

A Comparative Study of Two Chinese Versions of *Animal Farm* from the Perspective of Functional Equivalence Theory

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Abstract: This study conducts a comparative analysis of lexical conveyance and semantic expression in Rong Rude's and Chen Chao's Chinese translations of George Orwell's *Animal Farm* through the lens of Functional Equivalence Theory. The research begins by introducing *Animal Farm* and its two Chinese translations, followed by an in-depth exploration of the concepts of lexical conveyance and semantic expression. Guided by Functional Equivalence Theory, the study systematically examines the differences between the two translations in terms of lexical choices and semantic interpretation, highlighting how functional equivalence influences textual expression and reader reception. The comparative analysis reveals that while the two translations exhibit notable divergences in semantic accuracy and cultural adaptability due to distinct translation strategies, both strive to preserve the original style and intent of the text, resulting in commendable renditions. The study concludes with implications for translation practice, emphasizing the need for translators to balance fidelity to the source text with consideration for target readers' expectations and cultural contexts to achieve optimal translation outcomes. This research not only provides an empirical case study for translation studies but also offers theoretical and practical guidance for future literary translation endeavors.

Keywords: Comparative Study; *Animal Farm*; Functional Equivalence Theory; Semantic Conveyance

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview of *Animal Farm*

Animal Farm, first published by George Orwell in 1945, is considered a classic

example of dystopian fiction. For Orwell, literature was a writing activity with both political and artistic purposes. In the preface to the Ukrainian edition of *Animal Farm*, Orwell described the spark of his true inspiration: "I saw a small boy, perhaps ten years old, leading a cart-horse down a narrow lane; whenever the horse tried to turn, the boy whipped it, and it occurred to me that if only the beasts could realize their own strength we should never be able to ride them or eat them, just as we can never—at any rate, so long as civilization lasts—be free of the over-class. The animals of the farm, as I saw them in my first vision, were the victims of a system, and I wanted to criticize that system" [1]. The novel's plot revolves around an English farm where animals have long suffered brutal oppression and abuse at the hands of Farmer Jones. Led by animal leaders Napoleon and Snowball, they collectively rebel, successfully driving away the farmer and establishing a system of self-management by the animals. However, under the new farm system, the animals continue to endure exploitation and oppression, working tirelessly day and night. Most shockingly, the rebel animal leaders ultimately become indistinguishable from the original human farmers, usurping the so-called "freedom". This novel, with its profound political allegory, has garnered widespread attention and resonance on the international literary stage, occupying a unique position in the literary realm. Its satirical implications deeply reflect the essential characteristics of real society, and its philosophical ideas and values have evoked deep resonance among readers. From an academic perspective, the educational value of this work has had a broad impact globally and sparked ongoing academic interest. Based on this, the international academic community has conducted systematic research on it, forming diversified research perspectives and theoretical achievements.

1.2 Introduction to Translations of *Animal Farm*

In terms of lexical conveyance, both translators, Chen Chao and Rong Rude, demonstrate exceptional translation skills. However, they each have unique characteristics in their choice and use of vocabulary. Chen Chao's translation focuses on maintaining the original text's linguistic sense and rhythm, thus tending towards literal translation in vocabulary selection. He strives to convey the original text's satirical meaning and profound connotations through precise words. Rong Rude, on the other hand, pays more attention to cultural adaptability and reader experience in lexical conveyance. He is adept at using various four-character idioms and vivid language descriptions to make the translation closer to Chinese readers' reading habits and aesthetic needs.

2. Concepts of Lexical and Semantic Conveyance

2.1 Lexical Conveyance

Language communication primarily takes two forms: oral and written, and lexical conveyance plays a crucial role in both. Relevance Theory, as a theoretical framework for analyzing utterance understanding, focuses on analyzing utterances in natural verbal communication, revealing their underlying logic [2]. Relevance Theory was proposed by French and British scholars Sperber and Wilson in their jointly published book *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*. They view communication as a cognitive process, with both parties having a mutually understood premise based on their correlated cognitive models. Maximum relevance and optimal relevance are two main mechanisms within relevance. Maximum relevance refers to a situation where the listener exerts minimal effort in understanding a conversation but achieves the best perceptual effect; optimal relevance refers to a situation where the listener obtains the language perceptual effect after exerting effective effort in a conversation [3]. Strictly speaking, Relevance Theory applies only to one type of communication, namely explicit communication [4]. According to Sperber and Wilson, explicit communication is a stimulus sent by one party in the communication process, making the intended

message mutually understood between both parties and clarifying the intended message for the listener through this stimulus.

