

Exploring the Relationship Between Translators' Styles and Translation Competence: A Case Study of English Translations of *The True Story of Ah Q*

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Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between Translators' Styles and Translation Competence (TC) by examining five English translations of *The True Story of Ah Q*. The five translators are George Kin Leung, Chi-Chen Wang, Yang Xianyi & Gladys_Yang, William Lyell, and Julia Lovell. Employing a mixed-method approach, the research utilises the Multidimensional Analysis Tagger (MAT) for quantitative analysis and the PACTE model framework for qualitative analysis. The key competencies of TC—bilingual, extralinguistic, strategic sub-competence, and knowledge about translation—are evaluated to understand their impact on stylistic choices in the translations. MAT's quantitative analysis provides insights into the lexical density, syntactic complexity, and narrative techniques, while the qualitative analysis explores cultural transmission and rhetorical strategies used by the translators. The findings reveal significant variations in translator style, influenced by their competencies. Translators with higher bilingual and knowledge about translation demonstrate greater linguistic flexibility and accuracy, whereas strategic and extralinguistic sub-competence impact cultural adaptations and rhetorical fidelity. This research contributes to expanding the PACTE model's application to literary translation, offering empirical support for how TC manifests in stylistic choices. The study highlights the value of combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to advance the understanding of translator style and competence in translation studies.

Keywords: Translators' Styles, Translation Competence, PACTE, *The True Story of Ah Q*

1. Introduction

The study of translators and translation competence (TC) plays a key role in the understanding of the translation process within the domain of translation studies. The way a translator styles their narrative will reflect their perception and approaches towards the formation of the language, comprehension of the culture, and the techniques they operationalize. On the other hand, the successful resolution of the cultural barriers in the process of translation is dependent on the necessity of the TC (Gough, 2024; Supardi et al., 2021). A translator should have more than just linguistic expertise; their task is to convey the original work's essence intricately using the gifted intellect. Translation strategies are used here to deal with emotions, stylistic aspects, cultural particulars, and other recommendations (Katan & Taibi, 2021). In laying the matter of how the interplay of TC and Translators' Styles comes into play, translators arrive at the balancing equation of faithfulness, imagination, cultural transmission, and linguistic expression (Cheng, 2022; Tian, 2023).

Lu Xun is a master of linguistic ideas creation, and *The True Story of Ah Q* is a splendid example of modern literature in China with a specific language style and complex cultural background (Wang, 2022). The author ironises, metaphorizes, and employs other rhetorical devices to expose the society of China and also craft a critique of national feelings through the story (Mehta, 2022). While the proper rendition of a message from one language to another includes further aspects such as conveying culture and emotions, a translator faces challenges such as being faithful to the original linguistically. Translators' TC and style have a direct link not only to the translation's efficiency but also to the readers' understanding of the historical work (Tianzhen, 2023). In addition, analysing the different English versions of *The True Story of Ah Q* enhances the comprehension level of the readers through the demonstration of the TC in the form of style.

The PACTE model, developed by Spanish researchers, conceptualises TC as a multifaceted construct that includes

six essential competencies: bilingual sub-competence, extralinguistic sub-competence, knowledge about translation, instrumental sub-competence, strategic sub-competence and psycho-physiological components (Albir, 2020; Albir et al., 2020; Mohammedain, 2020). In connection to the data regarding the five translations of *The True Story of Ah Q*, the PACTE theory redefines that participants' instrumental sub-competence and psycho-physiological components shall be dismissed since the translators are no longer available, and there can be no follow-up. Therefore, four sub-competencies were studied later. This study uses a combination of quantitative methods, which will be done by incorporating the Multidimensional Analysis Tagger (MAT) (Zhao, 2024) with qualitative analysis, which is aimed at shedding light on the stylistic rendering of the translations about their lexical choices, syntactic structures, and rhetorical strategies. Hence, the coordination of both approaches produces equal grounds for the comparison of overall translation quality (Gough, 2024).

2. Literature Review

In translation studies, TC is the identifying factor that the translator has to work around before the task is performed, while it is the expression that refers to the way of shuffling words so as to obtain the desired purpose. In the last couple of years, the PACTE model has gained an effortless leading role in setting a theoretical framework for TC research. Along with that, a more profound study of Translators' Styles has been taken; it has been scrutinised how Translators' Styles and their TC combine when they deal with literary and different kinds of texts. In this section, we will provide a summary of the four key competencies of the PACTE model, look into how these competencies affect translation technique, and give an evaluation of the weak points of present research based on the available literature so that the researchers explain how this research can contribute on filling the gaps.

2.1 The PACTE Model and Its Core Competencies

The following are the core competencies of the PACTE model.

