

# A Corpus-based Study on Stylistic Features of *Lisao*'s English Translations by the Yangs and Xu Yuanchong

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**Abstract:** Among a number of English translations of *Lisao*, Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang's version and Xu Yuanchong's version are often regarded as the most representative ones. The article, based on the self-built parallel corpus of *Lisao* and the corpora of English British Romantic Poems, explores the stylistic features of *Lisao*'s English translations of the Yangs and Xu Yuanchong through analysis of the collected data. The findings have shown that the Yang's version is more variable in the use of words, more complex in sentence structures and more difficult in readability than Xu's; The former has the tendency of explicitation while the latter simplification; In addition, the Yang's version is faithful and close to the original structure, and Xu's is simple and smooth in diction and sentence structure. The stylistic differences of the two translations by the Yangs and Xu can be attributed to the translators' different views on translation, their purposes and the strategies they chose.

**Keywords:** corpus; *Lisao*; translation styles; comparative studies

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## 1. Introduction

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, *Chuci* gradually entered the western world through translation, causing a stir and even

leading a trend among the community of sinologists. *Lisao*, as one of the major texts of *Chuci*, is the first piece from the anthology introduced to the west. Because of the poem's cultural, historical and artistic significance in addition to its wide dissemination and profound influence, the study on English translations of *Lisao* is conducive to: a. gaining an in-depth understanding of *Lisao*, how it is translated, what styles do representative translators use to represent the classic from the East; b. offering a set of epistemological and methodological examples for further studies on other texts of *Chuci* or even Chinese traditional poems and their translation products, strategies, styles, etc. The study, as the title suggests, features translation stylistic criticism which can evidently capture losses and gains of literary works (Zhang, 2002: 54), yet the subjective comparative studies, without objective data, are less representative and objective. At the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Mona Baker, who firmly advocated a "corpus-assisted" method to mine translators' "fingerprints", carried out a series of "quantitative + qualitative" studies on translation stylistics, which somehow made up for the flawlessness born with the introspective way of study, and therefore blazed a new trail for the research of translators' styles. Generally, corpus-based translators' style studies always take the quantitative analysis of the features of the translated works as a point of departure, which, inevitably, incorporate lexical, syntactic and textual aspects (Hu, 2011: 115). Although some scholars may argue poems are based on spirits, aesthetics or forms, the article holds that poetic beauty is, somehow, conveyed through a variety of estrangements from the daily language, and thus poetry can never come to be without wordplays, line designs, and certain textual arrangements. Hence, the study of poetry translation styles should, as those for other literary genres, start from linguistic features.

Therefore, in the sections below, the author used Wordsmith 6.0, Free Web CLAWS Tagger, and Text Statistics and Readability onAprosto (<https://aprosto.com/text-statistics/>) to compare the two renderings by Yang Xianyi (2001) and Xu Yuanchong (2009), and the self-built British Romantic Poetry Corpus in terms of STTR (Standardized Type Token Ratio), High-Frequency Words, Sentence/Line Length, and Readability, and, with real examples, interpret the findings from lexical, syntactic and textual elements to find out the style differences and similarities of the two Chinese poet translators.

## 2. Corpus Building

Based on the requirements for the corpus to be both available and suitable (Hunston, 2002: 26) and the definition that "translators' style is represented by different translations of the same original text" Saldanha (2011: 2), the study created The *Lisao* English Translational Corpus involving Yang's *Li Sao* by Foreign Language Press in 2001 (2,922 words) and Xu's *Sorrow after Departure* published by China Foreign Publishing Corporation in 2009 (2,692 words). After inputting the corpora, the author started the initial process of denoising and unifying text formats so to lay a foundation for later segmenting, tagging and aligning.

To optimize the objectivity and make the study more comparable, corpus-based translator's style studies should, apart from collecting translations, "include original texts that have a comparable and analogous relationship in the target language" (Hu & Xie, 2017: 17). The 18<sup>th</sup>-century romantic literature in Europe features fantasy, analogy, and direct expression, mostly transcending reality and not confined to detailed descriptions, which, in one way or another, resembles the hyperbolic and romantic styles of *Lisao* (Xie, 2015: 122). With free diction, British romanticism severing itself from the dogmatic tradition chants for freedom. The

school, with great analogous values, is adept at expressing emotions through objects, (Chen & Zhao, 2012: 127), which is similar to “metaphors on plants and beauties” in *Lisao*. In such a conclusion, the study, referring to *The History of British Romantic Poetry* by Wang Zuoliang, built a Monolingual Corpora of the Original British Romantic Poetry consisting of 210 pieces of works by poets like S. T. Coleridge, W. Scott, P. B. Shelley, W. Wordsworth and G. G. Byron, with the total size of 136,266 words.

Additionally, to extend the paper’s academic significance by figuring out the universals of translation, defining linguistic features of romantic poetry, and finding differences between translated poetry and general English texts, the study also referred to statistics of the English Translational Corpus of the Chinese Poetry (Gao, 2015), the Brown Corpus and the British National Corpus.

