

# A Corpus-based Study of Personal Pronouns in Shakespeare's Plays

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**Abstract:** Based on corpus comparative analysis of Shakespeare's plays Zhu Shenghao and Liang Shiqiu's translations of Shakespeare's plays in terms of personal pronouns. The analysis reveals that Liang Shiqiu chooses more explicit personal pronouns, while Zhu Shenghao pays more attention to the divine rhythm of the translation. Compared with the two translations, the use of personal pronouns in Liang Shiqiu's translation is more frequent. Thereby analyzing the influencing factors of this phenomenon, the study shows that the differences between Chinese and English languages, the subjectivity of translators and social factors affect the explicit pronouns in translation and variation.

**Keywords:** Corpus, Shakespearean drama, Personal pronouns.

## 1. Introduction

Shakespeare's plays have been the brightest stars in the literary world, and several translations have appeared one after another since their introduction, among which the most famous and influential are Zhu Shenghao's translation and Liang Shiqiu's translation. At present, most of the studies on Shakespeare's plays focus on emotional color and rhetorical techniques, but there are not many research results on syntax and the rest of the text, and few studies are conducted from a quantitative perspective. With a large number of Shakespearean plays, a quantitative analysis of Shakespeare's plays through the corpus, a systematic and comprehensive analysis and comparison of several Chinese translations of Shakespeare's plays, and thus a more objective research result.

The corpus used in this study is the Shakespeare corpus created by Professor Hu Kaibao, which contains the Oxford edition of Shakespeare's plays and 23 translations by Zhu Shenghao and Liang Shiqiu.

## 2. Corpus Translation

Corpus-based Translation Studies (CTS), which has been developing rapidly in recent years, is a new discipline that analyzes bilingual corpus electronic texts based on linguistics, guided by translation theory, while integrating probabilistic and statistical methods, and incorporating descriptive translation studies and corpus linguistics to study translation over time or in common time. It provides new research ideas, methods and tools for translation research, and also reflects theoretical thinking about translation based on a large amount of real corpus[5].

## 3. Translation of Dominant and Variant

Translation commonality, also known as translation universality or universal features of translation, is the most obvious research result of translation in the development of corpus translation[2]. The features of translation commonality include simplification, explicit, standardization, neatness, etc.[1]. Among the studies on commonalities in translation, the most prominent ones are the dominant and variation. Manifestation in translation was first proposed by

vinary & darbelnet as a translation technique, in which the implicit meaning of the original text is expressed in the translated text, while such information can be obtained in the original text according to the context and the meaning of the context. In literary works, explicit and implicit meanings usually coexist. Implicitization means that what is directly indicated in the original text is not shown, and the reader can obtain it according to the context. The personal pronouns have a special role in Chinese, and more than one of them will appear at the same time in translated Chinese literature, and the simultaneous appearance of multiple personal pronouns will lead to variation. The main way of manifestation of personal pronouns is reflected in the transformation of personal pronouns, so this paper focuses on the way of transformation and variation of personal pronouns in the translations of Shakespeare's plays by Liang Shiqiu and Zhu Shenghao.

Personal pronouns can be divided into first-person pronouns, second-person pronouns, and third-person pronouns. Manifestation of personal pronouns refers to the translation refers to the direct reference to the person mentioned in the original text. English and Chinese have different characteristics, and the frequency of using personal pronouns will be different. Compared to English, the frequency of using pronouns in Chinese is lower. In contrast, according to Hu Xian Yao's study of the Chinese corpus, the Chinese translations of literary texts use personal pronouns more frequently[2]. This suggests that in the English system, personal pronouns are used in works of literary genres. In translated Chinese, the use of "he" is significantly higher and the reproduction rate is higher. The corpus study shows that the recurrence rate of he in original Chinese literature is 4.57, i.e., one "he" appears in every 4.57 sentences, while in original English literature, the recurrence rate is 3.05, with an average of one "he" in every 3.05 sentences. The noun recurrence of pronouns is more frequently used in Chinese literature, and the results show that the average distance of personal names in translated Chinese literature is 3.27, while in original Chinese literature it is only 1.53[3]. According to Wang Kefei's research, the pronoun "he" appears to a high degree in translated Chinese[4]. The alternation of personal pronouns in translations can cause variation. Take the third person pronoun "he" as an example, there are two main ways

of expression in the translation, namely, multiple "he" in the same sentence and different "he" in the same sentence..