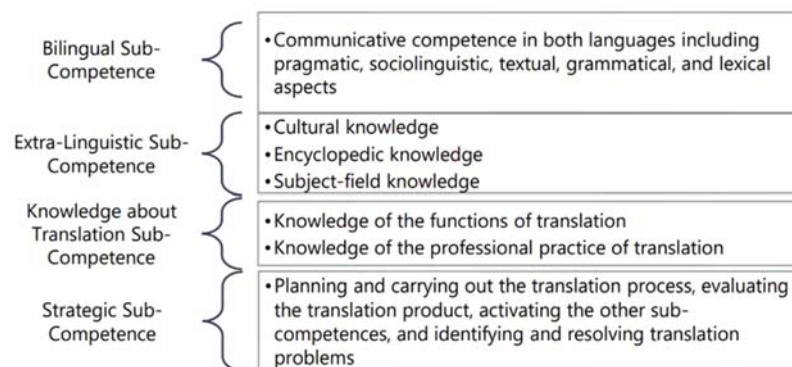


Figure 1. Adapted Sub-Competencies of PACTE's Final TC Model (Salamah, 2021)

Bilingual sub-competence, as a sub-competence of the PACTE model, involves the translator's linguistic competencies and knowledge of the two languages (Albir et al., 2020). Bilingual sub-competence covers vocabulary, grammar, and discourse knowledge, which becomes handy for the translator during the translation process when dealing with language's structural and expressive ways (Mei & Liu, 2023). The translator's comprehension of bilingual competency will be reflected in the style of translation, especially in the words and syntax of translated texts. Similar to a translator, an individual with strong bilingual ability will employ the syntactic structures of the target language more flexibly to demonstrate fluency similar to that of a native speaker. Consequently, the translation will be absolutely faithful to the original text while also flowing naturally, giving it a style that conforms to the cultural norms of the target language. On the other hand, if the translator's bilingual sub-competence is weak, the translation may sound too much like spoken English or very formal and grammatically accurate, which may lead to awkward pacing and overall poor readability of the translation.

Extralinguistic sub-competence means the translator possesses knowledge and awareness about the source and the target cultures, meaning intercultural ones like those above, which is necessary to transfer the text into another language successfully. It encompasses not only the technical knowledge concerning ethnic traditions and historical processes but also political or socio-cultural discrimination (Mollanazar & Beni, 2023). To translate a literary work like *The True Story of Ah Q*, an extralinguistic sub-competence is fundamental to help the translator destroy the cultural connotations hidden in the source text. The higher demand from the participants is inevitable, but they will also have a direct impact on Translators' Styles (Tursunovich, 2022). For instance, when a translator

encounters slang or metaphors originating from Chinese in the source text, they may opt to translate it in full or condense it. These variations between the original text and its translation will influence the comprehension of the target audience and establish a recognisable pattern throughout the translated work (Mollanazar & Beni, 2023).

Knowledge about translation is another key competence in the PACTE model, which points to the achievement of mastery of theoretical, professional, and pragmatic aspects (Mei & Liu, 2023; Robert et al., 2024). It offers translators solid arguments based on factual data for decision-making. Also, it assists them in the completion of the translation process, which requires accuracy and willingness to be read (Fitria, 2024). Translators with rich knowledge about translation are able to cope with various translation challenges more freely in the translation process and choose appropriate translation strategies to maintain the tone, style and context of the original text (Albir, 2020). Knowledge about translation directly affects the translator's grasp of style, especially when facing cultural differences or complex texts. The translator will make different decisions according to their knowledge reserves, thus presenting different translators' styles (Chodkiewicz, 2021).

Strategic sub-competence is a dynamic competence in the PACTE model, which is embodied in the translator's process of solving translation challenges (Tan & Cho, 2021). Every problem the translator faces in the translation process, such as lexical choice, cultural difference handling or syntactic adjustment, relies on strategic sub-competence to make decisions. Strategic sub-competence not only determines the accuracy of the translation but also directly affects the translator's stylistic performance (Omar & Salih, 2024). For example, translators may adopt strategies such as direct translation, paraphrasing, or cultural substitution when faced with complex rhetorical or culturally specific expressions, and the different choices of these strategies can lead to a diversity of Translators' Styles (Rivera-Trigueros, 2022). Consequently, the greater the strategic sub-competence of a translator, the more flexible and adaptable their translation style becomes.

2.2 Definition of Translators' Styles and Current Research Status

Translators' Styles comprise a translator's distinctive personal linguistic as well as cultural features demonstrated in the process of translation (Gough, 2024). The process embraces all dimensions, like lexical, syntactic, rhetorical, and cultural aspects handled by the translator, and hence endorses the translator's competence in the understanding of the original text and its style reproduction (Lawrence, 2021). Researchers are generally in consensus that the linguistic competencies of the translator do not solely determine Translators' Styles but also their knowledge of the source, the target cultures, and the emerging strategic moment (Albir et al., 2020). Therefore, Translators' Styles is not only linguistic artistry but also a reflection of the translator's mentality and culture.

The text type is a key research variable in the study of Translators' Styles. Translators' Styles are tested in the task of connecting different text types, which are heterogeneous in their features (Boase-Beier, 2023). Translating literary texts requires a translator to often explore not only the artistic value of the work and the readability of the target language but also account for the aspects of the source language (Yutong, 2023). For instance, writers can employ a variety of literary forms in which they fashion cultural allusions, linguistic structure, and other elements with sophistication. During such texts, the translator enters into the process that reflects the decision-making not only in linguistic skills but also reveals the translator's knowledge about and ability to navigate the source culture (Naji et al., 2019). The translation of functional materials such as texts on science and technology along with documents of a legal nature reveal the need for specificity as well as a common pattern in style (Steigerwald et al., 2022).