Therefore, this theory not only applies to daily oral communication but can also be extended to unnatural utterances, such as novels, poems, essays, and other literary texts. In such genres, communication theories demonstrate broad explanatory power. This is because, whether oral or written, all forms of verbal communication revolve around the speaker/author's communicative intention, essentially being the same. In written texts, although their presentation differs from oral communication, they remain a form of ostensive communication, where words and sentences constitute ostensive stimuli. These stimuli serve as contextual cues, constructing a cognitive environment for readers. In this cognitive environment, readers seek relevance to deduce the author's communicative intention or writing purpose. This process not only reflects the information exchange between the author and reader but also represents a bidirectional interaction between the author's ostension and the reader's inference.

When engaging in literary writing, to achieve effective communication, authors often hope to enhance the information transmission effect through lexical means, enabling readers to fully understand and appreciate the work with minimal reading effort. Here, Relevance Theory provides an analytical framework based on cognitive models, enabling a deeper explanation of how authors consciously choose specific lexical means to construct overall language operation according to communicative intentions. This theory not only helps us understand why authors choose specific vocabulary but also reveals the deeper reasons behind these choices.

Therefore, there is a close connection between Relevance Theory and lexical conveyance. The former provides a theoretical support for the latter, enabling target language readers to more deeply understand how authors convey intentions through lexical choices in the creative process and how readers interpret these intentions by seeking relevance in the cognitive environment. This process is not only the core of language communication but also an important part of literary appreciation [5].

2.2 Semantic Expression

In literary discourse, a word often possesses multiple meanings, and the specific meaning of a word can vary in different contexts. In such cases, the translator must make the correct choice regarding the semantics intended by the original author. In the two translations of *Animal Farm*, both translators have differentiated the semantic expression of the original text's words from various perspectives. The conveyance of semantics in translation can serve as a significant criterion for evaluating translations. Regarding the definition and classification of semantics, there have been diverse and differing viewpoints throughout history. The seven-fold classification of semantics proposed by British semanticist Geoffrey Leech is a representative approach, and this classification provides great reference value for comprehensively analyzing text semantics. In his book *Semantics*, Leech divides semantics into seven categories: Conceptual meaning, Connotative meaning, Social meaning, Affective meaning, Reflected meaning, Collocative meaning, and Thematic meaning, with the middle five being collectively known as associative meanings [6]. Conceptual meaning primarily refers to the mental aspects of meaning possessed by a word or phrase, summarized and condensed based on the objective world and human consciousness. Connotative meaning is the implied meaning based on conceptual meaning, characterized by instability and subject to changes due to cultural background, era development, and personal experiences. Stylistic meaning generally refers to various meanings closely related to the social background of the speaker, encompassing the speaker's social status, experiences, the relationship between the parties, formality, time, dialect, and many other aspects. Affective meaning refers to the emotions and attitudes reflected in language, expressed through conceptual meaning, connotative meaning, stylistic meaning, tone, intonation, etc. Reflected meaning is the meaning that listeners or readers associate with. Collocative meaning involves the appropriate pairing of words. Thematic meaning itself specifically refers to the various meanings conveyed by the methods used in organizing information in language applications (such as tone, word order, emphasis, etc.) [7].

In translations of literary works, translators need to accurately convey the semantics of the original work, which includes precise grasp of conceptual meaning, deep understanding of connotative meaning, appropriate reflection of social meaning, delicate capture of affective meaning, clever guidance of reflected meaning, accurate reproduction of collocative meaning, and overall grasp of thematic meaning. For example, when translating a character's dialogue in a novel, the translator must not only accurately convey the conceptual meaning of the dialogue, i.e., the specific content spoken by the character, but also convey the affective and social meanings through tone, intonation, and other means, enabling readers to perceive the subtle relationships and emotional fluctuations between characters.

This requires translators to pay attention to the collocational relationships between words and the construction of thematic meaning during the translation process, considering the profound implications of the seven-fold classification of semantics. The choice of a word depends not only on its conceptual meaning but also on various factors such as its connotative and social meanings. The construction of thematic meaning involves the organization of information and modes of expression throughout the text, serving as an important aspect that translators need to consider holistically to more precisely grasp the semantic essence of the original work and achieve effective reproduction and conveyance in the target language.

