

A Comparative Study of the Poem Translation Styles of the German Translation of *A Dream of Red Mansions* From the Perspective of Corpus-Translatology

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Poetry is an integral part of the artistic framework of *A Dream of Red Mansions*, and plays a crucial role in shaping the atmosphere, portraying characters, and reflecting social reality, therefore it has both unique artistic charm and research value. This paper takes Kuhn's and Schwarz's translation of *A Dream of Red Mansions* as the research objects, selects 19 poems that both translators have translated to make a corpus, uses the software LancsBox to compare the translations from three levels of vocabulary, syntax, and text, in order to provide a new interpretation dimension for the translation research of *A Dream of Red Mansions* and enrich the application of the corpus-based method in the field of translation research of Chinese classics.

Keywords: corpus-based translation studies, *A Dream of Red Mansions*, poetry translation, translator's style

Introduction

Recognized as the pinnacle of Chinese classical novel and a masterpiece of Chinese culture, *A Dream of Red Mansions* reached an unprecedented peak in the history of classical Chinese literature with its exquisite artistic achievement (P. T. Du, & G. L. Du, 2020, p. 3). The novel contains a large number of poetic works with profound connotations, which are not only of great aesthetic value, but also play an indispensable role in building the artistic framework of the book and deepening its thematic ideas. The poetic art of *A Dream of Red Mansions* is not only limited to poetry and song, but also includes such artistic forms as the couplet, lantern riddle, and verse, all of which can be included in the study of the poetry of *A Dream of Red Mansions* in a broad sense.

From the 19th century to the present, *A Dream of Red Mansions* has been translated into nearly 20 languages, with as many as 60 translations circulating around the world. The first appearance of *A Dream of Red Mansions* in the German-speaking world dates back to 1842, when the German missionary Gützlaff introduced the main plot of *A Dream of Red Mansions* to German readers in a six-page translation (Yao, 2015, pp. 247-263). Since then, *A Dream of Red Mansions* was gradually presented to German readers in the form of extracts and abridged translations. Franz Kuhn translated *A Dream of Red Mansions* into German in the 1930s, and this abridged translation had a significant and far-reaching influence in the western world. The full translation of *A Dream of Red Mansions* was published at the beginning of the century, by the German sinologists Rainer Schwarz and Martin Woesler, which is the only full translation in German to date.

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By comparing Kuhn's translation with Schwarz's, the author has identified a total of 19 poems translated by both translators, including six poems, six pairs of couplets, three proverbs, two songs, and two pairs of prophetic sayings. In this paper, the original poems and the translations by Kuhn and Schwarz are selected to create corpus. Using software LancsBox, the two translators' styles will be compared at three levels: vocabulary, syntax, and text.

Corpus-Based Translation Studies and Translator's Style

Benefitting from the flourishing of corpus linguistics and descriptive translation studies, the corpus-based translation study was born in the 1990s, creating a paradigm for translation criticism that combines subjectivity and objectivity, and expanding a new dimension of descriptive translation studies. The combination of corpus linguistics and translation studies has resulted in a coherent, comprehensive, and rich research paradigm. This paradigm, which addresses issues of translation theory, description, and practice, has become a new paradigm in contemporary descriptive translation studies (Laviosa, 1998a, pp. 474-479). Professor Mona Baker first applied the corpus approach to translation research, leading her team to build the world's first translation corpus, the Translational English Corpus (TEC), and applied it to a range of corpus translation researches, such as translator's styles and translation norms (Hu & Mao, 2012, pp. 380-395).

For a long time, translation was seen as an imitative activity and the study of translator's style was marginalized until the 1990s, when it entered the attention of translation scholars (Hu, 2011, p. 16). Baker defines translation style as "a set of linguistic or non-linguistic characteristics that resemble a fingerprint" (Baker, 2020, pp. 241-266). According to Professor Hu, the study of translator's style explores the preferences of translators in terms of the application of words, sentence structure, punctuation, layout of text, as well as the translator's specific language usage habits (Hu, 2011, p. 29). The study of translator's style has become one of the important topics in corpus-based translation studies, which breaks away from the traditional research methods and uses data-driven analysis methods to explain the various linguistic and non-linguistic factors.

Comparative Study of the Translator's Styles of Poetry

In this chapter, a comparative analysis of the translator's styles will be carried out at three levels: lexical, syntactic, and text. At the lexical level, tokens, types, TTR, and the average word length will be analyzed. The syntactic level will focus on dates such as the average sentence length and conjunctions of the two translations. At the level of text, the Fog Index and Flesch Reading Ease will be counted to determine the reading difficulty of the translations.

Lexical Level

Vocabulary is a fundamental component of a text, and by analyzing vocabulary, researchers can better grasp the characteristics of the text (Chen & Ren, 2019, pp. 45-50). Token means the total number of all words in the text. Type means how many different words are present in a text. TTR is the ratio of the two above dates, which to some extent reflects the richness of the vocabulary, the higher the ratio, the more varied the translator's use of words and the richer the vocabulary of the translation. The average word length refers to the average length of words in the text, generally speaking, the longer the average word length, the more difficult the translation is to read. The author uses the software LancsBox to calculate the data of original work and the two translations, resulting in the following statistics.

