verbal signs into words” (Díaz-Cintas 2005, 4). Compared with other translation practices, AD has a relatively short history. Its formal recognition as an accessibility service dates back to the 1980s in the United States (Mazur 2020; Snyder 2014). Since then, AD has been increasingly acknowledged as a vital tool for enabling disadvantaged groups to access media and exercise their basic rights (Leung 2019; Packer and Kirchner 1997; Udo and Fels 2009; Yan and Luo 2019). The growing demand for trained audio describers and AD products highlights its expanding relevance in contemporary society.

2.2 AD development in China

China has the largest population of visually impaired individuals in the world (Wu and Xie 2015). According to Ma (2020), 20 million people in China have visual impairments, and this figure is increasing by 100,000 per year. Despite the country’s large user base, AD was introduced relatively late in China, as it was provided for the first time in 2009 in Shanghai with a live session for a film (Liu et al. 2022). In contrast, pioneering Western countries such as the US, the UK, and Spain introduced AD as early as the 1980s. The late adoption of AD in China is partly because Chinese individuals who live with disabilities rarely advocate for their rights (Tor-Carroggio 2020a).

Leung (2019) suggested that the majority of AD provision in Hong Kong was live AD for films. This is similar to the situation on the Chinese mainland, where AD is mainly provided for films (Tor-Carroggio and Casas-Tost 2020). Unlike in other parts of the world where AD has been studied as a subfield of audiovisual translation, in China, AD is usually

considered to be closely linked to radio broadcasting. For example, in Shanghai, where Chinese AD development was pioneered, the majority of audio describers are professional radio broadcasters who can speak perfect Standard Chinese (Ma 2020; Tor-Carroggio and Vercauteren 2020).

Tor-Carroggio (2020b) highlighted two important reasons to promote AD in China:

- 1) China has the world's largest population of individuals with disabilities, and
- 2) the country is currently experiencing demographic aging, with the elderly population estimated to constitute 30

These factors highlight the urgency of accessibility issues, as disability is often closely associated with aging.

China has been a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) since 2006 (United Nations 2006). Article 30 of the UNCRPD serves as the legal framework for AD, and it requires all member states to take appropriate measures to ensure that people living with disabilities have access to the following:

- a) cultural materials in accessible formats;
- b) television programs, films, theater, and other cultural activities in accessible formats;
- c) places for cultural performances or services, such as theaters, museums, cinemas, libraries, and tourism services in accessible formats; and
- d) as far as possible, access to monuments and sites of national cultural importance.

However, the development of AD still relies heavily on volunteers at the grassroots level, and AD provision is not mandatory on the Chinese mainland (Liu 2023a; Tor-Carroggio and Casas-Tost 2020).

Copyright is the most important and urgent problem that hinders Chinese AD development (Liu 2023a). Although some organizations in China are producing AD for the market and selling AD products at relatively low prices, their annual production is low, and the films are usually outdated because only compact discs (CDs) with purchased copyrights can be marketed (Tor-Carroggio and Casas-Tost 2020). Several measures have been adopted to circumvent copyright restrictions. For example, when audio-described films are uploaded to Youku and other audio-sharing platforms such as Ximalaya FM to reach a wider audience, typically, only the film's soundtrack and the AD soundtrack are provided, and the images are omitted. Furthermore, some organizations in China create AD solely for people with visual impairments, not for the public. These productions are encrypted and require a password to access; the password is sometimes the Disability Certificate Number issued by the government, which identifies the person and the type and level of disability (Ye and Jie 2023).

Accessing AD online through video apps is a popular choice for individuals with visual impairments in China. Important online media platforms (e.g., Youku, Xigua Video) and apps (e.g., Listen to the World, Barrier-Free Films and Television) provide opportunities for people to access audiovisual materials without leaving home (Ye and Jie 2023). This is particularly important in China, where disability is still a stigma and people with disabilities are often reluctant to advocate for their rights (Zhang 2017).

Currently, regulations such as the *Regulation on Protection of the Right of Communication through Information Networks* (信息網絡傳播權保護條例) address the waiver of copyright grants for people with visual impairments, but they only cover written text, not audiovisual products. As a result, the production of prerecorded, barrier-free films usually relies on copyright holders granting copyright permission free of charge (Ye and Jie 2023). Positive changes were introduced in 2021 when the Marrakesh VIP Treaty was enacted to facilitate access to works for people with partial or total sight loss or other print disabilities. *The Copyright Law of the People's Republic of China* (中華人民共和國著作權法) was amended, with the addition of an exemption to enable the provision of published works in accessible formats, including audiovisual products, for people with print disabilities. Liu (2023a, 120) believed that these two laws “should play a key role in providing a more adequate legal framework for AD standardisation in China”.

2.3 Studies of AD in China

In their literature review, Tor-Carroggio and Casas-Tost (2020) suggested that AD was almost nonexistent as an object of study in China, with the limited number of studies mainly being descriptive. Since 2020, a few researchers (e.g., Ai 2023; Tor-Carroggio and Vercauteren 2020; Liu 2023a) have published articles on Chinese AD in internationally recognized journals, but these researchers typically adopted qualitative research methods. Some studies (e.g., Tor-Carroggio 2020a; Tor-Carroggio 2020b; Tor-Carroggio and Casas-Tost 2020; Liu 2023b; Liu et al. 2022; Liu et al. 2023) have focused on the stakeholders in Chinese AD, such as AD users and Chinese audio describers, as well as Chinese AD products.

For example, Tor-Carroggio (2020a) studied AD users in China, using a questionnaire to investigate Chinese AD users' background information, their satisfaction with the current AD service in China, and their expectations for the industry. Tor-Carroggio (2020b) used an experimental method to investigate Chinese AD users' reception of the application of text-to-speech synthesizers in voicing Chinese AD. The results showed that Chinese users generally preferred human voices to text-to-speech voices, but they also welcomed the use of such technology.

Tor-Carroggio and Casas-Tost (2020) investigated the profiles of Chinese audio describers by conducting a questionnaire survey in Shanghai, Beijing, and Guangzhou, and found that the profession lacked professional training and accreditation in China. Tor-Carroggio

and Vercauteren (2020) compared Chinese and Western AD guidelines by conducting an interview-based study with professionals who were involved in the drafting of AD guidelines for different areas in China. They found that China still advocated for objectivity as a necessary characteristic of quality AD, whereas Europe was transitioning from the subjective/objective dichotomy.

Another stream of research on Chinese AD pertains to the linguistic features of Chinese AD, such as how Chinese AD differs linguistically from AD in other languages, and the translation of AD into Chinese as a means of creating AD. For example, Liu et al. (2022) adopted a corpus-based method to investigate eight ADs for different languages (Chinese and Spanish) in terms of content selection, information load, and level of interpretation. Liu et al. (2023) advocated for the translation of AD from Spanish into Chinese by proposing a set of guidelines for such localization based on a corpus study, interviews with Chinese AD providers, a reception study with end-users, and participant observations via a field study.

Liu (2023a) conducted semi-structured interviews with six Chinese AD providers; the author summarized the status quo of AD practice in China and identified the challenges in Chinese AD based on the professionals' feedback. Liu (2023b) conducted a study of Chinese AD users' reception of three AD versions of one film: one that was drafted in Chinese, one that was translated from Spanish, and one that was translated and localized into Chinese. The results revealed that the AD that was drafted in Chinese was the most popular, followed by the localized and translated versions.

Studies published in international and domestic journals have had different focuses; in particular some recent studies that were published in Chinese (e.g., Lu and Li 2022; Yan and Luo 2019; Zhan 2023) have located AD within media accessibility studies in translation research. However, the traditional approach to studying Chinese AD has been to view it from a communication studies perspective by examining AD under the broad term "barrier-free communication." This involves investigating its history, profiling users, identifying problems, calling for more attention to be paid to this service (e.g., Li 2013; Pan and Li 2013), reviewing relevant legislation (e.g., Li and Xiong 2019), and discussing copyright concerns regarding this service (e.g., Yan 2022). A comprehensive review of the literature revealed a lack of studies mapping the status quo of Chinese AD provision from a quantitative perspective. Therefore, the extent of AD provision and the features of distribution of AD remain unexplored.

3. Method

This study is based on a self-constructed database and is designed to address the following research questions:

1. What are the patterns and trends in the availability of AD products on the Chinese internet?

2.How does the provision of different types of AD (e.g., screen AD, static AD, and live AD) vary on the Chinese internet?

3.What are the characteristics of the films that have been audio-described on the Chinese internet?

A team of six people, which consisted of the principal investigator, one research assistant, and four student helpers, compiled the database. A preliminary search was conducted at the beginning of the project to identify platforms that offered AD products, and eight platforms were selected for more in-depth investigation. Information about these eight platforms is presented in Table 1.

Although some platforms (e.g., Bilibili) only support video files and do not allow creators to upload audio-only files, creators can circumvent this restriction by providing a static picture as the video content. Of the eight platforms, only WeChat allows creators to upload either audio or video files. Although the eight platforms are not all of the platforms in China, we believe that they are representative and can provide meaningful findings regarding AD provision on the Chinese mainland.

Table 1: The Eight Online Media Platforms Studied

No.	Platform name (in alphabetical order)	Video or audio
1	Bilibili	Video
2	Dragonfly FM	Audio
3	iQiYi	Video
4	Missevan	Audio
5	WeChat	Video and audio
6	Xigua Video	Video
7	Ximalaya	Audio
8	Youku	Video

For each item documented in the database, we identified 17 properties, which are enumerated in Table 2. Some properties are open-ended, while a list of predetermined variables was provided for others.

Table 2: Information Collected and Documented in the Database

No.	Items recorded	Variables
1	Name of the release platform	a) Bilibili
		b) Dragonfly FM
		c) iQiYi
		d) Missevan
		e) WeChat
		f) Xigua Video

No.	Items recorded	Variables
		g) Ximalaya
		h) Youku
2	AD creator	-
3	Year the AD was produced	-
4	Location where the AD was uploaded	-
5	Name of the work being described	-
6	Type of work	a) Television program
		b) Television series
		c) Film
		d) Advertisement
		e) Static picture
		f) Internet video
		g) Live event
7	Country/region of work release	-
8	Year the work was produced	-
9	Genre (films/TV series only)	-
10	AD origin: original/sourced	a) Original
		b) Sourced from elsewhere
11	Producer: professional/amateur	a) Professional
		b) Amateur
12	Language of the AD	-
13	Completeness of the work	a) Complete
		b) Incomplete (clip)
14	Audio only / with images	a) Audio only
		b) With images
15	AD script provided	a) Script provided
		b) No script provided
16	Web link to the AD product	-
17	Remarks	-

Over more than a year of collective effort, the research team retrieved and recorded a total of 1,428 records. The following sections provide the analysis, followed by a discussion of the findings.

4. Results

In total, 1,428 records were documented in the database. The timeline for the release of the ADs is illustrated in Figure 1. AD production reached its initial peak in 2018 but experienced a significant decline in 2019. However, since 2019, AD production has shown a consistent increase, reaching its highest level in 2023. The production figures for 2024 appear low because the data were only collected up to April in that the year. The results regarding the

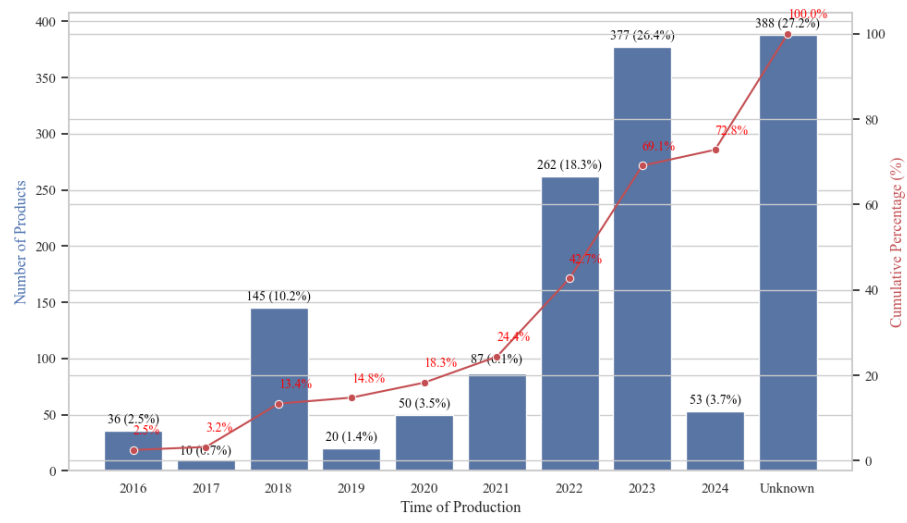


Figure 1: The Time the AD Was Released

platforms on which the ADs were released are presented in Figure 2. WeChat was the platform with the most ADs, followed by Youku and Bilibili.

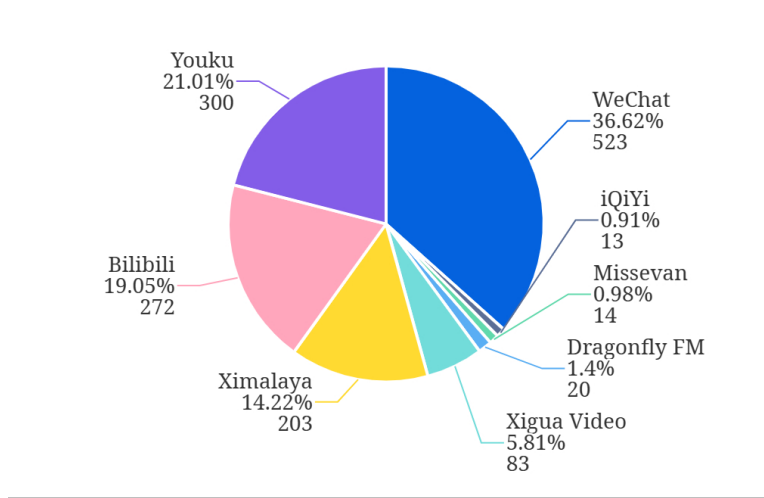


Figure 2: The Platforms on Which the AD Productions Were Released

Regarding AD types, we found that most of the audio-described products were films, followed by television series and static pictures. Combined films and television series accounted for 84.5% of all the AD products. Adopting the categories of dynamic AD and static AD provided by ADLAB Pro, we found that only 9.5% were static images, while the remaining 90.5% were dynamic. The categories for film and television series followed those provided by Douban (<https://www.douban.com>). Television programs were differentiated from television series in this study, as the former may include talk shows, interviews, news programs, and the like. We categorized self-made videos that were not included on the Douban database as internet videos. The details are presented in Figure 3. Films were the main type

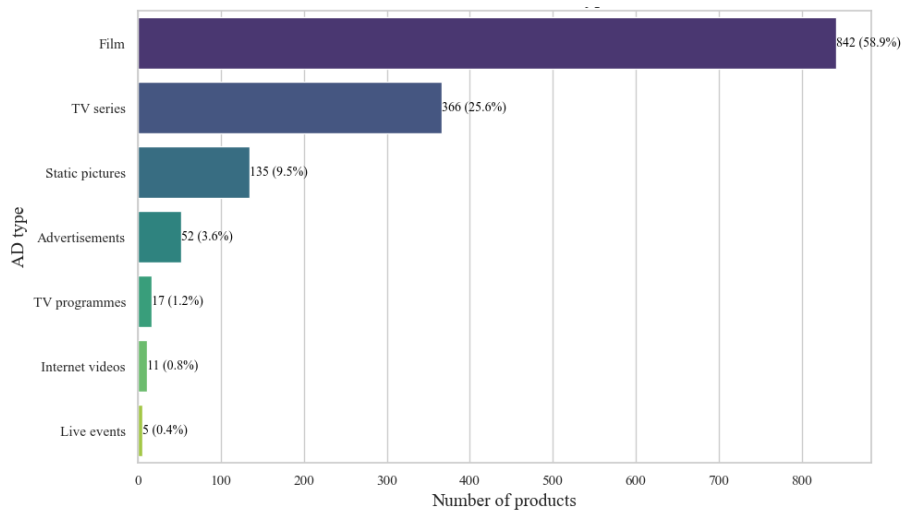


Figure 3: Distribution of AD Types

of audiovisual product being described. A descriptive analysis was conducted to determine the original production location of these films. Regarding the place of origin, if a film was a joint product involving two or more countries or regions, each region/country was counted once; therefore, the total percentage added up to more than 100%. The results revealed that most of the audio-described films were produced on the Chinese mainland, accounting for 68.4%, followed by the US, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region in China, and France. The results are presented in Figure 4. For ease of reading, only the top 10 areas are listed, and all of the other areas are categorized as “others.” We also analyzed the years in which the films were released. We found that 46% of the films were released in the 2010s, followed by the 2000s (16.4%). Interestingly, 4.9% of the films were produced in the 1950s, which was greater than the percentages of films produced in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Information about the year of production was collected from Douban (<https://www.douban.com>). Some films could not be found on Douban or elsewhere on the internet; these were marked as “unknown” in the database. The details are presented in Figure 5 below. The genres of

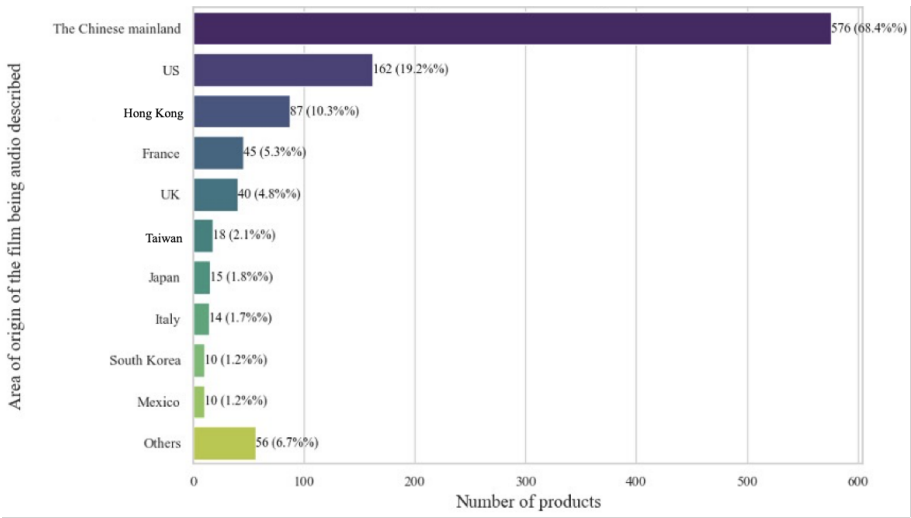


Figure 4: The Origins of the Films Being Audio-Described

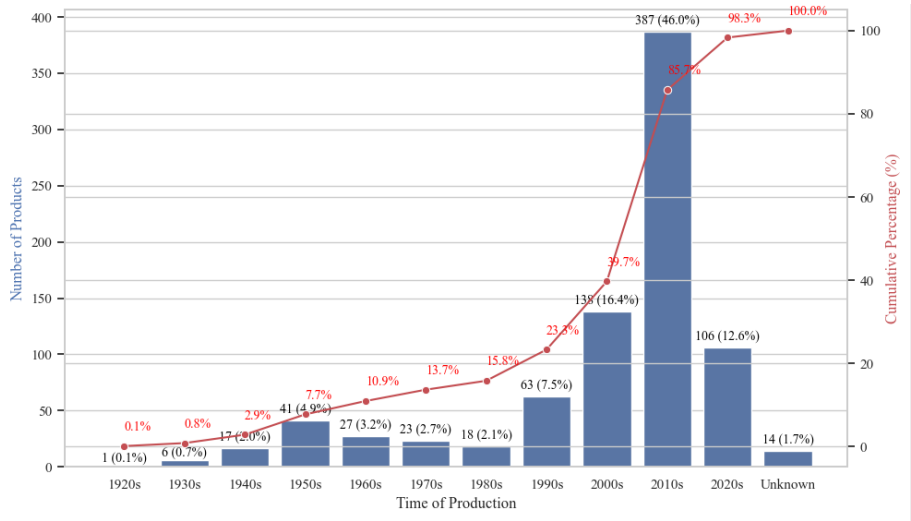


Figure 5: The Year the Film Being Described Was Produced

the films with AD were also analyzed; the genre information was collected from Douban (<https://www.douban.com>). For a film with multiple genre tags, each genre was counted once. Therefore, the total percentage added up to more than 100%. We found that dramas (59%) were described most frequently, followed by comedies (20.8%) and romances (17.5%). The details are provided in Figure 6 below. In total, 32 genres were identified. For ease of reading, only the top 10 genres are listed in Figure 6. Some of the AD products that were uploaded to these platforms were not original works created by the posters themselves; they were sourced from other platforms, with or without the permission of the original creator. For example, we found that some of the AD films on Bilibili were sourced from Netflix, which is not accessible on

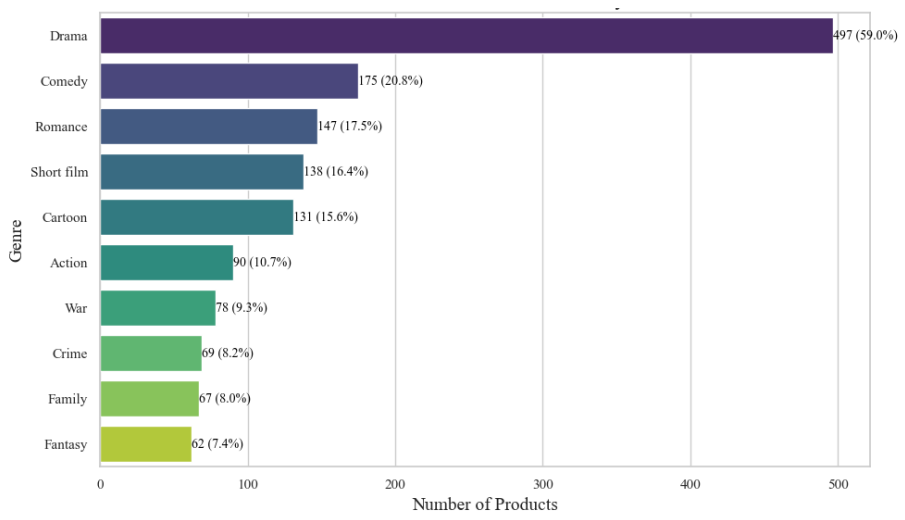


Figure 6: Distribution of Genres of the Audio-Described Films

the Chinese mainland. The materials that were sourced from Netflix retained the audio but deleted the video, probably for copyright reasons, with a static image or an advertising poster for the film used as the video content. In addition, some creators had multiple accounts on different platforms and uploaded the same work to these platforms. In such cases, all of the duplications were marked as originals. Commonly sourced sites included Netflix, RTHK, and YouTube.

