

Do Self-translating Poets Have Equally Distributed Equivalent Words in the Target and Original Texts? A Corpus Examination of Yu Guangzhong's Poems

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Abstract

This article examines the utilization of high-frequency words in Yu Guangzhong's self-translated poetry through a corpus-driven analysis. The objective is to explore the presence of equivalence and inequivalence in the translations executed by Yu Guangzhong himself. The utilization of modal verbs, lexical bundles, and keywords has been analyzed in various contexts, such as novels and speeches. However, studies that compare disparities in the use of high-frequency words between the source and target languages within poetry translation are scarce. The original and self-translated poetry corpora of Yu Guangzhong have been constructed at the word level to enhance the original texts' co-occurrence and corresponding translations. In the comprehensive self-translation of his eighty-five poems, Yu Guangzhong encounters challenges in achieving an equitable distribution of equivalent words between the target and original texts. It is observed that most high-frequency words in Yu Guangzhong's original and target texts lack equivalence in use and meaning. Although two of the three poems analyzed individually mainly achieve equivalence, this discrepancy might be attributed to the translator's utilization of literal and word-for-word translations.

Keywords: Yu Guangzhong, equivalence, self-translation, high-frequency words, corpus analysis, poetry translation

1. Introduction

While translating, translators should maintain equivalence. If not, the meaning may change. However, because complete equivalence is impossible, the goal is to mitigate bias and attain the maximum degree of equivalence. (Eremenco et al., 2005). Notably, much of the research on translation equivalence has focused on how translators achieve equivalence between the original and translated texts and the translation strategies that enable this (Bibiraykhon, 2023; Li et al., 2022; Septarani, 2022). Furthermore, studies have also examined the equivalence of specific components within the translated text, including grammatical equivalence, stylistic equivalence, and equivalence of idioms (Kanasya & Bram, 2023; Özdemir, 2019; Satti & Ali, 2022). Limited research has been undertaken to assess the equivalents between the complete source text and its translated counterpart, specifically from a corpus-based standpoint (Farahani & Kazemian, 2021; Pastor, 2021; Rebecchi & Tagnin, 2020). Though some studies have diverse research perspectives on corpus analysis, their discussions generally focus on modal verbs, keywords, personal pronouns, and lexical bundles (Huang & Shi, 2022; Liu & Afzaal, 2021; Ping, 2022; Yang et al., 2023; Zhang & Cheung, 2022). Additionally, most corpus data about equivalence primarily originates from novels (Liu & Afzaal, 2021; Meng & Pan, 2022) and non-literary works such as speeches, political discourses, and food-related texts (Crible et al., 2019; Li & Pan, 2021; Rebecchi & Tagnin, 2020). However, there seems to be a noticeable lack of focus on using high-frequency words in poetic works.

This study thus examines Yu Guangzhong's poems and English translations to explore whether differences exist between the source poem and the translation. The result of this study will contribute to the almost-absent theoretical discussion on equivalence in poetry translation based on corpus studies and examine whether Yu Guangzhong achieves equivalence when translating his poetic works, as this has little been found in any previous academic literature. As for the practical-applicational aspect, by examining equivalence in Yu Guangzhong's poems and translations, poets in want of doing self-translation and translators in the area of poetry translation can learn the translation style and methods of poet and self-translator Yu Guangzhong for the purpose to increase the quality and quantity of poetry translations.

2. A Brief Biography on Yu Guangzhong

Yu Guangzhong (1928-2017) is a well-known multilingual writer, poet, translator, and philosopher in China (Chen, 2022; Gu, 2019; Shan, 2019). He has written over fifty poetry and prose volumes in over six decades (Gallo, 2023; Gu, 2019). He also created many acclaimed translations of English-language works, including a 1956 Chinese translation of Irving Stone's historical novel *Lust for Life* about Vincent van Gogh. However, Yu Guangzhong's poetry, prose, critical writings, and translations have garnered significant academic and popular interest over the years, resulting in his widespread recognition as a poet, prose writer, or translator rather than a self-translator.

