

Veiling the Vulgar: Translation of Sex-related Euphemisms in Mo Yan's *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*

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Abstract

Although the translation of euphemisms has received academic attention, studies of sex-related euphemisms remain scarce, particularly in Chinese-English contexts. This study, therefore, aims to explore how sex-related euphemisms are translated from Chinese to English. Drawing on the euphemism formation frameworks of Al-Adwan and Naumenko and Kryvonis, and Vinay and Darbelnet's translation strategies, this study employs the methods of descriptive translation studies and selects 84 samples from Mo Yan's *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* and Goldblatt's English translation. The results indicate that widening, metaphor and implication are the most common formation mechanisms, while euphemism with Chinese characteristics is identified as a new type of formation mechanism. Additionally, equivalence is the most frequently used strategy for euphemisms formed through implication and metaphor, while literal translation tends to appear in euphemisms generated through widening. Notably, for sex-related euphemisms with Chinese characteristics, the translator tends to adopt modulation to accommodate Western sexual culture. These findings expand the existing formation mechanisms of Chinese sex-related euphemisms, offer practical guidance for translators, and provide insights into the relationships between sex-related euphemism translation and cross-cultural communication.

Plain Language Summary

Translation of Sex-related Euphemisms From Chinese into English

This study looks at how expressions that refer to sex indirectly, which called sex-related euphemisms, are translated from Chinese into English. Although euphemisms have been studied before, there has been insufficient research on how sex-related ones are handled between Chinese and English. Using Mo Yan's novel *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* and Howard Goldblatt's English translation as the source of data, the study examines 84 instances of such expressions. It analyzes how sex-related euphemisms are formed in Chinese and how they are translated, based on established linguistic and translation frameworks. The results show that most Chinese sex-related euphemisms are formed through widening, metaphor, and implication. For the translation strategies, equivalence is most frequently employed in euphemisms formed through implication and metaphor, while literal translation tends to appear in euphemisms generated through widening. Notably, for the sex-related euphemisms with Chinese characteristic, translator tends to adopt modulation to accommodate Western sexual culture. Overall, the study expands the current formation mechanism framework of Chinese euphemisms, offers practical guidance for translators when dealing with sex-related language between Chinese and English, and helps to explain how different sexual values are reflected through translation.

Keywords

sex-related euphemisms, formation mechanisms, translation strategies, *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*

Introduction

Euphemism, derived from the Greek word “euphèmos,” which means “to speak well,” comprises “eu,” meaning “good,” and “phèmi,” meaning “to speak.” Definitions of euphemisms in the literature tend to characterize them as a linguistic strategy that replaces harsh or offensive words and

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Data Availability Statement included at the end of the article



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expressions with milder, more indirect alternatives (Al-Kharabsheh, 2011; Farghal, 2005; Olmat, 2018). Notably, Allan and Burridge (1991) were the first to add the concept of “face” to the definition, suggesting that euphemisms are adopted to avoid possible offensiveness or “loss of face” for all involved parties. Similarly, Candra et al. (2022) view euphemisms as a linguistic strategy aimed at safeguarding all parties involved in communication against disrespect, embarrassment, and potential conflicts. As these definitions suggest, the generation of euphemisms is closely related to taboos since they enable communication about sensitive topics without directly mentioning them (Lestari & Sutrisno, 2023). Agyekum (2002, p. 372) characterizes euphemism as “a shield against the offensive nature of taboo expressions,” involving topics such as sex, death, bodily functions, crime, politics, and religion.

Sex tends to be the most prevalent theme in euphemisms (Rawson, 1981). As a basic human need, sex plays a pervasive role in people’s lives; yet, it is considered taboo in most cultures (Yuan, 2016). This discursive tension necessitates the use of euphemisms in sexual discourse, leading to a proliferation of sex-related euphemisms. In China, for instance, Confucianism promotes strict social norms, leading to the suppression of sexual desire, based on the assumption that an excessive emphasis on sexuality could challenge family order and threaten social and political stability (J. Yu et al., 2022). Confucianism also emphasizes 非礼勿言 (Fēi-lǐ-wù-yán, “Do not speak of impropriety”), whereby any public discussion of sex-related topics is considered impolite or embarrassing. Thus, discussions of sexuality have never been entirely open in China. As a result, Chinese has a rich variety of sex-related euphemisms (Lee & Ngai, 2012), which assume diverse forms, including metaphor, widening, implication and idiom. For instance, 鱼水之欢 (Yú-shuǐ-zhī-huān, “the pleasure of fishes in water”) is frequently used to describe intimate relations between men and women. Nevertheless, existing studies of sex-related euphemisms have mainly focused on English and Arabic, paying far less attention to Chinese. Thus, the mechanisms through which Chinese sex-related euphemisms are formed remain to be further explored.

Mo Yan, the only Chinese writer to win the Nobel Prize in Literature, faced controversy over sexual content in his novel 丰乳肥臀 (*Big Breasts and Wide Hips*). Some argued that the explicit sexual descriptions in the novel conflicted with China’s conservative sexual norms (Lung, 2003). The novel was subject to an official publication ban prior to Mo Yan’s Nobel win, highlighting the sensitive nature of sex-related topics in China. *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* narrates the turbulent life of a Chinese woman, Lu Xuan’er, who witnesses the major historical transformations of the 20th century. Under the pressures of her husband’s impotence and the duty to continue the family line, she “borrows seed” by having sexual relations with nine men. In fulfilling her procreative mission, she exacts revenge on her husband’s family. Mo

Yan has acknowledged using euphemisms to deal with sexual themes, including strategies such as metaphor, implication, and expressions with Chinese characteristics.

Rather than produce a “literal translation” in the strict sense, the novel’s English translator, Goldblatt, adopts a method of “translation and adaptation,” often restructuring the original text to cater to English-speaking readers (Yi, 2014). This warrants exploration of how the novel’s sex-related euphemisms are rendered in translation. Indeed, the abundance of sexual euphemisms in *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* and the translator’s interventions make this novel an effective dataset for exploring the translation of sex-related euphemisms.

Although studies have explored the translation of sex-related euphemisms, focusing mainly on translation strategies, few examine how the formation mechanisms of euphemism influence the adoption of translation strategies, leaving a gap in the field. The cultural sensitivity of sex-related euphemisms also poses challenges for translation. Since sexual taboos vary across cultures, expressions that need to be euphemized in one culture may be directly stated in another. Generally, Chinese people hold more conservative views about sexuality than people in Western societies (J. Liu et al., 2020; D. Liu et al., 2025). As discussed above, a potential reason for this is the influence of traditional Confucianism in China (W. Yu, 2021). Although there is evidence that China has undergone a “sexual revolution” since the reform and opening up of the late 1970s, traditional sexual values remain deeply embedded in Chinese society (Ho et al., 2018; Lyu et al., 2020; Wong, 2015). Such differences in sexual values between Chinese and Western cultures pose challenges to the translation of sex-related euphemisms. This study, therefore, investigates the English translation of sex-related euphemisms in *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*, focusing on the following questions:

1. What are the formation mechanisms of Chinese sex-related euphemisms in *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*?
2. How do the formation mechanisms of sex-related euphemisms influence the adopted translation strategies?
3. How do these translation strategies reflect differences in the sexual cultures of China and the West?

Literature Review

Formation Mechanism of Euphemism

Although euphemisms exist in almost all languages, their formation mechanisms diverge. Scholars have developed several frameworks for euphemism formation, among which Warren’s (1992) semantic innovation framework has been widely applied. This framework was developed based on 500 examples selected from two English dictionaries—*A Dictionary of Slang and Euphemisms* (Spears, 1981) and *A Dictionary of*

Euphemisms (Neaman & Silver, 1983)—encompassing particularizations, implications, metaphors, metonyms, reversals, understatements, and overstatements. Similarly, based on *A Dictionary of Euphemisms* (Holder, 2008), Akopova (2023) summarized five main formation mechanisms of euphemistic expressions: borrowing from other languages, semantic extension, metonymy, metaphor, and various types of word-formation changes. Among these strategies, semantic extension and metaphor are the most frequently used.

