Translator positioning in characterisation: a corpus-based study of English translations of Luotuo Xiangzi

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Abstract

Luotuo Xiangzi, a renowned modern Chinese novel, successfully portrays a young rickshaw puller in Beijing–Xiangzi. Upon its translation into English at the end of World War II, the protagonist aroused much sympathy from American readers. As a best seller in the United States, the novel has been retranslated many times. A contributing factor to its popularity is the creation of the memorable protagonist. The paper investigates the role of translator positioning in constructing the character. It proposes a systematic framework that incorporates Appraisal and characterisation models. An analysis of the Chinese text and three English translations suggests that the positioning or value orientation adopted by the translators plays a significant role in their characterisation and demonstrates how a mixed model can clarify this interaction. Furthermore, the corpus-based method makes it possible to reveal patterns of translator positioning hidden in the translations.

Keywords: Luotuo Xiangzi; translator positioning; characterization

1. Introduction

1.1 Justification for the present research

The concept of translator positioning has attracted much scholarly attention in trans- lation studies, given its significant role in impacting target readers' attitudes (Li & Liao, 2020, p. 2) and locating traces of the translator in their translated works (Hermans, 2020, p. 424). While there is an exponential amount of literature that con- siders translator positioning in literary translation (e.g. Hermans, 2010; Hermans, 2014; Liu, 2016; Munday, 2012; Peng, 2015; Rosa, 2010/2013, 2013; Wang, 2018; Zeven & Dorst, 2020), this topic has scarcely been addressed in the translation of fictional characterisation (Liu, 2016; Peng, 2015; Wang, 2018; Zeven & Dorst, 2020). This study seeks to elucidate how translator positioning shapes readers' emotional responses to fictional

characters by analysing English translations of the Chinese novel Luotuo Xiangzi.

Luotuo Xiangzi, written by Lao She on the eve of World War II, has been regarded as 'the finest modern Chinese novel' (Hsia, 2016, p. 155). The 'main reasons for being an outstanding work of art in modern Chinese fiction and in addition so popular among readers are the creation of realistic and unforgettable characters and the description of their inner lives' (Rydholm, 2019, p. 64). The novel delineates Xiangzi's aspirations and fortitude to lead a decent life facing unjust suffering. In this book, 'the lower-class protagonist is portrayed with a degree of loving attention and emotional intensity that has no parallel in Chinese fiction' (Liu, 1995, p. 107). These expressive features provide abundant textual cues for identifying positioning in characterisation. Moreover, the depiction of Xiangzi has elicited great sympathy from American readers (Meng, 2010, p. 7). The initial translation sold over one million copies and became a best seller in the United States (Li, 2013, p. 177). Its popularity led to the publication of two more trans- lations in the United States. The availability of these retranslations makes it possible to compare the positioning of the initial translator with that of subsequent translators during different periods.

The English translations of Luotuo Xiangzi have been extensively studied in terms of cul- tural constraints (e.g. Xia, 2019; Zhao & Sun, 2012), individual translator style (e.g. Huang, 2015; Zhang & Fu, 2019) and reception of these texts (e.g. Li, 2013; Lin & Chen, 2015). However, few studies have examined the characterisation techniques employed by different translators. Even fewer have discussed the underlying positioning adopted by the translators. These gaps in existing research may be due to the lack of an analytical frame- work that allows for a systematic examination of translator positioning in characterisation.

This study proposed a systematic framework based on the Appraisal model (Bednarek, 2008, p. 169; Martin & White, 2005, pp. 34–160) of Systemic Functional Linguistics and a characterisation model (Culpeper [2001] 2014, pp. 164–233; Culpeper & Fernandez- Quintanilla, 2017, p. 93) integrating narratological and stylistic concepts (Rundquist, 2018, p. 39). The Appraisal model provides a rigorous and replicable tool to identify lin- guistic manifestations of translator positioning in characterisation, while the character- isation model is used as a supplementary tool to analyse potential emotional effects of the characterisation. The validity of the proposed framework will be tested through quan- titative and qualitative analyses of the protagonist Xiangzi

in the three English translations of Luotuo Xiangzi.

1.2. Research questions

The present study explored the following questions:

(1) How have the translators positioned themselves in their characterization of Xiangzi?

(2) How has the translator positioning conditioned readers' emotional responses to Xiangzi?

(3) What are the possible motivations for the different translator positioning in their characterisation of Xiangzi?

2. Literature review

2.1. The Appraisal model and the concept of positioning

The notion of positioning has been explored from a number of perspectives and under a wide range of terms in linguistics, such as 'stance' (e.g. Conrad & Biber, 2000; Keisanen & Kärkkäinen, 2014; Landert, 2017), 'evaluation' (e.g. Hunston, 2011; Hunston & Thomp- son, 2000; Macken-Horarik & Issac, 2014), and 'appraisal' (e.g. Bartley, 2020; Martin & White, 2005; Su & Hunston, 2019). It is a hotly debated concept, but there is no consen- sus on how it can be defined or should be studied (Keisanen & Kärkkäinen, 2014, p. 295). In this study, the Appraisal model proposed by Martin and White (2005, pp. 34–160) was adopted for analysing translator positioning, since this model is 'widely recognised as the most systematic and influential framework currently available' (Su & Hunston, 2019, pp. 343–344) for theorising positioning.

Positioning, a concept subsumed in the Appraisal model, refers to how writers adopt stances towards the material they present, how they employ a range of discourse strat- egies to encourage a particular reading position, and how they construct particular iden- tities for themselves (Martin & White, 2005, p. 1). When it comes to characterisation, positioning is also concerned with how to convey through different voices in a narrative and invite sympathy from intended readers (Macken-Horarik & Issac, 2014, p. 68).

Martin and White (2005, p. 135) divide the concept into two gradable types: attitudi- nal positioning (or 'attitude') and dialogistic positioning (or 'engagement'). Both types are realised with the chosen Appraisal sources, Appraisal targets and Appraisal lexis (Su & Hunston, 2019, p. 364). Bednarek (2008, p. 169) further refined the Affect system of attitudinal positioning based on corpus

evidence. Bednarek's modification of Martin and White's model was taken into account in this study. Many translation scholars have applied the Appraisal model to translation studies (e.g. Hermans, 2010, 2014; Li & Liao, 2020; Munday, 2010, 2012, 2015; Rosa, 2009, 2013) because it makes possible a nuanced description of translator positioning operating in discourse. Nevertheless, only a few studies exist that have investigated translator positioning in characterisation. These scholars (Liu, 2016; Wang, 2018) were primarily concerned with lexical choices at the micro-level. Only Peng (2015) considered the macro-structure of narrative transmission, yet his focus did not include characterisation techniques. Since the translator positioning in characterisation is realised through simultaneous choices of Appraisal language and characterisation techniques, focusing on only one aspect will inevitably yield a partial picture. In this case, the combination of Appraisal and characterisation models may provide a more comprehensive account of translator positioning in characterisation.

