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Chapter · December 2022

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12 Hedges and Boosters as Indicators of Translation Style

With Reference to Fictional Dialogues in *Honglouloumeng* Translations

Kanglong Liu, Ho Ling Kwok and Riccardo Moratto

1. Introduction

Honglouloumeng (hereinafter HLM) is recognized as one of the four classical Chinese novels whose great fame rests on its lively depiction of almost all facets of Chinese culture in the 18th century. The novel consists of 120 chapters, with the first 80 chapters written by Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹 (also spelled Ts'ao Hsueh-ch'in, ca. 1715–1763) roughly from 1740 to 1750 while the remaining 40 chapters were allegedly written by Gao E 高鹗 after Cao's death. As one of the most renowned works of Chinese literature, HLM has been translated into more than 20 languages including English (Fan and Minford 2017, 374). Among its various English translations, *The Story of the Stone* translated by David Hawkes and John Minford and *A Dream of Red Mansions* translated by Xianyi Yang (also spelled Hsien-Yi Yang) and Gladys Yang are the two unabridged published translations that have been widely studied and compared.

Over the years, translation researchers working with HLM translations have made efforts to identify how different translations diverge in various lexical, textual and stylistic aspects (Li, Zhang, and Liu 2011; Liu and Afzaal 2021b; Liu, Cheung, and Moratto 2022). This line of study has operationalized various linguistic indicators to examine the style of two HLM translations, including nominalization (Hou 2013), vocabulary richness (Fang and Liu 2015), and even lexical bundles (Liu, Cheung, and Moratto 2022). The use of these indicators has contributed to revealing the divergent styles between the two translations. In this study, we make use of two important indicators, i.e., hedges and boosters, to examine how Hawkes and the Yangs used them differently in their translations. As linguistic features used by writers or speakers to express their views, modify the force of statements or speech acts, and engage with the readers or listeners (Farrokhi and Emami 2008, 63; Holmes 1984, 348), hedges and boosters have been widely studied in the field of literary studies.

As hedges and boosters are closely related to the presentation of fictional speech which in turn is closely related to characterization, comparison of the two HLM translations using these two indicators can reveal how the

two versions are similar or divergent in their translation style. To the best of our knowledge, no research has attempted to examine fictional dialogue translation using hedges and boosters as indicators. We thus hope that this study can yield some new findings regarding HLM translation style research.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Style of Translation

Generally speaking, style is defined as the perceived distinctive manner, use of language and language choices in written or spoken expressions made by individuals and social groups (Crystal 1999, 323; Wales 2001, 397). In the field of stylistics, researchers have been interested in uncovering the literary style of a writer by examining his or her unique use of linguistic features or techniques. As translators mediate between two different languages and cultures by acting as both readers of the source text and writers of the translated text, translators are also believed to have their own idiosyncrasies or style instead of simply reproducing the source texts in the translations passively. In other words, translators can also have their own voice presence in the translation (Hermans 1996). The rise of corpus-based translation studies together with an easy access to corpus tools has greatly promoted research on translation style. It is generally agreed that Baker (2000) made the first proposal of using corpus for studying the style of translators. Baker (2000, 262) argued that translation is a creative event, and hence the translator's characteristic use of the language in the 'creation' process can reveal their style. There are two main approaches for investigating style in translation studies, namely the translator style versus translation style approach. The translator style approach compares various translation works of different translators to identify the unique linguistic patterns attributable to a particular translator while the translation style approach compares translations of an original text done by different translators to show the divergences of language features among them. The increasing prevalence of corpus-based translation studies has greatly promoted the investigations of both translator style and translation style.

As HLM is considered to be one of the greatest Chinese novels, a great number of researchers have been attracted to investigate the translation style of its various translations. The two full-length English translations, one translated by Hawkes and Minford and the other by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang, have been extensively studied for their style. Motivated by Baker (2000), this line of research has mainly made use of corpus methods to examine the translation style of HLM translations. Based on a parallel corpus consisting of the first 15 chapters of the HLM source texts and their corresponding translations, Li, Zhang and Liu (2011) found that Hawkes used a lower type-token ratio and longer sentence length compared with

the Yangs. Also based on the same corpus, Liu and Afzaal (2021b) found that Hawkes used a higher number and variety of lexical bundles than the Yangs, indicating that Hawkes showed a wider range of stylistic variations in translating the Chinese novel. In the same vein, Liu, Cheung and Moratto (2022) found that Hawkes overused verb phrases and stance markers, while the Yangs tended to overuse prepositional phrases and referential markers in fictional dialogues.