In the domain of Arabic, Farghal (1995) proposed four linguistic strategies for generating euphemisms: figurative expressions, circumlocutions, remodelings, and antonyms. Al-Adwan (2015), meanwhile, analyzed the Arabic subtitles of the television sitcom *Friends* and developed an update mechanism that includes widening, implication, metonymy, demetaphorisation, borrowing, misrepresentation, and omission.

By comparison, only one study has investigated the formation mechanism of Chinese euphemisms (Naumenko & Kryvonis, 2023). Examining Chinese euphemisms from both synchronic and diachronic perspectives, that study proposed a model involving phonetic allusion, antonomasia, the euphemization of certain fixed expressions, metaphor, and metonymy.

Most existing frameworks for the formation mechanisms of euphemisms derive from English (Akopova, 2023; Warren, 1992; Williams, 1975) or Arabic (Al-Adwan, 2015; Farghal, 1995), paying limited attention to the Chinese context. Given that traditional Chinese notions about politeness have made the language particularly rich in euphemisms, it is crucial to establish a framework grounded in the linguistic and cultural characteristics of Chinese.

Translation of Sex-Related Content

The translation of sex-related content is a critical site for examining the dialectic between personal ethics and social constraints (Santaemilia, 2008). Nevertheless, it occupies a marginal position in translation studies, suffering from persistent scholarly neglect (Baer & Bassi, 2025). This oversight may stem from the sensitivity inherent in sex-related content across cultures.

Some scholars have confirmed that the omission or dilution of sex-related content in translations from English to Chinese is attributable to cross-cultural differences (Sun, 2001; Wang, 1998). As Allan and Burridge (2006, p. 13) stated, censorship refers to the “suppression or prohibition of speech or writing that is considered harmful to the public good.” For example, Ke (1999) argued that sexual taboos impose moral constraints on Chinese translators, forcing them to delete or neutralize sex-related content. Similarly, Y. P. Wu (2010) examined the English translations of sexual descriptions in the novel *Sha Fu*, identifying complete omission and mitigation as two main techniques used to deal with such material. Additionally, comparing two Chinese

translations of novel *The Color Purple*, Ziman (2008) found that translators tended to violate fidelity to the source by using techniques such as deletion to make the translated text “clean.” Specifically, sentences related to sexual behavior and genitals were deleted in both translations.

Conversely, some studies challenge the assumption that sex-related content is always diluted. For example, Lee and Ngai (2012) explored English translations of the Chinese traditional opera *The Peony Pavilion*, finding that all three versions retained sex-related content. Similarly, Feng and Zhao (2020) examined the David Tod Roy’s translation of the Chinese classic erotic novel *Jin Ping Mei*, revealing that it fully retained the sexual content. A potential reason is that the translator might have considered the target audience’s preference for preserved rather than suppressed sexual descriptions. Such differences underscore the need for more research on the translation of sex-related content from Chinese to English in terms of translation strategies and underlying differences in sexual sensitivity.

Translation of Sex-Related Euphemisms

The translation of sex-related euphemisms between Chinese and English has received limited scholarly attention. Most studies focus on English–Arabic (Al-Barakati, 2013; Anber & Swear, 2016; Mohammed, 2020; Taghian, 2021) and English–Indonesian language pairs (James, 2020; Lestari & Sutrisno, 2023; Putranti et al., 2017), paying insufficient attention to English–Chinese contexts.

First, existing research on the translation of sex-related euphemisms between Chinese and English focuses on general translation strategies. For example, Feng and Xu (2019) examined the translation of sex-related euphemisms in modern Chinese novels, finding that translators more often adopt reproduction strategies, thus conveying China’s unique sexual culture to target readers. Similarly, Z. Yang (2014) examined sex-related euphemisms in English translations of *Dream of the Red Mansion*, identifying strategies such as literal translation, free translation, annotated translation, and euphemistic explanation, thus underscoring the importance of preserving cultural connotations. By contrast, few studies have applied more detailed classifications of translation strategies. Yuan (2016), for instance, explored the translation of sexual taboos in subtitles and proposed a framework combining source-oriented strategies, such as specification, calque, and shifted direct translation, with target-oriented strategies, including generalization, substitution, omission, and addition. This suggests that while scholars have adopted diverse translation strategies, the application of more refined theoretical frameworks remains insufficient.

More crucially, existing studies have focused on translation strategies, while overlooking the constraining role of the formation mechanisms of euphemism in shaping translation choices. For instance, literal translation is perhaps more likely to be applied to euphemisms generated

through widening. Consequently, existing research has yet to establish a systematic relation that links “formation mechanisms” with “translation strategy.” To fill this gap, the present study draws on Vinay and Darbelnet’s (2000) translation framework to integrate translation strategies, investigating how the formation mechanism of sex-related euphemisms influences translators’ strategic choices.

Additionally, existing studies acknowledge cultural and social influences on sex-related euphemism translation but offer limited explanation of how translation strategies reflect different sexual cultures. For instance, Anber and Swear (2016) emphasized translators’ knowledge and intercultural competence in translating sex-related euphemisms. Similarly, Mohammed (2020) highlighted the difficulty of achieving dynamic equivalence through translation, yet his analysis centered on translation challenges rather than on how strategies reflect cultural distinctions. By contrast, Yuan (2016) found that translators’ choices are shaped by ideology, thus reinforcing patriarchal values and constructing particular female images. Overall, the existing research lacks a systematic examination of how sexual cultural differences are reflected through the translation of sex-related euphemisms.

Theoretical Framework

Since this study focuses on the translations of sex-related euphemisms, the concept and scope of sex must be defined. Sex has a threefold meaning in the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (Hughes, 1996). First, it refers to the physical activity that two people engage in to produce offspring, or for pleasure. Second, it refers to whether a person, plant, or animal is male or female. Third, it refers to all men or all women considered as a group. The first definition focuses on sexual intercourse while the latter two emphasize gender differences. This study focuses on the first definition since sexual intercourse is the most direct reflection of sex-related content.

To identify sex-related euphemisms, this study combines Al-Adwan (2015), and Naumenko and Kryvonis’s (2023) models to serve as a framework. Al-Adwan’s framework is selected for the category “omission,” which was originally based on Warren’s (1992) framework. This is chosen because it is one of the few euphemism formation mechanisms in the Chinese context. Furthermore, the category “euphemisms with Chinese characteristics” is adapted based on the “euphemization of certain fixed expressions” from this framework. Table 1 shows the adapted framework for euphemism formation mechanisms. A total of six categories of euphemism formations are identified: widening, implication, borrowing, omission, metaphor, and sex-related euphemisms with Chinese characteristics.

Table 1. Adapted Framework of Euphemism Formation Mechanisms.

Framework for euphemism formation mechanism	Original categories	Adapted categories
Al-Adwan (2015)	Widening Implication Metonyms Demetaphorization Borrowing Semantic Misrepresentation Omission	Widening Implication Borrowing Metaphor Euphemisms with Chinese characteristics Omission
Naumenko and Kryvonis (2023)	Phonetic allusion Antonomasia Euphemization of certain fixed expressions Metaphor Metonymy	

These euphemism formation mechanisms are defined below:

1. Widening is one of the ways to produce euphemisms: it “involves the use of a general term to replace a more specific one in a particular context” (Al-Adwan, 2015). Example: using “meat” to substitute for “pork.”
2. Implication “involves two propositions, where the second is usually a logical consequence of the first” (Al-Adwan, 2015). Example: People can easily think of alcohol after hearing “bend an elbow.”
3. Borrowing involves adopting euphemisms from other languages to address offensive or inappropriate elements, thus reducing potential offensiveness through the borrowed term’s foreign origin and initial unfamiliarity (Al-Adwan, 2015).
4. Metaphor is a type of euphemism that disguises the offensive or undesirable qualities of the original subject by linking it to something perceived as having similar characteristics (Al-Adwan, 2015). Example: “paradise” being used to describe female genitalia.
5. Euphemisms with Chinese characteristics are expressions in Chinese that serve as euphemisms to make a statement less explicit or offensive (Naumenko & Kryvonis, 2023), including idioms and dialectal or customary expressions.
6. Omission is used when a taboo or uncomfortable subject is considered highly offensive or threatening to someone’s dignity: speakers will often choose to avoid mentioning it entirely, thereby neutralizing the potential threat (Al-Adwan, 2015).