3. Overview of Functional Equivalence Theory

Functional equivalence theory, first proposed by Eugene A. Nida, a renowned linguist and Bible translator, posits that the primary goal of translation is not merely to replicate the source text's form but to convey its meaning and effect on the target audience. This theory emphasizes that the function of the source text should be preserved in the target language, ensuring that readers in the target culture have a similar experience as those in the source culture.

3.1 Development of Functional Equivalence Theory

Dynamic equivalence, also known as

functional equivalence, is the process of translating the source text in such a way that it produces a similar response or reaction in the target audience. It involves not just translating words but also conveying the underlying meaning and cultural nuances. In Nida's book *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, published in 1969, he clearly defined dynamic equivalence: "Dynamic equivalence is therefore to be defined in terms of the degree to which the receptors of the message in the receptor language respond to it in substantially the same manner as the receptors in the source language." [8] In simple terms, Nida's dynamic equivalence means that "the response of the target language readers to the translation is basically the same as that of the source language readers to the original text", that is, "the closest natural equivalence" [9].

For instance, if a metaphor in the source text evokes a particular image or emotion in the reader, the translation should aim to produce a similar emotional response in the target audience. This could involve using a culturally relevant metaphor or idiom that resonates with the target culture. The goal is to ensure that the message is conveyed effectively, regardless of the differences in language and culture.

However, the term "dynamic" is prone to being misinterpreted as merely something with influence. As a result, many people believe that if a translation has considerable influence, it must be an example of dynamic equivalence [10]. To eliminate such misunderstandings and also to emphasize the concept of function, Nida replaced dynamic equivalence with functional equivalence in 1993.

Looking at the development of Nida's functional equivalence theory, its core lies in: the translation should have smooth and natural diction, convey the meaning vividly, and evoke similar responses from readers [11]. This theory has elevated the status of target language readers to an unprecedented level. Great importance is attached to the target language readers' language and cultural habits, their comprehension and appreciation abilities, and their responses to the translation. Although the theory of functional equivalence encompasses both formal equivalence and content equivalence, Nida believed that when the two conflict and cannot be simultaneously achieved, form should be sacrificed for content. However, this does not mean disregarding

form completely. While achieving content information equivalence, efforts should be made to achieve formal equivalence as much as possible, with content equivalence being given priority.

In addition, Nida put forward the scope of functional equivalence: from the minimum, realistic functional equivalence to the maximum, ideal functional equivalence. This actually reflects the degree of understanding and appreciation of the denotative and connotative meanings of the original text. He pointed out that "in the process of discourse communication, there will always be some losses and misinterpretations because there are no two interlocutors who have almost the same denotative and connotative meanings for discourses with the same phonetic, lexical, grammatical, and discursive features". Thus, the concept of functional equivalence can be further elaborated as follows: the minimum, realistic functional equivalence means that target language readers can imagine how source language readers understand and appreciate the denotative and connotative meanings of the original text; the maximum, ideal functional equivalence means that the way target language readers understand and appreciate the denotative and connotative meanings of the translation is the same as the way source language readers understand and appreciate those of the original text [12].

3.2 Key Principles of Functional Equivalence

Functional equivalence is not an equivalence of languages but an equivalence of language functions and a psychological response equivalence of readers. What Nida is concerned about is whether the response of the translation in the minds of target language readers is similar (not equal) to that of the original text in the minds of source language readers. The theory of functional equivalence mainly guides translation practice through the following four criteria: convey information; convey the spirit and style of the original work; the language is smooth and conforms to the grammatical rules and expression habits of the target language; readers' responses are similar [13].

Conveying information means ensuring that the information in the source text is accurately transmitted to the target readers during the

translation process. Translators need to make sure that every key point and important piece of information in the source text is correctly conveyed to the readers of the target language. Conveying the spirit and style of the original work requires that translation not only preserves the content of the original text but also its unique literary style and ideological connotations. Translators need to ensure that the translated text can reflect the language features, emotional coloring, and cultural background of the original author, enabling readers to experience the unique charm of the original text.

The language is smooth and conforms to the grammatical rules and expression habits of the target language means that the translated text should be fluent and natural in the target language, conforming to the grammatical rules and idiomatic usage of the target language. This involves not only the choice of vocabulary but also sentence structure and paragraph organization to ensure that the translated text reads smoothly.