2.2. Characterisation and Culpeper's model

Characterisation, a concept from narratology, refers to 'the way in which a character is represented in a narrative' (Herman & Vervaeck, 2019, p. 67). In recent years, the topic of characterisation 'seems to spill into a multitude of disciplines and be approachable from a multitude of perspectives' (Culpeper & Fernandez-Quintanilla, 2017, p. 93). Cul- peper's model is one of the most cited in characterisation analyses. It has been employed to analyse fictional, dramatic and televisual characterisation in narratology, stylistics (e.g. Bednarek, 2011; Culpeper & Mcintyre, 2010; Fernandez-Quintanilla, 2020) and translation studies (Zeven & Dorst, 2020). The original model (Culpeper [2001] 2014, pp. 164–233), designed for analysing dramatic characterisation, distinguishes three textual cues that provide character information: authorial (or direct narratorial character information), explicit, and implicit cues. In a recent paper, Culpeper and Fernandez-Quintanilla (2017, p. 93) adjusted the model to make it suitable for narrative genres. The revised model comprises three dimensions of characterisation: narratorial control, self or other presentation, and explicit or implicit textual cues. Compared with the previous model, it considers the degree of narratorial control in the character's speech and thought presentations. However, its understanding of consciousness was restricted to thought or mental verbalisation, neglecting the 'non-verbal mental activities that prepon- derate in human cognition' (Rundquist, 2018, p. 5). As 'gaining

knowledge of a charac- ter's inner life is an important factor in characterisation, and one likely to lead to a 'rounder impression of character'' (Culpeper, 2001, p. 170), the present study expands Culpeper's model to accommodate a broader category of consciousness presentation, covering thought, perception, and state of mind, as expounded by Rundquist (2018, p. 39).

3. A proposed framework for translator positioning in characterisation

For the analysis of positioning in characterisation, a mixed-model framework (see Figure 1) was proposed, incorporating the Appraisal model (Bednarek, 2008, p. 169; Martin & White, 2005, pp. 34–160) from Systemic Functional Linguistics and a charac- terisation model (Culpeper [2001] 2014, pp. 164–233; Culpeper & Fernandez-Quinta- nilla, 2017, p. 93) that integrates concepts of narratology and stylistics (Rundquist, 2018, p. 39). This framework considers translators' choices in three dimensions: Apprai- sal type, Appraisal target and Appraisal source.

The Appraisal type comprises three parallel systems: attitudinal positioning, dialogistic positioning and graduation. Attitudinal positioning, which consists of affect (emotion) and evaluation (judgement and appreciation), expresses individual subjectivity towards people, places, things and happenings (Landert, 2017, p. 491). It can be inscribed using expli- cit linguistic resources or invoked implicitly with attitudinal tokens. Dialogistic positioning shows how the author subjectivity reacts to the imagined reader subjectivity by contracting or expanding the dialogic space in a narrative (Du Bois, 2007, p. 159). The intensity of both types of positioning can be scaled up or down through adjustments in graduation.

In addition to the Appraisal type, the source and target of appraisal are also criteria for Appraisal analysis (Martin & White, 2005, p. 59). The Appraisal target refers to an appraised item or 'what is evaluated' (Su & Hunston, 2019, p. 365). It can be classified into four categories: direct narratorial character information, visual features (context, kinesic, and appearance), verbal features and internal features. These categories were modified from Culpeper's ([2001] 2014, pp. 164–233; Culpeper & Fernandez-Quintanilla, 2017, p. 93) classification of characterisation cues, with a focus on whether or not the cues come from a character's consciousness. Since there are only limited dialogues between characters in the data, the subdivisions of verbal features (e.g. surge features, accent, terms of address) in Culpeper's model were simplified in the proposed model.

The Appraisal source refers to an appraiser or 'the value attributed to' (Su & Hunston, 2019, p.