Table 2. Framework for Translation Strategies.

Framework for translation strategies	Original categories	Adapted categories
Vinay and Darbelnet (2000)	Borrowing	Literal translation
	Calque	Transposition
	Literal translation	Equivalence
	Transposition	Modulation
	Equivalence	
	Modulation	
	Adaptation	

This study's framework for translation strategies is guided by Vinay and Darbelnet's (2000) direct and oblique translation procedures. Specifically, the direct procedure refers to "transposing the source language message element by element into the target language" (Vinay & Darbelnet, 2000, p. 84), comprising borrowing, calque, and literal translation. Oblique procedures involve using techniques when "stylistic effects cannot be transposed into the target language without upsetting the syntactic order, or even the lexis" (Vinay & Darbelnet, 2000, p. 84). This can be achieved through transposition, modulation, equivalence and adaptation. One reason for adopting this procedure is that it provides a graded translation strategy, distinguishing techniques based on the varying degrees of alteration between the source text (henceforth ST) and the target text (henceforth TT). After examining the translation of sex-related euphemisms, four strategies are identified: literal translation, transposition, equivalence, and modulation.

Table 2 illustrates the original and adapted frameworks of translation strategies for sex-related euphemisms.

The translation strategies for sex-related euphemisms are defined as follows:

1. Literal translation involves transferring the message of the sex-related euphemism element by element into the target language (Vinay & Darbelnet, 2000). Example: 房事 (Fáng-shì) is translated as "bedroom affair."
2. Transposition involves changing the grammatical category of sex-related euphemisms, ensuring linguistic equivalence without changing the intended meaning during translation (Vinay & Darbelnet, 2000). Example: 做爱 (Zuò-ài) is translated as "lovemaking."
3. Equivalence involves reformulating sex-related euphemisms by changing stylistic devices and syntactic structures while retaining their basic meaning (Vinay & Darbelnet, 2000).
4. Modulation involves a change of perspective in the transfer of sex-related euphemisms from the ST to the TT, whereby the communicative intention is preserved

by adapting the information rather than reproducing it literally (Vinay & Darbelnet, 2000).

Methods

Research Design

Guided by the research questions, this study adopts a qualitative research method that relies on interpreting data (Elliott & Timulak, 2005). Since this study examines the translations of sex-related euphemisms in *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* and their relationships with formation mechanisms of euphemisms, as well as how translation strategies reflect different sexual values, in-depth analysis of the ST and TT are conducted.

This study specifically adopts Toury's (2012) three-step model of descriptive translation studies (henceforth DTS). The translations of sex-related euphemisms in *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* are first examined in terms of their acceptability within the target culture, followed by a comparative analysis of ST and TT to identify translational shifts. On this basis, translation patterns are summarized to reconstruct the translation process. Rather than evaluate quality, the study aims to describe and interpret how sex-related euphemisms are translated, thereby uncovering the cultural differences behind translation.

Data Sources and Data Selection

Data are extracted from the Chinese novel 丰乳肥臀 (*Feng Ru Fei Tun*) (Mo, 1995) and its English translation by Howard Goldblatt, *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* (Mo, 2012). The rationale for this selection is as follows: First, the novel centers on themes of body, sexuality, and family history, and it contains many sexual depictions using various forms of euphemism, such as metaphor, widening, and implication. Second, the novel is set in rural Northern China, a region that is significantly different from Western countries in terms of language, sexual culture, and esthetic values. This makes the translation of sex-related euphemisms from Chinese into English particularly worthy of investigation. Finally, Howard Goldblatt has long been Mo Yan's translator and played a key role in his Nobel prize win. This helps ensure the quality of the TT.

Although this study focuses on a single novel, the sexual and cultural issues it addresses are of general relevance in Chinese literature. Thus, the findings can have implications for other texts as well. Furthermore, the identified formation mechanisms of euphemism and translation strategies can provide guidance for handling sex-related euphemisms in other genres. This study also reveals the influence of sexual differences between China and the West on translation. This allows the findings to be extended to broader research on euphemism translation and cross-cultural communication.

Table 3. Example of an Expression Excluded from Data Collection.

Source Text	他们俩人在性爱过程中，都感到千言万语涌上心头... (p. 428)
Literal Text	When they made love , their hearts overflowed with unspoken words.

Purposive sampling, which is suitable for studies that address specific research questions, allows for a more targeted and effective exploration of the underlying information behind social phenomena (Rai & Thapa, 2015). Given this study’s aim to examine the formation mechanisms of sex-related euphemisms in *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*, the translation strategies employed, and how they reflect cultural differences in sexual values, this sampling method can be considered appropriate.

Data extraction involved five steps. First, the researcher downloaded the official Chinese and English versions of *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*. Second, the researcher read both versions of the book with a focus on identifying sex-related content. It was then determined whether each instance should be classified as a euphemism based on the categorization frameworks proposed by Al-Adwan (2015) and Naumenko and Kryvonis (2023). During this screening process, certain direct expressions were excluded because they explicitly contained the taboo words. As Table 3 shows, this expression was categorized as direct language rather than a euphemism because it explicitly uses the sensitive word 性 (Xing, “sex”), whose literal text (henceforth LT) is “made love.” Thus, it was excluded from the sample.

Third, the ST and TT identified in the second step were systematically paired and compiled into an Excel (see Appendix 1). By aligning them at the sentence or paragraph level, a detailed analysis of their differences was performed. This alignment facilitated the identification of subtle variations and supported the examination of the employed translation strategies. Fourth, the translation strategies were coded and recorded in Excel, following the translation procedures proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet (2000). Fifth, by analyzing the coding of these strategies, the reflection of different sexual cultural values through the translation was further examined.

As the study focuses on sex-related euphemisms in literary texts, some examples cited in the analysis contain explicit or culturally sensitive language. These examples are reproduced only for the purpose of linguistic analysis and academic discussion.

To ensure the validity of the selected samples, two doctoral students specializing in translation were invited to randomly verify the accuracy of the classifications and offer suggestions for samples requiring revision. Simultaneously, inter-rater reliability was assessed using an online reliability calculation tool, ReCal2. As Tables 4 and 5 show, there is an average agreement of 96.4% and Krippendorff’s α of 95%

for the coding of formation mechanisms and 92.9% agreement with a Krippendorff’s α of 91% for translation strategies. According to the benchmarks proposed by Krippendorff (2004) and O’Connor and Joffe (2020), these values indicate substantial to nearly perfect inter-rater reliability.

During the coding of the formation mechanisms of sex-related euphemisms, a borderline case emerged with the expression 风流事 (Fēng-liú-shì, “romantic affair”). One coder categorized it as widening, since 风流 (Fēng-liú, “romantic”) extends from literary elegance to imply sexual intercourse. Another coder classified it as a euphemism with Chinese characteristics, considering its conventionalized and culturally specific usage. After discussion, the research team agreed on the latter classification, since its usage derives from cultural convention rather than semantic extension.

Another borderline case was identified with the expression 跟了你的女人 (Gēn-le-nǐ-de-nǚ-rén, “the woman who follows you”) during the coding of translation strategies. The phrase was translated as *woman who gets tangled up with you*, which lies between equivalence and modulation. The use of *tangled up with* reflects equivalence, as it reproduces the euphemistic effect in a culturally appropriate manner. However, the translation also demonstrates modulation, since the original emphasis on female belonging shifts to the idea of emotional entanglement, representing a shift in perspective. Accordingly, this case was ultimately categorized as modulation.

Findings and Discussions

In response to RQ1, this section first presents the frequencies and percentages of the six formation mechanisms of sex-related euphemisms, thereby providing an overall distribution of how euphemisms are formed in *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*. At the same time, representative examples are provided for each formation mechanism to enable readers to more clearly understand the identification process. Addressing RQ2, the distribution of translation strategies for sex-related euphemisms is presented, including their frequencies and percentages, in order to summarize overall translation trends. At the same time, the distribution of translation strategies based on different formation mechanisms are also provided, illustrating how euphemism formation mechanisms influence the choice of translation strategies. Regarding the RQ3, the analysis further explores how different sexual cultural values between China and the West are reflected in translation, primarily through case analysis of modulation strategy that involve shifts in gender roles, attitudes toward chastity and sexuality.