Overall, corpus-assisted style research of HLM has often operationalized specific linguistic indicators to investigate how one translation differs from another. Some typical indicators that have been used to study HLM include nominalization (Hou 2013), sTTR and lambda (Fang and Liu 2015) and metaphorical idioms (Su 2021). Based on a thorough review of this line of research, we can see that most studies are often confined to the use of lexical words or constructions. Besides, a majority of studies simply treated HLM as one single text without differentiating its internal genre variations (narration versus fictional dialogues). We suspect this might be one factor causing the contradictory findings in some studies. For example, several studies found that the two HLM translations showed no differences in terms of vocabulary richness (Fang and Liu 2015), lexical density (Liu, Liu, and Zhu 2011) and word length (*ibid.*). As fiction is increasingly viewed as a genre consisting of narration and fictional dialogues (Egbert and Mahlberg 2020), separating fictional speech and narration can be a viable approach in translation and/or translator's style research. Thus, following Liu, Cheung and Moratto (2022), this study will also investigate how hedges and boosters are represented in the fictional dialogues of the two translations by Hawkes and the Yangs.

2.2 *Hedges and Boosters*

As basic strategies to signal the strength of statements or speech acts, hedges and boosters can help express different degrees of commitment (i.e., certainty and conviction) and detachment (i.e., doubt) (Farrokhi and Emami 2008, 64; Holmes 1984, 347; Vassileva 2001, 85). According to Holmes (1984, 348), conveying modal meaning and affective meaning are two rudimentary reasons for speakers to modify the illocutionary force. Speakers' attitudes toward the content of propositions are regarded as modal meaning, and speakers' attitudes toward the audience are referred to as affective meaning (Holmes 1982, 18).

Hedges are the lexical devices that decrease the illocutionary force of speech act (Farrokhi and Emami 2008, 64), such as *might*, *possible*, *suggest*. They express uncertainty, show doubt or withhold commitment to a proposition (Hyland 2005b, 178). They can also indicate opinions, attenuate the strength of criticisms, disagreements and praises, or show respect, humility and politeness (Farrokhi and Emami 2008, 65; Hyland 1998, 351). Boosters

refer to the lexical devices that increase the illocutionary force of speech act (Farrokhi and Emami 2008, 64), such as *it is clear that*, *surely*. They express certainty, strong conviction and commitment to their argument (Hyland 2005b, 179–80). They can also stress shared information or build conversational solidarity with the audience (Hyland 1998, 350). The functions and examples of hedges and boosters are summarized in Table 12.1.

As important linguistic devices for presenting opinions and commitment by writers or speakers, hedges and boosters have been widely studied in the linguistic and literary fields. In the field of translation studies, researchers have also made use of hedges and boosters to examine various issues in translation. Pisanski Peterlin and Zlatnar Moe (2016) identified modifications of hedges in translated texts (Slovene) done by Slovene trainee translators to achieve greater commitment to a statement than source texts (English). Also, a quarter of hedges were omitted during translation. In contrast, Herriman (2014) found that translators only omitted boosters but inserted more hedges when translating Swedish texts into English. As genre is an important variable in affecting the profiling of translated texts (Liu and Afzaal 2021a), it is believed that hedges and boosters might be represented differently by translators in different text types. To the best of our knowledge, hedges and boosters have not been applied in translation-style research. For such a reason, it is deemed that hedges and boosters can serve as effective indicators to examine the style of the two HLM translations.

2.3 Research Questions

Based on the foregoing review, we can see that little research effort has been made to investigate HLM translation style by taking genre variation into consideration. Besides, no research so far has attempted to use hedges and boosters to examine how they are represented in the HLM fictional dialogues. Since hedges and boosters are the lexical devices for adjusting the illocutionary force and attitudes toward audience (Farrokhi and Emami 2008, 64), how they are represented in texts can be related to a particular literary as well as translation style. The different representations of hedges and boosters can thus reveal a translator's awareness and approach to handling the modal and affective meaning of characters' speech, which might

Table 12.1 Functions and examples of hedges and boosters

Features	Functions	Examples
Hedges	Express uncertainty, withhold commitment and open dialogue	Arguably, might, possible, suggest, usually
Boosters	Express certainty, convey commitment and close dialogue	Evidently, it is clear that, obviously, surely

otherwise remain hidden by using other indicators. In this study, we mainly address the following two research questions:

- RQ1: Do the fictional dialogues in the two HLM translations, one translated by Hawkes and the other by the Yangs, differ in the representation of hedges and boosters?
- RQ2: If the differences in RQ1 are identified, what are the possible factors that account for such differences?