Recently, researchers have shifted their focus from theoretical studies of translators' styles to practical ones based on real-life evidence. Thus, in the treatment of MAT, it is specifically seen as a tool applied in the investigation of translators' stylistic patterns. The subject tool can effectively pinpoint divergences in the way the translators apply language patterns by numerical metrics like lexical density, syntax complexity, or even the use of rhetorical devices throughout the translation process (Chou et al., 2024). MAT provides data support for the study of Translators' Styles and allows the researchers to compare the stylistic characteristics of different translators through objective data (Jinfang et al., 2023). The use of this type of method is beneficial in that it gives way to discerning differences that are otherwise hard to explain in the qualitative analyses, for instance, not only different grammatical structures but also the various expressions a text might have when done by different translators.

Despite considerable achievements in translator style exploration, there are only a few studies currently available in the already existing literature on the relationship between Translators' Styles and TC in line with the PACTE model. The style in existing studies is predominantly described qualitatively, and a theoretical system, which may explain the style formation, is absent. This problem is especially noted in literary translation, where the translator's TC is not yet fully recognised and explained in style.

2.3 Inadequacies and Research Gaps in Existing Studies

Although the PACTE model provides a detailed theoretical framework for studying translators' TC, there are still some shortcomings in existing research when dealing with cultural and linguistic complexity (Omar & Salih, 2024). First of all, most of the current studies on the relationship between TC and Translators' Styles focus on one dimension of TC and less on the integrated role between the various competence dimensions. Especially in the translation of culturally complex literary works, bilingual sub-competence, cultural competence, knowledge about translation, and strategic sub-competence interact with each other, but the existing literature lacks in-depth analyses of how these competencies jointly affect Translators' Styles (Rivera-Trigueros, 2022). Secondly, most of the research on Translators' Styles is limited to qualitative analysis. Although quantitative analysis tools such as MAT provide a new path for style research, they have not yet been widely used to analyse the relationship between Translators' Styles and TC (Huang, 2021).

To fill this gap, these authors will combine quantitative and qualitative methods to explore how translators' TC is reflected in different English translations of *The True Story of Ah Q* through their styles. More precisely, this study will make use of the MAT development to investigate in a statistical way the lexicons, syntactic set-ups, and devices of persuasion among the English translations written by five different translators. Furthermore, we base our revelations on the comprehensive analysis of the core competencies detailed in the PACTE model, this time arguing for a special concentration on cultural and strategic competence. Finally, this work intends to investigate how these competencies were applied by the translators in cases involving cultural nuances and linguistic barricades. The study will, therefore, aim to provide scientific data for analyzing the styles of translators and also to enlarge the PACTE model application in the field of literary translation.

This study seeks to fill the existing gap in understanding the relationship between Translators' Styles and TC. It will achieve this by performing both quantitative and qualitative comparisons of different English translations of *The True Story of Ah Q*. This research's findings will provide new theoretical insights and methodological support for the advancement of TC models and the exploration of translators' styles. Consequently, the research question that this study aims to explore is: How do the various components of TC interact to shape the distinct Translators' Styles?

3. Methodology

This study utilizes a combination of quantitative and qualitative analyses, employing the MAT tool and the PACTE model, to systematically investigate the Translators' Styles and TC in the five English versions of this novel.

3.1 Quantitative Analysis Method—MAT

On the contrary, MAT proves to be the most appropriate method for this research since it is a powerful corpus-based tool for multidimensional linguistic analysis, which is designed to focus on text (Nini, 2019). MAT, in essence, appears as a broad focus on the nuances of the translation style. It definitely covers the concerns of frequency and concordance in general and beyond any other tools, such as AntConc and WordSmith. As a result, MAT is able to capture various elemental stylistic differentiations. Consequently, it becomes primarily suitable for exploring those choices of translators that foster the uniqueness of transformations.

The MAT is a remarkable tool that is capable of achieving tedious and extensive quantitative and multidimensional analyses, which greatly increases the efficiency of a research study. Basic corpus tools may show word frequencies and lexical variety levels, but MAT comes with a more sophisticated tool that describes syntactic complexity, nouns per text ratio, and modality. In the above regard, these components are the fundamental elements of identifying such features as the syntactic and lexical preferences of a translator (Jinfang et al., 2023). The power of MAT is that it can analyze different dimensions of the text, which is similar to the aim of this study since we try to comprehend how various translators approach the same source texts. Furthermore, MAT allows to assessment of similar attributes for different translations, which presents a more in-depth identification of the translator's ability to preserve the nuances of the original work (Liu et al., 2023). Nevertheless, MAT has a strength in quantifying the language use, when the most popular methods cannot identify the use of the style, which is the central part of the research. The tool allows for high customization, which makes it possible to integrate some rather unfamiliar linguistic parameters that are best fit for translating styles in literature texts. So, MAT has greater relevance than statistical corpus tools, as it is strictly concerned with the target aims of the project.

