Can syntactic complexity distinguish translator style?—A novel stylometric analysis of Hongloumeng with dependency grammar

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October 19, 2023

Abstract

The present study is perhaps the first study to examine the issue of style in translation by dependency distance. Translator style has been examined through different indicators, such as STTR and LR, MSL, and typical language patterns, such as reporting verbs and loan words. Yet, previous studies seldom consider syntactic structures, especially syntactic complexity extensively discussed in domains like second language acquisition, in the analysis. Dependency distance has been considered a valid indicator of syntactic complexity. Studies have shown that Dependency distance can effectively differentiate translational and original English. If dependency distance can distinguish translational and native texts, then it should be hypothesized that translation style can be differentiated by dependency distance. To this end, the present study examines the translator style of four English texts of the Chinese classic novel Hongloumeng. The results confirm the hypothesis that dependency distance can distinguish translator style. The findings also show that dependency direction can be taken into consideration in examining translator style.

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