364). In a narrative, the author's appraisal of a character may be voiced by a narrator, char- acter, or both (dual appraisers). Appraisal by the narrator takes the form of either narration (no speech/consciousness presentation involved) or description (narrator's report of speech/ thought act, narrative perception, dissonant psycho-narration, and indirect speech/thought) (see Rundquist, 2018, p. 39). In contrast, appraisal by the character takes the form of either quotation (direct speech/thought, free direct speech/thought) (Rundquist, 2018, p. 39) or a blend of different forms without any narratorial marker. If the appraisal is presented in the form of representation (free indirect speech/thought, free indirect perception, free indirect psycho-narration) (Rundquist, 2018, p. 39) or a blend of different forms with narratorial markers, it is potentially voiced by both the character and the narrator. Different Appraisal sources represent different degrees of narratorial involvement, which influences the reader- character distance and the emotional response by the reader to the character (Leech & Short, 2007, p. 269).
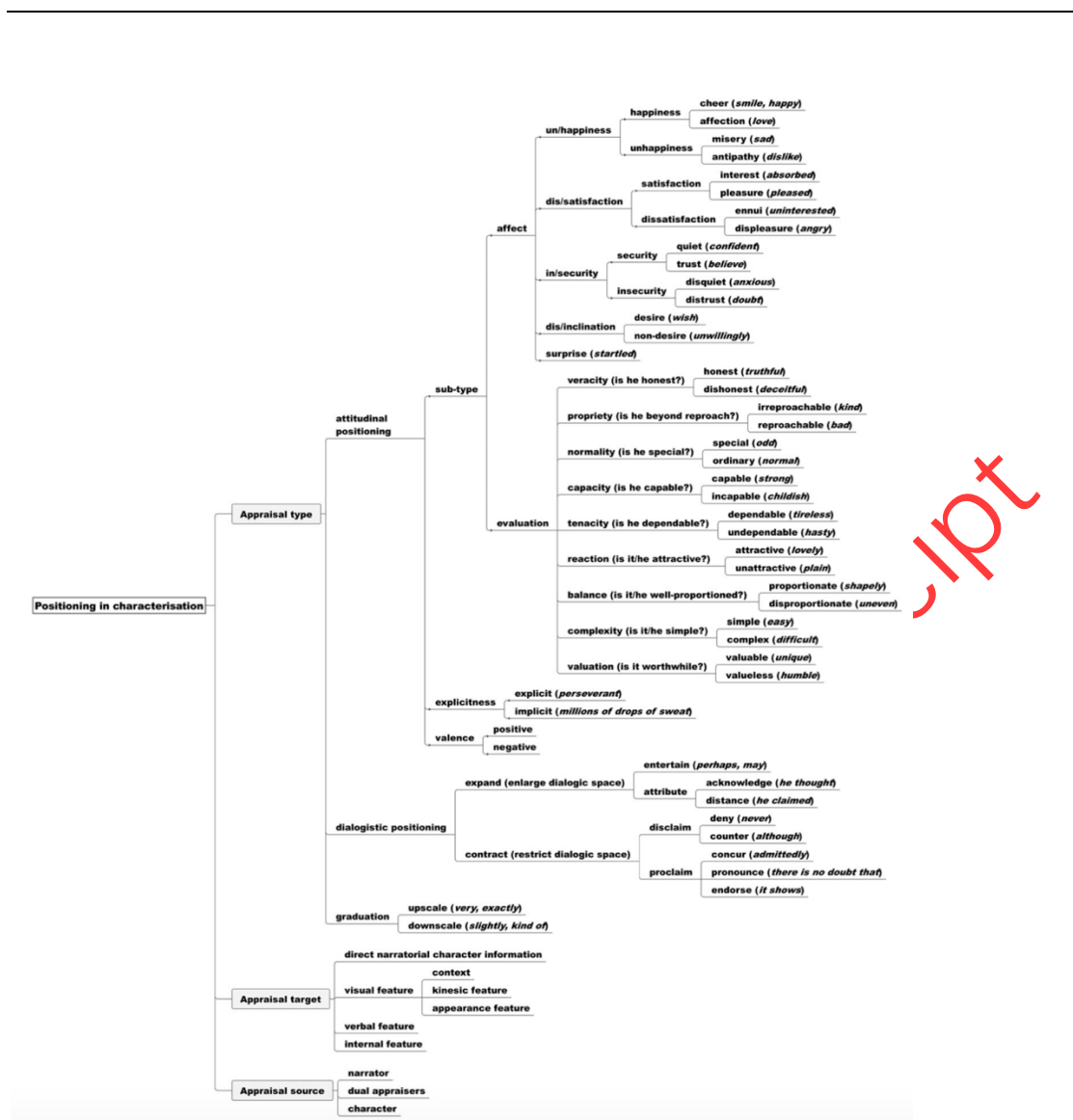
Figure 1. Appraisal system for positioning in characterisation (based on Bednarek, 2008, p. 169; Culpeper [2001] 2014, pp. 164–233; Culpeper & Fernandez-Quintanilla, 2017, p. 93; Martin & White, 2005, pp. 34–160; Rundquist, 2018, p. 39).
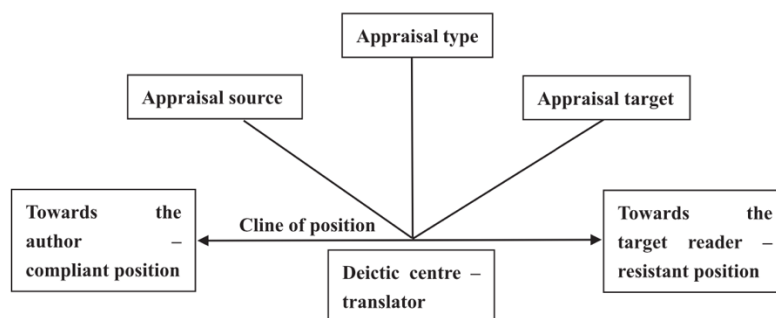

Figure 2. Model of translator positioning in characterisation (based on Martin & White, 2005, p. 206; Munday, 2012, p. 38, 68).

In addition to defining the Appraisal dimensions to be investigated in the trans- lations, another essential step was to compare the source text with the target texts for translational shifts (see Figure 2). The degree of the translational shifts can indi- cate the reading positions adopted by translators concerning the source text (Munday, 2012, p. 38). Few translational shifts suggest that the translator has taken a compliant position and accepted the author's positioning. Conversely, significant translational shifts imply a more resistant position that might differ from the poetics or ideology of the source text.

4. Research methods

4.1. Data collection

The five English translated versions of the novel Luotuo Xiangzi in book form are listed in Table 1. As noted in their prefaces (Lao, 1979, 2010), the American translators Evan King, Jean James, and Howard Goldblatt all selected the same source texts (collected in Lao, 2008), whereas the source text (Lao, 1955) chosen by the Chinese translator Shi Xiaojing was a different version with many omissions. For consistency in source texts, the present study excluded Shi Xiaojing's translations. Given that linguistic features become stable across 1000-word samples (Biber, 1990, p. 261), and the first impression is vital in forming a reader's impressions of a character (Sklar, 2013, p. 93), a parallel corpus was compiled by collecting the first chapter of the source text (ST) (Lao, 2008) and three target texts (TTs) (Lao, 1945, 1979, 2010). The first chapter, where Xiangzi is first introduced to the reader, describes his first attempt to buy a rickshaw in the face of difficulties. Table 2 presents the parallel corpus.

4.2 Data processing

After storing the collected texts in TXT format, the ST was word segmented with Corpus Word Parser, and EmEditor was used to edit the texts. Next, the ST and the TTs were aligned with ParaConc at the sentence level, regarding full stops, semicolons, question marks, ellipsis and exclamation marks as marks of a sentence (Peng, 2015, p. 293). Appraisal expressions in the characterisation of Xiangzi were then annotated and calculated using the UAM CorpusTool. Finally, log-likelihood statistical tests were performed on the ST-TTs comparisons using the log-likelihood calculator avail- able in Wmatrix.

Table 1. The English translations of Luotuo Xiangzi. First

	First publication	Title	Source text edition	Translator	Publisher
1	1945	*Rickshaw Boy*	1939 Renjian Shuwu edition	Evan King	Reynal & Hitchcock Inc., New York, USA
2	1979	*Rickshaw: The Novel Lo-t'o Hsiang Tzu*	1949 reprint edition	Jean James	University of Hawaii Press, Hawaii, USA
3	1981	*Camel Xiangzi*	1955 revised edition	Shi Xiaojing	Foreign Language Press, Beijing, China
4	2005	*Camel Xiangzi (Chinese-English Bilingual Edition)*	1955 revised edition, 1939 Renjian Shuwu edition	Shi Xiaojing	The Chinese University Press, Hong Kong, China
5	2010	*Rickshaw Boy: A Novel*	1939 Renjian Shuwu edition	Howard Goldblatt	HarperCollins Publishers, New York, USA

Table 2. Parallel corpus.