3. Method and Procedures

3.1 Corpus

This research is based on the first 80 chapters of HLM translations, namely *The Story of the Stone* translated by David Hawkes and *A Dream of Red Mansions* co-translated by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang. In order to eliminate the confounding variable due to the inconsistency of multiple translators, we did not include the last 40 chapters translated by Minford in our analysis. For the current research, we used a self-written Python program to extract fictional dialogues from the translations based on the presence of quotation marks. It should be noted that the quotation marks are used for various functions and not exclusively for marking self-conversations and conversations, we thus further manually proofread the extracted data to ensure accuracy. Upon completion, the final corpus consists of two English subcorpora, i.e., the Yang Dialogue corpus (Hereinafter YD) and the Hawkes Dialogue corpus (Hereinafter HD). YD has a total of 219,478 tokens (total number of items) and 9,801 types (number of unique items) while HD has 280,716 tokens and 10,734 types (see Table 12.2).

3.2 Instrument

Authorial Voice Analyzer (AVA) developed by Yoon (2017) was employed to obtain the quantitative data of hedges and boosters in HD and YD. AVA is an automated processing tool designed to capture Hyland's (2005b) interactional metadiscourse markers (Yoon 2021, 712). The hedge and booster lists contain 164 and 174 expressions, respectively (Yoon 2017, 76; Yoon and Römer 2020, 218). AVA can calculate the normalized frequencies (occurrences per 1,000 words) of both types and tokens of hedges and boosters (Yoon 2017, 75; 2021, 712). AVA has been verified to report a very high accuracy rate (Yoon and Römer 2020, 219).

Normalized token and type frequencies of hedges and boosters across the two corpora calculated by AVA were treated as dependent variables. Then non-parametric Wilcoxon tests were used to examine if significant differences exist between the two translations in the use of hedges and boosters

Table 12.2 Descriptive statistics of the HLM corpus of fictional dialogues

HLM Corpus of Fictional Dialogues

<i>Corpora</i>	<i>Chapters</i>	<i>Translator(s)</i>	<i>Files</i>	<i>Types</i>	<i>Tokens</i>	<i>TTR</i>	<i>STTR</i>
HD	1–80	David Hawkes	80	10,734	280,716	3.82	39.28
YD	1–80	Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang	80	9,801	219,478	4.47	42.14

to translate the fictional dialogues. Some examples were then extracted to supplement the quantitative results and show the different patterns of the two translations.

4. Results

4.1 Hedges

Statistics of the normalized tokens and types of hedges across the two corpora are summarized in Table 12.3. Results showed that HD (*Mean* = 19.72, *SD* = 3.47) contained significantly more hedges than YD (*Mean* = 13.48, *SD* = 2.94), $p < .001$. Also, HD (*Mean* = 6.40, *SD* = 1.32) presented significantly more types of hedges than YD (*Mean* = 5.69, *SD* = 1.47), $p < .001$.

To obtain a preliminary view of the types of hedge markers, *WordSmith Tools version 8.0* (Scott 2021) was used to search and count the frequencies of a list of hedge markers. *WordSmith 8.0* cannot automatically identify the syntactic category of a word. Also, some words in the hedge list can have multiple meanings besides serving a hedge function. Therefore, the data in Table 12.4 are based on hedging adverbs that have more consistent meanings. To simplify the analysis, Hyland's (2005a) categorization instead of Yoon and Römer (2020) AVA list was adopted in this search.

Among 101 items in the hedge list under Hyland's (2005a) categorization, 32 are adverbs. Two items, *about* and *around*, can be used as adverbs or prepositions. As these two items do not have a sole function, they were not included in the analysis. Seven items did not appear in both corpora, i.e., *approximately*, *broadly*, *largely*, *plausibly*, *relatively*, *uncertainly* and *unclearly*. Three items had the same frequencies, i.e., *essentially*, *roughly* and *unlikely*, and appeared only once. Except for the word *usually*, the remaining 19 items were present more conspicuously in HD than in YD. The examples of hedging adverbs used in HD and YD are illustrated in (1), (2) and (3).

