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Translation Styles in Two Chinese Versions of *A Bend in the River*: A Corpus-Based Study through Bourdieu's Practice Theory

Xin Zhang^{1*} , Rachel Suet Kay Chan^{1*} , Raan-Hann Tan² 

¹ Institute of Ethnic Studies (KITA), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Bangi 43600, Malaysia

² Institute of Malaysian and International Studies (IKMAS), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Bangi 43600, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

This study adopts a corpus-based translation studies (CTS) approach to compare Fang Bolin's and Li Yongping's Chinese translations of *A Bend in the River*. A bilingual one-to-two parallel corpus was constructed with sentence-level alignment; quantitative indices include STTR, lexical density, four-character idiom frequency, syntactic restructuring profiles, and strategies for culture-loaded words. Using Bourdieu's practice theory, it examines linguistic and non-linguistic features through quantitative methods, focusing on differences in lexical richness, syntactic patterns, and translation strategies. The findings show that Li Yongping's translation demonstrates higher lexical richness (STTR = 52.76%), greater frequency of four-character idioms (0.94%), and more active syntactic restructuring. In contrast, Fang Bolin's translation relies more on the syntactic strategy of direct correspondence (80.0%) and shows a higher proportion of high-frequency words (22.11%). The stylistic differences can be attributed to the translators' different field positions, cultural capital accumulation, and translation habitus formation. As a mature writer-translator, Li Yongping occupied a central position in the translation field, possessed rich cultural capital and a strong creative habitus, and tended toward a domestication translation strategy. Fang Bolin, by contrast, as a novice translator, occupied a peripheral position in the translation field, relied on academic capital and a conservative habitus, and tended toward a foreignization translation strategy. Interpreted

*CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Xin Zhang, Institute of Ethnic Studies (KITA), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Bangi 43600, Malaysia; Email: zx20230918@gmail.com;
Rachel Suet Kay Chan, Institute of Ethnic Studies (KITA), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Bangi 43600, Malaysia;
Email: rachelchansuetkay@ukm.edu.my

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through the field–capital–habitus lens, these contrasts move the analysis from description to explanation and point to implications for translator training.

Keywords: *A Bend in the River*; Translation Style; Corpus-Based Translation Studies; Bourdieu; Practice Theory

1. Introduction

As the 2001 Nobel Prize laureate in Literature, V.S. Naipaul’s *A Bend in the River* is a significant work in contemporary English literature. Set against the backdrop of 1960s Africa, the novel depicts identity crises amid social transformation through Salim, an Indian protagonist living in a Congo River city. Since its publication, the work has been widely acclaimed and hailed as “one of the most important English novels of the 20th century”. Its distinctive narrative style and rich literary connotations make it valuable for translation studies.

The Chinese translation and dissemination of this work are important for Sino-foreign literary exchange. The novel involves complex social, cultural, and linguistic elements. Different translators’ approaches to the same text reflect the diversity of translation strategies, offering an ideal research subject for translator style studies.

A Bend in the River currently has two major Chinese translations: Li Yongping’s translation^[1] and Fang Bolin’s translation^[2]. The close publication dates enable temporal comparison. The two translators exhibit both similarities and differences in their cultural backgrounds and professional experiences. Both translators hold doctoral degrees from American universities and teach at higher education institutions, primarily engaging in literary translation and Chinese writing. However, Fang Bolin was born in mainland China, and his Chinese original works are mainly essay collections focusing on educational observations and cultural commentary, excelling in non-fiction writing; Li Yongping was born in British Sarawak (now Malaysia) and primarily engages in literary creation, specializing in fictional literary creation.

However, regarding their backgrounds when translating *A Bend in the River*, Li Yongping was already an experienced writer-translator when he translated this work, having translated more than twenty English works and completed several Chinese novels, and possessing profound literary creation skills and translation practice experience. In contrast, Fang Bolin was still in the initial stage of his translation career at

that time, with *A Bend in the River* being his first translation work, and he had no prior literary creation experience.

This experiential difference provides unique analytical value for this study. By comparing the stylistic characteristics of both translations using Bourdieu’s practice theory, this research reveals how translators’ different field positions influence their translation strategies. The study provides empirical material for understanding translators’ positional shifts, capital accumulation processes, and translation habitus formation.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1. The Emergence and Development of CTS

CTS, as a product of the interdisciplinary integration of corpus linguistics and descriptive translation studies, was formally established with the landmark publication of Mona Baker’s pioneering paper *Corpus Linguistics and Translation Studies: Implications and Applications* in 1993. Baker first proposed the idea of using corpora to investigate translation languages. She noted that “translation studies has reached a stage in its development as a discipline when it is both ready for and needs the techniques and methodology of corpus linguistics in order to make a major leap from prescriptive to descriptive statements, from methodologizing to proper theorising, and from individual and fragmented pieces of research to powerful generalisations”^[3]. Three decades later, the field has undergone what De Sutter and Kruger describe as a genuine “process of tearing down the interdisciplinary walls”, demonstrating the “de-isolation of CBTS” through enhanced technological capabilities and expanded methodological frameworks^[4]. Current developments show CTS expanding into digital humanities, artificial intelligence applications, and large-scale multilingual corpus construction, marking a new phase of interdisciplinary innovation^[5].

With the refinement of theoretical construction, CTS has undergone a developmental trajectory from the dawn

(1993–1995) to the corpus linguistic turn (1996–1999) and then the cultural studies turn (2000–present)^[6]. The completion of the Translational English Corpus (TEC) in 1996 marked the formal launch of empirical research, and Baker systematically proposed the conceptual framework of translation universals, including the four major translation characteristics: explicitation, simplification, normalization, and leveling out^[7]. After entering the 21st century, research has shown diversified development, expanding from translation universals to new areas such as translator style and translation process.

2.2. Corpus-Based Translator Style Studies

Translator style studies, as an important branch of CTS, did not formally begin until the early 21st century. Baker, in *Towards a Methodology for Investigating the Style of a Literary Translator*, first introduced the use of corpus as a method in translator style studies, proposing that translator style consists of a range of linguistic and non-linguistic personal features left in the text, metaphorically compared to the translator’s “thumb-print”, which manifests as regular linguistic patterns, habitual translation strategies, and textual selection preferences that translators present across different translated works^[8]. Saldanha developed this concept further, offering systematic methodological guidelines. She emphasized the need to distinguish between conscious stylistic choices and unconscious linguistic habits^[9]. She also advocated for a more nuanced approach to translator style analysis, arguing that researchers should consider both quantitative patterns and qualitative interpretations to fully understand stylistic phenomena.

