A Comparative Study on the English Translation of the Personalized Language of the Character Huniu (虎妞) in *Luotuo Xiangzi*

Cao Jing[1], Nor Shahila Mansor[1], & Diana Abu Ujum[1]

[1] Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Serdang, Malaysia

Correspondence: Nor Shahila Mansor, Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia. E-mail: nsm@upm.edu.my

Abstract

This study aims to compare and discuss the Chinese-English translations of Huniu's (虎妞) personalized language in four different English translations of the Chinese novel *Luotuo Xiangzi*, supported by Nida's theory of "functional equivalence" and with a demonstration of the features of Huniu's personalized language that lead to difficulties in translation as a framework for the analysis. The analysis reveals that, when translating Huniu's personalized language, the translators adopted various translation methods, including euphemism, literal translation, deletion, and free translation. The findings indicate that the use of euphemisms as a translation strategy does not support maintaining the character's language features and style when translating the swear words used by the character. Proactive changes in the tone of the speech of the character in translation impacts the reproduction of that character's personality and image. In addition, Huniu's language style of the Beijing dialect is difficult to maintain in translation. These findings serve as a reference for the Chinese-English translation of a character's personalized language in novels to facilitate the dissemination of Chinese literature around the world.

Keywords: comparative, Chinese-English translation, character's personalized language, Huniu, *Luotuo Xiangzi*

1. Introduction

The language of characters plays a crucial role in literary works, and the success of a novel is greatly influenced by its characters. The characters' language are extremely personalized to showcase their uniqueness, further the plot, engage the reader's attention, and to convey the author's writing style (Pan, 2010). The characters' personalized languages in Chinese novels have presented significant challenges to translators because of the differences between Chinese and Western cultures, the various ways in which Chinese and Western languages can be expressed, as well as personal characteristics, such as dialects, in some characters' languages. In the process of translating novels, translators tend to have an inadequate understanding of the importance of a character's language with personalized features and neglect to do an in-depth investigation of the character's personalized language. As a result, the subtleties of the character's language are unintentionally lost, and the character's image will lose some of its brilliance.

Written by Lao She, *Luotuo Xiangzi* is considered to be one of the finest modern Chinese novels (Hsia, 2016, p. 155). It has been translated into 16 languages and is well-known both domestically and internationally. The "main reasons for being an outstanding work of art in modern Chinese fiction and, in addition, so popular among readers, are the creation of realistic and unforgettable characters and the description of their inner lives" (Rydholm, 2019, p. 64). Among these characters, the main female character 虎妞 (Huniu) "is the most glorious female image in modern Chinese literature" (Chen, 2004, p. 11). Huniu was the daughter of Fourth Master Liu, a man who owned a rickshaw shed. Despite being older than 30, she was still single. Despite being ugly and old, she was a skilled manager. No man dared to marry her because she was as powerful as a man. To marry Xiangzi (the male protagonist, a rickshaw man), she planned a trap. However, after marrying him, she continued to be lazy and greedy, leaving Xiangzi to bear the burdens of life. In the end, she died of dystocia with no money for a proper burial.

Due to the significant difference between Chinese and English and the cultural differences between the Eastern and Western worlds, the translation of the discourse or speech from Chinese into English is extremely difficult. Huniu, an actual local "Beijinger," has incredibly rich language features, in contrast to the protagonist, Xiangzi, who is quiet. The distinct features of Huniu's language pose even greater challenges for translators to represent her personalized language style. Moreover, *Luotuo Xiangzi* was translated into four different English versions by four different translators, whose translation activities spanned over 60 years. Each translator had a different approach to the translation of Huniu's personalized language, resulting in different translation effects, which is of great value for research and reference.

