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7 Orality in Translated and Non-Translated Fictional Dialogues

Yanfang Su and Kanglong Liu[1]

7.1 Introduction

Fictional dialogues are speech or conversational exchanges between (among) characters in fiction (Koivisto and Nykänen 2016; Bednarek 2018). Fictional dialogues are usually carefully scripted by the author to imitate the orality features of authentic conversations so as to shape characters, develop the storyline, and facilitate author-reader interaction. It is acknowledged that devising fictional dialogues is a demanding task for the literary author. For translators, it is equally challenging to translate fictional dialogues because linguistic, cultural, and aesthetic considerations need to be taken into account (Ettobi 2015). The challenges posed to translators are reflected in previous research regarding how and how well the orality features can be retained in translation. Many studies reported a certain degree of unnaturalness or reduced degree of orality in translated fictional dialogues, such as Leppihalme's (2000) study on the translation of nonstandard language, Rosa's (2000) analysis on diachronic changes in translating forms of address (i.e., pronouns, verbs, titles, and nouns used to address a specific speaker), and Ettobi's (2015) research on cultural assimilation and non-assimilation in translating orality. Most of these studies are qualitative in nature, in that they resorted to the use of certain orality features to study how translated fictional dialogues deviate from the correspondent source texts. Despite some innovative findings, such a qualitative method cannot offer a holistic picture of the orality features in translated fictional dialogues, nor can it compare the similarities and differences of orality between translated and non-translated fictional dialogues. Therefore, in order to address such a gap, this study utilized a corpus of representative original English fictions and a corpus of representative Chinese-English translated fictions to examine how orality features are represented in fictional dialogues of translated and non-translated fiction. The present study extends the extant literature by adopting a multidimensional analysis approach (MDA), thus increasing the range of orality features being explored and providing more quantitative insights into this line of inquiry. In addition, we also aimed at uncovering the discrepancies between translated and non-translated texts in terms of orality, hoping to gain a better understanding of the distinctive features of translated texts and offer practical suggestions for similar future research.

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7.2 Literature Review

7.2.1 Orality of Fictional Dialogues

Orality refers to a way of dealing with "knowledge and verbalization" in oral speech (Ong 1982, 1). It is assumed that features of orality are epitomized in spontaneous face-to-face conversations (Bublitz 2017). Literary writers strive to imitate the linguistic features of authentic conversations in creating fictional dialogues. The features of fictional dialogues are thus very different from narration in fiction. For this reason, some scholars have challenged the traditional approach to regard speech and narration in fiction as one register (Egbert and Mahlberg 2020). At the same time, some researchers also explored the perceptual quality and naturalness of fictional dialogues. In particular, early studies on fictional dialogues mainly adopted a qualitative approach to describe the orality features in fictional dialogues (e.g., Short 1996; Thomas 1997, 2002). For example, Ferguson (1998) analyzed the use of dialect in Dickens's *Bleak House*, Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, and Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. By carefully examining the characters' sociocultural background and the historical settings, she argued that the use of dialect in Victorian novels was inconsistent and deviated from readers' expectations of genuine conversations. Recently, quantitative approaches utilizing corpus-based approaches and statistical analyses were used to analyze the orality features of fictional dialogues. For instance, Quaglio (2009) made use of two corpora and utilized the multidimensional analysis and the log-likelihood test to compare the linguistic features and the corresponding functions of fictional dialogues and authentic conversations. Jucker (2021) compared the orality features between performed fictional dialogues and spontaneous conversations by making use of five large-scale corpora and quantitatively analyzed the frequency distribution of common inserts and contractions which are believed to characterize orality. He found that the scripted fictional dialogues underused the orality features than the unscripted conversations. Both corpus-based quantitative investigations and qualitative descriptions revealed that the scripted fictional dialogues, although carefully contrived, shared some similarities with written texts (Ikeo 2019; Jucker 2021) but still diverged from the unscripted spontaneous conversations or impromptu speeches in many aspects (Short 1996; Bublitz 2017).

Another strand of research strives to understand orality in fictional dialogues and their perceptive functions in fiction. At the microlevel, the orality features can facilitate the communicative purposes of fictional dialogues to reflect the state of the mind of the characters (Leech and Short 2007; Koivisto and Nykänen 2016) and promote the development of the plot (Locher and Jucker 2021). Moreover, the identity of characters and the power hierarchies in the fictional world also emerged through intersubject interactions (Bucholtz and Hall 2005; Holmes and Wilson 2017). Therefore, the orality features of fictional dialogues are carefully designed by the author, including conversation structures, syntactic characteristics, wording, spelling, and tone, to offer important cues of the age, gender, region, ethnicity, social status of the characters (Locher and Jucker 2021). At the macrolevel,

orality features can help promote the interaction between the author and the readers. Specifically, the author reconstructs the activity and imparts the contextual information to the readers through fictional dialogues (Locher and Jucker 2021). The readers follow the logical progression of the novel and take the initiative to portray the characters in the sociocultural context of the novel with the help of the orality features (Nykänen and Koivisto 2016). Bublitz (2017) noted that although the orality features were reduced in fictional dialogues, the readers managed to create meanings and contexts through interacting with the dialogues. In brief, orality as represented in fictional dialogues plays an important part in constructing the fictional world. However, most of the studies still adopted a deductive method by analyzing a limited range of orality features of some extracts of fictional dialogues (Jucker 2021). In this regard, we believe that a more inductive corpus-based analysis of a wider variety of features can offer better insights into this line of inquiry.

