

# Amplifiers and Profanities in the English and French Translations of Mo Yan's *Frog*: A Comparative Corpus-Assisted Discourse Analysis

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Received: January 25, 2026

Accepted: April 2, 2026

Online Published: July 7, 2026

doi:10.5430/wjel.v16n6p85

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v16n6p85>

## Abstract

This article presents a comparative corpus-assisted discourse analysis of amplifiers and profanities in the English and French translations of Mo Yan's *Frog*. Combining frequency-based corpus profiling with Critical Discourse Analysis, the study examines cross-text differences in amplification and taboo calibration and interprets them in relation to target-language norms, readership expectations, and translator strategy. The results show that the French translation contains a higher normalized frequency within the selected amplifier set, whereas the English translation shows a higher overall profanity rate than the French version. Qualitative analysis further indicates that these differences are mediated by contextual and stylistic factors rather than attributable to translator gender alone. The study contributes to literary translation research by showing how expressive intensity and taboo language are reconfigured across translation contexts through both lexical patterning and discourse-level choices.

**Keywords:** gender, corpus linguistics, amplifiers, profanities, critical discourse analysis

## 1. Introduction

How translators render intensity and taboo language is consequential in literary translation because these linguistic resources shape character voice, interpersonal stance, emotional texture, and ideological positioning (Crisafulli, 1997; Sukur & Fadzil, 2024). In this study, amplifiers are treated as degree-raising expressions that strengthen evaluation or affect (e.g., intensifying adverbs, emphatic constructions, and other linguistic realizations of heightened force), while profanities refer to taboo or stigmatized expressions associated with swearing, insult, and culturally sensitive vulgarity. Both categories are socially regulated and frequently index norms of politeness, authority, and gendered expectations in discourse. Accordingly, the translation of amplifiers and profanities offers a theoretically and methodologically tractable site for examining how identities and ideologies may be reproduced, negotiated, or muted in target texts.

Following the cultural turn in Translation Studies, scholarship has increasingly foregrounded the translator's agency and the socio-ideological conditions under which translations are produced. Feminist translation theory, in particular, established gender as a critical category for analyzing textual intervention and power relations in translation. Simon (1996) argues that feminist translation is not confined to women's writing but constitutes a politically engaged practice that rethinks authorship, fidelity, and authority. This orientation aligns with poststructuralist views of meaning-making and situates translation within broader cultural and ideological discourses, including postmodernism and postcolonialism.

Building on this theoretical foundation, a growing body of research has examined how gender relates to translation choices, representation, and ideological filtering (Castro & Ergun, 2017; Savoldi et al., 2021; von Flotow, 2023; Wang, 2025). Corpus-based investigations have reported gender-associated tendencies in the use and translation of stance and evaluative resources such as intensifiers, hedges, personal pronouns, and other markers of affect and alignment (Meng, 2020; Yousefabi et al., 2025). These studies suggest that translators may pattern differently when working with emotionally charged or culturally sensitive material, including language that intensifies affect or expresses aggression and social transgression.

At the same time, scholars have cautioned against treating gender as a stable explanatory variable reducible to a male–female binary. Such comparisons can obscure the fact that gender is widely theorized as fluid, contextual, and performative, shaped by ideology, culture, audience expectations, and institutional constraints (Shaheen et al., 2021; Irshad & Yasmin, 2022; von Flotow & Kamal, 2020). From this perspective, what appears to be a “gender effect” may be mediated by the translator's positionality, professional norms, paratextual framing, publisher constraints, and target-culture sensitivities. Consequently, research that claims gendered translation differences must also account for these extralinguistic variables to avoid gender essentialism.

Despite these advances, gender-oriented studies in Translation Studies still face two recurring limitations. First, many analyses implicitly retain binary assumptions or treat gender as the primary driver of textual patterns without adequately modeling mediating factors (Meng, 2019; Zhang, 2025). Second, research focusing specifically on the translation of amplifiers and profanities—forms that are both ideologically charged and culturally regulated—remains limited, particularly in literary translation (Xiao, 2024). More specifically, there remains limited research that examines amplifiers and profanities together in literary translation through a comparative corpus-assisted

and discourse-analytical design, especially in ways that foreground contextual mediation rather than assuming direct gender causality. Because amplifiers and profanities often function as sites of value negotiation (e.g., mitigation, amplification, sanitization, or intensification), they provide a sensitive lens through which translators’ interpretive positioning and strategic choices can be examined (Valde n, 2024).

This study addresses these gaps through a comparative examination of Mo Yan’s *Frog* and its published translations into English and French by translators of different genders. The English translation by Howard Goldblatt and the French translation by Chantal Chen-Andro offer a productive comparative case because each translation was produced within distinct target-language norms and publishing ecologies, where taboo language and expressive intensity may be regulated differently. In this study, translator gender is treated not as an isolated causal variable but as a contextual and interpretive dimension that may intersect with target-language norms, translator style, readership expectations, and publication conditions. Accordingly, the study investigates whether observable cross-text differences arise in the treatment of amplifiers and profanities and how such differences may be interpreted in relation to these mediating factors. This comparative design is analytically useful because it allows observable cross-text differences in the rendering of amplifiers and profanities to be identified across two translations of the same source text, while interpreting those differences in relation to contextual mediation rather than attributing them to gender alone.

Methodologically, the study integrates corpus-based analysis with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The corpus component supports the identification of distributional and patterned differences in the treatment of amplifiers and profanities across translations, while CDA enables context-sensitive interpretation of how these linguistic choices contribute to the construction of voice, stance, and ideological positioning in the target texts. This combined design permits (i) pattern description at the textual level and (ii) interpretive explanation grounded in discourse context rather than in essentialized assumptions about gender.

Guided by poststructuralist approaches to gender and by prior research on evaluative and taboo language, the study proceeds with three analytical expectations. First, the English and French translations are expected to show measurable cross-text differences in the treatment of the selected amplifiers and profanities. Second, such differences are expected to require interpretation beyond simple lexical counting, since target-language conventions and discourse context may shape how intensity and taboo force are realized. Third, any observed patterns are expected to reflect mediation by contextual and strategic factors, including target-language norms, readership expectations, translator preferences, and publication conditions, rather than any single explanatory variable.

The study has three objectives and corresponding research questions (Table 1). By clarifying how identity, ideology, and context interact in the translation of expressive and taboo language, the research contributes to ongoing debates in gender and translation studies and offers practical implications for translator education and professional decision-making in culturally sensitive literary translation.