	Abbreviations	Texts	Sentences	Tokens
1	ST	Source Text: Chapter 1 (Lao, 2008)	160	4,271
2	TT1 King	Target Text 1: Chapter 1 (Lao, 1945)	145	4,373
2	TT2 James	Target Text 2: Chapter 1 (Lao, 1979)	283	4,669
3	TT3 Goldblatt	Target Text 3: Chapter 1 (Lao, 2010)	213	4,122
		Total No.	801	17,435

5. Results

5.1. Translational shifts In Appraisal sources

Table 3 and Figure 3 summarise the patterns of translational shifts in Appraisal sources. The higher the log-likelihood value (represents as LL in Tables and Figures), the more significant the translational shifts.

As shown in Table 3 and Figure 3, apart from some minor similarities, the TTs diverged significantly from the ST in Appraisal sources. Generally speaking, TT1 (average LL=92.46) showed more marked distinction in positioning from the ST author than TT2 (average LL = 50.15) and TT3 (average LL = 32.67). It seems that the initial translator was more resistant to the author's positioning than subsequent translators. This tendency is roughly consistent with the retranslation hypothesis that the initial translation tends to be target-oriented, whereas retranslations are more source-oriented, bringing readers closer to the ST (Berman, 1990, p. 7). Further- more, the increased use of narrator and dual appraisers in the TTs indicates that the translators tended to increase narratorial involvement in appraising the character. The increased narratorial involvement has prompted the translations to lose a certain degree of vividness and immediacy. Nevertheless, this has ensured the necessary distance for target readers to observe the character objectively, in other words, allow- ing room for a sympathetic evaluation of whether the experience of the character is

fair. As noted by Sklar (2013, p. 26), 'in contrast with empathy, sympathy involves greater distance between the individual who feels it and the person towards whom it is directed'. An example is given below. When ST content is ambiguous, the literal translation offers the more likely option first in bold and underlined.

Table 3. Translational shifts in Appraisal sources

Appraisal sources	Reference corpus	Target corpus 1			Target corpus 2			Target corpus 3		
	ST	TT1 King			TT2 James			TT3 Goldblatt		
	No. (%)	No. (%)	LL	Sig.	No. (%)	LL	Sig.	No. (%)	LL	Sig.
Narrator	903 (56.19%)	1008 (59.22%)	1.32	0.251+	883 (58.71%)	0.86	0.354+	774 (63.03%)	5.48	0.019*+
Dual appraisers	447 (27.82%)	671 (39.42%)	33.24	0.000***+	565 (37.57%)	22.72	0.000***+	396 (35.25%)	4.57	0.033*+
Character	257 (15.99%)	23 (1.35%)	242.81	0.000***−	56 (3.72%)	126.88	0.000***−	58 (4.72%)	87.95	0.000***−
Total	1607	1702	277.37		150.46	150.46		1228	98	

*$p < 0.05$ (asterisk indicates significance), ***$p < 0.001$.
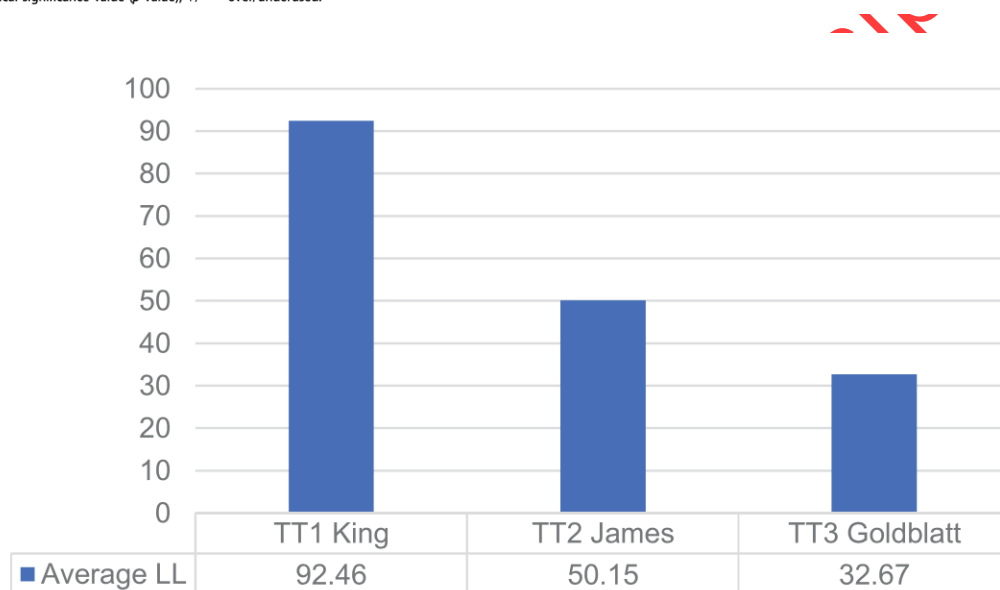Sig. = statistical significance value (p-value), +/− = over/underused.

Figure 3. Tendency for translational shifts in Appraisal sources.

Example 1

Texts	Example	Choices of Appraisal sources
ST and literal translation	假若老这么下去，几时才能买上车呢？为什么这样呢？难道自己还算个不要强的？ If it **keeps**/kept on like this, when **is**/was it possible to buy a rickshaw? Why **is**/was it like this? **Isn't**/wasn't a competitive person **myself**/himself?	Character: free direct thought/ free indirect thought
TT1 King	Suppose things **were** always like this, when **would he** ever be able to buy **his** rickshaw? Why **were** things like this? **Could** anybody say that **he wasn't** trying to improve **himself**?	Dual appraisers: free indirect thought
TT2 James	If things **kept** on like this, when **would he** ever be able to buy a rickshaw? Why **was** it like this? **Could** anybody say **he** had no goal in life?	Dual appraisers: free indirect thought
TT3 Goldblatt	At this rate, when **would he** ever have enough to buy a rickshaw? Why **was** this happening? **Was he** not trying hard enough?	Dual appraisers: free indirect thought