### 3. Data Collection and Statistics

#### 3.1 STTR

Translators’ styles include typical language use whose basic unit is the word (Hu, 2011: 115), and the richness of lexical application can more or less reflect translators’ styles. Type Token Ratio (TTR) is a common parameter for judging text difficulty, and variety of words, and it is positively associated with vocabulary richness (Baker, 2000: 250). Stubbs *et al.* extensively applied TTR in the 80s and the 90s to calculate the lexical density of texts, but with the increase of the word number, there appear more functional words and may consequently lead to a result less objective. Given that, the study used the “Statistics” function in the Wordlist module of Wordsmith 6.0, taking 1,000 words as a unit to make statistics and comparisons on STTR of the three sets of corpora (Yang’s, Xu’s, and British romantic poetry). Besides, to ensure objectivity, the study took the English Translational Corpus of the Chinese Poetry (Poetry Translated) by Gao Bo (2015) as a reference.

	Token	Type	STTR
Yang’s	2,922	1,099	50.25
Xu’s	2,692	905	45.55
Romantic Poetry	136,266	13,591	51.64
Poetry Translated	150,585	13,215	48.23

Table 1 Token, Type and STTR of the Four Corpora

According to Table 1, Xu’s version (45.55) has less lexical richness than Yang’s (50.25), English Translation of Chinese Poetry (48.23) lies between the former two, and British romantic poetry (51.64) sees the highest number. From the statistics, four points could be drawn: a. Xu Yuanchong shows simplification in poetry translation whereas Yang Xianyi’s work is more like the English original, and by the reference to the English translation of the Chinese poetry, the two translations are divergent in the aspect of lexical difficulty; b. British romantic poetry is obviously higher in terms of lexical richness than original English poetry of different kinds (46.93) (Gao, 2015: 86), which means that romantic poems are more complex in diction; c. the STTR of the least lexically variable text by Xu Yuanchong is higher than that of translated novels in English (44.63)

(Olohan, 2004), which means that the translations are strongly dependent on genres, and poetry translations have a higher lexical richness than that of narrative works; d. STTRs of both translations by Xu and Yang are lower than that of the original English poetry, which verifies that “translations of the narrative texts are less variable in words than the original” (Laviosa, 1998) is also applicable in poetry, and it also proves the statement that “poems are confined to structures and therefore translators are limited to diction” by Wang Dongfeng (2018).

### 3.2 High-Frequency Words

The formality of texts could be revealed by particular high-frequency words. Baker (2000) utilized Translational English Corpus (TEC) to undertake a quantitative analysis of structures of academic language, and the research showed that certain language structures are reflective of translators’ styles. FengQinghua (2008: 225) pointed out that the frequency of “the” and “of” can reflect the difficulty of phrases and syntactic structures, and the frequency of the above-mentioned two words in translations can demonstrate their formality. When it comes to poetry, Yan Yidan (2011) quantified the styles of the representative English translations of Li Bai’s poems by high-frequency words; Xing Jiafeng & Yan Minfen (2016) analyzed the overall stylistic features of Shakespearean sonnets with a keywords list; Peng Lizhi & Liu Zehai (2019) discussed poetry translators’ styles with high-frequency words. The study, using the function of “Wordlist” in WordSmith 6.0 and following the concept by Laviosa (1998): The words that appear over 0.10% in the whole text could be counted as high-frequency words, calculates the top10 highly frequent words in the three sets of corpora of Yang’s and Xu’s versions and British romantic poetry. Besides, to differentiate the formality of the translations and explore the difference between the original English poetry and general English texts, the study also refers to the 2,000 most commonly used vocabularies in the Brown Corpus to make the list of top 10 words.

No.	Yang’s			Xu’s			Romantic Poetry			Brown Corpus		
	Word	FRQ	PCT	Word	FRQ	PCT	Word	FRQ	PCT	Word	FRQ	PCT
1	the	175	5.99	oh	186	6.91	when	495	0.36	the	69 975	7.00
2	I	104	3.56	I	130	4.83	are	449	0.33	be	39 175	3.92
3	and	93	3.18	the	115	4.27	so	423	0.31	of	36 432	3.64
4	my	88	3.01	and	106	3.94	this	422	0.31	and	28 872	2.89
5	to	81	2.77	my	60	2.23	thee	417	0.31	a	26 800	2.68
6	in	52	1.78	to	49	1.82	like	413	0.30	to	26 190	2.61
7	with	42	1.44	in	33	1.23	what	413	0.30	in	21 338	2.13
8	of	38	1.30	a	28	1.04	where	400	0.29	he	20 033	2.00
9	their	36	1.23	of	27	1.00	at	398	0.29	have	12 458	1.25
10	they	26	0.89	with	25	0.93	who	393	0.29	it	11 247	1.12

**Table 2 High High-Frequency Words in the Four Corporuses**

From the Table 2, it can be observed that Yang’s version is, compared to the Brown Corpus, 1.01% and 2.34% lower in terms of the frequency of “the” and “of” respectively; Xu’s work is 1.72% and 0.30% lower in the same aspect.

To further distinguish the texts, the study conducted loglikelihood calculations on different data. The use of “the” and “of” between Xu’s and Yang’s versions demonstrates a slight difference (LL=8.07, Sig. <0.004; LL =1.08, Sig. <0.299), Xu’s work has an obvious difference from the Brown Corpus in terms of frequency of “the” and “of” (LL=33.17, Sig. =0.00; LL =72.36, Sig. =0.00), and the frequency of “the” in Yang’s work does not show drastic difference from the Brown Corpus (LL=4.45, Sig. <0.035), but that of “of” stages a tremendous variety (LL=58.49, Sig. =0.00). It means that in terms of textual formality, the Brown Corpus >Yang’s >Xu’s. In addition, it is known from the high-frequency words of the British Romantic Poetry Corpus that the original English poetry are extremely different from general English texts in style, even without high-frequency words juxtaposed. Manywh-question markers and “like”, the indicator of simile, frequently are found in the former, which generally means that questions and rhetorical devices like simile in British romantic poetry frequently appear. As is said, Xu’s and Yang’s renderings show affinity to the general English texts, demonstrate a proclivity of generalization, and bear less literary styles.

