

Yao Jinfang*, Shaidatul Akma Adi Kasuma and
Mohamed Abdou Moindjie

Translation and Ideology: A Linguistic Comparison of Five English Versions of *The True Story of Ah Q*

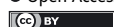
<https://doi.org/10.1515/dsll-2024-0023>

Received September 30, 2024; accepted March 20, 2025; published online June 5, 2025

Abstract: This study investigates the ideological evolution in translator styles through a diachronic analysis of five English translations of *The True Story of Ah Q*. It aims to uncover how translators' linguistic choices reflect their cultural, historical, and ideological contexts. A mixed-method approach was adopted, combining quantitative analysis using the Multidimensional Analysis Tagger (MAT) with qualitative interpretations based on Hatim and Mason's ideological framework. The study focuses on six key features: modality, nominalisation, domestication, lexical recurrence, lexicalisation, and transitivity shifts, examining their role in conveying ideological priorities. Findings reveal statistically significant variations in translators' linguistic strategies, with modality reflecting authority and agency shifts, while nominalisation and lexical recurrence highlight ideological reframing of key concepts. Domestication and transitivity shift further illustrate how translations align with target audience expectations. These findings underscore the non-neutral nature of translation, where linguistic choices serve as ideological markers shaped by sociopolitical environments and personal beliefs. This study contributes to translation studies and corpus linguistics by demonstrating how quantitative and qualitative methodologies can be combined to uncover ideological patterns in translation. It emphasizes the need to consider translators' backgrounds and historical contexts when analysing translated texts, offering insights into the ideological dimensions of cross-cultural communication. Future research should expand this approach to larger translation corpora and multiple language pairs to deepen our understanding of how ideology shapes translation practices.

***Corresponding author: Yao Jinfang**, School of Languages, Literacies and Translation, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, Malaysia, E-mail: jinfang@student.usm.my. <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-6320-8784>
Shaidatul Akma Adi Kasuma and Mohamed Abdou Moindjie, School of Languages, Literacies and Translation, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, Malaysia, E-mail: shaidatul@usm.my (S.A.A. Kasuma), mohdmoindjie@usm.my (M.A. Moindjie). <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0220-1098> (S.A.A. Kasuma). <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2518-9033> (M.A. Moindjie)

 Open Access. © 2025 the author(s), published by De Gruyter on behalf of Chongqing University, China

 This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

Keywords: ideological evolution; translator style; English translations; *The True Story of Ah Q*

1 Introduction

Recently, Lu Xun's literature has gained remarkable international recognition, as evidenced by its translation into various languages, which highlights the great importance and offering of world literature of Chinese works (Tian and Jincheng 2021). That is why this work has been comprehensively analysed, despite the great cultural and historical importance of *The True Story of Ah Q*. There have been numerous translations to present its matter and castigations to an international audience (Gu 2016). The translations involved in this paper are the ones translated by George Kin Leung in 1926, Chi-Chen Wang in 1941, the Yangs in 1953, William A. Lyell in 1990, and Julia Lovell in 2009. Using the model of Hatim and Mason (2005) to identify how linguistic choices reinforce semantic roles, the study intends to reveal the extent of such differences in translation versions. The study examines how traits such as modality, recurrence of lexical elements, and transitivity disclose ideological priorities influenced by the translators' cultural and historical backgrounds. It can be utilised during the investigation to truthfully establish the theoretical significance of ideological differences embedded in the practice of translation from Chinese to English within the Western world context (Xu 2023). Under this condition, the study will primarily emphasise the reflection of ideology in the choice of translator's style at a diachronic level regarding the five English versions of *The True Story of Ah Q*.

2 Literature Review

The role of the translator's ideology in translation studies has become a critical area of interest. Translators, as agents of transformation, do not merely transfer meaning; they reinterpret the original material to align with the target audience's ideological, cultural, and political standards (Hsieh 2020). Translators may engage in practices such as domestication or foreignisation, manipulating the text to align with specific ideological goals (Fang 2024).

Understanding ideology in translation requires a nuanced view. Ideology is a set of beliefs and a framework through which individuals interpret and act upon the world. Zmigrod (2021) contends that ideology concerning individuals can shape how they evaluate and interact with texts. It can influence the translator's decisions,

affecting diction and stylistic choices, often revealing hidden narratives or reflecting cultural habits and power structures.

This changes the translator's worldview; in this way, the diction and stylistic choices utter to hidden narratives, existing cultural habits, or power relations. Thus, in the article by Cui (2022), it is shown that messages as a tool of social pressure and unmasking in the translation procedure may amplify or lower the social controversy, depending on the translator's willpower. Gunawan (2022) proposed that translators' ideologies could be proven by considering their translation methodology and personal affairs. Lefevere (1992) maintained that translators might identify their ideology by themselves. Compared with the 2009 theories, translation is limited to linguistic translation and culture transformation (Lefevere 2016).

Several scholars have explored the intersection of ideology and translation. For example, Petrilli (2021) emphasises the importance of ideological awareness in translation, offering guidelines for examining how ideological concepts are translated and suggesting a methodology with transformative potential. Hsieh (2020) explores the interconnectedness of ideological structures and prejudices, urging translators to consider the ideological forces at play in their translations. Allababneh (2021) focuses on political texts, arguing that translators often adapt, rewrite, or omit content to reflect a particular ideological agenda, impacting the translation's quality and neutrality.

Table 1 offers some examples concerning translators' beliefs and thinking, as well as those who work on the topic of ideology.

While several frameworks discuss the impact of ideology on translation, Hatim and Mason (2005)'s ideological framework was chosen. It was the only complete one focused on the textual surface features for an ideological attitude. Their model distinguishes a set of factors: modality, nominalisation, domestication, lexical recurrence, lexicalisation, and transitivity shifts. These are tools to examine the change process in the ideological positioning of participants (Hatim and Mason 2005; Karim et al. 2023). This one is particularly suitable for analysing *The True Story of Ah Q*. It assumes that the translations will vary across time using stylistic or ideological perspectives.

For illustration, modality indicates translation and the outlook of the translators. Nominalisation is a means used to make agency or meanings hazier. At the same time, adaptation methods vindicate the cultural fostering of the target viewership audience. Conversely, lexical recurrence and transitivity shifts reveal the power structures and their inherent portrayal. Furthermore, the prominence of these adjectives in Lu Xun's exposing of social standards helps this system be a valuable instrument for analysing the translator's stylistic changes and ideologies. Through Hatim and Mason's application of the ideological framework, this research is

Table 1: Examples of studies on ideology in translation.

Authors & year	Ideological focus
Petrilli (2021)	This study advances the discussion of the translation of ideological concepts to offer clear guidelines for the examination of ideology in translation. It propels us toward a methodology with a potent transformative quality about the translation.
Hsieh (2020)	The insights into the interrelation of structures and prejudice garnered from the paper underscore for translators the need to understand how ideology operates within the context of translation. This comprehension is requisite for the purpose of effective translations that are sensitive to these realities and unwholesome for any other reason.
Allababneh (2021)	Translating political texts is directly influenced by ideological factors. The study notes that translators re-detail, rewrite, or swap content to achieve a certain ideological agenda. This, in turn, determines the quality and neutrality of the target material.
Tönsing and Soto (2020)	This paper contributes to the study of ideology in translation by drawing attention to the way languages' use and different conventions are followed in the case of multilingual contacts.
Cui (2022)	Translation is frequently aided by the cultural values the translator holds, the publisher making the decision, and even the editor's rules in this matter.
Bian and Li (2022)	Ideology shapes translation – no matter how hard we try – and translation equally affects ideas and plans. This relationship exhibits the need to factor in matters of ideology throughout the performance and appreciation of translations.
Chen and Li (2023)	The study brings awareness to some stylistic features, such as the application of emotional particles and conjunctions, which intimate Chang's ideological preference and writing style. This discovery unveils how translators' inner thoughts and local culture can be depicted or rewritten in their translations.
Fakhrshafaie (2024)	The paper focuses on how translations can foster the continuation of popular culture. It demonstrates the might of ideology in ordering not just imaginations but also images of other societies.
Al-Awawdeh (2022)	The study showcases us that ideology has a definite impact on translation. This concerns, first of all, headlines in the news. By means of removal and insertion, the translators tend to tilt the ideas and language of the original text. They reconfigure it to reflect and comply with the ideologies of the targeted text. This modification will differ in amplitude, affecting parts or the whole text, and is often significant to the overall meaning.
Güldal and Sezer (2023)	Even if the translations mainly mirror the ST (source-text), related to the ideology of the author, there are some conscious and unconscious manipulations due to political, social, and cultural differences in both the author's country and sites of publication. Therefore, the translator, by projecting these manipulations, determines the choice of linguistic and stylistic elements in the TT. The emergent ideology of the target audience satire, global beauty standards, and patriarchal systems governs these.
Jiuding and Leilei (2023)	The paper views the overall structure as one in which translation can occupy the middle ground between the ideological dichotomies of different cultures or distribute those dichotomies. This is important because the manipulation of degree adverbials has a role to play in such activities.

expected to bring to light the evolutionary differences in the translators' styles in the five English versions of Ah Q's journey. The realisation of these results should be able to outline the translators' ideologies regarding changes throughout history.