Although Yu Guangzhong's initial foray into the field of translation was somewhat fortuitous, his intense interest in the field drove him to attempt numerous translations during his undergraduate years (Shan, 2019). Nevertheless, he saw these early attempts as inadequate, calling them a "clumpy attempt" (Shan, 2019, p.194). Notable is 1952, which marked the professional start of Yu Guangzhong's translation activities (Siu, 2012). This year, His translation of the Pulitzer Prize and Nobel Prize-winning short story, *The Old Man and the Sea*, was published. From 1952 to 2012, Yu Guangzhong translated fourteen works (Yu, 2011). Compared to other translators, Yu Guangzhong has translated fewer works, including novels, poems, and dramas, which exhibit his proficiency across various literary genres. In addition, Yu Guangzhong's translation skills are bidirectional, as he is adept at translating from Chinese to English and English to Chinese.

3. Relevant Research on Translation Equivalence Using Corpus Analysis

The concept of equivalence emerged in Western translation theories in the 1950s, primarily attributed to the works of Vinay and Darbelnet (1958) as well as Jakobson (1959), while the period of its peak influence occurred during the 1960s and 1970s, precisely the context of structuralist linguistics (Pym, 2017; Rędzioch-Korkuz, 2023). While there may be variations in the typology of equivalence among different theorists, it is widely acknowledged that there is a strong correlation between translation equivalence and the processes involved in translation (Oneț & Ciocoi-Pop, 2023). The principle of equivalence in translation studies discusses the relationship between source and target texts or their elements, as well as the nature and extent of that relationship, which is rarely presented in an absolute or comprehensive form (Abdi Saroukhil et al., 2018; Palumbo, 2009). Pym (2017, 2023) further explains that equivalence refers to a relationship denoting the "equal value" between a segment of text in the source language and its corresponding segment in the target language, and this relationship can be established across various linguistic levels, encompassing formal and functional (dynamic) aspects.

However, the majority of scholarly discussions about equivalence revolve around common misconceptions. For example, the West Wind symbolizes vitality and positive life force in Western cultures but not in Chinese cultures. The distinction between the West Wind in China and the West Wind in the West arises from the contrasting geopolitical contexts. In China, the West Wind pertains to the inclement winds from the Siberian Plateau, characterized by their harsh nature. Conversely, in Western regions, the West Wind denotes the temperate maritime winds emanating from the Atlantic Ocean, known for their warmth. Hence, translators must possess a precise understanding of the specific information sought when undertaking the translation of the West Wind's name. When translating a source text from China for a Western audience, Eugene Nida might propose two approaches to consider when solving the West Wind: either as West Wind or East Wind. The first choice would involve "formal equivalence" (also referred to as "formal correspondence" as it aligns with the structure of the Chinese language). The alternative option, as described by Nida, would be "dynamic equivalence" (or "functional equivalence" as it serves as a central point to create equivalent impacts on the target reader).

The explanations and examples illustrate the simplicity of the concept of equivalence. However, its complexity becomes significantly pronounced when scrutinized as a term and theoretical framework (Pym, 2017). Therefore, certain translation theorists hold a pessimistic perspective regarding equivalence. Snell-Hornby (1988) rejects equivalence as it is too imprecise to be a useful concept, as it creates the illusion of linguistic symmetry that hardly exists beyond the level of inaccurate approximations and distorts the fundamental problems of translation. Perez (1993) thinks the translation process is not solely reliant on the pursuit of equivalence but is also influenced by the translator's identity and the question of their trustworthiness. Lefevere (1992) even advocates abandoning equivalent since both theorists and practitioners cannot agree on a single definition of equivalence that is either too wide and hence meaningless or too restricted and particular, making it challenging to use in research or practice.