The percentage of high-frequency words in a text goes along with the repeatability of easy words whose frequency indicates the level of readability of a certain text (Zhou, 2019: 27). Therefore, the study calculates the frequency of the top20 words in the four sets of corpora mentioned above in order to discover the difficulty of the two translations.

	Yang’s	Xu’s	Romantic Poetry	Brown Corpus
<b>FRQ</b>	936	944	7793	36 9678
<b>PCT</b>	32.03%	35.07%	5.72%	36.97%

**Table 3** Frequencies of the Top20 Words

From Table 3, the top20 words in both translations and the Brown Corpus share quite the same percentage. The percentage of the top20 words in Xu’s version is 3.04% higher than that of Yang’s, and the Brown Corpus is 1.9% higher than Xu’s rendering in the same regard. Surprisingly, the same parameter of the original romantic poetry is 26.31%, 29.35%, and 31.25% lower than the rest, which means words used in the romantic poetry are the least common, and it is followed by Yang’s translation. On the other hand, Xu’s version and the Brown corpus have the most common words and are strongly communicative. The loglikelihood says that in terms of the percentage of the high-frequency words, the difference between Xu’s and Yang’s versions is statistically significant (LL=3.85, Sig. <0.050), the difference between the Brown Corpus and Yang’s version also bears statistical significance (LL=20.11, Sig. =0.00), but there is no obvious difference found between the Brown Corpus and Xu’s translation (LL =2.67, Sig. <0.102). Yang’s translation, Xu’s translation, and the Brown Corpus have dramatic statistical significance when compared to the British romantic poetry respectively (LL = 1615.64, Sig. =0.00; LL=1767.68, Sig. =0.00; LL=51605.25, Sig. =0.00). Laviosa (1998) and Wang Kefei (2004: 183) put forward that “The extensive use of high-frequency words is the representation of translational simplification”. From the data, it is known that poetry translation data can justify the hypothesis. Additionally, figures related to high-frequency words in both translations are close to that of the general English texts, and this tells that the “normalization” hypothesis in German-English translations by Kenny (2001) is also proved to be available in the sphere of Chinese-English poetry translations.

### 3.3 Word Density

Word density is the proportion that content words take in the whole text, which is a criterion to tell the information load of a text. The higher content words percentage means more information (Baker, 1995: 237), more conciseness in diction, and a lower level of foreignization. Baker found that the word density in TEC is evidently lower than that of the original, and she inferred that this would be the result caused by translators consciously or unconsciously (Baker, cited in Liu *et al.*, 2011: 61), which could explain that the word density is correlated with translators' styles. In China, scholars like Huo Yuehong (2010), Chen Jiansheng, Gao Bo (2011), and Zhao Ying (2015) looked into translators' styles by adopting word density as a parameter, which scored remarkable achievements.

To further verify the styles in word use of the two translations, the study, in this section, takes word density as a parameter and uses Free Web CLAWS Tagger to seg and tag the two translations and original British romantic poetry. For reference, the author, based on the POS classifications of *Chuci* by Qian Zhiyong *et al.* (2014: 106), and monographs such as *Annotations of Chuci* (《楚辭集注》) by Zhu Xi, *Interpretation on Chuci* (《楚辭通釋》) by Wang Fuzhi and *New Thoughts on Chuci Studies* (《楚辭新論》) by Shi Zhongzhen, tags the original Chinese text of *Lisao*, and finally begets the total lexical items of 2, 157. Besides, the article makes statistics on the frequency and percentage of nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs, the four types of content words that have stable meanings (Biber *et al.*, 1999) in the texts, and calculates the word density by the formula first designed by Ure: word density = content words / total words \* 100%. The results are seen in Table 4 and Figure 1.

	Noun	Adjective	Adverb	Verb	Total	Density
Yang's	659	252	134	482	1 527	52.26%
Xu's	582	221	100	408	1 311	48.67%
Original	31 565	12 426	6 560	16 812	67 363	49.43%
<i>Lisao</i>	504	114	191	540	1 349	62.54%

**Table 4 Percentage of Content Words**

In terms of the word density, it is known that the British romantic poetry (49.43%) is between Xu's (48.67%) and Yang's (52.26%) works, whereas the Chinese original (62.54%) is the most concise and information-loaded. As for the percentage of each type of the content words selected, Xu's, Yang's, and romantic English poetry are quite the same, but English texts show differences from the Chinese original. Loglikelihoods are seen in Tables 5, 6, 7, 8.