Formation of Sex-Related Euphemisms

To answer RQ1, a total of 84 sex-related euphemisms are identified in *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*: the primary data can

Table 4. ReCal2 Formation Mechanism Results.

Variable	Percent agreement	Scott's pi	Cohen's kappa	Krippendorff's alpha (nominal)	N agreements	N disagreements	N cases	N decisions
Variable 1 (cols 1 & 2)	96.4%	0.954	0.954	0.955	27	1	28	56

Table 5. ReCal2 Translation Strategies Results.

Variable	Percent agreement	Scott's pi	Cohen's kappa	Krippendorff's alpha (nominal)	N agreements	N disagreements	N cases	N decisions
Variable 1 (cols 1 & 2)	92.9%	0.907	0.907	0.909	26	2	28	56

Table 6. Number and Percentage of Sex-related Euphemisms by Formation Mechanism.

Ways of euphemism formation	Number of samples	Percentage
Widening	30	36%
Metaphor	21	25%
Implication	20	24%
Euphemisms with Chinese characteristics	8	10%
Omission	3	3%
Borrowing	2	2%

be found in Appendix 1. Table 6 shows the distribution of their formation mechanisms.

As shown in Table 6, six categories of sex-related euphemisms formation are identified: widening, metaphor, implication, expressions with Chinese characteristics, omission, and borrowing. Among these, widening constitutes the largest proportion with 30 samples (36%). Metaphor and implication are represented in similar proportions of 25% and 24%, respectively. Euphemisms with Chinese characteristics occur in eight instances. Omission and borrowing account for the smallest proportions of 3% and 2%, respectively.

Widening mainly involves using expressions with broader meanings to substitute for sexual intercourse, such as 满足 (Mǎn-zú, “satisfied”), 睡觉 (Shuì-jiào, “sleep”), 折腾 (Zhē-teng, “to toss about”), and 完婚 (Wán-hūn, “to get married”). Metaphors, especially those related to agriculture and food, are frequently used to generate sex-related euphemisms. For example, some expressions related to agriculture are used to metaphorically compare sexual intercourse to the process of sowing seeds and fertilizing, such as 包种包收, 一包到底 (Bāo-zhǒng-bāo-shōu, yī-bāo-dào-dǐ, “from seeding to harvesting, all in one package”), 种子 (Zhǒng-zǐ, “seed”), 借种 (Jiè-zhǒng, “to borrow seed”), and 肥水不落外人田 (Féi-shuǐ-bù-luò-wài-rén-tián, “fertile water should not flow into others’ fields”). Similarly, food-related expressions also become the sources of sex-related euphemisms. For instance, in 我是来给你送肉的 (Wǒ-shì-lái-gěi-nǐ-sòng-ròu-de, “I

come to send you meat”), meat is used as a metaphor for a woman’s body, highlighting the similarity between sex and food as fundamental human needs. Additionally, war, politics, and entities are also used as metaphors for sexual behavior. Implication euphemisms are often generated through depictions of behaviors, sounds, and environments to suggest the occurrence of sexual behavior. For example, 烛光晃晃, 肉影翩翩 (Zhú-guāng-huǎng-huǎng, ròu-yǐng-piān-piān, “the light flickering, and the flesh shadows fluttering”) uses the shadows of bodies on the wall caused by flickering candlelight to subtly imply sexual intercourse. Similarly, 半是痛苦, 半是呻吟的叫声 (Bàn-shì-tòng-kǔ, bàn-shì-shēng-yín-de-jiào-shēng, “half in pain, half in moaning cries”) implies sexual intercourse through sound. Notably, euphemisms with Chinese characteristics involve idioms, dialect, and customary expressions. For example, the expression 破瓜 (Pò-guā, “break the melon”) signifies a woman’s first sexual experience. Other similar expressions such as 日 (Rì, “fuck”), 风流 (Fēng-liú, “romantic”), 跟 (Gēn, “follow”), and 霸占 (Bà-zhàn, “take possession”) are abundant in the novel. Omission is the most extreme method of generating sex-related euphemisms, which directly avoids mentioning sex. For instance, in 我就把谁的娘——明白吗 (Wǒ-jiù-bǎ-shuí-de-niáng——míng-bái-ma, “I’ll ——with who’s mother, understand?”), “have sexual relations with” is replaced by a dash to avoid stating the offensive expression. Borrowing refers to sex-related expressions borrowed from other languages. For example, 一夜风流 (Yī-yè-fēng-liú, “one night stand”) originates from an American movie *It Happened One Night* and was later borrowed to signify a sexual relationship lasting only one night.

The formation mechanisms of sex-related euphemisms echo with previous studies in which widening, implication, metaphor, borrowing, and omission were used (Almijrab, 2020; Feng & Xu, 2019; S. Wu & Wan, 2021). For example, Feng and Xu (2019) examined similar formation mechanisms, including widening, metaphorization, and omission. Additionally, previous studies have explored sexual metaphors (Feng & Xu, 2021; Feng & Zhao, 2020; Peng, 2012), such as “sex is plants,” “sex is food,” “sex is war,” and “sex is agriculture.” Notably, due to China’s cultural and social

Table 7. Number and Percentage of Translation Strategies for Sex-related Euphemisms.

Translation strategy	Number	Percentage
Literal translation	23	27%
Equivalence	32	38%
Transposition	11	13%
Modulation	18	22%

conventions, the formation mechanisms of euphemism in the Chinese context are more complex. In particular, this category includes culturally specific expressions in the form of dialects, idioms, and customary expressions, which are rarely mentioned in previous research. These data warrant attention as they better reflect cultural complexity.

Translation Strategies of Sex-Related Euphemisms

In response to RQ2, this section investigates how euphemism formation mechanisms influence the choice of translation strategies. It first presents the overall frequency and distribution of translation strategies, followed by the distribution of translation strategies based on formation mechanisms.

As shown in Table 7, four translation strategies are identified. Among them, the most commonly used strategy is equivalence, which accounts for 38% (32 times) of the translation strategies. Additionally, literal translation and modulation are also frequently adopted, at 27% (23 times) and 22% (18 times) respectively. By comparison, transposition shows a lower proportion of 13% (11 times).

Table 8 presents a more detailed distribution of translation strategies based on different formation mechanisms of sex-related euphemisms. We can see that the equivalence strategy is most frequently employed in euphemisms formed through implication and metaphor. One reason could be that euphemisms generated by these two mechanisms often rely on implied meanings or metaphorical associations, whose interpretation depends on contextual inference. Thus, equivalence allows the translator to preserve the original euphemistic expression through cross-cultural transferability.

Notably, modulation is more frequently used when translating sex-related euphemisms formed through euphemisms with Chinese characteristics. This could be because these expressions are deeply embedded in Chinese Confucian sexual culture. Thus the translator often acts as a cultural mediator, adjusting their meanings and perspectives to bring them more in line with Western sexual culture. By contrast, literal translation is more commonly adopted in euphemisms formed through widening, as these expressions are semantically vague and easily comprehensible across cultures. Therefore, the translator can directly convey them without cultural adaptation. This suggests that when the semantic

meaning of a sex-related euphemism is general, literal translation becomes the most effective strategy. However, the use of the transposition strategy shows a more balanced distribution among different formation mechanisms. The next subsection illustrates how these translation strategies are employed in translating sex-related euphemisms.

Notably, the following examples contain explicit language related to sexuality and are presented for analytical purposes only.

Literal Translation. The following examples show the application of literal translation in sex-related euphemisms formed through widening.