In terms of research models, corpus-based translator style studies mainly adopt three approaches: the monolingual comparable model focuses on the consistency characteristics of multiple works by a single translator; the bilingual parallel model examines translation strategy differences between translators when multiple translations exist for the same source text; the multiple composite model integrates the advantages of the former two models to construct more complex research frameworks^[10].

2.3. Current Research Status and Limitations

Current corpus-based translator style studies have achieved rich results, but certain limitations remain. First,

existing research predominantly focuses on renowned translators or literary translation masters from earlier periods, with insufficient attention to contemporary literary translators, particularly writer-translators. Second, research often lingers at the semantic level of language, and the integration between language and society requires deeper exploration^[11]. Therefore, this study aims to provide an analytical perspective for the theoretical interpretation of translator style causation, exploring the potential influences of field position, capital configuration, and translation habitus on translator style causation.

2.4. Theoretical Framework: Bourdieu’s Practice Theory

While Bourdieu’s theories encompass numerous terms, the three most central concepts are field, capital, and habitus^[12]. He proposed a concise formula for the analytical model of practice: Practice = (Habitus × Capital) + Field^[13]. When this formula is applied to translation studies, it becomes: Translation Style = (Translator’s Habitus × Cultural Capital) + Translation Field. This formula reveals the dynamic mechanism of translator style causation: based on their position in the translation field, translators utilize their various forms of capital and make translation decisions under the guidance of their translation habitus, ultimately forming distinctive translation style characteristics.

The core of Bourdieu’s practice theory lies in resolving the opposition between subjectivism and objectivism, constructing a complete analytical framework through three core concepts^[14].

Field refers to “a separate social universe having its own laws of functioning independent of those of politics and the economy”^[15], where members conduct social practice activities according to the corresponding field rules. Simultaneously, the field is also “a space of struggle”^[16], where differences in capital possession among members determine their different positions within the field, leading members to seek various ways to secure or enhance their positions in the field. The translation field is interconnected with political, economic, literary, and other fields, and is influenced by these other fields to varying degrees.

Habitus is conceptualized as learned dispositions that unconsciously generate strategies serving actors’ objective interests without deliberate design^[17]. Habitus possesses

two characteristics: being “structured” and “structuring”, meaning that “inevitably inscribed within the dispositions of the habitus is the whole structure of the system of conditions, as it presents itself in the experience of a life-condition occupying a particular position within that structure”. Specifically, translators’ education, professional experiences, and other practical activities influence them, becoming internalized over time to constitute habitus, and manifesting as the formation of specific ideological understanding, which is then repeatedly externalized consciously or unconsciously in translation activities.

Capital exists in four forms: economic capital, cultural capital, social capital, and symbolic capital, with symbolic capital being transformed from economic, cultural, and social capital^[18]. In translation activities, translators assess their various forms of capital, and then appropriately deploy this capital, which ultimately manifests in their translation strategies. To some extent, the choice of translation strategies is the result of translators’ comprehensive consideration of various forms of capital.

3. Research Design

3.1. Research Questions

Current research on the two translations of *A Bend in the River* consists mainly of impressionistic reviews with limited scope, lacking systematic empirical analysis and comparative studies of the two translations. Traditional comparative translation studies often rely on researchers’ subjective judgments, making it difficult to provide objective data support and scientific analytical foundations. Therefore, employing corpus methods to conduct systematic comparative analysis of the two translations on their translation features and ex-

ploring the causes of translation styles has certain academic value and practical significance.

Based on this, this study proposes the following three research questions:

Research Question 1: What lexical and syntactic differences exist between the two translations at the linguistic feature level?

Research Question 2: What differences in cultural translation and syntactic restructuring strategies do the two translations present at the non-linguistic feature level?

Research Question 3: Based on Bourdieu’s practice theory, how can the causation of translation style differences between the two translations be explained?

3.2. Corpus Construction

In this study, the corpus comprises V.S. Naipaul’s original *A Bend in the River*^[19] and its two Chinese translations: Li Yongping’s translation and Fang Bolin’s translation, with the specific composition shown in **Table 1**. The original work was the 1979 hardcover edition by Alfred A. Knopf, which was difficult to obtain due to limited publication numbers; therefore, the 1980 Vintage Books edition was adopted, which was a paperback reprint of the first edition. Both publishing houses are subsidiaries of the Random House Group, maintaining the text’s originality and authority. Both translation corpora are based on the 1979 V.S. Naipaul original work, with translation and publication rights obtained through the same copyright agency, Big Apple Tuttle-Mori Agency. The selected translations are all scanned versions of the original first-published physical books. All corpus texts used in this study are solely for academic research purposes under the principle of fair use, ensuring no infringement of intellectual property rights. Details are shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Source and target texts of *A Bend in the River*.

Text	Author/Translator	Publication Year	Publisher	Word Count
<i>A Bend in the River</i>	V. S. Naipaul	1980	Vintage Books	109,063
<i>Da He Wan</i>	Li Yongping	1999	Commonwealth Publishing	221,003
<i>He Wan</i>	Fang Bolin	2002	Yilin Press	193,121

The corpus construction procedures are as follows:

1. Corpus text collection and digitization: Physical scanned texts were converted into electronic documents using OCR software ABBYY FineReader 15;
2. Corpus text cleaning: For format unification and quality control, all inherent text formats were removed, irrelevant information such as headers, footers, and page numbers was deleted, and main text was separated from auxiliary text (prefaces, annotations, etc.);

fonts, font sizes, and paragraph formats were standardized;