	Yang's	Xu's	Original
Yang's			LL=0.47 Sig. < 0.495
Xu's	LL=0.55 Sig. < 0.457		LL=2.78 Sig. < 0.095
Original	LL=0.36 Sig. < 0.550	LL=1.63 Sig. < 0.202	LL=0.04 Sig. < 0.847

**Table 5 Loglikelihood of Nouns**



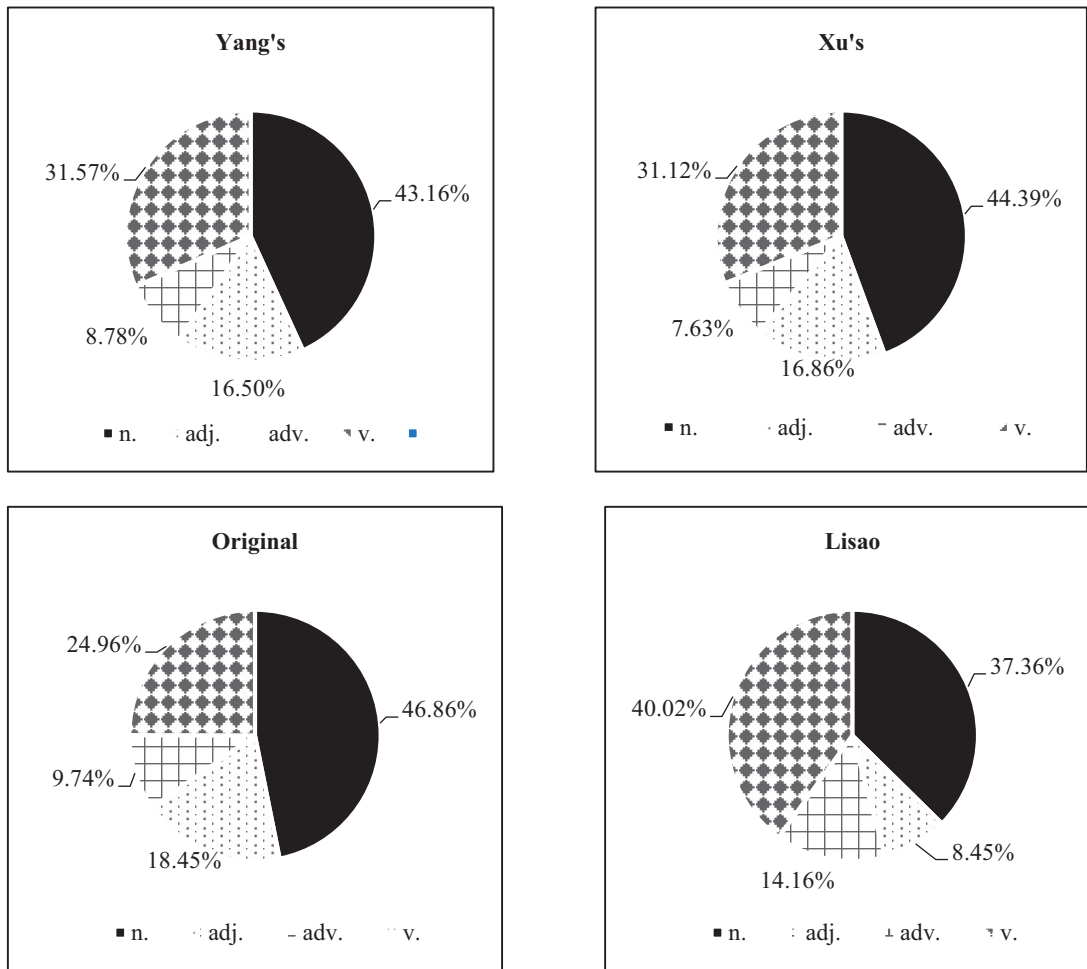


Figure 1 Content Words Percentage

	Yang's	Xu's	Original
<b>Yang's</b>			LL=0.78 Sig. < 0.376
<b>Xu's</b>	LL=0.29 Sig. < 0.593		LL=2.48 Sig. < 0.115
<b>Original</b>	LL=19.85 Sig. = 0.000	LL=15.18 Sig. = 0.000	LL=40.48 Sig. = 0.000

Table 6 Loglikelihood of Adjectives

	Yang's	Xu's	Original
<b>Yang's</b>			LL=0.31 Sig. < 0.575
<b>Xu's</b>	LL=2.56 Sig. < 0.109		LL=7.21 Sig. < 0.007
<b>Original</b>	LL=34.81 Sig. = 0.000	LL=52.67 Sig. = 0.000	LL=57.34 Sig. = 0.000

Table 7 Loglikelihood of Adverbs

	Yang's	Xu's	Original
Yang's			LL=36.3 Sig. =0.000
Xu's	LL=1.59 Sig. <0.208		LL=15.81 Sig. =0.000
Original	LL=44.35 Sig. =0.000	LL=59.30 Sig. =0.000	LL=212.10 Sig. =0.000

**Table 8 Loglikelihood of Verbs**

From the data above, it is known that the two translations by Yang and Xu are almost the same in content words used, but the former has more adjectives, and verbs, especially adverbs account for even a greater proportion. This shows the language use in Yang's text is more dynamic. Compared with British romantic poetry, the two translations have fewer nouns, adjectives and adverbs. English texts are generally higher in proportions of nouns and adjectives than those of the Chinese original. The figure reveals three points: a. Yang's version is better at description, more affected by the "verb-oriented" expressions in the English original, whereas Xu's work inclines to use more nouns, and the latter is more influenced structurally by poetic features of Chinese poems that "generally have a concise diction, and images, especially natural images frequently appear" (Yuan, 2009: 5); b. the two translations are eclectic between the Chinese original and the British romantic poetry in terms of information conveyance, which, somehow, proves the existence of the "third code" in poetry translation (Frawley: 1984/2001); c. in comparison with the English poetry, the Chinese one observes more verb use, with the poetics of "expressing through images", and because of the features embedded in the language of Chinese and Chinese poetry, the two English translations are somehow influenced by the effect of source language shining through (Teich, 2003: 145).