Table 1. Research objectives and research questions

Item	Research Objectives (RO)	Research Questions (RQ)
1	RO1: To identify and compare cross-text differences in the rendering of selected amplifiers in the English and French translations of <i>Frog</i> .	RQ1: What cross-text differences are observable in the rendering of selected amplifiers in the English and French translations of <i>Frog</i> ?
2	RO2: To identify and compare cross-text differences in the rendering of selected profanities in the English and French translations of <i>Frog</i> .	RQ2: What cross-text differences are observable in the rendering of selected profanities in the English and French translations of <i>Frog</i> ?
3	RO3: To interpret these differences in relation to target-language norms, readership expectations, translator strategy, publication context, and the possible relevance of gendered positioning.	RQ3: How can the observed differences be explained in relation to contextual and strategic factors, including the possible relevance of gendered positioning?

Description: The table summarizes the study’s research objectives and their corresponding research questions.

**2. Literature Review**

*2.1 Gender in Translation Studies*

Since the 1990s, gender has become an established analytical lens in Translation Studies, with feminist translation theory providing a foundational framework for examining translator agency, intervention, and ideological positioning (von Flotow, 1991, 1997; Simon, 1996; von Flotow, 2020). Within this tradition, translators are theorized not as neutral conduits but as socially situated agents whose interpretive decisions may reflect culturally available gender norms and ideological commitments. In literary translation in particular, where voice, stance, and characterization are salient, gender has been discussed as one dimension through which translation choices may become marked, whether deliberately or inadvertently.

Empirical work has offered indications that gender may correlate with patterned translational behavior in domains that are socially regulated or ideologically sensitive. Santaemilia (2005), for example, reports gender-related differences in the translation of sexually explicit language, while Silveira Brisolara (2011) argues that lexical and stylistic decisions can index gendered subjectivities under certain ideological orientations. More recently, Valde n (2024) examines swearword translation in Spanish audiovisual translation and suggests

that gender-associated tendencies can remain observable even in professional settings. Taken together, this body of research supports the general proposition that translation is shaped by cultural, ideological, and individual factors, among which gender has been treated as a potentially relevant—though not self-sufficient—explanatory dimension.

### 2.2 Comparative Studies of Male and Female Translators

A substantial strand of research compares translations produced by male and female translators to identify recurring tendencies in the handling of gendered themes and ideologically salient language. Irshad and Yasmin (2022), in their analysis of feminist literature translation, report that female translators more often preserve or accentuate feminist meanings, whereas male translators more frequently neutralize gendered language. Similarly, Liu (2024), using feminist translation criticism, analyzes English and French translations of *Mulan Ci* (“The Ballad of Mulan”) and argues that some male Western translators reconstruct the heroine’s voice through culturally gendered assumptions that may diminish the representation of female agency. In addition, Shaheen et al. (2021) apply Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to show how a male translator’s ideological positioning can shape the rendering of feminist themes, indicating that translation outcomes are influenced by the interaction of gender with cultural and political constraints.

At the same time, scholars caution that male–female comparisons may reproduce binary assumptions that oversimplify gender as a stable causal variable (von Flotow & Kamal, 2020). In poststructuralist accounts, gender is more appropriately understood as fluid, contextual, and performative, mediated by ideology, institutional constraints, readership expectations, and translator positionality (Shaheen et al., 2021; Irshad & Yasmin, 2022). Accordingly, even where gender-associated patterns are observed, they may be substantially shaped—or overridden—by factors such as training, genre conventions, editorial norms, and target-culture acceptability (Yousefabadi et al., 2025). This critique motivates analytical designs that can identify patterns while also providing context-sensitive explanations that avoid gender essentialism.

### 2.3 *Frog, Mo Yan, and Gendered Representation*

Mo Yan’s *Frog* (Wa; Shanghai Literature and Art Press, 2009) provides a productive site for examining gendered representation and its translation because the narrative foregrounds themes of reproductive governance, maternal ideology, and individual trauma. The protagonist Gugu, a midwife implicated in the enforcement of China’s one-child policy, is situated at the intersection of state authority and embodied female experience, making the novel particularly relevant to debates about female subjectivity and patriarchal structures. Scholarship has questioned whether Mo Yan’s depiction of women in *Frog* should be read as feminist, ambivalent, or constrained by patriarchal narrative frameworks (Yang, 2022). These interpretive debates underscore the likelihood that translation decisions—especially those affecting intensity, stance, and taboo language—may shape how gendered experience and agency are represented to target readers.

### 2.4 Amplifiers and Gendered Language Use

In this article, intensifier is used as the broader umbrella term for degree-modifying resources, while amplifier refers to degree-raising intensifiers and serves as the main operational term in the present study. Within traditional grammatical classifications, boosters and maximizers may be treated as subtypes of amplification (Quirk et al., 1985). Accordingly, the discussion below uses amplifier for consistency when referring to the study’s selected analytical category. Early gender-and-language scholarship proposed that women use intensifiers more frequently than men, linking this tendency to socialization and norms of emotional expressiveness (Lakoff, 1975). Subsequent corpus-based studies have reported gender-associated variation in intensifier use in particular contexts (Bradac et al., 1995; Tagliamonte & Roberts, 2005), although findings may vary by genre, setting, and community norms. Cross-linguistically, French intensifying items such as *absolument*, *énormément*, and *très* serve comparable discourse functions and have been described in grammatical studies of French modification and degree (Guimier, 1996; Riegel et al., 2002). For translation research, the relevance of amplifiers lies in their capacity to modulate voice and stance, potentially reshaping the narrative and interpersonal effects of the source text.

### 2.5 Profanity and Gender

Profanity and taboo language are widely understood as socially regulated resources that index stance, aggression, solidarity, and boundary-making, and research has repeatedly linked their usage to gendered norms and community expectations. Coats (2021) reports that men may use profanities more frequently and more intensely in certain informal contexts, while Lakoff (1975) argues that women’s language is normatively constrained away from vulgarity. Later work suggests that gender gaps may be narrowing and are sensitive to context: Johnson and Lewis (2010) report reduced differences in some settings, and Knirnschild (2019) observes shifts in gendered profanity usage in social media discourse. In translation, taboo language presents acute decision points because renderings are often shaped by target norms of acceptability, market expectations, and editorial practices. Consistent with this, Valdeón (2024) suggests that male translators may preserve stronger taboo expressions more often in some audiovisual contexts, whereas female translators may mitigate or reframe them—though such tendencies are likely mediated by professional constraints and genre conventions.

### 2.6 CDA, Corpus Methods, and Literary Translation

CDA offers a framework for analyzing how language choices relate to ideology and power, and Fairclough’s (2010) model—text analysis (description), discourse practice (interpretation), and sociocultural practice (explanation)—is particularly useful for examining how representations are constructed and circulated. In translation research, CDA has been used to analyze how translators’ choices can reproduce, negotiate, or resist ideological meanings (Baker, 2006; Munday, 2008). However, CDA benefits from systematic textual

evidence when the aim is to compare translations at scale. Corpus methods can provide that evidence by identifying distributional patterns and recurrent translational tendencies, while CDA supports context-sensitive interpretation of how those patterns operate in narrative voice and ideological positioning.

