INTRODUCTION

In order to gain some insights into the differences between Chinese and English translations of Japanese text, two notable pieces of Japanese literature, *Izu no Odoriko* (The Dancing Girl of Izu; abbreviated Izu) and *Norwegian Wood* (NW) are selected as the subjects of this research. The former is a short story written by Yasunari Kawabata, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1968; the latter is a novel by arguably the most well-known Japanese writer in the contemporary world, Haruki Murakami. The aim is to gather the available versions of translations as well as the origin text, and compare specific passages from each version that can reflect the overall quality of the translation.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

WHAT IS A GOOD TRANSLATION? In the case of literature, the requirement is more complicated than simply accuracy; it also requires clarity, naturalness, preserving the mood of the author, and being culturally appropriate for the target audience, etc. (Zarl).

Chinese literary translation is divided into the following categories:

**JAPANESE/JAPANESE**
- Japonic
- Influence of Chinese in vocab, written form, and pronunciation
- Direct import of European vocab
- Conjugations for past, negative, passive, potential, and volitional forms, adjective conjugations
- Complex honorifics system (proclitics, conjugations, verbs)
- Subject - verb - object

**ENGLISH**
- West Germanic language family
- Many vocab influenced by other Germanic & Romance langs (esp. French)
- Non-tonal like Japanese
- Latin script
- Conjugations for past & perfect tense
- 1st/2nd/3rd person
- Minimal to no honorifics
- Subject - verb - object

**CHINESE**
- Sino-Tibetan language family
- Fundamentally different from Japanese despite their connections
- Tonal language (5 tones)
- Chinese characters
- No conjugations for verbs
- add/words/particles instead
- Minimal honorifics
- Subject - verb - object

RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

**CATEGORIZATION** – a few categories of text were established based on the major components of each story (i.e. "scenery", "appearance", "action").

- Then, specific passages that fall under each category are selected from each story and used as subjects of this research.
- The categorization could vary from text to text due to the nature of each story.

**AWAKWARD SPOTS** – where the translation sounds highly unnatural or deviates significantly from original text (in other words, either lack in flow or accuracy)

- These "problematic" passages might shed light on certain difficulties in the translating process.
- The way these difficulties are approached could determine the quality of a translation.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Sample Passage Analysis from *Norwegian Wood* (all passages are analyzed in similar fashion)

Corresponding texts are highlighted with the same color; "awkward spots" are underlined.

**Japanese**

ふと気配があった時、直子の言葉は既に終わっていた。言うのの力が、消えのような気がされた時でもない。正

確と言えば彼女は言葉をすすめなかった。どうかしらとつぶやきをみたのは、彼女はいかに続接を始め

たか、それはもう何かになった。何が考えなかったのか、あるいはそれを損ねたのかもしれない。

何を言ったかが彼女の耳に、時間かを理解され、それの音で彼女を締め続けたエネルギーのような

のが損なわれてしまったのではないか。 (Murakami, 83)

English:

Before I knew it, she had stopped talking. The ragged end of the last word she spoke seemed to float in the air, where it had been torn off. She had not actually finished what she was saying. Her words had simply evaporated. She had been trying to go on, but had come up against nothing. Something was gone now, and I was probably the one who had destroyed it. My words might have finally reached her, taken their time to be understood, but obliterated whatever energy it was that had kept her talking so long. (Rubin, 39)

**Chinese (version 1):**

蓦的察觉到时，话语已戛然而止。中断的语言片段像被悄悄的切片似地涌在空中。原句未完，她说的话并未结束，而是突然消失到无影无踪。本来她还想再继续两句，但话已云消雾散，被破坏掉了。说不准现在连我都快被她的话语言语的类似动力的东西。 (Lin, 46)

**Chinese (version 2):**

这一瞬间，直子的言辞已经结束，话语的碎片，好像是被切片似地似地涌在空中，准确地说，她的话并没有结束，只是不知在这

么瞬间对话语消失殆尽，说不定是想继续下去，但是对现在的情况也已经没有了。不说也罢，也未尝不是好事。我想刚才的话或许对

直子的耳朵，好心人才能理解，从而破坏了促使说话者谈话的类似驱动力的东西。

(Shi, 15)

- Translating to English tends to require more reordering and combining of sentences than Chinese does.
- Chinese v1 sacrifices some literal accuracy for better flow of text, relatively plain and colloquial Japanese phrases are translated with embellishments, i.e. (idsiom (言語): (改変), making the tone stiffer and more refined/poetic.
- Chinese v2 takes a strictly literal approach. Vocabulary (kanji), phrasing, sentence breaks, and even grammar, are preserved to the greatest extent. The high accuracy comes at the cost of awkward word choice and poor flow.
- The subtle meaning of the particle "しまった" (shimatta) is not, and probably cannot, be smoothly translated into English. The subtle hint of disappointment in "しまった" is lost almost all the time.
- The absence of subject in Japanese sentences is more readily preserved in Chinese than in English translation.
- The abundant use of passive form of verbs in Japanese seems to be better preserved in English translation.

OTHER FINDINGS

- Although there are many existing studies about either Japanese-English or Japanese-Chinese translation, little has been done in the comparison between the two. By comparing English and Chinese translations, this research attempts to bring attention to what is lost in the content that readers of either language can access.
- Personally, I can also learn how to produce good translations through studying prominent translators' works.

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