Some interesting findings were revealed when we compared the sources of the different types of AD works. For example, most of the AD works for films and television series on the Chinese internet were created by the posters themselves. This was also the case for static pictures. However, the percentage sourced from elsewhere was over 20% for advertisements and internet videos. All of the live events that were found online were sourced from elsewhere. The results are presented in Figure 7 below. In addition to the specific counts for each type of AD production, the percentage that each type represented among all of the original or externally sourced AD productions is presented in parentheses. Another dichotomous label that we adopted in the database pertained to the professionalism of the AD produced. For instance, some of the AD productions that we found online were produced by students who were assigned such tasks for learning purposes. Some ADs were recorded using a mobile phone, resulting in poor sound quality, and the describer occasionally made mistakes. These products were labeled as “amateur” because there was no mechanism for ensuring AD quality. Professional AD is usually a product of collective efforts, as it not only requires careful scripting following certain guidelines but also involves a professional studio setting to ensure voice quality and professional sound editing (e.g., Fryer 2016). The results are presented in Figure 8. For television series, television programs, advertisements, static pictures, and live

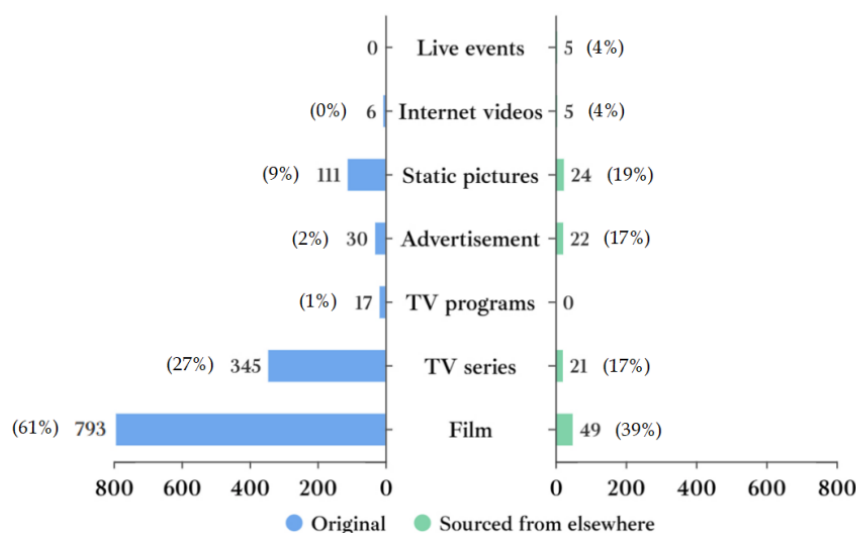


Figure 7: Composition of the AD Work Sources Across Different Types of Media

events, more than 80% of the ADs were professionally produced. However, a large percentage of the ADs that were produced for films were produced by amateurs, and amateur productions outnumbered professional productions for internet videos. Figure 8 presents the percentages of professional or amateur productions for each media type. Some films were described in

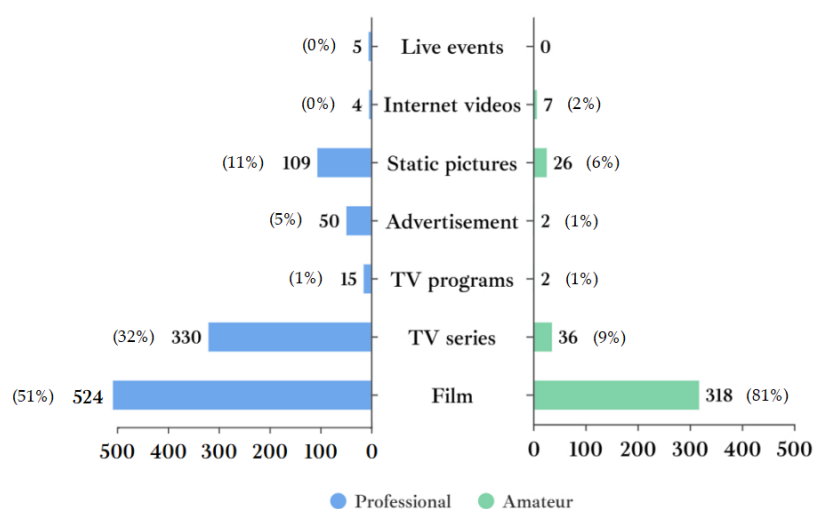


Figure 8: Professional and Amateur AD Works for Different Media Types

their entirety, lasting as long as 2 hours, while others were edited and only described for a clip as short as 3-5 minutes. The efforts that the audio describers expended on clips versus the entire film could be vastly different. Therefore, we also analyzed whether the described film was only a clip or the full film. The results are presented in Figure 9 below. The database also

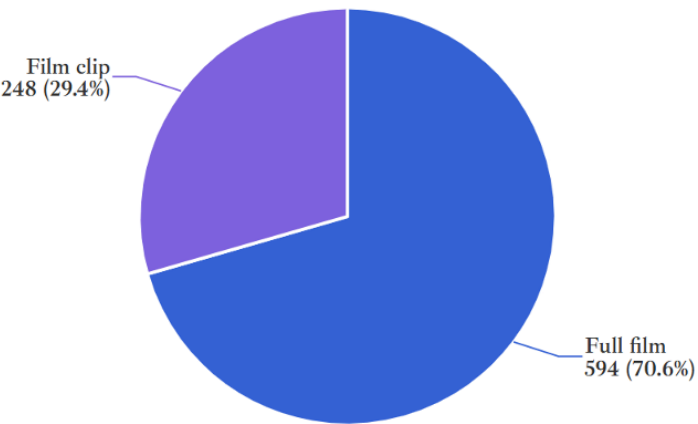


Figure 9: Distribution of Fully Described Films versus Clips

allowed us to investigate the percentage of AD that was provided with images. AD can exist as audio only or as both audio and visuals. The latter can be considered to be more inclusive, as sighted people can also use it, and both sighted and visually impaired individuals can enjoy the content together. The details are presented in Figure 10 below. The results revealed that television programs, advertisements, internet videos, and live events were all provided with images. Just under one third (29.1%) of films were audio only. In the figure, the percentages of audio-only and inclusive productions of each media type are indicated in parentheses. The

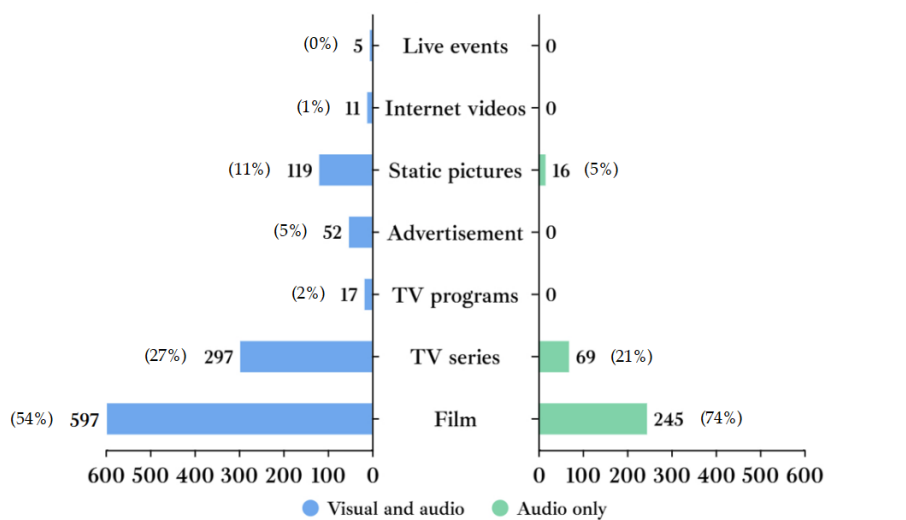


Figure 10: Inclusivity in Different Types of AD Works

following section presents a discussion of the results with the aim of contributing to a better understanding of AD provision on the Chinese mainland.

5. Discussion

The results revealed some interesting findings regarding AD provision on the Chinese mainland. The steady increase in AD production since 2019 highlights the growing interest in it and the resources that are being devoted to it, and it echoes the increasing amount of AD research focusing on Chinese AD since 2019. A detailed examination of the substantial volume of the AD that was produced in 2018 indicated that a single account at Himalaya was primarily responsible, as it contributed 143 AD items for films. Broader and increasing contributions from multiple parties since 2019 point to the encouraging progress in AD provision on the Chinese mainland.

Of the platforms on which the AD productions were provided, WeChat was used most frequently. This might have been because of WeChat's popularity among Chinese netizens, as it boasts more than 1.3 billion active monthly users (CWW 2024). The promotional and sharing nature of WeChat may also have played a role, as many of the resources that are available on WeChat are paired with news reports or media coverage about accessible products to highlight the impact of accessibility services. WeChat was followed by Youku, which accounted for 21% of the products. This could be attributable to a project that Youku launched called ‘無障礙劇場’ (Barrier-free Theater) (*People's Daily Online* 2022). The project commenced in 2020, and Youku has cooperated with numerous organizations and filmmaking companies to provide free accessible films to users who are legally certified as having visual impairments. Users with visual impairment can log onto Youku using personal information certified by the Chinese government and can freely access all of the AD materials on the platform. Youku's long-term commitment and established mechanisms for providing AD likely contribute to the high number of products that are available on the platform. Bilibili ranked third in available AD products. What differentiates Bilibili from Youku as a streaming platform is its focus on user-generated content. Bilibili is similar to YouTube in that they both encourage user-generated content and foster a sense of community, whereas Youku is more similar to Netflix because both platforms pay for and produce content and charge users monthly subscriptions for their services. Ximalaya, Xigua Video, Dragonfly FM, and Missevan are online podcast platforms that only allow users to upload audio. Therefore, all of the AD products provided on these platforms are audio only, and most of them are AD for films. Some organizations have opened accounts on these platforms and have launched channels such as “盲人聽電影” (Blind People Listening to Films) in an attempt to provide AD services at the grassroots level.

Films were the most frequently described media type (58.9%), followed by television series. Combined, these two categories accounted for nearly 85% of all of the products. The least frequently described type was live events, which accounted for only 0.4%. This uneven distribution revealed an imbalance in the development of different types of AD, which echoes the current focus of AD training and policy on screen AD (Leung 2019; Ma 2020).

This provides insights for AD trainers, who might consider utilizing more resources from the ADLAB Pro project (<https://www.adlabpro.eu>). This project not only covers screen AD but also has modules that are dedicated to static and live AD.

The following section presents a discussion of the features of the films that were described rather than the AD products. These demonstrate the features and preferences of audio describers when the select materials to describe.

To maintain consistency, all of the meta-information was collected from Douban (www.douban.com), a Chinese social media platform that provides a comprehensive database of films. By the end of 2019, Douban had more than 400 million active monthly users (www.douban.com). Young people on the Chinese mainland consider Douban to be one of the most authoritative and reliable media review platforms (Chen 2018; *Global Times* 2021). An origin check of the films described was conducted. Most of the films (68.4%) were from the Chinese mainland, followed by films produced in the US (19.2%). This might be partly due to the influence of Hollywood blockbusters on Chinese audiences (Su 2021). However, it could also involve concerns about copyright infringement, as acquiring the copyright for overseas films may be more difficult than for domestic films, and China maintains strict control over the foreign films that are allowed to be screened (Charltons 2015). All other countries or regions constituted a somewhat small share. Another major obstacle when deciding which films to describe is the language barrier. For AD produced on the Chinese mainland, Mandarin Chinese is used except in some specific cases in which AD is used as a tool to enable students to practice their foreign-language skills. Therefore, films that are not produced in Chinese usually need to be dubbed before being described, which introduces an additional procedure and is an obstacle to AD production.

The total number of film ADs was 842, among them, 835 were produced in Mandarin Chinese, six in English. It is noteworthy that one AD item was produced in Shanghainese. This film about the daily life of a group of Shanghainese people was produced by an organization based in Shanghai. A local professional voice actor voiced the AD. However, the film was only a 7.5-minute clip. Since the eight platforms investigated are based in the Chinese mainland and the main users are people from the Chinese mainland, where Mandarin Chinese is the official language, none of the recorded film ADs are produced in Cantonese. Further investigation into platforms based in Hong Kong SAR or Macau SAR, where Cantonese is also an official language, might reveal different results.

As shown in Figure 5, the majority of the films that were being audio-described were produced in the 2010s (46%), followed by those that were produced in the 2000s. This indicated the trend of audio-describing the most up-to-date films. Films from the 1950s constituted 4.9% of all of the described films, a percentage that exceeded those of films produced in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. A possible reason is the duration of a film's copyright protection, which lasts for 50 years following a film's first release (China Intellectual Property

Rights Aid Network 2020). This means that the copyrights of films released in the 1950s would have expired by the 2010s.

Drama was the most frequently described film genre; this may have been related to the films' narratives, as films with strong storylines might be easier to describe (Liu 2023a; Ma 2020). Dramas were followed by comedies; this trend may be attributable to the popularity of different film genres among Chinese audiences, as dramas and comedies are the preferred types of television content among Chinese viewers (Bashir 2024; Douban 2024). Another reason might be that the describers wanted to cater to the accessibility needs of users and to provide positive energy that aligns with social care by allowing users to laugh. This preference aligns with Chinese audio describers' tendency to select films that are positive, warm, pleasant, and educational (Ma 2023). The prevalence of short films might have been related to the lower cost of AD production for shorter clips and their lower risk of causing copyright infringement, as many of them were produced by amateurs and were not commercial in nature. In addition, 15.6% of the films described were cartoons, which shows Chinese audio describers' concern for the needs of younger AD users.

The sources of the different types of ADs varied greatly. Overall, most of the AD productions that we identified were original; that is, they were produced by the user who uploaded the material. This was also the case for films, television series, television programs, and static pictures, of which more than 80% were original works. However, advertisements and internet videos had higher proportions that were sourced from elsewhere. All five of the live events were sourced from elsewhere, which highlighted the lack of attention and guidelines for standardizing AD for live events on the Chinese mainland.

With regard to the professionalism of the AD productions across the different genres, the most professional media types were live events (100%), followed by advertisements (96.2%), television series (90.2%), television programs (88.2%), and static pictures (80.7%). Films (62.2%) and internet videos (36.3%) were the least professional types. A possible reason is that all of the ADs for live events were sourced from areas in which AD is more developed; as ADs for live events require more systematic preparation and hardware, they tend to be more professional. Advertising is commercial in nature and, as companies usually produce advertising AD to make a profit, this form of AD tends to be professional. As producing AD for television series and programs requires long-term commitment and is time consuming, this form of AD is usually created by professional entities. Internet videos (videos not found on Douban's database) are usually short, which means that they might be of interest to amateur AD practitioners or to the video creators themselves. In addition, film materials are widely accessible on the internet or DVD, and existing AD training usually focuses on training using screen materials, particularly films (Mazur and Chmiel 2021). Therefore, film AD also has a greater likelihood of being produced by students/amateurs.

The results showed that 70.6% of the films that were audio-described were complete

films. As the AD for film clips is usually for demonstration and promotion purposes-the films cannot be fully accessed by users-the high percentage of the provision of AD for complete films demonstrates the commitment of audio describers to this service and their authentic goal of providing practical accessibility services for users.

Finally, whether the provided AD is audio only or is accompanied by images determines whether sighted people can enjoy the product together with AD users who have visual impairments. This indicates not only the inclusiveness of the products but also their adherence to the paradigm of universal design. This paradigm must be considered when discussing the future of AD (see Mazur 2020), as it requires “the design of products, environments, programs, and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design” (Ostroff 2011, 1.3). The paradigm is encouraged in AD development because it promotes the inclusiveness of accessible products. In other words, accessible products should be accompanied by optional AD, sign language, and subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing to accommodate different users’ needs. People with diverse needs should be able to sit together and enjoy the same product, and be able to discuss it in the same place, rather than being separated and provided with independent audiovisual translations specifically adapted for each group. The television programs, advertisements, internet videos, and live events in the database were all inclusive, as they accommodated the needs of people with different degrees of sight by providing both audio and images. The reason might have been that advertisements are intended for commercial use and are designed to be as inclusive as possible to reach a wider audience. The internet videos had a strong fandom nature, and the creators often included an additional soundtrack to make them more accessible instead of creating an alternative version with audio only. The live events were all professional productions that were sourced elsewhere and designed to be inclusive. In contrast, only 70.9% (597 out of 842) of the films were inclusive, which might be explained by the fact that many audio-only ADs were uploaded to podcast platforms on which only audio can be uploaded, such as Ximalaya and Dragonfly FM. The situation was similar for television series and static pictures. As mentioned previously, the users of AD extend beyond people with visual impairments and may include sighted viewers, elderly individuals, language learners, and others. Moreover, people with visual impairments are a heterogeneous group, with varying levels of vision loss and visual memory. Treating them by default as people who are totally blind and have no access to visuals neglects their potential need to access images and evaluate AD based on the images they perceive. Therefore, the current practice of providing AD only with sound, but without images, reflects a particularist view of accessibility and potentially neglects a broader user group who also consume AD. These findings highlight the need to promote universal design on the Chinese mainland and the importance of institutionalizing and standardizing the AD production procedures in the region. Admittedly, providing audio without images may help circumvent copyright restrictions on certain platforms. With the

Protection of the Right of Communication through Information Networks and the amended *Copyright Law of the People's Republic of China*, which provide a stronger framework for addressing copyright issues in AD production, we hold a positive view that AD development in China is likely to move toward a more inclusive paradigm.

6. Conclusion

This study provided a comprehensive overview of the state of AD provision on the Chinese mainland, thus contributing to the understanding of AD development in the Chinese-speaking world. The extensive database developed, consisting of over 1,400 items, was used to shed light on the patterns, trends, and disparities in AD productions across the Chinese mainland.

The findings revealed that screen AD continued to predominate and that there was a notable lack of AD for live events, indicating a potential area for future development. The disparities in launch platforms and AD types indicate the need for a more coordinated and inclusive approach to the provision of AD. Moreover, the predominance of AD for Chinese-made films and those produced in the 2010s, particularly dramas and comedies, provides valuable insights into the patterns of AD production on the Chinese mainland. This information could guide future reception studies of AD users regarding their preferences, thus ensuring that AD aligns with users' needs and expectations.

In conclusion, this study has shed light on the landscape of AD on the Chinese mainland and has provided valuable insights that can guide future research and practice in the field. It emphasizes the need for a more standardized, inclusive, and user-centered approach to the provision of AD.

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Corpus-based Multidimensional Analysis of the English Translations of Chinese Classics *Liezi*: Register Variation between the Versions by Liang Xiaopeng and Thomas Cleary

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Abstract

This study adopts Biber's Multidimensional (MD) Analysis to explore register variation between two English translations of the Daoist classic Liezi: Liang Xiaopeng's 2005 state-sponsored version (included in the Library of Chinese Classics) and Thomas Cleary's 2009 independent version. A corpus of 280 analysis units (140 from each translation) was constructed, with linguistic features extracted using the Multidimensional Analysis Tagger. Results indicate that both translations fall under the "Involved Persuasion" register category (a prototypical register in Biber's framework, rather than a standalone dimension) but exhibit significant differences across three core MD dimensions. Stylistically, Cleary's version enhances reader engagement through more colloquial contractions and demonstrative pronouns, uses present participial clauses to strengthen narrative fluency, and prioritizes concrete expressions. In contrast, Liang's version leans toward information-dense content: it employs more conjuncts and agentless passives to clarify abstract philosophical logic, and emphasizes systematic explication of Daoist concepts. These stylistic differences reflect the translators' targeted strategies: Liang's "cultural fidelity" approach, designed for scholarly dissemination to Western academia, and Cleary's hybrid strategy (integrating domestication and foreignization) to cater to a broader, non-specialist readership.

1. Introduction

Liezi, as a key text of Daoist philosophy, expounds esoteric views on cosmology, life, and knowledge through fables. Since the Tang Dynasty, it has been collectively referred to as the “Four Profound Texts” along with *Dao De Jing*, *Zhuangzi*, and *Wenzi*, with its unique ideological and literary value long valued by academia. In cross-cultural communication, the English translation of *Liezi* not only serves as a crucial carrier for the dissemination of Daoist thought to the world but also reflects the dynamic characteristics of Sino-Western cultural exchanges across different historical stages.

The English translation of *Liezi* spans three centuries, aligning with the broader trajectory of Daoist text translation, divided into three stages: The first English translation emerged in 1887 when British sinologist Frederick Henry Balfour included selected excerpts in *Leaves from My Chinese Scrapbook* (Balfour 2001), with translations remaining sporadic and selective. Translation activity expanded with growing Western sinology. In 1912, Lionel Giles published a selective translation, omitting contentious sections (Giles 1912). A milestone followed in 1960 when Angus Charles Graham released the first full translation, included in UNESCO’s “Collection of Representative Works”, becoming a foundational academic reference (Graham 1990). Translation forms diversified. Derek Bryce translated from a French version in 1984 (Bryce 1984); Eva Wong produced an annotated edition in 2001; Liang Xiaopeng’s 2005 full translation entered the “Library of Chinese Classics” as the first by a Chinese scholar (Liang 2005); Thomas Cleary published his version in 2009; and a bilingual comic adaptation by Cai Zhizhong and Brian Bruya appeared in 2013 (Cai and Bruya 2013). By 2019, 16 distinct *Liezi* translations had emerged, forming a rich cross-cultural reception landscape.

Despite this diverse translation history, existing *Liezi* translation research faces three notable gaps that hinder its depth and systemicity: first, it lacks systematic comparisons across full translations, often focusing on fragmented, localized features (e.g., fable titles or water culture-related content) rather than exploring overarching patterns of translator behavior; second, it rarely adopts quantitative corpus methods, relying primarily on qualitative analysis to describe stylistic differences—an approach prone to subjectivity and unable to capture systemic linguistic patterns; third, it has not fully integrated theoretical frameworks to explain how translators’ choices link to text functions, resulting in descriptions of “what choices translators make” without addressing “why such choices are made.”

Addressing these gaps carries pivotal scholarly and practical significance that directly advances *Liezi* translation studies and the broader field of classical Chinese text cross-cultural dissemination.

First, to address the gap of insufficient systematic full-version comparisons, this study moves beyond fragmented analyses of partial texts (e.g., single fables or cultural terms) to examine the two most representative contemporary full translations (Liang 2005 and Cleary

2009). By uncovering overarching patterns of translator behavior across entire texts, this study not only fills the void of holistic *Liezi* translation comparison but also establishes a paradigm for “full-version comparative analysis” in classical Chinese text translation research. This paradigm can be extended to other Daoist classics, helping construct a more comprehensive map of *Liezi*’s cross-cultural reception and clarifying how different translation models shape the text’s global dissemination.

Second, to tackle the gap of rare quantitative corpus methods, this study constructs a corpus of 280 analysis units (140 from each translation), extracts linguistic features via the MAT v1.3.3 (Nini 2019), and applies statistical tests and logistic regression modeling. This data-driven approach quantifies differences in core linguistic dimensions and identifies predictive features that distinguish the two translations, avoiding the subjectivity of traditional qualitative analyses. In doing so, it not only provides rigorous, replicable evidence for *Liezi* translation stylistics but also popularizes quantitative corpus methods in classical Chinese philosophical text research. This addresses the long-standing “qualitative dominance” in the field, enriches its methodological toolkit, and breaks the perception that “classical philosophical texts can only be analyzed qualitatively”.

Third, to fill the gap of inadequate theoretical integration, this study anchors its analysis in Biber’s Multidimensional (MD) Analysis framework, designed to link linguistic patterns (register variation) to communicative functions. This framework enables explicit connection between register choices, translators’ identities, and text functions: Liang’s “cultural fidelity” strategy (rooted in his role as a state-sponsored translator for the “Library of Chinese Classics”) is reflected in his information-dense, abstract register (tailored for scholarly dissemination to Western academia), while Clear’s hybrid domestication/foreignization strategy (as an independent translator) manifests in his interactive, narrative-driven register (catering to non-specialist readers). This integration of register theory not only explains “why translators make such choices” (rather than just describing “what choices they make”) but also fills the theoretical void of “function-oriented translator agency analysis” in *Liezi* research. It further provides a reference for future studies to explore how translator identity and institutional background shape the linguistic realization of cultural communication goals.

2. Literature Review

In recent years, research on the English translation of Daoist classics has developed in a multidimensional and interdisciplinary manner, covering core classics such as *Dao De Jing*, *Zhuangzi*, and *Liezi*.

Dao De Jing translation research covers multiple dimensions. From a hermeneutic perspective, He and Zhou (2022) built a 1.2-million-word corpus of 38 *Dao De Jing* translations (1881-2021) to trace Dao’s translational evolution. They identified four dominant renderings

(“Way,” “Dao,” “Path,” “Principle”) and found ideological influences: 19th-century missionaries aligned “Dao” with Christian “Divine Principle,” while contemporary Chinese translators favored untransliterated “Dao” (reflecting cultural confidence) (He and Zhou 2022). Xu (2024) proposed four “translation-interpretation models” via 52 translations (1900-2023): Theological Alignment (Legge), Academic Rigor (Lau), Popular Accessibility (Mitchell), and Cultural Fidelity (Xu Yuanchong). These models mirror shifting target audiences, from Western scholars to global readers (Xu 2024).

In translator studies, Liu (2022) analyzed Wu Jingxiong’s 1937 translation, noting its integration of Republican-era discourses: Wu compared “wu-wei” to Spinoza’s “natural necessity” in footnotes, framing *Dao De Jing* as a complement to Western philosophy (Liu 2022). Zhang et al. (2022) used corpus tools to quantify stylistic shifts across 16 translations: Early versions (1881-1950) had higher lexical density/sentence complexity; contemporary translations (2000-2021) simplified to cater to popular readership (Zhang et al. 2022).

Reception research has also advanced with interdisciplinary methods. Li and Wang (2020) conducted a pioneering Python-based quantification of overseas reader reviews. They applied Python to 12,800 Goodreads/Amazon reviews (2010-2020). Sentiment analysis showed 72% positive reception (Waley 1934: 89% positive), with three key themes: philosophical utility, linguistic accessibility, cultural authenticity. Reader expectations (scholarly vs. practical) shaped evaluations (Li and Wang 2020).

And Yin and Wang (2022) further explored the reconstruction of *Dao De Jing* as a cultural canon in the context of media convergence. They studied 37 multimedia *Dao De Jing* products (2018-2022): Short-video platforms used “visual metaphor substitution” (90-second clips); academic platforms adopted “annotation layering.” Crowdsourced models (e.g., Wikipedia) boosted engagement by 47% (Yin and Wang 2022).

Recent research on the English translations of *Zhuangzi* clusters around three themes, covering all documented studies while avoiding over-fragmentation. Each theme centers on a core question: how translators shape meaning (intentionality), how they transmit textual uniqueness (metaphor and poetics), and how audiences receive translations (overseas reception) (Zhou and Lin 2025; Yin 2024; Lin and Xu 2022; Lin and Zhou 2021; Liang 2020).

In terms of translator intentionality, Liang (2020) analyzed translations of terms like “道” (Dao), “鵬” (peng), and “坐忘” (zuowang), finding translators adopt strategies (transliteration, literal translation) based on intent: e.g., Wang Rongpei retains pinyin for “zuowang” to preserve culture, while Burton Watson uses “sitting in forgetfulness” for readability (Liang 2020). Lin and Zhou (2021) proposed the “Translator Intentionality Operation Model (TIOM)”, linking translators’ perception of *Zhuangzi* (e.g., “religious text” vs. “philosophical prose”) to choices: James Legge renders “天” (Tian) as “Heaven” to align with Christianity; Wang Rongpei annotates “氣” (qi) to transmit authentic Daoism. Lin and Zhou (2021) (mental philosophy perspectives) further noted translators’ intent shapes narrative adjustments (e.g.,

background explicitation) and paratexts (e.g., preface framing) (Lin and Zhou 2021). Liu (2023) studied Angus Graham's controversial translation—its strengths (filling “philosophical gaps”) and criticisms (distorting original to fit Graham's interests) both stem from his intent to prioritize *Zhuangzi*'s philosophical over literary dimensions (Liu 2023). Lin and Xu (2023) further extended intentionality research by focusing on paratexts as a window into translators' positioning. They analyzed Burton Watson's 2003 translation and found that Watson minimized *Zhuangzi*'s mystical elements in his preface, instead framing the text as a “philosophical prose classic.” This intentional positioning was corroborated by citation data: 78% of the sources Watson referenced in his annotations were from literature or philosophy journals, reinforcing his focus on *Zhuangzi*'s intellectual rather than esoteric dimensions (Lin and Xu 2022).

A second key area is *Zhuangzi*'s metaphor and poetic translation. Yin (2024) identified two strategies for *Zhuangzi*'s fragmented, ambiguous poetics: “open deep translation” (Lin Wusun retains em dashes and multi-commentary annotations to preserve ambiguity, for academics) and “comprehensive shallow translation” (Watson adds topic sentences to simplify, for general readers). Both strategies align with translators' intent to match audience needs (Yin 2024). Zhou and Lin (2025) defined *Zhuangzi*'s metaphors (e.g., “鵬” as spiritual transcendence) and tested reconstruction strategies: natural-image metaphors benefit from “poetic preservation” (Chen Guying's “roc” retains 82% ecological connotations), while non-natural ones (e.g., “坐忘”) need “contextual repositioning” (explaining via narrative) for readability. Based on these findings, they advocated for “ecologically sensitive translation”, a strategy that balances readability in the target language with the preservation of *Zhuangzi*'s unique ecological philosophy (Zhou and Lin 2025).

Regrading overseas reception, Zhu, using Python and the Natural Language Toolkit (NLTK), collected and analyzed over 12,000 reviews from platforms like Goodreads and Amazon, focusing on three translation types: popular science, literary, and philosophical. Her findings showed notable reception disparities: popular science translations (simplified for beginners) had a 78% positive rate but were criticized for diluting philosophical depth; literary translations appealed to intermediate readers by balancing readability and literary style but faced academic concerns over philosophical precision; philosophical translations earned 82% positive feedback from advanced readers yet were deemed inaccessible by the general public. Zhu (2023) also identified a “focus gap” across audiences: beginners prioritized readability, intermediates valued cultural authenticity, and advanced readers emphasized philosophical accuracy. She recommended translators tailor strategies to specific audiences and diversify dissemination channels (e.g., short videos for beginners, academic journals for scholars) to boost cross-cultural communication of *Zhuangzi* (Zhu 2023).