Against this background, the present study combines corpus-based analysis (supported by tools such as AntConc) with CDA to examine the English translation of *Frog* (Mo, 2014) and the French translation (Mo, 2013). This combined approach enables the study to (i) identify patterns in the treatment of amplifiers and profanities across translations and (ii) interpret how those patterns contribute to gendered representation in context. Importantly, the study treats translator gender as a mediated, non-deterministic dimension of translation behavior and therefore also considers explanatory factors such as target-culture norms, readership expectations, and translator strategies.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a comparative corpus-assisted discourse-analytical design, combining (i) quantitative corpus profiling and (ii) qualitative Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Quantitatively, frequencies, normalized frequencies, and distributional patterns of selected amplifiers and profanities are compared across a Chinese source-text corpus and two target-text corpora (English and French). Qualitatively, CDA is applied to aligned textual instances to interpret how lexical choices contribute to stance, voice, and gendered representation in context. The design supports pattern identification and context-sensitive explanation; it does not treat translator gender as a deterministic causal factor, but as one mediated by target-culture norms, readership expectations, and translator strategy.

#### 3.2 Materials and Corpora

This is a text-based study and involves no human participants. The materials consist of the source text and its published translations:

- ST: Mo Yan, *Wa* [*Frog*] (Shanghai Literature and Art Press, 2009).
- TT1: Mo Yan, *Frog*, English translation by Howard Goldblatt (Penguin, 2014).
- TT2: Mo Yan, *Grenouilles* [*Frog*], French translation by Chantal Chen-Andro (Éditions du Seuil, 2013).

Three monolingual corpora were constructed:

- Chinese corpus (ST): 110,358 tokens
- English corpus (TT1): 127,051 tokens
- French corpus (TT2): 162,430 tokens

The English and French translations of *Frog* constitute an appropriate comparative corpus because both are full published translations of the same source novel, both circulate in major target-language literary systems, and both render a text in which amplification, confrontation, and taboo language are narratively salient. The comparison is therefore intended not to isolate gender as a single causal variable, but to examine observable cross-text differences between two target texts derived from the same source text and to interpret those differences in relation to multiple mediating factors, including target-language norms, translator strategy, publication context, and the possible relevance of gendered positioning.

To support distributional analysis, each corpus was segmented into multiple files by chapter (one chapter per text file) and saved in UTF-8 plain-text format. Basic cleaning was performed to remove non-narrative paratext that could distort counts (e.g., publisher front matter), while preserving punctuation and dialogue formatting because amplifiers and profanities frequently occur in spoken interaction.

#### 3.3 Operational Definitions and Variables

##### 3.3.1 Amplifiers

Consistent with the terminology established in Section 2.4, amplifiers are operationalized here as degree-raising lexical items that increase intensity in evaluation or affect. Following classifications in English and French linguistic research (Fohlin, 2008; Guimier, 1996; Holmes, 1990; Lorenz, 1999; Paradis, 1997; Quirk et al., 1985; Riegel et al., 2002), the analysis focuses on a controlled set of high-frequency amplifier forms that are well described in both languages. This controlled list was used to generate a focused and replicable comparison of recurrent degree-raising forms; it is not intended as an exhaustive inventory of all amplification strategies in either translation.

The following 13 amplifier forms were used as AntConc search terms:

- English (TT1): *a lot, absolutely, completely, deeply, enormously, entirely, extremely, highly, of course, perfectly, terribly, totally, very*
- French (TT2): *beaucoup, absolument, complètement, profondément, énormément, entièrement, extrêmement, hautement, bien sûr, parfaitement, terriblement, totalement, très*

These forms were selected based on established descriptions in the literature and cross-linguistic comparability (supported by dictionary-based equivalence checks). Searches were conducted to capture occurrences of each form in running text, and each concordance line was manually checked to exclude non-relevant hits. For amplifier searches, excluded cases included non-intensifying uses, metalinguistic mentions, titles, and list-like artifacts. For multiword forms such as *of course* and *bien sûr*, only instances functioning

as discourse-relevant amplifiers in context were retained.

### 3.3.2 Profanities

“Profanities” are operationalized as taboo or stigmatized expressions used for insult, swearing, vulgar reference, or socially marked aggression. Based on the ST corpus, 14 high-frequency and widely distributed profanity items were identified and treated as the focal ST profanity set:

杂种 (zázhǒng), 屁 (pì), 混蛋 (húndàn), 妈的 (mā de), 畜生 (chùshēng), 狗日的 (gǒurì de), 骚货 (sāohuò), 放屁 (fàngpì), 妈呀 (mā ya), 王八蛋 (wángbādàn), 烂货 (lànhuò), 婊子 (biǎozi), 母狗 (mǔgǒu), 老杂毛 (lǎozámáo).

Because some items may have context-sensitive force, each candidate token was verified through concordance review to confirm that it functioned as profanity or taboo language in that context. Only instances functioning as taboo, insulting, or socially marked aggressive expressions were retained; literal, semantically weakened, or non-taboo uses were excluded from the focal dataset. The comparative component examines how these profanities are rendered in TT1 and TT2, drawing on prior work on profanity use and translation (e.g., Knirnschild, 2019).

### 3.4 Sampling Procedures and Extraction

#### 3.4.1 Corpus Extraction and Search Procedures (AntConc)

All corpora were analyzed using AntConc 4.0. For each amplifier term in TT1 and TT2, AntConc was used to obtain:

1. Raw frequency (Frequency)
2. Normalized frequency (NormFreq; per million tokens)
3. Distribution across files (Dispersion evidence)

The amplifier analysis is primarily a controlled target-text lexical comparison of selected degree-raising forms in TT1 and TT2. Claims about translation behavior are therefore limited and are interpreted cautiously, with source-text alignment used mainly in the qualitative CDA examples rather than as a full source-to-target inventory of all amplification shifts. For profanities, concordance lines for each ST profanity item were extracted from the Chinese corpus. Instances were then traced to corresponding stretches in TT1 and TT2 through chapter-based location matching and close reading, enabling comparison of (i) retention, (ii) mitigation, (iii) amplification, or (iv) omission/reformulation at the level of aligned discourse segments.

#### 3.4.2 Sample Size, Precision, and Distribution

For the quantitative component, the effective “sample size” is the full set of occurrences of each targeted term across each corpus. Because corpora differ in total tokens, comparisons rely on normalized frequencies and distributional evidence rather than raw counts alone. Distribution was assessed by examining whether targeted items occur broadly across chapters rather than clustering in isolated sections, reducing the risk that observed differences are driven by local narrative concentration.