### 3.4 Sentences/Lines

Olohan (2004: 149) and Hu Kaibao & Xie Lixin (2017: 14) pointed out that the mean sentence length is one of the indicators of translators' styles. Generally, mean sentence length and standard deviation of sentence length are positively correlated to syntactic structures and variations respectively (Chen & Li, 2016: 24). Poetry is normally presented in form of lines and stanzas. Lines and sentences are different. The former is the structural representation while the latter takes the role of a meaning unit. Therefore, lines, stanzas and the relationship between the two can be counted as important parameters to determine translators' preferences for the content or structure of the original poem. Toivanen *et al.* (2012) built a corpus to analyze the content and form of the poetry, but they, only considered grammar and rhyme in the section on poetic structures, without taking poetic lines into consideration; Wang Feng & Liu Xueqin (2012) investigated the translator's styles of a couple of English versions of *The Ballad of Mulan* from the perspective of sentences, but this study did not involve poetic lines. Given that, except for the total number of sentences (TNS), sentence mean length (SML), and standard deviation of sentence length (SD), the research also includes the number of poetic lines (PL) and their mean length (LML), for the purpose of looking into the extent to which translators prefer structures over the content. Wordsmith 6.0 is the tool used for sentence-related data collection and EmEditor is applied to count the total number of the lines. Results are seen in Table 9.



	TNS	SML	SD	PL	LML
Yang's	145	20.15	8.68	374	7.81
Xu's	366	7.36	1.61	374	7.20
Original	4 852	28.08	29.92	19 330	7.05

**Table 9 Sentence/Lines**

From the table above, the mean sentence length of British romantic poetry is much higher than that of Yang's and Xu's translations, and Yang's work is, in comparison with Xu's, closer to the original English poetry in the syntactic aspect. From the perspective of mean sentence length, it is known that the top-down sequence of the texts in terms of syntactic difficulty is the British romantic poetry, Yang's and Xu's versions. This means the statement that "(The) sentence length of the translated narrative texts is evidently higher than the original" (Laviosa, 1998: 564) is contradictory in the genre of poetry<sup>1</sup>, but the figure, meanwhile, proves what Gao Bo (2015: 88) once put forward that: The standard deviation of sentence length of the English translations of Chinese poetry is lower than the original English poetry<sup>2</sup>. The two translations share the same number of poetic lines, but on average, there are more words per line in Yang's version, which means the rendering carries more information in each poetic line. Therefore, it is more complicated and more content- rather than structure-oriented. Ratios of the total sentences to lines of Yang's, Xu's and British romantic poetry are 0.39, 0.98, and 0.25. That could be interpreted that, there are, on average, 0.25, 0.39, and 0.98 sentences in each line of the romantic poetry, Yang's and Xu's versions respectively. It shows the original romantic poetry is more casual in the layout of poetic structures. Additionally, Yang's work is similar to the English original in such a regard, and Xu's translation seems more fixed, nearly remaining the one-sentence-per-line structure as the Chinese original.

### 3.5 Readability

The stylistic statistics on the textual level mainly target the readability which is closely related to the acceptability among the target readers, a parameter interrelating with the discourse and translators' strategies. (Huang, 2014: 80) WangKefei & Huang Libo (2007: 102) thought that translational simplification can be divided into compulsory and non-compulsory categories, and the latter consists of factors such as the translation process, translators' preferences, and target text norms. From this standpoint, we know that comparing the readability of different translations of the same original text while referring to the original text of the same genre in the target language can, more or less, mine the translators' habits, decisions in the translation process, and the norm of the target text. The study then uses Text Statistics and Readability on the Aprosto website to make statistics on Gunning Fog Index, Coleman-Liau Index, ARI, Flesch Reading Ease of the three corpora involving Yang's and Xu's *Lisao* and the original British romantic poetry, and respective figures are seen in Table 10.

	Yang's	Xu's	Original
Gunning fog index	8.48	6.69	10.96
Coleman-Liau Index	10.37	7.46	10.77
ARI	9.23	4.23	11.38
Flesch Reading Ease	56.87	74.11	52.72

**Table 10 Readability Indexes**

The text with a higher Flesch Reading Ease means that it is easier (Flesch, 1948: 221), and except for this parameter, other indexes could be referred to as the grade when native speakers can easily understand the text. For example, provided that the number is 1, the first-grader native speakers could easily understand the specific text. Without any exceptions, the high-low sequence of the textual difficulty is British romantic poetry > Yang's > Xu's, and such a result verifies the statement in previous sections, and the data, as well, demonstrates the translation universal hypothesis of "(translators') unconscious simplification on the ST information" (Baker, 1996: 176).

## 4. Representations of Translators' Stylistic Features

The two translations are compared on lexical, syntactic and textual aspects, and some examples are made below to explain and demonstrate the data obtained in the previous section.

### 4.1 Lexical Styles

Based on STTR, high-frequency words, word density, the study found that: Yang's work is rich in diction, more narrative and literary (less commonly used words). It tries to represent the archaic style of the Chinese original, with more difficult word and more information load per syntactic unit throughout, and chooses to remain the cultural features of the Chinese original, putting much more effort into semantic translation. Xu's rendering is concise in word use, simplified, easy to understand, communicative and carries less information per unit. It puts more emphasis on creating a harmonious relation among poetic structure, aesthetics, rhymes and rhythms, thus considering more the holistic presentation of the poem, because of which sound, structure and meaning are more likely to be intensively and collectively shown in the translation.