7.2.2 Translating Orality of Fictional Dialogues

In view of the complicated linguistic features and important functions of fictional dialogues, translating fictional dialogues in a natural-sounding and culturally appropriate way imposes unique challenges for translators. Since the cultural relations between the source texts and the translated texts are dissimilar in various aspects (Ettobi 2015), translating the social and cultural values connoted in orality features of fictional dialogues is a challenging and sometimes even impossible task (Tiittula and Nuolijärvi 2016; Newmark 1987). Such an argument is supported by some research findings that translation of fictional dialogues often seems to fail to reproduce effectively the orality features in the translated texts. For example, Leppihalme (2000) analyzed how translators dealt with nonstandard language related to regionalism in literary dialogues. She found the law of growing standardization (Toury 2012) (i.e., translation tends to lose its source language features and variations but instead conforms to target language conventions) is dominant in the translation, in addition to other strategies such as domestication, compensation, addition, and foreignization. However, the use of many strategies further led to a loss of features that could have distinguished the author's literary works and reduced the traits of the characters' social status. Rosa (2000) analyzed the diachronic changes in Portuguese translations of the forms of address in *Robinson Crusoe*. She found that the power relationship between Robinson and Friday was distorted in some translated versions, such as the three versions in the 1980s and 1990s. She further elucidated that the changes in translation were a negotiation of the source text, the target text, and the developing translation norms. In 2015, Rosa compared some examples of dialogues extracted from the original version and the translated version of Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist*. She found that many nonstandard usages of English were obliterated or even standardized in the translated version, and consequently, the discursive representation of otherness was totally wiped out. While the aforementioned researchers solely focused on the translated fictional dialogues, Arhire (2019) compared the use of lexical emphasis and ellipsis between the translated Romanian fictional dialogues and their

English originals; he argued that untranslatability occurred occasionally due to the structural differences between the two languages, which further led to an underrepresentation of emotions and reduced identity-shaping power of the dialogues. Despite some interesting findings, most studies in this field are largely descriptive in nature based on some representative excerpts extracted from the novels.

To sum up, though great efforts have been made in investigating the orality features of translated fictional dialogues, most studies are still based on purely qualitative methods to analyze examples selected from one particular fiction. Besides, the use of orality features vary from one study to another, which has not only created problems for generalizability of findings, as the selected language features might not be adequate to distinguish one text from another (Xiao 2009; Biber 2014), but also restricted the pursuit of further scholarly investigations. Overall, in this field of research, quantitative evidence is still lacking, leaving the findings and conclusions resting heavily on the insight of individual researchers. In other words, studies based on a corpus of representative fictional dialogues remain relatively scarce. In addition, much of the extant literature on orality features in fictional dialogues focused solely on either original texts or translated texts, and it is unclear whether differences exist between translated and non-translated fictional dialogues (Nevalainen 2004). For the few studies comparing translated and non-translated fictional dialogues, most of them centered on the translations between European languages. For example, Nevalainen (2004) utilized the Corpus of Translated Finnish to examine the colloquial features of translated texts, that is, nonstandardized spelling and wording. Nevertheless, investigations based on language pairs with distant genetic relationships, such as English and Chinese, might yield more fruitful results. In view of the limitations of the research methods of previous studies, we proposed using the MDA to compare the multiple linguistic features of different text types.

7.2.3 The Multidimensional Analysis Approach and Studies on Orality

The multidimensional analysis approach (MDA) was originally proposed and developed by Biber (1988) to identify, interpret, and compare the "co-occurrence" patterns of certain linguistic features in corpora and the reflected "shared functions" (Biber et al. 2002, p. 14). Biber (1988) analyzed the register variation of English using a batch of linguistic features. Six dimensions turned out to yield important results to discriminate the different registers, that is, (1) involved vs. informational language, (2) narrative vs. non-narrative language, (3) elaborated vs. situation-dependent discourse, (4) overt expression of persuasion, (5) abstract vs. non-abstract discourse, and (6) online informational elaboration. Biber's (1988) proposal of the MDA model was epoch-making (Biber et al. 2002). First, it is corpus-based, making analysis of a large number of representative texts possible. The use of computational tools also facilitates the thorough analysis of a wide range of linguistic features quantitatively, ensuring more accurate and consistent results. In addition, the same computational tools or corpora data can be applied

and replicated in different studies, which can further strengthen the generalizability of research findings. Since its introduction, the MDA model has prompted subsequent researchers to adopt it in a variety of studies.