1) Source text: “.....應該裡頭伺候。只因天氣炎熱，眾位千金都出來了，法官不敢擅入，請爺的示下。恐老太太問，或要隨喜那裡，我只在這裡伺候罷了。”

(Cao 1791/1993, Vol. 1, Chapter 29, page 304)

Table 12.3 Wilcoxon test for the tokens and types of hedges across two corpora

	HD (<i>n</i> = 80)		YD (<i>n</i> = 80)		Wilcoxon test	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	<i>V</i>	<i>p</i>
Tokens	19.72	3.47	13.48	2.94	3229	<.001*
Types	6.40	1.32	5.69	1.47	2515	<.001*

* *p* values are significant at < .001

Table 12.4 Hedging adverbs used in HT and YT

Items	HT	YT	Difference (HT-YT)	Items	HT	YT	Difference (HT-YT)
Almost	35	3	32	Possibly	33	19	14
Apparently	9	4	5	Presumably	2	1	1
Essentially	1	1	0	Probably	98	20	78
Fairly	12	4	8	Quite	317	172	145
Frequently	2	0	2	Rather	160	71	89
Generally	9	2	7	Roughly	1	1	0
Likely	36	25	11	Sometimes	27	10	17
Mainly	2	0	2	Somewhat	13	0	13
Maybe	12	9	3	Typically	1	0	1
Mostly	5	1	4	Unlikely	1	1	0
Often	72	69	3	Usually	5	17	-12
Perhaps	126	8	118	TOTAL	979	438	541

a) Translation 1: “Perhaps I should be allowed inside to wait on Her Old Ladyship. However. In this inclement heat, and with so many young ladies about, I shouldn’t like to presume. I will do whatever you say. I did just wonder whether Her Old Ladyship might ask for me, or whether she might require a guide to take her round the shrines.....However. Perhaps it would be best if I waited here.”

(Vol. 2, Chapter 29, To make consistent, I suggest presenting volume no. first, then chapter no., page 75, translated by Hawkes)

b) Translation 2: “... I ought to attend the ladies inside,” “But it’s such a hot day, with so many young ladies here too, that I don’t like to presume without your permission. I’d better wait here in case the old lady may want me to show her round.”

(Vol. 1, Chapter 29, To make consistent, I suggest presenting volume no. first, then chapter no., page 426, translated by the Yangs)

The occurrence of *perhaps* in HD is at least 15 times more than that in YD (HD: 126; YD: 8). In Example (1), the hedging adverb *perhaps* has already appeared twice in HD while YD does not contain any hedging adverbs in the same dialogue. Besides, there are four occurrences of hedge modal verbs

(*should*, *might* and *would*) in HD, but only two (*ought* and *may*) in YD. The clause as shown in the example, 應該裡頭伺候 (literally ‘should be served inside’), was handled differently by Hawkes and the Yangs. The word *should* in HD is comparable to the word *ought* in YD. Both serve as hedge modal verbs to decrease the illocutionary force. Hawkes added *perhaps* on top of *should be* to strengthen the uncertain tone. Similarly, *perhaps* is used in addition to *would be best if I waited here* in Hawkes’ translation of 我只在這裡伺候罷了 (literally ‘I am just waiting here’) while the Yangs translated it as *I’d better wait here*. The character’s attitude conveyed in the Yangs’ version is similar to that of Hawkes, but Hawkes lessened the illocutionary force to a large extent with an additional hedge marker. This example indicates that Hawkes had a tendency to add the hedging adverb *perhaps* to the sentence with a hedge modal verb.

2) Source text: “暫且無妨，精神還好呢。”

(Cao 1791/1993, Vol. 1, Chapter 11, page 118)

a) Translation 1: “For the time being there doesn’t seem to be anything much to worry about,” “She seems to be in quite good spirits.”

(Vol. 1, Chapter 11, To make consistent, I suggest presenting volume no. first, then chapter no., page 241, translated by Hawkes)

b) Translation 2: “For the present there’s nothing to fear. She’s in good spirit.”

(Vol. 1, Chapter 11, To make consistent, I suggest presenting volume no. first, then chapter no., page 163, translated by the Yangs)

Example (2) further illustrates Hawkes’ preference for adding hedge markers in the presentation of dialogues. In the sentence 暫且無妨，精神還好呢 (literally ‘it is okay for now, still in good spirits’), literal translation actually makes sense and is understandable without the use of hedge markers, which is the case in YD. HD includes three hedge words, i.e., the adverb *quite* and twice the use of the verb *seem(s)*, to express the character’s uncertainty about how long the present situation will continue.

3) Source text: “往常倒有些體面，今兒當著這些人，倒做起主子的款兒來了。”

(Cao 1791/1993, Vol. 2, Chapter 44, page 466)

a) Translation 1: “...I used to think that I counted for something round here, but now, after being put in my place in front of all these others, I can see that I did wrong to come.”

