

A Corpus-based Study of William Blake's The Tyger-Translation Style

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Abstract: *The Tyger* by William Blake symbolized a devout Christian belief and admiration towards the God among western people at that time. It is of great importance in the English literature history. Thus whether the Chinese translation versions are in concordance with the original meaning or not is worth study. Based on the corpus, this paper will compare and analyse the three Chinese translation versions in terms of lexicon selection and sentence features, so as to explore the differences in styles.

Keywords: *The Tyger*, William Blake, Corpus, Translation.

1. Introduction

At the end of the 18th century, the influence of American Revolutionary War and the French Revolution was extended to the England, where lived plenty of pious Christians. Additionally, the Enlightenment impacted the authoritarian Church as well. In 1789-1794, *The Songs of Innocence and Experience* was created by William Blake, the first important romantic writer in English literature history. The admiration of God, the spiritual reliance on the religion, the reflection of the corrupt church, benighted people from lower class as well as the changes of social circumstance were all depicted between the lines in his work, profoundly igniting the curiosity of the scholars home and abroad by his power and connotation behind the words. In the poem *The Tyger*, he exerted the imagination of the almighty God with simple words and vivid creatures. Therefore, a few decades later, Guo Moruo, Xu Zhimo and Bian Zhilin, the three well-received Chinese scholars translated *The Tyger* respectively.

Since the advent of the corpus study on translation in the 1980s, a series of study on the style criticism emerged, laying emphasis on the novel translation or prose translation, which suggests a lack of poem related research. This paper will focus on three translation versions of *The Tyger*, based on the self-built corpus, explore the difference and styles in terms of lexicon and sentence, and provide further suggestions for future poem translation from English to Chinese.

2. Methodology

2.1. Material Collection

The Tyger attracted the attention of many Chinese scholars, including Guo Moruo, Xu Zhimo and Bian Zhilin, who also translated it into Chinese for wide spread and further study. Besides, the translators mentioned above were in the similar period of time, keeping with the social and historic matter in correspondence. Thus, these three versions are selected for its great popularity and wide influence.

2.2. Tool and Methods

The three translation versions are selected as the material for self-built corpus after text pre-processing. CLAWS and CorpusWordParser are used to tag the words in the texts. Wordsmith8.0, the corpus retrieval and analysis tool, is adopted to study and compare the language style of the text

and the differences in translator's style among the three versions, attempting to explore the translation strategies adopted by translators and their personal factors in the process of translation.

3. Results and Discussion

Based on the statics provided by Wordsmith, some differences on translation styles are found in terms of lexicon and syntax.

3.1. Lexicon

Different translators choose different range of vocabulary into their works, which directly reflects their translation styles. In the research, Type, Token, TTR and part of speech are studied by means of Wordsmith 8.0, CLAWS and CorpusWordParser.

3.1.1. Lexical Variation

As Yang Huizhong(2005) suggests, TTR (Type Token Ratio) can reflect the lexical size and lexical variation of text. According to Baker(2000), the higher TTR is, the more diverse and richer lexicon is. The results from Wordsmith 8.0 are shown in the Figure 1. The original text reveals a relatively lower TTR than the translation, indicating the repetitive rhetorical use is applied as the figure of speech. While all of the translation versions improved the vocabulary variety significantly, especially in the Xu's and Guo's.

	Type	Token	Type Token Ratio
The Tyger	141	73	51.77%
Bian Zhilin's Version	108	58	75.32%
Xu Zhimo's Version	95	62	81.58%
Guo Moruo's Version	83	53	81.54%

Figure 1. Statistical results of The Tyger and Chinese translation parallel corpus)

3.1.2. Part of Speech

By means of tagging with CLAWS and CorpusWordParser, the part of speech, especially the nouns, verbs, adjectives, are studied to see the language features of both the original poem

and the translation versions. The statistics are shown below (Figure 2).

	The Tyger	Bian Zhilin's Version	Xu Zhimo's Version	Guo Moruo's Version
noun	43	46	49	49
verb	24	34	35	40
adjective	12	25	33	33

Figure 2. Numbers of different part of speech in The Tyger and Chinese translation)

Chinese translations versions mentioned all manifest a more general usage of verb, compared to the original verse. This can be resulted from the discrepancies in the Chinese and English languages themselves. In other words, the conjunction structure and facultative structure in Chinese is understandable for the overall context, so verbs can appear frequently in sentences; while English tends to use nouns or noun phrase to express actions, behaviors and other concepts.

3.2. Syntax

3.2.1. Sentence Complexity

The mean sentence length suggests the level of reading difficulty. It is generally believed that the longer sentence is, the more complex and sophisticated the text is. Since the original text is targeted at the lower-class people with its simple words and direct expressions, whether the translation versions are in line with such characteristics is worth study. The results from Wordsmith 8.0 are shown in the Figure 3.

Texts	Mean sentence length
The Tyger	7.52
Bian Zhilin	10.25
Xu Zhimo	21
Guo Moruo	14.42

Figure 3. Mean sentence length in The Tyger and Chinese translation

It can be seen from the figure that the Chinese versions tend to be more intricate for its language features. Three translators applied long sentences to convey the meaning with sensitive and polished style. Xu's ranks highest in terms of mean sentence length, linking the content with conjunctions and connectives.

3.2.2. Conjunctions Density

The conjunction contributes to the cohesion in the overall text, conveying juxtaposition, progression, transition, causality, hypothesis, etc. In the poem translation, many

people would neglect the importance of such linking words or phrases. The conjunctive density is acquired with the help of CLAWS and CorpusWordParser. The results are shown in Figure 4.

Versions	The Tyger	Bian Zhilin	Xu Zhimo	Guo Moruo
Density	5.59%	2.20%	0.00%	0.51%

Figure 4. conjunctive density in The Tyger and Chinese translation

Xu's version used zero conjunctives, inconsistent with the language features of the original text. The conjunctive density of The Tyger is significantly higher than other translation versions. Words such as "and" appear frequently in the original text. However, the Chinese translations seldom apply the conjunctives, but adopt the connections within the meanings.

4. Conclusion

Based on the statistics by corpus and tagging tools, the great differences between the original version and the translation pieces are found in terms of lexicon and sentence. The English one is easy to understand for its simple language and brief sentences; besides, it is more coherent for its wide use of conjunctives. Compared to this, Chinese versions reveal a tendency for verb usage and a lack of conjunctives. However, since *The Tyger* is targeted at the lower class, the translators should pay more attention to the related hidden requirements, therefore making for a comprehensive convey and spread.

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