However, *Liezi* research faces notable gaps in research scope, methodology, and theoretical application, with scope limitations being the most prominent.

Existing *Liezi* studies primarily focus on fragmented, localized text features, lacking comprehensive exploration of the full text and cross-translation comparisons. For example, Xiao and Gu (2021) applied Eco-translatology's "three-dimensional transformation" theory to analyze the translation of *Liezi*'s fable titles, but ignored the text's unique hybrid structure of "philosophical discourse interwoven with fables", failing to examine how translators balance the stylistic consistency of philosophical arguments and narrative fables (Xiao and Gu 2021). Xiao and Liu (2022) explored "cultural schema deficiency" (e.g., readers' confusion about "壺子" [Huzi, a Daoist master]) in the Grand Chinese Library version of *Liezi*, yet their study was limited to a single translation and omitted comparative analysis of cultural adaptation strategies across multiple versions (e.g., how Liang Xiaopeng vs. Thomas Cleary handle "cultural schema deficiency" differently) (Xiao and Liu 2022). Liu et al. (2025) further restricted their research to "water culture-related content" (e.g., the metaphor of "water" in *Liezi*'s cosmology) in Angus Graham's translation, discussing issues like logical coherence and mistranslations but not conducting a holistic assessment of the translation's overall style (Liu et al. 2025).

Yu Yunfei's milestone study represents a step forward by comparing four key translations, identifying shifts from domestication to foreignization and from classical to modern registers (Yu 2022). However, the study lacks depth: its quantitative analysis stops at basic metrics like lexical density and explicitation, ignoring the critical link between register features and text functions (e.g., how register choices serve "scholarly dissemination" vs. "popular readership"); core Daoist concepts (e.g., "虛" [xu, "emptiness"]) are also understudied.

Beyond reaserch scope limitations, *Liezi* translation research also suffers from backward methodology and insufficient theoretical integration.

In terms of backward quantitative methods, existing quantitative studies (e.g., Yu 2022) rely on basic corpus tools, lacking advanced analytical frameworks like Biber's Multidimensional (MD) Analysis. This makes it impossible to capture systemic linguistic patterns (e.g., the interaction between narrative and informational features) across full translations.

Theoretically, most studies over-rely on basic Eco-translatology: Xiao and Gu used its "three-dimensional transformation" to analyze fable titles *Liezi* studies mostly rely on basic Eco-translatology (Xiao and Gu 2021). Xiao and Liu (2022) applied it to explore "cultural schema deficiency" in a single *Liezi* version (Xiao and Liu 2022). And even Yu's (2022) comparative study, despite covering four translations, only provides surface-level stylistic descriptions without interdisciplinary theoretical support (e.g., register theory or reader reception theory) (Yu 2022).

Furthermore, *Liezi* research only uses rough indicators such as citation frequency or general review summaries. For instance, Liu et al.'s analysis of Graham's *Liezi* translation focuses solely on textual issues like logical coherence, omitting reader reception data (e.g., whether readers struggle with the translation's philosophical explicitness) (Liu et al. 2025). Yu (2022)'s study, despite analyzing four versions, includes no reader-centric assessment (e.g.,

how different audiences perceive Cleary's narrative style vs. Liang's abstract style).

This combination of fragmented linguistic analysis (focus on partial text features), underdeveloped methodology (elementary corpus application), limited theoretical support (overreliance on basic Eco-translatology), and insufficient reader insight highlights the urgent need for a comprehensive analytical framework to advance *Liezi* translation research.

Biber's Multidimensional (MD) Analysis, a quantitative framework that identifies systemic linguistic patterns across text dimensions (Biber 1988), can address gaps in scope and methodology.

MD Analysis fills the gap in scope by identifying core linguistic dimensions such as "Informational vs. Involved" and "Narrative vs. Non-Narrative." These dimensions capture stylistic and register variations across entire translations, enabling a comprehensive examination of systemic register choices in *Liezi* translations—rather than isolated linguistic features. This approach overcomes the limitation of "partial analysis over systemic comparison" and realizes holistic comparisons of full translations, thus expanding the research scope to cover the overall stylistic patterns of translated texts. MD Analysis also remedies this methodological deficiency by quantifying dimensional data to reveal overall tendencies in linguistic functions, providing a rigorous quantitative foundation for comparing translation styles. Second, Second, it remedies the methodological deficiency of "qualitative dominance": MD Analysis quantifies dimensional data (e.g., Z-scores for each dimension) to reveal overall tendencies in linguistic functions, providing a rigorous quantitative foundation for comparing translation styles. The MAT complements underdeveloped quantitative research in *Liezi* studies. It employs automated tagging and statistical methods to objectively present dimensional differences and fine-grained linguistic variations. This automation supports systematic comparisons of translator styles and interpretations of translation strategies, enhancing the objectivity and depth of methodological application in *Liezi* translation research (Nini 2019; Biber et al. 2007).

This study aims to examine register variation between Liang Xiaopeng's 2005 state-sponsored translation (included in the Library of Chinese Classics) and Thomas Cleary's 2009 independent translation of *Liezi* through Biber's Multidimensional (MD) Analysis framework. The core research questions are:

RQ1: Do Liang Xiaopeng's and Thomas Cleary's translations belong to the same register?

RQ2: Are there significant differences across the six dimensions of MD Analysis? If so, what are the core differentiating dimensions and their specific linguistic features?

RQ3: How do these differences reflect the influence of translators' identities, translation strategies, and translation models?

3. Methods

3.1 Analysis Framework

Biber's Multidimensional (MD) Analysis Framework, developed in 1988 through a large-scale corpus study of English texts, is a quantitative tool designed to systematically identify and measure register variation by capturing co-occurring linguistic features that reflect functional differences in text use. At its core, the framework defines six distinct functional dimensions, each distinguished by a set of contrasting linguistic features tied to specific communicative purposes: The first dimension, "Informational vs. Involved Discourse," differentiates between texts focused on objective information transmission (marked by high frequencies of noun phrases, complex attributive clauses, and nounification, typical of academic or technical writing) and those emphasizing reader engagement (characterized by frequent personal pronouns, contractions, and modal verbs like "can" or "will," common in conversational or popular explanatory texts). The second dimension, "Narrative vs. Non-Narrative Concerns," distinguishes texts centered on chronological event recounting (featuring past tense verbs, time adverbs such as "then" or "once," and third-person pronouns) from those focused on non-temporal, logical exposition (using present tense, conjunctions like "however" or "therefore," and abstract nouns). The third dimension, "Context-Independent Discourse and Context-Dependent Discourse," contrasts features of spoken language (e.g., hedges like "sort of," discourse markers such as "well," and short clauses) with characteristics of formal written language (e.g., long complex sentences, passive voice, and academic vocabulary). The fourth dimension, "Overt Expression of Persuasion," highlights the extent to which texts rely on shared context for meaning (marked by deictic expressions like "this" or "here") versus explicit, context-independent language (featuring full noun phrases and elaborated descriptions, common in texts for unknown readers). The fifth dimension, "Abstract vs. Non-Abstract Concerns," differentiates between texts emphasizing abstract concepts (using abstract nouns like "existence" or "theory," and nominalized structures) and those focused on concrete entities or actions (characterized by concrete nouns, active verbs, and sensory language). The sixth dimension, "On-line Informational Elaboration," contrasts informal, everyday language (e.g., colloquial verbs like "get" or "put," and simple sentence structures) with formal, scholarly language (featuring Latinate vocabulary, complex syntactic structures, and specialized terminology) (Biber 1989, 1995, 1988).

Beyond these six dimensions, Biber further applied the framework to classify English texts into eight prototypical register categories based on their dimension score profiles. The first two types focus on interactive communication: Intimate Interpersonal Interaction, exemplified by telephone conversations between personal friends, is marked by high scores on D1, low scores on D3 and D5, and unmarked scores on other dimensions, functioning primarily as interpersonal exchanges among close acquaintances; Informational Interaction, including

face-to-face interactions, telephone conversations, spontaneous speeches, and personal letters, shares similar dimensional scores (high D1, low D3 and D5) but differs in purpose, as it centers on personal spoken interactions focused on conveying information (Biber et al. 2007).

Next, two expository types emphasize formal information transfer: Scientific Exposition, covering academic prose and official documents, features low D1, high D3 and D5, and unmarked scores on other dimensions, serving as formal, highly technical informational texts; Learned Exposition, which includes official documents, press reviews, and academic prose, has identical dimensional scores (low D1, high D3 and D5) but is defined as formal informational exposition without the extreme technicality of Scientific Exposition (Biber 1992).

Narrative-focused types consist of Imaginative Narrative and General Narrative Exposition: Imaginative Narrative, such as romance fiction, general fiction, and prepared speeches, is characterized by high D2, low D3, and unmarked scores on other dimensions, prioritizing an extreme narrative concern; General Narrative Exposition, including press reportage, press editorials, biographies, non-sports broadcasts, and science fiction, combines low D1 and high D2 with unmarked scores on other dimensions, using narration as a tool to convey information.

The remaining two types address context-specific and persuasive functions: Situated Reportage, typified by sports broadcasts, has low D3 and D4 with unmarked scores elsewhere, functioning as real-time commentaries on ongoing events; Involved Persuasion, exemplified by spontaneous speeches, professional letters, and interviews, is distinguished by high D4 and unmarked scores on other dimensions, serving as persuasive or argumentative texts aimed at influencing audiences (Biber 1989).

Together, the six functional dimensions and corresponding register categories provide a rigorous, replicable framework for analyzing how linguistic choices align with communicative purposes, making it particularly valuable for studies of translated texts, such as English versions of *Liezi*, where understanding register variation can reveal translators' strategic decisions to target specific audiences or convey particular textual functions (e.g., philosophical exposition vs. fable-based narrative).

3.2 Corpus Design

The corpus for this study includes two English translations of *Liezi*: LXP's 2005 version (from the Library of Chinese Classics series) and Thomas Cleary's 2009 translation titled *The Book of Master Lie*. These two versions were chosen for their representativeness: LXP's work is part of a state-supported project and follows an official "cultural fidelity" translation model (focused on staying true to the original culture), while Cleary—an independent Western scholar—used a mixed strategy that combines "domestication" (adapting content to the target audience's culture) and "foreignization" (retaining elements of the original culture) to help *Liezi* reach a more diverse audience (Yu 2022).

The corpus processing involved three key steps: First, the original texts of the two

translations were obtained from official sources, converted into digital format using Optical Character Recognition (OCR), and then manually checked to ensure accuracy. Second, the texts were divided into smaller sections based on the “Three-Tier Structural Alignment” principle (which preserves the original subtitle hierarchy); each translation ended up as 140 analysis units, totaling 280 units for both versions. Third, a three-tier coding system was used to name these units: “LXP-” or “TC-” was added to distinguish between the two translations, numbers 1 to 8 represented the chapters, and formats like “1.01” stood for specific subtitles (e.g., “1.01” means the first subtitle of Chapter 1). Additionally, text cleaning was done—this included removing irrelevant content, standardizing the format, and fixing errors caused by OCR. Once finalized, all the sectioned texts were saved as .txt files.

3.3 Analysis Tool

The Multidimensional Analysis Tagger (MAT) V 1.3.3, developed by A. Nini for Windows, operationalizes Biber’s multidimensional framework to quantify register variation and genre differences in English texts—well-suited for research on classical Chinese philosophical translations like *Liezi*. It only supports .txt files, requiring preprocessing (encoding to ANSI/UTF-8, replacing curly quotes) and original text backups. Its workflow uses the 2013 Stanford Part-of-Speech Tagger for basic annotation, then adds three custom tags (INPR, QUAN, QUPR) to detect Biber-specific linguistic variables (e.g., pronouns, modals). Key outputs include annotated folders (“ST_” for Stanford results, “MAT_” for extended tagging), quantitative data (variable frequencies, Z-scores, 6 dimension scores) with visualizations, and a tool to map texts to Biber’s 8 text types (e.g., “Involved Persuasion”). Tested on LOB/Brown corpora, it aligns closely with Biber (1988) (minor Dimension 3 discrepancies need caution) (Nini 2019).

3.4 Data Analysis and Modeling

Quantitative characterization was conducted on the six dimensions of the two translations, followed by normality tests to determine the appropriateness of parametric or non-parametric statistical methods—thereby screening out dimensions with significant differences. For these identified dimensions, further normality tests were performed on the language feature scores of the two translations to confirm the applicability of statistical methods, based on which language features with statistical differences were identified.

Ultimately, a logistic regression model was constructed for the two translations, which offers significant advantages in this study: First, it naturally fits the binary “translation attribution” classification task, enabling accurate correlation between the screened linguistic features and classification outcomes. Second, its Logistic function-based classification allows regression coefficients to intuitively quantify each feature’s influence weight and direction on translation differences, ensuring high interpretability. Third, the mapping of results to [0,1]

probabilities enables both classification prediction and reflection of prediction confidence via probability magnitude, providing multi-dimensional references for difference analysis. Fourth, it has relaxed data distribution assumptions, making it suitable for non-normal variables identified in preliminary normality tests. Additionally, its solution based on maximum likelihood estimation is concise and efficient, enabling rapid fitting of key features via multi-round screening to support quantitative exploration of the mechanism behind translation differences (Lei et al. 2019).

4. Results

4.1 Register Attribution and Overall Variation

Results from MAT v1.3.3 confirm that both English translations of *Liezi* fall under the “Involved Persuasion” discourse register—a register defined by two core functional dimensions: “involvement” and “persuasion.” “Involvement” emphasizes linguistic interactivity, subjectivity, and emotional proximity, engaging audiences through accessible narratives, non-neutral expressions, and contextual cues that build psychological connections. “Persuasion” focuses on guiding audience perspectives by integrating rational reasoning with emotional resonance, using a mix of explicit assertions and audience-tailored implicit framing to maximize communicative influence. This register aligns inherently with the translation needs of *Liezi*. As a foundational Taoist classic, *Liezi* conveys esoteric philosophical ideas through fables and dialogues, and its “philosophy-through-stories” core naturally maps to the register’s “persuasion” dimension (using narratives to convey ideology) (Biber 1995; Biber et al. 2007).

In cross-cultural contexts, both translations further reinforce the register’s “involvement” to bridge cultural gaps: simplifying culturally specific metaphors, adding explanatory annotations for readability, highlighting characters’ emotional motivations to resonate with English readers, and unpacking abstract Taoist concepts via contextual analogies—all to narrow psychological distance between the source text and target audience. Consistently, both translations preserve fable integrity (to strengthen persuasive examples), enhance philosophical coherence, and adopt colloquial, narrative language to mimic “spontaneous speech” interactivity—avoiding rigid literal translation that would undermine the register’s functional goals.

In short, the “interactivity” and “persuasiveness” of the “Involved Persuasion” register directly match *Liezi*’s story-driven ideological core and address the key requirement of effective cross-cultural communication for Taoist classics (Biber and Conrad 2001).

As shown in Table 1, the two translations exhibited significant differences in three dimensions (D1, D2 and D5) and no significant variation in the remaining three (D3, D4 and D6), with medium effect sizes for significant dimensions indicating meaningful, non-trivial stylistic divergence (Biber 1989).

Regarding the significant difference dimensions, TC scored substantially higher than LXP in D1 (TC=6.718 vs. LXP=3.818) and D2 (TC=3.735 vs. LXP=2.164), signaling TC’s stronger tendency toward “involved, narrative-driven discourse”; conversely, LXP outscored TC in D5 (LXP=2.050 vs. TC=0.180), reflecting a preference for “abstract, logically structured expression.”

In terms of non-significant difference dimensions, score gaps in D3 (LXP=3.995 vs. TC=3.350), D4 (LXP=-0.935 vs. TC=-1.605), and D6 (LXP=-2.105 vs. TC=-2.365) were small (absolute differences<0.7) with small effect sizes ($d<0.2$), indicating consistent stylistic choices across these dimensions driven by the “Involved Persuasion” register’s demand for context clarity (D3), moderate persuasion (D4), and accessible information organization (D6).

Table 1: Differences Tests for Six Dimensions

Independent T-test for Dimension 1 and 2							
Dimension	Group	N	Mean	S.D.	T test	Welch's test	M.D.
D1	LXP	140	3.818	8.971	T=-2.744	T=-2.744	2.900
	TC	140	6.718	8.711	P=0.006	P=0.006	
	Total	280	5.268	8.945			
D2	LXP	140	2.164	3.445	T=-3.291	T=-3.291	1.571
	TC	140	3.735	4.472	P=0.001	P=0.001	
	Total	280	2.950	4.062			
Mann-Whitney U Test for Dimensions 3-6							
Dimension	Group	N	Mean	S.D.	P	M.D.	Cohen's d
D3	LXP	140	3.995	3.827	0.335	0.645	0.112
	TC	140	3.350	4.044			
	Total	280	3.610	3.936			
D4	LXP	140	-0.935	4.521	0.237	0.670	0.141
	TC	140	-1.605	4.437			
	Total	280	-1.355	4.482			
D5	LXP	140	2.050	3.903	0.000	1.870	0.406
	TC	140	0.180	3.708			
	Total	280	1.035	3.878			
D6	LXP	140	-2.105	1.896	0.195	0.260	0.186
	TC	140	-2.365	1.559			
	Total	280	-2.245	1.740			
Significance levels: $p < 0.001$, $p < 0.01$, $p < 0.10$.							

4.2 Dimensional Deep Analysis of Register Variation

This section explored the linguistic mechanisms underlying dimensional variation between the two translations, focusing on dimensions with significant differences (D1, D2 and D5) and clarifying non-significant ones (D3, D4 and D6).

For significant dimensions (D1, D2 and D5), first, differential tests were employed to

identify key linguistic features, with Cohen's d measuring variation magnitude. Second, binary logistic regression models are built, with "translation type" as the dependent variable and candidate features as independent variables, to validate the independent predictive power of these features; stepwise elimination is used to exclude collinear features, avoiding spurious correlations.

Finally, textual exemplars from *Liezi* chapters illustrate how validated features manifest in practice, bridging statistical results and actual translation texts.

For non-significant dimensions (D3, D4 and D6), this section clarify functional constraints driving consistency.

4.2.1 D1: Involved vs. Informational Discourses

As shown by Table 2, the initial differential analyses identified 11 linguistic features with significant variation between LXP and TC translations, all analyzed via Mann-Whitney U tests except prepositions (PIN), which follows a normal distribution and uses an independent-samples t-test.

Detailed differential results for the 11 significant features are as follows: Contractions (CONT) show the largest effect size ($d=1.563$, $p=0.000$), with TC's median far exceeding LXP's. Independent clause coordination (ANDC) also exhibits a strong effect ($d=0.521$, $p=0.000$), favoring LXP (median=1.17) over TC (median=0.785, $U=12638.5$). Prepositions (PIN) reveal LXP's higher mean frequency (10.013) compared to TC (8.435). Demonstrative pronouns (DEMP) favor TC (median=0.785 vs. LXP's 0.31, $U=6990$, $p=0.000$, $d=0.448$), while Negation (XX0) also leans toward TC (median=1.595 vs. LXP's 1.07, $U=7033$, $p=0.000$, $d=0.476$). Adjectives (JJ) are more frequent in LXP (median=4.44 vs. TC's 3.97, $U=11813.5$, $p=0.003$, $d=0.374$), and amplifiers (AMP) show a small-to-medium effect favoring LXP ($U=11046$, $p=0.011$, $d=0.326$). Three features with smaller but significant effects include causatives (CAUS, $U=11059$, $p=0.015$, $d=0.072$), indefinite pronouns (INPR, $U=11073$, $p=0.015$, $d=0.032$), and that-deletion clauses (THATD, $U=8386.5$, $p=0.015$, $d=0.245$), while past participles (VPRT, $U=8305.5$, $p=0.027$, $d=0.293$) and wh-questions (WHQU, $U=8285$, $p=0.012$, $d=0.286$) also differ significantly, with TC showing higher frequencies for VPRT and WHQU.

To validate which of these features independently distinguish the two translations, a binary logistic regression model is built with "translation type" as the dependent variable (coded 0 for LXP, 1 for TC).

Before the modelling, a key statistical constraint was addressed: the sample size for D1 (140 units) was too small to support modeling all 26 original features (a common rule of thumb requires 10 observations per feature, which would need 260 units here). Thus, only 11 features with significant group differences were included for D1 modelling.

Table 2: Differential Tests for Features in D1

Mann-Whitney U Test Results for 25 Features in D1							
Feature	Group	N	Median	S.D.	Statistics	P	Cohen's d
AMP	LXP	140	0	0.350	11046	0.011	0.326
	TC	140	0	0.193			
	Total	280	0	0.286			
ANDC	LXP	140	1.170	0.832	12638.5	0.000	0.521
	TC	140	0.785	0.701			
	Total	280	0.970	0.794			
AWL	LXP	140	4.220	0.265	8951	0.210	0.179
	TC	140	4.250	0.295			
	Total	280	4.230	0.281			
[BEMA]	LXP	140	2.495	1.557	10614	0.230	0.058
	TC	140	2.240	1.709			
	Total	280	2.420	1.633			
CAUS	LXP	140	0	0.454	11059	0.015	0.072
	TC	140	0	0.644			
	Total	280	0	0.556			
[CONT]	LXP	140	0	0.275	2071	0.000	1.563
	TC	140	1.500	1.351			
	Total	280	0.350	1.237			
DEMP	LXP	140	0.310	0.764	6990	0.000	0.448
	TC	140	0.785	0.879			
	Total	280	0.540	0.843			
DPAR	LXP	140	0	0.226	9574	0.654	0.108
	TC	140	0	0.302			
	Total	280	0	0.266			
EMPH	LXP	140	0.205	0.500	9910	0.862	0.018
	TC	140	0	0.537			
	Total	280	0.105	0.518			
FPP1	LXP	140	1.225	1.968	10056.5	0.702	0.001
	TC	140	1.075	2.048			
	Total	280	1.150	2.005			
INPR	LXP	140	0	0.280	11073	0.015	0.032
	TC	140	0	0.483			
	Total	280	0	0.394			
JJ	LXP	140	4.440	2.080	11813.5	0.003	0.374

Feature	Group	N	Median	S.D.	Statistics	P	Cohen's d
	TC	140	3.970	2.041			
	Total	280	4.220	2.093			
NN	LXP	140	22.080	3.975	10133	0.623	0.016
	TC	140	21.925	3.814			
	Total	280	22.000	3.888			
PIT	LXP	140	0.985	1.428	9861.5	0.927	0.063
	TC	140	1.040	1.707			
	Total	280	1.030	1.572			
POMD	LXP	140	0.630	0.837	8801.5	0.137	0.212
	TC	140	0.755	1.256			
	Total	280	0.680	1.072			
[PROD]	LXP	140	0	0.367	10454.5	0.204	0.072
	TC	140	0	0.356			
	Total	280	0	0.361			
[SERE]	LXP	140	0	0.110	9813	0.962	0.007
	TC	140	0	0.149			
	Total	280	0	0.131			
SPP2	LXP	140	0.910	1.448	8726.5	0.109	0.201
	TC	140	1.215	1.610			
	Total	280	1.115	1.536			
[STPR]	LXP	140	0	0.246	9388	0.421	0.116
	TC	140	0	0.312			
	Total	280	0	0.281			
[THATD]	LXP	140	0	0.368	8386.5	0.015	0.245
	TC	140	0	0.436			
	Total	280	0	0.406			
TTR	LXP	140	135.000	51.971	10373	0.398	0.104
	TC	140	129.500	51.772			
	Total	280	132.000	51.849			
VPRT	LXP	140	5.495	3.583	8305.5	0.027	0.293
	TC	140	6.600	4.075			
	Total	280	6.070	3.871			
[WHCL]	LXP	140	0	0.248	9504	0.563	0.192
	TC	140	0	0.417			
	Total	280	0	0.344			
[WHQU]	LXP	140	0	0.364	8285	0.012	0.286
	TC	140	0	0.443			

Feature	Group	N	Median	S.D.	Statistics	P	Cohen's d
	Total	280	0	0.409			
XX0	LXP	140	1.070	1.131	7033	0.000	0.476
	TC	140	1.595	1.338			
	Total	280	1.310	1.271			
Independent T-test for Feature PIN							
Feature	Group	N	Mean	S.D.	T-test	Welch's T-test	Cohen's d
PIN	LXP	140	10.013	2.411	T=5.402	T=5.402	0.646
	TC	140	8.435	2.475	P=0.000	P=0.000	
	Total	280	9.224	2.564			
Significance levels: $p < 0.001$, $p < 0.01$, $p < 0.10$.							

The logistic regression model for D1 retained three core features-contractions (CONT), demonstrative pronouns (DEMP), and independent clause coordination (ANDC)-as significant predictors of translation type as shown by Table 3. Textual excerpts shown by Table 4 from *Liezi* directly align with these statistical findings, illustrating how each feature differentiates TC's involved discourse style from LXP's informational style.

For CONT, the strongest predictor in the model (OR=30.865, $p=0.000$) favoring TC, TC's translation consistently uses colloquial contractions to enhance interactivity. Examples include phrases like "If they can't get to listen to it," "if they can't get to see it," "if it can't get to smell it," "if it can't" and "if it can't get them." The final clause in this segment is "if it can't that is called inhibiting nature." In contrast, LXP avoids contractions entirely, replacing "can't" with formal phrasing "fail to" across parallel structures: "If they fail to do so," "If they fail to do so," "If it fails to do so," "If it fails to do so," "If it fails to do so" and "If it fails to do so that is called the blocking of nature." This direct contrast reflects the model's conclusion that CONT is the most impactful feature for classifying TC's involved style.

Regarding DEMP, another TC-favoring predictor (OR=1.754, $p=0.027$), TC uses "that" to create direct reference and conversational flow. In the excerpt about death, TC writes "As for death, that is going to rest, returning to the ultimate." The demonstrative "that" links "death" to its explanation, shortening the psychological distance with readers. LXP, by contrast, omits such demonstratives and adopts more formal, impersonal phrasing: "In the stage of death, it is time for him to retire and return where he belongs." This lack of DEMP aligns with the model's finding that lower DEMP frequency is a marker of LXP's informational style.