### 3.5 Measures and Calculations

#### 3.5.1 Normalized Frequency

To compare corpora of different sizes, normalized frequency per million tokens (NormFreq) was computed as follows:

$$\text{NormFreq} = (\text{Frequency} / \text{TotalTokens}) \times 1,000,000 \quad (1)$$

where Frequency is the raw count of the term in a given corpus and TotalTokens is the token count of that corpus.

#### 3.5.2 Dispersion

Dispersion was evaluated using chapter-level distribution evidence produced by AntConc (dispersion plots and file-level occurrence patterns). The numeric Dispersion values reported are taken directly from AntConc’s dispersion output (Plot Tool), which reports Juilland’s D on a 0–1 scale; 0 indicates that all occurrences are confined to a single file, whereas values approaching 1 indicate a more even spread across files. This measure complements frequency by distinguishing globally characteristic patterns from locally concentrated effects.

### 3.6 CDA Procedure (Qualitative Analysis)

After quantitative profiling, CDA was applied to selected amplifier and profanity instances to interpret how translation choices shape stance and gendered representation in context. These qualitative examples were selected to illustrate broader quantitative patterns identified in the corpus analysis rather than to function as isolated anecdotal cases. CDA followed Fairclough’s (2010) three-dimensional framework:

1. Textual analysis: lexical choice, intensity modulation, mitigation/amplification, and shifts in evaluative force;
2. Discursive practice: how translators’ choices may reflect interpretive positioning and production norms;
3. Sociocultural practice: broader ideological and cultural constraints (e.g., target norms regarding taboo language, reader acceptability).

Selection for CDA prioritized instances that were (i) frequent, (ii) widely distributed, and/or (iii) qualitatively salient (e.g., strong insults, identity-relevant dialogue, or narratively pivotal scenes). Concordance lines were exported from AntConc and organized in Word for close reading and cross-text comparison. In the tables, FileTokens denotes token count per file, Frequency denotes raw occurrences, NormFreq denotes normalized frequency per million tokens, and Dispersion denotes distributional spread across files.

3.7 Reliability and Validity Checks

To enhance coding consistency, all borderline cases in the amplifier and profanity datasets were re-examined through a second concordance-based review by the authors. Profanity candidates were checked to ensure that retained instances functioned as taboo, insulting, or socially marked aggressive expressions rather than literal or semantically weakened uses. In addition, all CDA examples included in the article were re-read and re-coded in a second analytical pass to confirm the stability of the interpretive categories applied in the discussion, including retention, mitigation, amplification, and omission. Any uncertainties were resolved through repeated reference to the surrounding narrative context and the operational definitions established in Section 3.3.

3.8 Ethical and Legal Considerations

All texts analyzed are publicly available published works. The study reports aggregate counts and short illustrative excerpts for analytical purposes consistent with scholarly fair use/quotation practices.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Corpus Analysis of Amplifiers

Table 2. AntConc corpus analysis of amplifiers in TT1

Item	Amplifier	FileTokens	Frequency	NormFreq	Dispersion
1	of course	127,051	51	401.414	0.792
2	very	127,051	34	267.609	0.78
3	deeply	127,051	13	102.321	0.675
4	absolutely	127,051	11	86.579	0.606
5	highly	127,051	8	62.967	0.637
6	totally	127,051	7	55.096	0.695
7	perfectly	127,051	6	47.225	0.728
8	completely	127,051	5	39.354	0.553
9	a lot	127,051	4	31.479	0.551
10	extremely	127,051	3	23.613	0.289
11	terribly	127,051	2	15.742	0.333
12	entirely	127,051	1	7.871	0
13	enormously	127,051	0	0	0
Total		127,051	145	1,141.27	/

Description: TT1 corpus size = 127,051 tokens. Frequency refers to the raw number of occurrences of each search term. NormFreq refers to normalized frequency per million tokens, calculated as (Frequency / FileTokens) × 1,000,000. Dispersion (Juilland’s D), as reported by AntConc, indicates the extent to which a term is distributed across the chapter-segmented files in the corpus (values closer to 1 indicate broader distribution; values near 0 indicate concentration in few files). The table reports only the pre-specified amplifier set used for cross-text comparison; other intensifying items (e.g., *so*, *really*) are not included in this table.

Table 3. AntConc corpus analysis of amplifiers in TT2

Item	Amplifier	FileTokens	Frequency	NormFreq	Dispersion
1	très	162,430	152	935.788	0.922
2	bien sûr	162,430	62	381.703	0.832
3	absolument	162,430	28	172.382	0.817
4	profondément	162,430	18	110.817	0.631
5	entièrement	162,430	13	80.034	0.696
6	beaucoup	162,430	12	73.878	0.653
7	complètement	162,430	12	73.878	0.653
8	parfaitement	162,430	9	55.408	0.692
9	extrêmement	162,430	6	36.939	0.556
10	terriblement	162,430	6	36.939	0.631
11	hautement	162,430	2	12.313	0.333
12	énormément	162,430	1	6.156	0
13	totalemment	162,430	1	6.156	0
Total		162,430	322	1,982.39	/

Description: TT2 corpus size = 162,430 tokens. Frequency refers to the raw number of occurrences of each search term. NormFreq refers to normalized frequency per million tokens, calculated as (Frequency / FileTokens) × 1,000,000. Dispersion (Juilland’s D), as reported by

AntConc, indicates the extent to which a term is distributed across the chapter-segmented files in the corpus (values closer to 1 indicate broader distribution; values near 0 indicate concentration in few files). The table reports only the pre-specified amplifier set used for cross-text comparison; other intensifying items (e.g., *vraiment, tellement*) are not included in this table.

Tables 2 and 3 show a clear difference between TT1 and TT2 in the use of the selected amplifier set (13 matched forms in each target language). When normalized per million tokens, TT1 contains 1,141.27 occurrences, whereas TT2 contains 1,982.39 occurrences. A rate comparison using the log-likelihood ratio test ( $G^2$ ) indicates that this difference is statistically reliable ( $G^2 = 32.34, df = 1, p < .001$ ), with TT2 exhibiting an amplifier rate approximately 1.74 times that of TT1.

This pattern is compatible with classic gender-and-language claims that women may use intensifying resources more frequently (Lakoff, 1975), but it should not be interpreted as evidence of a direct gender effect in the present dataset because translator gender is confounded with target language and publication context (male translator in English; female translator in French). Therefore, the quantitative contrast is treated as a descriptive cross-text difference, and the CDA section below is used to examine mediating factors such as target-language norms, translator strategy, and reader-oriented adaptation.