The concept of equivalence is jeopardized due to the influence of non-linguistic elements, such as images or auditory signs, and the pervasive constraints of space and time (Rędzioch-Korkuz, 2023). As a result, scholars have raised concerns regarding its validity and have proposed alternative concepts, including accessibility, relevance, and usability (Gambier & Gottlieb, 2001). Hence, certain scholars endeavor to establish alternative perspectives for equivalence. For instance, Neubert (1985) defines *equivalence* as a semiotic category with three components: semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic dimensions, which implies that it pertains to the relationship between signs and their referents, the relationship between signs themselves, and the relationship between signs and their users. Gorlé (1994: 170), another proponent of the semiotic perspective in translation studies, contends that the concept of equivalence should not be understood as a simple "one-to-one correspondence" but rather as a complex "one-to-many" relationship.

While equivalence has been a longstanding concept in translation, research on its understanding and application continues to expand, with new perspectives emerging year by year. Despite the innovative and imaginative nature, research in the field consistently demonstrates a shared focus on equivalence, highlighting the continued importance of equivalence in translation. Corpus-based studies are a recent development in the field of translation, as the use of the corpus approach in translation only gained popularity in the late 20th century (Hu, 2016), which might be attributed in part to the advancement and maturation of computer science. As a result, equivalence research has begun to intersect with a new angle, namely corpus research, which has accompanied the rise of computer science. For instance, Mikhailov (2021) demonstrates the distinction between translation equivalence and translation stimulation by providing illustrations from parallel corpora of Russian-Finnish and Finnish-Russian translations and examines the application of translation equivalence and translation stimulation in the field of translation studies and contrastive semantic research. Asscher (2022) integrates artificial intelligence, corpus research, and equivalence and examines the disparities between corpus-based machine translation algorithms and critical paradigms of human translation, such as natural equivalence.

The overview above is not comprehensive, but even this concise outline demonstrates that the debate over equivalence in translation

theory, which has spanned over seventy years, is widely recognized as a significant topic in translation and is expected to remain a prominent issue.

4. Research Methods

A qualitative approach characterizes this research. The methodology utilized in this study incorporates both descriptive and analytical approaches, which are contingent upon textual analysis.

A small comparable corpus is constructed using AntConc, a freely available software, to compare the Chinese and English poetry of Yu Guangzhong. The poetry of Yu Guangzhong, both in Chinese and English, is initially converted into a plain text format. Subsequently, the text is formatted, and any extraneous noise is eliminated. Chinese and English texts are segmented using the Python programming language. The Chinese and English poetry texts are compressed into an archive file and individually uploaded to AntConc. Besides, to prioritize words or phrases that convey the content and meaning of poetry, stop words are eliminated from both the source and target language versions.

The corpus comprises eighty-five pairs of self-translated English poetry and their original versions from Yu Guangzhong's poetry collection, *The Night Watchman*, acknowledged as the most significant and representative works. *The Night Watchman* has been published in three versions, and this research chose the latest version published in 2017. The poetry selected for this study is chosen because their sources of information and publication dates are identifiable, making it easy to identify their source texts. The Chinese corpus comprises 11150 tokens, whereas the English corpus contains 15950 tokens. Thus, the size of the Chinese corpus is less than one-third fewer than that of the English corpus, which may be attributable to the Chinese utilizing covert coherence to depict grammatical relationships in loosely structured, concise, and uncomplicated sentences, owing to its paratactic nature while the English language emphasizing the logical and comprehensive nature of sentence structures through the utilization of modifiers (Cheung, 2009; Zhang & Cheung, 2022). Table 1 provides the details.

Table 1. Corpus information

Language	Tokens	Types	Type/Token Ratio
Chinese	11150	4504	40.39%
English	15971	3564	22.32%

The analysis is performed in a two-step process. The initial analysis examines the high-frequency words in English and Chinese poetry. This study utilizes the corpus tool for analyzing high-frequency words to identify the most prominent high-frequency words from both the source texts and target texts. These high-frequency words are then categorized into different issues. The subsequent process involves comparing the English and Chinese corpora's high-frequency word lists. The collocates of the high-frequency word attributes are examined in their contexts to identify whether Yu Guangzhong achieves equivalence in his self-translations of his works of poetry.