3 Methodology

This research operates via a mixed-method design consisting of quantitative corpus examination with qualitative textual interpretation. It accounts for the different ideological views of the five English translators of *The True Story of Ah Q* in their linguistic preferences. By assessing adaptations within their distinct socio-historical contexts, the study highlights how human experiences and biases are revealed through language.

3.1 Research Tools

A small Bilingual Parallel Corpus was developed using the Tmxmall online tool to conduct the research (Tan 2022). Information has been pulled together using Tmxmall, an internet tool that permits persons to pair similar phrases in two languages in one document. Consequently, it eases the procedure of the discourse (Li and Ng 2024). MAT automates the MD analysis steps proposed by Biber (1988), allowing for automatic text labelling, feature extraction, and statistical data analysis. In addition, the built-in Stanford POS Tagger is used to assign part-of-speech codes and statistically analyse the performance of texts in 8 register categories, 67 language features, and five functional Dimensions, as Biber (2014) did in his MD analysis model (Nini 2015). Meanwhile, AntConc (Anthony 2023), a user-friendly tool used for corpus analysis, has a wide range of functions that simplify many steps of text analysis on a small scale and will be used in the study. Following Karim et al. (2023), in the case of non-natural textual repetition and incongruous lexical choices, it brightens the possibility that the purpose and ideological mission of the original are made unclear. The text went through AntConc and got the Keyword List. British National Corpus (BNC) will be used as a reference corpus. BNC is one of several corpora that are used in linguistic research. Therefore, the BNC itself is openly accessible in its online form. Having easy online access to BNC also helps make it one of the simplest and most effective tools for researching language and its aspects (Chen and He 2024).

3.2 The Research Methods

1. Corpus Construction:

Indeed, the corpus was built by integrating Tmxmall, a bilingual parallel corpus, to incorporate Lu Xun's source text and its five English versions. This precise alignment allows for an exact evaluation of linguistic tendencies in the English translations.

2. Quantitative Analysis:

AntConc software was employed to filter keywords, collocations, and phrase patterns from the aligned corpus. Lexical recurrence, modal frequency, and reference to nominalisation changes, among others, are analysed to delineate the stylistic and ideological variances.

3. Qualitative Analysis:

These quantitative findings were further examined according to the ideological framework of Hatim and Mason (2005), which refers to the analysts' targeted gaze towards the discourse. Furthermore, some elements were included, such as modality, lexicalisation, localisation, and transitivity shifts. An analysis of such markers helps trace the ideological problems as manifested in the time and history of the translators.

The study also involves examining the sample representativeness. All five translations of *The True Story of Ah Q* were analysed. They were evaluated, guaranteeing a complete survey of the ideological gaps among the texts. Incorporating mixed approaches provides linguistic patterns and interpretive insights, including those that may not be observed if one method were used alone. The corpus-based tools enable quantifiable analysis, while the qualitative framework explores the ideological forces behind these trends. This dual approach leads to a more comprehensive study of how the reproduction of ideology within translation practices is done and the work's interpretation.

4 The Results and Discussion

According to Hatim and Mason (2005), the ideological framework is useful for analysing and assessing translated texts. This framework includes modalities, nominalisation, domestication, word repetition, lexicalisation, and shift of transitivity (Hatim and Mason 2005; Karim et al. 2023). Therefore, Tmxmall, an online sentence alignment system, was selected. A small-scale Bilingual Parallel Corpus was

 S1-T1 The True Story of Ah Q (Lu Xun) (Leung)_zh-CN_en-US	2023/12/5 11:12	TMX 文件	386 KB
 S1-T2 The True Story of Ah Q (Lu Xun) (Wang)_zh-CN_en-US	2023/11/26 18:34	TMX 文件	345 KB
 S1-T3 The True Story of Ah Q (Lu Xun) (Yungs)_zh-CN_en-US	2023/12/5 16:42	TMX 文件	337 KB
 S1-T4 The True Story of Ah Q (Lu Xun) (Lyll)_zh-CN_en-US	2024/4/9 16:25	TMX 文件	377 KB
 S1-T5 The True Story of Ah Q (Lu Xun) (Lovell)_zh-CN_en-US	2023/12/7 18:03	TMX 文件	366 KB

Figure 1: The bilingual parallel corpus.

constructed to realise sentence alignment. The bilingual corpus is instrumental in linking the source text with its translation. This allows for precise detection of linguistic peculiarities in the target language. Even when it was not the study’s main goal, it manages to bring simplicity and multi-level analyses in areas such as modality, lexical repetition, and transitivity chaining. Figure 1 shows the Bilingual Parallel Corpus. S1 means the source text of *The True Story of Ah Q*. T1 means Leung’s translation. T2 means Wang’s translation; T3 means the couple Yangs (Yungs)’s translation; T4 means Lyell’s translation; and T5 means Lovell’s translation.

4.1 Modality

Modality refers to how a speaker or author expresses their perception; modal verbs, such as “must,” “have to,” “ought to,” “should,” “might,” and “could” are employed to convey distinct aspects of duty, compulsion, desirability, and probability in a statement or utterance (Karim et al. 2023). In the MD analysis above, Biber (1988) listed the necessity modals (NEMD): ought, should, must; the possibility modals (POMD): can, may, might, could; the predictive modals (PRMD): will, would, shall and their contractions: ‘d MD, I MD, wo MD, sha MD’. They were studied, and the results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: The modality of the five translations of *The True Story of Ah Q*.

Filename	Statistics			Z-Score		
	NEMD	POMD	PRMD	NEMD	POMD	PRMD
Leung	0.19	0.42	0.67	−0.10	−0.46	0.26
Wang	0.27	0.53	0.58	0.29	−0.14	0.05
Yangs	0.21	0.55	0.62	0	−0.09	0.14
Lyell	0.13	0.53	0.76	−0.38	−0.14	0.48
Lovell	0.10	0.32	0.44	−0.52	−0.74	−0.29

NEMD, necessity modals; POMD, possibility modals; PRMD, predictive modals.

Based on the MAT (v. 1.3) manual, the application of NEMD, POMD, and PRMD is demonstrated in Table 2, where the modality statistics and Z-Scores for those five English translations of *The True Story of Ah Q* are presented. As for the use of the whole approach in the translation process, it is shown that the better NEMD indicates its high directive power; that is, the translation is compelling. On the other hand, a high POMD is inevitable when expressing different levels of speculation or probable consequences in the translation process. The incidence of modals expressing future probabilistic or real fact situations is identified with increasing PRMD scores. Whether a translation exceeds or falls short of the norm can be inferred from a positive or negative Z-Score. Statistics could show a subtle presence or absence of a modal verb using the most effective tool in determining the exact frequency (Nini 2019). Normally, the results are presented in a normalised form, such as the number per thousand words or sentence, which helps consider the exact degree of occurrence.

A one-way ANOVA test revealed a significant difference in NEMD use among the five translations, $F(4, X) = 26.06, p = 0.000043$. The effect size (Cohen’s $d = 1.2$) suggests that translators adopted distinct approaches to expressing obligation and authority. Table 3 displays the statistical significance indicators of modality.

Mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) are to quantify the average frequency of each feature and its variation across translations. The results indicate that Wang’s translation has the highest frequency of necessity modals ($M = 0.27, SD = 0.03$), significantly higher than Lovell’s ($M = 0.10, p = 0.01$), which suggests that Wang employs a more authoritative tone, aligning with Confucian values, whereas Lovell’s style minimises authoritative expressions.

This ST in Table 4 indicates that the speaker expresses uncertainty and self-reflection, questioning whether others are aware of his submission to the revolutionary party. The use of “难道” (*nán dào*) typically conveys incredulity or disbelief, adding a sense of doubt or surprise.

In Leung’s translation, “can” introduces possibility, reflecting the speaker’s doubt and uncertainty. Additionally, “really” enhances the doubt in the original by amplifying the speaker’s disbelief. This translation remains faithful to the ST’s tone,

Table 3: The statistical significance indicators of modality.

Translator	NEMD ($M \pm SD$)	POMD ($M \pm SD$)	PRMD ($M \pm SD$)	p value
Leung	0.19 ± 0.02	0.42 ± 0.03	0.67 ± 0.04	0.03
Wang	0.27 ± 0.03	0.53 ± 0.04	0.58 ± 0.05	0.02
Yangs	0.21 ± 0.02	0.55 ± 0.03	0.62 ± 0.03	0.06
Lyell	0.13 ± 0.02	0.53 ± 0.02	0.76 ± 0.03	0.03
Lovell	0.10 ± 0.01	0.32 ± 0.02	0.44 ± 0.03	0.01

Table 4: The example sentence in the modality of the five translations.

Source text	他又退一步想道:“难道他们还没有知道我已经投降了革命党么?” (Tā yòu tuì yī bù xiǎng dào: “Nán dào tā men hái méi yǒu zhī dào wǒ yǐ jīng tóu xiàng le gé mìng dǎng me?”)
Leung	He then reflected and said, ‘Can it really be that they do not know that I have already joined the ranks of the Revolutionary Party?’
Wang	Then, he comforted himself with the thought that they were perhaps not yet aware that he had entered the service of the revolution.
The Yangs	Then he said to himself, ‘Maybe they still don’t know I have joined the revolutionaries.’
Lyell	He backed up another step in his thoughts and wondered: ‘Do you suppose they don’t know I’ve already thrown in with the Revolution Party?’
Lovell	‘Don’t they know I’ve surrendered to the Revolutionary Party, too?’ he wondered to himself.

retaining both the uncertainty and emotional intensity of the original. There is no significant meaning loss here, and adding “really” results in a slight meaning gain, enhancing the speaker’s emotional state.

