

# Explicitation of Personal Pronoun in Chinese Translation\*

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Based on the comparable corpus of translated Chinese and original Chinese, this paper studies the explicitation of personal pronouns in translated Chinese. The results show that: (1) on the whole, the explicit characteristics of personal pronouns in translated Chinese are obvious; (2) The explicitation of the third personal pronoun is more obvious than that of the first and second personal pronouns, and the translation process, purpose and strategy and the source language shining through effect are the reasons for the explicitation.

*Keywords:* manifestation, personal pronouns, Chinese translation, corpus

## Introduction

Explicit hypothesis was put forward by Blum-Kulka in 1986. After more than 30 years of development, it has become an important topic in the study of translation commonality. Up to now, foreign scholars have studied the explicitation of many European translation languages, including English, and most of them can confirm the existence of explicitation. However, to find out whether this conclusion based on European translation languages is universal, it is necessary to verify it through Chinese, which is quite different from European languages. Based on the comparative corpus of translated Chinese and original Chinese with diversified styles, this paper studies the explicitation of common personal pronouns in Chinese translation from macro and micro levels, in order to discover the explicitation characteristics of personal pronouns in Chinese translation and analyze the reasons.

## Research Design

### Research Objects and Research Problems

The research objects of this paper are common personal pronouns, which can be divided into first personal pronouns, second personal pronouns and third personal pronouns.

This study attempts to answer the following three questions:

- (1) Compared with the original Chinese, do the personal pronouns in the translated Chinese show explicit features in general?
- (2) Are there differences in the explicitation of the three types of pronouns in translated Chinese?
- (3) Does the specific personal pronoun show explicit features in translated Chinese?

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## Research Methods

The comparable corpora used in this study are The Lancaster Corpus of Mandarin Chinese (hereinafter referred to as LCMC) and The Zju Corpus of Translational Chinese (hereinafter referred to as ZCTC), and the retrieval tool is BFSU PowerConc 1.0.

In order to judge the explicit degree of personal pronouns in translated Chinese, we have carried out a log likelihood test (also called Log Likelihood Test, hereinafter referred to as LL) on the frequency of personal pronouns used in ZCTC and LCMC. The higher the LL value in the test results, the greater the difference in frequency between the two corpora, the higher the explicit degree (if the LL value is negative, the higher the implicit degree), with reference to the significance level. In order to minimize the error, we set the significance level  $p$  to 0.001. When  $p > 0.001$ , there is no significant difference in frequency between the two corpora, but when  $p \leq 0.001$ , there is significant difference. The tool of log likelihood calculation is LL rate calculator.

## Data and Discussion

### Overall Explication of Personal Pronouns

The frequency of personal pronouns in ZCTC and LCMC and the differences between them are shown in Table 1.

Table 1  
*Table of Personal Pronouns in ZCTC and LCMC*

	ZCTC	LCMC	LL	Significance
Sum of personal pronouns	37143	22822	3453.46	0.000

It can be seen from Table 1 that, on the whole, the frequency of personal pronouns used in ZCTC and LCMC is obviously different, with statistical significance ( $p = 0.000$ ). In other words, compared with the original Chinese, the personal pronouns in the translated Chinese have obvious characteristics.

Personal pronouns as a whole have obvious characteristics in translating Chinese, so is the specific personal pronouns the same?

Table 2 shows the frequency of using three types of personal pronouns in ZCTC and LCMC and the differences between them.

Table 2  
*Table of Three Types of Personal Pronouns in ZCTC and LCMC*

Types	ZCTC	LCMC	LL	Significance
First person	11851	7579	946.99	0.000
Second person	4911	3477	246.36	0.000
Third person	20281	11766	2337.17	0.000

It can be seen from Table 2 that the frequency distribution of the three types of personal pronouns in translated Chinese and original Chinese is quite different ( $p = 0.000$ ). Compared with original Chinese, the explicit features of the three types of personal pronouns in translated Chinese are quite obvious. In addition, by

Table 2 also shows that the third-person pronoun is the most obvious in translated Chinese (LL =2337.17), followed by the first-person pronoun (LL =946.99) and the second-person pronoun (LL =246.36).

### The Concrete Manifestation of Personal Pronouns

See Table 3 for the frequency and differences of the use of specific personal pronouns in the two corpora.