3. The corpus was prepared through a three-stage proof-reading and alignment procedure. First, OCR correction was conducted using ABBYY FineReader 15 to eliminate basic recognition errors from scanned texts. Second, multiple large language models (ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Grok for English; Kimi, Doubao, Qwen, ERNIE for Chinese) were prompted to detect potential OCR or typographical mistakes without altering semantic content, and their outputs were cross-verified by human reviewers. Finally, each translation was manually compared line by line with the original scanned editions to ensure fidelity and eliminate residual discrepancies;
4. Text alignment: The original text was sentence-segmented and aligned with corresponding Chinese sentences in both translations using Claude LLM. After human proofreading, this created a “one-to-two” English-Chinese parallel corpus that enabled sentence-level comparison between translations. For sentence alignment, Claude LLM was employed with a standardized instruction: “Align each sentence of the English source text with its corresponding Chinese translations by Li and Fang, maintaining a one-to-two mapping at the sentence level. English was segmented strictly by full stops, question marks, and exclamation marks, while Chinese segmentation followed semantic boundaries rather than punctuation. Each English sentence was matched to the precise corresponding Chinese semantic unit, with the ‘merge’ tag applied only when two or more English sentences were inseparably fused into a single Chinese expression.” Manual verification followed to ensure accuracy;
5. Chinese word segmentation and part-of-speech tagging: Unlike English with natural word boundaries, Chinese requires segmentation due to continuous character writing. The Jieba python toolkit was used for automatic segmentation and tagging, followed by manual verification;
6. Corpus composition: The composite comparative corpus established through the above steps includes three independent monolingual sub-corpora of *A Bend in the*

River (English original, Li Yongping’s Chinese translation, and Fang Bolin’s Chinese translation) and a “one-to-two” bilingual parallel sub-corpus consisting of the original, Li’s translation and Fang’s translation.

3.3. Research Tools and Methods

This study employed quantitative analysis with systematic procedures. The Jieba toolkit segmented Chinese translations and calculated lexical density, hypotactic levels, and four-character idioms. WordSmith 9.0 generated frequency statistics, TTR/STTR, and sentence segment distributions for all corpus texts. CUC_ParaConc enabled parallel corpus analysis of culture-loaded word translations. Excel’s regular expressions calculated sentence lengths and syntactic restructuring frequencies. Chi-square testing ($\alpha = 0.05$) verified statistical significance of syntactic strategy differences between translations.

All statistical data underwent double verification, with critical data independently analyzed twice for consistency. Subjective analyses were verified against relevant literature and the two translators’ paratexts. Results were cross-validated with linguistic examples and existing research to ensure credibility.

4. Comparative Analysis at Linguistic Feature Level

4.1. Lexical Feature Analysis

4.1.1. Lexical Richness

Lexical richness is measured through Type-Token Ratio (TTR), which can reflect text vocabulary size and lexical variation to a certain extent. Types are distinct words in a corpus, counted once regardless of frequency. Tokens are total word instances, with each occurrence counted separately. Due to differences in corpus size among different texts, this study adopts Standardized Type-Token Ratio (STTR), which calculates the type-token ratio of text in batches according to a certain length (usually 1000 words as a calculation unit), then calculates the mean type-token ratio to reflect the information content of the text, thereby ensuring data comparability^[20]. Statistical results are shown in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Statistics of lexical richness.

	Source Text	Li's Translation	Fang's Translation
Token	109,491	116,944	107,346
Type	7,493	13,294	11,689
TTR	6.84%	11.37%	10.89%
STTR	39.96%	52.76%	47.55%
STTR SD	58.84	46.09	50.99

As shown in **Table 2**, Li Yongping's translation has a standardized type-token ratio of 52.76%, higher than Fang Bolin's translation at 47.55%, indicating that Li's translation possesses higher lexical richness and lexical variation. This difference reflects Li Yongping's tendency to use more diversified lexical expressions during translation, while Fang Bolin's vocabulary is relatively smaller with less lexical variation. The STTR standard deviation shows that the original text has the highest standard deviation (58.84), while Li's translation has the lowest (46.09), indicating that Li's translation has relatively more uniform lexical distribution and stronger regularity in vocabulary.

It is noteworthy that Xu^[21] found that the STTR in the fiction sub-corpus of the Lancaster Corpus of Mandarin Chinese (LCMC) was 44.02%. This indicates that overall, the lexical richness of both translations is significantly higher than that of original Chinese fiction (44.02%) and the English original text (39.96%). This phenomenon contradicts Baker's (2000) hypothesis of lexical simplification in translations, reflecting the enrichment of Chinese vocabulary in the English-to-Chinese translation process.

4.1.2. Lexical Density and Hypotactic Level

Lexical density refers to the proportion of content words in the total word count, which can reflect text information density and reading difficulty. Hypotactic level refers to the proportion of function words in the total word count,

reflecting the degree of grammatical explicitation. Both of them can be calculated for the two translations through Jieba toolkit. According to Stubbs^[22], lexical density should be the proportion of content word tokens in total tokens. On the other hand, since Chinese lacks morphological changes, its formalization is mainly manifested through the use of function words or grammatical markers. Therefore, the grammatical explicitation degree of the corpus, i.e., hypotactic level, can be reflected by calculating the proportion of function word frequency in total word frequency^[23]. Content words in Chinese mainly include nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, numerals, and classifiers, while function words mainly consist of conjunctions, prepositions, auxiliary words, interjections, and modal particles that serve grammatical functions^[20]. The classification of pronouns in Chinese remains controversial, so they are counted separately. Statistical results are shown in **Table 3**.

Analysis reveals that Li Yongping's translation has a lexical density (68.41%) higher than Fang Bolin's translation (65.44%), indicating that Li's translation carries greater information load with relatively higher reading difficulty. In terms of hypotactic level, Fang Bolin's translation shows a higher proportion of function words (20.15%) than Li Yongping's translation (17.60%), indicating that Fang's translation has stronger grammatical explicitation and clearer syntactic structure.

Table 3. Statistics of lexical density and hypotactic level.

	Total Tokens	Content Word Frequency	Lexical Density	Function Word Frequency	Hypotactic Level	Pronoun Frequency	Pronoun Proportion
Li	116,944	79,997	68.41%	20,583	17.60%	16,364	13.99%
Fang	107,346	70,243	65.44%	21,627	20.15%	15,476	14.42%

This difference reflects the different strategies employed by the two translators: Li Yongping tends to maintain high information density, while Fang Bolin strengthens grammatical relationships by increasing function words, bringing it closer to English hypotactic features.