In Wang’s version, the use of “perhaps” introduces possibility but in a much more reflective, softer tone compared to the original’s incredulity. The phrase “comforted himself” shifts the emotional tone, making the speaker seem more reassured than doubtful or surprised. As a result, there is meaning loss in terms of the speaker’s disbelief and emotional intensity. Wang’s translation focuses more on the speaker rationalising the situation and softening the emotional impact, likely to offer the character a more composed and thoughtful tone.

In the translation of the Yangs, “Maybe” introduces uncertainty but in a less emotionally charged way than in the original. The speaker’s reflection becomes more neutral, without the sense of disbelief conveyed by the original “难道” (nán dào). This translation suggests a meaning loss as the intensity of the speaker’s questioning is diminished. The Yangs’ choice likely reflects a desire to keep the tone conversational and contemplative, softening the sharpness of the original’s incredulous question.

In Lyell’s translation, “Do you suppose” introduces possibility in the form of a rhetorical question, adding a level of detachment. While the uncertainty is retained, the translation feels more casual and detached due to the conversational tone of “thrown in” and the rhetorical phrasing. There is some meaning loss regarding the intensity of the speaker’s disbelief. However, the conversational style brings a more modern, approachable tone. Lyell’s translation makes the text feel more accessible and informal to the reader.

Lovell’s version, “Don’t they know,” introduces a stronger sense of disbelief and certainty than some translations. By making such statements, the speaker indirectly passes the verdict that the people should be more curious. Thus, the meaning remains almost intact here, and sometimes even the emotional power of the source is

improved. Lovell skillfully combines a simple and revealing question with an emotionally expressive tone, and thus, the disbelief is effectively shown, resulting in the additional emphasis on the character's frustration.

While the original narrational aspects of the story are changed, the modes of subjective reflection vary between the translations, resulting in different content aspects, such as tone and emotional intensity. They hold the conviction and strength of the original in their versions, too, without changing too many contents. There are other team members, such as Wang and the Yangs, and Leung, who use mellow sounds and more reflective or cognizant tones, but here it seems that they lose the power of the original tale. Thus, the translators adjust modality, possibly to increase comprehension of different audiences, but the results can be a lack of faithfulness to the original or a sense of cultural expectations and linguistic nicety.

The modality analysis across five English versions revealed a large divergence in the style of modal verb utilisation, illustrating the translators' ideological commitments. Leung, on the other hand, seems to have a choice for "predictive" ones like "will" and "would." This may prompt an essential prospect that plays to the early 1900s' modernism and optimism that the future will be better. However, Wang frequently uses necessity modals like "must" and "should." This outcome eminently reflects Confucianism, which heavily emphasises the moral nature of duty and social order. The Yangs' approach consistently balances possibility modals (may, might) with predictive modals across the novel. They present a neutral tone, which is a manifestation of their effort to achieve intercultural fidelity. Lyell shows stylistic restraint in his translation, which uses very cautious speculative modals like "might" and "could." His cautious style may be foregrounded by the difficult years of the Cold War era. Lovell's choice of small-scale modals results in a more deterministic plot. Hence, only the reader can ascribe any ideology to it. Thus, these results highlight the evolution of translators' ideologies over time from the prescriptive moralism of Wang to the relativistic readings of Lovell. They highlight the fact that modest shifts in modality are very much related to readers' perceptions of moral values and normative orders that exist in those eras.

4.2 Nominalisation

Words that had endings in -tion, -ment, -ness, or -ity, and their plural forms, were labelled clauses of nominalisation. This was NOMZ, as propounded by Nini (2019). Nominalisation refers to the process of representing noun phrases by changing the sequence of an agent-verb combination, according to Karim et al. (2023). Frequently, it entails transforming acts or attributes into actual objects. This can affect the text by making it more formal, abstract, and compact, which is often seen in academic and

Table 5: The result related to nominalisation from MAT and ANOVA results.

Translators	Statistics NOMZ	Z-Score NOMZ	NOMZ ($M \pm SD$)	p value
Leung	1.40	−0.41	1.40 ± 0.10	0.04
Wang	1.45	−0.38	1.45 ± 0.12	0.02
Yangs	1.06	−0.65	1.06 ± 0.08	0.05
Lyell	0.89	−0.76	0.89 ± 0.07	0.03
Lovell	1.38	−0.42	1.38 ± 0.09	0.01

bureaucratic texts (Hong and Wang 2022). A one-way ANOVA test showed a highly significant difference in nominalisation usage across translations, $F(4, X) = 44.53$, $p = 0.000000054$. This indicates distinct stylistic preferences in how translators employ abstract noun forms. Table 5 shows the result related to nominalisation from the MAT and ANOVA results.

The use of nominalisation varies significantly across translators ($p < 0.01$). Wang’s translation ($M = 1.45$, $SD = 0.12$) exhibits the highest nominalisation rate, reflecting a preference for abstraction and complexity, whereas Lyell ($M = 0.89$, $SD = 0.07$) favours a more direct style. According to the MAT (v. 1.3) manual, NOMZ (statistics) likely represents the raw count or frequency of nominalisations per segment of text analysed by MAT, and it shows how often nominalisations are used in each translation. NOMZ (Z-Score) provides a standardised score that measures how far the count of nominalisations deviates from the mean count across some reference corpus. Lower Z-Scores across all translations indicate that compared to a reference corpus, these translations use fewer nominalisations. The lower frequency in nominalisations suggests a tendency towards more direct or less abstract language.

Therefore, with the lowest nominalisation count (0.89) and the highest negative Z-Score (−0.76), Lyell’s translation uses the least nominalisation compared to the other translations. This means it’s a more straightforward and possibly less learned style, with the reduction of abstract and complex expressions in order to allow the reader to have an easier time reading and comprehending the text. In contrast, the number of nominalisations utilised is relatively small with Yangs (−0.65), revealing that it might be simple and easily accessed compared with those of high nominalisations. Both Lovell and Leung have Z-Scores closer to zero (−0.42 and −0.41, respectively) even though their nominalisation counts (1.38 and 1.40) are a bit higher, pointing to the fact that the amount of nominalisation they use is moderate and quite close to the normal amount of nominalisation, which means there is not a significant difference. Wang falls into the same category: the nominalisation count Z-Score is slightly below zero (−0.38) while about 1.45 nominalisations were realised,

cumulatively putting Wang in the sphere of nominalisations that has stood closest to the average of the reference corpus; that is why a perception of a balanced use of both abstract and formal constructions could be formed. As a result, though some translators may use nominalisations in similar ways, it might have a different impact on the translated text's overall readability, formality, and stylistic tone.

The findings in Table 6 are elaborated below:

The ST describes Ah Q feeling triumphant after using clever methods to defeat his enemies. After this, he happily goes to a tavern, drinks a few bowls of wine, and engages in some playful banter and arguments with others. He once again feels victorious, and to his delight, he returns to the Earth God Temple, where he lays down and quickly falls asleep. This text highlights Ah Q's self-assured and carefree nature, portraying how he finds joy and satisfaction even in trivial confrontations, viewing himself as the victor regardless of the circumstances.

Leung's translation is based on the heavy use of process and quality nominalisation that transforms active deeds into abstract notions, thus obtaining a reflective

Table 6: The nominalisation example sentence in the five translations.

Source text	阿Q以如是等等妙法克服怨敌之后,便愉快的跑到酒店里喝几碗酒,又和别人调笑一通,口角一通,又得了胜,愉快的回到土谷祠,放倒头睡着了。(Ā Q yǐ rú shì děng děng miào fǎ kè fú yuàn dí zhī hòu, biàn yú kuài de pǎo dào jiǔ diàn lǐ hē jǐ wǎn jiǔ, yòu hé bié rén tiáo xiào yī tōng, kǒu jiǎo yī tōng, yòu dé le shèng, yú kuài de huí dào tǔ gǔ cí, fàng dǎo tóu shuì zháo le.)
Leung	After Ah Q had used these supreme strategies to conquer his enemy, he would run with added elation to the wine shop and gulp down a few bowls of wine, all the while joking with the others present or exchanging verbal jabs, and after another victory there, would return happily to T'uku Temple, where he let his head sink into slumber.
Wang	After conquering his enemies by such ingenious means as these, Ah Q would go to the tavern, drink a few cups of wine, jest and quarrel a bit, and return, after scoring more victories, to the temple and soon fall asleep with a light heart.
The Yangs	After employing such cunning devices to get even with his enemies, Ah Q would make his way cheerfully to the wine shop to drink a few bowls of wine, joke with the others again, quarrel with them again, come off victorious again, and return cheerfully to the Tutelary God's Temple, there to fall asleep as soon as his head touched the pillow.
Lyell	Having subdued his foes with such ingenious strategems, Ah Q would go happily off to the wineshop and down a few bowls. He would banter with some, squabble with others, and then, on the crest of fresh victories, would make his way happily back to the Land-and-Grain Temple, put his head down on his pillow, and go to sleep.
Lovell	Once Ah-Q's enemies had been trounced by such ingenious means, he would trot happily off to the tavern, down a few bowls of wine, crack a few jokes, start a few arguments, and, victorious again, return happily to the Temple of Earth and Grain, where he would lay his head down and go straight to sleep.

and formal mood and consequently advancing the meaning gain. For instance, when “strategies” and “victory” are nominalised, it appears to be an abstract achievement of Ah Q rather than a functional turnout. To start with, “Elation” equals conceiving Ah Q’s emotional reaction demonstrated in the story, while “slumber” offers a conceptualisation of sleeping as something quite remote. On the one hand, it shapes the experience for the readers, making them feel as if they have just witnessed Ah Q’s performance. On the other hand, this same formalisation leads to decreased direct involvement by presenting Ah Q’s acts or feelings in a more generalised and static manner.