The usage of MAT in the present study obtains data with the purpose of learning the markedly different stylistic features that the five translators used more objectively. The results obtained will therefore prove the way language selections, syntactic arrangements, and vocabulary choices demonstrate different translation styles and also the involved competencies (Lin et al., 2023). This research will apply MAT to investigate five English translations of

The True Story of Ah Q by Lu Xun. The detailed procedures are outlined as follows: Initially, the texts from the five English translations were entered into the MAT, which subsequently annotated and quantified the linguistic features present in each translation. More narrowly, MAT focused on vocabulary choice in translation, including vocabulary difficulty, vocabulary variety, and vocabulary density. Meanwhile, those data can showcase the qualitative level of a translator's capability in switching languages. In this regard, the selection of vocabulary that can display the translator's ability or proficiency level in both source and target languages. On the whole, the complexity of the translation of a highly difficult text into a target language is a good matrix for assessing the translator's proficiency.

Additionally, through the MAT-based quantitative data from this study, it can be more than compared to the bilingual sub-competence of the five translators quantitatively. For example, some may possess an inclination to utilise complex syntactic structures or difficult vocabulary, while others would be more prone to employing simpler and direct language expressions. Data of this nature will be contrasted, and comparisons will be made between texts that have been translated by different translators in order to highlight the various uses of language in their works and further assess the differences in their bilingual sub-competence. Interestingly, MAT also can produce data concerning the employment of modal verbs by translators to see how the translators construct their tones, attitudes, and uncertainties, which provides a generous knowledge of the translation process (Goulart & Staples, 2023). Qualified translators are professional enough to change the tense of a certain verb in order to fit better the atmosphere of the original work. In contrast, beginner translators or those who lack specific translation education may choose word-for-word translation or may replicate the same sentence structure (Omar & Salih, 2024).

The findings of the quantitative analysis will offer such objective information as traditional media support for this research, allow the unveiling of translators' distinctive language features, and justify or refuse the impact of the translators' bilingual sub-competence and knowledge about translation on their translators' style.

3.2 Qualitative Methods

The qualitative analysis in this study complements the quantitative findings by focusing on aspects of translation that cannot be captured through purely numerical data. This study employs qualitative analysis through text analysis to thoroughly investigate the ways in which translators navigate particular linguistic and cultural aspects within the novel. This method emphasizes a thorough analysis of translation strategies, particularly regarding the handling of culturally important and rhetorically intricate sections. Text analysis is especially effective for exploring the ways in which translators' decisions mirror their strategic and extralinguistic skills. For instance, in the process of translating Ah Q's colloquial expressions or cultural markers, including metaphors and irony, the qualitative analysis will emphasize the ways in which each translator either preserves or alters these elements.

Specific passages that present the greatest difficulties for translation, which may range from portraying culturally loaded terms, and the application of rhetorical devices, to terms and phrases that are only used in the source language, will be selected and a five-translation comparison made. The objective lies in the exploration of translator approaches addressing these challenges, for instance, in making decisions about retaining the stylistic features or equating the meaning to the target culture.

Thanks to the textual analysis, the study will be able to determine exactly what linguistic strategies the translators used to convey the cultural elements and rhetorical devices, and as a result, will get insight into the translators' competence—the ability to solve translation challenges (Omar & Salih, 2024). In a culturally complex text like *The True Story of Ah Q*, the translator has to deal with many culturally specific components and devices like Lu Xun's use of irony, metaphors, colloquialisms, and other cultural symbols in the novel. The translator adopts diverse approaches that link to his or her TC (Salamah, 2021). For example, when Huochuang is translating the local language expressions of Ah Q into English, he/she has two options: one is to keep the original expressions and fail to make any adjustments, and the other is to adapt the expressions to the target culture. This instrumental power of the translator is portrayed in the target culture as well as in the stylistic aspects like Albir (2020). Through qualitative analysis, these concrete translation strategies will be reflected in the translators' strategic sub-competence in encountering cultural complexity (Li et al., 2021). This research shall glean the five translators' way of dealing with culturally similar aspects. It will show the differences in strategic sub-competence of different translators and further extract the reasons for these differences in the development of translator style.

Additionally, the analysis will assess translators' extralinguistic competence, focusing on how well they convey the cultural context of the original text in the target language (Salamah, 2021). This competency set is crucial for efficiently translating a highly culture-determined text such as *The True Story of Ah Q*. The qualitative analysis will focus on what the translator has accomplished in terms of repair by handling specific examples of cultural elements in translated texts. For example, the character of Ah Q has a very concrete social understanding and

cultural impression of Chinese culture, and the translators need to find out how to bring this very profound cultural context along in the process of translating it. In fact, the potential provision of extralinguistic qualities by a translator is a determinant feature of finding the correct form and way of presenting the cultural meanings and relevance that the source language masterpiece bears to the readers of the target language. Those state-to-state relationships were carefully shaped so that the characteristics were preserved in the target text, as well as their understanding and acceptance by the target readers (Guliyants et al., 2020). In this respect, the adaptiveness to cultural traits displays itself very well through the stylistic variation of the translator. Qualitative analysis makes it possible to measure the level of extralinguistic sub-competence of the translator, and the way in which the cultural components of their translation are dealt with testifies to the degree of this extralinguistic sub-competence of the translator (Yang, 2023).