Example 1

ST	大姐猖狂地喊叫着,“我跟司马库睡过觉了,我就是她们的娘!” (Mo, 1995, p. 180)
TT	She shouted like a madwoman, “Kill me! I slept with Sima Ku, and I am their mother!” (Mo, 2012, p. 312)

In Example 1, 睡过觉 (Shuì-guò-jiào, “slept with”) is identified as a typical sex-related euphemism through widening, in which a general expression for a daily activity is semantically extended to euphemistically allude to intimate relations. The underlying reason may be that both behaviors take place in bed, leading to a natural association. In the English translation, the phrase is rendered literally as “slept with.” The use of literal translation here is both accurate and culturally appropriate. Since English and Chinese share similar metaphorical extensions in using “sleep” to denote intimate relations, a literal rendering allows the translator to preserve the euphemistic connotation of the ST. Thus, literal translation effectively conveys the meaning and pragmatic function of the original euphemism without losing cultural nuance.

Example 2

ST	法定丈夫, 丈夫, 你也配提这两个字? 你履行过丈夫的义务吗? (Mo, 1995, p. 583)
TT	Husband. Do you think you’re worthy of the term? Have you fulfilled your husbandly duties? (Mo, 2012, p. 543)

In the same vein, Example 2 is also identified as widening. Wang Yinzhi questions Jin Tong about whether he has fulfilled his duties as a husband, indirectly implying Jin Tong’s deficiency in marital intimacy. 你履行过丈夫的义务吗? (Nǐ-lǚ-xíng-guò-zhàng-fū-de-yì-wù-ma, “Have you fulfilled your husbandly duties?”) extends the general concept of marital responsibility to implicitly refer to sexual obligations within marriage. Rather than referring directly to such matters, this expression uses a socially acceptable phrase to maintain decency while conveying sexual

Table 8. Distribution of Translation Strategies Based on Formation Mechanisms.

Formation mechanism	Literal translation	Transposition	Equivalence	Modulation
Implication	5	4	9	2
Widening	11	4	8	7
Metaphor	4	3	11	3
Euphemisms with Chinese characteristics			3	5
Omission	2			1
Borrowing	1		1	

deficiency. In the English translation, literal translation is employed to render it as “have you fulfilled your husbandly duties,” effectively preserving the euphemistic reference to sexual intercourse through a comparable semantic extension in English. Through literal translation, the indirectness of the ST and cultural intelligibility for the English readers have been maintained.

Transposition. Example 3 illustrates the use of transposition.

Example 3

ST	母亲说: “大膘子, 我是来给你送肉的.” (Mo, 1995, p. 637)
LT	Mother said, “Dabiao, I come to send you some meat. ”
TT	“Dabiao, I’ve brought some meat for you this time.” (Mo, 2012, p. 85)

In Example 3, 送肉的 (Sòng-ròu-de, “send some meat”) is a sex-related metaphor for “having sexual relations.” It draws from a similar Chinese expression 卖肉 (Mài-ròu, “to sell meat”), which refers to sexual intercourse in exchange for money. In these expressions, a woman’s body is compared to “meat,” implying disrespect toward women. In the English translation, it is rendered as “brought some meat for you.” This uses the transposition strategy by changing the word class, from a declarative sentence with a verb-object pattern to a prepositional ditransitive verb structure. This transformation retains the original metaphor without affecting the reader’s comprehension. Additionally, it accurately expresses the heroine’s contempt for her body and disappointment with society for regarding her as a tool for delivering a son.

Equivalence. The following three examples illustrate the application of equivalence in sex-related euphemisms formed through metaphor and implication.

Example 4

ST	每天夜里, 他都像是一个不知疲倦的农夫, 耕耘着老金肥沃的土地. (Mo, 1995, p. 518)
LT	Every night, he is like a tireless farmer, cultivating Laojin’s fertile soil.
TT	Every night, like a farmer who never tires, he cultivated Old Jin’s fertile soil. (Mo, 2012, p. 503)

Example 4 is a sex-related euphemism generated through metaphor. In this metaphor, intimate relations are implicitly associated with agricultural activity: the man is figuratively portrayed as a farmer, while the woman is compared to fertile land, evoking the image of a farmer plowing a field. This type of sex-related metaphor reflects the Chinese agrarian civilization, connecting human reproduction to agricultural productivity. The equivalence strategy is employed in the English translation. Although the structure of the sentence is altered by delaying the subject and using a relative clause to describe the farmer’s tirelessness, the sex-related metaphor is preserved. This choice demonstrates cultural sensitivity, as retaining the Chinese agricultural metaphor highlights the connection between sexuality, fertility, and sexual culture while ensuring that English readers can grasp the implicit sexual meaning.

Example 5

ST	你这样的香喷喷的童子鸡, 瘸胳膊最喜欢, 她是老牛牙不好, 专拣嫩草啃呢! (Mo, 1995, p. 445)
LT	The fragrant spring chicken like you, is the favorite of lame arm. She is the old cow with bad teeth, so only picks tender grass to chew!
TT	You’re the most likely one, a fragrant baby rooster, just the type favored by our armless leader. An old cow like her, with bad teeth, has to graze on tender grass! (Mo, 2012, p. 438)

In the same vein, Example 5 illustrates the use of equivalence in translating sex-related metaphor. This expression deploys a Chinese proverb 老牛吃嫩草 (Lǎo-niú-chī-nèn-cǎo, “old cows eat tender grass”) to describe couples with large age gaps. Specifically, 老牛 (Lǎo-niú, “old cow”) refers to old Jin and 嫩草 (Nèn-cǎo, “tender grass”) to Jintong.

In the TT, the translator renders the proverb as “An old cow like her, with bad teeth, has to graze on tender grass.” Although the wording differs from the original syntactic structure, the metaphorical imagery is largely preserved. Through the strategy of equivalence, the translation reproduces a comparable figurative meaning in the target language, allowing readers to grasp the humorous and ironic implication conveyed in the ST.

By retaining the metaphor, the TT maintains the expressive force of the original proverb while ensuring that the figurative meaning remains accessible to English readers. This approach enables the translation to convey the cultural

nuance embedded in the metaphor without substantially altering its rhetorical effect.

Example 6

ST	一盏白油大蜡烛流着浊泪， 烛光晃晃，肉影翩翩 。(Mo, 1995, p. 182)
LT	A large white oil candle flowed with oil tears, with the light flickering, and the flesh shadows fluttering .
TT	A large white candle, wax dripping down its sides, shone brightly and sent fleshy shadows dancing on the walls .(Mo, 2012, p. 218)

Example 6 is a sex-related euphemism generated through implication, which describes sexuality indirectly through the environment. The flickering candlelight and fleshy shadows imply bodily movement and intimacy, creating an elegant atmosphere of sexuality. In the English translation, the equivalence strategy is used to reproduce the original meaning, but the sentence structure changes. Specifically, the reduplicated phrase 肉影翩翩 (Ròu-yǐng-piān-piān, “fleshy shadows fluttering”) is rendered as “fleshy shadows dancing on the wall.” A possible reason could be that imagery related to light and shadow carries similar sensual connotations in English, allowing the translator to preserve the indirect sexual implication. Therefore, equivalence not only reproduces the semantic meaning of the original sex-related euphemism but also conveys its subtle emotional and esthetic nuances.

Modulation. Modulation usually involves changes of information or perspectives. Therefore, to answer RQ3, that is how do translation strategies reflect differences in the sexual cultures of China and the West, the employment of modulation strategy is mainly used. The following three examples illustrate how modulation functions as a strategy to reflects shifts in underlying sexual culture from China to the West.

Example 7

ST	而这个黑脸男人，最终 钻进了她的被窝 。(Mo, 1995, p. 29)
LT	And this black-faced man finally drilled into her bed .
TT	she was already sharing her bed with the dark-faced man. (Mo, 2012, p. 38)

As Example 7 shows, 钻进了她的被窝 (Zuān-jìn-le-tā-de-bèi-wō, “drilled into her bed”) is identified as a sex-related euphemism through implication. The subject 黑脸男人 (Hēi-liǎn-nán-rén, “dark-faced man”) is replaced by “she” in the TT. This change in subject transforms the initiator of the intimate relations from male to female, altering the woman’s status from passive to active in the situation. Through modulation, the translation transforms the gender inequality into a more equal relationship. This adaptation reflects a shift from the traditional Chinese sexuality, where women are positioned as

passive, to Western sexuality, which emphasizes relative gender equality and women’s sexual autonomy.

