



## Big Data Analysis on Features of Wang Jinhua's Chinese Translation of Emily Dickinson's Poetry

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**Abstract**

The American poetess, Emily Dickinson, whose poems have entered textbooks of Chinese university, primary and middle schools for many years, has become a well-known foreign poet for Chinese public. It is through Chinese translation that most Chinese readers come into contact with Dickinson's poems, yet study on Chinese translation of Dickinson's poetry which will help reveal characteristics of Chinese translation and thus contribute to the development of Dickinson studies and facilitate popularity of Emily Dickinson in China, is obviously insufficient at present. Based on text data of 243 translated poems in Wang Jinhua's collection of Chinese translation, *Selected Dickinson's Poems*, and their original poems, programming approach is adopted to make statistics of vocabulary, part of speech, stanza and line, and punctuation of the original and the translated texts, and translation features of Wang's translation is revealed by contrastive analysis. It is found that vocabulary in Wang's translation is less abundant than the original. Weights of nouns plus verbs in translation and the original text are close, accounting for about 45% respectively, but nouns performance in original text is more prominent, while verbs performance in translation is more significant. There are many additions of verbs in translation, while there are not much changes to original nouns, and sometimes new nouns are added as subjects of clauses, all of which making the translation smooth and easy to understand without lacking of gracefulness. There is little difference in the number of stanzas and verse lines between the original and Wang's translation. Original dashes and commas have been changed a lot, either by omission or conversion, yet periods undergo little changes. Translation of exclamation marks and question marks is with high faithfulness to the original.

### 1.1.INTRODUCTION

Translation is not only reproduction of original form and content in target language, but also reflects certain preferences and characteristics of translator. As translation theorist Lawrence Venuti said, it is impossible for translator to be invisible in translation (Venuti, 2004), translator's subjectivity will inevitably be reflected in translation, no matter what translation method is used, such as domesticating method or foreignizing method (Lefevere, 1977); The

social, historical and cultural traditions in which translator is situated, as well as translator's own social identity and status, will greatly affect translator's subjectivity characteristics, thereby affecting the characteristics of translation. At the same time, the translation also inevitably has the characteristics of intertextuality, that is, the translation not only reflects translator's personal subjectivity (including translator's personal aesthetic preferences), but also reflects traces of influences imposed upon translator by others, or to use a term from Hermeneutics, it is influenced by translator's "fore-understanding" (Vorverständnis) (Gadamer, 2004), and thus is intertextual. Translator's fore-understanding comes from translator's comprehension of all relevant readings before translation work begins, including the reading of original author and other authors as well as relevant history, culture, etc.

In addition, due to inherent differences between source language and target language, the translated text and the original work will be different in terms of language expression on vocabulary, syntax, phonetics, etc., as well as the meanings expressed including semantic similarities and differences, semantic scope and depth, etc., so the translation is hardly be a perfect reproduction of the original. The translation is a complex work, a subtle synthesis. Although it is apparently manifested as the translation of the original work, it also implicitly contains elements from other sources. Just as Ana Luisa Amaral, a Portuguese translator of Emily Dickinson's poems, pointed out, "translation allows for the confluence of several voices" (Amaral, 2019), and therefore, a comprehensive evaluation of a translation becomes almost impossible, and it is more common for evaluators to evaluate translation form one or several aspects according to relevant standards. The ideal situation is to have an understanding of translator's social identity and role, academic level and expertise, translation purpose and principles, aesthetic preferences, etc., as well as relevant characteristics of the original author and his work before evaluation.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

The legendary American poetess Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) was one of the pioneers of American modernist poetry. In the 1980s, she was acknowledged as one of the Western classical writers (Zhou, 2013), and "Except for Shakespeare, Dickinson manifests more cognitive originality than any other Western poet since Dante." (Bloom, 1994). She began to abstain from social interaction nearly at the age of 30, and devoted herself to writing poems for decades in solitude. She left more than 1,700 poems and only published 10 poems during her lifetime (Li Hui 2019). Dickinson's poetry "is notable for its peculiar agrammaticality: unexpected plurals, inverted syntax, and an often complete disregard for gender, person, or

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agreement between nouns and verbs.”(Amaral, 2019), the result is a compact, cryptic language full of ellipses, and thus Emily Dickinson is called by Ana Luisa Amaral, a Portuguese translator of Dickinson’s poems, as “Ms. Difficult”(Amaral, 2019).

It was only a few decades after her death that she began to become famous, and until today, academic research has never stopped on various aspects of her, such as research on Dickinson’s poetry rhetorical devices (Miu, 2003), ecofeminist characteristics (Li, 2019), religious beliefs (Sun, 2016) and so on.