Researchers in the literature field have long been interested in the characters in this celebrated novel, while, in the field of translation study, research on the English translations of *Luotuo Xiangzi* has focused on themes related to cultural elements (Wang & Zhang, 2018; Fan, 2019; Wang, 2021), translators' styles (Zhang & Fu, 2019; Ye, 2020), the dynamic to static conversion (Li, 2019; Zhang, 2019; Shi,

2020), and the most recent research relates to the translators' positioning (Zhao & Li, 2021). Nevertheless, few have explored the translation of the featured and personalized language of the distinctive character Huniu in *Luotuo Xiangzi*, and even fewer have compared all four versions. Therefore, the objective of this study is to compare and examine the translation of Huniu's personalized language by four translators, based on identifying the features of Huniu's personalized language, and with the aim of providing some references for the translation of characters' personalized languages in modern novels from Chinese into English to facilitate the dissemination of Chinese literature globally.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Previous Studies on the Translation of a Character's Language from Chinese into English

Researchers of the translation of the character's language from Chinese into English are mainly Chinese. Meng (2015) analyzed how the translator reproduced the language style of the characters in the novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms,* but did not focus on one particular character or provide a theoretical basis. Dong (2018) conducted a comparative study of the translation of the characters' language in *Dream of the Red Mansion* from the perspective of interpersonal grammatical metaphors but focused on the realization of the character's mood of statement and question as well as the command function. Zhang and Gao published a series of articles about the translation of the character's language in Yu Hua's novels, based on House's translation quality evaluation model (Zhang & Gao, 2019, 2020; Gao & Zhang, 2019). These studies attempted to evaluate the translation quality, but lack systematic analyses and evidence. In their study published in 2020, Yuan and Jiang examined how cultural differences affect the methods used to translate the language used by the characters in *Dream of the Red Mansion*. They believed that translators rely on different cultures and had different understandings of the individualized language of each character in the text, which impacts the translation of the characters' language significantly.

2.2 Existing Problems in Previous Literature

Studies on the translation of characters' language from Chinese into English are few and far between. The bulk of the research in this field focus on classical literature, such as *A Dream of the Red Chamber* and *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, whose languages are no longer used in modern Chinese novels. In addition, the majority of the researchers emphasize the importance of character language translation but do not pay enough attention to the translation of the character's personalized language. However, establishing the meaning of a character's language is only the first step. If the features and style of the language cannot be established for the readers, all the characteristics of the character will be significantly reduced. Finally, previous studies have focused on the translation of character dialogue and did not study personalized language characteristics and style reproduction of specific characters, and the selected examples in the studies are not clear and systematic.

3. Theoretical Framework

Nida's functional equivalence translation theory is widely adopted and discussed by scholars and has had great influence in the history of translation. The development of this theory has taken place in three stages: the descriptive linguistics stage, the communication theory stage, and the sociosemiotics stage (Song, 2021).

Nida first proposed the theory in 1964 and distinguished between "formal equivalence" and "dynamic equivalence" in his book *Toward a Science of Translating*. He (1964) believes that there are two main types of equivalence: formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence. Formal equivalence is centered on the source language, trying to reproduce the form and content. In the practice of translation guided by dynamic equivalence, the requirement is that the relationship between the receiver and the message should be the same as the relationship between the source language receiver and the original message.

In 1969, Nida replaced "dynamic equivalence" with "functional equivalence". The "functional equivalence" means that the translation process is not a literal, rigid (or structural), or complete equivalence, but a dynamic and flexible transformation process. The most important (but not the only) factor in measuring the success of a translation is the "readers' response" (Nida, 1969, p. 24). When translating the original text, the translator expresses the meaning of the language through more abundant equivalent forms so that the target language readers can feel the original context and have the same reading experience as the original readers. Functional equivalence translation theory includes four aspects, namely word equivalence, sentence equivalence, text equivalence, and stylistic equivalence (Song, 2021). Among these four aspects, Nida (1969) believes that meaning is the most important, followed by form. If only formal equivalence is emphasized, it is likely to hide the cultural significance of the original language and hinder cultural communication and exchange.

As Nida (1993) notes, in general, it is best to speak of "functional equivalence" in terms of a range of adequacy, since no translation is ever completely equivalent. It is critical to figure out whether the reaction of the target text's readers to the information they get is equal to or infinitely close to the response of the source text's readers to the information they receive (Nida, 1993). A number of different translations can, in fact, represent varying degrees of equivalence. The maximal extent of functional equivalence stands for a high degree of language-culture correspondence between the target language and the source language (Gao, 2018). While achieving "functional equivalence" to the maximum extent, that is, "the readers of a translated text should be understand and appreciate it in substantially the same manner as the original readers did" (Gao, 2018), the linguistic and stylistic features of the source text must be comprehensively considered .