(Vol. 2, Chapter 44, To make consistent, I suggest presenting volume no. first, then chapter no., page 366, translated by Hawkes)

b) Translation 2: “You usually show us more consideration, but now in front of all these people you’re putting on the airs of a mistress.”

(Vol. 2, Chapter 44, To make consistent, I suggest presenting volume no. first, then chapter no., page 46, translated by the Yangs)

Usually is the only hedging adverb that appears more frequently in YD than in HD. In Example (3), Hawkes and the Yangs adopted different approaches for translating the word 往常 (literally ‘as usual’). The Yangs chose *usually*, which is a hedging adverb with a weak illocutionary force while Hawkes translated it as *used to* to convey a similar meaning. However, Hawkes extended his translation of 往常 by adding a booster verb *think* to form a clause *I used to think that* before introducing the translation of its subordinate 倒有些體面 (literally ‘still treated with consideration’).

4.2 Boosters

Statistics of the normalized tokens and types of boosters across the two corpora are summarized in Table 12.5. Results showed that HD (*Mean* = 28.79, *SD* = 4.18) contained significantly more boosters than YD (*Mean* = 22.89, *SD* = 3.93), *p* <.001. However, no significant difference was found between the two in the types of boosters.

Similar to hedges, the data in Table 12.6 are based on booster adverbs, which are identified to have consistent meanings in terms of expressing an intensifying force of a speech act.

Among the 64 items from the Hyland’s (2005a) booster list, 20 are adverbs. Two items, *really* and *indeed*, can be used as either booster adverbs

Table 12.5 Wilcoxon test for the tokens and types of boosters across two corpora

	HD (<i>n</i> = 80)		YD (<i>n</i> = 80)		Wilcoxon test	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>V</i>	<i>p</i>
Tokens	28.79	4.18	22.89	3.93	3170	<.001*
Types	8.33	2.17	8.14	2.02	1651	>.05

* *p* values are significant at < .001

Table 12.6 Booster adverbs used in HT and YT

<i>Items</i>	<i>HT</i>	<i>YT</i>	<i>Difference (HT-YT)</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>HT</i>	<i>YT</i>	<i>Difference (HT-YT)</i>
Actually	42	36	6	Never	381	316	65
Always	289	154	135	Obviously	39	13	26
Certainly	128	42	86	Surely	132	45	87
Clearly	3	12	−9	Truly	16	17	−1
Definitely	19	6	13	Undoubtedly	4	1	3
Evidently	9	0	9	TOTAL	1062	642	420

or exclamation markers, so they were excluded from the count. Seven items were not found in both corpora at all, i.e., *conclusively*, *decidedly*, *incontestably*, *incontrovertibly*, *indisputably*, *undeniably* and *undisputedly*. Except for the items *clearly* and *truly*, the remaining 11 items appeared more frequently in HD than YD. The examples of booster adverbs used in HD and YD are illustrated in (4), (5) and (6).

- 4) Source text: “這都是素日姑娘念的，難為他怎麼記了。”
(Cao 1791/1993, Vol. 1, Chapter 35, page 362)
- a) Translation 1: “It’s what you’re always reciting yourself, miss,” “Fancy Polly being able to remember it!”
(Vol. 2, Chapter 35, page 175, translated by Hawkes)
- b) Translation 2: “Those are lines you often recite, miss,” “Fancy him getting them by heart!”
(Vol. 1, Chapter 35, page 503, translated by the Yangs)

According to Table 12.6, the booster adverb *always* in HD is 135 occurrences more than that in YD (HD: 289; YD: 154). This adverb outweighs other booster adverb markers in terms of its different representations in HD and YD. As demonstrated in Example (4), Hawkes chose *always* to translate 素日 (literally ‘normal days’) while the Yangs used *often*, which is a hedge marker. In this case, Hawkes used boosters to translate 素日 (literally ‘normal days’) and 往常 (literally ‘as usual’) while the Yangs used hedges to translate these Chinese adverbs of frequency.