Example 1:

Chinese original:

朝搴阨之木蘭兮，夕攬洲之宿莽。

Yang's:

Magnolias of the Glade I plucked at Dawn,  
At Eve beside the Stream took Winter-thorn.

Xu's:

At dawn I gather mountain grass, oh!  
At dusk I pick secluded one.

It can be felt from the example 1 that the difficulty of Xu's version is evidently lower than that of Yang's. It is shown that Yang translates “木蘭” into “magnolias of the Glade” while Xu Yuanchong renders it into “mountain grass”. In Xu's version, the translator uses words like “grass” and “the herb”, therefore directly generalizing “木蘭花” in order to reduce the time it may take for readers to decode the image, which allows them to quickly capture the herbal image. In Yang's translation, Magnolias refers to the plant from the family of Magnoliaceae and the reason he uses the word is to represent the original meaning of the Chinese poem. Yang

translates “宿莽” into “Winter-thorn”, and Xu puts “one” as its translation to refer to “mountain grass” that appears in the previous line, thus semantically unifying the two different plants, obscuring conceptions of different vegetables so as to achieve his previously promoted purpose that target readers can happily read the text “樂之”. On the other hand, the translation by Yang for the same plant is “Winter-thorn”, making explicit the plant’s feature of “winter resistance”, and the word winter is also a metaphor for the dark political environment the poet was in. Although Yang’s word is slightly less common, it gets to the meaning and expresses the poet’s emotion. “阨 (pi)” is a molehill in the south of the Chu State, and Xu’s translation of it (omission) seeks the general meaning, whereas “Glade” used in Yang’s version refers to the space afront a forest, which is the subjective extension in the meaning of the original. Xu intends to pursue the poetic conception, but the translation is a bit drifted away from the true meaning. Generally, Yang’s work is more precise in the lexical aspect, therefore preferring to use the original English name for plant image, which causes more difficulty. Besides, Yang coinages new words on basis of the original poem, and this leads to a less generalized text. Xu’s work is indeed simplified, paying more attention to simple images that can easily resonate with western readers, obscuring complicated Chinese images. This justifies the validity of the data of STTR and top20 words in previous sections.

Specifically, in the first line, the only difference could be found in the syntax (Yang’s post-position of “unrecognized” and Xu’s pre-position of “unknown”). The latter considers the inverted form of the Chinese original, applying a negative inversion to directly translate “不吾知 (me not knowing)”, but Yang uses a special question “why should I” to let the poet’s personal emotion be easily captured by target readers. In Yang’s version, the logic chain between the first and second line stays intact, and this means the second line is still a part of the question and the word “since” leads to the adverbial clause of cause. With the pre-position of the phrase “in my Heart” followed by “Fragrance”, “truly”, the adverb of degree, and the verb, “rized”, the line stressed the act of the Chinese poet’s self-inspection. However, Xu’s version has shifted the perspective to “my heart” which is taken as the subject, the doer of “fragrance” and “light”, and thus a simple S+V structure is formed. Besides, the future tense is applied in order to emphasize the poet’s expectation for the days to come. The example reiterates the fact that Yang’s work relies more on the sentence structure to express, which is close to English poetry, with more emphasis on degrees, whereas Xu’s translation takes more account of direct and simple utterances, and it, with more nouns, shows more features of the Chinese poetry.

Example 2:

Chinese original:

不吾知其亦已兮，苟餘情其信芳。

Yang’s:

Why should I grieve to gounrecognised,

Since in my Heart Fragrance was trulyrized?

Xu’s:

Unknown, I care not if it grieves, oh!

My heart will shed fragrance and light.

## 4.2 Syntactic Styles

In terms of sentences, Yang's work is prone to be like British romantic poetry, with many run-on sentences, which leads to numerous nested and tree-shaped sentences in the translation. Additionally, Yang chose to translate the Chinese original into an epic, therefore applying comparatively more narratives. Syntactically, Xu's work is closer to the Chinese original, putting emphasis on representing structural features of the Chinese poem, with sentences taking up the parallel form. Apart from this, Xu's translation inclines to convey the structure of the Chinese original in order to get the translation tinted with the generic beauty of Chinese poetry, and therefore, its sentences are antithetical, short, concise, symmetrical, and clear in lay-out.