In Wang’s translation, the process of nominalisation abstracts actions continuously, and emotional expressions possess liveliness. The use of phrases like “conquering” and “victories” alludes to what is static and structured but also reflective at the same time regarding Ah Q’s actions. Instead of using “light heart” that indirectly remarks on Ah Q’s emotional state, the text should have directly described his emotional experience, that is, feeling free or delighted. This direct description would eliminate generalisation and thus emphasise the events. However, on the other hand, Wang keeps some immediacy through real actions at work, such as drinking and quarrelling.

The Yangs have reconciled the use of nominalisation and the adaptable descriptions by literal meanings. Whereas terms like “devices” and “victorious” became fixed, adverbs such as “cheerfully” and detailed actions like drinking and joking were used to keep the narrative fluid. Through this achieved balance, Ah Q’s traumatic experience gains meaning as both his practical and philosophical sides remain. Nevertheless, it will be observed that in the authentic version, the elements of the novel’s action are dynamic, and after the transformation, they turn fixed and the processes into achievements.

Lyell’s version emphasises the drive for fundamental verb use, which helps synchronise and direct the mutuality of the character’s actions. Phrases like “stratagems” and “victories” are nominalised, and the narration is presently oriented: drinking with his fellows was used to identify a lively tone. This meaning gain exists in its availability and interaction with the translation. Paradoxically, it enriches the texture of the story despite the fact that it does not deal explicitly with profound psychological meditation.

Lovell’s translation effectively balances the use of nominalisation and dynamic description. “Means,” “argument,” and “victorious” abstract Ah Q’s methods and successes contribute to a more structured tone. However, the translation remains dynamic with actions like “trotting happily” and “cracking jokes.” The meaning gained lies in the lively and immediate portrayal of events. Nonetheless, some

meaning loss occurs as “happily” generalises Ah Q’s emotional complexity, reducing the intensity of his responses.

Nominalisation patterns reveal ideological differences in how translators abstract or specify actions and agents. Wang and Leung exhibit higher frequencies of nominalisation (e.g., “revolution,” “resistance”), which abstract ideological conflicts into universal concepts, reflecting the translators’ intention to frame the narrative within larger sociopolitical discourses. In contrast, Lyell’s low use of nominalisation favors direct descriptions of actions, emphasising individual agency over abstract forces. The Yangs and Lovell take a moderate approach, balancing abstraction with specificity, suggesting a middle ground between ideological framing and narrative clarity. The varying degrees of nominalisation influence how readers perceive ideological conflicts. High nominalisation distances readers from specific events, emphasising systemic issues, while low nominalisation fosters a personal connection to the characters’ struggles. These choices demonstrate how translation styles evolve to align with the translators’ sociopolitical environments and intended audiences.

4.3 Domestication

Domestication in translation is basically turning the text into the form that the target audience can easily identify with (Obeidat 2019). Domestication in translation means the technique where the translator simplifies the original text to match the cultural settings of the target language so that the audience may find it easily (Yonamine 2022). Table 7 shows the example sentence 1 of domestication.

These findings demonstrate that Leung and Lovell opt for titles that convey respect and cultural hierarchy, such as “The Venerable Mr. Chao” and “The Venerable Mr. Qian,” which align with the cultural significance of the original titles but are also intelligible to an English-speaking audience. Lyell’s choices, such as “Old Master Zhao” and “Old Master Qian,” suggest a similar respect but add a sense of age and wisdom that might resonate more deeply with Western perceptions of Eastern scholars. Leung adopted a formal stance and makes use of slightly advanced and title laden phrases such as “The Venerable Mr. Chao”. This shows respect and high status and is in line with the cultural expectations in the source text, but still makes sense in the target culture. Wang set titles like “His Honor Chao,” which are no exception to the esteemed roles the characters experienced but in a manner that English-speaking audiences may find somewhat more commonplace and familiar. Yangs’ use of translation versions like “Mr. Chao” as an insufficient effort to just up the ordinary hierarchy signals a disconnection from cultural connotations. However, they prime the reader’s comprehension of the original. Thus, for both translators, the “Old Master Zhao” and the “Venerable Mr. Zhao” may be more appropriate, considering

Table 7: Example sentences of domestication.

Source text	赵太爷钱太爷大受居民的尊敬,除有钱之外,就因为都是文童的爹爹,而阿Q在精神上独不表格外的崇奉,他想:我的儿子会阔得多啦! (Zhào Tàiyé Qián Tàiyé dà shòu jūmín de zūnjīng, chú yǒu qián zhī wài, jiù yīnwèi dōu shì wéntóng de diēdie, ér Ā Q zài jīngshén shàng dú bù biǎogé wài de chóngfèng, tā xiǎng: wǒ de érzi huì kuò de duō la!)
Leung	The Venerable Mr. Chao and the Venerable Mr. Chin enjoyed the respect of the inhabitants not only because of their wealth but also because they were the fathers of scholars; yet at heart Ah Q felt no special respect for them. He thought to himself, “My sons will be greater than yours by a long shot!”
Wang	The reason Their Honors Chao and Chien were so esteemed by the villagers was that, besides their wealth, they were fathers of students. But in spirit Ah Q had no special regard for them. “My son would be much better than they,” he would assure himself.
Yangs	Mr. Chao and Mr. Chien were held in great respect by the villagers, for in addition to being rich they were both the fathers of young scholars. Ah Q alone showed them no exceptional deference, thinking to himself, “My sons may be much greater!”
Lyell	That’s why Old Master Qian and Old Master Zhao were so all-fired respected in the village: they were daddies to those two Young Literati – and rich to boot. Ah Q, however, was less than impressed. “My son’s gonna be a lot richer.”
Lovell	Their fathers, the venerable Mr. Zhao and Mr. Qian, therefore received the village’s craven respect not just for their personal wealth, but also for their sons’ academic prospects. Only Ah-Q remained invulnerable to the glamour of their future promise: My son will be much richer than them! he thought to himself.

the original terms of respect used. This way, one stays rooted in the writer’s culture without becoming overly literal to an English reader.

The domestication techniques employed throughout the novel show little consistency whatsoever among the translators. Through this, the readers see how they use some familiar elements while also adapting unfamiliar ones. As seen in Lovell and Lyell, total domestication can be found by substituting culturally specific terms with western equivalents. This makes the text easier to grasp. For example, the title “Old Master Zhao” in the Lyell version reflects Western-style respectfulness hierarchically. The rendering by the Yangs consists of more literal translations. As a result, they retain the authentic but unexciting reading of the original. Appropriate equivalents like domesticating a few terms while preserving others, are the way to go. They indicate that the aim is to serve both the Eastern and Western audiences. Domestication choices reflect ideological priorities. High domestication, as seen in Lyell and Lovell, aligns with globalising ideologies that prioritise accessibility, potentially at the cost of cultural specificity. Literal translations, like those of the Yangs, align with preservationist ideologies that resist Western assimilation.

The findings in Table 8 are elaborated that the ST reveals the callous and superficial attitude of the townspeople toward Ah Q’s execution. Instead of viewing the event with any solemnity or pity, they are disappointed that the shooting execution was not as entertaining as a traditional beheading would have been. They mock Ah Q, considering him a laughable criminal, and are further discontented that there was no theatrical or dramatic performance to make the execution more spectacle. This reflects the cruelty and apathy of the townspeople, who view the execution as an opportunity for entertainment rather than a moment of serious reflection.

Leung’s translation maintains a formal tone throughout the passage. In this case, there is no variation in names or titles, as Leung focuses more on collective public opinion and does not introduce specific labels or names for the prisoner. In terms of language and syntax, Leung maintains a complex, formal structure, closely

Table 8: Example 2 of domestication.