4.1.3. High-Frequency Word Distribution

The frequency of high-frequency words can reflect the degree of normalization in translations. The higher the proportion of high-frequency words, the more the translation tends to repeatedly use common vocabulary, thereby

reducing text complexity. This study uses the word list function of WordSmith 9.0 to retrieve and count high-frequency

words in both translations. Statistical results are shown in **Table 4**.

Table 4. Statistics of high-frequency word distribution.

	Top 10 High-Frequency Word Frequency	Total Tokens	Proportion
Li	22,733	116,944	19.44%
Fang	23,729	107,346	22.11%

Fang Bolin’s translation shows a higher proportion of high-frequency words (22.11%) than Li Yongping’s translation (19.44%), indicating that Fang’s translation tends more toward repeatedly using a small number of common words, with higher textual normalization, relatively lower reading difficulty and increased acceptability.

According to Yang and Zhu, this ratio in the fiction sub-corpus of the original Chinese corpus LCMC was 14.18%^[24], lower than the high-frequency word ratios of both Chinese translations in this study. This indicates from one perspective that translations have higher lexical repetition compared to original Chinese fiction, possibly reflecting lexical selection tendencies and language conversion characteristics in the

translation process, demonstrating translators’ conservative strategies in lexical choice and their considerations of reader acceptability.

4.1.4. Four-Character Idioms

Four-character idioms, as an important expressive form in Chinese, can reflect translators’ degree of domestication and cultural adaptation strategies through their frequency. The 49,446 four-character idioms from the Comprehensive Dictionary of Chinese Idioms were loaded as a user dictionary into the Jieba toolkit. After automatic filtering and manual removal of invalid matching targets, the statistical results are shown in **Table 5**.

Table 5. Statistics of four-character idioms.

	Four-Character Idiom Frequency	Total Tokens	Proportion
Li	1,105	116,944	0.94%
Fang	585	107,346	0.54%

Li Yongping’s translation shows a higher frequency of four-character idioms (0.94%) than Fang Bolin’s translation (0.54%), with a difference reaching 1.74 times. This difference reflects two different preferences in Chinese literary translation: Li Yongping pays more attention to leveraging the national characteristics and literary flavor of Chinese expression, while Fang Bolin tends more toward establishing direct correspondence with the original text.

Analysis of specific examples reveals the systematic nature of these differences, while also raising questions about potential overelaboration.

Example 1 (ID 5787, Chapter 3, Section 15, Paragraph 14)

Original: Far away, all around, beyond the trees, were the buildings.

Li: 放眼望去, 公园四周, 树梢外, 一幢幢栉比鳞次的高楼拔地而起, 巍然耸立。

Fang: 在远处, 从树木上面看过去, 到处都是楼房。

Li’s translation demonstrates potential overelaboration: the original’s neutral “buildings” becomes “高楼” (tall buildings), while simple spatial description is transformed into dramatic imagery through “栉比鳞次” (closely arranged like fish scales and comb teeth), “拔地而起” (rising from the ground), and “巍然耸立” (standing tall and majestic). The original carries no sense of architectural grandeur or majesty that would justify such amplification.

Example 2 (ID 43, Chapter 1, Section 1, Paragraph 10)

Original: After my anxiety to arrive, there was little for me to do.

Li: 千里迢迢, 急急忙忙赶到这儿来, 我却发现没有生意可做;

Fang: 急吼吼地到了这里, 却没什么事好做。

Li’s “千里迢迢” (traveling great distances) adds geographical specificity absent from the original’s “anxiety to arrive”. This systematic preference—appearing 10 times versus zero in Fang’s translation—suggests a pattern of semantic

expansion beyond the original’s boundaries.

Example 3 (ID 3920, Chapter 2, Section 9, Paragraph 65)

Original: We’ve been clinging to the idea of defeat and forgetting that we are men like everybody else.

Li: 我们只顾自怜自艾，怨天尤人，却没想到我们跟其他人一样，

Fang: 我们死抱着失败的观念不放，忘记了我们其实和其他人一样。

While Li’s paired idioms “自怜自艾” (self-pity and self-blame) and “怨天尤人” (complaining against heaven and blaming people) create rhythmic elegance, they arguably exceed the original’s emotional register. The original’s simple “clinging to the idea of defeat” becomes a complex psychological analysis through these idioms: “自怜自艾” transforms internal emotional state into active self-directed negativity, while “怨天尤人” adds external blame-casting entirely absent from the source text.

These examples illustrate Li’s strategy of using four-character idioms, but also suggest potential over-translation where stylistic enhancement may compromise semantic fidelity to the original’s measured tone.

4.2. Syntactic Feature Analysis

4.2.1. Average Sentence Length

Sentence length and word length are important indicators reflecting textual syntactic features. Average sentence length can reflect translators’ syntactic organization preferences, while average word length reflects the complexity of lexical choices. This study uses periods, question marks, and exclamation marks as sentence markers, employing regular expressions “[\?!\.]” and “[。 ! ?]” to count the total number of sentences in both the original and translated works, and obtains statistical data shown in **Table 6**.

Li Yongping’s average sentence length (15.29 words) exceeds Fang Bolin’s (14.30 words), closer to the original (15.23 words). Li adopted a strategy increasing total words and sentences while maintaining original sentence length through information supplementation. Fang used an approach increasing sentences but reducing total words, shortening average length for readability. However, since 75% of Chinese sentences contain multiple segments^[25], sentence-level analysis alone is insufficient; segment-level statistics are needed.

Table 6. Statistics of average sentence length.

	Source Text	Li’s Translation	Fang’s Translation
Total tokens	109,491	116,944	107,346
Total sentences	7190	7648	7508
Average sentence length	15.23	15.29	14.30

4.2.2. Sentence Segment Frequency Distribution

To more precisely analyze the syntactic features of both translations, this study conducted detailed frequency distribution statistics on sentence segments. Sentence segments

can be individual sentences, clauses, or phrases, marked by commas, semicolons, colons, periods, exclamation marks, and question marks as boundaries. Regular expression retrieval and statistics were performed on both translations in Excel. Basic statistical data are shown in **Table 7**.

Table 7. Statistics of sentence segments.