Although the mean sentence length of the two translations is much lower than that of the British romantic poetry, the parameter of Yang's (20.15) is also extremely higher than that of Xu's (7.36), and example 3 presents such a difference. As is clearly demonstrated, Yang's work does not rigidly divide the sentence of the original, betraying the poetic structure of *Lisao*. From the semantic perspective, Yang's division of the sentence is based on the meaning of the original, which means that if a stanza of the original poem is logically fluent, the translator would, by no means, block the logic stream with punctuations in the translation, for the purpose of maintaining the coherence of the text. In the example, Yang's version is logically consistent, which could be back-translated as: "I hold high the crown and touch my accessories which are bright and brilliant. Perhaps others ruin his own halo and fragrance, whereas my innocence rivals against corruption" (我舉上高冠,長撫配飾,珠光寶氣,他人或許自毀彩霞與芬芳,我的清廉是腐朽的對抗). There is semantic consistency between the beginning and the end of the line, and emotion is observed to be rising from the low to high, which is logically and expressively compatible with the Chinese original. However, Xu's version sees a difference here: there is always an interjection "oh" at the end of the odd line, and the exclamation mark trailing behind, naturally, separates different lines within a stanza to become an individual sentence, which is the same as the Chinese original. Due to such a reason, the mean sentence length in Xu's version remains around 7. What needs to be mentioned is that the line length of both translations is quite the same (around 7-8 words), which is also not much different from that of British romantic poetry. Again, according to the example, it is obvious that both translations can keep the basic poetic form in the target poetics and that they divide the lines on basis of the Chinese original. The difference is evident too: Yang's version is comprehensively difficult on word use and sentence structure, less demanding on prosody, more narrative and more flexible on sentence-making, and so there is a much higher mean sentence length than its counterpart. To conclude, the specific example proves the results obtained from the previous section on sentences and lines.

Example 3:

Chinese Original:

高餘冠之岌岌兮,長餘佩之陸離。  
芳與澤其雜糅兮,唯昭質其猶未虧。

Yang's:

My Headdress then high-pinnacled I raised,  
Lengthened myPendants, where bright Jewels blazed,





Others may smirch their Fragrance and bright Hue,  
 My Innocence is roof against Abuse.  
 Xu's:  
 I raise my headdress towering high, oh!  
 And lengthen pendants sparkling long.  
 My fragrance 'mid the dirt won't die, oh!  
 My brilliancy ne'er wanesthereamong.

In terms of the standard deviation of sentence length, Yang's and Xu's works are lower than British romantic poetry (Yang: 8.68; Xu: 1.61; English original: 29.92). The degree of Xu's syntactic variation is way lower than that of Yang's and British romantic poetry. The comparison tells that Yang's translation is more flexible than Xu's. In example 4, the four sentences of Xu's rendering follow basic sentence structures such as S-V-O or S-LV-PA, rarely observing grammatical variations or clauses. Contrarily, when it comes to Yang's work, the sentence structure is comparatively complicated. For example, the first sentence in the case "Whylovest thou thy Grace and Purity" should be put as "Why do thou lovest thy Grace and Purity", and the sentence continues with "Alone dost hold thy splendid Virtue high?" (With thou holding thy splendid Virtue high) to form an adverbial clause of company, degrading its syntactic status after analyzing the logic of the Chinese original in order to make the rendering more readable. The third line sees the device of inversion: the phrase "the Rince's Chamber" is put before the verb and the whole line ends with a colon whose function is to transit to the last line of the stanza by connecting with a question led by "why holdest", and what's more, there is also a subordinate part starting with "with" in the question. These all make the whole stanza syntactically interlocked and complicated.

Generally, Yang's translation follows the logic of the Chinese original by which the translator further arranges the syntactic structure to resemble the one in the English original, with, if any, inversions for the poetic form's sake. Xu's translation is certainly simpler and more antithetically structured, which is a betrayal of the typical sentence structure of English poetry but a catering to that of Chinese poetry. Therefore, it well explains the reason why Yang's syntactic variation is greater than that of Xu's.

Example 4:

Chinese Original:

汝何博賽而好修兮，紛獨有此媿節。  
 蕓菜蔬以盈室兮，判獨離而不服。

Yang's:

Whylovest thou thy Grace and Purity,  
 Alone dost hold thy splendid Virtue high?  
 Lentile and Weeds the Rince's Chamber fill:  
 Whyholdest thou aloof with stubborn Will?

Xu's:

"Fond of beauty, why are you straight? oh!  
 Why hold alone your virtue high?"

When thorns and weeds o'errun the State, oh!  
Could you despise them and stand by?"

### 4.3 Textual Styles

Textually, the simplification level of Yang's version is lower than Xu's, with lower readability, and this inclines to that of romantic poetry, so readers can completely understand the translation based on their English proficiency and literacy. The work's level of formality is high, which shows a tendency of deviation from the general English style. Xu's rendering, with a lower level of formality, is generally simplified, more readable and easier in diction. Therefore, readers can read it more smoothly and fluently. Besides, Xu's translation, seeing less poetic and linguistic features, is more like general texts in English.

According to what was mentioned above: "the" and "of" are indicators of the level of formality in English texts, there appear, in example 5 alone, "the" for three times and "of" once in Yang's version. As for this phenomenon, the study proposes that the translator consciously puts emphasis on the literariness of the commonly used words by applying the formula of "determiner + image word with the first letter uppercased". Apart from this, the widely applied "the" is correlated to the textual style: Yang's *Lisao* is more like an epic with a magnificent tone and spirit, because of which, the syntactic and textual structures should give way to imposing images in order to fit the genre's narrative feature and solemn style, and this inevitably brings about nominalized structures. This explains why the textual formality of Yang's work is higher than that of Xu's. In the same example, "the" only appears once and goes along with the word "sun" in Xu's version. The entire text tends to list images directly, without consciously devising a method to emphasize or foreignize the image of the original. It rarely witnesses nominalized structures and is more like an English lyrical ballad structurally, with an evident prosodic feature and more commonly used words. Because of it, the text is more colloquial and readable.