Source text	而城里的舆论却不佳,他们多半不满足,以为枪毙并无杀头这般好看;而且那是怎样的一个可笑的死囚呵,游了那么久的街,竟没有唱一句戏:他们白跟一趟了。(Ér chéng lǐ de yúlùn què bù jiā, tāmen duōbàn bù mǎnzú, yǐwéi qiāngbì bìng wú shā tóu zhè bān hǎokàn; érqǐè nà shì zěnyàng de yī gè kěxiào de sǐqiú hē, yóu le nàme jiǔ de jiē, jìng méiyǒu chàng yī jù xì: tāmen bái gēn yī tàng le.)
Leung	But opinion in the city was unfavourable; the majority of the people were dissatisfied, maintaining that execution by rifle was not so interesting to witness as decapitation; besides, what sort of ludicrous prisoner was this to have paraded for so long a time on the streets and not, in the end, to have sung any lines from a drama? They had followed him all in vain.
Wang	Public opinion in the city, however, was outraged and dissatisfied; most people contended that shooting was not as good a spectacle as beheading. And what a stupid and spiritless prisoner – not a single tune out of him all the time he was being paraded through the street! They had followed the procession for nothing.
The Yangs	But the consensus of opinion in town was unfavourable. Most people were dissatisfied because a shooting was not such a fine spectacle as a decapitation, and what a ridiculous culprit he had been to, to pass through so many streets without singing a single line from an opera. They had followed him for nothing.
Lyell	Public opinion in town was something less than favourable, too. Most townsfolk were disappointed – a shooting had not proved nearly so much fun as a good old-fashioned beheading. Worse yet, in his role as condemned criminal, Ah Q had given a miserable performance – paraded through the streets all that time and not a single line of opera! They had followed him in vain.
Lovell	The verdict in town was more ambivalent: death by firing squad, the majority of them felt, wasn’t a patch on decapitation. And the condemned had been a miserable specimen. In that whole extended tour around the streets, he hadn’t managed to choke out a single line of opera; they had followed him for nothing.

mirroring the original text. Phrases like “the majority of the people were dissatisfied, maintaining that execution by rifle was not so interesting” reflect a somewhat formal register. This results in meaning gain in fidelity to the original structure but meaning loss in accessibility and engagement for modern readers. Leung’s approach to cultural elements is fairly neutral, keeping the comparison between execution by rifle and decapitation formal and serious, reflecting the original’s tone without heavily domesticating it for a Western audience. This strategy leads to gaining meaning by preserving the cultural atmosphere of the ST. It risks meaning loss by distancing the text from English readers, who might find it harder to connect with the more detached tone.

Wang’s translation, like Leung’s, does not introduce specific names or titles in this passage, focusing instead on the public’s collective disdain. Nonetheless, Leung makes use of a more complex use of words and sentence structures in comparison to Wang. With shorter sentences and expressions like “Public opinion in the city, however, was outraged and dissatisfied,” a novel reader may find it easier to read and connect with and be able to grasp the meaning of other contexts. It is, in fact, only slightly formal in the original, but that is achieved by sacrificing some of the author’s tone. While appropriately using the same cultural elements, Wang is more critical and makes use of phrases like “What a stupid and spiritless prisoner,” which brings a more personal perspective. Consequently, the translation eventually becomes interesting as more original details can no longer be mentioned. Nonetheless, most meaning loss occurs due to oversimplifying the public’s abomination of the original.

The Yangs use a more inclusive style in this passage, focusing on a stronger appeal to the collective experience rather than the specific names/figures of the former prisoners themselves. The Yangs use a form and syntax language that goes through the formal and more easy-going language used in the current translation. Sentences such as “the consensus in town was unfavourable” refer to formal context but avoid making the sentence more complex. The slight informality of the phrases, for example, “what a ridiculous culprit,” serves the purpose of making the narrative easily accessible but accommodates the original tone as well. Through this, the message integrity improves, while there is a struggle to grasp the formal, specific meaning of the original text. As for cultural adaptation, the Yangs compare shooting to cutting off a head. Nonetheless, they modernise the provided statement for English speakers by making it easier to comprehend. An equal distribution of this nature ensures the preservation of most of the meaning of the text in question while allowing cultural richness.

Lyell’s version introduces Ah Q as a character to ensure readers can better relate to the story. Lyell’s introduction of this character, therefore, plays into the interpretation by the reader in the sense that it readily connects the character to the audience. Nevertheless, the mistake occurs when the transition gets out of the main

idea of the collective view. The Lyell type uses fully domesticated language and conversational syntactic structures. Phrases like “Public opinion in town was something less than favourable” and “a good old-fashioned beheading” simplify the original and make it more interesting and understandable. This anglicisation leads to meaning gain in terms of contemporary readability. However, it creates meaning loss by distorting the original’s more stylised, serious tone. The cultural elements are also significantly redesigned and replaced with more emphasis on the spectators’ disappointment than the action through terms such as “a shooting had not proved nearly so much fun,” making execution another show to entertain the bored crowd. Such dramatisation emphasises the cultural component of public events for Western readers. Nevertheless, it distinctly changes their perception of this historical fact by downplaying it as a source of entertainment.

Similar to Lyell, Lovell presents *Ah Q* as the condemned criminal, enhancing the narrative’s connection and relatability for the reader. This domestication adds meaning gain by individualising the narrative. However, some meaning loss occurs due to the reduction of the collective public opinion focus observed in the original. Lovell’s language and syntax are formal but accessible, with phrases like “The verdict in town was more ambivalent” reflecting a balance between literary language and approachable English. The inclusion of idiomatic phrases like “wasn’t a patch on decapitation” mixes formality with informality, making the translation fluid and readable. This strategy results in gaining meaning in terms of accessibility. However, it introduces meaning loss as the cultural specificity is smoothed over for English-speaking audiences. In adapting cultural elements, Lovell uses a strategy similar to Lyell’s, referring to execution with less gravity and more colloquial comparisons. This domestication creates meaning gain by making the cultural elements relatable. Nonetheless, there is still meaning loss as the seriousness of public executions as spectacles are toned down.

4.4 Lexical Recurrence

Karim et al. (2023) stated that the differentiation of inconsistent lexical recurrence and unnatural lexical choice or mismatch in translation may cause derailing of the original message that addresses readers’ original tone and ideological intentions. The meaning or ideological context of words can frequently be demonstrated by how they are employed, the lexical range, or the keyness index. The next table is the Keyword List of Translations of *The True Story of Ah Q*, which demonstrates the ideological implications.

The lexical recurrence analysis using AntConc reveals statistically significant differences across translations ($p < 0.05$). Wang’s translation, which highlights cultural identity through terms like “honor” and “licentiate,” shows the highest keyness score (LL = 22.94, $p = 0.01$), confirming a statistically significant focus on Confucian values. In contrast, Lovell’s translation prioritises modernist language, with a significant keyness score for “now” and “great” (LL = 20.31, $p = 0.02$), aligning with a forward-thinking ideology.

Based on Table 9, Leung underscores nuances and continuation, implying a tacit appreciation for traditions along with new approaches. Wang balances Confucian values and critiques of modernisation, focusing on societal identity and cultural tension. Yangs highlights reflection, continuity, and individual agency, blending traditional values with emerging modern ideologies. Lyell uses action-oriented and egalitarianism, focusing on dynamic progression and social mobility. Lovell uses modern and pragmatic, emphasising immediacy, renewal, and personal agency within a forward-thinking framework. This analysis ties each translator’s linguistic style to their ideological priorities and historical context. In conclusion, lexical recurrence patterns across the translations reflect ideological stances on key themes such as power, resistance, and hierarchy.

This variable is measured via AntConc, and this feature cannot be shown in one or two sentences; thus, there is no need to provide samples.

Table 9: Ideological implications of the translators’ key keywords.

Translator	Key keywords	Keyness score (LL)	p value
Leung	“Was,” “he,” “this,” “but,” “had,” “not,” “his,” “would,” “no,” “him,” “did,” “still,” “Mr,” “long,” “old,” “little,” “man,” “came,” “although,” “few”	18.53	0.02
Wang	“Q,” “ah,” “honor,” “his,” “chao,” “he,” “wei,” “licentiate,” “foreigner,” “him,” “biography,” “tsou,” “fake,” “beard,” “had,” “nun,” “revolutionaries,” “queue,” “temple,” “oldish”	22.94	0.01
Yangs	“Was,” “he,” “this,” “but,” “had,” “not,” “his,” “would,” “when,” “time,” “him,” “could,” “only,” “after,” “did,” “still,” “even,” “Mr,” “old,” “again”	15.42	0.04
Lyell	“That,” “was,” “he,” “had,” “his,” “would,” “out,” “then,” “him,” “back,” “down,” “d,” “off,” “even,” “long,” “old,” “didn’t,” “man,” “too,” “went”	19.67	0.03
Lovell	“Was,” “he,” “had,” “his,” “now,” “him,” “after,” “back,” “d,” “off,” “even,” “Mr,” “old,” “again,” “man,” “though,” “great,” “head”	20.31	0.02

Keyness score (LL) measures how distinctive certain words are in each translation (higher score = more unique to that translation); p value indicates statistical significance ($p < 0.05$ means a word is significantly more frequent in one translation compared to others).

4.5 Lexicalisation

Lexicalization, which Hatim and Mason definitively see as verbal embedding of one’s cognitive model of the factual mental to the utterances through a specific ideology, makes use of idiomatic and lexical phrases, as well as the standard structure of a given language, which is actualised in language (Hatim and Mason 2005). When regarding translating ideological aspects defined by Hatim and Mason (2005), it will be essential to consider how lexicalisation as a characteristic of ideologies will influence translation. Additionally, it means to think whether the word choices of the translator can give shape to ideological positioning. The categories of lexicalisation encompass Cohesion and Transitivity, Over-lexicalization, and Style-shifting. Using fragments from five translation versions of *The True Story of Ah Q* by Lu Xun, a table is presented to illustrate the lexicalisation elements within the ideological framework established by Hatim and Mason (2005). Table 10 illustrates the sentence example of lexicalisation.