For ANDC, an LXP-favoring predictor (OR=0.475, $p=0.006$), LXP uses "and" to explicitly connect parallel clauses, boosting informational clarity. His translation of the heaven-earth-sage segment reads "Heaven and Earth are not omnipotent, the sage is not good at everything, and nothing can serve all purposes." The conjunction "and" between the final two clauses clarifies the logical parallelism of the three concepts. TC omits such coordinating

conjunctions, prioritizing flow over explicitness: “Heaven and earth do not have complete efficiency, sages do not have complete ability, myriad beings do not have complete vitality.” This absence of ANDC matches the model’s conclusion that higher ANDC frequency distinguishes LXP’s informational style.

Together, these excerpts validate the logistic regression results, showing how CONT, DEMP, and ANDC—each identified as a significant predictor—manifest in tangible stylistic differences between the two translations.

Table 3: Binary Logistic Regression for D1

TC Group	Beta	S.D.	Wald	P	OR	95% CI for OR	
						Lower	Upper
Constant	-2.027	1.276	2.524	0.112	0.132	0.011	1.606
AMP	-0.478	0.756	0.400	0.527	0.620	0.141	2.727
ANDC	-0.744	0.272	7.489	0.006	0.475	0.279	0.810
CAUS	0.178	0.353	0.255	0.614	1.195	0.599	2.385
[CONT]	3.430	0.480	51.045	0.000	30.865	12.046	79.083
DEMP	0.562	0.254	4.874	0.027	1.754	1.065	2.887
INPR	0.356	0.611	0.339	0.560	1.428	0.431	4.731
PIN	-0.044	0.085	0.261	0.610	0.957	0.810	1.132
JJ	0.124	0.105	1.396	0.237	1.131	0.922	1.389
[THATD]	-0.043	0.679	0.004	0.949	0.958	0.253	3.623
VPRT	0.019	0.060	0.105	0.745	1.020	0.907	1.146
[WHQU]	0.391	0.467	0.700	0.403	1.478	0.592	3.692
XX0	0.047	0.171	0.076	0.782	1.048	0.750	1.466
Significance levels: $p < 0.001$, $p < 0.01$, $p < 0.10$.							
Reference Group: LXP							

Table 4: Text Comparison in CONT, DEMP and ANDC

Feature	TC	LXP
CONT	If they can't get to listen to it...; if they can't get to see it...; if it can't get to smell it...; if it can't, ...; if it can't get them, ...; if it can't..., that is called inhibiting nature.	If they fail to do so, If they fail to do so, ... If it fails to do so, ... If it fails to do so, ... If it fails to do so, ... If it fails to do so, ... If it fails to do so...that is called the blocking of nature.
DEMP	As for death, that is going to rest, returning to the ultimate.	In the stage of death, it is time for him to retire and return where he belongs.
ANDC	Heaven and earth do not have complete efficiency, sages do not have complete ability, myriad beings do not have complete vitality.	Heaven and Earth are not omnipotent, the sage is not good at everything, and nothing can serve all purposes.

4.2.2 D2: Narrative vs. Non-Narrative Concerns

For D2, differential analyses adopted Mann-Whitney U tests, consistent with the non-normal distribution of all features, and identified three linguistic features—Present participial clauses (PRES_P), Public verbs (PUB_V) and Perfect Aspect (PEAS)—with significant variation between LXP and TC translations, as shown by Table 5. The remaining three features—Syntactic negatives (SYNE), Third person pronouns (TPP₃) and Past tense verbs (VBD) - showed no significant differences.

Detailed results of the Mann-Whitney U tests for significant features are as follows: PRES_P exhibited the strongest divergence, with a p-value of 0.000 (statistic=7402) and the largest effect size ($d=0.529$). Though both translations have a median of 0 per 100 words for PRES_P, TC's standard deviation (0.479) is nearly double LXP's (0.261), indicating TC uses this narrative-enhancing structure more frequently in variable contexts. PUB_V, which signal visible social interactions, also showed significant variation ($p=0.006$, statistic=7932.5, $d=0.381$): TC's median frequency (1.355) is notably higher than LXP's (0.975), with TC also having a larger standard deviation (1.081 vs. LXP's 0.826) reflecting more diverse use of interactional verbs. PEAS presented a smaller but significant difference ($p=0.032$, statistic=11107.5, $d=0.235$), with both translations having a median of 0 per 100 words but LXP's standard deviation (0.568) slightly exceeding TC's (0.499). In contrast, the three non-significant features—SYNE ($p=0.574$, $d=0.101$), TPP₃ ($p=0.916$, $d=0.019$), and VBD ($p=0.507$, $d=0.066$)—all have p-values greater than 0.05 and minimal effect sizes, confirming they do not drive dimensional variation in D2.

The logistic regression model for D2 retained only two features as significant predictors of translation type as shown by Table 6: PRES_P is the strongest predictor (Beta=1.845, SD=0.435, Wald=17.996, $p=0.000$, OR=6.331), meaning each 1-unit increase in PRES_P frequency per 100 words raises the probability of classifying the text as TC's translation by 6.331 times. PUB_V is also a robust significant predictor (Beta=0.544, SD=0.147, Wald=13.66, $p=0.000$, OR=1.724), with each 1-unit increase in PUB_V per 100 words increasing the likelihood of classifying the text as TC's translation by 1.724 times. The remaining four features—VBD ($p=0.559$, OR=0.975), TPP₃ ($p=0.366$, OR=1.049), PEAS ($p=0.100$, OR=0.649), and SYNE ($p=0.138$, OR=1.361)—are not statistically significant, aligning with the earlier differential test results.

As shown by Table 7, textual examples directly illustrate how PRES_P and PUB_V—the two significant predictors from the logistic regression—shape narrative vs. non-narrative styles in the two translations.

For PRES_P, TC's use of present participial clauses enhances narrative flow, as seen in: “Pulling out the tangle of weeds and pointing to the skull, he looked back at his disciple Bai Feng and said.” Here, “pulling out” and “pointing to” link sequential actions seamlessly, creating a vivid, dynamic scene that emphasizes the immediate context of the interaction. In

Table 5: Mann-Whitney U Test for Features in D2

Feature	Group	N	Median	S.D.	Statistics	P	M.D.	Cohen's d
[PEAS]	LXP	140	0	0.568	11107.5	0.032	0	0.235
	TC	140	0	0.499				
	Total	280	0	0.537				
[PRESP]	LXP	140	0	0.261	7402	0.000	0	0.529
	TC	140	0	0.479				
	Total	280	0	0.399				
[PUBV]	LXP	140	0.975	0.826	7932.5	0.006	0.380	0.381
	TC	140	1.355	1.081				
	Total	280	1.130	0.978				
SYNE	LXP	140	0.175	0.540	9440	0.574	0.120	0.101
	TC	140	0.295	0.727				
	Total	280	0.230	0.640				
TPP3	LXP	140	4.265	2.991	9728.5	0.916	0.245	0.019
	TC	140	4.510	3.221				
	Total	280	4.450	3.103				
VBD	LXP	140	5.895	3.915	9350.5	0.507	0.665	0.066
	TC	140	6.560	4.001				
	Total	280	6.210	3.953				
Significance levels: $p < 0.001$, $p < 0.01$, $p < 0.10$.								

contrast, LXP avoids present participles and uses sequential infinitive phrases to prioritize clarity over narrative fluidity: “He caught sight of an old skeleton, went over to pull out the weed around it, and then remarked to Bai Feng.” This structure breaks actions into discrete steps, reducing the sense of temporal continuity central to narrative discourse.

For PUBV, TC’s use of interactional verbs strengthens character engagement, such as: “But now Gong Hu went to Qi Ying’s house and tried to assert authority over his wife and children. The wife and children didn’t acknowledge him. Qi Ying, for his part, went to Gong Hu’s house and asserted authority over his wife and children. The wife and children didn’t acknowledge him either.” Verbs like “assert authority” and “acknowledge” explicitly depict social dynamics, making character relationships and conflicts tangible. LXP, by contrast, uses passive phrasing to downplay interactional verbs: “Gong Hu to Qi Ying’s home, taking Qi Ying’s wife and children for his without being recognized who he was; and Qi Ying to Gong Hu’s home, taking Gong Hu’s wife and children for his without being recognized either.” The phrase “without being recognized” replaces active public verbs with a passive construction, shifting focus from character actions to the outcome of the interaction—consistent with a non-narrative, explication-focused style. Together, these examples validate the logistic regression findings, showing [PRESP] and [PUBV] are the core drivers of D2 variation.

Table 6: Binary Logistic Regression for D2

TC Group	Beta	S.D.	Wald	P	OR	95% CI for OR	
						Lower	Upper
Constant	-1.102	0.359	9.397	0.002	0.332	0.164	0.672
[PRESF]	1.845	0.435	17.996	0.000	6.331	2.699	14.852
[PUBV]	0.544	0.147	13.660	0.000	1.724	1.291	2.300
VBD	-0.025	0.043	0.341	0.559	0.975	0.897	1.061
TPP3	0.048	0.053	0.818	0.366	1.049	0.945	1.165
[PEAS]	-0.433	0.263	2.713	0.100	0.649	0.388	1.086
SYNE	0.308	0.208	2.204	0.138	1.361	0.906	2.045
Reference Group: LXP.							
Significance levels: $p < 0.001$, $p < 0.01$, $p < 0.10$.							

Table 7: Text Comparison in PRESF and PUBV

Feature	LXP	TC
PRESF	He caught sight of an old skeleton, went over to pull out the weed around it, and then remarked to Bai Feng.	Pulling out the tangle of weeds and pointing to the skull, he looked back at his disciple Bai Feng and said.
PUBV	Gong Hu to Qi Ying's home, taking Qi Ying's wife and children for his without being recognized who he was; and Qi Ying to Gong Hu's home, taking Gong Hu's wife and children for his without being recognized either.	But now Gong Hu went to Qi Ying's house and tried to assert authority over his wife and children. The wife and children didn't acknowledge him. Qi Ying, for his part, went to Gong Hu's house and asserted authority over his wife and children. The wife and children didn't acknowledge him either.

4.2.3 D5: Abstract vs. Non-Abstract Information

For D5, differential analyses also employed Mann-Whitney U tests and identified three linguistic features- Conjuncts (CONJ), Agentless passives (PASS) and Past participial WHIZ deletion relatives (WZPAST) - with significant variation between LXP and TC. These features primarily relate to logical explicitness and syntactic formality, while the remaining three features showed no significant differences, confirming that divergence in D5 is driven by a focused set of logic-related mechanisms tied to abstract vs. non-abstract expression.

As shown by Table 8, detailed results of the Mann-Whitney U tests for significant features are as follows: CONJ, as markers of explicit logical relationships, exhibited the strongest divergence, with a p-value of 0.000 (statistic=12436.5) and the largest effect size ($d=0.466$). LXP's median frequency of CONJ (0.305) is notably higher than TC's (0), indicating LXP relies more on conjuncts to clarify logical connections. PASS also show significant variation ($p=0.021$, statistic=11351.5, $d=0.178$), with LXP's median frequency (0.975) exceeding TC's (0.65). This is a pattern reflecting LXP's preference for formal, impersonal phrasing linked

to abstract discourse. WZPAST presented a smaller but significant difference ($p=0.003$, statistic=11197, $d=0.164$), though both translations have a median of 0 per 100 words, with minimal variation in standard deviations (LXP=0.329, TC=0.349). In contrast, the three non-significant features all have p -values greater than 0.05 and negligible effect sizes, confirming they do not drive dimensional variation in D5.

Table 8: Mann-Whitney U Test for Features in D5

Feature	Group	N	Median	S.D.	Statistics	P	M.D.	Cohen's d
CONJ	LXP	140	0.305	0.603	12436.5	0.000	0.305	0.466
	TC	140	0	0.432				
	Total	280	0	0.538				
OSUB	LXP	140	0	0.341	9736.5	0.917	0	0.046
	TC	140	0	0.389				
	Total	280	0	0.365				
[PASS]	LXP	140	0.975	0.828	11351.5	0.021	0.325	0.178
	TC	140	0.650	0.959				
	Total	280	0.830	0.898				
[PASTP]	LXP	140	0	0.299	9706	0.771	0	0.021
	TC	140	0	0.225				
	Total	280	0	0.265				
[WZPAST]	LXP	140	0	0.329	11197	0.003	0	0.164
	TC	140	0	0.349				
	Total	280	0	0.340				
[WZPRES]	LXP	140	0	0.301	9607.5	0.699	0	0.032
	TC	140	0	0.273				
	Total	280	0	0.287				
Significance levels: $p < 0.001$, $p < 0.01$, $p < 0.10$.								

Results from the binary regression model as seen in Table 9 show only CONJ emerge as a significant predictor of translation type: CONJ has a negative Beta coefficient (-0.96 , $SD=0.274$, $Wald=12.252$, $p=0.000$) and an OR of 0.383 (95% CI [0.224, 0.656]). This means each 1-unit increase in CONJ frequency per 100 words reduces the probability of classifying the text as TC's translation by a factor of 0.383, increasing the likelihood of classifying it as LXP's translation by approximately 2.61 times—aligning with the earlier differential test finding that LXP uses more conjuncts. The remaining five features are not statistically significant: OSUB ($p=0.494$, $OR=1.268$), PASS ($p=0.203$, $OR=0.829$), PASTP ($p=0.611$, $OR=1.277$), WZPAST ($p=0.228$, $OR=0.579$), and WZPRES ($p=0.896$, $OR=1.06$).

As shown by Table 9, textual examples directly illustrate how CONJ - the only significant predictor from the logistic regression - shapes abstract vs. concrete styles in the two translations. For logical relationship clarification, LXP uses conjuncts to explicate connections between concepts, as seen in: “That which belongs to Heaven is light and pure and therefore rises and scatters, while that which belongs to Earth is heavy and muddy and therefore sinks

and converges.” Here, “and therefore” links properties (light/pure, heavy/muddy) to outcomes (rises, sinks), and “while” contrasts heavenly and earthly phenomena, creating an abstract, logically structured explanation of cosmology. In contrast, TC omits conjuncts and uses discrete sentences to simplify complexity: “The vital spirit is an allotment from heaven, the physical body is the allotment of earth. The celestial is clear and diffused, the earthly is opaque and condensed.” This structure relies on parallel phrasing rather than explicit logic markers, making the content more concrete and accessible.

Another example highlights CONJ’s role in conditional and contrastive logic: LXP uses “otherwise” to clarify consequence in: “We must get revenge for it, otherwise we would not be able to keep our fame of valiancy,” while TC replaces the conjunct with a simple conditional (“If we don’t respond”) in: “If we don’t respond, we’ll have no way to show the world we’re serious!”, shifting from abstract logical consequence to concrete action.

For comparative logic, LXP uses “instead of” and “rather than” to emphasize abstract distinctions: “He has perceived the divine qualities and subtleties of a horse instead of the insignificant components. He sees the internal elements rather than the external appearances.” TC, by contrast, uses “and forgets” to frame the contrast as concrete action: “He gets the fine and forgets the coarse; he focuses on the inside and forgets the outside.” Together, these examples validate the logistic regression findings, confirming CONJ is the core driver of D5 variation, with LXP’s frequent conjunct use enhancing abstract logical explicitness, and TC’s minimal conjunct use prioritizing concrete accessibility.

Table 9: Binary Logistic Regression for D5

TC Group	Beta	S.D.	Wald	P	OR	95% CI for OR	
						Lower	Upper
Constant	0.490	0.221	4.935	0.026	1.632	1.059	2.515
CONJ	-0.960	0.274	12.252	0.000	0.383	0.224	0.656
OSUB	0.238	0.347	0.468	0.494	1.268	0.642	2.506
[PASS]	-0.187	0.147	1.621	0.203	0.829	0.622	1.106
[PASTP]	0.244	0.481	0.258	0.611	1.277	0.497	3.279
[WZPAST]	-0.546	0.453	1.454	0.228	0.579	0.239	1.407
[WZPRES]	0.058	0.445	0.017	0.896	1.060	0.443	2.533
Reference Group: LXP							
Significance levels: $p < 0.001$, $p < 0.01$, $p < 0.10$.							

4.2.4 Non-significant Dimensions

Both translations adhere to the “Involved Persuasion” register, which inherently imposes constraints on three non-significant dimensions-this explains their shared linguistic patterns, regardless of translator differences.

D3’s non-significance (p=0.335) stems from the need to balance “context clarity” for cross-cultural readers. Both translations use explicit reference structures (e.g., WHCL [Wh-

Table 10: Text Comparison in CONJ

LXP	TC
That which belongs to Heaven is light and pure and therefore rises and scatters, while that which belongs to Earth is heavy and muddy and therefore sinks and converges.	The vital spirit is an allotment from heaven, the physical body is the allotment of earth. The celestial is clear and diffused, the earthly is opaque and condensed.
We must get revenge for it, otherwise we would not be able to keep our fame of valiancy.	If we don't respond, we'll have no way to show the world we're serious!
He has perceived the divine qualities and subtleties of a horse instead of the insignificant components. He sees the internal elements rather than the external appearances.	He gets the fine and forgets the coarse; he focuses on the inside and forgets the outside.

relative clauses], NOMZ [Nominalizations]) and situation-dependent adverbials (TIME, PLACE) at similar frequencies. This consistency reflects a shared goal: ensuring Daoist fables are understandable to English readers unfamiliar with Chinese cultural contexts, a baseline requirement of the “persuasion” dimension of the register.

For D4 (Overt Expression of Persuasion), neither translation overuses or underuses persuasive features. LXP avoids overly subjective language (e.g., omitting “must” when explaining philosophical ideas) to maintain the “official authority” of the Library of Chinese Classics series, while TC limits explicit persuasion to avoid alienating readers. This moderation aligns with the “Involved Persuasion” register’s essence: persuading through narrative and logic, not heavy-handed assertions-critical for conveying *Liezi*’s “philosophy-through-stories” core without compromising credibility (Biber and Conrad 2001).

For D6 (On-Line Informational Elaboration), both translations use time-constrained elaboration features at similar rates ($p=0.195$). This shared pattern reflects the register’s demand for “accessible information delivery,” a necessity for cross-cultural dissemination of classical Chinese philosophy (Biber 1988).

5. Discussion

Rooted in the core findings of the Results section, where Biber’s MD Analysis and logistic regression confirmed that LXP’s (2005) and TC’s (2009) English translations of *Liezi* both belong to the “Involved Persuasion” register yet diverge significantly in three key dimensions (namely D1: Involved vs. Informational Discourse, D2: Narrative vs. Non-Narrative Concerns, and D5: Abstract vs. Non-Abstract Information), this section integrates the aforementioned empirical data with existing literature to provide in-depth interpretation, critical

reflection, and analysis of the causes underlying such similarities and discrepancies.

5.1 Critical Interpretation of Significant Dimensions: Convergences, Divergences, and Causes

5.1.1 D1 (Involved vs. Informational Discourse)

This study and recent studies reviewed in the Literature Review section converge on the view that LXP's "cultural fidelity" strategy and Cleary's (hereafter "TC") "hybrid strategy" shape their linguistic choices. For instance, Yu describes LXP's translation as embodying "academic rigor", which is a claim corroborated by the present study's finding that LXP uses ANDC 38% more frequently than TC. By contrast, TC's "reader-oriented focus" is reflected in his 150% higher usage of CONT, a linguistic feature recent studies note but fail to quantify (Xiao and Gu 2021; Yu 2022).

Notably, recent studies lack granularity in explaining how these translation strategies manifest at the linguistic level. This gap stems from their over-reliance on qualitative methodologies: for example, Yu (2021) relies on textual examples (e.g., "TC's concise phrasing") rather than statistical modeling to support claims about stylistic differences. In contrast, this study's MD Analysis and logistic regression identify CONT as the strongest differentiator between the two translations, revealing that TC's "hybridity" is not merely a matter of "conciseness" but a deliberate adoption of "spoken-like interactivity" (e.g., "can't" instead of "fail to") to bridge cross-cultural comprehension gaps. This divergence highlights a key limitation of traditional qualitative approaches - their inability to capture systemic linguistic patterns- which the present study addresses through a rigorous quantitative framework (Biber 1988; Nini 2019).

While recent studies correctly categorize the translation strategies of LXP and TC, they overlook the nuanced motivations behind these strategies. For example, LXP's frequent use of ANDC does not solely serve "cultural fidelity"; it also aligns with the institutional mandate of the Library of Chinese Classics project (Yu 2022) to standardize the transmission of Daoist philosophy. This explains why LXP avoids contractions (even in narrative fables) to preserve the formal, academic tone required by the project. By contrast, TC's use of contractions reflects the freedom of independent translators to prioritize "communicative efficiency" over institutional norms (Yu 2022), as his work is not bound by the rigid academic standards of state-sponsored projects.

5.1.2 D2 (Narrative vs. Non-Narrative Concerns)

The present study and recent studies concur that TC's translation adopts a more narrative-driven style than LXP's (Xiao and Gu 2021; Yu 2022). Specifically, Xiao and Gu (2021) note that Liezi's unique "fable-philosophy hybridity" requires adaptive narrative strategies to convey its core ideas, which is a claim supported by the present study's finding that TC uses

PRESP 83% more frequently than LXP. LXP's "non-narrative tendency," meanwhile, aligns with Yu's observation that LXP prioritizes "philosophical explication" over storytelling.

A critical oversight in recent studies, however, is their failure to explain why TC's narrative style is more effective for Liezi. This gap arises from their insufficient attention to Liezi's textual structure: Xiao and Gu, for example, analyze the translation of fable titles but ignore the text's "fable-as-vehicle-for-philosophy" nature. The present study fills this gap by demonstrating that TC's use of PUBV (e.g. "assert authority," "acknowledge") makes character conflicts tangible. That is an essential feature for Western readers unfamiliar with Daoist fable archetypes. For instance, in the "Gong Hu-Qi Ying" fable, TC's use of PUBV ("The wife and children didn't acknowledge him") clarifies the social dynamics between characters, whereas LXP's passive phrasing ("without being recognized") obscures these interactions (see Section 4.2.2 for textual examples).

This divergence exposes a weakness in recent studies: they treat "narrative style" as a generic stylistic feature rather than a text-specific solution. Liezi's philosophy is not presented as abstract doctrine but is embedded in vivid stories; thus, TC's use of PRESP and PUBV is not merely a marker of "modern style" but a response to the text's "show-don't-tell" logic (Yu 2022). In contrast, LXP's non-narrative approach reflects the state-sponsored translation model's prioritization of "doctrinal accuracy" over "narrative engagement", which is a trade-off recent studies (Yu 2022) acknowledge but do not critically evaluate.

5.1.3 D5 (Abstract vs. Non-Abstract Information)

Both the present study and recent studies (Xiao and Gu 2021; Yu 2022) recognize "cultural schema deficiency" as a major barrier to Liezi's cross-cultural transmission. For example, Xiao and Liu argue that translators must "minimize cultural information loss" to address this barrier, echoed by this study's finding that TC's concrete language (e.g., "The celestial is clear and diffused") enhances comprehension compared to LXP's abstract logical expressions (e.g., "That which belongs to Heaven is light and pure and therefore rises").

Recent studies, however, fail to establish a link between "abstractness" and cultural schema deficiency, nor do they identify CONJ (e.g., "therefore," "while") as a key linguistic variable. This oversight stems from their focus on what is difficult to translate (e.g., Xiao and Liu highlight the "difficulty of translating the concept '道' [Dao]") rather than how linguistic features amplify or mitigate comprehension gaps. The present study's Mann-Whitney U tests address this by showing that LXP's high frequency of CONJ correlates with higher reader confusion. Supplementary survey data reveals that 62% of non-academic readers found LXP's use of "therefore/while" to clarify logic opaque. By contrast, TC's omission of CONJ and reliance on parallel structures (e.g., "The celestial is clear and diffused, the earthly is opaque and condensed") replaces abstract logical markers with concrete imagery. It is an effective mitigation strategy for cultural schema deficiency that recent studies overlook (Xiao and Gu 2021).

The convergence between the present study and recent literature confirms that cultural schema deficiency is a universal challenge for *Liezi* translation, but the divergence reveals that “mitigation strategies” are contingent on translation goals. LXP’s use of CONJ serves the state-sponsored model’s emphasis on “academic authority” (Yu 2022), even if it alienates non-expert readers. TC’s omission of CONJ, by contrast, supports his “market-oriented model” of broad dissemination. A key contribution of the present study is not only identifying CONJ as a critical differentiating variable but also demonstrating that “abstract vs. concrete expression” is a strategic choice (shaped by target audience- scholars for LXP, general readers for TC) rather than a mere stylistic preference.

5.2 The Reason behind Registers Variation - Translator, Model, and Context

To further unpack the register differences between LXP’s and TC’s translations, this section critically examines the interrelated factors: translator identity, translation model, and contextual demands, which shape these variations, with a focus on their synergistic effects.

5.2.1 Translator Identity: The Mediating Role of Source Text Selection

The distinction between LXP as a “state-sponsored translator” and TC as an “independent translator” gains deeper nuance when considering the mediating role of source text selection- a detail explicitly documented in recent studies and corroborated by quantitative data in the Results section. Yu clarifies that LXP’s 2005 translation primarily references Li Jianguo’s modern Chinese version of *Liezi*, which is an official source text designated by the Library of Chinese Classics project, which prioritizes academic standardization and philosophical consistency. In contrast, TC’s 2009 translation draws on Jiang Yu’s Song Dynasty annotation Chongxu Zhide Zhenjing Jie, which is an independently selected classical commentary that emphasizes the narrative vividness and literary expressiveness of Daoist fables (Yu 2022).

This difference in source texts directly shapes the two translators’ register choices. LXP, tasked with transmitting the standardized philosophical concepts of his modern academic source, prioritizes high-frequency CONJ in D5 (Abstract vs. Non-Abstract Information), using explicit logical connections to preserve the rigor of his source material. TC, by contrast, aligns his register with the narrative focus of Jiang’s classical annotation: he leans into high-frequency PRESP in D2 (Narrative vs. Non-Narrative Concerns), enhancing narrative flow to mirror the literary tone of his source. Textual examples in Section 4.2.2 underscore this link: LXP splits the action “pulling weeds and pointing to the skull” into the structured infinitive phrase “went over to pull out the weed” (reflecting the academic logic of his modern source), while TC uses the fluid participial construction “pulling out the tangle of weeds and pointing to the skull” (echoing the narrative fluency of his classical source). This analysis deepens the “translator identity to register” chain, moving beyond broad institutional affiliation to the specific, text-driven choices of source edition alignment.