Liu (2003) commented that "the principle of creative functional equivalence proposed by Nida is exceedingly rich in content and can be regarded as all-encompassing, which will always have practical reference value for translators" (p. 166). The translation of Huniu's

personalized language is not only lexical and grammatical issues between the source and target languages but also involves language, form, culture, and other factors. As a result, functional equivalency theory is suitable for this study.

4. Methodology

This paper presents a comparative study of the English translations of the personalized language of Huniu in the Chinese novel, *Luotuo Xiangzi*. The study employs a descriptive-qualitative approach. Descriptive translation studies "describe the phenomenon of translating and translation(s) as they manifest themselves in the world of our experience" (Holmes, 1988, p. 71). The data was collected manually, and, even though some statistics or numbers are included in the findings, the data was manually examined and counted. Thus, this is a qualitative rather than a quantitative study.

4.1 Data Source

The data for the current study was gathered from the first-published *Luotuo Xiangzi* by Renjian Shuwu (人间书屋) in China in 1941 as the source text (ST) and the four English versions of *Luotuo Xiangzi* (shown in the following table) as the target texts.

Table 1. Four English translations of *Luotuo Xiangzi*

No.	First publication year	Title	Translator	Publisher	Abreviation
1	1945	*Rickzhaw Boy*	Evan King	Reynal & Hitchcock, New York, USA	TT1 King
2	1979	*Rickshaw: The Novel Lot'o Hsiang Tzu*	Jean James	University of Hawaii Press, Hawaii, USA	TT2 James
3	1981	*Camel Xiangzi*	Shi Xiaojing	Foreign Language Press, Beijing, China	TT3 Shi
4	2010	*Rickshaw Boy*	Howard Goldblatt	HarperCollins Publishers, New York, USA	TT4 Goldblatt

4.2 Data Collection

The data collection process followed the standard procedures, which involved an overall understanding of the story through reading the novel first, followed by another reading for a second scrutiny. All of Huniu's Chinese speech that contain personalized language features that pose challenges for the translation process were especially scrutinized. Moreover, the corresponding data in the four target texts were mapped one by one and listed. This process was repeated until all the data in the source text and target texts had been identified, mapped, and transcribed.

4.3 Data Analysis

The data were first categorized based on the features of Huniu's personalized language that made translation challenging. Thereafter, the data were analyzed in the spirit of functional equivalence through a comparative and descriptive analysis. Examples as well as figures and tables are presented to illustrate the findings. The expressions or sentences that are discussed are underlined in the ST (source text) and the TT (target text) for clarity of reference, and a transliteration of the Chinese equivalents (Pinyin) is provided to enable the reading of the examples given in the Chinese alphabet.

5. Findings and Discussion

Huniu's personalized language with its distinctive features (as shown in Figure 1) reflects her language style and personality and was translated by four translators using various translation methods.
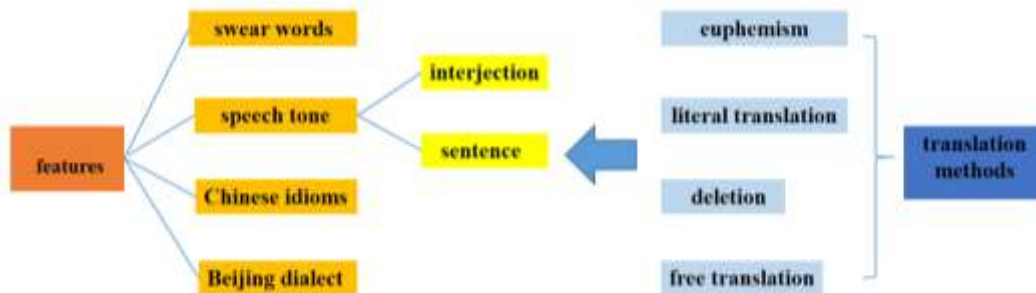

Figure 1. Translation methods used in the translation of Huniu's personalized language features

The following sections examine the four translation versions, based on Huniu's personalized language features, to establish whether the translations achieve functional equivalence in the representation of Huniu's language style.