The findings in Table 10 are elaborated below: Leung’s translation exemplifies over-lexicalisation by retaining the Chinese honorific “Chii-jen Lao-yeh,” which emphasises the cultural and class identity embedded in the original text. By keeping this honorific intact, Leung adds meaning gain by preserving the cultural richness

Table 10: The sentence example of lexicalisation.

Source text	船的使命,赵家本来是很秘密的,但茶坊酒肆里却都说,革命党要进城,举人老爷到我们乡下来逃难了。(Chúan de shímìng, Zhào jiā běnlái shì hěn mìmì de, dàn cháfáng jiǔsì lǐ què dōu shuō, gé mìng dǎng yào jìn chéng, jǔ rén lǎoyé dào wǒmen xiāngxià lái táonàn le.)
Leung	As for the ship’s mission, that was kept very secret by the Chaos; but in the tea shops and in the wine shops, it was rumored that rebels were advancing upon the city and that Chii-jen Lao-yeh had come to their village to take refuge.
Wang	The Chaos had kept the mission of the boat a secret, but it was said in the teahouse and the tavern that the revolutionaries were about to occupy the city and that His Honor had come to take refuge in the country.
The Yangs	The Chao family kept very quiet about the errand of the boat, but according to the gossip in the tea-house and wine shop, the revolutionaries were going to enter the town and the successful provincial candidate had come to the country to take refuge.
Lyell	The Zhaos, of course, were secretive as to the boat’s real mission, but out on the street word had it that the Revolutionary Party was about to occupy the town and that Old Master Selectman had come out to Wei Village to hole up until things blew over.
Lovell	Although the Zhaos were keeping very quiet about the reason behind the boat’s arrival, the gossips in the teahouse and tavern were saying that the city was about to fall to the Revolutionary Party, and Mr. Provincial Examination had taken refuge in the village.

and specificity of the original. However, this also leads to some meaning loss for English readers unfamiliar with such terms, as the cultural nuance may not be fully understood. Leung also mirrors the shift from formal discourse in elite spaces to informal public gossip by moving from “the ship’s mission” to “it was rumoured.” This shift reflects the diffusion of information from the elite to the public, and the use of Passive voice structures obscures the direct actors involved in spreading the information, decentralising power. The overall approach results in meaning gain in cultural specificity but may create meaning loss in terms of clarity and directness for Western readers.

Wang simplifies the cultural markers by translating “Chii-jen Lao-yeh” as “His Honor,” maintaining a general sense of hierarchy while reducing the cultural specificity of the original. It introduces meaning gain in terms of accessibility, as the term “His Honor” is more recognisable for Western audiences. Still, there is a loss of meaning in the reduction of the cultural context. Similar to Leung, Wang’s translation reflects how elite knowledge transitions to public gossip but through a more streamlined approach. Wang uses passive structures to show this flow of information without assigning clear responsibility. She has a decentralised view of how knowledge moves through society. Passive voice structures create meaninglessness through the reduction of the visibility of individual agency. However, the translation gains meaning with its readable and simple character.

In a linguistic stance taken by Yangs, a more detailed linguistic pattern is employed. The term of distinction, namely “successful provincial candidate,” highlights the bureaucratic standing. This step urges the readers’ social stratification awareness by providing more meaning gain. However, there could be a portion of meaning loss for audiences with less knowledge compared to their native titles in the Chinese bureaucracy. The Yangs follow a pretentious count-chalk-style gossip. Hence, it resonates with the standard’s shift from high places toward ordinary masses. Furthermore, though there is a difference, the Yangs, unlike Leung and Wang, they use active verbs and attribute direct agency to the characters, such as, “the Chao family kept very quiet.” This active form adds responsibility to the part where each individual is involved in its construction. Here, the importance of individual accountability is strengthened by the Versailles-type writing. The creation of meaning gains results from the increased transparency of social arrangements and power redistribution that is reflected. Speaking about the Yangs, one can say that their approach is more even between cultural retention and a rather strong emphasis on character agency. Yet, clarification about this lies in the fact that a layer of meaning might evaporate, particularly in the sections formulated in a more formal tone in the original.

Lyell brings a European touch to his works by translating the polite term “Old Master Selectman.” He renders the class identity slightly more familiar to English-dominant readers. Here, the use of over-lexicalisation provides meaning gain for the rest of the title. In this case, the title becomes more understandable and culturally close. However, meaning loss is apparent in the departure from the original Chinese honorifics. Lyell’s translation uses casual discourse, such as “word had it,” reflecting how elite information becomes street gossip. The active voice used in phrases like “The Zhaos, of course, were secretive” assigns clear agency to the characters, highlighting their role in the flow of information. This transparency in power dynamics creates meaning gain, as the characters’ actions are more explicit. Still, it also leads to meaning loss as the subtlety of the original’s Passive voice structures is removed.

Lovell’s translation uses over-lexicalisation in phrases like “Mr Provincial Examination” to emphasise formal social rank and class identity. It has the meaning gained in preserving the social structures present in the original. Still, the use of formal titles may cause meaning loss if the reader is unfamiliar with the specific bureaucratic roles. Lovell contrasts with other translations by using active verbs and placing agency in the hands of ordinary people. Phrases like “the gossips in the teahouse and tavern were saying” assign responsibility for the spread of information to the public, which creates meaning gain in terms of portraying a more democratic distribution of power. Lovell’s active construction usage gives clear direction to the story and puts it in a more personal space. There is, however, the implication that this reduction may possibly result in a transformation of the original’s contemplative and satirical aspects in social relations.

All in all, lexicalisation analysis underscores how translators weave ideological stances into their works. Those include matters of word choice and phrasing. For example, the usage of labial honorifics like “Mr.” and “Chii-jen Lao-yeh” highlights old hierarchies. It can be seen, by and large, as an illustration of a rather traditional standpoint on leadership. Lovell, on the other hand, refrains from employing such terms among her peers. She talks about characters in an equitable way, something that is common in modern Western countries. Yangs’ integration of culture-laden terms like “provincial candidate” is illustrative of their greater struggle for authenticity. Lyell eases such semantics with more accessibility. The selection of lexicalisation influences how the readers conceive of what they are reading and the political environment they are in. When translators decide to use culturally relevant words or bureaucratic terms, this guarantees respect for the ideology of the original text. This is done from the reader’s point of view or the point of view of their own reading experience.

4.6 Transitivity Shifts

Transitivity analysis represents a method that aids us in evaluating the manner in which these features are manifested in the translated texts, specifically, the features of agency, ideology, characterisation, and story (Schneider 2023). When shifts from transitivity emerge, it is because decisions are not similar between languages of the source and target. The issue of agency is vital in translation studies, as transitivity shift portrays a transformation in depiction of acts, agents, and motif in different versions of a story (Li 2020). For the purpose of summarising the transitivity shift among the five translations, the project employed the Statistics and Z-Scores from the Multidimensional Analysis Tagger (MAT). Statistics data file contains a detailed comparison of linguistic characteristics in five translations of the novel. Transitivity features worth considering would then include: VBD – reflection of the past tense verbs, which could narrate the actions of the people in the narrator’s mind. VPRT – the present tense verbs that help in illustrating the on-going or the habitual actions. BYPA – the bias formed due to the utilisation of the ‘by-passives’, where voice is in passive, resulting in omission or demotion of the doer of an action. WZPAST + WZPRES -past and present participial clauses, in the sense that they are involving the use of verbs to phrase what noun is being talked about and definitely can be a factor in certifying the complexity of a sentence. The data is present in the Z-Score file differ from standard values. Using these observations, we can evaluate the transitivity aspect if there is an increase or a decrease in the Z-Scores and count of the observed indicators of the features. Figure 2 displays the comparison of transitivity-related features among translations.

The findings in Table 11 are elaborated below:

In the ST, the author discusses the struggles he faces while trying to write a serious and refined article. Although he intends to produce a high-quality piece, as soon as he begins to write, he is overwhelmed by the task’s difficulty. The phrase emphasises the frustration and challenge of the writing process, suggesting that despite their best efforts, crafting such an article proves to be far more difficult than anticipated.