Statistics	Li’s Translation	Fang’s Translation
Total sentence segments	21,436	17,228
Average word count	6.64	7.41
Longest sentence segment word count	48	36
Shortest sentence segment word count	1	2
Standard deviation	3.32	3.49

Li Yongping’s translation contains more sentence segments (21,436) but shorter average length (6.64 words) than Fang Bolin’s (17,228 segments, 7.41 words). This reflects different strategies: Li uses numerous short segments to

adapt English logic to Chinese pause rhythms and reader habits, while Fang employs longer segments for logical clarity despite reduced rhythmic flow. **Figure 1** shows the detailed distribution differences.

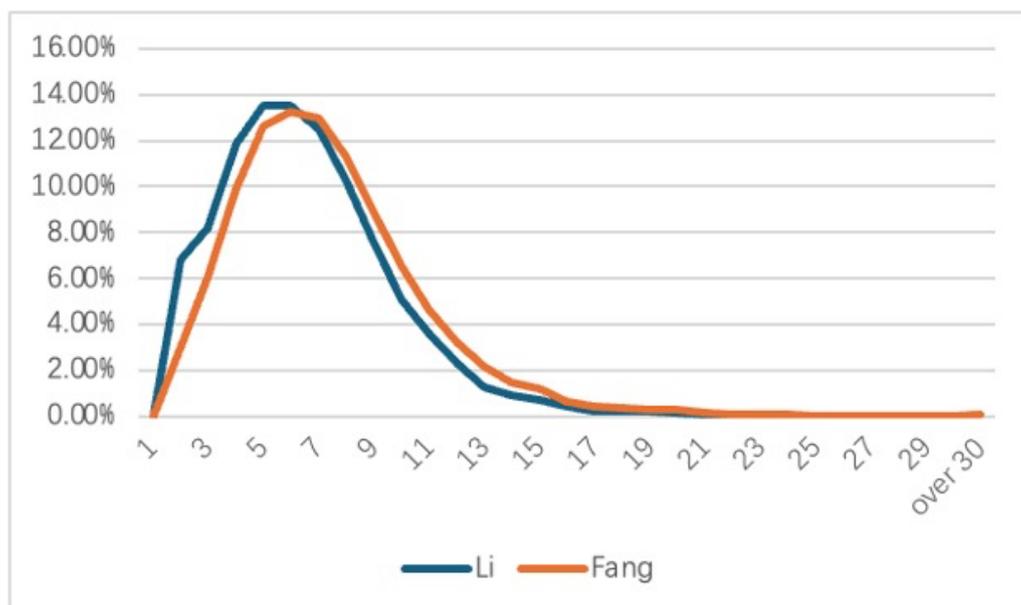


Figure 1. Sentence segment length distribution.

As shown in **Figure 1**, Li Yongping’s translation demonstrates higher usage proportions than Fang Bolin’s translation for 2–6 word sentence segments, while long segments (7+ words) are consistently lower than the latter. Therefore, sentence segment frequency distribution better reflects the rhythmic characteristics of translations within syntactic categories. Overall, Li Yongping’s translation tends toward smaller segment capacity, creating a Chinese narrative rhythm through dense short segments that better conform to Chinese readers’ cognitive habits.

5. Comparative Analysis at Non-Linguistic Feature Level

This section analyzes non-linguistic features by examining how the two translators handle source text vocabulary and sentences. It compares culture-loaded word translations and sentence translation strategies, using statistical testing to verify differences.

5.1. Translation of Culture-loaded Words

A Bend in the River contains numerous culture-loaded words spanning political, religious, racial, and historical dimensions. The translators’ handling of these terms directly reflects their strategies and cultural attitudes. Using large language models, AntConc’s keyword function, and manual screening, 242 culture-loaded words were identified. CUC_

ParaConc analysis revealed 26 words with different translations between versions (**Table 8**).

Through analysis of the translation strategies for 26 culture-loaded words, differences in translation strategies between the two translators were found:

Li Yongping’s domestication strategy tends to embed foreign concepts into Chinese cultural contexts. For example, “Asafoetida” → “驱风油” (carminative oil) emphasizes medicinal function over botanical identity, and “prayer mat” → “地毯” (carpet) removes religious function to emphasize everyday objects. Among the 26 differential vocabulary items, 23 words (88.5%) adopted domestication translation strategy, reflecting the deep-seated philosophy of “cultural localization”—reducing cognitive burden through familiar cultural symbols and prioritizing target readers’ acceptance psychology.

Fang Bolin’s foreignization strategy maintains more accuracy and cultural characteristics of source text concepts while preserving readability. For example, “Asafoetida” → “阿魏树脂” (Asafoetida resin) preserves botanical specificity rather than Li’s functional description, and “prayer mat” → “祈祷的跪垫” (prayer kneeling mat) clarifies religious function. Among the 26 differential vocabulary items, 23 words (88.5%) adopted foreignization translation strategy, reflecting the philosophy of “cultural fidelity”—believing that readers have the capacity to understand foreign cultures and that translation should bear cultural transmission responsibilities.

Table 8. Comparison of translation strategies for culture-loaded words.

Source Text	Li's Translation	Fang's Translation
Big Man	*伟人 (great man)	大人物 (big potato)
radicalization	*国有化 (nationalization)	激进化 (radicalization)
nationalization	*企业国有化计划 (enterprise nationalization plan)	国有化 (nationalization)
Domain	*国家园区 (national park)	新领地 (new territory)
Liberation Army	*民族解放军 (national liberation army)	解放军 (liberation army)
people of the Indian Ocean	*印度洋民族 (Indian Ocean ethnic peoples)	印度洋人 (Indian Ocean people)
Warrior Boys	*战士族子弟 (warrior clan children)	少年武士 (young warriors)
métis	*杂种子 (mixed breed)	混血儿 (mixed-blood child)
tribal boundaries	部落疆界 (tribal boundaries)	*部落之间的阻隔 (barriers between tribes)
Muslim	*回教徒 (Hui religion follower)	穆斯林 (Muslim)
Koranic school	*回教学校 (Hui religion school)	《古兰经》学校 (Quran school)
prayer mat	*地毯 (carpet)	祈祷的跪垫 (prayer kneeling mat)
good-luck charm	*护身符 (protective amulet)	幸运符 (lucky charm)
protecting ointments	*辟邪油膏 (evil-repelling ointment)	防护油 (protective oil)
the bend in the river	*大河湾 (great river bend)	河湾 (river bend)
petit people	*小老百姓 (common people)	小人物 (small potato)
Big Man's White Man	*御用的白人学者 (imperial white scholar)	白人亲信 (white confidant)
grubs	*蛆虫 (maggots)	蛴螬 (grubs)
coconut chutney	椰子酸辣酱 (coconut sweet and sour sauce)	*椰子酱 (coconut sauce)
Asafoetida	*驱风油 (carminative oil)	阿魏树脂 (Asafoetida resin)
turban	*布巾 (cloth)	穆斯林式头巾 (Muslim-style headscarf)
African costume	非洲传统服装 (African traditional clothing)	*非洲服装 (African clothing)
kohl	*锑粉 (antimony powder)	墨粉 (ink powder)
Arab slave caravan	*阿拉伯奴隶贩子 (Arab slave traders)	阿拉伯的贩奴车队 (Arab slave caravan)
slave stockade	*奴隶拘留营 (slave detention camp)	奴隶围场 (slave stockade)
water hyacinth	*洋水仙 (foreign narcissus)	水葫芦 (water hyacinth)