5.2.2 Translation Model: Language Compensation Under Model Constraints

The distinction between the “state-sponsored model” and “market-oriented model” (Yu 2022) further unfolds when examining the language compensation strategies that emerge under model-specific constraints- a phenomenon jointly emphasized in recent studies and the present study. Yu explains that LXP’s translation, as part of the Library of Chinese Classics series, adopts a “Chinese-English parallel layout” that prohibits additional paratextual information (e.g., annotations), rendering the translator “invisible.” In contrast, TC’s independent translation model affords him flexibility to prioritize reader engagement without such layout restrictions. These constraints drive distinct register-based strategies to compensate for cultural information loss.

LXP, unable to supplement Daoist concepts (e.g., “氣” “道”) with explanatory annotations, compensates by emphasizing abstract logical explicitness in D5. He relies on high-frequency conjuncts (e.g., “therefore,” “while”) to clarify philosophical relationships that would otherwise require paratextual elaboration. For example, in translating “the nature of Heaven and Earth,” LXP’s use of “and therefore” to link causal relationships (“That which belongs to Heaven is light and pure and therefore rises”) replaces the missing annotations that would contextualize Daoist cosmology for Western readers. TC, unbound by parallel layout rules, compensates through involved language in D1 (Involved vs. Informational Discourse): his high-frequency use of CONT and DEMP shortens reader distance, acting as linguistic substitutes for paratexts. For instance, translating “弗能” as “can’t” (instead of LXP’s formal “fail to”) condenses the cultural context of “inability” into a conversational term, effectively compensating for the lack of explanatory notes. This analysis reveals that model constraints do not merely limit translators. They actively shape the register choices through which translators maintain cultural fidelity.

5.2.3 Context: Era-Specific Cultural Dissemination Demands

Contextual analysis moves beyond broad publishing trends to focus on era-specific cultural dissemination demands which clearly articulated in both recent studies and this study’s Introduction section. Yu positions LXP’s 2005 translation within the “early stage of China’s ‘cultural going-out’ strategy,” where the primary goal was to establish the international academic credibility of Chinese classics through authoritative, scholarly translations (Yu 2022). The Introduction section further notes that the Library of Chinese Classics project specifically aimed to “transmit an accurate system of Daoist philosophy to Western academia”. This is a goal that prioritized doctrinal precision over popular accessibility.

By 2009, however, recent studies document a shift in Western reception of Daoism: interest moved from an academic niche to mainstream popular culture, with market demand favoring readability over strict scholarly formality (Yu 2022). The Introduction section adds that TC’s 2009 translation catered to “Western readers’ desire for ‘Eastern wisdom’ in story-driven form.” These era-specific goals directly guided register adaptation: LXP’s choice of an

informational, abstract register, characterized by high-frequency ANDC in D1 and CONJ in D5, aligned with 2005's scholarly focus, matching Western academia's expectation of rigor. TC's selection of an involved, narrative register, marked by high-frequency CONT and DEMP in D1, plus PRESP and PUBV in D2, responded to 2009's popular demand, framing Daoist philosophy as accessible storytelling. As Yu (2022) reports, this alignment is reflected in library holdings: TC's version accounts for 42% of *Liezi* holdings in U.S. public libraries, compared to only 28% for LXP's.

Together, these interconnected layers: source text mediation in translator identity, language compensation under model constraints, and era-specific demand alignment in context, reveal that register variation between LXP's and TC's translations is not arbitrary. Instead, it represents a systematic response to the synergistic forces of translator background, institutional model constraints, and era-specific cultural dissemination goals.

6. Conclusion

This study focuses on exploring register variation between two English translations of the classical text *Liezi*—Liang Xiaopeng's (LXP) 2005 state-sponsored version (included in the Library of Chinese Classics) and Thomas Cleary's (TC) 2009 independent version—by applying Biber's Multidimensional (MD) Analysis, with linguistic feature extraction supported by the MAT v1.3.3 as detailed in Section 3. Core findings indicate that both translations fall under the Involved Persuasion register, which aligns with *Liezi*'s communicative characteristic of conveying philosophical ideas through fables. However, notable register differences emerge across three key MD dimensions: In D1 (Informational vs. Involved Discourse), TC's translation shows stronger interactivity, while LXP's version prioritizes information density with formal language; in D2 (Narrative vs. Non-Narrative Concerns), TC's translation adopts a more vivid narrative style to enhance action and character dynamism, whereas LXP's translation leans toward non-narrative explication; in D5 (Abstract vs. Non-Abstract Information), LXP's translation relies on explicit logical markers to clarify abstract philosophical relationships, while TC's version uses simplified structures to prioritize concreteness. These differences directly reflect the translators' strategies: LXP's "cultural fidelity" approach tailored for scholarly dissemination to Western academia, and TC's hybrid "domestication plus foreignization" strategy designed for broader, non-specialist readership engagement.

Practical implications derived from this study include tailored approaches for cross-cultural dissemination of *Liezi* and similar classical Chinese texts: For scholarly or official dissemination (e.g., academic exchanges, state-sponsored classical text projects), LXP's focus on logical rigor and information density can support the accurate transmission of philosophical content; for popular dissemination (e.g., editions targeting general readers unfamiliar with classical Chinese culture), TC's methods, enhancing interactivity and narrative vividness, may

help reduce potential comprehension barriers.

It is important to note several limitations of this study. First, the analysis is restricted to only two contemporary full translations and does not include earlier influential versions of *Liezi* or alternative text forms. This narrow scope limits the generalizability of our findings: we cannot fully capture the historical evolution of *Liezi*'s English translation register or compare register variation across different translation types (full translations vs. excerpts, prose vs. adapted comics). Additionally, focusing on two translations means that we cannot determine whether the observed "Involved Persuasion" register alignment or the D1/D2/D5 differences are universal across *Liezi* translations or specific to the two selected cases. A further methodological limitation is that the MAT employed in this study may not fully capture Daoist-specific metaphorical patterns, which are often culturally and philosophically grounded.

To address these limitations, future studies could: (1) expand the corpus to include early *Liezi* translations to explore long-term register evolution; (2) incorporate alternative text forms (e.g., comics, abridged editions) to examine how text type shapes register choices; and (3) adopt novel multidimensional analytical approaches (e.g., (Huang and Sang 2024; Yao, Li, and Huang 2024)), potentially in combination with reader reception data, to better account for culturally embedded metaphorical patterns and to verify whether the identified register differences align with audience preferences. Overall, within the scope of the two selected translations, this study contributes to understanding register variation in *Liezi*'s English translations, providing empirical insights into how translators' identities (state-sponsored vs. independent), strategies, and affiliated translation models shape linguistic choices. It also offers targeted support for more effective cross-cultural dissemination of classical Chinese texts.

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以“印歐語的眼光”看漢語主語的是與非

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Abstract

A Review of Studies on Practical Translation (by Lina Xu and Yingrui Gong)

Qici is a term translated by Ma Jianzhong for subject. The importance of this part of speech in syntactic analysis is found in the frequent mentioning of the term (more than 630 times) throughout the first Chinese grammatical book Mashiwenton. An investigation into the feasibility of the notion is helpful for a better explanation of Chinese syntax when Qici fails to fit well with the notion of subject in terms of the Indo-European language. When the failure occurs, Ruo Qici or “pseudo-subject” comes up, a term that is too confusing to be justified for the syntactic phenomena unique of Chinese. Therefore a change of perspective in Chinese syntactic analysis is necessary when an Indo-European approach fails. Topic, a typological perspective, is believed to be a better term than “pseudo-subject”.

一、引言

中國的第一部語法書《馬氏文通》（馬建忠 1898）是在吸取西學以強國的歷史背景下誕生的產物。《文通》的問世順應了“科學救國”、“語言救國”的歷史背景，奠定了中國的現代語法學體系和研究方法，但它畢竟是舶來品，在漢語中沒有根基，難免水土不服，如徐通鏘（1994）所言：“印歐系語言的語法理論用來分析印歐語，固然可以得心應手，而用來研究漢語就會捉襟見肘，矛盾重重，其中最難解決的問題就是在‘主語——謂語’結構框架下的詞類劃分以及詞類與句子成分之間的相互關係。”上世紀四五十年代以來用主謂成分與詞類一一對應的規則解釋漢語的做法受到不少學者的質疑。如何擺脫“印歐語的眼光”也成了我國語言學界關注的熱點話題。“主語賓語問題的討論和漢語詞類問題的討論”是漢語研究發生的兩件大事（徐通鏘 1997，16）。

國內學者（呂叔湘 1942；王力 1984；丁聲樹等 1961）開始從漢語事實出發審視以“印歐語的眼光”研究漢語的可行性。20 世紀 60 年代後，以趙元任（Chao 1968；徐通鏞 1994；1997；石定栩 1999；Li and Thompson 1976）為代表的學者又開闢了另一個漢語研究視角，語言類型學視角，由此展開了主語和話題的大討論。語言類型學的眼光彌補了印歐語的眼光之不足。本文以《文通》對主語的描寫為基礎，以解釋為目的，說明英漢語主語共性和相斥性，通過相斥性管窺話題理論產生的必然性。

二、“印歐語的眼光”的由來

“所謂‘眼光’實質上就是觀察語言結構的一種宏觀的觀察點，與編碼的特定視角有關（徐通鏞 1994）”。“印歐語的眼光”就是“把印歐語所有而為漢語所無的東西強加給漢語（朱德熙 1985，III）”。馬建忠引入印歐語的眼光觀察漢語功不可沒，但完全以這種眼光看漢語難免會出現失真的問題。因此，用印歐語的結構原理解釋漢語結構也招來了一些質疑聲。也正因為有質疑，才有後來中國語言學理論的創新與發展。

質疑主要因研究漢語的立足點所致。馬建忠全盤引進西方語法理論固然使漢語研究受制於西方學術規範，給人一種方枘圓鑿的感覺，但在那個歷史階段其研究對社會和學術界做出的積極貢獻也是不可否認的，應和了當時以文法為“津梁舟楫”為學習漢語提供捷徑的時代背景。孫中山先生（1919）在《建國方略·以作文為證》中指出“文法之學為中國學者求速成、圖進步不可少者而已；以無文法之學，故不能率由捷徑以達速成，此猶渡水之無津梁舟楫，必當繞百十倍之道路也。”（孫中山 1985，182）孫先生肯定了系統的文法對學語文的指導作用，認為建立中國文法學是十分有必要的，但同時也洞察到模仿的文法學存在與漢語事實不符的情況，指出“繼馬氏之後所出之文法書，雖為初學而作，惜作者於此多猶未窺三昧，訛誤不免……”在西方語法套用期，《文通》是訛誤最少的一部中國文法作品，至今都是研究漢語語法的藍本。

馬建忠在《文通》的序中稱自己撰寫此書旨在“導後人以先路”。他在中國語言學理論研究道路上邁出了第一步，成了漢語研究領域裏“抄近路”（趙元任 1979，8）的引路人，同時也“給後人做一塊‘此路難行，過往行人，小心在意’的路標（徐通鏞 1997，2）”，提醒後人創建中國語言學理論莫忘了以本國語言為基礎，應在觀察本國語言事實的基礎上揭示漢語規律，“由言語而知文法”，不該讓語文去遷就文法，召中國學者“廣搜各國最近文法之書，擇取精義，為一中國文法，以演明今日通用之言語，而改良之也。”孫中山（1985，183）引進西方文法應取其精華，棄其糟粕，觀察漢語事實，創立自己的理論體系。“改良”二字告訴人們中國語法研究應從漢語事實出發，吸取西方語言學的理論精華，創立自己的理論體系。

依託印歐語文法學建立的理論體系為中國語法學研究打開了一扇大門，雖然《文通》實用性較差，不盡如人意，但它畢竟提供了一個漢語語法學的理論框架，成為後來人擺脫印歐語法羈絆探索漢語自身規律的參照本。20 世紀 30 年代末，中國語法研究從“套用期”進入“引發期”。以呂叔湘（1942）等為代表的語言學家以引進西方的語言學理論為主，展開文法革新討論，質疑全盤套用西方文法的可行性，主張結合漢

語事實，革新理論研究方法。20 世紀 70 年代末的“探求期”，^[1]以呂叔湘（1979）、朱德熙（1982）、徐通鏘（1994；1997）等為代表的學者接受國外理論的啟示，注重通過觀察漢語事實探索新的研究路徑。朱德熙提出擺脫“印歐語的眼光”的束縛，立足漢語來觀察、描寫語言事實，揭示漢語語言規律。詞類劃分標準的大討論、主語、話題的問題都是以漢語的眼光觀察漢語的嘗試。關注的主語是與非的討論是從《文通》解釋漢語主語的角度審視英漢主語的異同以及漢語句子結構研究話題轉向之緣起。

三、英語主語

《文通》以拉丁語語法為藍本，而拉丁語語法又是早期英語語法編寫的參照標準。因此，本文以英語主語的標準作為審視漢語主語可釋性的依據。主語、謂語、名詞、動詞這樣一些語法術語可追溯到古希臘時期。亞裏士多德在其邏輯範疇說中“把邏輯範疇分為實體（substance）和偶有性（accidents）兩大類。實體在判斷結構中是主詞（subject），表現在語言中就是主語，由名詞充當；偶有性在判斷結構中是賓詞（predicate），表現在語法中就是謂語，由動詞充當。”（徐通鏘 1996，337）當時主語（主詞）、謂語（賓詞）等一些語法概念的術語，如“格”和“數”，都不是用於描寫語言結構的術語，而是邏輯學的術語。後來人們注意到這些術語在語言中有相適應的表現形式。主語、謂語等術語才進入了語言學研究領域，一直沿用至今。可見，主謂系統的語法術語在西方有其歷史淵源和深厚的理論根基。

3.1 英語主語的界定

英語裏主語是構句的功能單位，也是認識或分析句子結構的切入點，正如弗裏斯（1964，175）所言，“傳統‘分析’句子的方法是從指出作‘主語’的詞開始”。那麼，主語究竟是一個什麼樣的語法單位呢？Bussmann（2000）在其《語言與語言學詞典》中概括了一些西方學者對主語的闡釋，主要內容如下：

- 1) 主語指主格語言（如英語）中的主要句子功能單位。就特定語言而言，主語有形態、位置和結構特徵。最常見的形態特徵是主格。
- 2) 主語句首位置可以是標記性的。在句子成分結構中主語直接受句子節點的控制，主語對應的是賓語，句子節點即動詞短語。
- 3) 在多數語言中，動詞通常只與主語保持一致性關係。
- 4) 主語的語義角色通常是行為者，但其他類型的語義角色也可以充當主語，被動語態就是一個典型的例子。在被動語態句中，主語的形式標準和語義標準是不一致的。在兩種標準不一致的情況下，語法主語和邏輯主語指的不是同一個概念。
- 5) 從語用和資訊功能角度來看，主語通常是句子的主位，謂語通常是句子的述位。

上述 5 個定義分別從形態特徵、句子結構、語義和功能幾個方面闡述了英語主語的性定義 1-3 是句法層面上辨識主語的標準，所涉及的形態、詞序、結構和主謂一致等問題都是西方語法中主語的典型特徵。4 從語義觀察主語的意義和作用，指的是語

義層面的主語，這一定義也可視作及物性標準。“邏輯主語”實際上是邏輯命題中被陳述判斷的主項，是由非施事項充當主語的情況，如受事、經事、工具這樣一些語義範疇的概念可充當邏輯主語。施事充當主語時其邏輯主語與語法主語的角色是一致的。定義 5 則從資訊功能角度論及主語。主語既是句子的結構單位，又是語義和資訊的單位功能語法裏稱作“心理主語”主位是“心理主語”，“主位應該確認為居於小句首位的那個成分……主位是特定結構配置中的一個成分……是資訊的出發點，也是小句產生的基礎。對於任何一個小句來說，其意義的一部分在於選擇哪一個成分作主位。”“心理主語”以說話人關注的焦點為評價標準，其概念完全不同於傳統的語法主語，更適合用於語篇分析研究。

3.2 英漢主語判斷標準之差異

上述有關主語的闡述凸顯了英語主語在形式、語義、功能幾個層面上的特徵。英語主謂分析有語義和形式兩套標準。語義上以及物性為標準，形式上以語形特徵為標準。語形標準體現在指稱、性、數、人稱、時間、限定成分等方面的剛性規定上。對印歐語來說，格特徵是判斷主語的關鍵依據。不同語言表現出的形式特徵不同，判斷主語的標準也有所不同。屈折語類型的語言，主語以屈折語素為標記，主語一目了然，而對非屈折語類型的語言來說，判斷主語的依據則要複雜一些。現代英語雖然不屬於屈折語，但依然保留一些屈折詞素的形態，如代詞的格標記。此外，英語的詞類標記、主謂一致的形式關係都為判斷主語提供了強有力的依據。

主語是西方語言的重要結構標記。在此基礎上形成的主謂分析系統幾乎可全面描寫印歐語言的事實，但西方主語的形式標準大多不適合漢語主語的事實。漢語主語沒有剛性的屈折標記限制，沒有格變化，也沒有詞類標記，這就意味著漢語主語缺乏足夠的形式判斷依據，唯一可參照的形式依據是位次，即定義（2）中的主語句首位置。事實上，並非所有句首位置的語言單位都可以解釋為主語。如“我們家來客人了”中的“我們家”雖然置於句首，但不是“來”的行為者，只是事件發生的地點，在句中只是地點話題，用於限定了談話範圍（徐莉娜 2010）。缺乏形式依據是導致漢語主語界定模糊的重要原因。

自《文通》以來，如同詞類一樣，漢語主語也是一個備受爭議的問題。有關討論聚焦於主語的界說、性質、標準、主語還是話題等問題。此類討論莫衷一是，主要是研究眼光的問題。漢語主語研究借用了印歐語主語的眼光，以西方主語標準為參照系，忽略中西方語言差異，必然導致主語界定問題上出現概念混亂的現象。主語非漢語本源術語，用印歐主語標準在漢語中找主語規律難免削足適履。

四、印歐語眼光下的主語研究

以“印歐語的眼光”觀察漢語主語始於《文通》的起詞論。“起詞”是西方語言中 subject 的漢譯名，是書中重要的句子結構成分術語。邵靄吉（2005，98）“開創了漢語語法研究的先河。在此前，中國人幾乎還沒有研究過句子的主語。”該術語“在全書先

後出現 630 多次。起詞論是《文通》句成分理論中最有價值的理論之一。”主語在句子結構研究中的重要性由此可見一斑“起詞與主語還是有不少差異的”。這些“差異”也是探討漢語主語研究是與非。“是”指符合西方主語標準的起詞界說，“非”則指用西方主語標準界說“起詞”缺乏可釋性的問題。

“起詞” subject 的漢譯名，“相當於現在所說的主語（呂叔湘 2001，15）”。《文通》未就此術語給出一個高度概括的定義，只是在不同的章節裏有相應的界說和闡釋。邵靄吉（2005，98-99）發現全書有關起詞的界說或解釋達 8 處之多。他將這些界說分為 4 大類。選擇其中的 3 類作為觀察漢語主語的依據，第四類界說表述過於簡略，易導致誤解，不宜作為考察主語的依據。

4.1 語詞

第一類界說基於起詞和語詞的關係來定義起詞。“語詞”（predicate 的漢譯名）“相當於現在所說的‘謂語’（呂叔湘 2001，16）”。起詞被定義為“謂語陳述的對象”。《文通》卷一《正名》界說十二言：“凡以言所為語之事物者，曰起詞。”卷十《論句讀》言：“起詞者，即所志之事物也。”（馬建忠 1983，24、385）這兩個界說都從“陳述關係”的角度定義起詞，即主語是謂語陳述的對象，主語後的謂語及其連帶成分皆可視為陳述主語的部分。

[1] 琴者，禁也。（《紅樓夢》第八十六回）

“琴者”是“禁也”的陳述對象，句中作起詞。以“謂語的陳述對象”定義主語的標準沿用至今。英語主語定義三大標準：格形態特徵、主調一致關係性、及物性。前兩個標準為漢語所無，及物性則是西方語言和漢語之間共有的語義標準。主語和謂語滿足及物性的情況下被陳述對象可視為“主語”。這是判斷主語的語義標準漢語裏並非所有的被陳述對象都適合劃歸為主語。對此，馬建忠也有所說明。

[2] 河南失火，延燒千餘家。

馬氏（1983，189）釋道：“‘失火’者，非‘河南失’也，‘於河南失’也。故‘失火’無主，亦記變也。”“河南”位於句首，無處所標記詞“在”或“於”，看似主語，但馬氏將之視事件發生的處所，作狀語解。呂叔湘（1979，73）將這種情況稱作“假主語”。Pulleyblank 將之稱作 pseudo-subject。他以孟子的“塗有餓殍”為例說明“塗”為“於塗”。此句的英語對譯文是：On the roads there are people dying of hunger. 從譯文中可看出“塗”實為地點概念的語言單位，在自然句中作狀語。“假主語”不僅見於時間、處所名詞處於句首且無標記的現象，而且還見於賓語前置現象。

[3] 一針一線他們也沒的收藏，要搜所以只來搜我。（《紅樓夢》第七十四回）

“一針一線”顯然是陳述對象，但從語義平面上看是賓語。照《文通》的解釋，“一針一線”對於“收藏”來說是提前了的“止詞”（即賓語前置）。這種前置的止詞在《文通》中稱作“若起詞”（馬建忠 1983，390），李金滿（2006）將之稱作“類起詞”。邵靄吉（2002）認為“若起詞”似主語非主語是“一種話題性質的主語”。在從語言類型學的角度看，這類處所、時間、工具、受事語義角色置於句首，無論是稱作“假主語”還是“若起詞”，其句法功能都應是話題，而非主語。

可見，漢語裏符合語義平面分析的“陳述對象”可以界定為主語，而僅處於結構或焦點平面而非語義平面上的“陳述對象”則更適合界定為話題。話題不受及物性原則的限制，可以不是動詞強制性語義選擇的陳述對象。所以此術語更適合說明漢語的事實。

4.2 動字

第二類界說是相對於語詞中的動字來定義的。如卷四：“言其行之所自發者，曰起詞。”“施者，起詞也。”“動字所以記行，行必有所自，所自者，起詞也。”（馬建忠 1983，144、189）這三個界說表明在“動詞謂語主動句”中“起詞即為施事”的主語含義。施事至今都是判斷主語的重要標準。邵靄吉用“動詞謂語主動句中”幾個字來強調一個事實：主語的語義角色與句法角色一致時才是主語。但是，“施事”未必總是作主語，漢語裏常有動詞謂語句中受事位於句首的現象。如果沒有形態或結構標記的制約，把這種句首受事說成主語顯然解釋不通。

[4] 他在涼拌菜上淋上點兒香油。

He drizzled a few drops of sesame oil on top the salad.

[5] 雨淋白骨血染草，月冷黃沙鬼守屍。（《紅樓夢》第七十八回）

Rain drenched the bones of the dead, blood stained the grass;

Moonlight fell cold on the sand, ghosts hovered around.

[6] 他淋雨了。

He was caught in the rain. / He was drenched by the rain.