Table 2

*Table of Specific Personal Pronouns in ZCTC and LCMC*

Personal pronoun	ZCTC	LCMC	LL	Significance
I (我)	8941	5612	768.29	0.000
We (我们)	2910	1967	183.49	0.000
You (你)	4396	2909	304.82	0.000
You (您)	242	214	1.72	0.190
You (你们)	273	354	-10.49	0.001
He (他)	9479	5933	823.22	0.000
She (她)	4828	2834	524.95	0.000
It (它)	2127	1076	351.34	0.000
They (他们)	3166	1585	536.28	0.000
They (她们)	157	92	17.17	0.000
They (它们)	624	246	169.84	0.000

It can be seen from Table 3 that the frequency of the second personal pronoun “您” in ZCTC is higher than that in LCMC, but there is no obvious difference between them ( $p=0.190$ ). The frequency of the second personal pronoun “你们” in ZCTC is lower than that in LCMC and shows obvious hidden features ( $p=0.001$ ). There are significant differences in the frequency of other personal pronouns in ZCTC and LCMC.

### Reasons for Explicitation

Blum-Kulka (1986, p. 62) holds that explicitation is mainly related to the translator's style preference. Ke Fei (2005, p. 307) thinks that the explicit and implicit factors in translation mainly include language factors, translator factors, social and cultural factors and text factors. The following is from translation process, translation purpose and strategy, and the source language shining through effect to explain the motivation of explicitation and concealment.

#### Translation process, purpose and strategy

Hu Kaibao (2011, pp. 89-90) holds that, in essence, the translation process is a process in which the translator uses the target language to explain or report the meaning of the source text, which generally includes the translator's reasoning and supplementary explanation of the meaning of the source text. In order to facilitate readers to understand the source text, translators usually express the implicit or vague information in the source text. In terms of expression, “English is more commonly used to express things in terms of terms, that is, to describe things in an objective manner without personal pronouns” (Lian, 1993, p. 76). Although some self-evident people are implied or omitted in Chinese, Chinese pays more attention to subjective thinking, which is dominated by “everything is ready for me” and tends to describe objective things from the perspective of self, or tend to describe people and themselves. When translating English into Chinese, the materialized expression in English will be personified by the translator. In addition, there are a large number of impersonal sentences and passive sentences in English. When translating into Chinese, a considerable number of people need to be supplemented, which makes the number of personal pronouns in translated Chinese increase, which is reflected in the manifestation of personal pronouns in translation. Of course, “when a person can be self-evident, it often

implies a person or omits a person” (Lian, 1993, p. 77), which shows the concealment of personal pronouns in translation.

Translators’ translation purposes and strategies will also influence the explicitation and concealment. “The choice of translation methods and translation strategies is determined by translation purpose” (Li, 2004, p. 139). In short, purpose determines strategies and methods. If the purpose of translation is to introduce, translators will generally adopt literal translation, closely follow the language form and style of the original text and reflect it in the translation as much as possible. As a result, the relatively complete personal pronouns in English will be better conveyed when translated into Chinese, which is reflected in the manifestation of personal pronouns in translation. Translators will omit some personal pronouns according to readers and Chinese norms, or restore them to the referents of personal pronouns, which is the concealment of personal pronouns in translation.

#### **Source language shining through effect**

Newmark (1991, p. 78) holds that source language interference is ubiquitous in translation, and under the condition of source language interference, source language features can penetrate into the target language. According to Duff (1981, p. 113), the transmission effect of the source language has a great influence, and it can even be said that the source language is exercising “autocratic rule” over the target text. Teich clearly put forward the “source language penetration effect”, that is, “when translating one language into another, the translation may be oriented towards the source language. Through English-German/German-English translation, he pointed out that the language features of the translation are different from those of the corresponding mother tongue text, and there is a kind of ‘source language penetration effect’ in these translations” (Dai, 2013, p. 80) Wang Qing’s (2010) research based on the comparable corpus of creation and translation shows that English source language has certain intervention effect on Chinese translation. Dai (2013)’s research on prepositions, collocations, “yes” sentences and punctuation marks in Chinese translation shows that “source language penetration effect” also exists in English-Chinese translation. Although he did not study personal pronouns, we have reason to think that there is also “source language penetration effect” in the treatment of personal pronouns in English-Chinese translation. In addition, Huang (2008)’s research on personal pronoun subjects also shows that “in English-Chinese translation, the translated text shows the transfer of personal pronoun subjects due to the influence of the source text, which leads to the increase of its frequency” (p. 458). This is essentially the same as the previous “source language penetration effect”.

### **Conclusion**

In this paper, the explicitation of common personal pronouns in translating Chinese is studied. The results show that, on the whole, the explicit features of personal pronouns in translated Chinese are obvious; The third personal pronoun is the most obvious, followed by the first personal pronoun, and the second personal pronoun comes last. The process, purpose and strategy of translation will make the personal pronouns in translated Chinese explicit, and the source language shining through effect will also affect them.

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