One of the prominent research strands is the study of orality. For example, Biber et al. (2002) compared speech and writing in academic discourse and found that spoken and written texts contrasted remarkably in dimensions 1, 2, 3, and 5, with some variations in disciplines. Quaglio (2009) utilized dimension 1 of MDA to compare the language of television dialogues used in the situation comedy *Friends* and the language of natural conversations. He found that the television dialogues most resembled the linguistic features in the involved registers proposed in Biber's (1988) study, indicating the endeavors of scriptwriters and actors to mimic natural conversations. Jonsson (2015) compared the linguistic features of synchronous and super-synchronous computer-mediated communication (CMC) with oral conversations using MDA. He found that oral and written texts contrasted notably in dimension 1, dimension 3, and dimension 5 of Biber (1988), with dimension 1 being the most significant one. Following the methodology of Jonsson (2015), Biber and Egbert (2020) compared the orality of searchable web registers with face-to-face conversations and found that the searchable web varies in terms of registers and the interactive registers are barely represented in this discourse domain. Xiao (2009) further developed the MDA approach by adding more semantic features, which result in a total of nine dimensions comprised of 141 linguistic features. He used the new model to compare the register variation in five varieties of English. Among all the factors, the dimension which differentiated the interactive casual texts and the informative elaborate texts exhibited the most prominent contrastive power among different registers (Xiao 2009). Summarizing from previous multidimensional analyses of orality, it is shown that most studies used authentic conversations as the benchmark for comparison. Besides, findings of previous studies indicate that dimension 1 of Biber's (1988) MDA is particularly effective in characterizing the orality of texts.

7.2.4 Research Questions

In view of the research gaps revealed by the foregoing review, the present study intends to adopt a corpus-based approach to systematically compare the degree of orality in translated and non-translated fictional dialogues. Specifically, two research questions are addressed. The first research question concerns with the orality of translated and non-translated fictional dialogues from a macrolevel. The second research question further examines how orality differs between translated and non-translated fictional dialogues in specific language features.

1 Do translated fictional dialogues display a lesser degree of orality than non-translated fictional dialogues represented by Biber's (1988) dimension 1?
2 If differences are identified between the two types of texts in dimension 1, in what ways do the individual linguistic features associated with dimension 1 differ between translated and non-translated fictional dialogues?

7.3 Methods

7.3.1 The Corpora

With the aim of comparing the orality of translated and non-translated fictional dialogues, we compiled a corpus of fictional dialogues with one translated subcorpus and one non-translated subcorpus. The first step of corpus compilation was the selection of high-quality and comparable translated and non-translated fiction works. To ensure the quality of the novels, we referred to the list of *Time*'s top 100 best novels (1923 to 2005) in selecting the original English novels and the top 100 twentieth-century Chinese novels recommended by *Asia Weekly* in selecting the translated Chinese novels. In addition, to make sure the translated and non-translated fictional dialogues were comparable, the publication time of the English novels and the translated novels was limited to the period of 1970s–2010s. Ten original English novels and ten translated novels were selected. Then, in the second step of corpus compilation, the fictional dialogues were extracted from the novels using a self-written Python program by detecting the quotation marks. The fictional dialogue data were then manually checked for consistency and accuracy. In the end, we have compiled the Fictional Dialogue Corpus, comprised of one subcorpus of non-translated fictional dialogues (250, 950 words) and one of translated fictional dialogues (132, 516 words) (see Table 7.1 for the corpus structure).

Table 7.1 Composition of the Fictional Dialogue Corpus

Fiction	*Publication Year*	*Word Count*
Translated Fiction		**132,516**
Border Town (《邊城》)	2009	7,758
Rickshaw Boy A Novel (《駱駝祥子》)	2010	9,565
Taipei People (《臺北人》)	2000	15,849
The Taste of Apples (《兒子的大玩偶》)	2001	18,138
The Deer and the Cauldron (《鹿鼎記》)	2002	25,251
Alien Realm (《異域》)	1996	3,426
Blades from the Willow (《蜀山劍俠傳》)	1991	13,003
Schoolmaster (《倪煥之》)	1978	20,171
Spring Peach (《春桃》)	1995	2,803
Farewell to My Concubine (《霸王別姬》)	1994	16,552
Non-Translated Fiction		**25,095**
American Pastoral	1997	30,178
Atonement	1987	4,266
Beloved	2000	15,409
The Blind Assassin	2000	14,286
Song of Solomon	1977	29,651
Falconer	1977	9,795
Gravity's Rainbow	1973	41,236
Never Let Me Go	2005	18,963
Snow Crash	1992	37,928
White Teeth	2000	49,238

7.3.2 Linguistic Features

In the present studies, the 28 linguistic features in dimension 1 of Biber's (1988) MDA are chosen for comparing the orality of translational and non-translational fictional dialogues. The reason for such a choice is twofold. Firstly, previous studies have confirmed dimension 1, which distinguishes "highly interactive, affective discourse produced under real-time constraints" and "highly informational discourse produced without time constraints" (Biber 1988, 135), was particularly useful in distinguishing oral from literate texts. Secondly, MDA has been established as a widely accepted analytical model with representative linguistic features. The use of this dimension together with the language features therein not only can increase the rigor of the study but also render comparison with other registers possible.