Similar reader response requires that the translated text should be able to evoke similar emotional responses and thoughts as the original text. Translators need to ensure that the translated text can stimulate readers to deeply reflect on the theme of the original text and generate emotional resonance, enabling target readers to have a reading experience similar to that of the original readers.

3.3 Challenges in Achieving Functional Equivalence

Nida put forward the idea of adequate translation. He believed that “since there is never a completely equivalent translation, generally speaking, when discussing ‘functional equivalence’, it is best to approach it from the perspective of ‘the scope of adequacy’”. This means that translation should first ensure equivalence at the meaning level of the source language, focusing on information transmission, and then consider equivalence at the formal level. The direction that translators should strive for is relative equivalence, not absolute equality. Nida repeatedly emphasized that the focus of translation is to reproduce information rather than to insist on consistency in the mode of expression [14]. The target language and culture as a whole are important factors that translators must consider during

the translation process. From this perspective, to obtain an idiomatic translation, translators need to make adjustments in two aspects: grammar and vocabulary. The adjustment in grammar is relatively simple, while vocabulary involves multiple different levels. Among them, the handling of culture-specific terms requires more effort from translators. Specific language contexts are also one of the challenges that translators need to overcome during the translation process [15].

While functional equivalence aims to bridge the gap between source and target languages, several challenges can arise during the translation process. These include: cultural barriers, linguistic differences, idiomatic expressions.

Cultural differences can pose significant obstacles to achieving functional equivalence. For example, idioms or metaphors that are deeply rooted in the source culture may not have direct equivalents in the target culture. In such cases, translators must find creative ways to convey the intended meaning without losing the essence of the original text.

Linguistic difference means different languages have distinct grammatical structures, syntax, and word order, which can make it challenging to maintain the same flow and rhythm in the translated text. Translators must navigate these linguistic differences while preserving the intended meaning and impact of the source text.

Idioms and colloquialisms often carry specific cultural connotations and cannot be translated literally. Translators must find culturally relevant expressions that capture the essence of the original idiom, ensuring that the intended meaning is conveyed accurately.

3.4 Applications of Functional Equivalence in Translation

Functional equivalence has been widely applied in various fields of translation, including literary works, religious texts, and technical documents. In literature, functional equivalence allows translators to bridge the gap between different cultures and bring the richness of the source text to a broader audience. By focusing on the intended message and cultural context, translators can create translations that resonate with readers in the target culture.

3.5 Importance of Functional Equivalence in Comparative Analysis

When conducting a comparative analysis of two translations, functional equivalence provides a valuable framework for evaluating the effectiveness of each translation of literary works [16]. By examining how well each translation achieves functional equivalence, we can gain insights into the strengths and weaknesses of different translation approaches. This analysis can help identify areas where one translation may be more successful in conveying the intended message and cultural nuances compared to another.

In the case of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, a comparative analysis of two Chinese translations using the lens of functional equivalence can reveal how different translators approach the task of conveying complex ideas and cultural references across languages and cultures.

From dynamic equivalence to functional equivalence, Nida continuously revised his theory, making it gradually more perfect. His translation concept still has great value for discussion and research to this day. Therefore, from the perspective of Nida's Functional Equivalence Theory, this paper explores the similarities and differences in the meaning conveyance of two Chinese translations of *Animal Farm* in terms of functional equivalence.

By applying the principles of functional equivalence, we can assess how each translation balances the need for accuracy with the requirement to create a meaningful and engaging reading experience for the target audience. This can help us understand the nuances of each translation and appreciate the unique contributions of different translators to bringing Orwell's work to life in the Chinese language.

4. Analysis of Lexical and Semantic Expression in the Two Translations

4.1 Equivalence of Vocabulary

In the translations of *Animal Farm*, the name "Snowball" has been rendered differently by two translators from Shanghai Translation Publishing House. Chen Chao translated it as *Si Nuo Bao* (a phonetic translation of Snowball). This method merely converts the name from English to Chinese based on its

pronunciation. As a result, it fails to take into account the inherent imagery and significance of the original name. Although it accurately represents the sound of "Snowball", it lacks the ability to convey any potential connections with the character's behaviors, personality traits, or appearance within the story.