Example 1 presents the protagonist's anxiety through thought presentations unsubor- dinated to reporting clauses (he thought). The ST is a typical blend of free indirect thought and free direct

thought in Chinese style, characterised by a lack of deictics for person and tense (Shen, 2017, p. 226). This form suggests that the voice may belong to the character rather than the narrator (Rundquist, 2018, p. 73). It creates a stylistic effect of 'an uninterrupted flow of narration, somewhat like a free direct dis- course, leading to the perfect illusion of a transparent mind' (Liu, 1995, p. 113). The use of blends in the ST posed two options for the translators: they could either translate into free direct thought (using the character's deictics for person and tense) or into free indirect thought (using narratorial deictics for person and tense). All the translators opted for the latter, mixing the narrator's voice with the character's in the Appraisal language. This choice draws the target readers away from over-involvement with Xiangzi, giving readers an observational rather than a participating role. This dis- tancing of engagement with the character is a prerequisite for developing sympathy, since being too close to the character may cause readers to lose their sense of subjec- tivity and make it difficult to objectively evaluate the character's experience (Sklar, 2013, pp. 25– 28).

5.2. Translational shifts in Appraisal targets

Table 4 and Figure 4 summarise the patterns of translational shifts in Appraisal targets. As shown in Table 4 and Figure 4, most of the Appraisal targets in the ST are related to internal features (accounting for 69.14%), enabling readers to access the character's inner world frequently. No significant translational shifts were identified, suggesting that the translators were compliant with the positioning taken in the ST. This phenomenon might be attributed to the fact that the ST 'operates in translingual modes of narration and is susceptible to translation to begin with' (Liu, 1995, p. 106). Furthermore, the extensive presentation of the character's mind in the ST is a popular modernist technique in the target culture, especially in the twentieth century (Rund- quist, 2018, p. 55). Under these circumstances, the translators do not need to make a lot of changes to the characterisation techniques in the ST. Nevertheless, King (internal feature in TT1: sig. = 6+) and James (internal feature in TT2: sig. = 1+) pro- vided more details of Xiangzi's internal features, facilitating reader understanding of the character's mind. In contrast, Goldblatt (internal feature in TT3: sig. = 9−) sim- plified the psychological portrayal. Thus, his readers need to infer the protagonist's mind by observing his external features, such as appearance (appearance feature in TT3: sig.=0.607+) and verbal behaviours (verbal feature in TT3: sig.=0.22+). See Example 2.
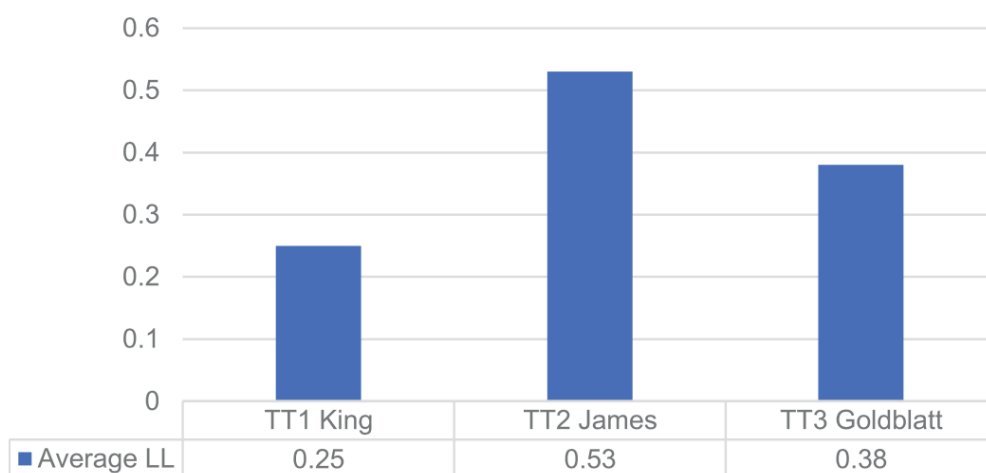
Figure 4. Tendency for translational shifts in Appraisal targets.

Table 4. Translational shifts in Appraisal targets.

Appraisal targets-types	Reference corpus ST No. (%)	Target corpus 1 TT1 King			Target corpus 2 TT2 James			Target corpus 3 TT3 Goldblatt		
		No. (%)	LL	Sig.	No. (%)	LL	Sig.	No. (%)	LL	Sig.
Direct narratorial character information	90 (5.60%)	93 (5.46%)	0.03	0.868−	66 (4.39%)	2.29	0.130−	61 (4.97%)	0.53	0.468−
Context	61 (3.80%)	71 (4.17%)	0.29	0.588+	64 (4.26%)	0.41	0.523+	45 (3.66%)	0.03	0.858−
Kinesic feature	249 (15.49%)	242 (14.22%)	0.91	0.341−	233 (15.49%)	0.00	0.998−	188 (15.31%)	0.02	0.091−
Appearance feature	63 (3.92%)	64 (3.76%)	0.06	0.814−	64 (4.26%)	0.21	0.644+	53 (4.32%)	0.21	0.607+
Verbal feature	33 (2.05%)	34 (2.00%)	0.01	0.910−	35 (2.33%)	0.27	0.606+	34 (2.77%)	1.49	0.22+
Internal feature	1111 (69.14%)	1198 (70.39%)	0.19	0.666+	1042 (69.28%)	0.00	0.961+	847 (68.97%)	0.00	0.959−
Total	1607	1702	1.49		1504	3.18		1228	2.28	

Example 2

Texts	Example	Choices of Appraisal targets
ST and literal translation	为怕[affect: disquiet]惹出更大的祸，他有时愫[affect: displeasure]睡一整天。 He sometimes sleeps a whole day in **vexation** [affect: displeasure] for **fear** [affect: disquiet] of causing more trouble.	Internal feature
TT1 King	Because of his **fear** [affect: disquiet] that he might get into even greater difficulties, he **would** [affect: desire] sometimes, out of sheer **vexation** [affect: displeasure], sleep the whole day away.	Internal feature expanded
TT2 James	Sometimes, because he was **afraid** [affect: disquiet] of bringing on some greater catastrophe, he just slept all day in a kind of **stupor** [affect: misery; evaluation: incapable].	Internal feature expanded
TT3 Goldblatt	One way to **avoid** [affect: non-desire] a serious accident was to spend all day in bed.	Internal feature simplified

In Example 2 above, the ST displays the psycho-narration of Xiangzi's mental experience from the narrator's externalised perspective. Although the externalised perspective placed readers in an observer role, the access to Xiangzi's inner world might prompt their sense of intimacy with the character. King and James added details of the character's desire (would in TT1) or cognitive states (stupor in TT2), enhancing readers' understand- ing of the character's mind and thus creating a more intimate reader-character relation- ship. Conversely, Goldblatt simplified the consciousness presentation in TT3, leading readers to have objective and detached feelings towards the character's experience.