In particular, dimension 1 consists of two categories of linguistic features. One category contains features with positive loadings, meaning that a higher frequency of such features will render the texts toward interactivity and orality; the other category consists of features with negative loadings, indicating that a higher frequency of these features will render the texts more informational and literate. The positive-loadings features include *amplifiers, causative adverbial subordinators, discourse particles, subordinator "that" deletion,* wh-*clauses, pronoun "it,"* among others. The negative-loadings features include *nouns, word length, prepositional phrases, type-token ratio, and attributive adjectives*. There are more positive-loadings features than negative ones, as the former are more commonly found in spoken registers, which are described as "verbal, interactional, affective, fragmented, reduced in form, and generalized in content" (Biber 1988, 105).

7.3.3 Data Analysis

To compare the orality of translated and non-translated fictional dialogues, the first step is to grammatically annotate the corpus data and extract the statistics of linguistic features needed for further quantitative analysis. To this end, the Multidimensional Analysis Tagger (MAT) (Nini 2019), which was designed to replicate Biber's (1988) MDA, was adopted in the present study. The MAT firstly tags the input texts with the linguistic features proposed by Biber (1988). Then, the program automatically calculates the normalized distribution (the frequency per 100 tokens) and computes the z-scores of the linguistic features in the corpus. Subsequently, based on the z-scores of linguistic variables, the dimension scores of the input texts are also calculated. The MAT also automatically matches the input texts with the closest register (Nini 2019). The output of the MAT analysis includes the normalized frequency and the z-scores of the individual linguistic features, the dimension scores of the input texts, a dimension graph, and a text-type graph.

After pre-processing the corpus data and obtaining the statistics of the linguistic features, quantitative analyses were conducted to compare the degree of orality in translated and non-translated fictional dialogues. We first conducted the

one-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and Levene's test to check the assumptions of normal distribution and homogeneous variance (Larson-Hall 2015). The alpha level was set at .05 for this study. The results of one-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test indicated that the dimension scores of both the translated fictional dialogues (p = .20) and the non-translated fictional dialogues (p = .20) were normally distributed. The Levene's test showed that the two groups of data followed the equality of variances (p = .77). As the assumptions were fulfilled, the independent samples t-test was conducted to compare whether the translated and non-translated fictional dialogues differ in the score of dimension 1 (RQ1). To get a more holistic picture of the overall degree of orality in translated and non-translated fictional dialogues, the dimension scores of various text types used by Biber (1988) were also given as references.

In addition to the independent samples t-test, the normalized frequency scores of individual linguistic features in the translated and non-translated fictional dialogues were also compared to reveal how the two text types differ in these features. The Mann-Whitney U test was utilized, as certain linguistic features did not fulfil the assumptions of normality or equality of variances (RQ2). The effect size of the features exhibiting significant differences (p<.05) was also calculated. The features that distinguish the two text types were discussed in detail with qualitative examples.

7.4 Results

7.4.1 Overall Dimension Scores

Table 7.2 presents the mean score, the standard deviation of dimension 1, as well as the closest genre of translated and non-translated fictional dialogues. As shown in Table 7.2, both translated and non-translated fictional dialogues received a positive score on dimension 1. Although the mean score of non-translated fictional dialogues (M = 6.80, SD = 6.80) was higher than that of translated fictional dialogues (M = 15.62, SD = 7.13), the independent samples t-test showed that differences between the two text types were marginally significant in terms of the overall score of dimension 1 (t = 2.06, p = .054, df = 18). Instead of stating that the two text types are not statistically different from each, such a marginally significant result needed to be treated with caution. One possible explanation for such a result might be the small sample size in both groups (Huck 2011), that is, only ten translated fictions and ten non-translated fictions were involved in the analysis.

Table 7.2 Score of Dimension 1

Text Type	*N*	*Mean Score*	*Std. Deviation*	*Closest Genre*
Non-translated	10	22.04	6.80	Personal Letters
Translated	10	15.62	7.13	Personal Letters