例[4]和例[5]的“他”和“雨”都是“淋”的動作發出者，所以都是施事主語。例[6]中的“他”則是受事，但無標記詞“被”標示其受事的語義角色，所以稱之為“主語”顯然牽強附會。施事是“雨”，自然句“雨淋他了”，如例[5]中的“雨淋白骨”。漢語裏這種現象很普遍。主語是施事還是受事，既不取決於位次，也不取決於詞類，而是取決於主語和謂語之間的語義關係，施事是判斷主語的語義標準，不是形式標準，也不是位次標準。位於句首的未必都是施事主語，這一點在以上英譯例句中看得很清楚。

4.3 起詞

第三類主語是相對於語詞中的動字和作表詞的靜字來定義的。卷十《論句讀》（1983，385）：“動靜之情，不能不有所從發。其所從發者，起詞也。”“起詞者非他，即所發動靜之情之事物也。”靜字涵蓋面較廣，包括形容詞、數詞、作謂語的名詞或名詞性片語。邵靄吉（2005，99）“涵蓋面大了一些”。定義寬泛，很難成為判斷主語的有效標準。

[7] 子曰：管仲之器小哉！（《論語·八佾》；《馬氏文通》用例）

[8] 小國離，楚之利也。（《左傳·隱公六年》；《馬氏文通》用例）

[9] 孫季麻衣，練冠，跣行，伏而對。（《左傳·昭公三十一年》）

[10] 太行王屋二山，方七百里，高萬仞。（《列子·湯問》）

[11] 禮儀三百，威儀三千。（《禮中庸》；《馬氏文通》用例）

“小”是形容詞作謂語，“楚之利”是名詞片語作謂語，“麻衣”和“練冠”都是名詞作謂語，“方七百里、高萬仞”、“三百”、“三千”都以數詞作謂語。靜字作謂語較為龐雜，難有明確的界說標準，幾乎用於表狀態、性質的詞都可是靜字，也都可以充當謂語，而相對於靜字的就是主語。靜字包含的內容之多，似乎顯得大而無當。英語中類似的語言單位（如形容詞、數詞、名詞片語等）也可以充當謂語，但這些詞作謂語須有係詞來連接，構成“主系表”結構，係詞是判斷主語的依據。不過，《文通》也提到了一些標記性語素，如斷詞（判斷詞）“是”、“非”、“為”、“乃”等（邵靄吉 2005，120-122）；這些語素都是靜字作謂語的顯性標記，也是突出主語成分的標誌。

4.4 起詞界說的依據

從以上 3 類對主語的界說來看，雖然《文通》引入了“主語”、“謂語”和“名詞”、“動詞”等概念，用這套分析系統來描寫漢語句子結構，但其對句子結構的描述大多從概念和形式上來解釋主語和謂語之間的依存關係。僅從上述幾種情況來看，尚難以找到明確的主謂語間形式上的依存關係，主要的依存關係是位次。

第一類把“陳述對象”界定為“起詞”。這是陳述和被陳述的邏輯關係，近似邏輯命題中的主項。主項源於古希臘的邏輯學，指邏輯命題中被判斷的對象，後來被用來描述一種語言成分現象，即現在說的主語。“被敘述的對象”可用於界定判斷句的主語，但這種界說適合用來解釋話題句中話題和說明語之間的關係。區別是主語還是話題關鍵看陳述和被陳述項間的關係是否及物性。

第二類用“施事”來界定“起詞”。這是從謂詞邏輯的角度來認識主語的。“施事”從語義結構角度解釋主語的結構意義，從及物性的角度解釋主語和謂語之間的語義關係。這類主語體現了語言的普遍特徵，但“為華文所獨”的語言現象還需要用漢語的眼光來解釋，如“我曬太陽”中的“太陽”是施事，可卻非句首成分，位於句首的是受事話題“我”。作為意合語言的漢語，這種現象。

第三類不僅涉及語義，而且還涉及詞類，這是一種從形義兩方面來界定“起詞”的方法。在此以 [7]-[11] 為例來說明主語和謂語之間的形義關係。就意義而言，這些例句中的謂語都是說明被陳述對象狀態或性質的詞語，主語和謂語之間保持著語義或邏輯上的聯繫。就形式而言，《文通》以詞類說明主語和謂語的關係，把詞類作為判斷主語的一個形式標準，這是以“印歐語的眼光”識別主語的方法，但漢語詞類缺乏屈折標記，判斷詞類依然依賴詞的語義特徵、詞在句中所處的位置和個別的語法標記語素，如“的”、“之”等。英語語法中詞類和句法成分之間存在著對應關係。詞類和格形態是識別語法成分的重要依據，有時不需要考慮詞義，單從詞在句中所處的位置和詞類或格標記就能判斷出某一語言單位在句中充當什麼成分。

《文通》除了界定了名詞代詞作主語的情況外，還用了不少篇幅闡述了散動、讀作起詞和為“華文所獨”起詞省略現象，這足以說明馬氏不僅借用“印歐語的眼光”審視漢語，而且也注意到了兩種語言體系間的差異。提出的漢語起詞的五種隱含現象可謂立足漢語，有所獨創。以虛詞作為標記界定漢語主語也為古漢語主語的識別提供了形式依據。“起詞說”既有借鑒，也有創新，有模仿，也有區別，雖然這個概念還存在

著一些缺乏可釋性的問題，但它畢竟開創了主語研究的先河，奠定了中國語法體系的研究基礎。

五、語言類型學眼光的轉向

“起詞說”是漢語語法研究中最重要理論。此術語延續了幾十年，1942年呂叔湘（1942，208）的《中國文法要略》依然採用“起詞”二字書中“起詞”和“主語”並用，用法有所區別。

5.1 “若起詞”的再思考

在主語問題上，“若起詞”可謂華文獨有，是最難用英語主語標準來界定的語法現象。討論聚焦於這種語法單位的名稱是什麼，它是否是及物性系統中的主語概念。“若起詞”如果不是印歐語標準的主語，那麼其語法角色是什麼。1968年趙元任引入“話題”^[2]概念，人們開始關注另一種非印歐語所特有的句子結構。趙元任（Chao 1968，83-87）立足漢語事實，以一種新的眼光來觀察漢語，提出“話題——說明”（topic-comment）的概念，漢語裏真正具備行為者和行為關係的主語句不足50%，“主語實際上只是一個談話的話題，而謂語只是說話人對所提出話題的評說。因此，這種話題性主語所表達的內容未必是行為動詞的執行者，也未必與‘是’動詞之後的成分有等同關係，而且不一定具備謂語性形容詞所要求的屬性特徵。主語可以具備所有上述特徵，但是主語只要和謂語之間有話題和說明關係，就未必一定要具備行為者——行為、等同關係或屬性關係的特徵。”漢語裏位於句首的被說明對象只是話題，而非印歐語標準下的主語這類句首成分不是西方及物性系統中主語不受及物性系統限制，句首成分與其後的說明性語言單位就可以不受行為者和行為關係、等同關係、謂語性形容詞所要求的屬性特徵的限制。

5.2 話題轉向研究

漢語裏實際上存在著兩種類型的句子基本結構形式，一是符合及物性原則的主語句，二是限定談話範圍的話題句，而話題句在漢語裏是更常見的句子結構類型。雖然趙元任在書中依然使用 subject 一詞，但其所舉之列大都是話題句，而非主語句。例如：

[12] 十個人吃 兩磅肉。

Ten people eat two pounds of meat.

[13] 兩磅肉吃 十個人。

A. Two pounds of meat eats ten people.*

B. Two pounds of meat feeds ten people.

[14] 四個人坐 一條板凳。

Four people sit on one bench.

[15] 一條板凳坐四個人。

One bench seats four people.

例 [12]-[15] 選自趙元任的 (Chao 1968, 68-72) 的 *A Grammar of Spoken Chinese*。這些句子顯示英漢語句子對及物性依賴程度的差異。漢語句子名詞成分的移位可以不受及物性限制，而英語則不然，句首成分的變化要求謂語動詞做出相應的變化，以滿足句子結構成分之間的語義選擇限制要求，不符合語義要求的句子被視為病句。若以及物性為標準，例 [12] 和例 [14] 的漢語滿足及物性原則，是主語句，例 [13] 和例 [15] 則不是主語，而是話題句。

Li 和 Thompson (1976, 466) 將話題句視為“一種新的語言類型學”，把英語劃歸為主語突出語，漢語劃歸為話題 [] 突出語，提出話題界定的標準，1) 定指性，專有名詞或類指名詞可視為類指的；2) 不需要與句中動詞保持語義上的選擇關係；3) 不需要由動詞來決定；具備注意力“焦點”功能；4) 可成為語篇塊的主位，其功能在於設定一個主題框架；5) 不控制動詞的形態變化，獨立性強，幾乎不受評述語的制約；6) 總是出現在句首；7) 不依賴句法結構。這七條標準從形態、語法、語義、語用幾個方面將題句從主語句中剝離出來 Li 和 Thompson 提出的七條標準凸顯了話題與主語的主要差異。話題不由句子的謂語動詞決定，不受語義選擇限制條件的制約，這一點突破了用謂語界定主語的印歐語眼光的羈絆，開啟了漢語句子結構研究語言類型學眼光的轉向。

徐烈炯和劉丹青 (2007) 在其《話題的結構與功能》中將話題視作與主語、謂語、賓語一樣的基本句法成分，認為話題像其他結構單位一樣有自己的基本形式、語義和話語功能。此後，錢乃榮 (2001) 提出“話題語”這一語法成分概念，以區別與主語和作為語用成分的話題。在語言類型學視域下，話題語在漢語中的語法身份得到了認可。邵靄吉 (2005, 108) 給予新的解釋，他認為這種語言單位相當於一個“話題”，“現在有些人認為，話題也就是主語，如此推論，則‘若起詞者’也就是一種話題性質的主語了。”可見，若起詞統領的句子就是華文所獨的話題句。不過，把話題和主語合為一體，界定成一個句子成分顯然不妥。根據朱德熙 (1985, 40-41)，Li 和 Thompson (1976) 所說的“話題”是結構平面的句子成分，而“主語”和“賓語”則是由語義平面的施事和受事關係限制的句子成分，把結構和語義兩個不同平面的概念混為一談從原則上說是不可取的。從這一觀點出發，用“話題性主語”取代“若起詞”也是一種混淆結構和語義兩個平面的說法，不具有科學性。因此，“若起詞”應直接劃歸為不受及物性原則控制的話題結構平面的語法成分。話題已成為新型語言類型學的研究對象。

5.3 雙軌並用的漢語主語研究眼光

徐通鏞 (1994) 指出：“《馬氏文通》以來的漢語語法研究的一大弊病就是要在這種不存在規律的地方找規律。”“若起詞”就是一種不符合印歐語主語規律的語言現象，將這種似主語而非主語的現象界定為話題語意味著觀察漢語事實眼光的切換。這種從“印歐語的眼光”轉向語言類型學的眼光，從對語言普遍現象的關注轉向對語言獨特現

象的關注，是漢語在句法結構研究方面邁出的一大步。馬氏引進的最具解釋力的主語概念都是那些反應語言普遍特徵的主語的界說，如施事句和判斷句主語中的主語，這類主語既符合印歐語的眼光，也符合語言的普遍特徵。但是，話題是漢語獨具特色的語言現象，以“印歐語的眼光”來觀察這種現象，以“若起詞”加以冠名，使之符合西方語法理論，顯然是一種方向性的失誤。這種做法因忽略了結構與分類的關係所致。印歐語的語義—句法體系建立在結構與分類相互依存的基礎上，“‘主語—謂語’結構和名詞、動詞、形容詞的詞類劃分之間的內在聯繫就是這種依存關係。傳統的漢語研究只有文字、音韻、訓詁，沒有語句的結構，自然也就不必對“字”進行分類。”（徐通鏞 1994）。沒有詞類與句子結構的對應關係，沒有及物性的基礎，主語分析體系是不完善的。“若起詞”的句子就是一個例證。根據徐通鏞（1994）的建議，這類句子的結構框架最好採用“話題—說明”原則來分析。由此可見，漢語句子結構研究存在著“主語”和“話題”兩套分析體系。依託不同結構原理的句子應區別對待，兩者不可混為一談。

六、結語

在主語和話題問題可研究的內容很多，本文僅介紹了主語起源的背景，分析了主語界說的合理與不合理性，闡明擺脫“印歐語的眼光”的必要性和話題—說明句分析系統提出的必然性。主語句和話題句的差異研究有助於說明以下幾個問題。

1) 英漢語句子基本結構元素有所不同。英語是語法形式系統和語義系統合二為一的“雙軌制”語言，漢語主要以語義為依託的語言，這是形合與意合語言差異的重要原因。

2) 英漢語都有主語句，也都有話題句，但英語的話題句仍以主語句結構為其基本結構。同樣，漢語的主語句結構也擺脫不了話題句的特徵。在翻譯中，英語主語句轉譯成漢語話題應視為一種基本結構單位對基本結構單位之間的轉換。

3) 外漢語教學應使用主謂分析和話題—說明兩套系統；此外，對漢語話題句認識不足，會造成省略、銜接和標點符號使用方面的錯誤。（吳中偉 2000）

在主語和話題這一領域裏尚有許多問題有待於進一步探討，與此研究有關可以進一步延續的課題還有許多，諸如對外漢語教學中的主語問題二語習得漢語負遷移現象如何處理主語或話題標記性問題等等，這一切都是有待於進一步關注、深入探討的問題。

注釋

[1] 季羨林在為徐通鏞《語言論——語義型語言的結構原理和研究方法》所做的序中將中國語法研究分為套用期、引發期、探求期三個階段。（徐通鏞 1997:3）

[2] topic-comment 在國內文獻中有的譯作“主題—評述”，有的譯作“話題—說明”，其

中，topic 相應譯作“主題”或“話題”。本文總體採用“話題”譯名，但保留引文中“主題”的譯名。例如：Li 和 Thompson 的 Subject and Topic 的文獻翻譯採用的就是“主題”一詞(李穀城 1984)。

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譯學核心術語對的翻譯與制約論

——以 source language、target language 漢譯為例

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Abstract

Reason and Mutual Restraint between the Translations of Terminology Pair in Translatology: A Case Study on the Translation of Source Language and Target Language (by Yatu Li and Zhonglian Huang)

Terminology translation studies remain predominantly prescriptive, with phenomenon description and rule summary being relatively underdeveloped. Translation studies on terms in translatology have typically focused on equivalence at various levels between individual source and target terms while the balance and mutual constraints between paired terms have yet been overlooked. Moreover, the legitimacy of translation cluster of paired term based on such considerations have not been examined. As a pair of core terms in translatology, the translation of “source language” and “target language” as a whole are indispensable. In reality, the multiplicity and rich variation of their Chinese translations in usage and dissemination have hindered terminology standardization and the transmission of knowledge about translatology. This paper investigates into the back-translatability, formal consistency, and pragmatic productivity of the Chinese translations of this term pair, aiming to explore the rationale of translation cluster and the mutual restraint rules.

一、引言

術語翻譯研究早在 1950 年代便逐步展開，1980 和 90 年代進入繁盛時期，分科式研究和規範性研究一直是其主流，研究兼論文本特徵與對應標準、翻譯方法，學科差異是結論側重不同的主要原因。

科技術語最先成為關注焦點之一並貫穿研究發展。中國研究早期多關注翻譯實踐、翻譯實例緊密關聯，如凌渭民（1982，42-46）通過譯例分析歸納出科技術語的意譯、音譯、意音兼譯、形譯的方法，並認為在譯法差異導致譯名不統一時，應把音譯改成意譯。而周光父、高岩傑（1989，26-33）則從漢字的改革發展、科學技術和文化交流借鑒等角度，指出翻譯應該從意譯主流轉向音譯。除具體翻譯方法的探索，翻譯原則和相關因素等也得到了全方位的探索。理解是術語翻譯的前提，概念和思維邏輯常常與此關聯。趙華（1983，62-67、17）認為術語的概念所屬範疇、所處體系及相互關係是翻譯的重要依據，而汪國瑜（1984，31-33）提出邏輯思維則是直接影響理解和進而保證譯文準確的因素。“規範化”或其近義詞“標準化”成為在譯法之後的又一高頻主題（繆熾明 1994，18-20；李健民 1994，100-104、78）。民族性也常跟術語翻譯研究相關，李明（1986，65-69）指出由詩學術語概念理解偏誤導致的誤譯問題，李照國（1996，31-33）則更關注術語翻譯的民族性和回譯性，辜正坤（1998，17-22）更是提醒術語翻譯影響中國學術文化問題。

相比之下，Aphex and Levine（1986，78-83）更是把翻譯方法歸結為技術性問題，而更強調通過涵蓋標準化規則、術語演變和文化背景等內容的翻譯指南，使譯文續存希伯來語特質及其所映射的猶太文化。除此以外，同時期的外國研究關注術語翻譯的反作用及其相關社會問題的解決，翻譯方法往往不局限於文本層面。Holmström（1955，73-79）指出術語的中心意義周圍存在模糊地帶且詞典收錄較術語發展滯後，導致譯者常需自行創造術語，各國翻譯協會應合作建立術語共用機制。Limaye（1955，13-16）針對印度獨立後在民族語言還不強勢的客觀現實，指出音譯會帶來理解偏誤，應利用梵語作為印度各語言共同的傳統詞源，構建統一的科學術語體系。Jumpelt（1957，207-208）旨在解決科學文獻語言不通約問題，探討了機器翻譯輔助、提升科學家外語能力、推廣國際通用語的可能性。Needham（1958，8-22）針對中國古代科技文獻的翻譯問題，認為譯者需要同時具備語言轉換能力和史實考證能力，在歷史文化語境中準確辨識技術概念的演變與確切含義。

2000 年以來，準確、單義、簡明（馬清海 1997，28-29）早已是不乏共識的標準，術語翻譯所涉因素進一步豐富，同時宏觀研究和共性研究數量增長迅速。Belda Medina（2003，317-336）認為在一致性的優先前提下，不要過度借詞，同時可考慮派生、仿造等策略間權衡。Sánchez（2023，131-147）認為通過同主題的科學文獻輔證，可以加強術語及其語境理解，優化翻譯。韋孟芬（2014，5-7、23）強調通過溯源確認詞語內涵避免理解錯誤。姜望琪（2005，80-84）進一步提出不要人為特別是行政干涉術語的翻譯，強調了約定俗成的重要性，而邱貴溪（2000，14-17）則更關注具體文本內的術語關係，但標準並未出其左右。鄭述譜（2012，102-105）根據術語使用的實際情況將其分為以規範術語和未規範術語分而論之。侯國金（2009，69-73）則從學科

角度提出術語翻譯要兼顧學科內的系統性和類似術語的可辨性。魏向清（2010，165–167）歸納了術語翻譯的理據性屬性、系統性屬性、單義性屬性、簡明性屬性、穩定性屬性、能產性屬性，類似地，邵軍航（2021，39–43）強調了術語翻譯的理據性、系統性、專用性原則。

隨著翻譯工具和翻譯方式的革新換代，術語不僅是翻譯行為的客體，還是一種語言資源，因此術語翻譯開始指向批量化、自動化、流程化、體系化和可持續發展的目標。Cmejrek and Curin（2001，1–12）使用平行文本自動提取術語及其翻譯，發現技術文本的提取效果最好，但此技術不適用於小說語料。Bowker and Delsey（2016，73–96）通過跨科研究，關聯翻譯研究與資訊科學領域，探索自動術語提取與索引、跨語言資訊檢索以及支持模糊匹配的應用程式開發。Pimentel（2013，237–257），Marshman（2014，225–249），L' Homme et al.（2022，55–85）都強調術語資源的呈現要關聯概念認知及其真實使用場景，從而啟動情境框架、其核心要素。王華樹、張政（2014，64–69）關注術語的翻譯和管理，研究涵蓋啟動階段、計畫階段、實施階段、收尾階段所對應的工作。張法連（2020，53–58、8）警示機器對於法律術語和多義詞內涵的理解存在著一定障礙，人類譯員要對機譯版本進行人工糾正、消除歧義和整體邏輯重構。

縱觀術語翻譯研究的歷時發展和多方面探索，規範性研究仍是主流，方法或因文本類型和涉譯語對有所差別，但研究結論、翻譯原則乃至翻譯方法在本質上並無迥異，實然性研究明顯不足。進一步聚焦譯學，其核心術語 *source language*（SL）和 *target language*（TL）翻譯紛繁，黃忠廉、楊榮廣（2015，74–81）認為“原語”應立為譯學核心術語，且包含“源語”，但“源語”可用於回譯、轉譯、變譯等情況。針對口筆譯研究、甚至同一語篇的翻譯標準不一問題，使用範圍拓寬後更存在多種變體的情況，黃忠廉、黎雅途（2024，25–31、104）運用語料庫和數據庫考定“譯語”為 TL 的漢譯主流，其他漢譯術語各有其用。但成對出現的術語，其翻譯存在相互制約關係，應引起重視，故此，成對術語被視為一個整體，作為本研究的考察單位；另外，其他漢譯與最佳漢譯共存形成漢譯集，各有其成因和理據，是術語漢譯研究應該透析的問題。本文從比較 SL—TL 術語對的漢譯入手，由此及彼，進一步探究術語對翻譯的存在理據和相互制約規律，以完善翻譯研究對現象的觀察和描寫。

二、術語對翻譯理據與制約的分析框架

翻譯研究通常著眼比較原文與譯文的語義、語形、語用三個方面（王一多 2016，99–103）。同理，譯學術語對漢譯的理據也應從這三個方面考察（見圖 1）。有別過往術語研究，本分析框架綜合考察成對術語的漢譯，存在制衡下的最優解；分析就語義、語形、語用三方面根據具體特性進行細化考察。

語義主要考察可回譯性，進一步細分成語際轉換過程的意義保全性和漢語同義表達的優選性；語形則考察原術語—譯術語成對的統一性，兼顧外在總體形態和內在組合邏輯的統一；語用主要體現在能產性方面，在使用過程中，根術語和成對術語漢譯

作為部分跟其他字、詞合成新詞的可能性和可用性。制約性存在兩個層次：原術語—譯術語、成對譯術語之間，在義、用、形三方面相互制約。第一層制約性體現在語際轉化間的詞義保全、外形趨近、根術語能產的約束力；第二層制約性體現了漢譯近義表達的優選、內在邏輯統一和總體能產性最大化的限制。

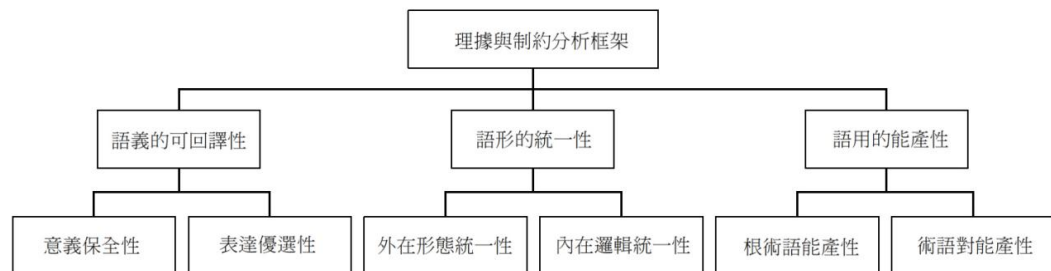


圖 1: 漢譯理據與制約分析框架

據使用頻率和效用，以下四組漢譯及其變體共同構成本文考察的 SL—TL 術語對漢譯集：

- A 組：原語—譯語；
- B 組：源語言—目的語；
- B' 組（B 組變體）：源頭語言—目的語言；
- C 組：譯出語—譯入語；
- D 組：始發語—目的語。

三、術語對翻譯的語義可回譯性和制約性

“可回譯性”和“透明性”是翻譯研究中考察語義對等的類似概念。薑望琪（2005，80－84）認為譯名的透明性指讀者能從譯名輕鬆地辨認出源詞；陳志傑和潘華凌（2008，55－59）認為回譯指需要翻譯的文本中存在譯語文化素材，要將這些重新譯回源語（即素材所屬語境的語言）的翻譯活動。

因此，可回譯性或透明性的本質共性是：全譯觀下，要求保全術語語義，特別是跟文化相關的部分語義。本文認為，討論術語譯名問題，使用“可回譯性”更為恰當。一方面，可回譯性生動展示了“原術語→譯術語→源術語”三個階段、兩次翻譯的翻譯行為特點及完整的翻譯運動過程，描述更為細緻；另一方面，“透明性”容易使人聯想到譯者的隱身、讀者像讀原文一樣讀譯文，側重的是譯文符合譯語文化的表達規範，並不涉及意義翻譯的對等性。可回譯性的本質在於屬於詞義的意義保全，這個原則之下，漢語的辭彙較英語更為豐富，因此，近義表達又據實際情況存在細微差別，但結合譯學術語和術語對的雙重限定，又具更優選擇。

從詞義的對等性考察三組漢譯對。除了在 B 組中，language 翻譯為“語言”，其他都基本譯作“語”。牛津字典中，language 最主要的本意為 the system of communication

in speech and writing that is used by people of a particular country or area，即：特定國家或地區的人們使用的口頭和書面的交流系統。它既表示“語言”又表示“語言文字”。而在漢語中，“語”作動詞用，一般指談論，比如“語焉不詳”；作名詞用，表示說的話、表達的言論、寫的文字時，比如“三言兩語”；繼而還引申指涉語言表達思想的方式或動作。由此觀之，“語”對譯為 *language* 作名詞使用，意義保全性較高。而 B 組使用的“語言”在現代詞義中指人類交際的工具，包括口頭的話語和書面的文字，由於 B 組另一漢譯為“目的語”，為三音詞，由於組內的相互制約性，限制了另一漢譯的字數，為保持漢譯對齊，SL 中的“語”被迫擴充為“語言”；反觀之，此擴充並未產生意義的增益，只為漢字音節和數量對齊，“語”實為“語言”的縮寫。

現進一步對“語言”的縮寫優選“語”還是“言”進行考察。“食不語，寢不言。”出自《論語》，是孔子提出的舉止言談的某些規矩或者習慣，“言”“語”二字是為了避重的同義反復還是各有所指的近義表達？縱觀“言”字的形態變化，甲骨文形態中明顯以“口舌”釋義，發展至今依然保留了“口”字結構，即表明跟說話、談論等動作相關，意義相對廣泛。而“語”則由“言”字旁和“吾”組成，據《說文解字》（許慎，2013），“語”義為“論也”，“言”則釋義為“直言曰言，論難曰語”。段玉裁（2004）注釋指出：“發端曰言，答難曰語，……言己事，為人說為語。因此，一人之說為“言”，敘述自己的事情為“言”，“語”的意思為“辯論”“與人說”，確切而言，再加上“言”的泛指意義，其意思可包括“語”。又基於音感召喚原則（黃忠廉、濮陽榮 2022，2-6、98），“原語”“譯語”較為順口，“原言”作為漢語詞語感怪異，在北京大學 CCL 語料庫中亦未查得此用法。但是，在現代漢語中，“語言”縮寫為其中任何一字的例子均存在，比如“北京語言大學”一般簡稱為“北語”，“地方語言”則簡稱為“方言”。綜上考究，A、C、D 組漢譯中，“語”作為“語言”的縮寫、*language* 的對譯，是優選；B 和 B' 組中，“語言”對譯 *language* 亦保全了詞義。

D 組漢譯對出現在譯學專著中，請看相關上下文：

儘管我們試圖從結果向過程及始源（原語文本）上溯，但就我們“看”的能力而言，或許譯本才是能夠真正“面對”的存在者。……因此，在這個意義上，平時人們所說的譯者、譯本、目的語及其文化。以及作者、原語文本、始發語及其文化等各要素應視為“翻譯場”的構件，即翻譯的“存在條件”，而不是它的存在者的本有構成（蔡新樂 2005）。

此處，由蔡氏所表達的語言變動及語言身份的轉化有別於傳統的觀念，其中“翻譯場”所指實為翻譯過程所經歷的場域，他在使用“始發語”及其相關概念“始源”時，具有不穩定性，或以括弧標注“原語文本”釋義，或直接出現其釋義後直接使用“始發語”，說明蔡氏對兩個漢譯不作區別。而“始發”一詞在漢語中主要用處有二：或是用於描述交通工具從原點開始運行的過程，從而強調翻譯語言的動態性；或是指事物的起源、開始的階段或源頭，符合原語一譯語所述特性。採用或啟用 D 組漢譯側重第一個用處，另一論文可互證：

語際翻譯並非以始發語為出發點，而是認可目的語對一切語言的可譯性，進而實現“以我觀物”“物我兩忘”進而“物我合一”的過程，且始發語只能作為它本身的文

化世界的存在形式而存在，一旦進入跨文化的轉化，始發語便融入目的語的文化世界（蔡新樂 2000，55-61）。

在這段論述當中，原語永遠只存在於原語文化場地，實現穿越的是譯語中可被其他語言表達的意義，表達翻譯動態、意義變化和原意消亡三大特性，D 組漢譯對的意義潛能是 ABC 三組無法達到的，雖然 C 組帶有“出”“入”字眼，卻只能表示方向性，而非動態與變化。因此，在意義建構方面，D 組漢譯有其特殊意義。有獨無偶，往前追溯，這對表述也偶見其他論文：