Her poems have also been translated into various languages, including Chinese, and so far there have been more than 10 Chinese translations of her poems (Zhou, 2011b). Dickinson research has not only become a prominent study in Chinese academic circles(Jiang&Wu,2010), its Chinese translations have also been included in textbooks of Chinese universities, primary and secondary schools, and has a large number of readers and a huge impact (Zhou, 2012). However, studies on Dickinson's Chinese translation are relatively rare, and even if there have been some discussions from the perspective of translation, they are mostly subjective and impressionistic, with insufficient objective evidences (He, 2004; Liu, 2010; Peng, 2014, 2015; Shen, 2021; Wang, 2014; Xu, 2012; Zeng, 2013; Zhou, 2011b), only the author of this paper has recently conducted some statistical-based evaluations of Chinese translation of Dickinson’s poetry (Zhou, 2020; 2021a; 2021b; 2022a; 2022b). There is no doubt that evaluation based on data statistics is one of the important approaches to evaluate translation. However, at present, many Chinese translations of Dickinson’s poetry still lack sufficient analysis and evaluation based on data statistics, which cannot but be said to be a pity.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

This study tries to reveal the answer to this question: What are the features of Wang Jinhua's Chinese translation, Selected Dickinson’s Poems? The altogether 243 Chinese translations of Dickinson's poems included in Selected Dickinson’s Poems(Wang, 2010) are selected as research object. Data statistics and comparison of the 243 original and translated texts are conducted to find how Wang Jinhua's translation (hereinafter referred to as Wang's translation) reproduces the original vocabulary, part of speech, stanzas and lines, and punctuation, and thus the features of Wang’s translation is summarized. Punctuation considered in this paper include dashes, commas, periods, exclamation marks, and question marks, while part of speech here includes nouns and verbs.

The translator Wang Jinhua (1950-) is a professor of North Central University, China. His *Selected Dickinson's Poems*, since its publication in 2010 by Beiyue Literature&Art Publishing House, has exerted constant impact on Dickinson's readers and researchers, and thus has an undeniable importance in history of Chinese translation of Dickinson's poetry.

#### **1.4 Rationale of the study**

In China, the most influential translation principle was proposed by the renowned translator Yan Fu (1854-1921) in Qing Dynasty in the preface to his translation of Thomas Huxley's (1825-1895) *Evolution and Ethics and Other Essays*, that is, "The three difficulties in translation are: faithfulness, expressiveness, and elegance." (Yan, 2018), among which faithfulness is particularly important for poetry translation, because poetry is a high degree of unity of form and content, and the translation must first faithfully reproduce the original form before it is possible to faithfully reproduce the original content. Just like Huang Guowen (1956-), a well-known contemporary Chinese scholar of linguistics, said: "Form is the embodiment of meaning. With different forms, they express different meanings, and convey different messages to the audience." (Huang, 2003). Therefore, in poetry translation, the view of resemblance first in form and then in content has always been upheld by most Chinese poetry translators (Liang, 1936; Wang, 1989; Huang, 2005; Liu, 1918; Bian, 1982; Sun, 1992; Sun, 1980; Jiang, 1995).

Jiang Feng (1929-2017), a distinguished Chinese poetry translator, even said, "Spirit exists in form, and those who lose their form are bound to perish their spirit" (Jiang, 1982); Xunzi (313BC-238BC), a thinker in ancient China during the Warring States Period, also put forward the view that "when the form is shaped, the spirit is born" (Zhang, 1974) in his work, *Xunzi • A Discussion of Heaven*, while Confucius (551BC-479BC), the greatest ancient Chinese thinker, in *The Analects of Confucius • Yongye*, puts forward the proposition that "Where plainness is in excess of gracefulness, we have crudeness; where gracefulness is in excess of plainness, we have pompousness" (Kong, 2020), all of which emphasize the close relationship between form and content.

Nida proposed formal equivalence of translation in 1964 (Nida 1964). In 1969, he renamed "formal equivalence" as "formal correspondence" (Nida 1969). He divided equivalence into formal equivalence and functional equivalence. With regard to functional equivalence, "This means not only the equivalent content of the message but, in so far as possible, an equivalence of the form." (De Waar & Nida, 1986), it can be seen that Nida has always attached great importance to the equivalence of form. Catford (1965) put forward translation equivalence

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theory based on systematic linguistics, focusing on equivalence in “levels” of grammar, vocabulary, phonetics, and word forms, as well as in “ranks” of grammatical structures, sentences, phrases, words, and morphemes. Therefore, "his theory is also theory of formal equivalence in essence" (Huang, 2003). In poetry translation, faithfulness in form is the easiest to achieve, as Cheng Fangwu (1897-1984), a famous modern Chinese writer and translator, said: "The translation of poetry is also poetry, and this is the most important thing we must not forget... Poetic forms are the easiest to transplant."(Cheng, 1985). Since poetic form is relatively specific and stable, it is easier to reproduce faithfully when translating, and it is more feasible to evaluate the translated form from the perspective of faithfulness.

This study takes faithfulness as evaluation criterion and tries to discover, based on data statistics, how much faithful Wang's translation is in reproducing the original, especially in formal translation. Apart from stanzas, lines, and punctuation, the statistical comparison of vocabulary (i.e. the number of words) and parts of speech (i.e. the number of nouns and verbs) between the original and translated texts also falls to category of formal analysis.