- 5) Source text: “若必定著張華帶回二姐去，未免賈璉回來再花幾個錢包佔住，不怕張華不依 ……”
(Cao 1791/1993, Vol. 2, Chapter 69, page 771)
- a) Translation 1: “even if I had insisted on Zhang Hua taking her away, there was always the possibility that Lian might get back in time to reclaim her. He would only have had to give Zhang a little money and Zhang would surely not have refused to give her back...”
(Vol. 3, Chapter 69, page 359, translated by Hawkes)
- b) Translation 2: “If I make Chang Hua reclaim Second Sister, Lien on his return will most likely offer more money to get her back, and Chang Hua’s hound to agree...”
(Vol. 2, Chapter 69, page 492, translated by the Yangs)

Example (5) is a conditional sentence which demonstrates the divergent translation styles between Hawkes and the Yangs. Conditional sentence contains a dependent clause specifying a condition and an independent clause predicting the outcome of the condition. In HD, the hedge modal

verbs, *might* and *would*, appear three times. Compared with HD, YD only contains one hedge marker (i.e., the adverb *likely*). Clearly, HD contains more hedge features than YD.

The differences in HD and YD are also reflected in the use of different conditionals. As can be seen from Example (5), Hawkes used the ‘unreal’ conditional depicting an unreal or imaginary situation contrary to reality, whereas the Yangs used a ‘real’ conditional to describe a real or possible situation. As the Chinese source text does not differentiate between ‘real’ and ‘unreal’ conditionals, Hawkes’ interpretation seemed to explicate the subtle nuances conveyed in the source text. In the two translations, we can see that the confidence in prediction can be reflected by the use of boosters. Hawkes used not only hedge markers but also booster adverbs (i.e., *always* and *surely*) to show a higher probability of or greater confidence in predicting the outcome of a hypothetical scenario. The Yangs did not apply any boosters in translating the same original text. This hints at Hawkes’ preference for conveying messages with more vivid speech acts of characters while the Yangs tended to adopt a more literal approach as is reflected with the less use of hedges and boosters.

- 6) Source text: “你糊塗。想必沒有聽真。”

(Cao 1791/1993, Vol. 2, Chapter 78, page 889)

- a) Translation 1: “Oh, you’re a silly girl!” “I’m sure you must have misheard.”

(Vol. 3, Chapter 78, page 561, translated by Hawkes)

- b) Translation 2: “You silly thing, you can’t have heard her clearly.”

(Vol. 2, Chapter 78, page 658, translated by the Yangs)

Example (6) illustrates the preference for the types of booster use. *Clearly* is one of the two markers that appear more in YD than in HD. To translate 想必沒有聽真 (literally ‘(I) guess that (you) did not listen accurately’), the Yangs used a booster adverb in the sentence *you can’t have heard her clearly* while Hawkes translated it as *have misheard* with a booster modal verb *must*. Similar to hedges, Hawkes intensified the confidence level of the sentence by adding *I’m sure* (note that *sure* is a booster adjective in addition to the booster modal verb *must* used in the sentence).

The above qualitative analysis together with the quantitative results shows that the two translations are quite divergent in terms of the use of hedges and boosters. The quantitative results can be corroborated by the qualitative analysis of the typical examples given above.

5. Discussion

The present exploratory study used hedges and boosters as indicators to examine the translation styles of the two HLM translations, i.e., one by

David Hawkes and the other by the Yangs. The results demonstrated that hedges and boosters can serve as effective indicators to reveal the differences in fictional dialogues between the two translation versions. Overall, in comparison to the Yangs, Hawkes used significantly more hedges and boosters in both frequencies and types. All the six examples extracted from both translations clearly pointed to their stylistic differences. Hawkes tended to intensify or weaken the illocutionary force by including additional hedges and boosters in his translations depending on the contexts. The Yangs' translation was relatively simple and direct, characterized by fewer hedges and boosters compared to Hawkes' version.

In the next section, we make further reference to the translation norms proposed by Chesterman (2016) to address the possible reasons for such translation style differences between Hawkes and the Yangs. As suggested by Liu and Afzaal (2021b, 9), the translator's language background and socio-political milieu can influence the stylistic difference when the translations are produced. Therefore, we also incorporate the translator's language background, translation practice and cultural background in our discussion. The implications of this study from the perspectives of conversational maxims and characterization are also addressed in relation to the findings.

5.1 Professional Norms

Chesterman (2016, 62–68) identified the norms that regulate the translation process and product and proposed a comprehensive framework of translation norms: professional norms and expectancy norms. Professional norms correspond to process norms that regulate translational behaviors during translation. They concern the appropriate relation established and sustained between the source and target text (relation norm in linguistic aspect), optimization of communication between original authors, translators, potential readers and other involved parties (communication norm in social aspect) and demands of loyalty in connection with relevant parties (accountability norm in ethical aspect) (ibid., 65–68). Translators may work under different norms governed by different language backgrounds and variations of translation practice, thus result in different translation styles.