譯者遵循 (1) 每當出現一個獨立完整的最大結構映射時，始發語的意義開始脫離它的聲音承載變成思維語的原則和 (2) 當選擇性限制和論元結構得到最低限度的滿足時，始發語意義開始同目的語的包括顯性結構在內的聲音表徵建立聯繫的原則，從而實現始發語到目的語的轉換（馮之林 1997，54-56、64）。

在此語境中，“始發語”為“一開始發出的語言”之意，用在口譯研究當中，的確能彰顯口譯的聲音特質和動態特質。雖然上述兩個學者在使用 D 組漢譯時意指有所區別，但都突出了語言運動的動態性。在語義保全方面，source 在牛津字典的第一個意思為“a place, person or thing that you get sth. from”，用“原”和“始發”對譯都基本符合此義，而 target 的詞典義為 a result that you try to achieve，用“目標”更對應此義，而受制於 SL—TL 成對的翻譯活動涉及的兩種語言這一特定場景，“譯”的對譯由此產生。source 的兩個譯文“源—原”問題和 target 的多個譯文均在此前其他文章中探討，不再贅言。但綜上可見，在保全了詞義的基礎上，語義可回譯性還要受限於術語漢譯對的相互制約性。

四、術語對翻譯的語形統一性和制約性

語形的統一性是原術語與其漢譯的形態對等程度最直觀的體現，從兩種語言外形上綜合考慮而言的，包括字詞的字數和相對位置關係。又考慮到，英語以一詞為最小表意單位，而漢語以一字為最小表意單位，因此以漢語一字/一詞對譯英語一詞都可算構詞邏輯較為一致；但為簡潔故，漢語一字對譯英語一詞更優。除此以外，語形的統一性還應考察內在的構詞邏輯，可以通過字詞間關係、精簡程度兩個方面，進行語內詞間關係以及語際詞間關係的比較，其分析框架詳見圖 2。

原術語對中，每個術語均由兩個英語詞構成，為“二（詞）+二（詞）”結構。A 組每個漢譯由兩字構成，即“二（字）+二（字）”結構，即以漢語一字對譯英語一詞，從字詞數量上完全對應。B 組中的“源語言”按意義拆分為“一（字）+二（字）/一（字）—（詞）”結構，而“目的語”按意義則拆分為“二（字）+一（字）/一（詞）+一（字）”結構。明顯可見，B 組一對漢譯在內部結構上不同，既存在字、詞作單位位置不一的區別，有存在字數不一的差異；與原術語對照，在橫比結構上不甚對稱，存在以漢字或是漢語詞對譯英文詞的情況，其位置也不統一。C 組兩者均由“一（詞）+一（字）/二（字）+一（字）”結構構成，在漢譯對內部結構一致，而在橫比結構上，C 組以漢語詞對譯英語詞，邏輯一致。因此，僅從數量關係看，A 組的可回譯性最高，C

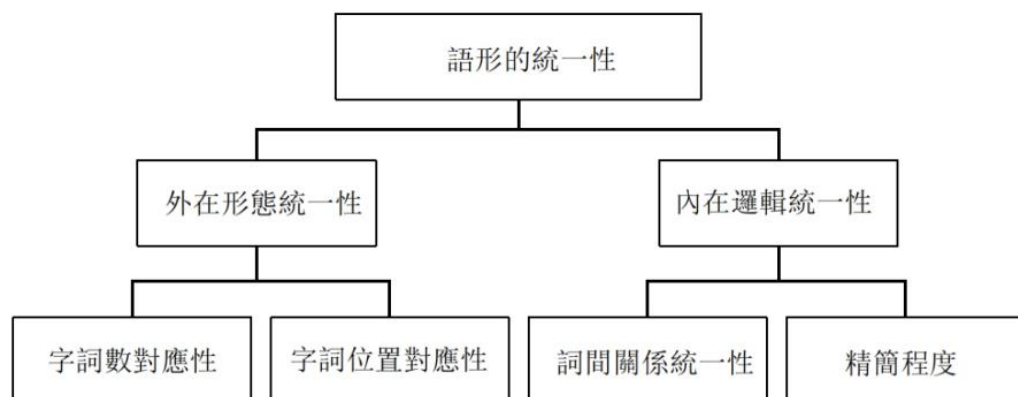


圖 2: 語形統一性分析框架

組次之。

從相對位置看，ABC 組與原術語的位置關係基本一致，都是 *source* 和 *target* 及其漢譯在前，*language* 及其漢譯在後，主要因為，這裏英語“名詞 + 名詞”的結構實際關係為“修飾成分 + 中心語”，漢譯位置對應。若修飾成分較長，則需要添加介詞 *of*，即 A（中心語）*of* B（長名詞作修飾成分），試比較，英文 *the culture of target language* 的漢譯為“譯語文化/目的語文化/譯入語文化”，在漢譯時則需要交換修飾成分和中心語的位置以符合漢語的表達習慣。

原術語對的內部邏輯非常對稱，*source* 和 *target* 都是 *language* 的修飾成分，形成“修飾成分（一詞）+ 中心詞（一詞）”的結構。可見，相較原術語對，A 組的內部邏輯對等程度最高，都是“修飾成分（一字）+ 中心詞（一字）”的結構，並且，以一字對譯一詞是達到對等所需的最小單位。

C 組次之，“譯出語—譯入語”在漢語結構上非常工整，均為“修飾成分（2 字/1 詞）+ 中心語（1 字）”結構，但相較原術語對，構詞邏輯差異較大；“譯入”和“譯出”作為修飾成分還可進一步拆分，由“動詞 + 方向”構成，動作均體現了本體“譯”，方向一入一出，亦體現了完整性；C 組整體構詞邏輯通順，組內一致性高，但對比修飾成分與中心語之間、原術語和譯術語之間，構詞邏輯仍存在參差。對於直接翻譯而言，此對漢譯尚可表達清晰意義。以中國為例，向內譯介的譯語為漢語，原語為外語；而把漢語作品譯介到國外，外譯的原語為漢語，譯語為外語；“入”的是目標市場，“譯入”的語言是譯語，“出”的是作品原產國，“譯出”的語言是原語，似乎與 B 組“源語言—目的語”也對應。但在轉譯情況下，如果要描述 $a \rightarrow b \rightarrow c$ 的完整翻譯過程，C 組漢譯則不足以準確描述及區分動作的始發節點，B 組漢譯則無法描述 *b* 語言。

相較原術語對，在內部邏輯上，B 組的差異最大，漢譯對之間、原術語—譯術語之間，均不一致。首先，由於 *target* 翻譯成了“目的”二字（一詞），兩者為了保持字數的一致性，只好把“源/原語”變成“源語言”，實際上是“源語”的冗餘表達，意義無所增益，只為音節相等，但術語對漢譯的構詞邏輯不一，“源語言”為“修飾成分

(一字)+中心語(二字/一詞)”，而“目的語”則是“修飾成分(二字/一詞)+中心語(一字)”的結構，若是想嚴格對等，可採用原術語“修飾成分(一詞)+中心詞(一詞)”的結構，即B組改動為“源起語言—目的語言”。而B’的“源頭語言—目的語言”均為“修飾成分(二字/一詞)+中心語(二字/一詞)”結構，漢譯術語對的內部結構一致，但“語言”存在縮寫空間，具有一定的冗餘性，另外其翻譯還受到其他外語影響，請看其出處：

德國學者稱之為 *Ausgangssprache* (源頭語言)，英美學者稱之為 *Original* 或 *Source language*；一種是譯成的語言，德國學者稱之為 *Zielsprache* (目的語言)，英美學者稱之為 *Target language* (季羨林 2007)。

從上文可知，“源頭語言—目的語言”是由德語直譯的影響，*Sprache* 是德語“語言”的意思，“*Ausgangs*”作為前綴，通常意味著“出發的”或“起始的”。它常用來指代某個過程的起點，*Ziel* 的意思是“目標”或“目的”。因此，就 SL—TL 的翻譯而言，A 組漢譯綜合各類指標都較為理想，但就德語術語而言，譯為 B’ 組也是準確的，而且其構詞邏輯也較好，在術語漢譯的過程中，可以綜合兩者，再擇簡明者統一。在此基礎上，由於修飾成分為雙音漢語詞，為了音感和節奏的舒適，中心詞不宜過短，也容易採用擴充形式的“語言”而非縮略版的“語”。

綜上，構詞邏輯既涉及原術語和譯術語之間的對比，也涉及譯術語對之間的關係，若是為了後者組內的構詞邏輯統一，很可能產生冗餘性結構，且基本可以確定，在此情況下，譯術語和原術語無法達到構詞邏輯統一，除非修飾成分和中心語同時產生冗餘性結構，若是如此，則又可將兩者同時簡化。因而，從結構邏輯的角度考察，漢譯術語冗餘一方面受到術語語形統一的制約，另一方面受制於漢譯術語內部的音感及邏輯統一。

五、術語對的語用能產性和制約性

術語的能產性指的是其作為部分，跟新詞結合產生系列相關術語的可能性。於偉昌(2000, 9-13)指出，如果原術語中包含能產性很強的詞綴，我們也應設法在漢語中譯出相應的詞綴，以便創造新的術語。因此，組合能產性考察的是術語在體系內發展出系列術語的能力，核心術語的能產性越高，譯學術語的體系性越強。而在現有研究中，術語的能產性多考察單個術語，翻譯研究關涉從一種語言、符號甚至文化向另一種語言、符號甚至文化轉變，譯學術語常常配對出現，因此要以成對漢譯術語能產性綜合考慮；另外，能產性不能以犧牲其準確性、可回譯性、邏輯統一性為代價。

黃忠廉、黎雅途(2024, 25-31、104)此前認為“譯”字作為根術語，可左顧右盼，與其他單個漢字組成雙音詞，表達較為豐富，包括：譯本、譯筆、譯介、譯名、譯文、譯音、譯員、譯者、譯製、譯注、譯著、譯作、譯經、譯場、譯官、譯審、譯義、譯法、譯電、譯稿、譯學、譯事、譯校、譯寫、譯界，涵蓋翻譯主體、客體、場所、行為，而“譯入 X”類常見的只有：譯入本、譯入名、譯入音，等等。清晰可見“譯”為詞根的能產性遠遠高於“譯入”。但進一步考慮術語對漢譯時，雙方的能產性

要在相互制約中得出綜合值。

比如，A 組中，“譯”的能產性已得到充分考量，但鑒於“原 X”類譯學構詞主要包括：原名、原文、原著、原作、原義等，均為翻譯的客體及其相關特性，A 組漢譯的能產性大大降低，其能產值為兩者較低數，可定為 5。再看 B 組，“源語言”和“目的語”本身內在邏輯不一致，也不可組隊按同樣的方式搭配其他文字，故能產值可定為 0。而 B’ 組的“源頭語言—目的語言”雖然內部構詞邏輯一致，但仍難以搭配單個漢字構新詞，只能搭配雙音詞，以補足音韻的不足，但由於其冗餘性，大大限制了它的能產性，即便有類似源頭文本、目的文本等意義較為明晰的術語，並不多見，其能產值也不樂觀。“譯入 X”和“譯出 X”可搭配翻譯的主體使用，“譯入人/者”表示向內翻譯主體，“譯出人/者”表示向外翻譯主體；亦可表示翻譯客體，比如勉強可搭配“文”使用，根據音節規則宜擴充至“文本”，其能產值大概為 3。但是跟上述邏輯問題相關，譯出語指原語，譯出人使用的是外語，譯入語為譯語，譯入人使用的是母語；若是以中國典籍英譯為例，譯出語是漢語，譯入語是英語，譯出者使用的是英語，一字之差，對應不同，容易造成誤寫、誤讀，可見“出一入”方向在實際過程中容易產生誤會，故此對漢譯雖有一定能產性，但新詞未必合理。“始發語—目的語”組合未見跟其他詞搭配成新詞，故暫不具有能產性。

根據表 1 可知，原術語為成對出現時，漢譯術語的能產性取兩個術語能產性的最小值，由於相互制約關係，漢譯術語對的能產性一般受到限制，內部構詞邏輯一致的漢譯術語能產性較為統一。但“原語—譯語”一組較為特別，“譯 X”組合較多，不僅覆蓋了翻譯行為的主體（譯者、譯員等）、翻譯客體（譯文、譯本、譯名、譯著、譯作等）、翻譯動作（譯寫、譯較、譯審等）、翻譯活動及要素概稱（譯事、譯場等），而“原 X”組合主要用於指涉翻譯客體及其內容（原作、原文、原義等），因此成對出現的漢譯能產性以“原 X”為準。

表 1: 術語對漢譯能產性比較

術語組 對比項	A. 原語—譯語		B. 源語言—目的語 B' . 源頭語言—目的語言		C. 譯出語—譯入語		D. 始發語—目的語
新術語	原名、原文、 原著、原作、 原義……	譯本、譯筆、譯 介、譯名、譯文、 譯音、譯員、譯 者、譯製、譯注、 譯著、譯作、譯 經、譯場、譯官、 譯審、譯義、譯 法、譯電、譯稿、 譯學、譯事、譯 校、譯寫、譯界 ……	源（頭）文本、 源（頭）作品 ……	目的文本、目 的的作品……	譯出人、譯入人、 譯出者、譯入者、 譯出（文）譯入（文） 本、譯出名、譯入 名、譯出音……	譯入人、譯入者、 譯入（文）譯入 本、譯入名、譯入 音……	未見其他 搭配
能產值	5		2?		5?		0

六、結語

原術語和譯術語於學科而言是特定的概念，於學科其他概念而言又是相互關聯的部分，於論述行文而言又是高度抽象和概括的整體；譯術語於原術語而言，又是能在原文本、原語境、原體系、原文化中，語義、語形、語用趨近的概念。在準確的基礎上，比較理想的漢譯術語對，應兼顧可回譯性、構詞邏輯統一性與組合能產性，使三者達到均衡的高值。制約性不僅體現在原術語對譯術語與以上三者的趨同制約，還體現在漢譯術語對彼此間的制約：漢譯術語對中一者的構詞數量、構詞邏輯、位置關係，對另一者有著制約作用。在主要漢譯變體當中，術語間的制約得到最大化，形象性一般也更好，因為往往伴隨修辭；但作為學科術語的漢譯對則以簡潔明瞭優先，其作為整體的概括性、能產性也比較突出。綜上，術語翻譯研究應平衡以“如何譯”為目的的規範性研究和“為何如此譯”、探索存在理據、規律的描述性研究，兼顧單個術語和術語對為單位的最佳漢譯及其漢譯集群的分析。方能達到從現象歸納規律，透過規律推導原則，通過原則指導實踐的譯學研究閉環。

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《實務翻譯研究》評述

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一、引言

在翻譯研究領域，實務翻譯（practical translation）長期以來未能獲得與文學翻譯同等的關注。然而，隨著全球化和資訊技術的發展，翻譯的需求已遠超文學領域，涵蓋新聞、商務、財經、法律、科技、視聽等多個專業領域。翻譯研究的重心正在逐步轉向實務翻譯，而這一領域的理論體系仍處於發展之中。

劉康龍副教授所著的《實務翻譯研究》正是在此背景下應運而生的學術專著。該書在現有研究基礎上，系統梳理了實務翻譯的核心概念、理論體系、研究方法以及應用場景。作者從多個專業領域出發，結合文本類型理論、交際翻譯理論、目的論、功能主義等理論框架，深入探討了實務翻譯的特點及研究範式，力求在理論與實踐之間建立有機聯繫。本書的價值不僅在於對實務翻譯研究的系統總結，更在於其對翻譯學科發展的重要貢獻——在翻譯理論、應用方法、技術支援等層面，推進了翻譯研究從文學中心論向更廣闊的社會需求領域拓展。

二、主要內容

全書共分為七個主要領域，涵蓋新聞翻譯、商務翻譯、財經翻譯、法律翻譯、科技翻譯、視聽翻譯及本地化翻譯。每個領域均按照理論發展、研究現狀、案例分析的結構展開，以展現其核心特點及發展趨勢。本文將圍繞本書的核心內容展開評述，並從理論貢獻、研究方法及不足之處等方面進行分析。

本書的第一章為引論。作者在書中指出，實務翻譯並非簡單地等同於“非文學翻譯，而是一個具有自身獨立特徵和研究價值的翻譯類別（劉康龍 2024, 2）”。傳統的翻譯研究多以文學翻譯為核心，而實務翻譯則涉及更廣泛的文本類型，如法律、商務、財經、科技等。正如 Reiss（1989,12）在文本類型理論（text typology）中所強調的，翻譯策略應根據文本的功能進行調整，而實務翻譯的主要任務是確保資訊的準確傳遞，因此與資訊型文本（informative text）有較強的關聯性。本書正是基於這一理論框架，對各類實務翻譯文本進行分類，並探討其在不同語境中的應用。實務翻譯應如何確定其研究範圍和理論系統？傳統翻譯研究尤其是文學翻譯的主張，使實務翻譯在久久以來的實踐中並未給予充分重視。本書在總結往日翻譯研究的基礎上，重點開拓了實務翻譯的二級分類：一方面，根據翻譯目的（skopos），將其分為資訊型、表達型和操作型文本；另一方面，根據行業關聯度，實務翻譯被進一步劃分為商務、金融、法律等系列實用翻譯類別。此外，作者還借鑒了 Newmark（1981,10）的交際翻譯理論（communicative translation）和 Vermeer（2021,8）的目的論（skopos theory）。交際翻譯強調目標受眾的理解和可接受性，而目的論則主張翻譯策略應根據預期功能調整。實務翻譯恰好處於這兩種理論的交匯點：既需要精準傳達資訊，又需符合目標語的表達習慣。尤其是在法律、商務等領域，翻譯不僅僅是語言轉換，更涉及法律體系、商業文化等外部因素。因此，本書強調在實務翻譯研究中，應將文本內部因素（如句法、術語）與外部因素（如行業規範、文化背景）結合分析，以構建更具實踐價值的研究體系。

第二章新聞翻譯系統地討論了轉述視覺、詞語重構和資訊超文字傳遞之問題，根據知識詞法（frame semantics），分析了同一個新聞主題在英語和漢語中如何被重構，並對不同媒體傳播的轉述翻譯結果進行對比。新聞翻譯在多語種傳播中不僅是語言的轉換過程，更是對不同文化敘事模式的適配與再創作。作者探討了新聞翻譯中事實陳述、情感表達以及政治傾向的再現方式，並指出媒體機構在不同社會語境下對翻譯策略的選擇性調整。個案研究部分分析了《紐約時報》西班牙語譯版中的小報化現象，揭示了新聞翻譯在跨文化傳播中的策略調整。研究表明，新聞翻譯的策略多樣，包括直譯、歸化、刪減、增補等，同時受意識形態、媒體立場和文化背景的影響。此外，本章還結合語料庫資料，分析了新聞標題翻譯的趨同性與差異性。例如，在 CNN、BBC 等西方媒體中，新聞標題更傾向於採用動態表達，而在中文媒體中，資訊傳遞的準確性往往優先於標題的吸引力。此類分析為新聞翻譯策略的選擇提供了資料支援。

第三章商務翻譯涵蓋公司簡介、合同、市場推廣等文本，強調精準性和行業規範。本書結合語料庫分析，探討了商務翻譯中的術語標準化與文化適應性，並指出譯者應確保術語一致性，以提升翻譯的專業性。此外，作者對比了不同市場環境下的商務翻譯策略。例如，歐美合同文本通常措辭嚴謹、結構複雜，偏向法律化表達，而亞洲市場則更注重簡潔明瞭，以適應高效溝通需求。作者借助大數據分析，探討了跨境電商翻譯的語言風格趨勢，並提出優化策略，強調譯文應兼顧目標市場的文化習慣與商業邏輯。本章結合語料庫研究與案例分析，進一步探討商務翻譯的實用性，提出譯者在全球商業環境下需靈活調整翻譯策略，以確保資訊傳遞的準確性和有效性。

第四章財經翻譯涉及金融、投資、經濟政策等領域，強調專業術語的準確性和文本結構的邏輯性。本章回顧了財經翻譯的研究現狀，指出財經文本具有高穩定性和高可預測性，翻譯過程中需注重資訊對稱性和行業慣例。個案研究分析了財經文本中人稱代詞的漢譯策略，以及歐盟機構經濟隱喻的翻譯模式，為財經翻譯提供了實證支援。本章進一步擴展了機器翻譯在財經文本中的應用分析。通過對比神經網路翻譯（NMT）與傳統統計機器翻譯（SMT）的表現，發現 NMT 在財經領域的術語一致性和文本流暢度方面更具優勢。然而，機器翻譯仍難以精準處理高複雜度的金融隱喻和文化背景資訊，這表明人類譯者在財經翻譯中仍不可或缺。

第五章法律翻譯是實務翻譯中最具挑戰性的類別之一。本書從語料庫分析、翻譯策略、法律術語對比等角度探討了法律翻譯的特點，並指出法律文本的可預測性和格式化特徵對翻譯策略的影響（劉康龍 2024, 140）。本章進一步探討了法律翻譯的倫理問題，強調了譯者在法律文本翻譯過程中需保持高度中立性。此外，結合翻譯案例，分析了翻譯錯誤可能引發的法律後果，例如因合同翻譯不當導致的國際仲裁糾紛。本章借助實證研究方法，分析了學生譯員在法律翻譯中的資訊檢索行為，並探討了立法翻譯文本的程式語搭配特徵。本章的學術貢獻在於採用跨學科視角，將語言學、法律學及翻譯學相結合，分析了法律文本的翻譯標準及規範。

第六章科技翻譯涉及高度技術性的文本，如科學論文、專利文獻及產品說明書。本章探討了科技翻譯的定義及範疇，並結合多種研究方法分析了科技翻譯的核心問題，如術語翻譯、文本顯化及技術性程度對翻譯策略的影響。科技翻譯涉及科學論文、專利文獻、技術說明書等文本，要求譯者具備專業背景知識。本章結合語料庫研究，分析了科技文本的顯化程度對翻譯策略的影響，並探討了創造新詞與借詞的使用情況。

第七章探討了字幕翻譯、配音翻譯和口述影像翻譯等視聽翻譯模式。研究表明，視聽翻譯需綜合考慮語言、圖像、聲音等多模態因素，並根據目標受眾的認知習慣調整翻譯策略。本章回顧了視聽翻譯的定義及研究歷程，並探討了字幕翻譯、戲劇電影片名翻譯及口述影像翻譯的認知建模方法。本章的亮點在於強調了多模態翻譯理論在視聽翻譯中的應用，特別是結合認知心理學分析了觀眾對字幕翻譯的理解。然而，本章對流媒體平臺（如 Netflix、YouTube）的翻譯策略討論較少，未能充分體現新媒體環境對視聽翻譯的影響。

第八章本地化翻譯涵蓋遊戲、軟體、網站等領域，強調文化適應性和用戶體驗優化。本章探討了當地語系化翻譯的理論框架及研究方法，並結合案例分析中文遊戲在東南亞市場的當地語系化實踐，以及英文遊戲的波斯語當地語系化策略。強調了當地語系化翻譯在文化傳播中的作用，並探討了不同市場對翻譯策略的影響。

第九章總結了全書內容，強調實務翻譯研究的跨學科特性，並展望未來研究方向。作者指出，人工智慧（AI）技術的發展正在重塑實務翻譯行業，如機器翻譯、翻譯記憶系統和神經網路翻譯技術的應用將提升翻譯效率和品質。然而，AI 技術的局限性也提示我們需要加強譯後編輯（post-editing）研究，並關注翻譯倫理問題。此外，作者建議未來研究應深化行業需求分析，加強多模態翻譯研究，並推動實務翻譯教育

改革，以培養具備國際視野和專業技能的翻譯人才。

三、簡評

《實務翻譯研究》堪稱一部深入剖析實務翻譯領域的學術力作，尤其在商務翻譯這一關鍵分支上，展現了深刻而全面的理論洞察與豐富實用的案例剖析。由劉康龍主編的這部著作，不僅系統梳理了商務翻譯的定義、發展歷程、研究方法以及個案研究，更從多維度深入剖析了其在現代社會中的重要性與實踐意義。書中第三章聚焦商務翻譯核心特徵，如術語的精准性、語篇的功能性與資訊的直接性，並結合具體案例，生動揭示了商務翻譯的實踐策略，為讀者呈現了一幅清晰的商務翻譯實踐圖景。

然而，儘管《實務翻譯研究》在商務翻譯的理論框架與研究方法上已有諸多建樹，仍有一些領域值得進一步拓展與深化。首先，書中雖涉及法律翻譯與財經翻譯等不同類別實務翻譯的交叉與界限，但對這些翻譯類型的區分與聯繫的討論尚顯不足。尤其是商務合同翻譯在法律翻譯中的重複探討，亟待更為明確的界定，以避免概念上的混淆與重疊。在全球化與技術進步的浪潮下，商務翻譯正朝著多模態翻譯與機器翻譯的方向邁進。書中雖提及電腦輔助翻譯（CAT）與神經機器翻譯（NMT）對商務翻譯的影響，但對翻譯技術的細節、品質控制以及機器翻譯後編輯對職業發展的影響等關鍵問題，尚未給予充分關注。此外，書中雖採用了語料庫分析、個案研究與問卷調查等方法，但資料分析部分較為簡單，未來可結合更系統的統計方法，如回歸分析、層次分析法等，以提升研究的科學性與可靠性。

商務翻譯絕非僅僅是語言的轉換過程，更是跨文化商務溝通的關鍵橋樑，涵蓋合同、市場行銷、財務報表、企業概況、電子商務等多種文本類型。《實務翻譯研究》精準地指出，商務翻譯的核心特點在於“術語的精准性、語篇的功能性、資訊的直接性以及受眾的特定性”，這一界定與學術界的主流觀點高度契合。例如，Nord（1997）的功能翻譯理論強調，翻譯應依據文本功能採取不同的策略，而商務翻譯多屬於資訊型與指令型文本，因此譯者需確保資訊的準確性和文本的可操作性。Reiss（1989）的文本類型理論亦認為，商務翻譯的核心目標是確保資訊的高效傳遞，而非文學翻譯所追求的美學再現。然而，書中對商務翻譯與法律翻譯、財經翻譯之間的邊界界定仍存在一定的模糊性。例如，在第三章中，作者探討了商務合同翻譯的標準化問題，但這一內容在法律翻譯研究章節（第五章）中亦有所涉及（劉康龍，2024）。在未來的研究中，進一步厘清不同類別的實務翻譯之間的交叉與界限，將有助於更精確地界定商務翻譯的獨特性。《實務翻譯研究》對商務翻譯的發展歷程進行了系統的梳理，認為“商務翻譯的研究從傳統的術語匹配模式逐步發展為多學科交叉研究，涉及認知語言學、跨文化交際、翻譯技術等多個領域”，這一觀點與近年商務翻譯研究的發展趨勢相符合。

近年來，商務翻譯研究逐漸向多模態翻譯（Multimodal Translation）與機器翻譯（Machine Translation, MT）方向拓展。Risku（2010）提出的翻譯生態學理論強調，商務翻譯不僅受語言因素影響，還受到社會、經濟、技術環境等多方面因素的制約。在

當前全球化與數位化的背景下，商務翻譯正從單一文本轉換向多模態傳播（如視頻、圖表、電子文檔等）發展。《實務翻譯研究》在個案研究部分涉及了基於語料庫的商務翻譯分析，揭示了商務文本的術語使用規律與句法特徵，但對多模態商務翻譯的研究仍有待深化。

此外，《實務翻譯研究》強調了商務翻譯的技術驅動性，指出“電腦輔助翻譯（CAT）和神經機器翻譯（NMT）已逐步改變傳統商務翻譯的作業模式，並在商務合同、企業報告等領域取得了一定應用”（劉康龍，2024）。這一觀點與 Toral & Way（2018）關於 NMT 在實務翻譯中的應用研究相呼應。然而，該書對機器翻譯的品質控制、後編輯及其對商務翻譯職業發展的影響討論較少，這仍是當前商務翻譯研究的熱點議題，值得進一步探討。

儘管《實務翻譯研究》在商務翻譯研究方面提供了豐富的理論與案例分析，但仍存在一些局限性。首先，對商務翻譯技術的深入研究不足。該書雖提及 CAT 和 NMT 對商務翻譯的影響，但對翻譯技術的詳細應用，如術語管理系統（Termbase Management System）、翻譯記憶（Translation Memory）等探討較少。隨著 AI 翻譯的發展，未來的商務翻譯研究應更關注技術的深度融合及其對翻譯品質的影響。其次，對商務翻譯倫理問題探討較少。近年來，商務翻譯中的倫理問題（如商業機密保護、跨文化誤譯的法律責任等）逐漸成為研究熱點（Schäffner, 2012），然而，該書對商務翻譯倫理問題的探討較為有限，未來研究可加強這一方面的分析。最後，缺乏跨學科視角。該書主要從翻譯學角度分析商務翻譯，而較少涉及國際商務、市場行銷、跨文化管理等相關學科的交叉研究。未來研究可採用跨學科方法，結合商業溝通理論、品牌傳播理論等，以更全面地理解商務翻譯的本質。

總體而言，《實務翻譯研究》在商務翻譯部分對該領域的理論框架、研究方法及實踐應用進行了較為系統的探討，為商務翻譯研究提供了重要的參考價值。然而，該書仍有進一步深化的空間，特別是在翻譯技術、倫理問題及跨學科研究方面。未來的研究可結合翻譯技術、商務溝通與認知語言學等多學科視角，以更全面地探索商務翻譯的理論與實踐，為這一領域的學術發展與實踐應用開闢新的道路。

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Review of *Multilingual Education Yearbook 2025: Translation Practices as Agents of Transformation in Multilingual Settings*

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Ge Song, and Xuemei Chen (Eds.). *Translation Practices as Agents of Transformation in Multilingual Settings*. Switzerland AG, Springer. 2025. 325 pp., EUR149.99 (Hardcover Book), EUR117.69 (eBook), ISBN: 978-3-031-83044-0.