Translator Wang Jinhua has once mentioned Emily Dickinson in two of his articles on American poetry, saying that "she believes that a person should take extra care of the fountain of his heart and keep his state of mind clear"(Wang, 2003), and "Dickinson also had a special fondness for nature"(Wang, 2004), but Professor Wang Jinhua did not mention how to translate Dickinson's poems, nor did he express his views on Chinese translation of Dickinson's poetry in his foreword to his book or elsewhere. Therefore, outsiders have no way of knowing his views on translation, especially on translating Dickinson's poetry into Chinese.

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

The study of Chinese translation of Dickinson's poetry is an indispensable part of Dickinson studies in China. Studying features of Wang Jinhua's translation may enhance Chinese scholars' and translator's understanding of Dickinson's poetry, help Chinese readers make wise choices among the many Chinese translations of Dickinson's poetry. In a word, it may contribute to the development of Dickinson studies and popularity of Dickinson's poetry in China

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Emily Dickinson and her poems were translated and introduced by modern Chinese poets such as Ye Gongchao (1904-1981) and Shao Xunmei (1906-1968) as early as in the early 20th century(Zhou, 2013). After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, more of

her poems were translated and her life was known to more Chinese people. The first collection of Chinese translation of Dickinson's poetry was published in the 1980s, and currently, all of her poems have been translated into Chinese, and collections of Chinese translation of her poems are sold well and have wide influence(Zhou, 2011a).Quite a number of Chinese translated texts of her poems has been included in textbooks of Chinese universities, primary and secondary schools, and are widely known to Chinese readers.

However, behind the Dickinson craze in China hides the fact that Chinese readers cannot understand most of Dickinson's poem. At the same time, quality of many Chinese translations of Dickinson's poem is uneven, which not only affects Chinese researchers' understanding of Dickinson's poetry, but also makes ordinary readers at a loss, not knowing which translation is better to choose.

The past Dickinson studies have rarely involved with Chinese translation of Dickinson's poetry. The author of this paper searched China National Knowledge Infrastructure, the largest database of academic research achievements in China, and found that during the past 40 years from the 1980s to the present, Chinese scholars have published 1,114 Dickinson research articles and 130 dissertations in Chinese, but among which there are less than 20 articles on Chinese translation of Dickinson's poetry, and they are mainly impressionistic criticisms, mostly about subjective feelings, and almost no objective judgments based on statistical data. Such researchers as Zhang Luping (2016), Peng Yan (2015), and Wang Zhujun (2015) discussed the Chinese translation of Dickinson's poetry from a theoretical perspective. Researchers He Rundong (2004), Liu Xiaomin (2010), Peng Yan (2014), Shen Huiwen (2021), Wang Junling (2014), Xu Zhen (2012) and Zeng Xueyu (2013) evaluated Chinese translations of Dickinson's poetry respectively, but their evaluations were mainly based on subjective impression, without support of data statistics, and consequently, though they are inspiring, their credibility is in doubt to some extent due to the lack of objectivity. Thus it can be seen that currently the study of Chinese translation of Dickinson's poetry based on data statistics is rare and therefore very necessary.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Sampling and Data Collection**

This paper is an empirical study of the collection of Chinese translation of Dickinson's poetry, *Selected Dickinson's Poems*(2010). This book, translated by China's famous translator Wang Jinhua (1950- ) and published in 2010 by Beiyue Literature and Art Publishing House in

China, contains 243 Chinese translated poems of 243 Emily Dickinson's original poems. The vocabulary, part of speech, stanza and verse line, and punctuation marks of the 243 original texts and translated texts are counted respectively, comparison and analysis are conducted, in order to find out translation features of Wang's translation objectively. The serial numbers of original poems mentioned in this paper refer to their serial numbers in 1955 and 1960 Johnson editions of Dickinson's Poems(Dickinson, 1955; Dickinson, 1960).

### **3.2 Research Design**

Before counting process, the 243 translated texts and the 243 original texts are first of all converted into txt format files, and proofread one by one, then a program written in python programming language is used to count the number of words, nouns, verbs, stanzas, lines, periods, commas, exclamation marks, question marks, and dashes of each poem, and also of the whole book.

In the process of statistics, in order to find difference between the original and the translated text, two word segmentation databases --- Chinese word segmentation database BosonNLP and English word segmentation database NLTK, are used to segment the original text and the translation. Features of vocabulary translation can be revealed by counting word frequencies. BosonNLP is a natural language processing SDK of Boson Chinese Semantic Open Platform. By calling the interface of the database, users can obtain relevant semantic analysis service functions (Shi, 2018). NLTK is an abbreviation of natural language tool kit. It provides standard interfaces for tasks such as basic classes of data representation related to natural language processing, of part-of-speech tagging, grammar analysis, text classification, etc., as well as standard implementation of these tasks. They can be combined to solve complex problems (Wei, 2016). This study mainly uses its part-of-speech tagging function.

## **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Based on objective statistical results, comparative analysis of 243 original and translated texts in terms of vocabulary, part of speech (noun and verb), number of stanza and line, and punctuation helps reveal translation features of Wang's translation with regard to these four aspects.