This method is able to reveal such a layering of translation decisions, which is a level deeper than the level of the language and culture of the original. Qualitative findings will not only give a detailed perspective about the different translators dealing with cultural subtleties and rhetorical aspects but also show the interrelation between these strategies and the competence of the translators.

3.3 Combination of Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis

The current research proposes a new framework that combines the quantitative and qualitative approaches by addressing issues of TC, such as bilingual competence, knowledge about translation, strategic competence, and extralinguistic competence in order to similarly affect Translators' Styles. Hence, quantitative data contribute to the collection of factual information on the matter (Abulela & Harwell, 2020). By means of the MAT-derived language feature module, researchers are shown the difference between translators expressed in terms of vocabulary choice, syntactic system, and modal verb use. These figures are the starting point for our understanding of translators' sub-competence in terms of language pairs and their knowledge about translation.

Whereas unique qualitative aspects of the decision-making processes of the translator when they face specific situations, for example, culturally complex or rhetorically sophisticated, cannot be captured by mere quantitative data (Halverson & García, 2021). Thus, the textual analysis will be based on the quantitative results and will dig into the actual examples in the text where strategic and extralinguistic sub-competence are obvious. For example, should MAT results show that a given translator often resorts to the usage of syntactically complex constructions, the text analysis will be focused on how this manifested in the translation of works with culturally or rhetorically significant elements.

The need for a qualitative analysis of selected sections will be based on the findings of the MAT stylistic analysis, ensuring the contextualization of the translators' functional stylization and strategic choices. An example is the case when a translator's choices of syntactic structures point at a formal type of language, which will be analyzed through text analysis concerning the influence of these choices on the translation of informal expressions or other types of function words in the original text. The method of uniting the qualitative and quantitative approaches allows both methods to function as a unity to provide full coverage of the two translators' stylistic and strategic manner.

Employing incorporating these two methods in the study, an objective, data-based approach that is unambiguously defined is parallel to the more subjective, detailed exploration of the translators' approaches to culturally relevant and rhetorically complex content. The variety of these approaches highlights the understanding of the ways translation qualification is expressed in the translation of the works (Diaz, 2021).

4. Results and Discussion

This study uses the MAT tool to quantitatively analyse the language characteristics of the five English translations of the novel and combines the PACTE model to qualitatively analyse the translator's translation strategies when dealing with culturally specific elements and rhetorical devices. The following will show the results of the quantitative and qualitative analyses, respectively, and by combining the data of the two, we will explore in depth how the translator's TC is manifested through Translators' Styles.

4.1 Results of MAT Quantitative Analysis: Differences in Vocabulary, Syntax, and Sentence Structure

1) Lexical density: Lexical density indicates the frequency of the original languages in translation studies (Liu & Dou, 2023). The values of Average Word Length (AWL) and TTR, via the Statistics data, help us understand the lexical density.

Table 1. The table of lexical density

Translation	AWL	TTR
Leung	4.30	128
Wang	4.28	120
The Yangs	4.29	115
Lyell	4.26	121
Lovell	4.38	137

Table 1 highlights that Lovell's translation gained recognition for its complex language, featuring longer words and a diverse vocabulary, highlighting a sophisticated and varied lexicon. Leung's translation also emphasised language, with a longer AWL and a broad vocabulary. On the other hand, Lyell and Wang had a more approachable writing style, with shorter words and a lower proportion of unique terms than Lovell and Leung. The Yangs' translation had a more approachable and intellectual tone, as observed by its lower lexical density (lowest TTR) and moderate AWL. This could indicate that the vocabulary is simpler and less diverse than in the other translations. These data shed light on the diverse word choices used by various translators. Lovell and Leung exhibited a preference for intricate and diverse language, but Yangs' translation appears to favour a simpler vocabulary.

2) Lexical variety: Lexical variety measures the range of word forms used in the translations (Liu & Dou, 2023). Note that z-scores of various word classes (e.g., nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs) from the z-scores data indicate lexical variety.

Table 2. The table of lexical variety

Translation	Adjectives (JJ)	Adverbs (RB)	Nouns (NN)	Verbs (VB)
Leung	0.5	1.75	0.6	0.3
Wang	0.3	1.00	0.4	0.1
The Yangs	0.7	1.25	0.5	0.4
Lyell	1.2	1.38	1.1	0.9
Lovell	0.6	0.31	0.7	0.5

Table 2 indicates that Lyell's translation demonstrated a great vocabulary diversity across all word categories (adjectives, adverbs, nouns, and verbs), indicating a sophisticated and varied use of language. Leung's writing style employed many adverbs, demonstrating a diverse and sophisticated sentence structure, yet less so in other word categories. The Yangs and Lovell had a modest vocabulary, with Lovell preferring nouns and the Yangs using a well-balanced combination of adjectives and adverbs. Wang's translation exhibited a restricted vocabulary, utilising a smaller number of adjectives, nouns, and verbs, which indicates a more straightforward and uncomplicated approach to storytelling. The data offered valuable insights into the word choices employed by different translators. Lyell's translation showcased a variety of word forms, contributing to the text's depth and richness. Wang's translation employed simpler language and a narrower range of vocabulary.