#### 4. Analysis of Personal Pronoun Data in the Translations of Zhu Shenghao and Liang Shiqiu

Although English and Chinese are two different languages,

they have the same classification of personal pronouns. In this paper, the use and frequency of personal pronoun subjects in the original and translated texts of Shakespeare's plays are studied with three types of personal pronoun subjects, and the specific data are shown in the following table:

**Table 1.** Three types of personal pronoun subjects

Text Type	Number of characters	Personal Pronoun Subject	Frequency
English original	575558	35531	61.73%
Chinese translation	Zhu translation	17197	46.45%
	Liang translation	17399	53.21%

From this table, it is clear that the number of characters in Shakespeare's translation is significantly less than that in the original text. In the original Shakespeare text, there are a total of 575,558 characters, of which the number of personal pronoun subjects consists of 35,531, accounting for 61.73% of the total, while in the translation, the percentages are 46.45% and 53.21% respectively, which indicates that the translators use personal pronoun subjects less frequently than the original

text when translating Shakespeare's plays, which also indicates that Chinese pays more attention to sentence-to-sentence translation. This also indicates that Chinese pays more attention to the connection between sentences.

By analyzing the frequency of personal pronouns in the translations of Shakespeare's plays by Zhu Shenghao and Liang Shiqiu, the results are as follows

**Table 2.** The frequency of personal pronouns

	Pronouns	Zhu translation	Liang Translation
First person	I	6130	6292
	We	1462	1317
	Total	7592	7609
Second person	You	3442	4219
	You	892	760
	Total	4334	4979
Third person	He	3361	3111
	She	1076	1017
	They	780	629
	They	54	54
	Total	5271	4811

	Pronouns	The Plays of Shakespeare
First person	I	10627
	my	5440
	me	2551
	mine	424
	we	1271
	our	1307
	ours	12
	Total	21632
Second person	you	878
	your	3346
	your	36
	Total	4260
Third person	he	2612
	she	935
	him	1644
	her	1499
	his	2942
	hers	7
	Total	9639

The data in the above table shows how the personal pronouns are manifested in the source text and the translation.

The degree of first and second person manifestation in the translated text is greater in Liang Shiqiu than in Zhu

Shenghao's translation of the first and second person pronouns, while the number of third person use in Zhu Shenghao is greater than the number of third person use in Liang Shiqiu. The number of uses of the third person is greater in the English source text, while the use of the second person is slightly higher in the Chinese-translated text than in the English text. The overall frequency of using pronouns in the Chinese text is less than the frequency of using them in the English text, which indicates that the Chinese text attaches more importance to the articulation of the text and to the connection between sentences. The difference in the frequency of using personal pronouns in English and Chinese texts would reflect the phenomenon of manifestation and variation.

In English-Chinese translation, the transformation of personal pronoun subjects reflects personal pronoun manifestation, and the types of transformation of personal pronoun subjects can be in four categories, explicit, added, corresponding and hidden, among which explicit and added belong to the category of interlingual manifestation[3]. The following section analyzes the original Shakespearean play and the corresponding Zhu and Liang translations by choosing specific cases.

#### 4.1. expressly

Example: Ros. Nay, you might keep that check for it till you met your wife's wit going to your neighbour's bed.

梁译文: 罗瑟琳不, 你可以把那句骂人的话留起来, 等你瞧见你妻子的才情爬上了你邻人的床上去的时候再说。

朱译文: 罗你可以留着这句话, 等你遇见你的妻上别人的床, 你再说。

In translating the second person "you" in the example, Liang Shiqiu chose to expressly translate the personal pronouns one by one, but Zhu Shenghao, in addition to expressing the personal pronouns one by one, added the personal pronouns that were not shown in the passage at the end of the translation, making the play more fluent.