### **4.1 Vocabulary**

The number of word types used in original text and translation, as well as their total occurrences (i.e. tokens), are counted respectively. On this basis, the average frequency of vocabulary

(i.e.token and word type ratio) can be calculated, that is, the total occurrences of vocabulary divided by the number of word types. Word types refer to the word forms that do not recur in a text, tokens refer to the total number of words used in a text, that is, total occurrences of words of a text, while token and type ratio is an indicator to reflect richness of vocabulary used in a text, which is the ratio between total word number and word types, and the lower the ratio, the richer the vocabulary.

Table1. Statistics of Vocabulary in the Original and Translation

<b>Versions</b>	<b>Tokens</b>	<b>Word Types</b>	<b>Token and Type Ratio</b>
Original	12810	4575	2.80
Translation	16475	4359	3.78

Statistics show (see Table 1) that the original text uses 4,575 word types with a total of 12810 occurrences, and the tokens and word types ratio is 2.8, while Wang’s translation uses 4359 word types with a total occurrences of 16475, and the token and word type ratio is 3.78, which is higher than that of the original. It can be seen that the use of vocabulary in the original text is more abundant than that in the translation.

Higher token and word type ratio of the translation means higher frequency of words in translation. In fact, not only translated words but also translated Chinese character display a relatively high frequency. A Chinese word is consisted of one or two Chinese characters which function as a word. Not every Chinese character can be used as a word. According to statistics, Wang’s translation uses altogether 2232 Chinese characters with a total of 26925 occurrences of Chinese characters, and the token and character type ratio is 12.06, which means the average frequency of Chinese character is about 12.

Take Chinese character “大”(Da, i.e.big) as an example. In the first 45 translations of Wang’s translation, the character “大” (Da, i.e.big) was used 10 times in 9 translations, which can be seen in verse lines such as:

Poem 5: 还会从大洋彼岸 [Hai Hui Cong **Da Yang** Bi An]

Poem 9: 大莽的锦缎似的身躯 [ **Da Mang** De Jin Duan Si De Shen Qu ]



Poem 74: 可是,秀丽的大地显得多么安静![Ke Shi, Xiu Li De Da Di Xian De Duo Mo An Jing!]

Poem 91: 在我走过她时她连大气也不敢出——

[Zai Wo Zou Guo Ta Shi Ta Lian Da Qi Ye Bu Gan Chu ——],

Poem 178: 也没在‘大梁’上悬搁—— [ Ye Mei Zai ‘Da Liang’ Shang Xuan Ge —— ]

Poem 249: 啊,大海! [Ah, Da Hai! ]

Poem258: 是上天凭借大气 [Shi Shang Tian Ping Jie Da Qi]

这光斜照时,大地在倾听—— [Zhe Guang Xie Zhao Shi, Da Di Zai Qing Ting ——],

Poem 280: 好像整个天宇都成了一口大钟

[Hao Xiang Zheng Ge Tian Yu Dou Cheng Le Yi Kou Da Zhong ],

Poem 294: 他生杀大权的刀斧—— [Ta Sheng Sha Da Quan De Dao Fu —— ]

The 10 occurrences of character “大”(Da, i.e.big) involve 8 words: ”大洋(Da Yang)、大莽(Da Mang)、大地(Da Di)、大气(Da Qi)、大梁(Da Liang)、大海(Da Hai)、大钟(Da Zhong)、大权(Da Quan)”, of which both words “大气”(Da Qi)and “大地”(Da Di) occur twice respectively.

One of the reasons why the number of words in translation is more than that in original text is that the translation adds content that the original text does not have. For example, for the last two lines of the first stanza of original poem 56 “‘Twill be because beyond the Rose/ I have been called away –”, Wang translates as “那是因为我已被召到阴间/ 远离了玫瑰——”(“Na Shi Yin Wei Wo Yi Bei Zhao Dao Yin Jian/ Yuan Li Le Mei Gui ——”), adding the image of “阴间”(Yin Jian, i.e. underworld). This kind of addition in translation can also be found in other translations. For example, in poem 5, Wang translates the original line “Robin is gone.” as “这知更鸟儿就没有了踪影。”(“Zhe Zhi Geng Niao Er Jiu Mei You Le Zong Ying.”), adding the concept of“踪影”(Zong Ying, i.e. traces) and so lack of original sense of blankness. At the same time, the translation also adds er-hua word, that is, Chinese word with

the suffix of “儿”[ə:r] as light-sound morpheme, which appears several times in the translation of poem 5, such as “玫瑰花儿纷呈。”(“Mei Gui **Hua Er** Fen Cheng.”)、 “我的鸟儿所到的彼岸” (“Wo De **Niao Er** Suo Dao De Bi An”) 、 “人儿更善”(“**Ren Er** Geng Shan”) and so on. Er-hua words are also used in other translations from time to time, such as “在舔触着船儿离开近海——”(“Zai Tian Chu Zhe **Chuan Er** Li Kai Jin Hai ——”) in poem 107 , “当激奋刺碰着心儿时!” (“Dang Ji Fen Ci Peng Zhe **Xin Er** Shi!”)in poem 165, and “去把梦儿做——”(“Qu Ba **Meng Er** Zuo ——”)in poem 196, etc.