At the item level, the reordered tables and the comparative figure make the contrast clearer. In TT1, *of course* shows the highest normalized frequency (401.414), followed by *very* (267.609), whereas in TT2, *très* ranks first (935.788), followed by *bien sûr* (381.703) (Figure 1). This preference for high-frequency items within the selected amplifier set is broadly consistent with earlier observations that very common intensifying forms often dominate naturalistic language data (Tagliamonte & Roberts, 2005), although direct comparison should be made cautiously because the present material involves literary translation rather than spoken interactional data. The distributional profiles also diverge from patterns reported in some problem-solving conversational contexts (Bradac et al., 1995), further supporting the need for context-sensitive explanation rather than essentialized gender attribution.

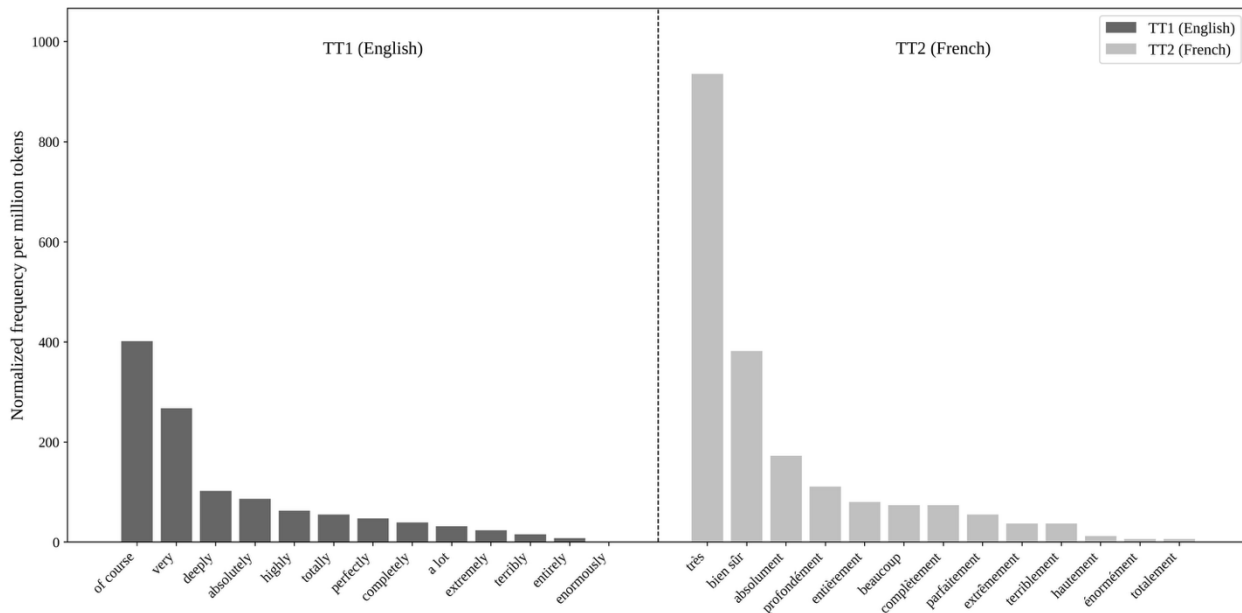


Figure 1. Comparative frequency of selected amplifier forms in TT1 and TT2

Description: The figure compares the normalized frequencies (per million tokens) of the selected amplifier forms in TT1 and TT2. The English and French items are shown in a single comparative visualization to highlight cross-text differences more directly. Corpus sizes are 127,051 tokens for TT1 and 162,430 tokens for TT2. Frequencies reflect occurrences of the pre-specified amplifier forms extracted with AntConc.

Taken together, these quantitative findings address RQ1 by showing that the English and French translations display observable cross-text differences in the rendering of the selected amplifier forms, with TT2 showing a markedly higher normalized frequency within the controlled amplifier set.

#### 4.2 CDA of Amplifiers

The quantitative results above indicate a higher normalized frequency for the selected amplifier set in TT2 than in TT1. However, frequency differences alone do not show how intensity is pragmatically realized in context. The examples below therefore do not function as isolated illustrations; rather, they are selected to show the main discourse mechanisms through which the broader quantitative pattern is instantiated, including explicit amplification, pragmatic reinforcement, and shifts in evaluative force.

To interpret the quantitative patterns above, this section applies Fairclough’s (2010) three-dimensional CDA model to selected amplifier

instances in TT1 and TT2. The analysis proceeds across: (i) textual choices (how intensity is realized), (ii) discursive practice (interpretation and production decisions in translation), and (iii) social practice (broader target-cultural norms and publishing constraints). CDA has been widely used in translation research to link lexical shifts to ideological positioning and intercultural mediation (Schäffner, 2004).

Across the dataset, two recurrent translation patterns are particularly salient:

1. Amplifier addition: an amplifier appears in the target text where no overt intensifier is present in the corresponding source segment (intensification introduced in translation).
2. Amplification shift: the degree of intensity is modified relative to the source segment, either strengthened (up-scaling) or softened (down-scaling), through lexical choice, restructuring, or pragmatic reframing.

### Example 1

**ST:** 这时，母亲的眼泪夺眶而出。她吩咐我们，千万别让你们大奶奶知道，也别出去胡啰啰。(Mo, 2009, p. 35)

**TT1:** Tears fell from Mother's eyes. Do not tell your maternal grandmother, not a word, she commanded. And don't talk about this outside. (Mo, 2014, p. 44)

**TT2:** Alors des larmes jaillirent des yeux de notre mère. Elle nous fit cette recommandation: « Il ne faut absolument pas que votre grand-tante le sache, et n'allez pas raconter n'importe quoi à l'extérieur. » (Mo, 2013, p. 52)

**Textual analysis.** In the ST, 千万别 (qiānwàn bié) functions as an emphatic prohibitive marker that intensifies the directive force of 别 ("don't") and heightens the urgency of the instruction. TT2 renders this intensified prohibition explicitly through "**absolument pas**," a strong amplifier within the negative modal construction "**il ne faut... pas**". TT1 does not mirror the amplifier lexically, but it strengthens the prohibition through a different device: the imperative "Do not tell..." is reinforced by the parenthetical emphatic phrase "**not a word**," which pragmatically increases the severity and non-negotiability of the command.

**Discursive practice.** The two translations thus encode comparable directive strength through different form-function solutions. TT2 lexicalizes intensity via an overt amplifier; TT1 realizes intensity through pragmatic reinforcement embedded in an imperative directive. This contrast supports analyzing amplification as functional equivalence rather than requiring one-to-one lexical matching of intensification across languages. It also suggests that intensity can be redistributed across grammatical resources (modal negation + amplifier vs. imperative + emphatic reinforcement) while maintaining a similar interactional effect.