To achieve the objectives of this study, the researcher collects high-frequency words and subsequently subjected them to analysis using Nida's equivalence framework. To ascertain the meaning of the high-frequency word in the source text within various contexts, the researcher conducts a comparative analysis by examining the equivalent value in English translations of the verses in the target language. Subsequently, a comprehensive examination of comparisons is presented, followed by a detailed explanation of assessments about the quality of translations.

5. Results

5.1 Difference of Top Forty High-frequency Words between the Source and Target Text in Terms of Words and Their Meaning

Table 2. Distribution of top forty high-frequency words in the source and target text

Top Forty High-frequency Words in the Source Text	Frequency	Top Forty High-frequency Words in the Target Text	Frequency
世界 <i>world</i>	19	night	90
里 <i>inside</i>	19	long	46
不能 <i>cannot; can't</i>	18	years	43
听 <i>listen</i>	18	rain	33
吹 <i>blow</i>	16	sea	32
滔滔 <i>torrential</i>	15	black	30
问 <i>ask</i>	15	wind	30
风 <i>wind</i>	15	white	29
黑 <i>black</i>	15	Chinese	27
远方 <i>far away</i>	14	life	26
最后 <i>last</i>	13	time	26
水声 <i>water</i>	13	mother	25
黄昏 <i>dawn</i>	13	river	25
going	12	world	25

母亲 <i>mother; mum</i>	12	back	23
永恒 <i>eternity</i>	12	ear	22
走 <i>go</i>	12	lamp	22
听见 <i>listen</i>	11	tick	22
夜 <i>night</i>	11	war	22
天使 <i>angel</i>	11	day	21
已经 <i>already</i>	11	dream	21
耳朵 <i>ear</i>	11	side	20
路 <i>road</i>	11	song	20
雨 <i>rain</i>	11	tock	20
中国 <i>China</i>	10	dark	19
妈妈 <i>mother; mum</i>	10	calling	18
战争 <i>war; battle</i>	10	death	17
春天 <i>spring</i>	10	earth	17
灵魂 <i>soul</i>	10	eyes	17
留下 <i>keep; stay</i>	10	home	17
知道 <i>know</i>	10	left	17
肥肥的 <i>fat</i>	10	pen	17
醒 <i>awake</i>	10	sun	17
上游 <i>upstream</i>	9	year	17
不要 <i>will not; don't</i>	9	call	16
举起 <i>raise up</i>	9	heart	16
前 <i>front</i>	9	man	16
夜晚 <i>night</i>	9	miles	16
寂寞 <i>lonely; alone</i>	9	soul	16
屏东 <i>Pingtung</i>	9	spring	16

Table 2 illustrates the top forty high-frequency words in the source text corpus. These high-frequency words mainly fall into four categories: one-character words, two-character words, three-character words, and English words. Over half of the high-frequency words are two characters because the Chinese writing system consists of approximately 3500 fundamental characters, and over 70% of the 50000 most commonly employed words comprise two characters (State Language Affairs Committee, 2008). Within the top forty high-frequency words, one English word, “going.” It is commonly observed that writers of Chinese nationality predominantly employ Chinese in their creative endeavors while infrequently incorporating foreign languages. The use of English in Yu Guangzhong’s Chinese poems may be attributed to his educational background and professional experiences, which elucidates why the English word “going” within the forty high-frequency words.

Table 2 presents the top forty high-frequency words in the target text corpus, all one-character words. In the Chinese language, a considerable number of words can be categorized as either long (disyllabic) or short (monosyllabic) while exhibiting similar semantic interpretations (Duanmu, 2012), while in the English language, words with varying numbers of syllables, regardless of whether they are monosyllabic or multisyllabic, generally possess distinct interpretations. For instance, in some Chinese contexts, the term “tiger” can be referred to as either “lao hu” or “hu,” with no significant syntactic or semantic distinctions between the two. In contrast, in some English contexts, the term “tiger” is referred to a tiger without any other interpretations. Furthermore, most high-frequency words in the target text are classified as nouns, which might result from English syntax. In written English, all clause patterns contain a subject and verb; the most basic and straightforward clause pattern is a subject with a verb (Eastwood, 2002); for example, Mike stopped. Even the most basic sentence contains a minimum of one noun.