Leung’s translation maintains a straightforward narrative, focusing on the physical and emotional process of writing. The phrase “placing my writing brush down” captures the physical action, while “I felt tremendous difficulty” expresses the internal reaction. The term “quickly decaying article” adds urgency and reflects the deteriorating quality of the work. In terms of transitivity, Leung retains a clear actor (the writer), an action (placing the brush down), and an emotional response (feeling difficulty). This results in meaning gain by preserving the original’s close connection between action and emotion. Nonetheless, there is minimal meaning loss as the

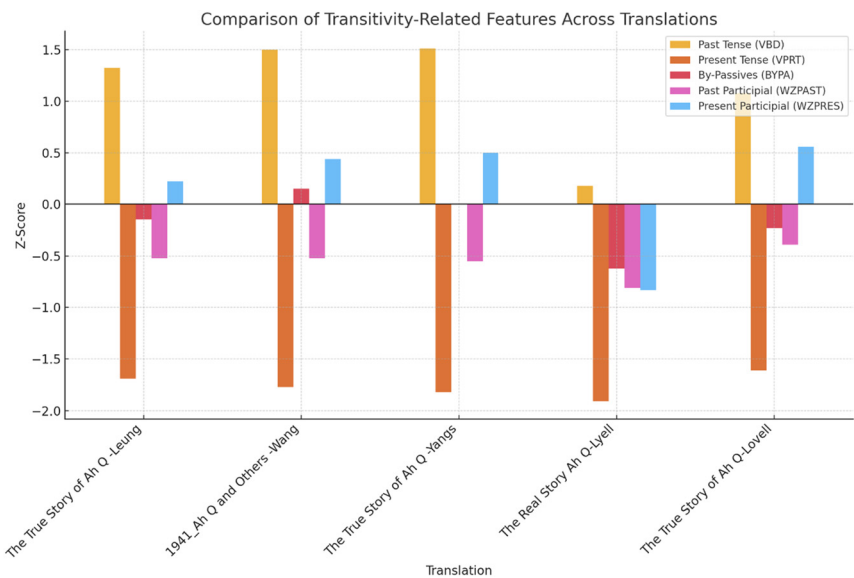


Figure 2: The comparison of transitivity-related features among translations.

straightforward translation may lack the philosophical depth present in other versions. The focus here is on the process without additional ideological layers, emphasising the personal experience of the writer’s struggle.

Wang introduces a more abstract interpretation with the phrase “mortal scent piece,” shifting the focus from the physical description (“decaying article” from Leung) to a symbolic reflection on mortality. The translation changes the dynamic

Table 11: Example sentence of transitivity shifts.

Source text	然而要做这一篇速朽的文章,才下笔,便感到万分的困难了。(Rán ér yào zuò zhè yī piān sù xiǔ de wén zhāng, cái xià bǐ, biàn gǎn dào wàn fēn de kùn nán le.)
Leung	However, on placing my writing brush down to take on this quickly decaying article, I felt tremendous difficulty.
Wang	But at the very outset of this mortal scent piece, a thousand difficulties confront me.
The Yangs	And yet, no sooner had I taken up my pen than I became conscious of tremendous difficulties in writing this far-from-immortal work.
Lyell	No sooner did I take up my writing brush to begin this very unimmortal work of mine than I ran into a horrendous host of difficulties.
Lovell	But as I take up my pen to begin this distinctly mortal work, the infinite difficulty of it again deters me.

with “a thousand difficulties confront me,” which positions the writer as a passive recipient of external challenges rather than an active agent facing difficulties. This transitivity shift suggests a less engaged stance, where the challenges are external forces acting upon the writer. Using metaphorical language brings meaning gain by introducing an ideological layer by highlighting the transient nature of human endeavours. However, meaning loss in terms of the writer’s agency, the author becomes more of a passive figure.

The Yangs balance both physical action and internal reflection. The process begins with the action of “taking up my pen” but transitions to an internal realisation with “became conscious of tremendous difficulties.” The phrase “far-from-immortal work” reflects a more philosophical take, similar to Wang’s “mortal scent piece.” Nevertheless, it maintains a closer connection to the physical act of writing. The transitivity shift lies in the transition from action to cognition – the writer is active in starting the process and reflecting on its challenges. It creates meaning gain by adding depth to the writer’s struggle, blending both the practical and existential aspects of writing. There is minimal meaning loss as the translation retains both action and reflection.

Lyell focuses on the physicality of writing with “take up my writing brush” but introduces strong ideological judgment with “very unimmortal work.” The difficulties are described as a “horrendous host,” suggesting overwhelming external challenges that the writer must confront. The transitivity shift is clear in the movement from the writer taking action to the external difficulties becoming the dominant force (“ran into”). It introduces a conflict between the writer and these external difficulties, which adds meaning gain in terms of the intensity and drama of the struggle. However, there is some meaning loss in the subtlety of the emotional or internal writing experience, as the focus shifts more towards the external battle with the overwhelming obstacles.

Lovell emphasises the continuity of the writing process with “as I take up my pen,” suggesting an ongoing struggle. The phrase “distinctly mortal work” aligns with Wang’s and the Yangs’ philosophical reflections on mortality but uses a more definitive term, emphasising the inevitable impermanence of the task. The difficulties are described as “infinite,” amplifying their scale, and the verb “deters” implies that the writer is actively discouraged from continuing. The transitivity shift here moves from action to inhibition – the difficulties prevent the writer from progressing. This results in meaning gain by highlighting the futility and overwhelming nature of the struggle. However, there is meaning loss in terms of personal and emotional engagement with the process as the focus shifts to the external and ideological weight of the challenge.

Throughout the translations, we observe a range of approaches that either adapt the text to the target culture or preserve its foreign elements: Leung and

Yangs strive to achieve equilibrium, with a minor inclination towards foreignisation through the preservation of intricate narrative and descriptive elements. Wang employs a combination of tactics but exhibits indications of domestication through more passive utilisation. Lyell significantly simplifies the text, reducing its intricacies, either to cater to a wider audience or a particular cultural inclination towards intricate narrative structures. Lovell appears to utilise a foreignising approach by preserving a significant portion of the narrative intricacy of the source work, particularly through the inclusion of present participial phrases. Every translation consists of two crystalline components, one linguistic and the other ideological. They are the boundaries within which various degrees of adaptation or opposition to these elements are shown, depending on the target culture's living style and literary interests.

5 Conclusions

5.1 Summary of Key Findings

This study undertakes a diachronic analysis of five English translations of *The True Story of Ah Q*, revealing that diverse stylistic and ideological approaches in translation significantly influence the interpretation of Lu Xun's renowned work. Through an in – depth exploration of elements such as modality, nominalisation, domestication, lexical recurrence, lexicalisation, and transitivity shifts, we have uncovered the ideological dimensions inherent in each translation.

5.1.1 Modality and Ideological Shifts

The analysis of modality indicates distinct ideological orientations among translators. Leung and Wang exhibit a preference for necessity modals (e.g., must, ought), which suggest authority and moral obligation, aligning with Confucian ideals and hierarchical values. Yangs and Lyell incorporate possibility modals (may, might), reflecting a more neutral and flexible narrative style that balances reader agency and textual interpretation.

Lovell's translation shows a shift towards predictive modals (will, would), creating a more determined and forward-looking narrative, aligning with modernist ideologies. The ANOVA results confirm that these differences are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), indicating that the translators' modality choices reflect underlying ideological commitments rather than random stylistic preferences.

5.1.2 Nominalisation and Cultural Hierarchies

Nominalisation patterns reveal shifts in cultural perspectives across translations. Wang and Leung's translations have a higher nominalisation frequency (e.g., revolution, resistance), abstracting ideological conflicts into generalised concepts, distancing readers from direct agency. Lyell's translation, by contrast, minimises nominalisation, opting for direct, action-oriented expressions, promoting a narrative of individual agency over abstract forces. Yangs and Lovell take a moderate approach, balancing abstraction with specificity, offering a nuanced blend of cultural fidelity and accessibility. The ANOVA results for nominalisation ($p < 0.01$) suggest clear ideological patterns in the way translators represent agency and authority.

5.1.3 Lexical Recurrence and Ideological Messaging

The keyword analysis using AntConc reveals statistically significant differences ($p < 0.05$) in lexical choices across translations. Wang's translation shows a high recurrence of "honor," "licentiate," and "temple", reinforcing Confucian ideals and societal order. Lovell's translation prioritises "now" and "great", reflecting a modernist, forward-thinking perspective. Leung and Lyell's lexical choices highlight contrasting approaches to tradition (Leung) and pragmatic social mobility (Lyell). These patterns indicate that lexical recurrence plays a central role in embedding ideological meanings within the text.

5.1.4 Transitivity Shifts and Agency

Transitivity analysis reveals how translators frame agency and responsibility differently. Leung and Wang's translations tend to use passive constructions, often obscuring agency and aligning with hierarchical, collectivist perspectives. Lyell and Lovell, in contrast, favour active voice and direct agency, reinforcing a Western individualistic outlook. Yangs' translation strikes a balance between agency and fluidity, maintaining both cultural fidelity and readability. These transitivity shifts shape how characters are perceived – whether they are seen as active agents or passive subjects of fate.

5.1.5 Domestication and Accessibility

The extent of domestication varies across translations, reflecting different approaches to audience accessibility. Lyell and Lovell adopt high domestication,

replacing culturally embedded terms with Western equivalents, prioritising accessibility but potentially erasing cultural nuances. Wang and the Yangs take a foreignisation approach, retaining original cultural references, preserving authenticity at the cost of accessibility. Leung's translation maintains a balance, using selective domestication to preserve cultural integrity while aiding comprehension. These findings highlight how domestication strategies reflect ideological positions on cultural transmission and globalisation.

5.2 Implication

5.2.1 Implications for Translation Studies

This study has demonstrated that ideology is intricately woven into language choices in translation, encompassing aspects such as modality, lexical selection, and transitivity. Future research in translation studies could further explore the complex interplay between different translation techniques, such as domestication and foreignisation, and ideological factors. For example, it would be interesting to investigate whether specific cultural or historical contexts make one technique more susceptible to ideological influence than the other.