5.1 Swear Words

As a result of having assisted her father in managing the rickshaw shed and dealing with the rickshaw pullers for a long period of time, Huniu's character is extremely tough. Huniu usually speaks freely, often in vulgar language and sometimes even swearing. Table 2 provides a summary of Huniu's swear words. Thereafter, two examples are presented for detailed analysis.

Table 2. Swear words used by Huniu

ST	Pinyin	TT1 King	TT2 James	TT3 Shi	TT4 Goldblatt
它娘的	tā niáng de	a mother's	motherfucking	hell	hell
死xx	sǐ xx	dead jeebah	dead prick	balls	you-know-what
xx		jeebah	cock	balls	balls

Example 1

ST: "你是了味啦，教我一个人背黑锅，你也不挣开**死 xx 皮**看看我是谁!" (1941, p. 69)

Pinyin: "Nǐ shìle wèi la, jiào wǒ yīgè rén bēihēiguō, nǐ yě bù zhēng kāi sǐ xx pí kàn kàn wǒ shì shéi!"

TT1 King: You've got tired of the flavor, and you want me to carry the black pot all alone. Why don't you pull back the skin on your **dead jeebah** and take a look at me out of your one eye, take a look at who you're dealing with?" (1945, p. 124)

TT2 James: You had a taste and now you make me take the blame all by myself. Why don't you pull back the skin on your **dead prick** and take a look at who I am!" (1979, p. 80)

TT3 Shi: You got what you wanted and now you expect me to take the consequences all on my own! Who the **balls** do you think I am anyway?" (1981, p. 87)

TT4 Goldblatt: You had your fun and now you want to dump everything on me. Well, pull back your **you-know-what** and see who you think you're talking to!" (2010, p. 101)

The preceding scene depicts Xiangzi working as a monthly rickshaw puller for Mr. Cao, and Huniu went there to deceive him by telling him that she was pregnant. Xiangzi persuaded Huniu to not say any more and to lower her voice so that the news did not become known to others. As the daughter of the owner of a rickshaw factory, Huniu was from an exploitative class. However, as she had been in the company of underprivileged rickshaw boys for a long time, she had developed a habit of using vulgar words to establish her authority among the rickshaw pullers. Huniu's exclamation conveyed her rage in the form of a curse.

The underlined words in the above example are the swear words in Beijing style. In the translation of vulgar words related to male sexual organs such as penis, "jeebah," used by King, is the phonetic rendering of a Chinese expression denoting the male sexual organ. It is likely that Western readers will not immediately understand what "jeebah" refers to. James might have used King's translation as a reference when translating it to "prick." These two translators portray Huniu's image with coarse words. The entire phrase was translated by Shi as "Who the balls do you think I am anyway?" The "balls" fits really well as a typical English swear word that also refers to the male sexual organ and conveys Huniu's outrage while also revealing her rudeness. However, Goldblatt used the expression "you-know-what" to express the swearing in TT4, so it lost the strength of the original swearing and weakened Huniu's rude image.

5.2 Speech Tone

Speech tone is a communicative means used to express position, attitude, consciousness, or presupposition. Speech tone serves a variety of purposes, such as expressing implicit meaning beyond the scope of language, enhancing the characters in a work, and more. There are many interjections and onomatopoeia in Huniu's speech, and the sentences are often rhetorical questions or exclamations. Therefore, a detailed analysis of the tonal characteristics of Huniu's personalized language and its translation, from word level to sentence level, follows.

5.2.1 Interjection

Interjections are words that express exclamation, calling, and reply, such as 唉(ai), 啊(a), 哼(heng), 哦(o)，哎哟(ai yo), 喂(wei), and 嗯(en) (Huang & Liao, 2009, p. 24). Interjections are flexible in pronunciation and semantics and special in syntactic function, so they are often regarded as a special part of speech in Chinese. Interjections are words that express a person's emotion, attitude, or will but have no conceptual meaning (Liu, 2018, p. 89). Huniu used many interjections when speaking, as shown in the following table:

Table 3. Interjections in Huniu's personalized language

ST	Pinyin	TT1 King	TT2 James	TT3 Shi	TT4 Goldblatt
哟	yo/you	you	Ah	Why	Oh
		yo	Oh	Ha	Well
嗨	hai	Hai	Well	Hey	Hey
		Hi	Hey	Hey	Hey
哼	heng	Heng	Humph	Hah	
		Heng		Huh	Hah
		Heng	Faugh	So	
啊	a	Ah	Ah	oh	I see
哦	oh	Oh	Oh	I knew it	I see
嗯	en	Uh-uh-h	Ummm	Heh	Hah

For example, the "哼(heng)" in Table 3 expresses Huniu's dissatisfaction and also irony, which is conducive to shaping her image of being "not easy to mess with." In Table 3, Goldblatt mainly omitted the interjections, and two interjections were translated into "I see," which weakens the effect of the interjections. This distinctive feature of Huniu's verbal expressions has not been shown, leading to a different characterization of Huniu.

5.2.2 Speech Tone of Sentences

In Lao She's description, Huniu speaks in a rich tone, interspersed with rhetorical questions and exclamations. The four translators independently made some proactive changes in the tone of Huniu's language. All the changes made by the four translators to the speech tones in sentences are presented in the following table, and examples are provided to explain the influence of these changes on the Huniu's language features, which are essential to depict Huniu's image.

Table 4. Changes in the speech tone in sentences.

ST		TT1 King	TT2 James	TT3 Shi	TT4 Goldblatt
! → .		81	56	43	100
? → .		0	0	0	4
? → !		0	0	4	2
! → ?		1	3	3	1
?! → ?		2	2	2	1
?! → .		0	0	0	1
Total		84	61	48	109

The table shows that the translators made the most changes to Huniu's exclamation sentences in the source text. King changed 81 exclamatory sentences into declarative sentences and one into an interrogative sentence. James changed 56 exclamatory sentences into declarative sentences and three into interrogative sentences. Shi changed 43 exclamatory sentences into declarative sentences and three into interrogative sentences. Goldblatt changed 100 exclamatory sentences into declarative sentences and one into an interrogative sentence. King and James did not change Huniu's interrogative sentences, but Shi changed four interrogative sentences into declarative sentences and two into exclamatory sentences. Goldblatt changed four questions into declarative sentences. There is also the special questioning tone plus the exclamation tone, represented by "?!," in Huniu's language, which have also been changed in translations.

Example 2

ST: "买车也得悠停着来，当是你是铁作的哪！你应当好好的歇三天！" (1941, p. 37)

Pinyin: "Mǎi chē yě dé yōu tíngzhe lái, dāng shì nǐ shì tiě zuò de nǎ! Nǐ yīngdāng hǎohǎo de xiē sān tiān!"

TT1 King: "Buying a rickshaw is something that you go about more slowly. You think you're made of steel. You ought to take a good rest for two or three days!" (1945, p. 59)

TT2 James: "You'd better control yourself if you want to buy a rickshaw, but of course you are made of iron! You ought to take a few days off." (1979, p. 42)

TT3 Shi: "Even so, you must take your time. Think you're made of steel? You ought to rest for three days."(1981, p. 51)

TT4 Goldblatt: "Buying a rickshaw takes time, even for someone who thinks he's made of steel. What you need is a good rest." (2010, p. 54)

The first short sentence in this example is an exclamation sentence, which seems to be Huniu blaming Xiangzi, but actually expresses her love and care for him. Because of Huniu's character, she does not express her concern gently.

Therefore, with the change in the tone of this exclamation, it no longer aligns with Huniu's character or her mood at this time, and the equivalent effect is insufficient. Imperative sentences are sentences that people use to express their wish to command, demand, discourage, prohibit, etc. (Zhao, 2010, p. 95). Command, suggestion, and request sentences are all examples of affirmative imperative sentences in Chinese (Zhou, 2017, p. 16). Therefore, clearly, the second short sentence in this example is an imperative sentence. King, James, and Shi all used "ought to" to indicate a command, and Goldblatt made a suggestion. The four translators have achieved equivalence in terms of meaning, and the translations are all imperative sentences. But TT1 retained the exclamation mark, which works better in terms of functional equivalence.