3) Syntactic Complexity: On syntactic complexity, an assessment of the complexity of sentence structures, a Mean Sentence Length (MSL), and the number of subordinate clauses was obtained based on the statistics data and z-scores for varying syntactic aspects (Yasuda, 2024).

Table 3. The table of syntactic complexity

Translation	Mean Sentence Length	Subordinate Clauses (SUB)
Leung	22.5	0.50
Wang	21.7	0.38
The Yangs	20.8	0.55
Lyell	24.3	0.60
Lovell	23.1	0.45

Table 3 insinuates that Lyell's interpreted account reflects an almost astonishing level of grammatical complexity since it contains long phrases and frequent subordinate clauses, including academic and literary language. The Yangs exhibited a notable degree of syntactic complexity, as evidenced by the frequent use of subordinate clauses, despite the brevity of their sentences in comparison to those of Lyell. Lovell and Leung exhibited a syntactic complexity marked by extended sentences and a moderate incorporation of subordinate clauses. It is important to observe that Wang's translation employed a more straightforward and direct grammatical structure, characterised by the use of shorter sentences and a reduced number of subordinate clauses. The results indicate the intricate nature of sentence structures utilised by various translators. Lyell and the Yangs favoured the prose and complex form of structure, while Wang's translation appeared plainer and more basic.

4) Cohesion: Cohesion pertains to the application of linguistic tools that link sentences and various segments of a text. This includes the utilisation of conjunctions, pronouns, and referential cohesive devices grounded in z-scores and statistical data (Tian et al., 2024).

Table 4. The table of cohesion

Translation	Conjunctions (ANDC)	Pronouns (PRP)	Referential Devices
Leung	0.69	1.50	High
Wang	0.51	1.50	Moderate
The Yangs	1.06	0.83	High
Lyell	2.02	0.17	Very High
Lovell	0.50	0.83	Moderate

Lyell's translation, as shown in Table 4, had outstanding consistency and was built upon its intense use of conjunctions as well as its secure continuousness. However, surprisingly, it did it by the use of a small range of pronouns. From their work, the Yangs and Leung also showed a noticeable homogeneity by making good use of conjunctions, pronouns, and reference devices. Whereas Leung's style had an intense usage of pronouns and conjunctions, the Yangs showed a great mixture of various cohesion tools. Substantiate that Mr. Wang and Ms. Lovell had a logical amount of alignment. Wang noted that pronouns were utilised regardless of conjunctions and referential components. Unlike Lovell, whose style had a low frequency of conjunctions and pronouns, Wang's still turned out to be sufficiently cohesive. Collectively, the results underscored the various methods that translators follow to ensure a seamless flow of text. Lyell's major focus was on conjunction and referential strategy devices, while the Yangs and Leung adopted much more comprehensive, including words like pronouns and conjunctions. Also, Wang and Lovell established a fair quantity of coherence, including the variations in their cohesive devices.

5. Narrative style: The narrative style emphasises elements that pertain to the art of storytelling (Song et al., 2022). The table below provides a summary of the utilisation of past tense verbs, third-person pronouns, and narrative-related constructions based on the z-scores data.

Table 5. The table of narrative style

Translation	Past Tense (VBD)	Third Person Pronouns (TPP)	Narrative Score (DIM2)
Leung	8.03	1.50	6.22
Wang	8.57	1.50	6.72
The Yangs	7.95	0.83	6.76
Lyell	7.92	0.17	-2.33
Lovell	8.04	0.83	6.51

Table 5 shows an opposite scenario, where the negative narrative score and the lower usage of the third-person pronouns in translation were seen in Lyell's translation, indicating a distinctly different narrative style. In doing this, it can provide a sense of a new, more formal, or restrained behaviour. Other translations (Leung, Wang, the Yangs, and Lovell) had a format that was closer to the traditional narrative, and they used a third person and VBD verbs in order to keep the consistency with one another.

In summary, the quantitative analysis has revealed certain patterns of vocabulary, structure, and complexity in the five translations above of this novel, with the findings correlating to the four sub-competence domains of the PACTE model. Lovell and Leung achieved a high level of bilingual excellence through their usage of syntax and diverse vocabulary; on the contrary, Wang utilised trivial and general terms and focused on cognitive transferability, thus telling the story in a straightforward way to invoke the imagination. The Yangs adopted a moderate level of syntactic and lexical complexity, striking a balance. Lexis's syntactic complexity and longer sentences correlate with advanced strategic competency, especially in the ability to write complex and lengthy essays. On the other hand, Wang's writing is characterised by short and simple phrases that reflect a more straightforward action. In the end, the variations of cohesion, which were established through conjunctions, pronouns, and referential devices, revealed translators' varying levels of external competence. In the case of Lyell and Leung, they connected more with formal cohesion, while Wang paid more attention to clarity with the help of simpler structures. Therefore, these findings illustrate, in perfect detail, how different translators' unique combinations of competencies taken from the PACTE model correspondingly moulded their translators' styles.