* Chinese translations marked with "*" represent domestication translation strategy.

The high proportions of consistency indicate that both translators have relatively stable principles for handling cultural vocabulary, reflecting different choices between “acceptability priority” and “accuracy priority” in cultural transmission functions.

To better illustrate the translators' different strategies, two representative cases are discussed in detail.

Example 1 (ID 6534, Chapter 4, Section 16, Paragraph 51)

Original: The President issued a statement, just to let everybody know that what the Big Man gives the Big Man can take away.

Li: 总统发表声明, 郑重宣示: “伟人” 赏赐老百姓的东西, “伟人” 随时可以收回来。

Fang: 总统发布了一个通告, 告诉大家说他大人物既然能把这些财产派给大家, 也能够收回去。

The politically loaded term “Big Man” is widely used in African contexts to refer to authoritarian rulers. Li's choice of “伟人” (great man) domesticates the concept into Chinese political discourse, where the word often carries positive connotations associated with revered leaders such as Mao Zedong. This strategy makes the irony more immediately accessible for Chinese readers familiar with personality-cult rhetoric, but it simultaneously dilutes the satirical ambigui-

ty of Naipaul's original. Fang's “大人物” (big potato), by contrast, maintains semantic neutrality and preserves the ambivalence of the source text, allowing readers to infer the irony independently. This comparison reflects Li's reader-oriented domestication approach and Fang's text-oriented foreignization tendency.

Example 2 (ID 170, Chapter 1, Section 2, Paragraph 2)

Original: My family was Muslim.

Li: 我们家是信奉回教的,

Fang: 我生在一个穆斯林家庭,

The translation of “Muslim” further highlights different cultural mediation strategies. Li's “回教徒” (Hui religion follower) reflects older Chinese terminology rooted in domestic historical experience, thereby domesticating the identity into a Chinese cultural framework. However, this choice risks conflating African Muslims with China's Hui ethnic minority, introducing unintended cultural associations. Fang's “穆斯林” (Muslim), phonetically translated by Chinese words, preserves the global Islamic identity of the original, requiring more cognitive effort from readers but ensuring cultural specificity. This contrast illustrates two philosophies: Li prioritizes cultural accessibility by anchoring the unfamiliar in familiar Chinese terms, while Fang emphasizes cultural fidelity and accurate representation of foreign concepts.

These two cases exemplify how translation of culture-loaded words involves deeper ideological choices: domestication through familiar Chinese discourse versus foreignization through preservation of cultural distinctiveness.

5.2. Syntactic Restructuring Strategies

The frequency of syntactic restructuring strategies can intuitively reflect translation style tendencies. This study conducted sentence-by-sentence annotation of 7,190 sentences in the original *A Bend in the River*, counted various syntactic restructuring strategies in both translations, and employed

chi-square testing and effect size analysis to quantitatively assess strategy distribution differences.

Manual corpus annotation enables Excel-based frequency analysis of syntactic restructuring strategies (Figure 2 and Figure 3). Segmentation strategies(1-2, 1-3, etc.) split one individual source sentence into multiple target sentences; combination strategies(2-1, 3-1, etc.) merge multiple source sentences into one target sentence. Omission(0) indicates complete deletion of a source sentence without translation; correspondence(1-1) represents one source sentence corresponding to one target sentence.

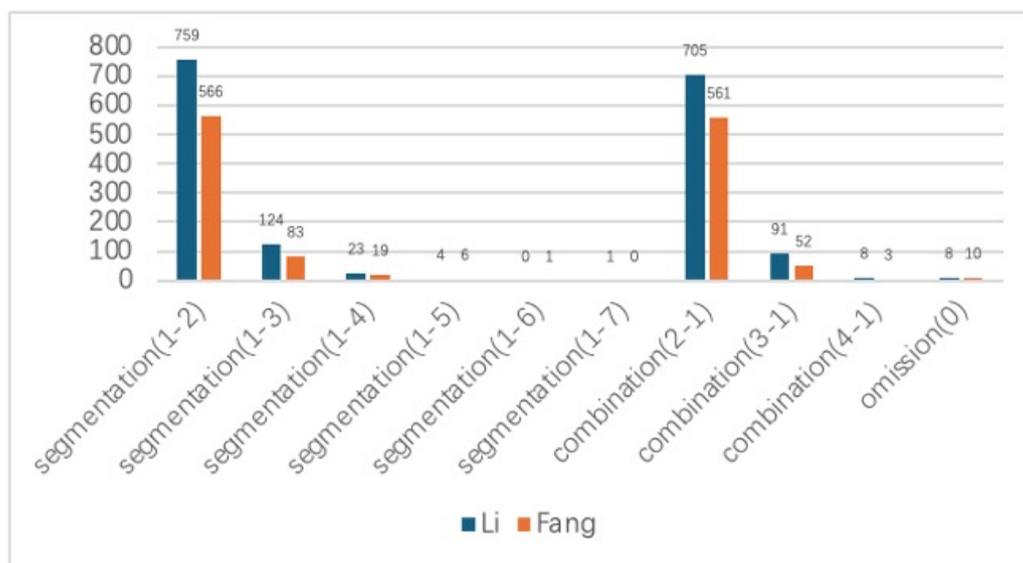


Figure 2. Frequency of syntactic restructuring strategies.