Example 3

ST: "过来先吃碗饭！毒不死你！两碗老豆腐管什么事？！" (1941, p. 32)

Pinyin: "Guòlái xiān chī wǎn fàn! Dú bùsǐ nǐ! Liǎng wǎn lǎo dòufu guǎn shénme shì?!"

TT1 King: "First come over here and eat a bowl of rice! It can't poison you! What use are two bowls of bean curd?" (1945, p. 52)

TT2 James: "Come have a bowl of rice first. It won't kill you. What are two bowls of bean curd?" (1979, p. 36)

TT3 Shi: "Come and have a bowl of rice. It won't poison you! Two bowls of bean curd, what kind of a meal is that?" (1981, p. 44)

TT4 Goldblatt: "Come eat first,"..."We won't poison you, and two bowls of bean curd hardly make a meal." (2010, p. 46)

A question mark is used after a question to show the interrogative tone. An exclamation point is used at the end of a sentence to express a strong tone of voice. The question mark and exclamation mark can be used together because of the figurative nature of punctuation and the visual nature of written language. Authors mobilize all verbal and non-verbal means to enhance the expressive force and appeal of their works. This form of expression that has both interrogative and exclamatory tones has the function of blending more complex feelings into one (Gui, 2004).

In this example, Huniu called Xiangzi over for dinner, using two exclamation marks in a row, which is extremely strong. James and Shi retained only one exclamatory sentence, while Goldblatt changed both, and the tone is significantly weakened. Huniu wondered whether two bowls of old tofu would be enough to fill her stomach. She also felt that a young man as big as Xiangzi could not have had enough to eat after only two bowls of bean curd. Huniu spoke in an exclamatory tone, with a little blame and command, hoping to persuade Xiangzi to come to dinner. To depict Huniu's complicated emotions, the author uses a question mark and an exclamation mark to express the tone. The four translators changed the tone, which was not in line with the functional equivalence and the reproduction of Huniu's image.

5.2.3 Chinese Idioms

The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2003, p. 741) defines an idiom as "a phrase which means something different from the meanings of the separate words; the way of making a statement typical of a person or a people in their use of language." However, in *Ci Hai*, a Chinese dictionary, "idiom" is defined as "set phrases or sentences, whose structure is often established and cannot be easily changed, including "set phrase, proverb, maxim, Chinese common saying, and a two-part allegorical saying" (Zhang & Wang, 2010, p. 880).

Example 4

ST: "...别忘恩负义就得了！" (1941, p. 50)

Pinyin: "... Bié wàng'ēnfùyì jiù déliǎo!"

TT1 King: "...Just so you're not **ungrateful.**" (1945, p. 85)

TT2 James: "...Don't '**forget favors and turn your back on kindness**,' that's all!" (1979, p. 57)

TT3 Shi: "..., so don't be **ungrateful!**" (1981, p. 68)

TT4 Goldblatt: "...Just don't be ungrateful." (2010, p. 73)

Example 5

ST: "别的都甭说，你别**忘恩负义**就得了！" (1941, p. 72)

Pinyin: "Bié de dōu béng shuō, nǐ bié wàng'ēnfùyì jiù déliǎo!"

TT1 King: "There's no use saying the rest, only you mustn't **forget favors that are done you, or turn your back on a good intent**." (1945, p. 129)

TT2 James: "There's no need to say any more. Just don't **'forget favors or be ungrateful for kindness'** and that'll be fine." (1979, p. 83)

TT3 Shi: "As long as you're not **ungrateful**, I don't care about the rest." (1981, p. 90)

TT4 Goldblatt: "All I ask is a little gratitude." (2010, p. 104)

The highlighted phrases in examples 4 and 5 are the same Chinese idiom, which means to forget the kindness and beneficence of others and, instead, do things that make others sad. In the examples, the translations of James and Shi are the same, while King and Goldblatt's translations are different. James' translation method is literal translation. She enclosed the translation in quotation marks to create the impression that it is a fixed phrase in Chinese and that the form and meaning are equivalent. All four translators used "cannot be ungrateful" to translate this idiom, which is a free translation that impacts formal equivalence negatively. In example 5, King opted for a word-for-word translation, equivalent in both form and meaning, and Goldblatt sacrificed the translation of the idiom in favor of directly directly translating it into the implied meaning, but he forfeited some of the function in terms of accurately representing Huniu's linguistic traits.