Table 1

Statistics of Vocabulary Level

Items	Original work	Kuhn's translation	Schwarz's translation
Tokens	236	425	451
Types	199	301	266
TTR	84.32%	70.82%	58.98%
Average word length	1.67	5.24	4.81

As can be seen from Table 1, the tokens and types of the original text is 236 and 199, the Kuhn's translation is 425 and 301, and the Schwarz's translation is 451 and 266. First of all, it can be noticed that the number of tokens in both translations has increased compared to the original work. This is evidence of explicitation of translated language, which means, the translated text always interprets the implicit information in the original text, and these interpretations result in a longer text than the original (Hu, 2011, p. 83). In addition, Schwarz's translation has a greater increase in the number of tokens than the other, and thus the text is more redundant. By analyzing the translation, it can be confirmed, that this is due to the fact, that Kuhn favors paraphrasing, while Schwarz translates the poems word for word, so that its translation is more redundant.

In terms of TTR, the Kuhn's translation is 70.82% and the Schwarz's is 58.98%. Compared to the original work, both translations show a lower TTR, showing the characteristic of simplification of the translated language. In addition, if we compare the two translations with each other, we can find that the TTR of Kuhn's translation is higher than Schwarz's, which indicates that Kuhn's translation is more varied and richer in vocabulary.

In terms of average word length, Kuhn's translation is 5.24 and the Schwarz's is 4.81. The average word length of Kuhn's translation is longer than his colleague. Combining both the TTR and the average word length, it is clear that, at the lexical level, Kuhn's translation is rich and varied in vocabulary, and the Schwarz's translation is more homogeneous and tends to be shorter in vocabulary.

Syntactic Level

At the syntactic level, the translator's style is reflected in the number of sentences, the average sentence length, and the conjunctions. The average sentence length is the ratio of the total number of tokens to the total number of sentences, expressed as the average number of words per sentence. Generally speaking, the longer the average sentence length, the more information it contains, the more complex the structure and the more difficult it is to read. Conversely, the shorter the average sentence length, the simpler the sentence structure and the more understandable it is (Jiang, 2017, pp. 54-61).

Table 2

Statistics of Syntactic Level

Items	Original work	Kuhn's translation	Schwarz's translation
Number of sentences	34	62	36
Average sentence length	6.94	6.86	12.53

As can be seen from Table 2, the selected poems in Kuhn's translation contain 62 sentences, with an average of 6.86 words per sentence. Schwarz's translation contains 36 sentences, with an average of 12.53 words per sentence. The average sentence length of Kuhn's translation is generally the same as that of the original work, with a larger increase in the total number of sentences, while the total number of sentences in

Schwarz's translation is closer to that of the original poems, with a significant increase in the average sentence length.

According to Laviosa's (1998b, pp. 557-570) theory, sentences can be divided into different categories according to their length: short sentences of one-nine words, medium-long sentences of 10-25 words, and long sentences of 25 words or more. Table 2 shows that the Kuhn's translation belongs to short sentences, while the Schwarz's is medium-long sentences, which means, that Schwarz's translation has longer sentence and is somewhat more difficult to read.

In addition to the average sentence length, sentence type is also an important factor affecting the reading difficulty of the translation. The number of conjunctions in the translation can reflect the situation of complex sentences. The author uses LanksBox to calculate the number of conjunctions in two translations.

Table 3

Statistics of Conjunctions

Conjunctions	Kuhn's translation		Schwarz's translation	
	Number	Frequency	Number	Frequency
und	10	2.35%	4	0.89%
wenn	1	0.24%	4	0.89%
wie	2	0.47%	2	0.44%
um...zu	1	0.24%	1	0.22%
als	1	0.24%	1	0.22%
wo	0	0.00%	1	0.22%
dass	0	0.00%	2	0.44%
statt...zu	0	0.00%	1	0.22%
weil	0	0.00%	1	0.22%
doch	0	0.00%	1	0.22%
Total	15	3.53%	18	3.99%

Table 3 shows that Kuhn's translation uses fewer conjunctions than Schwarz's, and Kuhn favors parallel conjunctions while Schwarz uses a lot of subordinating conjunctions. A review of the poems shows that Kuhn's translation uses more simple sentences and parallel structures, while Schwarz uses more complex sentences and subordinating structures in order to maintain the structural coherence with the original text. This further explains the longer average sentence length in Schwarz's translation, which can be confirmed by the following example.

original work: 君生日日说恩情，君死又随人去了。(Cao & Gao, 2015, p. 42)

Kuhn's translation: Durchs Leben wollen sie mit Einem wandern. Der Eine stirbt. Schon folgen sie dem Andern. (Cao & Gao, 2017, p. 16)

Schwarz's translation: Solange der Mann lebt, spricht die Frau von Treue, doch ist er tot, geht sie mit einem anderen fort. (Cao & Gao, 2015, p. 43)

By analyzing the above example, it can be seen that Kuhn translates one verse of the original poem into three parallel simple sentences, while Schwarz translates it into a complex sentence that includes temporal and adversative relations. The reason for the different sentence forms is that the two translators adopted different translation strategies. Kuhn pays more attention to free translation, so the flexibility is high, the sentence structure is not constrained, and the language is short and flexible. Schwarz's translation, on the other hand, is mainly a literal translation, striving to fit the original work and to bring out the contextual connotations of the

original poem. In summary, Kuhn's translation is simple, easy to read, and aesthetical, while Schwarz's is well-structured, logical, and clear.