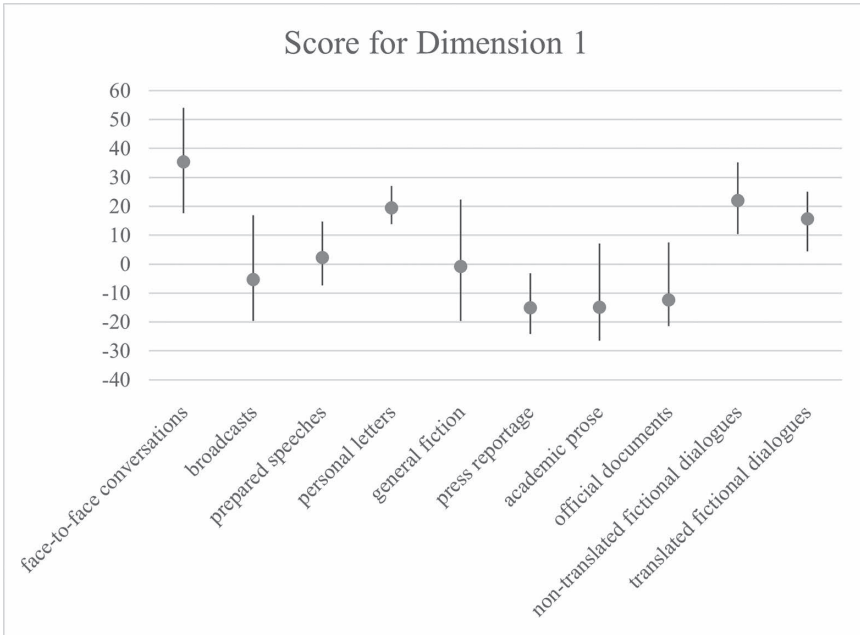

Figure 7.1 Scores for dimension 1 of different registers.

Figure 7.1 shows the spread of scores of different registers regarding dimension 1, in which the degree of orality of translated and non-translated fictional dialogues is illustrated together with related registers. The registers for comparison include face-to-face conversations, broadcasts, prepared speeches, personal letters, general fiction, press reportage, academic prose, and official documents (note the statistics are taken from Biber [1988]). The dots in the middle represent the mean dimension score of the register, and the upper and lower whiskers show the dispersion of the scores. As indicated in Figure 7.1, written registers, like official documents, press reportage, and academic prose, receive negative mean scores. Broadcasts and general fiction also exhibit negative mean scores, but the variation of the scores for these two registers is large, which is possibly due to the influence of sub-genres (Biber 1988). The rest of the registers, including conversations, prepared speeches, personal letters, and translated and non-translated fictional dialogues, received positive mean scores. Among all the registers receiving a positive mean score, prepared speech is the lowest, face-to-face conversations the highest, and personal letters, translated fictional dialogues, and non-translated fictional dialogues range in between. From a functional perspective, the positive scores suggest that these text types are more involved and interactive in nature, and the spread of the dimension scores indicates the different tendency toward orality. The mean scores for both translated and non-translated fictional dialogues

are higher than that of prepared speeches, lower than the mean score of face-to-face conversations, and similar to that of personal letters. This shows that both translated and non-translated fictional dialogues are characterized with a higher degree of orality, though they contain fewer informational features than prepared speeches but less orality features than face-to-face conversations. In addition, compared with the large variation of face-to-face conversations, the variation of fictional dialogues is smaller, indicating that the scripted fictional dialogues are relatively narrower in linguistic features than authentic conversations. In the end, it should also be noted that although both fictional dialogues resemble personal letters regarding mean scores, the variation of fictional dialogues is larger. This shows that fictional dialogues display a lower degree of internal consistency regarding orality than personal letters.

To sum up, translated fictional dialogues contain less orality features than its non-translated counterpart. However, the overall dimension scores indicated that both text types display a similarly high degree of orality. There is a high tendency for these two text types toward orality. Based on the dimension scores, fictional dialogues show great similarity with personal letters but are not directly comparable to face-to-face conversations.

7.4.2 Distribution of Linguistic Features

As indicated by the results of independent samples t-test, translated fictional dialogues did not differ significantly from non-translated fictional dialogues regarding the overall degree of orality. However, since the difference was marginally significant (p = .054), a closer look at the distribution of individual linguistic features might yield more insights into the similarities and disparities between the two text types. Therefore, the Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to compare the distribution of individual linguistic features between the two text types. Table 7.2 shows the results of the Mann-Whitney U test, including the mean rank differences, the Mann-Whitney U, the z-score, and the p-value. The mean rank differences reveal the discrepancy of individual features between the two text types. Features with a p-value smaller than .05 indicate that the linguistic feature is significantly different between the two text types.

As we can see from Table 7.2, 16 out of 28 linguistic features are not significantly different between the two text types. The translated and non-translated fictional dialogues receive similar scores regarding personal pronoun (including *first-person pronouns* and *second-person pronouns*), questions (*direct* wh-*questions*), *present tense*, *sentence relatives*, *independent clause coordinators*, be *as a main verb*, *amplifiers*, *emphatics*, *contractions*, *possibility modals*, and *analytic negation*. In addition, both translated and non-translated fictional dialogues receive similar negative scores regarding the other group of features that are representative of informational texts, like *nouns* (excluding nominalization and gerunds), *word length*, *prepositional phrases*, *attributive adjectives*, and *type-token ratio*.