4.2 Qualitative Findings: Differences in Strategies for Cultural Transmission and Rhetorical Processing

The qualitative analysis opened the door further to the evaluation of the translators' tactic decisions on culturally specific aspects and their rhetorical functions in *The True Story of Ah Q*. From the qualitative analyses. We came to a significant conclusion, which is that the translators' strategic and extralinguistic sub-competence have had a cultural impact on the conduction of cultural missions, as well as their competencies in persuasion and rhetorical treatment. For example, Table 6 displays the example of the translators' strategic and extralinguistic sub-competence.

Table 6. The example of the translators' strategic and extralinguistic sub-competence

Source	这近于盲从《新青年》，自己也很抱歉，但茂才公尚且不知，我还有什么好办法呢。(zhè jìn yú máng cóng "Xīn Qīng Nián," zì jǐ yě hěn bào qiàn, dàn mào cái gōng shàng qiè bù zhī, wǒ hái yǒu shén me hǎo bàn fǎ ne.)
Leung	This is akin to following blindly the New Youth Magazine , and I feel thoroughly ashamed of myself, but if the Hsiu-tsai did not know any better, what could you expect of poor me?
Wang	This smacks of blindly following the faddism of the New Youth, and I regret it myself, but what can I do since even the esteemed licentiate cannot throw any light on the subject?
The Yangs	This approximates blindly following the New Youth magazine, and I am thoroughly ashamed of myself, but since even such a learnt man as Mr Chao's son could not solve my problem, what else can I do?
Lyell	Now, I'll grant you this comes perilously close to blindly following New Youth—and I am terribly sorry about that—but when even a wise and learnt Budding Talent doesn't know what character to use, what can you expect from the likes of me?
Lovell	Which compromise reduces me to the level of those reprobates in charge of New Youth. For this, I am heartily ashamed of myself, but as the problem defeated even the younger Zhao, I fear I have no better option.

The strategic competence of individual translators, which encompasses their capability to address translation challenges, is intricately linked to their understanding of the target audience and the cultural norms that inform expectations. Leung's application of transliteration for "Hsiu-tsai" demonstrates a deliberate decision to emphasize cultural authenticity, targeting a specific audience that possesses an understanding of Chinese social frameworks or is open to engaging with less familiar terminology. This approach is consistent with a strategy of foreignization, emphasizing the cultural distinctiveness of the source text. In contrast, Wang's choice to employ the term "esteemed licentiate" illustrates a domestication strategy designed to render the cultural reference more accessible to a Western audience. This decision reflects a deliberate adjustment to meet the cultural expectations of clarity and familiarity within the target language.

The extralinguistic competence of each translator, which encompasses their understanding of cultural and societal nuances, significantly impacts these decisions. The Yangs, for example, highlight familial connections through the phrase "Mr. Chao's son," a technique that draws upon the cultural importance of family hierarchies in both Chinese and Western societies. This approach ensures that the translation connects on a relational level, even as it sacrifices some of the formal academic status suggested by the original term. Lyell's selection of the term "Budding Talent"

signifies a deliberate transition aimed at engaging a more modern, Western audience that prioritizes individual potential rather than conventional hierarchies. This choice demonstrates a keen awareness of the cultural values associated with achievement and personal growth.

Lovell's selection of the terms "reprobates" and "younger Zhao" indicates a thoughtful adaptation that highlights the rhetorical tone of social critique found in the original text, appealing to a Western audience that may anticipate a greater emphasis on moral judgment within this narrative. This underscores Lovell's ability to interpret not only the language but also the cultural and societal critiques present in the original work, thereby tailoring the translation to align with the target audience's expectations for engagement with social commentary.

In conclusion, the translators' strategic and extralinguistic sub-competence distinctly engages with their comprehension of the cultural expectations and reading preferences of their intended audiences. This leads to diverse strategies, ranging from strict foreignization to flexible domestication, each designed to align with the cultural and rhetorical inclinations of the target audience. The competencies in question play a crucial role in shaping both the precision and the reception of the translated text, as well as its overall effectiveness within the new cultural context.

4.3 Comprehensive Analysis of Quantitative and Qualitative Results

The current study exploits the combination of quantitative and qualitative analyses in order to further develop the framework through the co-appearance of translators' TC and their Translators' styles. On the one hand, the quantitative analyses show that the variations of the different linguistic features, such as lexical choices as well as the syntactical structures of different translators, directly reflect their first language command and how rich their brain's knowledge of translation is. Translators with richer vocabularies and more complex sentence structures often exhibit greater bilingualism competence, which gives them the ability to create sufficient rich content in the target language that appears natural and clear. Similarly, from the examination of the qualitative aspects, it turned out that the translators' ability to employ strategic and transcending linguistic knowledge is exercised in terms of cultural processing and choices of rhetorical elements. With strategic sub-competence strongly developed, translators may be dexterous enough to make plans regularly and on the fly that both preserve the main features of the source culture while tailoring the translation in correspondence with the cultural setting of the target language audience. Meanwhile, translators who performed considering strategic competencies in the area of cultural adoptions of the source texts are not as capable; they can only translate directly and do not possess the same cultural competencies to offer more fluency to the output. Another important point is that translators with strong extracurricular knowledge can see the culturally unique elements in the original and provide appropriate translation techniques, which allow readers to perceive it.