Textual Level

In this chapter, the text readability of the two translations will be analyzed. The study of readability began in the 1920s in the United States as a quantitative study of the difficulty of text, mainly in terms of sentence length and vocabulary difficulty. In this chapter, two abroad accepted text readability statistics will be applied: the Fog Index and the Flesch Reading Ease.

The Fog Index is used to calculate the number of years of schooling required to be able to understand the text. The higher the index, the longer it takes to understand the text, namely the more difficult the text is to read. And its formula is $\text{Fog Index} = 0.4 (L+H)$, where "L" is the average sentence length and "H" is the average number of polysyllabic words per hundred words (Gao, 2018, pp. 5-13).

The Flesch Reading Ease is calculated according to a statistical method proposed by Dr. Rudolf Flesch in 1948, where the index is calculated based on the number of words and syllables contained in a sentence, with the correct score ranging from 0 to 100. The higher the index, the less difficult the text is to read (Flesch, 1948, pp. 221-233). The formula is $\text{Flesch Reading Ease Score} = 206.835 - (1.1015 \times \text{ASL}) - (84.6 \times \text{ASW})$, where "ASL" is the average sentence length and "ASW" is the average number of syllables per word.

Table 4

Statistics of Text Readability

Items	Kuhn's translation	Schwarz's translation
Fog index	21.76	20.00
Flesch reading ease	63.07	66.39

Table 4 presents a comparison of the two translations, on the basis of which the text readability of the Kuhn's and Schwarz's translation can be quantitatively analyzed. The Fog Index is 21.76 for the Kuhn's translation and 20.00 for the Schwarz's, the former is higher than the latter. The statistical results of Flesch Reading Ease are 63.07 and 66.39 respectively, and Schwartz's version is higher than Kuhn's. From the perspective of Fog Index, it is found that the translations of the two translators put forward higher requirements for the readers, that is, readers who need to receive about 20 years of education can understand the content of the translation. In contrast, Kuhn's translation is slightly more difficult than Schwarz's translation. The statistical results of Flesch Reading Ease show that the data of Kuhn's translation are lower than that of Schwartz's, so it is more difficult to read. On the whole, the dates of the text readability point to the same result, that is, at the text level, Kuhn's translation is more difficult to read, while Schwarz's translation is slightly less difficult.

Conclusion

Using the corpus method this paper follows the principle of combination of quantitative and qualitative research, and conducts research on the translator's style of Kuhn and Schwarz from the perspectives of vocabulary, syntax, and text. The analysis results are as follows: First, on the lexical level, Kuhn's translation is rich in vocabulary, with a longer average word length and limited vocabulary expansion; Schwarz's translation has a lower lexical richness, a shorter average word length, and the poem is somewhat lengthy. Secondly, from the point of view of syntax, Kuhn's translated poems have shorter average sentence lengths and mostly have

short and simple sentences; Schwarz's translated poems have longer average sentence lengths, using a large number of medium-length sentences and complex sentences. Finally, on the text level, the statistical results of the two readability indices point out that, at the text level, Kuhn's translation is slightly more difficult to read, while Schwarz's translation is less difficult to read.

Combined with the different translation strategies adopted by the two translators, the above phenomenon can be explained: Kuhn positioned the target readers of the translation as the general German people, so he chose the translation strategy of domestication and focused on the translation skills of free translation, so the translation was natural and smooth. His translation of poems conforms to the reading habits of German readers. His translation is natural and agile, so it has far-reaching and extensive influence in Germany and even the whole of western world. Schwarz adhered to the principle of completeness and fidelity, and tried to be close to the original text. The poems he translated were highly faithful to the original work, with clear logic and straightforward language, showing the spirit of the original poems as much as possible. His translation is beneficial to show German readers the whole picture of the novel, and makes an important contribution to make up for the default of the full German translation of *A Dream of Red Mansions*.

Corpus-based research on translator's style benefits from the full development of descriptive translation and the great progress of corpus technology, and the research of translator's style has become an important research field in corpus-based translation studies. Studying the poetry translation of *A Dream of Red Mansions* from the perspective of corpus-based translation studies can improve the objectivity and scientificity of the conclusions, which is conducive to providing a new research dimension for the overseas dissemination of *A Dream of Red Mansions*, and further enriching the application of corpus-based methods in the field of German translation studies.

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