On the other hand, the Mann-Whitney U test also identifies 11 (out of 28) features that exhibit significantly different distribution in translated and

Table 7.3 Results of Mann-Whitney U-Test

Feature	*Mean Rank Diff.*[a]	*Mann-Whitney U*	*Z*	*Sig. (2-Tailed)*
Private verbs	9.6	2	-3.63	<0.001**
Wh-clauses	8.5	7.5	-3.216	0.001**
Hedges	7.9	10.5	-2.995	0.003**
Pronoun *it*	7.2	14	-2.722	0.006**
Subordinator *that* deletion	6.6	17	-2.496	0.013**
Stranded preposition	6.3	18.5	-2.386	0.017**
Indefinite pronouns	6.2	19	-2.35	0.019**
Discourse particles	5.7	21.5	-2.16	0.031*
Demonstrative pronouns	5.5	22.5	-2.083	0.037*
Pro-verb *do*	5.4	23	-2.043	0.041*
Causative adverbial subordinators	5.3	23.5	-2.007	0.045*
Present tense	4.4	28.0	-1.663	0.096
Analytic negation	4.0	30.0	-1.512	0.130
Contractions	3.8	31.0	-1.436	0.151
Total prepositional phrases	-3.1	34.5	-1.173	0.241
Amplifiers	2.6	37.0	-0.984	0.325
Word length	-2.3	38.5	-0.870	0.384
Attributive adjectives	-2.2	39.0	-0.832	0.406
Emphatics	-2.1	39.5	-0.794	0.427
Be as main verb	2.0	40.0	-0.756	0.450
Possibility modals	-1.1	44.5	-0.416	0.677
Sentence relatives	0.8	46.0	-0.311	0.756
First-person pronouns	0.8	46.0	-0.302	0.762
Second-person pronouns	-0.7	46.5	-0.265	0.791
Type-token ratio	0.2	49.0	-0.076	0.940
Direct *wh*-questions	0.2	49.0	-0.076	0.940
Total other nouns	-0.2	49.0	-0.076	0.940
Independent clause coordination	0.1	49.5	-0.038	0.970

Source: [a] Mean rank diff. = mean rank (non-translated fictional dialogues) – mean rank (translated fictional dialogues),
** Large effect size ($r > 0.5$).
* Medium effect size ($0.3 > r \geq 0.5$).

non-translated fictional dialogues, which are *causative adverbial subordinators*, *demonstrative pronouns*, *discourse particles*, *hedges*, *indefinite pronouns*, *pronoun* it, *private verbs*, *pro-verb* do, *stranded preposition*, *subordinator* that *deletion*, and wh-*clauses*. The mean rank differences of these 11 features are positive, meaning, that the normalized frequency of these specific features which are positively correlated with orality is higher in non-translated than in translated fictional dialogues. Among the 11 features, 7 features, that is, *private verbs*, wh-*clauses*, *hedges*, *pronoun* it, *subordinator* that *deletion*, *stranded preposition*, and *indefinite pronouns*, exhibit a large effect size. The rest of the 4 features, like *demonstrative pronouns, pro-verb* do, and *causative adverbial subordinators*, have a medium effect size.

Specifically, among the 11 significantly different features, one group of features is related to attitudinal or interpersonal expressions, which are overrepresented in

non-translated fictional dialogues. In comparison, personal feelings or attitudes are relatively underrepresented in the translated fictional dialogues. The feature with the largest effect size are private verbs (e.g., *feel, perceive*), which are symbolic of attitudinal or affective expressions and indicative of interpersonal communication. Private verbs are also one of the features that have the strongest power to distinguish involved from informational texts. The non-translated fictional dialogues use significantly more private verbs than translated ones, revealing that the characters express their personal feelings and thinking more explicitly in the former. For example, in one typical example of the non-translated fiction *Atonement*, the character uses private verbs to express personal ideas or feelings in a series of consecutive sentences.

> *You'd be forgiven for **thinking** me mad wandering into your house barefoot, or snapping your antique vase. The truth is, I **feel** rather lightheaded and foolish in your presence, Cee, and I don't **think** I can blame the heat! Will you forgive me?*
>
> – Robbie

In addition to private verbs, more frequent use of causative adverbial subordinators in non-translated dialogues also suggests an overrepresentation of more attitudinal or affective expressions in this text type. For example, in the original English fiction *American Pastoral*, "because" is frequently used and emphasized (in the form of "b-because" and "b-b-because") to express the strong emotions of the character when s/he is arguing with another person. Another feature that is typical of interactive texts is wh-*clauses*, which function as "structural elaboration" and provide a way to "talk about questions" (Biber 1988, 220). *Wh*-clauses are more prevalent in conversations and speeches. Likewise, the non-translated fictional dialogues exhibited a higher frequency of *wh*-clauses in comparison to translated ones.

Another typical group of features in non-translated fictional dialogues are impersonal pronouns, including *pronoun* it, *indefinite pronouns*, and *demonstrative pronouns*. These pronouns are used as general referents as they carry limited information. Such linguistic features are often associated with a lack of careful thinking, thus featuring one of the typical traits of spoken texts. The higher representation of pronouns and underuse of nominal referents in non-translated fictional dialogues reveal a stronger degree of uncertainty typical of real-time conversations. Therefore, in this aspect, the non-translated fictional dialogues are less informational and share more similarities with real-time conversations than translated fictional dialogues. Besides impersonal pronouns, the underrepresentation of *hedges* (e.g., *maybe*, *possibly*, *kind of*) in translated fictional dialogues also implies that translated fictional dialogues carry a higher degree of perceptual certainty. In the example extracted from the non-translated fiction *Beloved*, the character uses the pronoun *it* to refer to the "ghost" that she was unsure about, and the hedge *maybe* further highlights the uncertainty. Then another character resolved her doubt by firstly using *it* to refer to the ghost, as the first character did, and then shifting from *it* to *she* when referring to the ghost.