Moreover, since ideological biases in translation can sometimes be hidden beneath linguistic features, future research could develop more effective methods for identifying and addressing these biases. This would contribute to more transparent and accurate translation practices, enabling translators to produce work that is more faithful to the original text while also meeting the needs of the target audience.

5.2.2 Implications for Cultural Representation

Translation acts as a vital cultural intermediary. Future research could focus on optimising translation techniques to better represent the cultural ideologies of the source text without imposing the translator's own views. To achieve this, scholars could analyse a wider range of translations from diverse cultures and languages. By doing so, they can identify patterns and strategies that lead to more faithful cultural representation.

In addition, the use of different translations of the same text in educational settings could be explored. This could promote cross – cultural understanding and critical thinking about cultural ideologies among students. For instance, by comparing multiple translations of a literary work, students can gain a deeper

appreciation for the cultural and ideological differences between the source and target cultures.

5.2.3 Implications for Sociopolitical Studies

The correlation between translation norms and ideological changes identified in this study provides a foundation for further research. Future studies could expand the scope to include translations from a broader range of texts and languages. This would enable a more comprehensive understanding of how sociopolitical contexts shape translation.

For example, examining translations produced during periods of social unrest or political transition could reveal unique patterns of translation that are distinct from those in more stable times. This research could help cultural institutions and policymakers develop guidelines for translation practices that strike a balance between cultural preservation and adaptation to different sociopolitical environments.

5.3 Conclusion and Recommendations for Further Studies

This study demonstrates that translation is not a neutral act, but an ideological negotiation shaped by linguistic choices. By examining modality, nominalisation, domestication, lexical recurrence, lexicalisation, and transitivity shifts, this research reveals how translators impose distinct ideological perspectives on *The True Story of Ah Q*. Statistical analysis confirms that modality choices ($p < 0.05$) reflect authority and agency shifts, nominalisation patterns ($p < 0.01$) influence abstraction levels, and lexical recurrence ($p < 0.05$) signals ideological framing. The findings show that Wang and Leung favor hierarchical, Confucian interpretations, while Lovell and Lyell promote modernization and individual agency. Domestication strategies further indicate a spectrum of cultural adaptation, from faithful renderings (Wang, Yangs) to accessible reformulations (Lyell, Lovell). These variations underscore how translation is deeply intertwined with cultural representation and historical contexts. Moving forward, future research should expand this model to broader linguistic corpora and computational approaches, deepening our understanding of how ideological positioning evolves in translation studies.

Acknowledgments: The corresponding author would like to thank the second and third authors for their help in the research.

Research ethics: Not applicable.

Informed consent: Not applicable.

Author contributions: All authors have accepted responsibility for the entire content of this manuscript and approved its submission.

Use of Large Language Models, AI and Machine Learning Tools: None declared.

Conflict of interest: The authors state no conflict of interest.

Research funding: None declared.

Data availability: Not applicable.

References

- Al-Awawdeh, N. 2022. "The Function of Ideology in Translation: A Case Study of Selected Aljazeera News Headlines Translated into Arabic." *Ijaz Arabi Journal of Arabic Learning* 5 (1). <https://doi.org/10.18860/ijazarabi.v5i1.15431>.
- Allababneh, A. M. 2021. "Translator's Ideology and Translation Choices in Political Conflict: Do Translators Have Their Say?" *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation* 4 (6): 217–224.
- Anthony, L. 2023. *AntConc*. In (Version 4.2.4). Waseda University. Retrieved Sep 3, 2024, from <https://laurenceanthony.net/software.html>.
- Bian, J., and X. Li. 2022. "The Interaction Between Ideology and Translation." In *2021 International Conference on Education, Language and Art (ICELA 2021)*.
- Biber, D. 1988. *Variation across speech and writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Biber, D. 2014. "Multi-Dimensional Analysis." In *Multidimensional Analysis, 25 Years On: A Tribute to Douglas Biber*, edited by T. Berber Sardinha, and M. Veirano Pinto, 15–60. John Benjamins.
- Chen, F., and D. Li. 2023. "Patronage and Ideology: A Corpus-assisted Investigation of Eileen Chang's Style of Translating Herself and the Other." *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities* 38 (1): 34–49.
- Chen, C., and Q. He. 2024. "A Corpus-Based Study of Metaphor of Modalization in English Academic Writing." *SAGE Open*, 14 (1): 21582440241229809.
- Cui, F. 2022. "Ideology, Patronage, and Manipulation of Translation in Zouxiang Weilai Congshu: With Special Reference to the Translation and Introduction of Max Weber." *Frontiers in Communication* 7: 1031692. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2022.1031692>.
- Fakhrshafaie, N. 2024. "Translation and Ideology: The Case of the English Translation of Parinoush Saniee's the Book of Fate." *Language and Translation* 14 (1): 181–190.
- Fang, X. 2024. "Translator's (in) Visibility: A Case Study of Howard Goldblatt's Translation of Red Sorghum." *SAGE Open* 14 (2): 21582440241251473.
- Gu, M. D. 2016. "Lu Xun's Ah Quism: A Study of its Intrinsic Nature and Transcultural Value." *International Communication of Chinese Culture* 3 (2): 207–28.
- Güldal, B. K., and E. S. Sezer. 2023. "Investigating the Influence of Ideology on Translation: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Slogans of Cosmetic Brands and Their Turkish Translations." *Söylem Filoloji Dergisi* (Çeviribilim Özel Sayısı) 8: 403–21. <https://doi.org/10.29110/soylemdergi.1186734>.
- Gunawan, F. 2022. "The Ideology of Translators in Quranic Translation: Lessons Learned from Indonesia." *Cogent Arts & Humanities* 9 (1): 2088438.
- Hatim, B., and I. Mason. 2005. *The Translator as Communicator*. London: Routledge.
- Hong, Y., and C. Wang. 2022. "A Study of Nominalization in the Abstracts of Linguistic Academic Papers." *English Language and Literature Studies* 12 (4): 11–15.
- Hsieh, E. 2020. "The Politics of Translation and Interpretation in International Communication." In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication*. Oxford: Oxford University Press Oxford.

- Jiuding, Q., and Z. Leilei. 2023. "Research Review on Ideological Factors in Public Diplomacy Discourse Translation." *International Journal of Translation and Interpretation Studies* 3 (1): 08–16.
- Karim, S., K. Shahzad, and B. Hussain. 2023. "An Analysis of the Urdu Translation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: An Ideological Perspective." *Revista Espanola de Documentacion Cientifica* 17 (1): 1–17.
- Lefevere, A. 1992. *Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*. London: Routledge.
- Lefevere, A. 2016. *Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*. London: Routledge.
- Li, L. 2020. "Shifts of Agency in Translation: A Case Study of the Chinese Translation of Wild Swans." *Meta* 65 (1): 168–192.
- Li, Q., and Y. Ng. 2024. "Effective Chinese-to-English Biotic Interpretation in Ecotourism Destinations: A Corpus-based Interdisciplinary Study." *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 33 (2), 207–42.
- Nini, A. 2015. *Multidimensional analysis tagger (Version 1.3)*. Retrieved Sep 3, 2024, from <http://sites.google.com/site/multidimensionaltagger>.
- Nini, A. 2019. "The Multi-Dimensional Analysis Tagger." In *Multi-Dimensional Analysis: Research Methods and Current Issues*, edited by T. Berber Sardinha, and M. Veirano Pinto, 67–94. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Obeidat, A. M. 2019. "The Application of Domestication and Foreignization Strategies in Translating Arabic-English Collocations in Awlad Haratina's Novel." *International Journal of Language, Literacy and Translation (IJOLLT)* 2 (2): 13–28.
- Petrilli, S. 2021. "2223 Translation, Ideology, and Social Practice." In *The Oxford Handbook of Translation and Social Practices*, edited by M. Ji, and S. Laviosa. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schneider, U. 2023. "Reflexive Analytic Causatives: A Diachronic Analysis of Transitivity Parameters." *English Language & Linguistics* 27 (4): 789–813.
- Tan, P. 2022. "Construction of Multimodal Vocational English Corpus Based on Functional Software." In *International Conference on Frontier Computing*.
- Tian, Y., and N. Jincheng. 2021. "Comparative Analysis of English Versions of the True Story of Ah Q from the Perspective of Functional Equivalence Theory." *US-China Foreign Language* 19 (2): 118–122.
- Tönsing, K. M., and G. Soto. 2020. "Multilingualism and Augmentative and Alternative Communication: Examining Language Ideology and Resulting Practices." *Augmentative and Alternative Communication* 36 (3): 190–201.
- Xu, K. 2023. "The Impact of Ideological Shifts on Translators' Strategies: A Language-in-Use Analysis of Two Chinese Versions of Nineteen Eighty-Four." Master's Thesis, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. <https://hdl.handle.net/10356/168454>.
- Yonamine, M. 2022. "Domestication and Foreignization in Interlingual Subtitling: A Systematic Review of Contemporary Research." *Translation & Interpreting: The International Journal of Translation and Interpreting Research* 14 (1): 198–213.
- Zmigrod, L. 2021. "A Neurocognitive Model of Ideological Thinking." *Politics and the Life Sciences* 40 (2): 224–238.