The second reason is prose translation, that is, the original text is translated into a more prosaic language, which is more graceful and smooth rather than brief and concise. For example, the original 3 words "Robin is gone." are translated into 11 Chinese characters “这知更鸟儿就没有了踪影。” (“Zhe Zhi Geng Niao Er Jiu Mei You Le Zong Ying.”) which is not concise enough. In poem 5, the original two lines of “In a serener Bright,” and “Removed.” are respectively translated as “在一片更为安详的亮色里,” (“Zai Yi Pian Geng Wei An Xiang De Liang Se Li,”) and “都被驱散。” (“Dou Bei Qu San.”) , which are not much difference in meaning, but not as concise as the original. Prose translation is also obvious in translating the original line “The valley murmured ‘Come’ - ” of poem 9 into “山谷幽涧低低地嘟啾着 ‘来呀’——”(“Shan Gu You Jian Di Di De Gu Nong Zhe ‘Lai Ya’—— ”), in which “valley” is translated into the more elegant “山谷幽涧”(“Shan Gu You Jian”), and “murmured” into “低低地嘟啾着”(“Di Di De Gu Nong Zhe”). The meaning is faithful to the original, but the expression is greatly loosened. The prosaic language is graceful and smooth, easy to read and understand, but it loses the brevity and conciseness of the original poem.

In short, statistical analysis shows that the token and word type ratio of the original text is lower than that of the translation, which means that word types used in the original text is more abundant and vocabulary of the original is richer; and the total number of words used in the translation is much more than that of the original, indicating that the translation is not as concise as the original. The main reasons are that translator adopts addition as well as prosaic translation in translating, which makes the translation easy to understand while not lacking of gracefulness (Zhou, 2011b).

#### 4.2 Part of Speech

The most important and active parts of speech in language--- noun and verb are selected as statistical objects. Noun and verb as parts of speech can be found in almost all languages in the world, and they differ in many aspects such as in semantics and grammatical functions (Wu, 2019). Noun represents unified name of people, events, things, places, or abstract concepts. It is divided into proper noun and common noun. Accurate use of nouns in a text plays an important role in conveying the author's ideas. Verbs are generally used to indicate actions or states. The ingenious application of verbs can make things described in a text come alive, more vivid, and more dynamic. There is more than one classification standard for part of speech (Song, 2019). This paper adopts the classification standard of Chinese word segmentation database BosonNLP. The statistical results of nouns and verbs in original text and Wang's translation are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Statistics of Nouns and Verbs in Original Text and Translation

Part s of Speech	Versions	Num ber	Occurenc es	Ratio
ns	Original	1846	3500	27.32 % (3500/12810)
	Translati on	1662	3071	18.64 % (3071/16475)
s	Original	1142	2401	18.74` % (2401/12810)
	Translati on	1453	4186	25.40 % (4184/16475)

From the statistical results, an interesting phenomenon is that the total occurrences of original nouns and verbs account for 27.32% and 18.74% of total occurrences of original vocabulary respectively, the ratio between the two is about 5:3; and the total occurrences of target nouns and verbs account for 18.64% and 25.40% of the total occurrences of target vocabulary respectively. The ratio between the two is exactly the opposite of that of the original

text, that is, about 3:5, indicating that the performance of nouns in original text is more prominent, and the performance of verbs in the translation is more significant. Specific vocabulary data also shows this. The number of original nouns and their total occurrences are 1846 and 3,500 respectively, which are higher than those of 1,662 and 3071 in the translation; while the number of translated verbs and their total occurrences are 1453 and 4186 respectively, which are higher than that of 1142 and 2401 of the original text.

In addition, total occurrences of nouns plus verbs in original text and translated text account for 46.06% and 44.04% of total occurrences of original and target vocabulary respectively, indicating that the overall weight of nouns plus verbs in original text and translated text is close.

### 4.3 Stanza and Line

Professor [Xu Yuanchong \(1921-2021\)](#), a well-known poetry translator in China, has put forward the principle of "Three Beauties" in poetry translation. The "Three Beauties" refer to message beauty, prosodic beauty and image beauty ([Xu, 1987](#)), which has become one of the important guidelines for poetry translation and research in China. Among them, "image" refers to antithesis of poetry, the number, length and arrangement of verse lines. "Image beauty" refers to visual beauty brought by the external form of poetry ([Li Liyun 2018](#)). The "image beauty" in translation means that the translated poems should stick to the antithesis of the original poem, and the number of lines and metrics of the translated poems should also meet corresponding requirements. According to this theory, poetry translation should pay attention to the translation of poetic form, including faithfulness of number of stanzas and lines. The number of stanzas and lines in Wang's translation and the original text is counted. The results are shown in [Table 3 and Table 4](#)

Table 3. Statistics of Stanzas and Lines in Original Text and Translation

Items	Original	Translation	Difference Value
Number of Stanzas	594	602	8 (1.35%)
Number of Lines	2659	2646	13 (0.49%)

Table 4. Statistics of Translations with Stanza and Line Deviations

Deviated Translations	On Stanza	On Line
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Translations with Less Stanzas and Lines	2	6
Translations with More Stanzas and Lines	9	1
Total Number of Deviated Translations and Percentage	11 (4.53%)	7 (2.88%)

#### **Stanza**

Statistics show the original 243 poems have a total of 594 stanzas and the translation has 602 stanzas. The translation is 8 stanzas more than the original (accounting for 1.35%), involving 11 translations (accounting for 4.53%), of which 2 translations have less stanzas than the original, 9 translations have more stanzas than the original, and the remaining 232 translations have the same number of stanzas as the original text, accounting for 95.47%. The two translations with fewer stanzas than the original are translations of poems 519 and 766, with 1 stanza missing for each. The specific reason is that translation of poem 519 has missed the last stanza of the original text, and translation of poem 766 has missed the second stanza of the original text.