**Social practice.** The divergence is plausibly mediated by target-language conventions for expressing prohibition and emphasis. French commonly accommodates explicit amplifiers within negative modal constructions, whereas English frequently achieves comparable force through imperatives reinforced by emphatic restrictions (e.g., "not a word"). Accordingly, this case cautions against interpreting cross-text differences in amplifier counts as straightforward differences in "emotionality"; the relevant issue is how each translation mobilizes target-language resources to realize urgency and authority in context.

### Example 2

**ST:** 我这侄媳妇是个干将。姑姑道，等她手术后，恢复了身体，我准备调她到计划生育工作队! (Mo, 2009, p. 134)

**TT1:** My nephew's wife is very competent, Gugu said. After the procedure, I'll give her time to get back to normal before transferring her to the family planning work group. (Mo, 2014, p. 156)

**TT2:** — La femme de mon neveu est aussi forte que l'épée de Ganjiang<sup>1</sup>, dit la tante, après l'intervention, quand elle sera remise, j'ai l'intention de la faire muter dans l'équipe de travail du planning familial!

(Note 1: Forgeron du Ve siècle avant notre ère...) (Mo, 2013, p. 178)

Unlike Example 1, this example is not presented as a straightforward instance of amplifier frequency. Rather, it is included as a related qualitative case showing how evaluative force may be reconfigured through sense disambiguation, cultural reframing, and paratextual intervention in translation.

**Textual analysis.** In the ST, 干将 (gànjiàng) functions as a colloquial evaluative label meaning "a capable person / a strong hand," used to praise the nephew's wife in an everyday register. TT1 renders this appraisal transparently as "**very competent**," with very operating as an explicit amplifier that strengthens the evaluative stance while maintaining accessibility. By contrast, TT2 reanalyzes 干将 as **Ganjiang** and introduces an allusive comparison—"aussi forte que l'épée de Ganjiang"—reinforced by a footnote identifying Ganjiang as a legendary swordsmith. This interpretive move foregrounds a proper-name allusion that is not the most contextually salient reading of 干将 in this ST environment; rather, it constitutes a shift in sense selection (colloquial appraisal → proper-name encyclopedic reading) that substantially changes both meaning and stylistic register.

**Discursive practice.** The two translations instantiate different decoding and recoding pathways. TT1 prioritizes contextual disambiguation and reader-oriented clarity, strengthening evaluation through a simple, conventional amplifier. TT2 selects an encyclopedic cultural reading and then compensates for potential opacity via paratextual explanation (the translator's note). In CDA terms, TT2 relocates the evaluation from pragmatic colloquial praise to a learned cultural frame, which reshapes characterization effects and interpersonal stance (the woman's competence becomes a culturally coded "strength" framed through a legendary artifact). While the TT2 solution may be motivated by a preference for cultural depth and annotation, it nevertheless results in a meaning shift relative to the

locally salient appraisal sense of 干将 in the ST context.

**Social practice.** This case highlights why differences in “amplifier use” cannot be interpreted through gender alone. Here, the salient driver is interpretive disambiguation under cross-cultural constraints, alongside target-culture conventions that permit (and sometimes value) annotation and cultural framing in literary translation. The example therefore supports a central claim of the study: translation choices emerge from an interaction among contextual interpretation, target norms, and translator strategy, and may introduce intensity or cultural texture through sense selection and paratext, not only through degree adverbs.

In relation to RQ1, the CDA findings further show that these cross-text differences in amplifier use are not reducible to frequency alone, since amplification may be realized through different grammatical, pragmatic, and discourse-level resources across the two target texts.

#### 4.3 Corpus Analysis of Profanities

Whereas the amplifier analysis focuses on a controlled set of degree-raising forms in the two target texts, the profanity analysis begins from a source-text inventory and traces how taboo expressions are functionally rendered in the translations. The shift in procedure reflects the greater context-dependence and lexical variability of profanity translation.

Table 4. AntConc corpus analysis of profanities in ST

Profane Words	FileTokens	Frequency	NormFreq	Dispersion
杂种 (zázhǒng)	110,358	18	163.106	0.716
屁 (pì)	110,358	11	99.676	0.788
混蛋 (húndàn)	110,358	7	63.43	0.628
妈的 (mā de)	110,358	7	63.43	0.628
畜生 (chùshēng)	110,358	7	63.43	0.571
狗日的 (gǒurì de)	110,358	4	36.246	0.236
骚货 (sāohuò)	110,358	2	18.123	0.333
放屁 (fàngpì)	110,358	2	18.123	0.333
妈呀 (mā ya)	110,358	2	18.123	0.333
王八蛋 (wángbā dàn)	110,358	1	9.061	0
烂货 (lànhuò)	110,358	1	9.061	0
婊子 (biǎozi)	110,358	1	9.061	0
母狗 (mǔgǒu)	110,358	1	9.061	0
老杂毛 (lǎo zá máo)	110,358	1	9.061	0
Total	110,358	65	588.992	/

Description: ST corpus size = 110,358 tokens. Frequency refers to the raw number of occurrences of each profanity item in the ST corpus. NormFreq refers to normalized frequency per million tokens, calculated as (Frequency / FileTokens) × 1,000,000. Dispersion indicates the extent to which an item is distributed across the chapter-segmented files in the corpus (values closer to 1 indicate broader distribution; values near 0 indicate concentration in few files). The table reports the pre-selected ST profanity set used for cross-text comparison; it does not represent an exhaustive inventory of taboo language in the novel.

Table 5. AntConc corpus analysis of profanities in TT1

Profane Words	FileTokens	Frequency	NormFreq	Dispersion
damn	127,051	20	157.417	0.65
bastard	127,051	18	141.675	0.596
shit	127,051	12	94.45	0.758
bitch	127,051	9	70.838	0.651
son of a bitch	127,051	5	39.354	0.553
slut	127,051	3	23.613	0.491
asshole	127,051	1	7.871	0
whore	127,051	1	7.871	0
prick	127,051	1	7.871	0
Total	127,051	70	550.96	/

Description: TT1 corpus size = 127,051 tokens. Frequency refers to the raw number of occurrences of each profanity item in the TT1 corpus. NormFreq refers to normalized frequency per million tokens, calculated as (Frequency / FileTokens) × 1,000,000. Dispersion indicates the extent to which an item is distributed across the chapter-segmented files in the corpus (values closer to 1 indicate broader distribution; values near 0 indicate concentration in few files). Because taboo expressions are not always translated with one-to-one lexical equivalents, the items listed here reflect the principal high-frequency profanity realizations observed in TT1.