I don't know about lonely, Mad, ***maybe****, but I don't see how* ***it*** *could be lonely spending every minute with us like* ***it*** *does. Must be something you got* ***it*** *wants*.

It*'s just a baby. My sister, she died in this house*.

Using *do* as a pro-verb, as a distinctive feature of oral conversations, is also typical of non-translated texts. The word *do* is polysemous and can be used as a general verb in different contexts. The overuse of such a feature in the non-translated subcorpus implies a reduced information density and enhanced orality in non-translated fictional dialogues. In comparison, translated texts prefer precise wording to using the general verb *do*.

Moreover, compared with translated fictional dialogues, non-translated fictional dialogues preferred more reduced forms, represented by the constant omission of subordinator *that* and the more frequent use of stranded prepositions. On the other hand, translated fictional dialogues preserve the subordinator *that* more frequently. For example, in the translated fiction *Border Town*, the translator chose to retain the subordinator *that* when the character was referring to other people's ideas in the utterance.

No. 2, my Cuicui ***tells me that*** *one night during the last month she had a dream*.

It was strange. She ***said that*** *in her dream someone's songs floated her up to the bluffs across the creek, where she picked a handful of saxifrage!*

In comparison, in the non-translated fiction *The Blind Assassin*, subordinator *that* is often omitted, as evidenced in both of the following sentences.

They ***said*** *it was a matter of costs. After the button factory was burned, they* ***said*** *it would take too much to rebuild it*.

In addition, stranded prepositions are underrepresented in translated, while overrepresented in non-translated, fictional dialogues. For example, in one of the non-translated fictions, *Snow Crash*, the sentence "But you know that bug you were talking to earlier?" contains the stranded preposition "to" at the end of a sentence that is separated from the nominal. Such a feature is typical of orality, whereas the non-stranded counterpart is representative of formal discourse. Clearly, the non-translated fictional dialogues display a tendency toward the spoken end of the cline compared with the translated ones.

Discourse particles can serve different pragmatic functions (Aijmer 2002) and are used to express the attitudes and beliefs of speakers regarding the propositional content of an utterance. As such, it also helps to maintain textual coherence especially when the text is fragmented. Two extracts taken respectively from the translated and non-translated texts are used to illustrate the interesting distinction between the two text types. In both examples, the character interacts with the other character in a bad mood and expresses his/her idea about what the other

character has told him/her. In the translated fiction *Schoolmaster*, the speaker expresses his disagreement by directly putting forward his suggestion using a rhetorical question.

> *Why not let him get on with it?*
> *If it's something simple that one can manage oneself, there's no point in troubling someone else to do it.*

In comparison, in the non-translated fiction *Snow Crash*, "oh" and "well" were utilized to express the speaker's discontent and signal the confrontational situation. From the conversation, it can be inferred that the speaker is not satisfied with the answer given by the other speaker. The use of discourse particles clearly indicates the speaker's displeasure or even indignation. Also, using the discourse particles has, to some extent, mitigated the face-threatening situation caused by the rhetorical question.

> *"Where do you want to go on the Kowloon?"*
> *"The Raft."*
> "***Oh***, ***well,*** *why didn't you say so, that's where our other passenger is going."*

The underuse of discourse particles in translated fictional dialogues as opposed to non-translated ones suggests that translations might lack the authenticity and naturalness of face-to-face conversations compared to the originals.

In summary, although the translated and non-translated fictional dialogues are marginally significant in terms of dimension scores, they differ significantly in terms of the distribution of various individual features. Particularly, in comparison with non-translated fictional dialogues, the translated fictional dialogues are featured by an underrepresentation of personal attitudes and emotions, an underuse of discourse particles, and more complete and precise expressions.

7.5 Discussion

This study reveals the similarities and differences in orality between translated and non-translated fictional dialogues by making use of the multidimensional analysis approach. By treating fictional dialogue as a genre in its own right, we have come up with some interesting findings that might otherwise remain undetected if fiction is treated as one single genre. In this study, it is found that fictional dialogue shares more similarities with personal letters but nonetheless still exhibits a considerable degree of orality. Fictional dialogue, both translated and non-translated, does not resemble general fiction, as reflected by the overall dimension scores, which confirmed the proposal of previous researchers that fictional dialogues and narration are indeed two different genres that should be analyzed separately (Axelsson 2009). One possible explanation might be that fictional dialogues are scripted texts that are artfully created to simulate real-life

conversations representative of the sociocultural background of the characters (Bublitz 2017; Jucker 2021). The findings of the present study also corroborate with Bednarek (2018) and Jucker (2021) that scripted language of fiction displays different features from unscripted conversations regarding orality and thus can never be the same as spontaneous conversations. Notwithstanding the efforts to model and reproduce real-life conversations (Leech and Short 2007), as argued by Chaume (2007, 215), the scripted language are "very normative indeed."