In addition, there are 9 translations with more stanzas than the original text, which are translations of poems 207, 482, 690, 1196, 1232, 1272, 1339, 1413, and 1535. After verification, it is found that each of the 9 original poems do not have many stanzas, ye each stanza is with many lines, and the translator split the original stanzas with many lines, resulting in more stanzas of the translation than that of the original. Except for translation of poem 1339 which has 2 more stanzas than the original text, the other 8 translations are each with one more stanza than the original, and the 9 translations have a total of 10 stanzas more than the original.

#### **Line**

In terms of the number of lines, the original 243 poems have a total of 2659 lines, and the translation has 2646 lines. The translation is 13 lines less than the original (accounting for 0.49%), involving 7 translations (accounting for 2.88%), of which 6 translations have fewer lines than the original, 1 translation has more lines than the original (i.e. the translation of poem 764), and the remaining 236 translations have the same number of lines as the original, accounting for 97.12% of the 243 original poems. Of the 6 translations with fewer lines than the original text, except for the translations of poems 519 and 766 with missing stanzas mentioned earlier, the remaining 4 translations are translations of poems 478, 480, 738, and 1101. The reason for fewer lines of the translation is that the translation combines multiple

original lines into one line. The only translation with more lines than the original is the translation of poem 764, which translates 4 original lines into 9 lines.

To sum up, in terms of the number of stanzas and lines, Wang's translation is not much different from the original, and basically retains the original “image beauty”. There are omissions of stanza in translation, but there are only 2 cases with a total of 2 stanzas involved. Occasionally, there are addition of stanzas in translation, but this happens mostly when original poem has few stanzas with a large number lines per stanza, for which translator would split original one stanza into two stanzas. The translation sometimes combines multiple original lines into one line. There is only one case where one original line is expanded and translated into multiple lines.

#### **4.4 Punctuation**

When translating, the translation of punctuation cannot be ignored. Chinese scholar Jiang Xuelong believes that according to the function of punctuation, there can be four translation strategies, namely equivalent transplantation, necessary alteration, appropriate addition and deletion, and free translation into Chinese characters (Jiang, 2017).

Equivalent transplantation is literal translation of punctuation. The punctuation used in the original text will also be used in the translation. When a certain punctuation expresses the same meaning, emotion and function in both English and Chinese languages, the translation usually adopts this translation strategy. Necessary alteration refers to necessary change of punctuation marks as needed during translation process. Because of differences between English and Chinese punctuation marks, the use of punctuation marks will inevitably change with the changes in language structure of translated text, and so necessary alteration is common and necessary. In addition, in translation, sometimes it is necessary to segment or combine sentences according to characteristics of different languages, and punctuation addition is needed in sentence segmentation, while punctuation deletion can be found in combined sentences. Therefore, there is also a translation strategy of adding or subtracting punctuation appropriately. Free translation into Chinese characters means translating original punctuation marks into words of target language (Jiang, 2017).

The dashes, commas, periods, exclamation marks and question marks used in the original and translated texts are counted. The results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Statistics of Original and Translated Punctuation

Items	Dashes	Commas	Periods	Exclamation Marks	Question Marks	Total
Original	958	124	40	116	50	676
Translation	716	453	35	118	51	365
Deviation Value	42	77	6	-2	-1	17/311
Deviation Percentage	2.36%	6.26%	.57%	1.72%	2.00%	1.85% /11.61%

In general, the total number of punctuation marks used in translation is 311 (11.61%) less than the original, but the actual number of deviation cases is 317 (11.85%), and the number of dashes, commas, and periods in translation is less than that in the original text, and there are slightly more exclamation marks and question marks than that of the original text. Specifically speaking, the largest differences in number of punctuation marks between original text and target text can be found in dashes and commas, which deviate 242 (12.36%) and 67 (16.26%) respectively from the original, while the number of periods, exclamation marks and question marks is little different from that of the original.

#### 4.4.1 Exclamation Mark and Question Mark

First of all, exclamation marks and question marks in original text and the translation are analyzed. Exclamation mark in both Chinese and English is generally used at the end of an exclamation sentence or an imperative sentence expressing strong emotions, and can also be used as a pause at the end of an interrogative sentence or rhetorical question. The exclamation mark generally indicates a high degree of anger, alertness or other strong emotions (Yu, 2001). Therefore, whether exclamation mark is translated or not will affect emotional performance of the translation.