Table 6. AntConc corpus analysis of profanities in TT2

Profane Words	FileTokens	Frequency	NormFreq	Dispersion
bâtard	162,430	16	98.504	0.614
merde	162,430	13	80.034	0.636
putain	162,430	10	61.565	0.606
pute	162,430	6	36.939	0.491
salaud	162,430	5	30.782	0.553
salope	162,430	2	12.313	0.333
espèce de crétin	162,430	1	6.156	0
espèce de vile créature	162,430	1	6.156	0
chienne	162,430	1	6.156	0
putains de trucs	162,430	1	6.156	0
Total	162,430	56	344.761	/

Description: TT2 corpus size = 162,430 tokens. Frequency refers to the raw number of occurrences of each profanity item in the TT2 corpus. NormFreq refers to normalized frequency per million tokens, calculated as (Frequency / FileTokens) × 1,000,000. Dispersion indicates the extent to which an item is distributed across the chapter-segmented files in the corpus (values closer to 1 indicate broader distribution; values near 0 indicate concentration in few files). Because taboo expressions are often translated through paraphrase, euphemism, or culturally preferred formulations rather than one-to-one lexical equivalents, the items listed here represent the principal high-frequency profanity realizations identified in TT2.

Tables 4–6 show that the profanity profile differs across ST, TT1, and TT2. In ST, the highest-frequency items include 杂种 (zázhǒng) and 屁 (pì), with several items tied at the next level (e.g., 混蛋, 妈的, 畜生). In TT1, the highest-frequency items are damn, bastard, and shit. In TT2, the highest-frequency items are bâtard, merde, and putain. At a macro level, TT2 shows a markedly lower overall profanity rate (344.761 per million tokens) than ST (588.992) and TT1 (550.96). The log-likelihood ratio tests ( $G^2$ ) confirm that TT2 is significantly lower than TT1 ( $G^2 = 6.89$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .009$ ) and lower than ST ( $G^2 = 8.64$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .003$ ), whereas TT1 is not significantly different from ST ( $G^2 = 0.15$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .699$ ).

While this pattern is compatible with sociolinguistic reports that men may use profanities more frequently in certain contexts (Coats, 2021), the present design does not permit a direct gender-causal interpretation because gender is confounded with target language and publishing context. The more defensible conclusion is that TT2 (French) exhibits stronger overall profanity attenuation relative to TT1 (English) and relative to the ST, motivating CDA to explore whether attenuation is systematic across contexts or selectively applied under particular discourse conditions.

Table 7. Comparative analysis of profanities in ST, TT1 & TT2

Group	Profane words (ST) and functional equivalents (TTs)	Text	Frequency	NormFreq
1	混蛋, 王八蛋, 杂种, 畜生, 老杂毛 / asshole, bastard, son of a bitch / bâtard, espèce de crétin, salaud	ST	34	308.088
		TT1	24	188.901
		TT2	22	135.442
2	骚货, 烂货, 婊子, 母狗 / bitch, slut, whore / chienne, espèce de vile créature, pute, salope	ST	5	45.306
		TT1	13	102.322
		TT2	10	61.565
3	屁, 放屁 / shit / merde	ST	13	117.799
		TT1	12	94.450
		TT2	13	80.034
4	狗日的 / prick / putains de trucs	ST	4	36.246
		TT1	1	7.871
		TT2	1	6.156
5	妈的, 妈呀 / damn / putain	ST	9	81.553
		TT1	20	157.417
		TT2	10	61.565

Description: The NormFreq values in Table 7 are recalculated consistently using FileTokens = 110,358 (ST), 127,051 (TT1), and 162,430 (TT2), as reported in Tables 4–6. Group 3 is treated as excrement-related profanity (屁 + 放屁) for functional comparability with shit/merde.

Across ST and both translations, male-targeted derogatory items (Group 1) are substantially more frequent than female-targeted derogatory items (Group 2). This asymmetry is consistent with observations that gendered derogation is socially uneven and that female-targeting slurs can be more heavily regulated in public discourse (Coats, 2021). However, the translations show different redistribution patterns: TT1 expands Group 2 relative to ST, while TT2 shows comparatively lower Group 2 intensity overall, consistent with the macro-level attenuation of profanity in TT2.

These quantitative findings address RQ2 by showing that the English and French translations also differ in the rendering of selected profanities, with TT2 displaying a lower overall profanity rate than TT1 and a stronger tendency toward attenuation at the macro level.

#### 4.4 CDA of Profanities

Profanities are highly context-dependent and culturally saturated: their force derives from local norms, interactional positioning, and ideological framing rather than from stable dictionary meanings. CDA is therefore appropriate for examining how profanity translation participates in the construction of social identities, power relations, and acceptable speech boundaries (Fairclough, 2010; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). In *Frog*, profanity is embedded in quotidian speech and conflict episodes, functioning as a resource for expressing anger, contempt, and social hierarchy. Translators' handling of profanities is consequently shaped by multiple factors, including interpretive choices, target-culture acceptability norms, and audience orientation.

#### Example 3

**ST:** 当时我心硬如铁，将个人的安危置之度外。张拳，随你骂吧，婊子，母狗，杀人魔王，这些侮辱性的称号，我照单全收，但是，你老婆必须跟我走。(Mo, 2009, p. 105)

**TT1:** ... Go ahead, Zhang Quan, call me any insulting thing you want — whore, bitch, murderous devil — ... (Mo, 2014, p. 121)

**TT2:** ... tu peux vomir toutes les injures que tu veux, "pute", "chienne", "roi des enfers exterminateur", ... (Mo, 2013, p. 146)

**Textual analysis.** The ST uses 婊子 (*biǎo zi*) and 母狗 (*mǔ gǒu*) as strongly gendered insults that function to intensify interpersonal confrontation and establish an asymmetric power relation. TT1 renders these with conventional, high-force English slurs (**whore**, **bitch**) that closely reproduce the ST's gendered derogation and pragmatic impact in Anglophone usage. TT2 renders the sequence with **pute** and **chienne**. While *pute* is a conventional and high-force insult, *chienne* is more literal ("female dog") and may be less conventional as a direct female-targeting slur in many contemporary French contexts than alternatives such as  *salope* (depending on register and genre). As a result, TT2 may preserve semantic reference while potentially modulating the pragmatic punch relative to TT1's *bitch*.

**Discursive practice.** The translations differ in how they balance semantic equivalence and force equivalence. TT1 foregrounds force equivalence through widely recognized Anglophone slurs, producing a compact but high-impact insult chain. TT2 retains gendered meaning but redistributes force through lexical selection and register management (a strong term *pute* paired with a more literal *chienne*), consistent with the broader corpus pattern that TT2 shows greater overall attenuation of profanities. Importantly, this is not "less faithful" in a simple sense; rather, it indicates different priorities in how taboo force is calibrated for target readers.

**Social practice.** The contrast is plausibly mediated by target-culture expectations regarding vulgarity and insult conventions in literary prose, as well as by perceived acceptability thresholds for direct female-targeting slurs. The key point is that differences here are better explained through target norms and stylistic positioning—and the available lexical repertoires of each language—than through translator gender alone.