An obvious difference between Hawkes and the Yangs is their language background. Hawkes is a native English speaker. He translated HLM from L2 to L1 (i.e., L1 translation). For the Yangs' translation version, Xianyi Yang served as the main translator, who first translated the text by rendering it orally while his wife Gladys Yang assisted him with typing and polishing (Li, Zhang, and Liu 2011, 163). He is Chinese and translated HLM from L1 to L2 (i.e., L2 translation). Scholars generally agree that L2 translation is advantageous in terms of source text comprehension (Campbell 1998, 57), but the major shortcoming is the possible occurrence of unnatural and non-native target text (Samuelsson-Brown 2010, 27). As Hawkes stated in the Preface to *The Stone's Journey to the West* 紅樓夢西遊記, "For a foreign translator it is a somewhat alarming experience to have his work

subjected to such thorough scrutiny by a Chinese expert” (as cited in May and Minford 2003, 47–48). Hawkes admitted the limitations and concerns he had as a foreign translator compared with a Chinese expert. Meanwhile, Yang Xianyi admitted that his English was not as perfect as a native English speaker (Li, Zhang, and Liu 2011, 163). It can be safely postulated that the different language backgrounds of the two translators clearly have a role to play in their decoding and encoding processes, which led them to handle the translation differently. As a result, hedges and boosters are not necessarily the same between the two translations. As shown in the current study, Hawkes used significantly more hedges and boosters than the Yangs to explicate the hidden meanings in the source text dialogues, revealing a different decoding practice. The flexible use of hedges and boosters in some sentences (particularly conditional sentences) also shows that Hawkes used a relatively more liberal approach in translating HLM.

The different translation approaches of Hawkes and Yangs as shown in the examples indicated that Hawkes often amplified in his translation by including more details while the Yangs tended to render the translation in a more rigidly literal manner. Li and Wu (2017) also found that the Yangs’ version is more syntactically similar to the source text than Hawkes’ version. Yang Xianyi mentioned the philosophy of their translations in an interview, “You just have to find something approximate, but accurate, keeping your meaning as close as possible to the original... without trying to exaggerate or to add anything to it” (Henderson 1980, 34). These demonstrate that the Yangs seemed to implement a minimalist approach (Fan and Minford 2017, 384) in their translation. However, such an approach also limited the translators’ creativity and stylistic variations (*ibid.*).

In terms of the two laws proposed by Toury (1995), Yang seemed to adhere to “the law of interference” (267) in which he tried to literally translate the dialogues in English, consciously or subconsciously. On the other hand, Hawkes clearly followed “the law of growing standardization” (*ibid.*, 267) to make the translated text closer to the expectations of the target readers and norms of the target language (*ibid.*). Hawkes (1977, 20) believed that a “translator has divided loyalties. He has a duty to his author, a duty to his reader and a duty to the text. The three are by no means identical and are often hard to reconcile.” He chose to be loyal to the ideas instead of the words by thoroughly digesting the original text, recasting it and re-expressing the author’s ideas in accordance with the target language norms. As far as fictional dialogues are concerned, we can clearly see that Hawkes made abundant use of hedges and boosters to depict the dialogues of various characters depending on his own interpretation of the author’s intentions, story context and characters’ interactions.

5.2 Expectancy Norms

Expectancy norms relate to product norms, which are about readers’ expectations of the target language. Such expectations can be associated with the

acceptability of discourse conventions, style, grammaticality, etc. They are generally governed by the culture of the target community (Chesterman 2016, 62–65).

Hawkes and the Yangs translated HLM under different socio-cultural backgrounds, which in turn affected their perceived readership, translation goals and expectations of the translation products. The Yangs worked for the Foreign Languages Press, a translation press funded by the Chinese government to introduce Chinese culture to foreigners (Li, Zhang, and Liu 2011, 159). To the Yangs, reproduction of the original text in another language accurately without changes may be perceived to be the best option to achieve the aim of disseminating Chinese literature and culture to foreign audiences. Any supplementary information not stated in the original texts, such as the explanation of cultural meanings, would be provided in the footnotes (*ibid.*). Gladys Yang realized the drawbacks of such a translation approach in an interview, “We tend to be rather pedantic and the readers lose out, because we are more literal” (Henderson 1980, 34). In contrast, Hawkes had in mind the Anglophone readership and hoped to translate in a way that the readers with no prior knowledge could comprehend the novel properly and have a fluent reading experience. Hawkes mentioned in the Preface to *The Story of the Stone*, “I make no apology for having occasionally amplified the text a little in order to make such passages intelligible” (Hawkes 1977, 17). Hawkes intended to create a translation that reads like a novel instead of a piece of scholarship. Therefore, Hawkes adopted explanatory translation by incorporating footnotes into the main body of the novel to deliver meanings and connotations (Li, Zhang, and Liu 2011, 158). In this regard, the divergences in the use and distribution of hedges and boosters between the two translations may be attributed to the different translation strategies adopted. Also, adding more hedges and boosters to intensify the force of characters’ speech acts, like those in Examples (1), (2) and (6), also reflect Hawkes’ intention to enhance readers’ reading experience by accurately depicting the characters’ speech acts in various contexts.