5.3. Translational shifts In Appraisal types

5.3.1. Translational shifts In attitudinal positioning

Table 5 and Figure 5 show the patterns of translational shifts in attitudinal positioning. Due to space limitations, only statistically significant attitudinal subtypes are displayed. As shown in Table 5 and Figure 5, there were almost no significant translational shifts in the TTs. On the whole, King (average LL in TT1 = 1.24) and James (average LL in TT2 = 0.49) were more compliant to the author's positioning than Goldblatt (average LL in TT3 = 2.49). However, this pattern was inconsistent across different attitudinal categories.

In terms of attitudinal valences, both King (positive in TT1: sig. = 0.859+) and Gold- blatt (positive in TT3: sig. = 0.582+) accentuated the positive features of Xiangzi. Conver- sely, James (negative in TT2: sig. = 0.738+) magnified the character's negative image. For instance, many expressions of antipathy (not enjoy) deleted in TT1 and TT3 was kept in TT2. Moreover, TT3 deleted many negative evaluations of Xiangzi's incapability (simple- ton). In this case, TT1 and TT3 are more likely to prompt readers' positive impressions of the character early in the narrative.

An analysis of attitudinal types shows that all the translators have employed more resources of affect (affect in TT1: sig. = 0.516+; affect in TT2: sig. = 0.673+; affect in TT3: sig. = 0.286+) than the author in characterisation. It seems that the translators favoured using emotive resources to garner readers' sympathy with the character, partly because 'without affective empathy, one may have cognitive insight into another's state of mind or situation, but lack compassion' (Moruzi et al., 2018, p. 8). Moreover, it may be influenced by the trend of Western fiction, which increasingly emphasise the power of emotion instead of evaluation to guide readers' emotional responses to characters (Moruzi et al., 2018, p. 10).

Table 5. Translational shifts in attitudinal positioning.

|	Reference corpus ST	Target corpus 1 TT1 King			Target corpus 2 TT2 James			Target corpus 3 TT3 Goldblatt		
Attitudinal valences	No. (%)	No. (%)	LL	Sig.	No. (%)	LL	Sig.	No. (%)	LL	Sig.
Positive	410 (71.43%)	449 (72.30%)	0.03	0.859+	394 (70.36%)	0.05	0.830−	384 (78.08%)	0.30	0.582+
Negative	164 (28.57%)	172 (27.70%)	0.08	0.776−	166 (29.64%)	0.11	0.738+	134 (24.92%)	0.7	0.402−
Total	574	621	0.11		560	0.16		517	1.07	
Attitudinal explicitness										
Explicit	186 (30.9%)	206 (31.6%)	0.05	0.825+	172 (29.05%)	0.00	0.955−	167 (30.53%)	0.01	0.911−
Implicit	416 (69.10%)	446 (68.40%)	0.02	0.882−	420 (70.95%)	0.14	0.704+	380 (69.47%)	0.01	0.941+
Total	602	652	0.07		592	0.14		547	0.02	
Attitudinal types										
Affect	203 (33.72%)	234 (35.89%)	0.42	0.516+	211 (35.64%)	0.32	0.573+	205 (37.48%)	1.14	0.286+
Evaluation	399 (66.28%)	418 (64.11%)	0.44	0.506−	381 (64.36%)	1.15	0.283−	342 (62.52%)	2.07	0.15−
Total	602	652	0.86		592	1.47		547	3.21	
Key Affect subtype										
Unhappiness-antipathy	6 (2.96%)	1 (0.49%)	4.71	0.030*−	5 (2.14%)	0.13	0.715−	4 (1.90%)	4.01	0.045*−
Total	203	234	4.71		211	0.13		205	4.01	
Key Evaluation subtype										
Capacity-incapable	34 (8.52%)	30 (7.18%)	0.47	0.493−	24 (7.02%)	0.54	0.464−	16 (4.68%)	4.15	0.042*−
Total	399	418	0.47		342	0.54		342	4.15	

*p < 0.05.
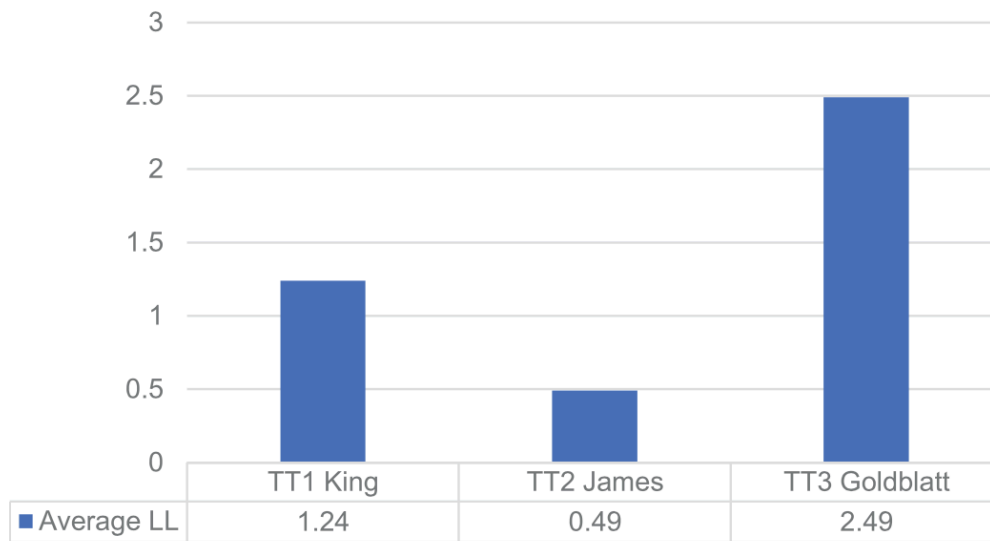
Figure 5. Tendency for translational shifts in attitudinal positioning.

Regarding attitudinal explicitness, a tendency of explicitation was traced in the initial translation (explicit in TT1: sig. = 0.082+). Conversely, the retranslations manifested a propensity for implicitation (implicit in TT2: sig. = 0.704+; implicit in TT3: sig. = 0.941 +). It appears that target readers of the initial translation were assumed to need greater disambiguation, while those of the retranslations were deemed more familiar with the character and, therefore, were offered more opportunities to appraise the char- acter themselves. Example 3, below, shows implicit evaluations underlined and explicit evaluations in bold.