Example 8

ST	这对金镯子，是 为我破瓜 的熊老太爷送的。 (Mo, 1995, p. 471)
LT	This pair of gold bracelets was given to me by the old man Xiong who broke my melon . . .
TT	This pair of gold bracelets was a gift from Old Master Xiong, who took my maidenhead . (Mo, 2012, p. 462)

In Example 8, 破瓜 (Pò-guā, “break the melon”) is a sex-related euphemism with Chinese characteristics, referring to a woman’s loss of virginity. Originally, the character *Gua* 瓜 [melon] visually resembled two 八 (Bā, “number eight”) combined. Hence, it symbolically represents a girl reaching sexual maturity at 16 years and was later extended to signify a woman’s first sexual experience. As a euphemistic expression, it reflects the conservative attitudes toward female chastity in Chinese Confucianism.

In the English translation, a literal rendering such as “break my melon” would likely be obscure to English readers unfamiliar with the cultural conventions embedded in the expression. Thus, the modulation strategy is adopted, translating it into “took my maidenhead,” shifting the original euphemistic expression into a more explicit and comprehensible one. Notably, this shift reflects the translator’s cultural sensitivity to differing sexual cultures between Chinese and Western societies. Compared with conservative Chinese Confucian attitudes reflected in the ST, the TT adopts a more direct expression that aligns with the comparatively open sexual culture of the West.

Example 9

ST	斜眼花跟在村里驻过的每支部队的每个财粮副官都有过 皮肉之情 。(Mo, 1995, p. 223)
LT	Little Gross-eyes had skin-and-flesh love with every adjutant in charge of treasure and grain in every army stationed in the village.
TT	Little Gross-eyes had relations with the quartermaster of every military unit that had ever bivouacked in the village. (Mo, 2012, p. 257)

In Example 9, the phrase 皮肉 (Pí-ròu, “skin-and-flesh”) can be traced to the novel *Jin Ping Mei*, where it commonly refers to physical contact. Thus, 皮肉之情 (Pí-ròu-zhī-qíng, “skin-and-flesh love”) serves as a euphemism for intimate physical relationship, sometimes carrying a slightly critical connotation that implies the relationship remains at a physical level and lacks emotional connection. In this context, it refers to Xie Yanhua’s sexual relationships with different men. In the English translation, it is rendered as “had relations with,” which more explicitly denotes a sexual

relationship. The possible reason lies in the relatively liberal sexual attitudes of Western culture. Consequently, the conservative sexual values reflected in the ST are replaced by a more liberal cultural perspective in the translation.

The findings related to modulation suggest that differences in sexual values are mainly reflected in three aspects: gender roles, attitudes toward chastity and attitudes toward sexuality. Compared with the ST, the TT tends to adopt more active gender roles, downplay attitudes toward chastity, and employ more explicit expressions in line with more open sexual values. These patterns jointly answer RQ3 by demonstrating how translation mediates sexual values across cultures rather than merely transferring linguistic forms.

The translation strategies for sex-related euphemisms echoes with previous studies in which equivalence was the most commonly adopted strategy (Yusuf & Ardi, 2024). Besides, the Goldblatt also frequently uses literal translation to effectively convey the euphemistic meanings and cultural connotations. This aligns with Al-Barakati (2013), Althawabeyeh (2017) and J. Yang (2020). Notably, the modulation strategy is also frequently used, in line with the findings of Albarakati (2020). Overall, most of sex-related euphemisms are maintained through translation strategies such as literal translation, transposition and equivalence. This findings are in line with studies from Lee and Ngai (2012) and Feng and Zhao (2020), which stated sex-related contents are maintained through translation.

Regarding the relations between the formation mechanisms and translation strategies for sex-related euphemism, this study finds that the translator prefers to use literal translation to deal with euphemisms generated through widening. This is inconsistent with the Feng and Xu's (2019), who found that modulation is more frequently used. This inconsistency suggests that Goldblatt tends to be more faithful to the ST, attempting to reproduce the euphemisms generated through widening to preserve their implications and enable readers to better appreciate the cultural nuances. Additionally, equivalence is commonly used in dealing with sex-related metaphor. This aligns with Feng and Xu (2021), who demonstrated the successful transmission of cultural connotations through the translation of sex-related metaphors. Notably, a new finding in this research is that modulation is frequently used in sex-related euphemisms with Chinese characteristics, which has not been examined in previous studies. This may be attributed to cultural differences in sexual values between China and the West. To align with more liberal Western attitudes, the adoption of the modulation strategy tends to make these euphemisms into more explicit expressions.

Conclusion

This study investigates the formation mechanisms and translation strategies of Chinese sex-related euphemisms in *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* from both linguistic and translational

perspectives. First, by identifying six formation mechanisms and expanding the category of sex-related euphemisms with Chinese characteristics, the study enriches existing frameworks for euphemism research and highlights the cultural specificity of euphemism in the Chinese context. Second, by examining the distribution of translation strategies and their relationship with formation mechanisms, the study reveals systematic patterns in the translation of sex-related euphemisms rather than arbitrary choices. Third, by focusing on modulation as a culturally motivated strategy, the study demonstrates how translation mediates sexual values between Chinese and Western cultures, contributing to the existing research on the translation of sex-related content between Chinese and English.

The findings challenge the assumption that translators tend to omit or tone down sexual content. Instead, the results show that most sex-related euphemisms are preserved through strategies such as literal translation, transposition, and equivalence. At the same time, modulation is frequently employed to adjust differences of gender roles, and attitudes toward chastity and sexuality in order to align the target text with more liberal Western sexual values. These findings suggest that translation does not merely transfer linguistic forms but actively negotiates cultural values embedded in sexuality.

Beyond theoretical contributions, this study offers practical implications for translation research and practice. For researchers, the relationship between euphemism formation mechanisms and translation strategy provides a systematic framework for analyzing sex-related language across cultures. For translators, understanding these relationships can lead to more principled decision-making when dealing with sex-related euphemisms. Specifically, the frequent use of modulation in translating euphemisms with Chinese characteristics indicates that when euphemisms are deeply rooted in culture conventions, translators may need to adopt the role of cultural mediators rather than rely on formal equivalence.

Nevertheless, this study is not without limitations. Focusing on a novel, the findings might not be broadly generalizable. Regarding research methods, this study adopts a qualitative method, without adding quantitative methods such as corpus. Additionally, this study uses content analysis instead of readers' reception of the target text, thus limiting the external validation of the translation's effectiveness. Further research could investigate readers' reception through surveys or interviews. Future research could also extend to euphemism in other topics, such as death, politics, and crime. Additionally, given the temporal nature of euphemisms, research on sex-related euphemisms may expand to modern contexts such as audiovisual texts, contemporary literary works, and online discourse including social media. Finally, it would be worthwhile to explore the factors influencing the translation of sex-related euphemisms, such as the translator's voice, and readers' reception.

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Ethical Considerations

This article does not involved with any human or animal studies. Therefore, there is no ethical clearance to be made.

Author Contributions

He Zhu completed the preliminary research design, and drafted the manuscript. Muhammad Alif Redzuan Abdullah determined the research framework and offer suggestions on the research design. Syed Nurulakla Syed Abdullah adjusted the framework of the results presentation. Mingcheng Huan offered assistance the process of data collection and analysis.

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The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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Appendix I. Comprehensive Item Classification Table.