Table 6. Translations with Exclamation and Question Mark Deviations

Deviated Translations	On Exclamation Mark	On Question Mark
Translations with Less Exclamation and Question Marks	0	1
Translations with More Exclamation and Question Mark	2	1
Total Deviated Translations and Percentage	2 (0.82%) )	2 ( 0.82%)

Statistics show (see [Table 6](#)) that only 2 (i.e. translations of poems [288](#) and 251) of the 243 translations have exclamation marks that deviate from the original text, that is, each of the 2 translation has 1 exclamation mark more than that of the original text, and the remaining 241 translations have the same number of exclamation marks as the original text. In terms of question marks, only one (i.e. translation of poem [288](#)) of the 243 translations has 1 less question marks than the original text, and another one (i.e. translation of poem 43) has 2 more question marks than the original text.

#### 4.4.2 Dash, Comma, and Period

Statistics of number of dashes, commas, and periods in original and translated texts are made respectively, and by analysis of the differences in their quantities, reveal the translation features of translating dashes, commas, and periods.

##### Dash

Dickinson's manuscript uses a lot of line segments, long and short, horizontal and oblique, each with particular meaning and function. After being printed, they are uniformly printed as short horizontal bars, which are now usually called dash. As for what each dash specifically expresses, only the author knows. Therefore, it can be said that extensively use of dash is one of the outstanding features of Dickinson's poetry. In Chinese translation, due to requirements of publishing house's printing specifications, all original short horizontal bars are generally printed as Chinese dashes. In Chinese, dash can indicate explanations, topic switching, while English dash mainly indicate tone transitions, emphasis, pauses, and omission of individual indecent words, etc. There is no explanatory function for English dash ([Huang, 2008](#)). Therefore, as far as Chinese and English dashes are concerned, the functions of the two



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are different, and the short bar "-" in the original text is neither equivalent to English dash, nor in the same form as the Chinese dash "——"; and so, its functional usage is naturally quite different from the Chinese dash, the function of original dash is much richer. Therefore, it is better not to delete or modify the original dashes when translating into Chinese.

Table 7. Statistics of Translations with Dash, Comma, and Period Deviations.

Deviated Translations	Dashes	Commas	Periods
Translations with Less Punctuation	116	66	19
Translations with More Punctuation	9	37	14
Total Deviated Translations and Percentage	125 (51.44%)	103 (42.39%)	33(13.58%)

Statistics show (see [Table 7](#)) that 116 translations have fewer dashes than the original text and 9 translations have more dashes than the original text, with a total of 125 translations which have different number of dashes from the original text, accounting for 51.44% of the total 243 translations, which is more than 50%. It can be seen that the deviation of Wang's translation from the original on dash is obvious. According to statistical [Table 5](#), 243 translations of Wang's translation have a total of 242 less dashes from the original, and so on average, almost every translation has one case of dash deviation from the original. After verification, reasons for difference in the number of dashes between the translation and the original are omission, conversion and addition in translating, among which the main reason is the omission of a large number of original dashes.

### **Comma**

In Chinese, commas are mainly used inside sentence to separate each part of the sentence, to make sentence structure clearer and the semantics clearer. In English, commas are used to separate appositions and separate independent components ([Han, 2017](#)). The statistics in [Table 5](#) show that the total number of commas in Wang's translation is 67 fewer than that of the original, accounting for 16.26% of the total number of commas in the original text. From statistical results in [Table 7](#), the number of commas in 66 translations is less than that in original text, and 37 translations have more commas than the original text, the number of deviated translations reaches to 103, accounting for 42.39% of the total 243 translations. The changes

in comma in Wang's translation are far greater than in period. The first method is to translate comma into other punctuation, and the second is to delete original comma in translating. For example, a comma at the end of the second line of the last stanza of original poem 165 is translated into a period in translation, and the comma at the end of the penultimate line (i.e. "Through faith in one he met not,") of the first stanza of original poem 43 is deleted in translation. In short, the translator converts part of the original commas into periods as well as deletes some of them in translation. This is the main reason why the total number of commas in translation is 67 fewer than the original.

### **Period**

English and Chinese have similar usage of period. Both are used at the end of declarative sentences and imperative sentences to indicate a semantic end. The number of periods in translation, like that of exclamation marks and question marks, is little different from the original. Statistics in Table 5 show that the total number of periods in Wang's translation is 5 less than the original, accounting for 3.57% of the total number of original periods. Statistics in Table 7 show that the difference of 5 periods between the translation and the original involves 33 translations (accounting for 13.58%), of which 19 translations have fewer periods than the original text, and 14 translations have more periods than the original text.

One of the reasons why the number of periods in translation is different from the original is that, in translation, original periods are translated into other punctuation marks, or other original punctuation marks are translated into periods. For examples, the period at the end of the last line of the first stanza of poem 43, which is "To introduce his soul.", is converted into a question mark in translation; and in translations of poem 165 and 5, original commas are converted into periods.

Another reason why the number of periods in translation is different from the original is omission. For example, in translation of poem 480, the original period at the end of the last line of the first stanza, which is in "She cannot keep Her place.", is deleted; and in translation of poem 1630, the original period at the end of the third line from the bottom, which is in "With indignation.", is also deleted and untranslated; and the original period at the end of the fourth line, "Its soaring Residence.", is converted to a dash, and comma at the end of the third line, "Ascension that for which it was,", is deleted in translation: "它是为升腾而造就" ("Ta Shi Wei Sheng Teng Er Zao Jiu De").