Example 6

ST: "嫁鸡**随鸡**，什么也甭说了。" (1941, p. 134)

Pinyin: "Jià jī suí jī, shénme yě béng shuōle."

TT1 King: "**When you marry a rooster, you've got to be content to be a chicken like the rest**." (1945, p. 257)

TT2 James: "**If you marry a rooster you obey the rooster** and that's that." (1979, p. 163)

TT3 Shi: "**Now I'm stuck with you**, there's no more to be said." (1981, p. 167)

TT4 Goldblatt: "As they say, **marry a rooster and spend your life as a hen**. There's nothing more I can say." (2010, p. 201)

The underlined phrases in this example is an idiom that means that a married woman has to be satisfied with her husband, no matter how good or bad he is. It is often used in conjunction with "嫁狗随狗 (which literally means marry a dog, follow a dog) to become a two-part allegorical saying, and its usage and meaning remain unchanged. This idiom is in line with the requirements of the feudal idea that women in marriage have to obey their husbands. This sentence is what Huniu said to Xiangzi. TT1, TT2, and TT4 all used a literal translation. In TT2, James chose the word "obey" to express the spirit of this idiom. TT1 was another way of saying that, if a woman is married, she should be content with the situation. In the Chinese marriage culture, the subject of "嫁" is the female, and the subject of "娶" is the male, but there is no specific distinction in Western culture, and they all use the word "marry." In TT4, Goldblatt creatively used "rooster" and "hen" to refer to men and women, rendering the source text by finding the closest understandable words with an extra equivalent effect in terms of the Chinese culture. It is obvious that all four translators have achieved functional equivalence.

5.2.4 Beijing Dialect

Halliday (1964) believes that dialect is a linguistic expression of the basic characteristics of a social system and a language variant of "user dependent" (p. 11). Linguist Catford (1965) divided dialects into regional dialects, social dialects, temporal dialects, idiolect, and other types (p. 85–89). Translation scholar Newmark (1988) summarized the functions of dialects into three dimensions, namely expressing language style, highlighting class differences, and displaying regional cultural characteristics (p. 195). In literary works, dialects serve as artistic expression. Therefore, theoretically, it is impossible for any author to create literature without the use of their mother tongue (dialect) (Dong & Sun, 2005). Lao She, the author of *Luotuo Xiangzi*, is Manchu and a native of Beijing. One of the praised aspects of *Luotuo Xiangzi* is the use of the Beijing dialect. As a native "Beijinger" in the novel, one of Huniu's language features is also the "Beijing flavor." The Beijing dialect is mainly used in Beijing City, Chengde City, Langfang City, and Zhuozhou City in the Hebei Province, and Chifeng City in Inner Mongolia (Wang & Li, 2016, p. 39).

Example 7

ST: "...说翻了的话，我会堵着你的宅门骂三天三夜！你上哪儿我也找得着！我还是**不论秧子**!" (1941, p. 69)

Pinyin: "... Shuō fānle dehuà, wǒ huì dǔzhe nǐ de zháimén mà sān tiān sān yè! Nǐ shàng nǎ'er wǒ yě zhǎo dézháo! Wǒ háishì bùlùn yāngzi!"

TT1 King: "...If you want it that way, I'm perfectly capable of blocking the door of the house where you work and cursing you out for three days and three nights. Wherever you go, I can find you. I'm **not going to be stopped by any arguments about right or wrong or who was at fault to begin with**. (1945, p 123)

TT2 James: "...If you abandon me, I'll stand at your boss's doorway and curse three days and three nights in a row! I'll find you anywhere you go. I'm **not interested in who's to blame**! (1979, p. 80)

TT3 Shi: "...If we reach no agreement, I can stand outside your employer's gate and curse you three days and nights! I **don't care who you are**; wherever you go I can find you!" (1981, p. 87)

TT4 Goldblatt: "...Come up with something or I'll stand outside your room and curse you for three straight days and nights! And I'll find you no matter where you go! I **don't care who I'm dealing with**. (2010, p. 101)