ID	Location	ST	TT	Formation mechanism	Translation strategy
1	Chapter 1 p.29	而这个黑脸男人,最终钻进了她的被窝	she was already sharing her bed with the dark-faced man.	Implication	Modulation
2	Chapter 1 p.32	包种包收,一包到底	doing the sowing and the harvesting	Metaphor	Literal translation
3	Chapter 2 p.82	乌枪队员们都足了。他们把母亲和我们姐弟俩扔到大街上	Satisfied, the soldiers tossed Mother, Eighth Sister, and me out into the street	Widening	Transposition
4	Chapter 2 p.90	你癞蛤蟆想吃天鹅肉,	like the toad who wants to feast on a swan, you can just dream on	Metaphor	Literal translation
5	Chapter 2 p.109	我跟你是一个爹下的种	You and I are from the same father's seed	Metaphor	Transposition
6	Chapter 2 p.162	上官领弟发出猫一样的叫声,哑巴的大影子在灯光里晃动着	Lingdi screamed like a cat, and the mute's hulking silhouette flickered in the lamplight.	Implication	Transposition
7	Chapter 2 p.162	她与他已经完婚。	They had been married.	Widening	Literal translation
8	Chapter 2 p.182	一盏白油大蜡烛流着浊泪,她光晃晃,肉影翩翩。	a large white candle, wax dripping down its sides, shone brightly and sent fleshy shadows dancing on the walls.	Implication	Equivalence
9	Chapter 2 p.182	青砖的地面上凌乱地扔着上官盼弟和蒋政委的灰布军装,一只粗布袜子搭在杏黄色的马桶边沿上。	Scattered on the stone floor were Shangguan Pandi and Commissar Jiang's clothes; a coarse wool sock was lying alongside the apricot yellow toilet.	Implication	Equivalence
10	Chapter 2 p.182	上官盼弟赤身裸体地趴在黑瘦的蒋立人身上。	Pandi, naked as the day she was born, was sprawled atop the dark, gaunt body of Jiang Liren.	Implication	Equivalence
11	Chapter 3 p.206	他把六姐盖住了。	Babbitt, the American demon Babbitt has covered up Sixth Sister.	Implication	Literal translation
12	Chapter 5 p.449	两个人滚在一起,像在水里一样,像狗黄鳝窝一样。	The two of them gyrated together, as if submerged in water, as if clearing out a hollow filled with eels.	Metaphor	Transposition
13	Chapter 5 p.489	几十年后,当我有缘伏在她的一丝不挂的身体上时	Decades later, when I finally had the chance to lie atop her naked body	Implication	Literal translation
14	Chapter 3 p.258	上官来弟似乎有些羞涩,三天前那个漆黑夜晚里的纵情狂欢她肯定不会忘记,这幸福的羞涩便是明证。	Blushing shyly, Laidi had obviously not forgotten her mad passion of three days before; the shy look on her face proved that.	Widening	Modulation
15	Chapter 3 p.258	你是金钢钻,他是朽木头	You're a diamond, he's a piece of rotten wood.	Metaphor	Literal translation
16	Chapter 3 p.263	所谓亲戚,都建立在男人和女人睡觉的关系上。	But being relatives like that can only come from sleeping with certain women.	Widening	Transposition
17	Chapter 3 p.274	把俺老婆霸占	he had his way with her.	Euphemism with Chinese characteristics	Modulation
18	Chapter 3 p.280	如果人们知道了她和司马库的一夜风流。	if people had known about her one-night stand with Sima Ku.	Borrowing	Equivalence
19	Chapter 3 p.280	我跟司马库睡过宽了	I slept with Sima Ku	Widening	Literal translation
20	Chapter 3 p.280	大姐赤膊与哑巴叫劲。	she stripped to the waist and engaged the mute in a battle of wills.	Widening	Transposition
21	Chapter 3 p.280	哑巴跪在大姐面前,双手搂着她的屁股,他的大头,伏在她的肚皮上。	he knelt at First Sister's feet and wrapped his arms around her waist. His big head rested against her belly.	Implication	Transposition
22	Chapter 3 p.281	但大姐的下半身已与哑巴的身体联结在一起。	the lower half of First Sister's body had already merged with the mute.	Widening	Literal translation
23	Chapter 4 p.339	是司马库用过的女人	had been exploited by Sima Ku	Metaphor	Modulation
24	Chapter 4 p.379	崔凤仙兴奋地扭动着,手中的竹篮落地,篮中的红皮熟鸡蛋在青砖铺就的地面上滚动。司马库抱起崔凤仙,把她安放在四独棺材那宽广的棺材上。.....	She writhed passionately and let her basket fall to the ground, sending brown eggs rolling around on the brick floor. Sima Ku picked her up and laid her on top of the broad crypt cover. . . . I know that any woman who gets tangled up with you is in for a bad time.	Omission	Literal translation
25	Chapter 4 p.379	跟了你的女人,都不会有好下场。	I know that any woman who gets tangled up with you is in for a bad time.	Euphemism with Chinese characteristics	Modulation
26	Chapter 4 p.388	我这辈子日了那么多女人,只可惜至今还没日过一个女共党。	I've screwed a lot of women in my life, and my only regret is that I've never screwed a Communist.	Euphemism with Chinese characteristics	Equivalence
27	Chapter 5 p.424	她跟哑巴的一些风流事	all about some romantic dealings with the mute	Euphemism with Chinese characteristics	Equivalence
28	Chapter 5 p.426	她知道,那件最让她担心的事情,在这只痴情小鸟的鸣叫中,已经悄悄地拉开了帷幕。	she knew that the bird's passionate cries were raising the curtain on the one thing she'd worried about.	Implication	Transposition

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Appendix I. (continued)

ID	Location	ST	TT	Formation mechanism	Translation strategy
29	Chapter 5 p.427	在他们一阵接着一阵的狂叫声中,母亲仓惶地关上了大门,并在院子里敲打着一只破得不能再破的铁锅,借以掩盖他们的叫声。	In order to block out their cries of passion, Mother slammed shut the door and began beating a badly worn pot out in the yard.	Implication	Modulation
30	Chapter 5 p.428	母亲巴望着来弟和鸟儿韩的造爱尽快结束。	Mother waited impatiently for Birdman and Laidi to finish their lovemaking.	Borrowing	Literal translation
31	Chapter 5 p.428	鸟儿韩使她得到全面的满足。	Birdman Han offered total satisfaction.	Widening	Literal translation
32	Chapter 5 p.428	所以与她/鸟儿韩的每次欢爱都始终热泪盈眶、泣不成声,没有丝毫的淫荡,充满人生的庄严和悲怆。	And so, every coupling was accompanied by hot tears and sobs, with no hint of lewdness, filled with human dignity and tragedy.	Widening	Modulation
33	Chapter 5 p.429	就在他来回踱进的时候,上官来弟和鸟儿韩,也在地上和炕上,不断地跃进着。	And while he was engaged in his great leap forward, Laidi and Birdman Han would be performing their own great leap forward on the ground or in bed.	Metaphor	Equivalence
34	Chapter 5 p.430	更令他惊异的,是从东厢房里发出的上官来弟的半是痛苦半是幸福的呻吟声	But what utterly shocked him were the moans of pain and pleasure from Laidi's room.	Implication	Equivalence
35	Chapter 5 p.431	鸟儿韩的屁股不停地耸动着,在他的前边,上官来弟高高地翘着臀部,她的双乳在胸前悬垂着,晃荡着,她的被散乱的黑发缠绕着的头颅在鸟儿韩的枕头上滚动着,她的手轻掌地抓着褥子,那些强烈地刺激着他的神经的呻吟声,从散乱的黑发中甩出来,甩出来。	Birdman's buttocks were pumping up and down; beneath him, Laidi's buttocks arched upward. Her breasts sagged and jiggled; her tousled black hair shifted on Birdman Han's pillow, and she was clutching the bed sheet. The intense moans that had so aroused him were coming from the mass of black hair.	Implication	Literal translation
36	Chapter 5 p.445	每到夜深人静时,也许就有一个绿油油的漂亮小伙子,钻到龙场长的被窝里!	Maybe a handsome green visitor comes to her bed late at night, when everything's quiet.	Implication	Equivalence
37	Chapter 5 p.445	她是老牛牙不好,专拣嫩草啃呢	An old cow like her, with bad teeth, has to graze on tender grass!	Metaphor	Equivalence
38	Chapter 5 p.450	龙场长不分昼夜地、交替使用着软硬两种手段,试图把上官金童变成男人,	Commander Long did everything possible, from encouragement to threats, day or night, to make a man out of Jintong.	Implication	Transposition
39	Chapter 5 p.451	满足了她的愿望。	granted her final wish.	Widening	Literal translation
40	Chapter 5 p.451	他精疲力尽地离开她的身体后。	he climbed off her, utterly spent.	Implication	Equivalence
41	Chapter 5 p.452	与她的尚未完全死去的身体交合。	the two of them were seen slipping out in the dark into some tall grass.	Widening	Equivalence
42	Chapter 5 p.458	霍丽娜跟着张麻子钻到草垛后。	the two of them were seen slipping out in the dark into some tall grass.	Implication	Literal translation
43	Chapter 5 p.458	他坚决地不相信出身于名门贵族、留学过俄罗斯的霍丽娜会为了一勺菜汤委身给猥琐不堪入目的张麻子。	he refused to believe that someone from a good family who had gone to school in Russia would give herself to anyone as ugly and as coarse as Pockface Zhang for a little extra soup.	Widening	Modulation
44	Chapter 5 p.460	乔其莎是他最后进攻的堡垒。	Qiao Qisha was the last stronghold he breached.	Metaphor	Equivalence
45	Chapter 5 p.460	所以任凭张麻子发疯一样地冲撞着她的臀部,她的身前也不由地随着抖动,但她吞咽慢头的行为一直在最紧张地进行着。	And so, while Pockface Zhang was madly pumping from behind, making her body rock, she never stopped attacking her food.	Implication	Equivalence
46	Chapter 5 p.471	我和一万个男人睡过觉。	I've slept with ten thousand men and earned a great deal of money.	Widening	Literal translation
47	Chapter 5 p.471	这对金镯子,是为我破瓜的熊老太爷送的.	this pair of gold bracelets was a gift from Old Master Xiong, who took my maidenhead.	Euphemism with Chinese characteristics	Modulation
48	Chapter 6 p.492	谁要再往前挤,破坏秩序,我就把谁的娘——明白吗?	If I catch anyone pushing and shoving, disrupting this line, well, I'll take his mother and . . . understand?	Omission	Literal translation
49	Chapter 6 p.505	这是我自己愿意的,也是我终生渴望的。	I wanted to do it, aunty. It's something I've wanted to do all my life.	Implication	Literal translation
50	Chapter 6 p.507	跟他去睡觉。	she can sleep with him.	Widening	Literal translation
51	Chapter 6 p.508	就让我老金的炕头上,永远都给他留着一个枕头。	There will always be a pillow for you on Old Jin's bed.	Implication	Equivalence
52	Chapter 6 p.511	俺这一身白肉,在文火上炖了三十年了,熟得透透的了,你怎么吃就怎么吃吧。	All that's important is the fact that this body of mine has simmered for thirty years, until it's cooked through and through. Now it's up to you to feast on it any way you want.	Metaphor	Equivalence
53	Chapter 6 p.512	那些头头脑脑、体体面面的人物,一大半上过我的炕。	I'll tell you straight out that at least half of those clever, fancy men out there have visited my bed.	Widening	Equivalence