Table 2 shows that the most high-frequency Chinese word is “世界,” which appears nineteen times among 11150 tokens and has the approximate meaning of “world” in English. The second most frequent is “里,” appearing nineteen times and meaning “inside” in English. The last most frequent is “屏东,” meaning “Pingtung,” appearing nine times. However, table 4 shows that the two most frequently used words in the target text are “night” and “long,” which appears ninety and forty-six times, respectively, among 15971 tokens and have the different meaning of “世界” and “里.” Moreover, the last frequent is “spring,” appearing sixteen times and showing the different meanings of “屏东.”

A notable disparity in the frequency of high-frequency words between the two languages becomes apparent upon comparing the Chinese and English corpora. In the Chinese corpus, the top forty high-frequency words exhibit a disparity of ten occurrences between the most frequently used word, “世界,” and the least frequently used word, “屏东.” Furthermore, the frequency of use of these forty words demonstrates a gradual decrease. In contrast, within the English top forty high-frequency vocabulary corpus, the use frequency of English high-frequency words in the target text is higher, especially the top three words, compared to Chinese high-frequency words in the source text, and the use frequency of other English high-frequency words is twice as many as that of Chinese. Additionally, there exists a notable

disparity of seventy-four occurrences between the highest-frequency word “night” and the lowest-frequency word “spring.” Moreover, the frequency of “night” is nearly twice as high as that of the second most frequently used word, “long.”

The substantial disparity in the usage frequency of high-frequency words between Chinese and English can potentially be attributed to the fact that in the Chinese language, it is observed that a considerable number of words can be categorized as either monosyllabic or disyllabic, with minimal variations in their semantic significance (Dong, 2015; Duanmu, 2012; Qin & Duanmu, 2017). For instance, Sproat and Shih (1996) argue that the terms “蝇 (pinyin: ying; English: fly)” and “苍蝇 (pinyin: cang ying; English: fly)” are two variants of a single lexical item and share identical semantic interpretations. Moreover, the discrepancy in frequency may be attributed to the existence of alternative expressions for certain words in Chinese. Table 3 presents the alternative expressions of some Chinese words and their equivalent translation in the Chinese and English high-frequency corpora. The English term “night,” with the highest frequency of occurrence, is associated with two distinct original words, “夜” and “夜晚,” in the corresponding Chinese corpus. In the Chinese context, the words “夜晚 (pinyin: ye wan)” and “夜 (pinyin: ye)” possess the same semantic connotations. Consequently, the original poem might have employed the monosyllabic term “夜.” The frequency of the disyllabic term “夜晚” is inherently lower. However, it is worth noting that the English translation for both “夜” and “夜晚” is “night,” which likely explains the prevalent usage of the term “night.”

Table 3. Alternative expressions for some high-frequency words

Original Version	Translated version	Interpretation
母亲; 妈妈; 妈	mother	母亲, 妈妈, and 妈 share the same meaning in Chinese.
夜; 夜晚	night	夜 and 夜晚 share the same meaning in Chinese.
听; 听见	listen	听 and 听见 share the same meaning in Chinese.

According to the analysis above, it is observed that there is an inequivalence in the translation of high-frequency words between Chinese and English, as well as in their respective frequency of usage. In light of this, one may question whether Yu Guangzhong achieves equivalence when translating the original poetry into the self-translated version. Translation transfers linguistic entities from one language to their equivalents in another (Haerani, 2023). However, equivalence in translation encompasses not only formal or structural equivalence but also semantic and pragmatic equivalence, which is in line with Al-Musawi (2014), who states that the primary purpose of translation is to linguistically, semantically, and pragmatically convey the accurate meaning of a word or sentence. Thus, a translator aiming for a faithful translation is to communicate the precise intended meaning of the original text effectively. To some extent, the significance of meaning outweighs the importance of structure (Haerani, 2023). Therefore, whether Yu Guangzhong achieves the equivalence between the original poem and the translation can be based on more than just the equivalence of high-frequency vocabulary between the Chinese and English translations. Instead, it should be ascertained by examining the linguistic, semantic, and pragmatic equivalence of the Chinese and English high-frequency vocabulary within the context of the source and target texts.