#### Example 4

**ST:** ... 肖上唇那老杂毛天天在大街上吹牛，说他儿子分配进了国务院... (Mo, 2009, p. 117)

**TT1:** ... that asshole Xiao Shangchun parades up and down the streets bragging about how his son has been given a job with the State Council... (Mo, 2014, p. 135)

**TT2:** ... Xiao Lèvre-supérieure, ce vieux bâard se vante à longueur de journée ... racontant que son fils a été affecté au Conseil des affaires de l'État... (Mo, 2013, p. 159)

**Textual analysis.** The ST insult 老杂毛 (*lǎo zá máo*) combines an explicit age marker 老 (*lǎo*) with a colloquial derogatory label, indexing contempt in a locally grounded register. TT1 renders the insult as **asshole**, which conveys direct contempt but omits the age marking, thereby compressing the ST's semantic components into a single, idiomatic Anglophone insult. TT2 renders it as **vieux bâard**, preserving the age marker (**vieux**) and selecting a strong insult (**bâard**). Compared with the ST's colloquial insult profile, TT2 arguably produces a sharper, more explicitly personalized derogation because it retains age marking and chooses a high-salience insult.

**Discursive practice.** TT1 prioritizes fluency and immediate interpretability by using a common conversational insult and streamlining culture-specific semantic layering. TT2 prioritizes explicit semantic retention (including the age marker) and produces a more intensified insult label. This pattern also cautions against any simplistic expectation that a female translator will always mitigate profanity: in this context, TT2 appears to maintain or intensify the insult's explicitness, suggesting that local discourse context and target-language insult conventions can outweigh any generalized gender-based tendency.

**Social practice.** This divergence is plausibly shaped by the interaction of target-language resources and stylistic conventions: English often condenses stance into a single idiomatic insult, whereas French can accommodate explicit attributive insult constructions (*vieux + insult*), producing a more overtly characterized derogation. The example reinforces the study's claim that taboo force is redistributed through target-culture norms and translation strategy rather than determined by gender alone.

#### Example 5

**ST:** ... 那个忘恩负义的小畜生... 我把他从他娘的肚子里拽出来的小王八羔子..... (Mo, 2009, p. 210)

**TT1:** ... that ungrateful bastard ... dragged that little shit ... out of his mother's belly? (Mo, 2014, p. 237)

**TT2:** ... c'est cette petite brute, cet ingrat... et dire qu'à l'époque c'est moi qui ai tiré ce  fils de pute du ventre de sa mère. (Mo, 2013, p.

278)

**Textual analysis.** The ST stacks multiple insults with distinct nuances: belittlement 小 (xiǎo), moral condemnation 忘恩负义 (wàng ēn fù yì), animalization 畜生 (chù shēng), and further derogation 王八羔子 (wáng bā gāo zi). TT1 redistributes this insult stack into a compact sequence (**bastard, little shit**) that maintains high interpersonal aggression while streamlining the ST's layered insult inventory and shifting emphasis toward idiomatic Anglophone profanity. TT2 similarly compresses and redistributes the insult load, but with a notable contrast in intensity: **petite brute** conveys condemnation with belittlement, while  **fils de pute** is a highly offensive construction that can exceed the force of some ST elements depending on context. Thus, TT2 is not uniformly attenuating; it selectively intensifies at a rhetorically salient point.

**Discursive practice.** Rather than reflecting a stable “mitigation” or “intensification” profile, the translations show context-sensitive calibration. TT1 adopts force-equivalent idiomatic solutions consistent with a readability-oriented approach that preserves confrontation while avoiding long insult chains. TT2 combines partial moderation **petite brute** with a strong escalation  **fils de pute**, suggesting a strategy of selective intensification to anchor the speaker's outrage and moral condemnation. This supports treating TT2's overall lower profanity rate as an aggregate tendency that still allows local intensification in climactic or socially charged moments.

**Social practice.** The example reinforces the broader finding that taboo force is shaped by rhetorical goals and target-culture conventions regarding literary profanity. TT2 can attenuate in some episodes (as in Example 3) while intensifying sharply in others (as here). The variability is best explained by the interplay of discourse context (speaker stance, narrative stakes), target-language profanity conventions, and translator strategy—not by gender alone.

In relation to RQ2, the qualitative analysis indicates that profanity differences are shaped not only by overall frequency patterns but also by context-specific choices in lexical force, register, insult conventions, and degrees of retention, mitigation, or reformulation.

Across both lexical domains, the quantitative findings indicate measurable cross-text differences between TT1 and TT2. However, the CDA results show that these differences are realized through multiple discourse mechanisms and are best interpreted in relation to target-language conventions, rhetorical context, readership orientation, and translator strategy. Within this design, translator gender may be considered as one possible interpretive dimension, but it cannot be isolated as a direct explanatory cause.

Taken together, the findings address RQ3 by indicating that the observed cross-text differences are most plausibly explained through contextual and strategic mediation, including target-language norms, readership expectations, translator preferences, and publication conditions, while gender remains a possible interpretive dimension rather than an isolated explanatory cause.

## 5. Conclusion

This study shows that the translation of amplifiers and profanities in *Frog* differs across the English and French target texts and that these differences are better understood as mediated and context-dependent, rather than as direct outcomes of translator gender alone. By integrating corpus profiling with CDA, the analysis demonstrates that amplification and taboo force are reconfigured through multiple strategies that reflect target-language conventions, readership expectations, and publishing constraints, thereby shaping narrative voice and gendered representation. Theoretically, the study contributes to gender-aware translation research by showing that cross-text differences in amplification and taboo language are more convincingly explained through contextual mediation than through gender essentialism. Methodologically, it demonstrates the value of combining a controlled corpus comparison with CDA in order to connect aggregate lexical patterning to discourse-level meaning in literary translation. Because the analysis is limited to one novel, two translations, and controlled item sets, future work should expand to additional texts and, critically, multiple translators within the same target language to disentangle gender from target-language effects. Taken together, the findings underscore the broader importance of examining how translations manage amplification and taboo language, given their direct consequences for characterization, stance, and ideological positioning in literary texts.

## Acknowledgements

AI disclosure: AI-assisted tools were used only for language polishing and structural revision. All interpretation, analysis, and reference verification were undertaken by the authors.

## Authors' contributions

Yajing Yang conducted the analysis and drafted the manuscript. Debita Tan Ai Lin supervised the study, contributed to the conceptual framing, and revised the manuscript critically. All authors approved the final version of the manuscript.

## Funding

Not applicable.

## Competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

## Informed consent

Obtained.

**Ethics approval**

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Sciedu Press.

The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

**Provenance and peer review**

Not commissioned, externally double-blind peer reviewed.

**Data availability statement**

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

**Data sharing statement**

No additional data are available.

**Open access**

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