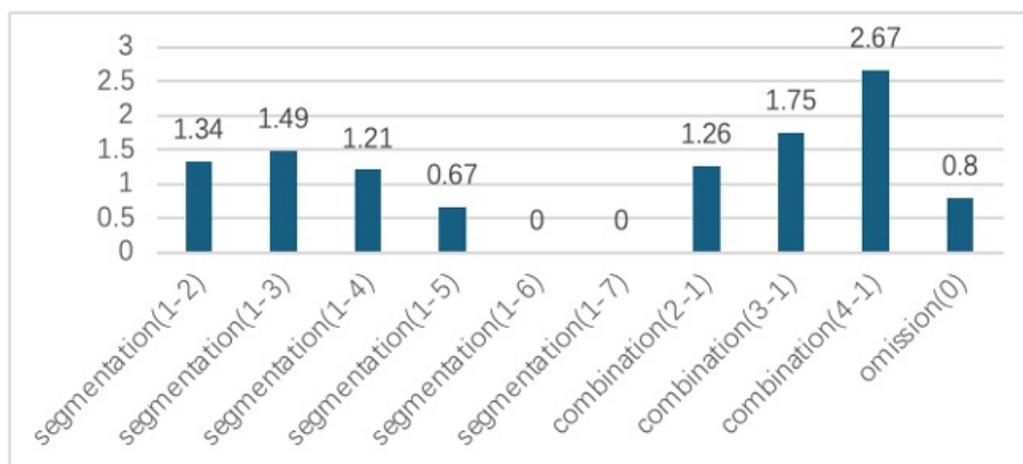


Figure 3. Frequency ratio of syntactic restructuring strategies (Li/Fang).

Chi-square testing of syntactic restructuring strategies, excluding direct correspondence(1-1), showed no significant differences: $\chi^2(5) = 8.947, p > 0.05$. Effect size analysis

(Cramér’s $V = 0.054 < 0.1$) indicated weak differences, confirming relatively balanced distribution patterns between translations. Although the testing showed no significant dif-

ferences, descriptive statistics still revealed both translators' preferences in major syntactic restructuring strategies.

As shown in **Table 9**, and as further visualized in **Figure 3**, the comparison highlights Fang Bolin's overwhelming reliance on direct correspondence (80.52%) versus Li Yongping's more diversified use of segmentation and combination strategies.

Fang Bolin's correspondence strategy occupies an absolutely dominant position (5,215 instances, accounting for 80.52% of total operations), while all syntactic restructuring strategies combined account for 19.48%. This high proportion of correspondence reflects high respect for source text

structure and the "minimal intervention" principle, with translation manifesting more as language conversion in nature.

Li Yongping's correspondence strategy proportion is relatively lower (4,556, 73.08%), with more active syntactic restructuring activities (accounting for 26.92%), and restructuring frequency is 1.47 times that of Fang's translation. Li Yongping demonstrates systematic restructuring tendencies: segmentation(1-2) and combination(2-1) strategies are 1.34 times and 1.26 times those of Fang's translation respectively, while complex restructuring such as segmentation(1-3) and combination(3-1) reaches 1.49 times and 1.75 times.

Table 9. Statistics of high-frequency core syntactic restructuring strategies.

Syntactic Restructuring Strategies	Li	Fang	Frequency Ratio
correspondence(1-1)	4,556 (73.08%)	5,215 (80.52%)	0.87
segmentation(1-2)	759 (12.17%)	566 (8.74%)	1.34
combination(2-1)	705 (11.31%)	561 (8.66%)	1.26
segmentation(1-3)	124 (1.99%)	83 (1.28%)	1.49
combination(3-1)	91 (1.46%)	52 (0.80%)	1.75

6. Discussion

To situate this work within CTS translator-style research, this study combines a bilingual one-to-two parallel design with Bourdieu's practice theory. While version-oriented studies of major works typically document stylistic contrasts using corpus metrics^[21,24], they seldom explain why such contrasts arise. The observed patterns are interpreted through the field-capital-habitus lens, moving from description to explanation.

6.1. Summary of Translation Styles

Li Yongping's translation exhibits an "innovative domestication" style with rich linguistic expression and active translation strategies. Lexically: high STTR (52.76%), lexical density (68.41%), and four-character idiom usage (0.94%) demonstrate Chinese creative potential. Syntactically: high-frequency short segments (6.64 words/segment) create Chinese narrative rhythm with a 27.4% restructuring rate. Culturally: 88.5% of culture-loaded words use domestication, reflecting a reader-oriented philosophy.

Fang Bolin's translation exhibits "conservative foreignization" with standardized language use and cautious strategies. Lexically: lower STTR (47.55%), higher high-frequency words (22.11%), and minimal four-character idioms (0.54%) reflect conventional expression reliance. Syn-

tactically: longer average sentences (14.30 words), correspondence strategy dominance (80.52%), and minimal restructuring (19.48%) emphasize completeness. Culturally: 88.5% foreignization maintains source characteristics, reflecting a text-oriented philosophy.

6.2. Cause Analysis of Translation Style

The stylistic differences presented by the two translations are not accidental phenomena, but rather the result of the combined effects of translators' different positions in the translation field, capital configurations, and habitus causations. Gouanvic demonstrates that translation practice, like every practice in Bourdieu's terms, is based upon a coincidence of two instances: the external instance of literary fields and the internal instance of the producing agents and their habitus, with translators' social trajectories fundamentally shaping their translation choices^[26]. Based on Bourdieu's analytical framework of practice theory, this study deeply explores the underlying causes of stylistic differences from three levels: field, capital, and habitus.

6.2.1. Power Differences in Field Position and Strategy Selection

As a novice translator, Fang Bolin occupied a peripheral position in the translation field, lacking authority and facing

dual pressures from editorial norms and critical judgment. His experience illustrates editorial constraints: initially translating “The world is what it is” as “世界亘古未变” (*literally, “the world has never changed since ancient times”*), he revised it to “世界如其所是” (*literally, “the world as it is”*) following editorial suggestions^[27]. This shift from free translation toward foreignization demonstrates how field power relations regulate translation practice, leading novice translators to adopt conservative “minimal intervention” strategies for legitimacy.