5.2 Similarity and Difference between Top Fifteen High-frequency Words between Yu Guangzhong’s Three Poems

Tables 4, 5, and 6 analyze the top fifteen high-frequency words found in three poems, Nostalgia, The White Jade Bitter Gourd, and Hsilo Bridge, written and translated by Yu Guangzhong. These tables provide insights into the high-frequency words used in the poems.

Table 4. Distribution of top fifteen high-frequency words in *Nostalgia*

Top Fifteen High-frequency Words in the Source Poem	Frequency	Top Fifteen High-frequency Words in the Target Poem	Frequency
乡愁 <i>nostalgia</i>	5	side	6
这头 <i>this side</i>	3	nostalgia	5
那头 <i>that side</i>	3	mother	2
母亲 <i>mother</i>	2	tiny	2
后来 <i>then</i>	1	boat	1
坟墓 <i>grave</i>	1	bride	1
外头 <i>outside</i>	1	grave	1
大陆 <i>mainland</i>	1	grew	1
小小的 <i>tiny</i>	1	inside	1
小时候 <i>young</i>	1	lowly	1
新娘 <i>bride</i>	1	mainland	1
浅浅的 <i>shallow</i>	1	narrow	1
海峡 <i>channel</i>	1	present	1
现在 <i>present</i>	1	shallow	1
矮矮的 <i>lowly</i>	1	stamp	1

Table 4 displays the top fifteen high-frequency words of *Nostalgia*. In the Chinese top fifteen high-frequency words corpus, two-character high-frequency words comprise eleven and three-character words four. In contrast, the corpus of high-frequency English words primarily consists of one-character words. Nevertheless, in the Chinese high-frequency word corpus of *Nostalgia*, eleven out of the top fifteen words have corresponding translations in the English high-frequency word corpus. Additionally, the utilization frequency of high-frequency vocabulary in Chinese and English is generally equitably distributed, with no observable instances where a Chinese term is extensively

employed while its English translation is sparingly used.

Table 5. Distribution of top fifteen high-frequency words in *The White Jade Bitter Gourd*

Top Fifteen High-frequency Words in the Source Poem	Frequency	Top Fifteen High-frequency Words in the Target Poem	Frequency
苦瓜 <i>bitter gourd</i>	4	bitter	5
似 <i>like; resemble</i>	3	gourd	5
踩 <i>step; tread</i>	3	earth	3
久朽 <i>decayed</i>	2	white	3
引渡 <i>extradite</i>	2	decayed	2
留下 <i>keep</i>	2	fairy	2
白玉 <i>white jade</i>	2	fruit	2
里 <i>inside</i>	2	jade	2
一首歌 <i>one song</i>	1	life	2
万睐 <i>glances</i>	1	light	2
不产 <i>not produce</i>	1	long	2
不再 <i>never</i>	1	stem	2
不幸 <i>unlucky</i>	1	sucked	2
不断 <i>constant</i>	1	till	2
不曾 <i>never</i>	1	time	2

Table 5 presents the top fifteen high-frequency words of *The White Jade Bitter Gourd*. In the corpus of the top fifteen high-frequency Chinese words, most high-frequency words are two-character words. On the other hand, the corpus of high-frequency English words is primarily composed of one-character words. However, unlike the corpus of *Nostalgia*, out of *The White Jade Bitter Gourd*'s top fifteen Chinese high-frequency words, only three possess corresponding English translations within the English high-frequency word corpus. When considering the frequency of high-frequency words, it can be observed that English high-frequency words are utilized slightly more frequently than Chinese high-frequency words.