Example 3

Texts	Example	Choices of attitudinal explicitness
ST and literal translation	这样，他的希望就<u>近</u>**便**多多了。 In this way his hopes seemed much <u>closer</u> and much **easier**.	Evaluation, simple: implicit (x1) Evaluation, simple: explicit (x1)
TT1 King	In this way his hopes seemed much <u>closer</u> and more **easily realisable**.	Evaluation, simple: implicit (x1) Evaluation, simple: explicit (x2)
TT2 James	His hope came much <u>closer</u> that way.	Evaluation, simple: implicit (x1)
TT3 Goldblatt	… bringing him <u>closer</u> to his goal.	Evaluation, simple: implicit (x1)

As shown in Example 3, the evaluations in TT1 are more explicit than the ST, while those in TT2 and TT3 are more implicit. It is posited that without pre-existing translations, readers of the initial translation were assumed to be unfamiliar with the introduced char- acter. Given that character

identification is likely to weaken due to 'the time that it takes for readers to process textual material, the greater effort involved in reading, and the psychological distance between sender and receiver' (Sklar, 2013, p. 41), King sup- plemented explicit evaluations (realisable) to facilitate understanding.

	TT1 King	TT2 James	TT3 Goldblatt
■ Average LL	2.7	2.61	0.75

Figure 6. Tendency for translational shifts in dialogistic positioning.

5.3.2. Translational shifts In dialogistic positioning

Table 6 and Figure 6 summarise the patterns of translational shifts in dialogistic position- ing, displaying only statistically significant dialogistic subtypes.

As shown in Table 6 and Figure 6, the author sets up a contractive dialogic space for his readers through frequent use of contractive resources (60.23%). However, King and James strongly opposed the sense of irrefutability in the ST (contract in TT1: sig. = 0.014*−; contract in TT2: sig. = 0.029*−). Therefore, they significantly reduced the resource of 'counter' (a contracting strategy used to replace or supplant alternative positions, e.g. only) and increased the resource of 'entertain' (an expanding strategy used to make room for possible positions, e.g. might) in their translations. These shifts may be influenced by the prevailing ideology of the United States after World War II when an aggressive monolingual culture unreceptive to foreign litera- ture emerged (Venuti, 1998, p. 12). Anticipating this resistance, King and James opened the dialogic space to increase the TTs' appeal to potential readers with different views. After the translated novel gained a canonical position in the target lit- erature system, Goldblatt resumed the contractive dialogic space in the translation (contract accounts for more than 50% in both the ST and TT3). This tendency is gen- erally in line with the retranslation hypothesis (Berman, 1990, p. 7). Example 4, below, shows expressions of 'contract' underlined and 'expand' in bold.

Example 4

Texts	Example	Choices of dialogistic resources
ST and literal translation	说站住，**不论**在跑得多么快的时候，大脚在地上轻蹭两蹭，就站住了。 When told to stop, **no matter** how fast he was running at the time, he scraped his big feet lightly on the ground for two paces, <u>actually</u> coming to a standstill.	Expand: entertain (x1) Contract: counter (x1)
TT1 King		Expand: entertain (x4) Contract: counter (x1)

(Continued)

Continued.

Texts	Example	Choices of dialogistic resources
	When it came to stopping, he had <u>only</u> to scrape his big feet lightly along the ground for two **or** three paces, and **no matter** how fast he **might** have been running he **could** come to a standstill.	
TT2 James	Tell him to stop and **no matter** how fast he was going at the time, he**'d** be standing still in two more light steps.	Expand: entertain (x2)
TT3 Goldblatt	When told to stop, **no matter** how fast he was going, he planted his feet and pulled up smartly.	Expand: entertain (x1)

In Example 4, TT1 shows a stronger inclination to enlarge the dialogic space, compared with TT2 and TT3. By adding 'entertain' resources (or, no matter, might), King made space for alternative voices and positions. This expanding strategy contributes to the het- eroglossic or multi-voiced nature of the narrative and may help win target readers holding opposite positions (Martin & White, 2005, p. 108). In TT2 and TT3, the gradual narrowing of dialogic space reflected the retranslators' increased confidence in the reception of their translations.

5.3.3. Translational shifts In graduation

Table 7 and Figure 7 summarise the patterns of translational shifts in graduation.

As shown in Table 7 and Figure 7, although no significant translational shifts were found in the graduation category, the initial translator (average LL in TT1 = 0.1) was more compliant with the author's positioning than the retranslators (average LL in TT2 = 0.13; average LL in TT3 = 0.47). This tendency is contrary to Berman's (1990, p. 7) retranslation hypothesis. In general, King and James were inclined to strengthen appraisal meanings (upscale in TT1: sig. = 0.85+; upscale in TT2: sig. = 0.832+), while Goldblatt was in favour of a weakened tone (downscale in TT3: sig.=0.386+). Example 5, below, compares frequencies in graduation resources.

Example 5

Texts	Example	Choices of graduation resources
ST and literal translation	是的，他**无疑的**可以成为**最**出色的车夫， Yes, he could **no doubt** become the **best** rickshaw man,	+Graduation (x2)
TT1 King	Right **enough**, there could be **no doubt** that he would become the **best** rickshaw man of them **all!**	+Graduation (x5)
TT2 James	Yes, there was **no doubt** that he could become a **most** outstanding rickshaw man.	+Graduation (x2)
TT3 Goldblatt	Yes, he was going to be the **finest** rickshaw man in town.	+Graduation (x1)

In Example 5, King and James preferred a strengthened tone, whereas Goldblatt opted to weaken it. In TT1 and TT2, the extensive use of intensifiers may construct the character as a subjective agent responsible for the attitude conveyed, contributing to a more inti- mate reader-character relationship. Moreover, these intensifiers highlight Xiangzi's tena- city to realise his dream, giving readers a stronger impression of the protagonist. In TT3, the reduced use of intensifiers tones down Xiangzi's resolution and gives the impression that the narrator's voice conveys the attitude. Thus, its readers may feel detached from the character. With upscaled graduation, TT1 and TT2 are more likely to elicit strong emotional responses from the readers than TT3, since 'the intensity of one's response, and one's commitment to it, depend in large part on the degree of the feeling that gen- erates' (Sklar, 2013, p. 34).

Table 6. Translational shifts in dialogistic positioning.