(continued)

Appendix I. (continued)

ID	Location	ST	TT	Formation mechanism	Translation strategy
54	Chapter 6 p.512	除了跟那死尸有过那么一次。	you've only been with a woman once, and that was a corpse.	Widening	Equivalence
55	Chapter 6 p.512	老金这辈子, 练的就是这一手。	that there's at least one thing I'm good at.	Widening	Equivalence
56	Chapter 6 p.512	心急吃不得热豆腐。	You can't eat steaming bean curd if you hurry it.	Metaphor	Equivalence
57	Chapter 6 p.514	你跟那个女人的事。	The incident with that woman.	Widening	Equivalence
58	Chapter 6 p.515	老牛吃嫩草。	you're an old cow feasting on tender new grass!	Metaphor	Equivalence
59	Chapter 6 p.515	当心我把你们那点下货给抖搂出来。	I'll make sure people find out about all your sneaking around.	Widening	Equivalence
60	Chapter 6 p.517	她刚刚想摆一个发情母兽的姿势, 但没等她把臀部翘起来, 上官金童就像老虎捕食一样把她按在炕前的地毯上。	She was about to bend over like an animal in heat, but Jintong, too filled with desire to wait, threw her down on the rug like a tiger pouncing on its prey, and took her then and there.	Implication	Modulation
61	Chapter 6 p.518	每天夜里, 他都像一不知疲倦的农夫, 耕耘着老金肥沃的土地。	Every night, like a farmer who never tires, he cultivated Old Jin's fertile soil.	Metaphor	Equivalence
62	Chapter 6 p.520	这样你能行吗? 你不行, 我知道。	Can you do it like this?" she said. "No, you can't, I know that.	Widening	Literal translation
63	Chapter 6 p.543	他想起与独乳老金纵情狂欢的那些日子。	Thinking back to the days of passion spent with Old Jin.	Widening	Equivalence
64	Chapter 6 p.559	有苦咱俩同当, 有福咱俩共享。	Whatever comes, good or bad, we share and share alike.	Widening	Equivalence
65	Chapter 6 p.583	法定丈夫, 丈夫, 你也配提这两个字? 你履行过丈夫的义务吗? 你行吗?	Husband. Do you think you're worthy of the term? Have you fulfilled your husbandly duties? Are you really up to it?	Widening	Literal translation
66	Chapter 6 p.590	我们连一日夫妻也没有。	We haven't had our oneday of married life.	Widening	Literal translation
67	Chapter 6 p.590	那次就算是了。	That should count.	Widening	Literal translation
68	Chapter 3 p.224	我日你娘的闺女。	Fuck your mother's daughter!	Euphemism with Chinese characteristics	Equivalence
69	Chapter 3 p.223	斜眼花跟在村里驻过的每支部队的每个财粮副官都有过皮肉之情。	Little Gross-eyes had had relations with the quartermaster of every military unit that had ever bivouacked in the village.	Euphemism with Chinese characteristics	Modulation
70	Chapter 5 p.424	乔其莎的日记里详细记载了上官金童与龙青萍的风流事。	In it she recorded in detail the illicit relationship between Shangguan Jintong and Long Qingping.	Euphemism with Chinese characteristics	Modulation
71	Chapter 7 p.624	就在这天夜里, 于大巴掌上上瞭儿的炕。	That night, Big Paw Yu visited Xuan'er's bed.	Widening	Transposition
72	Chapter 7 p.626	自从和于大巴掌有事之后, 她感到无脸再见姑姑啦。	In the wake of her intimacy with Big Paw Yu, she did not know how she could face her aunt again.	Widening	Modulation
73	Chapter 7 p.628	母亲顺从地接受了这个高大男人。	Mother gave herself to the man without a struggle, feeling neither pain nor joy.	Widening	Modulation
74	Chapter 7 p.639	母亲说: “大膘子, 我看你可怜, 才闭着眼睛俯就你几次, 你别得寸进尺。”	"Dabiao," Mother said, "I felt sorry for you, and that is why I closed my eyes and let you have your way a time or two. That is as far as it goes."	Widening	Modulation
75	Chapter 7 p.621	上官寿喜折腾她, 她逆来顺受。	When Shouxi wanted to have his way with her, she submitted weakly.	Widening	Modulation
76	Chapter 7 p.625	也是于大巴掌的种。	also came from Big Paw Yu's seed.	Metaphor	Literal translation
77	Chapter 7 p.626	她想, 该寻觅个好男人借种。	so she began the search for a better donor.	Metaphor	Equivalence
78	Chapter 7 p.633	我要偷人借种, 反倒成了正人君子。	So what must I do to gain their respect? Get pregnant by other men.	Metaphor	Modulation
79	Chapter 7 p.633	我这船, 迟早要翻, 不是翻在张家沟里, 就是翻在李家河里。	my boat is going to capsize, if not here, then somewhere else.	Metaphor	Equivalence
80	Chapter 7 p.633	肥水不流外人田。	Do not fertilize other people's fields.	Metaphor	Equivalence
81	Chapter 7 p.637	大膘子, 我是来给你送肉的。	No, Dabiao, I've brought some meat for you this time.	Metaphor	Transposition
82	Chapter 7 p.638	沙口村的高大膘子在母亲身上尝到了滋味, 便盯上了母亲。	As for Gao Dabiao, the dog butcher at Sandy Mouth Village, his brief affair with Mother had whetted his appetite.	Metaphor	Modulation
83	Chapter 7 p.619	种子不好, 地再肥也没用。	If the seed's no good, fertile soil is wasted.	Metaphor	Equivalence
84	Chapter 3 p.224	你这个卖×的破鞋。	Fuck you, you cross-eyed little whore!	Omission	Modulation