Table 6. Distribution of top fifteen high-frequency words in *Hsilo Bridge*

Top Fifteen High-frequency Words in the Source Poem	Frequency	Top Fifteen High-frequency Words in the Target Poem	Frequency
灵魂 <i>soul</i>	3	bridge	3
猛撼 <i>shake</i>	3	hsilo	3
醒 <i>awake</i>	3	silence	3
严肃 <i>serious</i>	2	soul	3
平原 <i>plain</i>	2	awake	2
微微 <i>slightly</i>	2	cross	2
必须 <i>must</i>	2	man	2
渡河 <i>cross river</i>	2	plain	2
知道 <i>know</i>	2	sea	2
西螺 <i>Hsilo</i>	2	shake	2
钢 <i>steel</i>	2	side	2
静 <i>silence</i>	2	steel	2
颤抖 <i>tremble</i>	2	tremble	2
一千条 <i>one thousand</i>	1	arms	1
一点 <i>one point</i>	1	awakes	1

Table 6 exhibits the top fifteen high-frequency words of *Hsilo Bridge*. In the Chinese corpus of the top fifteen high-frequency words, there are eleven two-character words, three one-character words, and one three-character word. In contrast, the corpus of high-frequency English words mainly consists of one-character words. Similar to the corpus of *Nostalgia*, the Chinese high-frequency vocabulary corpus of *Hsilo Bridge* consists of ten words that have corresponding English translations in the English high-frequency vocabulary corpus. Additionally, the frequency of usage of high-frequency words in Chinese and English is equal.

In summary, the analysis of these three poems might reveal that in the Chinese top fifteen high-frequency words corpus, two-character high-frequency words comprise over ninety percent of the entire corpus because the majority of Chinese words consist of two characters (Chan & Ng, 2012; Ma et al., 2017). Furthermore, there is no significant disparity in the frequency of high-frequency words between Chinese and English, implying that there are no instances where one source language vocabulary is used extensively while its translation is

used sparingly. Consequently, the frequently used words in the original poems also recurred frequently in the translations. Additionally, most high-frequency words occur two to three times, indicating a similar distribution pattern. However, the three poems depict varying scenarios regarding the concordance between Chinese and English equivalents. In the poems *Nostalgia* and *Hsilo Bridge*, the top fifteen high-frequency Chinese words align significantly with their English translations in the English high-frequency word corpus. Conversely, in the poem *The White Jade Bitter Gourd*, only five high-frequency Chinese words have equivalent translations in the English language. The situation above can be attributed to Yu Guangzhong’s choice of different translation strategies when translating the three poems.

5.3 *Difference in the Style of the Source Text and the Translator’s Style in the Target Text*

The issue of style holds significant importance in literary translation and can be defined as the linguistic attributes that distinguish a specific text (Short & Leech, 2007). The distinction between literary and non-literary translation appears to be primarily determined by the role of style (Boase-Beier, 2023). A translator’s style is also known as his or her “thumbprint” (Baker, 2000, p. 245); it refers to the distinctive manner in which they approach the act of translation, setting their work apart from that of other translators (Saldanha, 2011). The word frequency analysis in translation research is valuable for examining the translator’s style (Feng & Wang, 2021). Typically, the occurrence of a word or phrase with an exceptionally high or low frequency merits attention because frequency often provides insights into the unique characteristics of the text’s author, which is particularly relevant to the current investigation of translational style (Wang & Li, 2012).

Depending on the poem’s content and main topic, Duan (2020) puts Yu Guangzhong’s poem in *The Night Watchman* into the following categories:

Table 7. Categories of Yu Guangzhong’s Poetry Collection *The Night Watchman*

Number	Category	Quantity
1	time, season, and nature	29
2	self-reflection	21
3	nostalgia	17
4	social issues	9
5	love	4

Based on Table 7, it can be observed that Yu Guangzhong predominantly opts for the self-translation of poetry that pertains to time, season, nature, and self-reflection. Conversely, poems addressing societal matters and romantic love constitute a comparatively smaller proportion. While Yu Guangzhong is widely recognized for his nostalgic poems, it is essential to note that they comprise around 20%. In the English top ten high-frequency words, six nouns (night, years, rain, sea, wind, and life) pertain to time, season, nature, and self-reflection. Three (long, black, and white) of the remaining four words are classified as adjectives, while one (Chinese) can function as both an adjective and a noun.