To sum up, the core competence of the PACTE model is what defines the style of a translator and also helps in determining the overall style of the translated text. Translators with high bilingualism and rich knowledge about translation are often able to make flexible choices in vocabulary and syntax to maintain the linguistic naturalness of the translated text. In contrast, translators with strong strategic and extralinguistic sub-competence are able to show greater adapt competence in dealing with culture and rhetoric and to convey the cultural essence and stylistic features of the source text. Through the combination of quantitative and qualitative analyses, this study reveals the interactive relationship between the dimensions of TC, which provides us with strong empirical support for a more comprehensive understanding of Translators' Styles.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Conclusion

This study explored the relationship between the translator's TC and Translators' Styles through an in-depth analysis of five English translations of *The True Story of Ah Q*, combined with MAT quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis under the PACTE model. On the basis of the research, stylistic traits of translators (bilingual sub-competence, extralinguistic competence, knowledge about translation, and strategic competence) are manifested. The quantitative analysis showed differences in vocabulary choice, syntactic structures, and sentence complexity, and these presented the levels of bilingual sub-competence and knowledge about translation of the translators. The qualitative analysis of the strategies of the translators to overcome the issue of cultural transfer and rhetorical processing indicated that the implementation of extralinguistic and strategic sub-competence has to be taken into consideration when tackling cultural contexts. A mixed method approach in terms of statistical and narrative analysis was successfully demonstrated in this study by showing how different translators' TC diversity can be traced through their stylistic performance.

Without a doubt, the MAT quantitative analysis pointed towards the fact that the misplacement of Translators'

Styles is due to their bilingual sub-competence and extensive knowledge of translation. The performance of translators by means of vocabulary density, syntactic complexity, and frequent usage of modal verbs seemingly mirrors the relationship between their proficiency in the target language and translation competencies and abilities. Bilingual translators with good competence are over-represented when it comes to the use of diverse words and sentences with various structures, which get them closer to the level of the original text in style. Paragraphs translated by skilled translators, who possess a deep understanding of the craft and an acute sensitivity to nuanced voices and moods, will effectively convey the language and rhythm of the original text.

The results demonstrated that there is a connection between the Translators' Styles and their strategic or extralinguistic competence, in particular, cultural and rhetorical processing (Gao & Zhou, 2024). Translators who have strategic competence in the deep understanding of extra-linguistic factors may opt for the deviation from the original text in translating culturally specific content. Through these techniques, the audience can get a complete view of the cultural aspects by means of paraphrasing, annotations, and introducing cultural reference techniques. The above-mentioned conceptual tools are vitally important in this work because of their culturally profound and polyphonic characterization.

This study provides a new perspective on the use of the PACTE model in translation studies by exploring the link between TC and Translators' Styles. By combining quantitative and qualitative analysis, this study not only reveals how a translator's multidimensional TC affects their translator's style but also verifies the practicality and wide application competence of the core competence in the PACTE model. Specifically, bilingual sub-competence and knowledge about translation mainly affect Translators' Styles in terms of language selection and structural processing. In contrast, strategic sub-competence and extralinguistic sub-competence are more reflected in cultural elements and rhetorical processing. Through the empirical support of this study, the PACTE model has been further enriched and verified, providing a more systematic analytical framework for future translation research.

5.2 Limitations

This study has a few limitations. While the MAT quantitative analysis reveals differences in linguistic features, it struggles to capture the full picture of Translators' Styles, especially in terms of cultural and strategic decisions. It focuses mostly on formal language elements like vocabulary and syntax, missing some of the deeper, more nuanced aspects of translation. Additionally, while qualitative analysis provides insight into translators' cultural awareness and strategic choices, it is subjective by nature. The understanding of Translators' Styles can be shaped by individual biases, which may stem from the researcher's background. This introduces a level of subjectivity that could impact the analysis.

5.3 Suggestions for Future Studies

Future research could face it in several ways. First, working with texts that have reduced cultural complexity, this process may shed light on the influence of translators' style competency on the quality of the translation without the extraneous challenge of in-depth cultural elements. However, this form of TC would make it easier to discuss translational style specificity. Second, the inclusion of various subjects and more translators in the study would mean broadening the findings about how TC develops across various contexts. Finally, the use of NLP and machine learning tools like natural language processing could make it again easier to pinpoint these stylistic patterns and provide accurate information. With technology, the enhancement of objectivity of the analysis of the styles of the translators will allow us to find a more balanced and precise understanding of what they did.

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Authors' contributions

Ms Yao Jinfang was responsible for study design, revising, data collection and drafting the manuscript. Dr. Shaidatul Akma Adi Kasuma and Dr. Mohamed Abdou Moindjie supervised her and gave her comments in her study. All authors read and approved of the final manuscript.

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