Li Yongping, as a veteran writer-translator, occupied a relatively central position in the translation field. This advantageous position manifests in his active syntactic restructuring (26.92% versus Fang’s 19.48%) and systematic domestication strategies (88.5% of culture-loaded words). His longstanding literary creation reputation provided “symbolic violence” protection for his translation practice, enabling him to break through conventional translation norms and conduct innovative textual processing. This advantageous field position endowed Li Yongping with greater translation autonomy, allowing him to exercise translator subjectivity while maintaining fidelity to the source text.

6.2.2. Structural Differences in Capital Configuration and Expressive Ability

In Bourdieu’s framework, the configuration of capital shapes practical capacity. Fang Bolin relied mainly on academic capital, with strong linguistic skills but limited cultural capital and literary experience. The restrictive characteristics of this capital structure are manifested in: his lexical choices tend toward high-frequency common words (22.11% versus Li’s 19.44%), minimal four-character idiom usage (0.54% versus Li’s 0.94%), and syntactic processing predominantly through direct correspondence (80.52%), overall presenting characteristics of “technical translation”.

Li Yongping possessed rich literary capital and creative capital, with long-term novel creation practice endowing him with acute linguistic intuition, abundant rhetorical devices, and profound cultural foundation. This capital advantage translated into powerful linguistic expressive ability in translation: higher lexical richness (STTR 52.76% versus Fang’s 47.55%), higher frequency of four-character idiom, more active syntactic restructuring, demonstrating characteristics of “artistic translation”.

6.2.3. Diachronic Process of Habitus Formation and Translation Philosophy Differentiation

Fang Bolin’s academic habitus and foreignization tendency: The “fidelity to source text” habitus formed through his academic training is clearly manifested in his translation memoirs. Fang advocates that translators should strictly adhere to the source text, avoid over-interpretation, and emphasizes that excellent translation should make translators “invisible”, enabling readers to directly experience the original work’s charm^[27]. Furthermore, Fang Bolin elaborates on his translation working methods: “Generally, I translate word by word and sentence by sentence, trying to be as faithful as possible to the original text, then when revising, I compare paragraph by paragraph, and finally I read the translation without referring to the original text, thus three times before finishing”^[27]. This strict operational procedure reflects the systematic thinking and quality control consciousness formed in academic training.

Li Yongping, as a veteran writer, formed a creative habitus emphasizing expressive effects and reader acceptance through long-term literary creation. Although lacking direct statements of his translation philosophy, his translation practice clearly reflects the role of literary habitus: high-frequency use of domestication strategies demonstrates deep understanding of target readers’ acceptance psychology; active syntactic restructuring reflects skillful application of Chinese expression patterns; rich lexical choices showcase the creative potential of literary language.

6.2.4. Dynamic Generation Mechanism of Practice

The deep value of Bourdieu’s practice formula lies in revealing the dynamic generation mechanism of social practice. In translation practice, this mechanism manifests as:

- Fang Bolin’s practice logic = (academic habitus × limited cultural capital) + peripheral field position → risk avoidance strategy → foreignization translation + direct correspondence + standardized expression → conservative translation style;
- Li Yongping’s practice logic: (creative habitus × rich literary capital) + central field position → innovation-oriented strategy → domestication translation + syntac-

tic restructuring + innovative expression → innovative translation style.

The differentiated practice models not only explain the causation of stylistic characteristics in both translations, but more importantly reveal the essential characteristics of translation style as a product of social practice: it is neither a purely personal aesthetic choice nor a simple reflection of objective textual features, but rather the result of the interaction among translators' positions, capital, and habitus within specific social structures, embodying the sociological logic of translation activities.

7. Conclusions

This study takes V.S. Naipaul's *A Bend in the River* and its two Chinese translations as research subjects, employs the approach of CTS, and conducts stylistic comparative analysis of Li Yongping's and Fang Bolin's translations from the perspective of Bourdieu's practice theory. Through constructing a composite comparative corpus, the study examines stylistic differences between the two translations from linguistic and non-linguistic feature levels, and explores the causation of translation style based on the three core concepts of field, capital, and habitus.

Methodologically, this study attempts to combine CTS with Bourdieu's practice theory, extending translation style research from linguistic description to socio-cultural explanation. Through comparative analysis, it reveals different tendencies in translation strategy choices between veteran and novice translators, providing empirical support for translation style causation analysis. However, this study also has the following limitations: analysis based solely on the single literary work *A Bend in the River* restricts the representativeness of the findings and confines them to the two translations' styles, with shortcomings in reflecting translators' overall stylistic characteristics; predominantly quantitative analysis lacks sufficient depth in exploring translators' subjective motivations and decision-making processes. Nevertheless, *A Bend in the River* provides a valuable case, as it is an internationally acclaimed novel with two Chinese versions translated by individuals from contrasting backgrounds, which makes it particularly suitable for examining how habitus and field position shape stylistic differences.

Future research should construct more systematic stud-

ies of translator style development trajectories: longitudinally tracking the development and changes in both translators' styles, particularly focusing on Fang Bolin's style evolution process from novice to mature translator; horizontally comparing patterns of translation style differences among different types of writer-translators; combining qualitative methods such as interviews to deeply analyze the specific influence causation of creative experience on translation decision-making. Moreover, attention should be paid to how novice translators like Fang may gradually acquire more literary capital and stylistic flexibility over time, evolving from conservative correspondence toward more creative expression. These findings also carry implications for translator training: pedagogy should cultivate stylistic awareness and habitus formation, encouraging students to balance fidelity with expressive autonomy and thus prepare for long-term stylistic growth.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, X.Z. and R.S.K.C.; methodology, X.Z.; software, X.Z.; validation, X.Z. and R.S.K.C.; formal analysis, X.Z.; investigation, X.Z.; resources, X.Z.; data curation, X.Z.; writing—original draft preparation, X.Z.; writing—review and editing, R.S.K.C. and R.H.T.; visualization, X.Z.; supervision, R.S.K.C. and R.H.T.; project administration, X.Z. and R.S.K.C. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Data Availability Statement

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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