Given that adjectives modify nouns and lack inherent indication, it is not immediately apparent which theme the poem’s words pertain to. However, according to the target text, these four words (long, black, Chinese, and white) are present in pieces that revolve around categories of time, season, nature, and self-reflection, which suggests that the translator has successfully maintained the theme and style of the original poem in the translation. The top ten most frequently used words in the translation align with the two primary categories of the poem, which also have the most significant word count. The translator has accomplished a faithful rendition of the content and theme of the original poem in the translation, which can be attributed to the fact that the translator is also the author of the original poem, which likely facilitates a deeper understanding of the content and style, surpassing that of other translators.

Nevertheless, the top ten words in the Chinese high-frequency vocabulary corpus lack a distinct thematic orientation, unlike the top ten English words in the same corpus. Except for “滔滔 (English: torrential)” and “风 (English: wind),” the remaining eight words do not appear to be directly associated with the specific category. The likely cause for this can be attributed to one of the most significant differences between the English and Chinese language systems, which lies in their syntactic structures. English is predominantly characterized by hypotaxis, wherein subordinate clauses are linked through conjunctions and relative clauses. In contrast, Chinese exhibits parataxis, where the connections between words or phrases are expressed through logical relationships rather than linguistic devices. This feature of Chinese representing parataxis might lead to an emphasis on introspection, empathy, simplicity of expression, non-logicity, and ambiguity of meaning in literature. Hence, comprehending the connotation and significance of words becomes challenging when divorced from literature, particularly Chinese literature. It seems that the stronger the connotations and implicatures in the text, the more the translator will need to engage with the text.

In summary, translation is a complex process that involves not only conveying the literal meaning of the words but also capturing the nuances of how the message is delivered, and both the translation scholar and the translator must take into account the style of the text (Boase-Beier, 2023).

6. Discussion

The thorough examination of high-frequency words based on corpus analysis highlights the inequivalence in Yu Guangzhong’s self-translated poetry. It is found the meaning of the top forty high-frequency words in the original poem and the translation differ; namely, the Chinese and English words in the same ranking do not hold the same meaning. In addition, there is a noticeable difference in the frequency of high-frequency words between the original poem and its translation. The translation contains a significantly higher usage of high-frequency words than the original. However, when examining three individual poems, two of them, on the whole, achieve equivalence. The corpus consisting of eighty-five poems and the corpus of individual poems exhibit varying equivalencies, possibly because Yu

Guangzhong predominantly employs the direct translation method when translating the three randomly selected poems. However, upon examining the eighty-five poems translated by Yu Guangzhong, word-for-word translation might not be a preferred strategy for Yu Guangzhong.

There are limitations to this article. First, this article concentrates on only the high-frequency words in Yu Guangzhong's self-translated poems, which does not fully extricate all aspects of Yu Guangzhong's self-translation, thereby impacting the precise assessment of Yu Guangzhong's translation in equivalence. Second, the analysis lacks triangulation and may be deemed as subjective and interpretive. Additionally, the focus of the analysis does not cover other translation works of Yu Guangzhong. Therefore, to overcome the limitations above, future research can be focused on the following areas. Firstly, future articles can examine the other aspects of Yu Guangzhong's self-translated poetic works, such as the keyword and sentence length, or employ different methodologies to analyze other elements of Yu Guangzhong's poetry. Secondly, future research can address the limitation of textual analysis with interviews with professional translators, linguists, and the public interested in Yu Guangzhong's works. Lastly, future studies can explore the equivalence of Yu Guangzhong's novels and essays, which might contribute to and strengthen the current study.

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Authors contributions

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