The context of this example is that, after the premarital sex, Xiangzi left Huniu's father's rickshaw shed and went to Mr. Cao's house to work as a monthly rickshaw puller. The two had not seen each other for a long time when Huniu came to Xiangzi and told him that she was pregnant, so she came to discuss this with him. Xiangzi's attitude made Huniu angry. She put him down with cruel words and almost threatened Xiangzi, saying that, if he did not do anything, she would scold him for three days and nights. The underlined phrases in this example portray a Beijing dialect expression that means to argue without consideration of who the other party may be or what status they may have. In this context, Huniu would not stop looking for Xiangzi no matter whether she was right or wrong or had caused the problem herself. Therefore, King used the explanation translation method to explain the hidden meaning in Huniu's sentence, including the background, as understood by the translator. The others first understood the meaning of this dialect and then adopted the method of literal translation. The translations of all four translators have achieved functional equivalence.

Example 8

ST: "你看见什么啦？我受了一天的累，临完**拿我杀气**呀，先等等！..." (1941, p. 112)

Pinyin: "Nǐ kànjiàn shénme la? Wǒ shòule yītiān de lèi, lín wán ná wǒ shāqì ya, xiān děng děng!..."

TT1 King: "What have you seen? I've worked myself weary all day, and at the finish of it you **take out your temper on me**. Wait a little, wait a little..." (1945, p. 209)

TT2 James: "So what have you noticed? Here I've been wearing myself out all day long and now you **take your anger out on me** at the end of it. Now just you wait a minute..." (1979, p. 134)

TT3 Shi: "I'm fagged out as it is without you **venting your spleen on me**!..." (1981, p. 140)

TT4 Goldblatt: "And what is that? After knocking myself out all day, I'm not going to put up with your **accusations**!..." (2010, p. 167)

The context of this example is Fourth Master Liu's realization, after his birthday banquet, that the event seemed to be staged to cause him to suffer a loss. When he learned that the accountant claimed the guests' gifts did not amount to a significant amount of money, he became even more irate. He started grumbling and even using foul language at the mahjong table. When the old man changed the subject to Huniu, she became irritated. In the underlined phrase, "拿" literally means "take," "我" is "me," "杀" means "kill," and "气" refers to anger or temper in this context. "Take somebody to kill the anger" is a Beijing dialect phrase that means to express negative emotions towards someone. People in other parts of China may be unable to understand it, and it has even created a significant barrier to the understanding of readers from the Western culture and English-speaking countries. The original sentence has the meaning of an imperative sentence, and the subject is "you," i.e., Huniu is referring to her father. The first three translators all adopted the method of literal translation and explained this sentence to the readers. Goldblatt used free translation, changed the subject and the imperative tone to Huniu herself, who expresses a wish to not to be offended. Since it is difficult to achieve equivalence with this dialect, it is a success if a translation can convey the meaning.

6. Conclusion

This paper analyzes the language of the character Huniu in *Luotuo Xiangzi* and finds that her personalized language features include rich swear words and modal particles, speech tones, Chinese idioms, and the Beijing dialect. A comparative analysis revealed that the four translators flexibly adopted the translation strategies of explanation, literal translation, and free translation and, basically, achieved functional equivalence. Furthermore, this paper indicates that the style and effect of the dialect in the source language are difficult to maintain in the target language. Swear words should not be translated to euphemisms. Moreover, the translation method of omission and a change in the tone of speech are not conducive to the functional equivalence of the character's personalized translation. However, the significant obstacles the four translators had to surmount are worthy of affirmation. The achievements of the four translations have been tested by academia, readers, the market, and over time, and their value is precisely the purpose of translation research and reference.

Language is the window to the soul, and the words of the different characters are also a kind of speech of the speaker, expressing views and emotions. A character's language in a novel is "tailored-made," whose details are related to the overall portrayal of the character. The translation of the personalized language of characters involves a wide range of content that is neither a matter of pragmatics or register nor simply a matter of achieving the purpose of communication. Therefore, only by achieving functional equivalence can the target readers feel the language style of the character and see a well-rounded portrayal of the characters in the translations.

Admittedly, data from only one character in this paper is limiting in terms of revealing general features and translation issues in the characters' languages. Further investigations are needed to explore the features and solutions to the translation of characters' personalized languages.

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