Dialogistic types	Reference corpus	Target corpus 1			Target corpus 2			Target corpus 3		
	ST	TT1 King			TT2 James			TT3 Goldblatt		
	No. (%)	No. (%)	LL	Sig.	No. (%)	LL	Sig.	No. (%)	LL	Sig.
Contract	265 (60.23%)	238 (48.37%)	6.03	0.014*−	200 (49.14%)	4.75	0.029*−	158 (51.13%)	2.69	0.101−
Expand	175 (39.77%)	254 (51.63%)	7.14	0.008**+	207 (50.86%)	5.76	0.016*+	151 (48.87%)	3.41	0.065+
Total	440	492	13.17		407	10.51		309	6.37	
Key Dialogistic subtypes										
Contract-counter	103 (23.41%)	97 (19.72%)	1.47	0.225−	69 (16.95%)	4.38	0.036*−	62 (20.06%)	0.93	0.335−
Expand-entertain	152 (34.45%)	233 (47.36%)	9.32	0.002**+	184 (45.21%)	6.06	0.014*+	127 (41.10%)	2.08	0.150+
Total	440	492	10.79		407	10.44		309	3.01	

*$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$.

Table 7. Translational shifts in graduation.

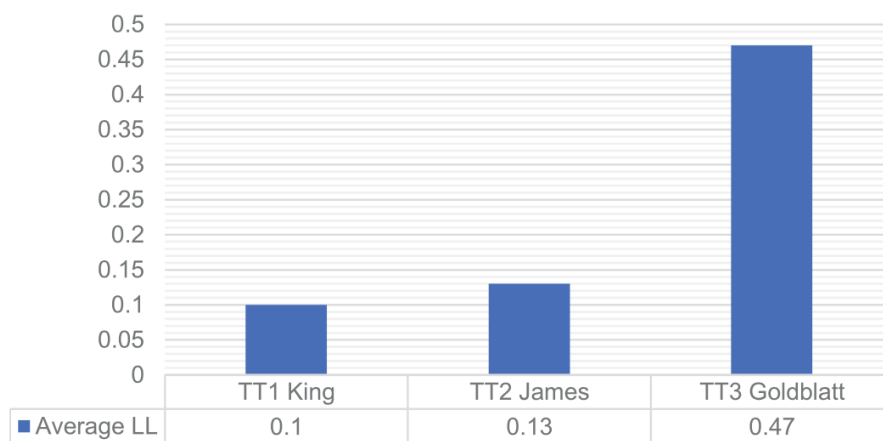| Graduation directions	Reference corpus	Target corpus 1			Target corpus 2			Target corpus 3		
	ST	TT1 King			TT2 James			TT3 Goldblatt		
	No. (%)	No. (%)	LL	Sig.	No. (%)	LL	Sig.	No. (%)	LL	Sig.
Upscale	461 (81.59%)	461 (82.62%)	0.04	0.850+	418 (82.77%)	0.05	0.832+	294 (79.03%)	0.18	0.669−
Downscale	104 (18.41%)	97 (17.38%)	0.16	0.685−	87 (17.23%)	0.21	0.648−	78 (20.97%)	0.75	0.386+
Total	565	558	0.2		505	0.26		372	0.93	

Figure 7. Tendency for translational shifts in graduation.

6. Conclusion

This article has analysed the roles of translator positioning in characterisation, revealing the following: The initial translator (average LL in TT1 = 19.35), on the whole, was more resistant to the positioning of the author than the retranslators (average LL in TT2 = 10.78; average LL in TT3 = 7.35). This tendency roughly conforms to the hypothesis that the initial translation tends to be target-oriented, while retranslations tend to be source-oriented, bringing readers closer to the ST (Berman, 1990, p. 7).

In general, translator positioning was likely to be motivated by their personal views regarding the ST. Evan King, a non-professional translator of TT1, voiced his position in his letter to Lao She. He claimed that the original work would be worthless if he had not perfected it (Buck, 2008, p. 634). This included rewriting portions of the novel and incorporating numerous alterations to appeal to an American readership. In Lao She's (1992, p. 3) words, 'the translator had not asked for my consent beforehand, and by the time I arrived in the United States, the book had already become a best seller; it was too late to change it back to its original.' In response to this initial infelicity, Jean James, the professional translator of TT2, tried to restore the original work's essence. In the preface, she (1979, p. vi) emphasised that her translation neither omitted nor altered anything and that she had done what she could to convey Lao She's style. To better reflect the style and spirit of the ST, Howard Goldblatt, the professional translator of TT3, undertook a further retranslation project. In the preface, he (2010, p. xiv) stated, 'I have undertaken this project, a goal I set for myself two decades ago, in hopes of making available a complete, faithful, and readable English version of one

of China's modern classics.'

The analysis has indicated a trajectory towards progressive foreignisation in the retranslations, which attach increasing importance to foreign elements of the ST. However, when examined in detail, this trajectory is inconsistent across different Apprai- sal sub-categories, lending support to calls for investigating retranslation with a broad discussion of historical context, canonisation processes, norms, ideology and translator's agency (e.g. Albachten & Gurcaglar, 2019; Alvstad & Rosa, 2015; Deane-Cox, 2014; Gur- caglar, 2020). Influenced by various contextual constraints, such as prevailing poetics and ideology, translators may, from time to time, go against their own values and make see- mingly conflicting choices during the translation process. Possible contextual motivations have been discussed in Section 5.

Furthermore, the analysis reveals the role of translator positioning in shaping readers' emotional responses to the character. Each of the translators reinforced the observer role of the target readers, which is conducive to fostering sympathy. Moreover, they employed more emotive resources in the TTs to engage readers emotionally. These trans- lational shifts may explain why the character aroused sympathy from target readers (Meng, 2010, p. 7). A comparison of the TTs suggests that the initial translation is more likely to produce sympathy than the retranslations, as the initial translation gives readers a stronger sense of intimacy with the character. It reduces the criticism against Xiangzi's weaknesses and explicates the character's mental experiences. Moreover, it leaves a more dialogic space for readers with alternative viewpoints. These stylistic effects may explain why the initial translation was better received than the subsequent translations (Li, 2013, pp. 163–167).

Based on a proposed framework that incorporates both Appraisal and characterisation models, this research demonstrates how translator positioning can shape readers' emotional responses to a character. Furthermore, the corpus approach makes it possible to uncover patterns of translator positioning hidden in their translations.

Further investigations are needed to better understand the relationships between translator positioning and their sociocultural contexts.

Disclosure statement

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