Additionally, in terms of the difficulty, it is seen in the example that the tokens of the Yang's and Xu's translations are 33 and 28 respectively. If comparing the words used in the translation with the Longman 2,000 basic words, we know that 23 words in Yang's translation are common, accounting for 69.7%, and 24 words in Xu's version could be found on the word list, taking up 85.7% of the whole stanza. It is evident that the general difficulty of Yang's translation is higher than that of Xu's, and the former features early modern English which brings more formality to the text because of the words rarely seen in contemporary texts. Xu's work is concise for the translator's objective of catering to readers' reading experience of the Chinese original.

## 5. Interpretations of Stylistic Features

The linguistic feature of Yang's work is eclectic. In the aspect of diction, Yang's work is to translate Chinese poems into an English poetry style, and this is related to the translator's educational background since childhood. When he was 13, he went to a British Christian mission school. Under the authentic English atmosphere, the translator was taught western studies, and he read a lot of European and American literary classics in his teen and early adulthood. Since his high-school year, Yang has begun poetry-to-poetry translation (Xin & Xie, 2018: 144), thus familiar with difficulties in and methods for translating poems from and into



different languages. Yang also preferred to use the traditional way to write Chinese poems, which reflected his preference for tradition or even archaism. As to *Lisao*, a classic Chinese poem, with many rhetorical devices such as simile and symbolism, the translator attempted to draw similarities between the ancient Chinese poem and the early English classics, and the heroic couplet by John Dryden is a match for the epically magnificent and solemn feature of *Lisao*, therefore becoming a model for him to refer to (*Ibid.*, 145). As a result, his English translation of *Lisao* has a great influence. Liang Shiqiu commented that: (The translation) is not only fluent in English but also faithful to the original. The work has, hence, become an exemplary model of Yang's poetry-to-poetry translations and also a material that can never be skipped for the analysis of Yang's poetry translation. Data from the article exactly proves that: his work is linguistically rich, difficult, textually formal and its diction is prone to be like that of English romantic poetry. His early educational background and personal poetic preference can also justify the previous statement that Yang's version is faithful to and governed by the English poetic norms.

Xu's version fully serves his translation purposes for readers' "understanding(知之)", "interest(好之)" and "joy(樂之)". Xu (1998: 37) once said: Faithful translations can only make readers understand it, faithful and fluent translations can make readers interested in it, and translations that are faithful, fluent, and able to display advantages of the TL can make readers joyful. From such a concept, Xu's three purposes are designed for readers' response, and further, we know that Xu's literary translations aim at making target readers accept the text better, and this also shows that Xu emphasizes translation's influence on readers and their resonance. Literary texts, especially narrative poems, are more like serious and imaginative works under the category of expressive and informative texts (Newmark, 1988: 39–40). Translations of informative texts need to achieve the purpose of faithfulness, and the expressive text translations aim at making the recipients receive the texts in a more natural way, which might take the readers' interests, backgrounds and identities into consideration. The first two points of the "three purposes" made by Xu are somehow overlapped with Newmark's text typology and what Skopos theory holds, and this thus reveals the translator's goal of translating *Lisao*: a. to make his audience know the semantic meaning (informative); b. to convey the sense of beauty in the text in order to attract and appeal the target readers (expressive). Therefore, techniques such as under-translation and amplification in the three aspects of word, sentence and text are rarely seen in Xu's rendering, and meanwhile, more hypernyms are used to avoid mistranslation for faithfulness' sake. In terms of word and sentence use, Xu's translation shows generalization and simplification, which further marks the application of "equating (等化)" and "popularizing (淺化)", strategies upheld by the translator himself, in a bid to turn the difficult text easy linguistically and culturally, to allow the possible readers to know the semantic meaning of the text, and to make them interested in the Chinese poem by offering aesthetic experience.

## 6. Conclusions

The result shows that: Yang's translation is more variable and difficult in word use, more complex and changeable in sentence structures, and more difficult to read. A higher level of explicitation is observed. Xu's rendering is less changeable and difficult in vocabulary, simpler and more fixed in sentence structures, and more textually readable. An obvious tendency of simplification is displayed. Based on the data-based discussion, it is

also found that Yang Xianyi has a poetry translation style that is precise in meaning, naturalized in structure, whereas Xu Yuanchong has the style of being simple in diction, and fluent in narration. What is worth mentioning is that while discussing the translators' styles, the article also proves other scholars' findings that "translators' use of words is limited to poetic structures", "mean sentence length of the English translation of ancient Chinese poems is shorter than that of the English original", and "translations are generally simplified". Lastly, the article's limitations: a. the ignorance of poetic features such as images, rhymes and structures; b. the failure of devising a poem-specific tagging system serving the quantification of poetic aesthetics and semantic prosody call for more contributions in the field of translation studies.

### Note:

1. In *Core Patterns of Lexical Use in a Comparable Corpus of English Narrative Prose*, Laviosa's results on the mean sentence length of the Translational English Corpus and Original English Corpus are 24.1 and 15.6.
2. In *An Analysis on the Translational Features of the English Versions of Chinese Poems: A Corpus-Based Study*, Gao Bo found, based on data, that the mean sentence length and standard deviation of sentence length of the English versions of Chinese poetry are 17.21 and 13.78; whereas the mean sentence length and standard deviation of sentence length of original English poetry are 23.64 and 20.70.
3. The article is based on the first author's Master thesis: *A Corpus-based Comparative Study on Translator's Styles: Taking English Translations of Lisao by Yang Xianyi and Xu Yuanchong as Examples*.

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