#### 4.2. Add

Adding refers to adding subjects to the translation that do not appear in the original text. The following is an analysis of a specific case

Example: Good my lord, like this fellow.

梁译文: 陛下, 请你喜欢这个人吧。

朱译文: 殿下, 请您喜欢这个家伙。

In this example, the original text uses an imperative sentence, but in the translation, Zhu Shenghao and Liang Shiqiu add the first person "you" to make the sentence more fluent. In the translation, Zhu not only added the first person, but also used the honorific because the sentence was addressed to the king, which shows that Zhu did not simply translate word-for-word, but also focused on making the translation more charming and reflecting the characteristics of the play.

Example 1: Ros. have with you

梁译文: 罗就走。

朱译文: 罗瑟琳你先走, 我跟着你

Example 2: His horses are bred better.

梁译本: 他的马都养得比我好;

朱译本: 他的马匹也还比我养得好些

In Example 1, when Liang Shiqiu translated the text, he chose to translate it correspondingly because he focused on the principle of fidelity of the original text, but Zhu

Shenghao's translation is just the opposite. In his translation, Zhu Shenghao does not simply pursue word-for-word translation, but pays more attention to accurately expressing the meaning of the text under the principle of textual fidelity. In Example 2, the second person pronoun is not written in the original text, but both Liang Shiqiu and Zhu Shenghao choose to translate the second person in their translations.

When the personal pronouns are increased and "he" with different meanings are crossed in the translated Chinese texts, objectively speaking, the personal pronouns have been mutated. This paper takes the personal pronoun "he" as an example and analyzes the variation of personal pronouns in Zhu's and Liang's translations.

##### 4.2.1. More "he" in the same sentence

Example: To his mistress, For whom he now is banish'd, her own price Proclaims how she esteem'd him and his virtue.

梁译本: 对于他的情人, 他是为了她才被放逐的, 她自己的人品便足以表示她是如何的重视他和他的美德

朱译本: 说到他的爱人, 他既然是为了她才被放逐的, 那么她本身的价值就可以说明她是怎样重视他和他的才德;

In this example, multiple third-person pronouns are used alternately in the original English text. In the translation, Liang Shiqiu chooses to translate multiple third-person pronouns directly, and multiple "he" is used, which is also very common in Chinese translated texts.

##### 4.2.2. Different means more "he" in the same sentence

Example: The king he takes the babe To his protection, calls him Posthumus Leonatus, Breeds him and makes him of his bed-chamber, Puts to him all the learnings that his time Could make him the receiver of.

梁译文: 今上国王, 他收养了这个婴儿; 取名为波斯邱默斯李昂内特斯; 他教养他, 使他成为近身的宠儿, 让他受当时最良好的教育;

朱译文: 我们现在这位国王把这婴孩收养宫中, 替他取名为波塞摩斯·里奥那托斯, 把他抚育成人, 使他受到当时最完备的教育;

When translating English texts, there are several "he" words used alternately in Chinese texts, but sometimes multiple "he" words refer to different people. Liang Shiqiu chooses to make them explicit in "his" translation, which also makes different "he" appears in the sentences. When more than one "he" appears in a sentence, it is easy to confuse the reader as to whom the "he" refers to. In his translation, Zhu Shenghao chose to use both the name and the personal pronoun "he" at the same time, which greatly reduces the degree of confusion for the reader.

## 5. Influencing Factors

Different people are influenced by different factors when translating Shakespeare's plays. This paper analyzes the factors affecting the differentiation between Zhu Shenghao's and Liang Shiqiu's translations of Shakespeare's plays from Chinese and English language differences, translators' subjectivity and social factors.