5.3 Conversational Maxims and Characterization

Conversational maxims proposed by Grice (1975) concern speech acts in terms of informativity (the maxim of quantity), truth (the maxim of quality), relevance (the maxim of relation) and clarity (the maxim of manner). Leech (2014) added the maxim of politeness to indicate the speaker’s consideration for audience. Hedges and boosters have the modal function of modifying the illocutionary force of speech acts and the affective function of presenting speakers’ attitudes toward audiences (Holmes 1982, 18). Hence, they are important features that can help speakers express their awareness of the maxim of quality by adjusting the truth value of a sentence (Grundy 2019, 118) and the maxim of politeness by modifying the degree of criticisms, respect and politeness.

In novels, characterization is anything used to make descriptions of a character, either directly by narration or indirectly by a character's behaviors, thoughts and speech. In fictional dialogues, conversational maxims can be used as characterization devices to portray characters' characterizations, propositional attitudes and interactions (Abualadas 2020, 637). Translation of fictional dialogues can reveal the speech norms that reflect the translator's contextualization of the original novel (*ibid.*, 642). According to Abualadas (2020, 644), more frequent use of hedges may imply a translator's consideration and awareness of characters' utterances and conversational maxims. Likewise, this also applies to the use of boosters, which are also the linguistic devices to intensify the illocutionary force of the characters' speech.

Hawkes used hedges and boosters more frequently than the Yangs. The results reveal that Hawkes had greater awareness and more consideration in terms of translating the modal and affective meaning to fulfill the conversational maxims of characters' speech when he contextualized the original novel and re-expressed the speech in the translation compared to the Yangs. Feng (2008, 307) found that Hawkes showed more awareness in distinguishing the educated and the uneducated characters in the original novel as reflected in his handling of the characters' speech. As noted by May and Minford (2003, 8), "[d]ialogue is perfectly rendered to reflect familial and generational distinctions [by Hawkes]." As an English native speaker, Hawkes seemed more sensitive to such hidden familial relations that are not expressly stated in the source texts and rendered them in a more explicit way in his translation, which contributed to the characterization of different characters in the novel. On the other hand, the Yangs adopted a largely literal approach and were seemingly constrained by the source texts in that they dared not use additional linguistic devices, including hedges and boosters, to convey the characters' personalities and peculiarities in the characterization process.

6. Conclusion

This study explored the different translation styles between the two HLM translations by focusing on how fictional dialogues are handled by different translators. We have shown that the use of hedges and boosters as indicators can reveal much about the translators' awareness, consideration and approach to characterization building in the translated novel. As far as HLM translations are concerned, it is clear that Hawkes showed greater awareness in translating the modal and affective meanings of the characters' speech. The stylistic differences can be attributed to the translators' language background, translation practice and socio-cultural background when the translations were produced.

Despite the findings of the study, some limitations that remain to be considered in future work can be noted. First, this study focused on fictional dialogues as a departing point to explore the divergent translation styles of

Hawkes and the Yangs. However, we only used two indicators, i.e., hedges and boosters, to show how the translators differed in their handling of fictional dialogues. Despite the fact that hedges and boosters can reveal some interesting and contrasting patterns regarding the translators' contrasting translation approaches, other indicators should be explored in future studies to show how characterization was differently developed by translators. Besides, as the current study largely adopted a comparable corpus design to focus on the two English HLM translations, the findings derived from such a target text-driven approach are constrained by such an approach. In other words, we did not fully explore the hedges and boosters of the source texts into consideration. Further studies can be conducted to explore Chinese hedges and boosters in the source text and examine how they are translated by different translators.

Acknowledgment

Kanglong Liu would like to acknowledge support of a startup grant "A Parallel and Comparable Investigation of Translator's Style in Honglouloumeng Translations" (Ref: P0000242) from The Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

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