In short, among the five punctuation marks, deviation of dashes and commas is the most

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prominent. The total number of dashes in translation is 12.36% less than that of the original, and 51.44% of translations do not match the original in the number of dashes. The number of commas in translation is 16.26% less than the original, and 42.39% of translations do not match the original in the number of commas. The difference in the number of dashes between the original and the translation is mainly due to omission and conversion in translating, that is, some original dashes are deleted, and some are translated as commas, periods, exclamation marks or question marks. Like dash deviation, the difference in the number of commas between the original and translation is mainly due to conversion of original commas into periods and omission of original commas in translating, especially when original comma is in the middle of the line, it is easier to be omitted. This change will undoubtedly destroy the rhythm of expression of the original poem. The massive changes in punctuation in translation have a non-negligible impact on emotional expression of the original text and affect the quality of translation.

The translation has little change to the original period. In order to divide verse lines more clearly, the translator sometimes converts commas in consecutive lines of the original poem into periods. In addition, there are also cases where the period of original poem is translated into question marks. The former is sometimes acceptable, while the latter's effect is not very good, because question mark has a strong emotional implication, and so the conversion into question mark in translation may cause a greater understanding deviation for readers.

The translator adopts equivalent transplantation and appropriate addition and deletion strategies for translation of exclamation marks and question marks. Therefore, the number of exclamation marks and question marks in translation is slightly different from the original. Equivalent transplantation can retain author's emotional expression to the greatest extent. Although appropriate addition and deletion may make the translation more accessible and clearer, it also processes author's emotional expression in a certain sense, which may cause some misunderstanding to readers. Therefore, for punctuation marks with strong emotional implication such as exclamation marks and question marks, it is recommended to follow the original as much as possible when translating, and do not change them.

## **5. Conclusion**

### **5.1 Major Findings**

In terms of vocabulary, the number of word types in Wang's translation is less than that of the original, but the total occurrences of words is slightly more than that of the original, and the token and type ratio of the translation is higher than that of the original, indicating that vocabulary used in the translation is less abundant than the original. Nouns performance in

original text is more prominent, while verbs performance in translation is more significant, but weights of nouns plus verbs in translation and original text are close, accounting for about 45% of the total vocabulary of the translation and original text respectively.

In translation, translator often adds some words or creates images that do not appear in original text. For original verbs, the translator sometimes makes changes according to translation context, and sometimes add some new verbs in translation. The translator also changes original nouns sometimes in translation, and sometimes adds nouns as sentence elements in clauses for the convenience of readers' understanding of the translation. The addition of new images, verbs and nouns, and the conversion of original verbs and nouns in translation make the translation more cohesive and smooth, and easier to understand without lacking of gracefulness, but sometimes obvious addition and conversion in translation highlight the impact of translator's subjectivity in translating and may cause a non-negligible deviation of translation from the original.

Wang's translation retains most of original stanzas and lines, with only a few deviations. Specifically speaking, in terms of stanza, the translator may split one original stanza with more lines into multiple stanzas with less lines in each stanza; translator may sometimes omit original stanza in translation, such as the omission of one original stanza of the two original poems respectively. In terms of lines, the translator may, in translation, combine multiple original lines into one line of the target text, or expand original lines into more lines of the target text.

The division of stanzas and lines of a poem will affect readers' perception and reading rhythm. A poem with a proper number of stanzas and lines will often arouse readers' interest and aesthetic pleasure in reading. Therefore, in translating, appropriate changes to the number of stanzas and lines of the original may make translation more adaptive to reading habit of readers and facilitate reading and understanding of the translation, however, from the perspective of respecting authorial intention and original structure of the poem, changes and adaptation of original stanzas and lines may damage connotation of original stanza and line arrangement, and distort the author's original intention.

The deviation of translation punctuation is mainly reflected in deviation of dashes and commas. Dashes in 51.44% of translations deviate from that of the original, and commas in 42.39% of translations do not match the original text. The deviation of dashes and commas is mainly due to large number of omissions or conversions in translation. In terms of periods, the translation has minor changes to original periods, and these changes include conversion of

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periods into question marks or commas to periods, etc., but the number of changes is not large and has little impact on the whole. The translator mainly uses equivalent transplantation and appropriate addition and deletion strategies to translate original exclamation marks and question marks, therefore, there is little difference between the original text and the target text in the number of exclamation marks and question marks.

## 5.2 Limitations and Implications

This study reveals features of Wang's translation in terms of formal translation rather than content translation, therefore the findings of this study are not comprehensive. It is almost impossible to objectively evaluate faithfulness of content in translation. However, formal features are an important part of features of translation.

It is hoped that the disclosure of the features of Wang's translation in this study will enable readers to better understand the translation and make a more informed choice when choosing a translation; at the same time, it will be helpful to promote Dickinson studies in China in that it may strengthen Chinese translators' and researchers' understanding of Emily Dickinson's poetry.

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