### 5.1. Chinese and English Language Differences

English focuses on hypotaxis, while Chinese focuses on parataxis. The so-called meaningfulness, instead of linking words to words or sentences to sentences, is directly linked by the grammatical meaning and logical relationship between sentences and sentences, and words to words. This theory of

parataxis in Chinese is inextricably linked to the way of thinking in Chinese culture. Our thinking regards human beings as a whole and highlights the wholeness of thought. Hypotaxi refers to strengthening the coherence of a text by adding conjunctions. English, in contrast to Chinese, is more concerned with hypotaxis. English sentences usually have various conjunctions between them. English's focus on hypotaxi and its focus on the individual also has a lot to do with it.

## 5.2. Translator Subjectivity

Shakespeare's plays have always been a shining star in the literary world. Over the years, there have been numerous translations of Shakespeare's plays, with Zhu Shenghao and Liang Shiqiu's translations being the most prominent. In general, Liang Shiqiu's translation mainly seeks to preserve the truth, while Zhu Shenghao pursues the magic of poetry.

Shakespeare's plays all contain a certain rhythm, but when Liang Shiqiu translated Shakespeare's plays, he did not translate Shakespeare's plays with the effect of "the beauty of sound". Liang paid special attention to preserving the meaning of the original and strove to "seek the truth". Liang was influenced by foreign scholars when he studied in the United States and emphasized the "aristocratic" nature of literature[6].

In contrast, Zhu Shenghao focused on rhyme. Zhu Shenghao's translation of Shakespeare was aimed at the general public. In addition to pursuing the fidelity of the text, Zhu Shenghao did not simply pursue the one-to-one equality between words, but focused more on the fidelity of the ideological content, emotional color and rhythm of the style. The principle of Zhu's translation is to "aim at the rhythm", not only to retain the rhythm of the original work and the fluency of the text, but also to make it retain the characteristics of the stage play[7]. Zhu Shenghao has a deep knowledge of classical Chinese culture, a strong ability to create poetry, and a strong patriotic feeling, while at the same time he is also fond of English poetry and has a solid English background. Zhu emphasizes "poetry speaks for the will" and is concerned with the fate of the country and the plight of the people.

## 5.3. Social factors

Liang Shiqiu and Zhu Shenghao were prominent Chinese literary scholars who were hugely influential in translating Shakespeare's plays. The social context had a major impact on the way they interpreted and translated the plays, which is evident in their translations.

After graduating from university, Zhu Shenghao participated in editing English dictionaries and had practical experience in English translation. He began translating Shakespeare's plays in the 1930s, a time of internal and external troubles and unrest in China, and a wave of translators in China as more and more aspirants wished to learn the ways of a strong Western nation. Zhu Shenghao's family was not wealthy, so he focused more on the acceptance of the general public when translating.

In the first half of the 20th century, China faced major reforms in the political, cultural and literary fields, and a wave of translations swept through the country. Foreign literature was introduced into China, and the constant reform and

innovation of Chinese literature was promoted. The production of vernacular literature in the May Fourth period promoted the creativity of translators in their translations

## 6. Conclusion

Based on a self-constructed corpus of Shakespeare's plays, this paper examines the representation of personal pronouns in Shakespeare's plays in Zhu Shenghao's and Liang Shiqiu's translations. In the translations, Liang Shiqiu chooses more explicit personal pronouns, while Zhu Shenghao pays more attention to the rhythm of the translation. Compared with the two translations, the first and second person pronouns are used more frequently in Liang Shiqiu's translation, while the third person pronouns are used more frequently in Zhu Shenghao's translation. By analyzing the specific cases of first, second and third person pronouns in Zhu Shenghao's and Liang Shiqiu's translations, the study finds that Sino-English language differences, translators' subjectivity and social factors affect translators' strategies of translating personal pronouns.

This paper mainly studies literary works through the corpus research method. Previous studies on literary works are mostly from a qualitative perspective, but through the corpus method, literary works can be studied from a quantitative perspective, and through the corpus method, the manifestation and variation characteristics of personal pronouns in literary works can be studied, and through quantitative analysis, the translation characteristics of literary works can be found more obviously, which is also conducive to better research on other literary works. This also facilitates better research on the translation methods and strategies of other literary works.

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