The marginally significant differences between translated and non-translated fictional dialogues show that the two text types still show considerable differences. Such differences are supported by the discrepant normalized frequency distribution of individual linguistic features between the two text types. This is in line with the findings of Brodovich (1997) that translations differ from originals in their portrayal of characters speaking nonstandard language. Such a difference is reflected in vocabulary as well as grammar features, which can partly be attributed to the translators' efforts to standardize translated texts. As far as the current study is concerned, the omission of subordinator *that* and stranded prepositions are less found in translated fictional dialogues, indicating that translated language favors more standardized structures over reduced forms or fragmented ones. The quantitative findings of the present study also corroborate with the qualitative findings of previous research that translated fictional dialogues tend toward standardization of language use (e.g., Read 2013; Tiittula and Nuolijärvi 2016; Nevalainen 2004). In addition, some distinct features of translated fictional dialogues might also be related to translators' decision to explicitate the source text (Blum-Kulka 1986/2000). For example, expressions that indicate vagueness and uncertainties, such as *hedges*, do *as a pro-verb*, *pronoun* it, *indefinite pronouns*, and *demonstrative pronouns*, are often underused in translated fictional dialogues. The findings give clear support for the worries of Ben-Shahar (1994) that translators prefer more specific lexemes and explicit verbalization to generalized or uncertain expressions.

Another possible explanation for the differences between translated and non-translated fictional dialogues might be the influence of the source language. For instance, the present study contradicts Nevalainen (2004), who found that translators frequently used interjections and speech fillers to retain orality in the translation. In the current study, we found that non-translated texts used discourse particles at a higher frequency than translated texts, suggesting that the translations might be subject to unnaturalness and incoherence. One possible reason for the diverged findings might be the influence of the source language. As Liu (2013) found, people with different first language might have different ways of using discourse particles. In the present study, the source language is Chinese, while in Nevalainen's (2004) study, the fictional dialogues were translated from Finnish. Source language clearly has a role to play in the translation of fictional dialogues. The source texts written in different languages might have a different proportion of attitudinal or affective expressions, which are then transferred to the translated texts. As argued by Bishop (1956), compared to Western fiction, emotions in Chinese fiction tend to be implicitly expressed and often conveyed

through the narrator's voice rather than the fictional dialogues. Consequently, when the translators follow the source language norm by opting for a more faithful approach, it is natural that emotional and affective language might be underrepresented in the translated fictional dialogues.

Despite the influence of source language, it should also be noted that the pragmatic functions of certain linguistic features might also be lost in the translation process of standardization or explicitation. The reduced degree of orality might also result in unnaturalness and lack of spontaneity in translated fictional dialogues (Ben-Shahar 1994). As fictional characters who come from different sociocultural backgrounds can be portrayed to exhibit divergent characteristics of speech (Locher and Jucker 2021), the degree of orality should be treated with extra attention in translated fiction which contains the source sociocultural backgrounds written in the target language. So far as the current study is concerned, the relatively lower degree of orality regarding certain linguistic features and the tendency toward standardization and explicitation in translated fictional dialogues, as warned by Tiittula and Nuolijärvi (2016), can influence the shaping of characters and even misrepresent the relationship between characters intended by the author. We suspect that, like other types of translation activities, translators of fictional dialogues are also trapped in a dilemma of either employing a more "literate" approach to produce more faithful but less "authentic" fictional dialogues or opting for a more "adaptational" approach to render less faithful but more "natural" dialogues.

7.6 Conclusion

The current study has used multidimensional analysis to examine the orality features in translated and non-translated fictional dialogues. In comparison to other models, the consistency and perceived robustness of this model have greatly increased the generalizability of the research findings. Our study has found that translation as an important variable has played a crucial role in affecting the profiling of translated fictional dialogues, which differ significantly from non-translated ones in a range of language features.

Notwithstanding the interesting findings, it is admitted that some limitations exist in the present study. The analysis has concentrated on fiction works that were published or translated from the 1970s to the early twenty-first century. Since translation is influenced by negotiation between sociocultural powers and the prevalent translation norms (Rosa 2000), future studies could compile a bigger corpus by including more fiction works for analysis. Another limitation arises from the nature of translation. The findings of this study are restricted to the design of the comparable corpus comprised of translated and non-translated fictional dialogues without referring to the source texts; therefore, the influence of the source texts on the orality features of translation remains unknown. Future studies can be conducted to examine to what extent the differences in orality between these two text types are a result of translation or source language influence. In this regard, the use of composite bilingual corpus (Laviosa 2006, 268) integrating both

comparable and parallel corpora can be fruitfully utilized to explore a number of interrelated variables in translated fictional dialogues.

Note

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