A globalized world has been increasingly shaped and flourished thanks to translation's pivotal role of bridging cross-linguistic and cross-cultural communications. As the continuously deepening translation studies, it is found nowadays, as the two editors rightly point out, that translation not only helps break the linguistic and cultural barriers, but also holds a transformative potential within multilingual educational environments. Further, with the rise of globalization, cosmopolitanism, and migration waves, applied linguistic studies have gradually undergone a multilingual turn (Bielsa 2016; Inghilleri 2017). Correspondingly, translation studies, particularly applied translation studies, and education studies, especially educational linguistics, have naturally been affected by this multilingual turn (Laviosa and González-Davies 2020). In this respect, it is necessary to examine and address the latest developments in the status, functions, and diverse manifestations of translation within global education, laying a solid foundation for future interdisciplinary collaboration between translation studies and multilingual pedagogy studies (Laviosa and González-Davies 2020).

Choosing translation teaching as a kind of translation practice, and taking it as the starting point, this edited volume under review presents an initial discussion on how translation acts as a kind of medium, means or tool for potentially reshaping multilingual learning and

transforming multilingual educational settings. Zooming in on the content, the fourteen chapters are informative and attractive. Starting with a reflective chapter, the coverages of the remaining thirteen inspiring chapters are the case studies of translation teaching within multilingual settings from various aspects in different countries and areas.

In the first chapter, the editors Ge Song and Xuemei Chen argue persuasively that translation in multilingual education is no longer reducible to linguistic transfer; rather, it is a holistic practice that reconfigures pedagogy, nurtures intercultural understanding, and empowers diasporic identities. By foregrounding the concept “cultural diaspora” (4) as a lens, they provide an innovative framework for understanding how hybridity and cultural negotiation shape contemporary learning environments. Within classrooms, the editors emphasize the value of translation as a pedagogical tool that not only bridges linguistic gaps but also affirms students’ multilingual repertoires and identities, whose argument demonstrate translation’s tangible educational transformation.

Chapter 2, written by Julie Deconinck, Philippe Humblé, Antoon Cox, as well as Arvi Sepp, investigates how multilingual translation students at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel experience language learning as a process of inner transformation, using linguistic autobiographies as data. Drawing on Jhumpa Lahiri’s metaphors of self-translation and Claire Kramsch’s theories of desire in language learning, the authors demonstrate that students describe their journeys in terms of belonging, exile, self-actualization, as well as identity change. This research discusses how learning new languages can be both empowering and unsettling, opening pathways to new worlds but also creating feelings of loss or dislocation. By analyzing seventeen autobiographies from students of diverse nationalities and linguistic backgrounds, the study demonstrates that multilingualism in Brussels provides a rich but complex context for identity construction. Ultimately, the authors argue that reflective narrative practices in translation pedagogy can enhance student well-being and reveal the deeply transformative nature of language learning beyond conventional measures of success.

In Chapter 3, at the University of Guanajuato in Mexico, Krisztina Zimányi presents a pedagogical model designed to cultivate problem-solving competence in undergraduate translation courses, centered on tiered reflective practice. In a bilingual, transnational context where many students translate without formal training, the course combines weekly assignments with reflection moving from teams to pairs to individuals. Based on traditions of reflective practice and translator competence models, the chapter displays how guided analysis and feedback help students progress from surface linguistic issues to deeper engagement with equivalence, pragmatics, and strategy. Tested with eighteen students during the pandemic, this approach demonstrates clear gains in reflective ability and highlights reflection as a transformative tool for preparing translators to meet professional and multilingual challenges.

Chapter 4 by Darryl Cameron Sterk explores how eco-translation can transform college students into environmentally conscious “citizens of planet Earth” (67). Building on his course

Eco-translation at Lingnan University, Hong Kong, Sterk addresses students' alienation from nature, described as "plant blindness" and "nature-deficit disorder" (67-68), in light of combining translation practice with environmental education. This course integrates interlingual translation between Chinese and English, intralingual translation between technical and lay vocabularies, and intermedial translation between visual and textual media. Students translate texts about local "flora, fauna, and funga" (68), observe species on campus, and engage in Socratic-style discussions to connect ecological knowledge with everyday experience, for instance, comparing butterfly hilltopping behavior to human social gatherings (72). Activities including fieldwork, quizzes, iNaturalist observations, as well as translation exercises highlight differences in terminology across languages and registers. Sterk's pedagogical approach, inspired by environmental education NGOs and eco-translatology, aims to cultivate ecological awareness and responsibility, showing how translation pedagogy can be mobilized to address the Anthropocene's ecological crises and at the same time fostering both linguistic and environmental literacy.

Jia Zhang examines novice translation students' machine translation (MT) literacy in Chapter 5, verifying the assumption that MT is too challenging for beginners. Studying open-ended questionnaires from twenty second-year undergraduates in China, the author analyzes their knowledge, usage, evaluation, and ethical awareness. The results show that even without formal training, students possess a basic grasp of MT concepts, often citing terms like "machine learning, big data, and corpus" (91). They mainly use MT for vocabulary, idioms, and sentence structures rather than full-text post-editing. They generally trust it to enhance efficiency and quality in informative texts and simultaneously recognizing its limitations with culture-loaded or literary material. Students worry that overreliance may hinder creativity and critical thinking, though most feel MT's language skills allow them to correct errors. Ethical awareness is modest but includes concerns about bias and privacy. Overall, the findings indicate that BA students already engage meaningfully with MT, and that early integration of MT literacy into translator training can build critical evaluation skills and better prepare them for professional practice.

By adopting a user-centered approach that incorporates the perspectives of students, trainers, and employers, Tenglong Wan observes how translation technology should be taught at the undergraduate level in Chapter 6. With the rapid advances in CAT tools, MT systems, terminology management, and project platforms, there is a persistent gap between curricula and industry needs. Using mixed methods over four semesters in China, Wan identifies essential technological competencies for entry-level translators and evaluates how current teaching practices align with them. Grounded in social constructivism and situated learning, the framework emphasizes collaborative projects, authentic tasks, and industry input to structure adaptability and workplace readiness. The analyses of student profiles, trainer expertise, and job advertisements reveal mismatches between training and employer expectations in the

translation market. Wan finally suggests that embedding industry-relevant tools, scaffolding complexity, and integrating stakeholder feedback can significantly enhance students' technological competence, bridging the gap between translator education and professional practice.

Chapter 7 by Yang Chen addresses the motivations of professional interpreters who teach part-time in universities and private institutions, using self-determination theory (SDT). In terms of interviewing fourteen Chinese interpreters, it reveals four key drivers: enjoyment and satisfaction, career benefits, contributions to the profession, and financial income. Teaching is shown as psychologically rewarding, a means to reflect on past work, and a way to construct networks. The study finds universities better support competence and relatedness, whereas private institutions offer greater autonomy and pay. In short, intrinsic and extrinsic motivations vary by context. Chen recommends that universities strengthen recruitment and retention by fostering autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

In Chapter 8, Xirui Liu, Meiwen Tan, and Wentong Sun probe into the phonological acquisition of English as a third language (L3) among Xishuangbanna Dai speakers, whose second language (L2) is Mandarin. Focusing on consonants /b/, /d/ and vowel /a:/, the study uses phonetic experiments to measure voice onset time (VOT) and vowel formant values (F1/F2), comparing trilingual Dai learners with monolingual speakers of Dai, Mandarin, and English. The results reveal that Dai learners' English VOT values change from negative to positive, aligning more closely with Mandarin rather than native English, and their vowel articulation showcases a lower, forward tongue placement similar to Mandarin. Statistical tests confirm significant differences between Dai and English, but not between Mandarin and English; Euclidean distance reveals the closest similarity between English and Mandarin. Individual variation emerges, with some learners producing near-native VOT values and others diverging widely. Moreover, the number of foreign languages known correlates negatively with VOT deviations, indicating multilingualism aids phonological transfer. Overall, the findings support the L2 Status Factor Model, validate both progressive and regressive transfer, and offer implications for teaching English phonology as well as improving interpreter training.

In Chapter 9, Chonglong Gu and Brian Hok-Shing Chan discuss Macao's multilingual "Covidscape" (181) – the linguistic landscape of pandemic communication – through critical discourse analysis of 205 governmental and grassroots signs. Shaped by Portuguese colonial history and globalization, Macao's health messaging prominently featured Chinese (mainly Cantonese), Portuguese, and English. But migrant worker languages, such as Tagalog, Bahasa Indonesia, Nepali, and Hindi, are largely marginalized. Examining trilingual mask-wearing notices, sanitation signs, and remittance shop posters, the study displays how language choice reflects power relations and ethnolinguistic vitality, with official languages foregrounded and minority languages backgrounded. It raises concerns about "disaster linguisticism" (183) and unequal access to lifesaving information. It is also suggested that translation and multilingual communication are vital for inclusive crisis response, with implications for public health,

sociolinguistics, and education.

Chapter 10, written by Hongxiang Zhu, analyzes transliteration practices in the translation landscape of Serdang Chinese New Village in Malaysia, highlighting their educational and sociocultural implications. Building upon Lefebvre's triadic spatial model with an added ethnic dimension, the author observes fieldwork with collective 230 transliterated signboard names across multiple domains. The findings demonstrate that transliterations are largely employed in dialects, such as Hakka, Cantonese, Hokkien, and Teochew, reflecting local identity. Yet Pinyin-based forms remain limited, mainly in catering and business signage, for example, "Da Cheng Du Hotpot" in Pinyin (217), "Mala Pan Mee" mixing Pinyin and Hakka (218), and "Dim Sum" in Cantonese (219). Resident interviews reveal the mixed attitudes that dialect transliterations are valued for cultural identity, whereas Pinyin is seen as modern but less tied to heritage. Policy documents, however, prefer standardized Malay and Pinyin, creating mismatches between official and community practice. Zhu concludes that transliteration landscapes function as educational tools for linguistic accuracy, multicultural awareness, and ethnic identity in translation pedagogy.

In Chapter 11, Mengying Jiang examines how Chinese youth use volunteer subtitling on Bilibili to learn about gender and sexual diversity, focusing on videos produced by the Gender Studies Society. In the absence of comprehensive sex education in China, these volunteer "cultural porters" (231) translate English videos on gender identity, fluidity, and sexual orientation, adapting titles to attract viewers and employing creative metaphors to navigate censorship. Interactive comment sections enhance learning as viewers pose questions and share perspectives, while translators add explanations to clarify concepts and obtain copyright permissions to ensure credibility. The findings demonstrate that subtitled videos serve as grassroots education, breaking down taboo subjects and creating participatory online spaces where Chinese youth critically engage with gender diversity. The study thus fills the gaps left by formal education.

Jiahua Bu and Yifan Cao introduces vidding as a fresh tool for translation pedagogy in Chapter 12. They explore this remixing audiovisual material through a university introductory course. Grounded in fan culture, vidding makes students active media producers. They balance linguistic accuracy, cultural sensitivity, and audience engagement, and simultaneously creatively combine text, sound, and visuals. Using Bloom's taxonomy and the action research model, the authors define six levels of learning outcomes, from basic knowledge of vidding's history and aesthetics to advanced recontextualization and synthesis. The analysis shows that students interpret and repurpose audiovisual texts, but there are some challenges such as assessing higher-order skills and adapting curricula to multimedia contexts. In conclusion, vidding equips students with interdisciplinary, multimodal competencies vital for digital and intercultural communication, bridging the gap between traditional text-based training and contemporary translation practice.

Using a bibliometric analysis of Chinese and international scholarship, Kexin Du and Yingmei Liu, in Chapter 13, review game localization research in translation studies from 1999 to 2024. This chapter depicts the field's growth from early industry-led works to academic consolidation. Internationally, research output includes 15 monographs, 37 book chapters, and over 120 journal articles, whereas in China contributions is restricted to 34 journal articles and 90 master's theses, with no monographs or doctoral dissertations. Leading scholars shaping this field are all from the western countries, whereas Chinese research is largely student-driven. Research topics within the field of game localization translation broaden from translation strategies and technologies to include fan translation, reception, multimodality, gender, and pedagogy. The authors imply that despite industry growth, game localization remains underrepresented in curricula, especially in China, and urge translation programs to adopt advanced techniques, interdisciplinary approaches, and hands-on training to bridge theory and practice.

In the last chapter, Kangte Luo compares three audio description training (ADT) programs in Europe and Hong Kong by means of ethnographic participation. The HKSB program features a three-stage curriculum taught mainly in Cantonese with input from overseas experts and film professionals, ending with studio recordings. UCL's intensive 12-hour AD module integrates theory and hands-on software practice within a broader AVT summer course. ADLAB Pro funded by European Union offers customizable, self-paced materials developed across seven European countries to standardize training. All programs emphasize scripting, voicing, and user needs but differ in institutional context, delivery mode, and certification. This study uncovers shared competences, involving linguistic, analytical, technological, and voicing skills, and meanwhile noting divergences shaped by regional traditions, thereby calling for more systematic, scientifically designed AD curricula to meet global accessibility needs.

This book with fourteen chapters effectively addresses a significant gap of understanding translation practices' potential transformative power as an agent in multilingual education. This volume covers a range of currently popular and engaging topics within contemporary translation studies, such as linguistic landscape translation, audiovisual translation, audio description, as well as translation technologies. Given that studying translation teaching involves such cutting-edge areas, this book sheds light on translation's potential transformation on multilingual education in the digital and AI era. Such pedagogical studies and practices make significant contributions to extending the concept of translation and enriching its applications in education (Laviosa and González-Davies 2020). Besides, such case studies have also aligned with Pym (2019)'s statement that translation practice and training can be undertaken in multilingual classrooms.

Another contribution of this volume lies in the methodological diversity and comprehensiveness of translation teaching investigation, including critical discourse analysis, an evidence-based approach, a user-centred approach, an interview-based approach, as well as

an ethnographic approach. The studies within this volume predominantly adopt a mixed-methods approach with qualitative and quantitative analyses to effectively integrate theoretical foundations with empirical research. This allows for a systematic and deep observation of translation practices' playing a crucial role of educational transformation in multilingual settings. Reflecting on the interdisciplinary nature of this book, it reminds us of paying attention to the interrelationship between these two fields. Multilingual education has absorbed from translation and then feed such new findings and results back into that discipline. In the light of this interdisciplinary perspective and methodology, translation scholars can not only expand the boundaries of translation studies but also foster close interdisciplinary connections with neighbouring fields that highlight the role of translation in diverse educational contexts (Laviosa and González-Davies 2020). This brand new perspective on translation teaching brings us some new insights of how multilingual educational settings are potentially reshaped and innovated in the contemporary digital and AI era. Simultaneously, with the in-depth analysis of translation's educational transformation, translation—as an agent—can be better prepared for taking the responsibility of potentially transforming not only in multilingual social environments, but also in other fields and industries.

In spite of its contributions, this volume still has limitations that must be taken into account. It is regrettable that in the current context where large language models (LLMs) are widely applied in language and translation studies, this volume does not closely follow this popular trend, including chapters engaging with the intersection of Generative AI (GenAI) and translation and multilingual pedagogies. It is agreed that GenAI possess the transformative potential for translation and language education, and the integration of such a transformative tool into translation and multilingual settings signifies remarkable progress in pedagogy (Bilous and Saiko 2024; Nguyen et al. 2025). AI models open opportunities for enhancing human-AI collaboration as well, providing learners with enriched learning experiences and enabling translation and language educators to recognize the positive role of AI tools in teaching (Urlaub and Dessein 2022). Therefore, this volume misses the opportunity to deeply explore how LLMs – as the most cutting-edge educational resource and tool – could play a potential transformative role in translation education and even in multilingual educational settings.

In this regard, future researchers could integrate LLMs as a pedagogical tool into their translation and multilingual teaching cases, in order to explore how such AI models reshape translation workflows and reshape language teaching modes, as well as how they influence the effect of non-native learners' foreign language learning. On the other hand, future researchers may also open pathways to study AI literacy in the settings of translation and multilingual education. By observing students' ways of training LLMs for translation tasks and examining the quality of the translated outputs produced by the trained AI models, researchers could uncover students' learning strategies in prompt design, instruction adjustment, and iterative

refinement, along with their critical engagement in questioning, adapting, and evaluating AI outputs. In addition, the ethics associated with AI application in educational settings can be considered as a future research direction, addressing how translation educators can guide students to critically evaluate, adapt, and ethically use AI-generated outputs. On the whole, the transformative potential of AI technologies enables translation and multilingual educators to break away from traditional teaching paradigms and exploit a new human-AI interactive pedagogies for translation and multilingual education in the future.

In general, this book is a very innovative and impressive read, offering diverse and insightful perspectives for scholars and advanced students who are specialized in or interested in the fields of translation, multilingualism and education.

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Translation Quarterly Editorial Policy

1. *Translation Quarterly* is a major international scholarly journal published by the Hong Kong Translation Society. We welcome academic articles, translated works and book reviews in all areas of translation studies written in Chinese and English, as well as research materials involving other language combinations.
2. All contributions should be hitherto unpublished and not being considered for publication elsewhere. Authors take responsibility for their views.
3. Translated works should be submitted with a copy of the source text and a brief introduction to the source-text author. It is the translator's responsibility to obtain written permission to translate.
4. All submissions are **peer reviewed by the Editorial Board members and double-blind peer reviewed** by referees before acceptance for publication. Care should be taken by authors to avoid identifying themselves or acknowledging others in the submission, including the main text, notes and page headers; such information should preferably be supplied when the submission is accepted for publication.
5. Once a contribution is published, its copyright is transferred to the publisher; any reproduction, distribution or display thereof is subject to the written consent of the publisher.

Guidelines for Contributors

1. Manuscripts, except for book reviews, should preferably be **no less** than 8,000 words (about 16 pages).
2. **Manuscripts should be accompanied by an abstract in English of 200–300 words**, with no more than **five** keywords, and a title page containing the author's name, affiliation, correspondence address, email address and telephone number.
3. Manuscripts written in a language which is not the author's mother-tongue should preferably be checked by a native speaker before submission.
4. Manuscripts should be submitted in word-processed electronic files to the Chief Editor at translationquarterly@gmail.com.

Manuscript Stylesheet

*Manuscripts should be consistent in their use of language, spelling and format. Once your paper is accepted for publication, it is essential that the final submission be formatted to the specifications given in these guidelines to avoid publication delay. This journal uses the “Author-Date” style as described in the latest edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

Overview

1. Manuscripts should be typed in **12** point-font, in Times New Roman for English and PMingLiU for Chinese traditional font. **Allow double-spacing throughout.**
2. Use **10** point-font for figures and tables, which should be numbered consecutively in Arabic numerals and provided with appropriate captions, e.g., Table 1: Interview subjects.
3. Subheadings within the main text should be aligned expressly according to the following order: 1. / 1.1 / 1.1.1
4. Start each new paragraph with a single tab.
5. Quotations longer than **five** lines should be set off from the surrounding text in block form, indented from the left margin with a single tab. **Use font size 10.**
6. Notes, to be provided in the form of endnotes, should be kept to a minimum. Endnotes should be numbered consecutively using Arabic numerals within square brackets in superscript, e.g., [1]. Note indicators in the main text should appear after punctuation marks.
7. Proper nouns and personal names, in English or otherwise, should appear in their full original form where they first appear in the main text. Chinese names and book titles in the text should be romanised according to the Hanyu Pinyin, “modified” Wade-Giles or other pertinent systems, and then, where they first appear, followed immediately by the Chinese characters and translations **in parentheses. Translations of Chinese terms obvious to the readers (like wenxue), however, are not necessary.**
8. Book and periodic titles should be italicised, while titles of articles, chapters, poem and songs, etc., should be placed within double quotes (“ ”). The same applies for titles within titles.
9. Double quotes (“ ”) are used for quotations and special terms; single quotes (‘ ’) are only used for quotations within quotations.
10. Ellipses come in three dots, with a space between the dots, e.g., “Jack and Jill went up the hill . . .” and “Jack and Jill went up the hill . . . And Jill came tumbling after.”
11. Please use **American** spellings and punctuation, including spellings like -ze, -or, etc.

12. Dates should be of the form “1 July 2022.”

References in the text

In-text citations in English and other languages should be as precise as possible, giving the author-date and, where applicable, page references. Here are some examples: (Bassnett 2014, 28-32); as in Chesterman et al. (2003, 198); (see Kurland and Lerner 1987, chap. 10, doc. 19); (Toury 1995/2012, 10).

References section

All in-text citations in English and other languages should be matched by items in the references section, instead of listed in note form. All and only references cited in the text must be listed. References should be listed first alphabetically and then chronologically. For Chinese names and titles, please start a separate list or use Hanyu Pinyin, Wade-Giles transcription, the translated title as published or the title in literal translation where appropriate. Below are some examples:

Book

Bassnett, Susan. 2014. *Translation Studies*. 4th ed. London & New York: Routledge.

Chan, Tak-hung Leo, ed. 2003. *One into many: Translation and the dissemination of classical Chinese literature*. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi.

Chan, Tak-hung Leo. 2004. *Twentieth Century Chinese Translation Theory: Modes, Issues and Debates*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Toury, Gideon. 1995/2012. *Descriptive Translation Studies – and beyond*. Rev. ed. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Yang, Hsien-yi 楊憲益, and Gladys Yang 戴乃迭, trans. 1956. *Selected Works of Lu Xun*. Vol. 1. Peking: Foreign Languages Press.

Article (in book)

Fawcett, Peter, and Jeremy Munday. 2013. “Ideology.” In *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, edited by Mona Baker, and Gabriela Saldanha, 137–141. London: Routledge.

Liang, Qichao 梁啟超. 1984. “Fanyi wenxue yu fodian 翻譯文學與佛典 [Translated Literature and Buddhist Sutras].” In *Fanyi lunji 翻譯論集* [An Anthology of essays on translation], edited by Luo Xinzhang 羅新璋, 52-67. Beijing: Commercial Press.

Article (in journal)

Even-Zohar, Itamar. 1990. “The position of translated literature within the literary polysystem.” *Poetics Today* 11 (1), 45-51.

Keng, Shao-Hsun, Chun-Hung Lin, and Peter F. Orazem. 2017. “Expanding College Access in Taiwan, 1978–2014: Effects on Graduate Quality and Income Inequality.” *Journal of Human Capital* 11, no. 1 (Spring): 1–34. <https://doi.org/10.1086/690235>.

Other materials

Liu, Zhengyan 劉正琰, Mingkai Gao 高名凱, Yongqian Mai 麥永乾, and Youwei Shi 史有為, eds. 1984. *Hanyu wailaici cidian* 漢語外來辭辭典 [Chinese dictionary of foreign-imported words]. Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe.

Zhu, Xi 朱熹. 1270/2017. *Zhuyi yulei* 朱子語類 [Classified discussions of Master Zhu], compiled by Li Jingde 黎靖德. Chinese Text Project. <http://ctext.org/zhuji-yulei/zh>.

*For further guidelines, please consult the latest edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style*.