On the contrary, Rong Rude chose to translate it as *Xue Qiu* (a literal translation of Snowball in the original text). In today's open cultural context, this translation proves to be more appropriate. The term *Xue Qiu* is straightforward and instantly conjures up an image related to snow in the reader's mind. In the story, the character Snowball is depicted as lively, agile, and creative. This translation effectively captures these qualities, presenting an image of a leader who is not scheming but rather positive and progressive.

Moreover, through the author's description, the use of mental processes highlights Snowball's disadvantaged position compared to Napoleon. The use of relational and mental processes foreshadows Snowball's inevitable expulsion during his power struggle with Napoleon. In contrast to the phonetic translation *Si Nuo Bao*, *Xue Qiu* enables readers to form more intuitive associations and gain a deeper understanding of the character through the name. It enhances the consistency in both meaning and imagery between the translation and the original text, thus better meeting the modern translation requirements of functional equivalence and enabling readers to better grasp the original author's intentions.

The anthroponym "Boxer", assigned to the novel's emblematic workhorse, encodes both literal and symbolic dimensions. Orwell uses it to underscore the character's relentless labor and physical endurance. Semantically, "Boxer" evokes associations with vigor and power, aligning with the horse's role as the proletarian archetype—a being whose strength is exploited by the regime. Boxer symbolizes the intellectuals who, under the political pressure and the fear of physical extermination, experience a sharp clash between their ideals and reality, and eventually yield to despair [17]. Rong Rude's translation, *Quan Ji Shou* (boxer), adopts a semantically translation strategy. This choice foregrounds the character's symbolic function as a tireless laborer whose identity is reduced to his physical utility. The term *Quan Ji Shou* inherently carries a human vocational

specificity, which, while slightly dissonant when applied to an animal, amplifies the allegorical critique of dehumanizing labor systems. By retaining the semantic core, Rong prioritizes ideological fidelity, ensuring that the target reader immediately grasps the juxtaposition between the horse's noble diligence and the pigs' manipulative exploitation.

In contrast, Chen Chao's transliteration *Bao Ke Se* opts for phonetic fidelity, divorcing the name from its semantic roots. This strategy avoids anthropocentric dissonance by treating "Boxer" as a neutral proper noun, thereby preserving the text's surface-level realism. Yet, the loss of semantic meaning obscures Orwell's deliberate irony: the horse's name, meant to mirror his exploitable strength, becomes an empty signifier. While *Bao Ke Se* aligns with Chinese conventions for transliterating foreign names, it sacrifices the layered critique embedded in the original. Functionally, Chen's choice may enhance readability for audiences unversed in English wordplay but dilutes the novel's satirical edge. Nida's functional equivalence theory emphasizes the receptor's response over formal correspondence. Rong's *Quan Ji Shou* achieves dynamic equivalence by eliciting the intended association between the character's name and his symbolic role. Chen's *Bao Ke Se* while formally neutral, fails to activate the semantic network critical to Orwell's allegory, resulting in a receptor response misaligned with the source text's ideological aims.

4.2 Semantic Transmission

4.2.1 Equivalence of sentences

The source sentence and its two Chinese versions discussed here is presented in Figure 1. The source sentence presents a multi-layered narrative sequence characterized by dynamic motion and vivid imagery. The syntactic structure employs a series of coordinated verbs ("lurched," "kicked off," "drew," "made his way") to depict Mr. Jones's intoxicated movements, while the subordinate clause ("where Mrs. Jones was already snoring") injects a subtle contrast between his chaotic actions and her passive state. The phrase "with the ring of light from his lantern dancing from side to side" metaphorically personifies the lantern's movement, aligning it with Mr. Jones's unsteady gait. Such syntactic

parallelism and semantic density pose challenges in balancing rhythmic coherence and semantic fidelity during translation.

Example 1:	With the ring of light from his lantern dancing from side to side, he lurched across the yard, kicked off his boots at the back door, drew himself a last glass of beer from the barrel in the scullery, and made his way up to bed, where Mrs. Jones was already snoring.
Rong Rude's translation	他打着趔趄走过院子，手里提的一盏灯的环状光影也跟着晃来荡去——一进后门，赶紧甩腿踢掉脚上的靴子，先从洗碗间的啤酒桶里汲取了这天的最后一杯，然后往琼斯太太已经在那儿打呼噜的床上走去。
Chen Chao's translation	他踉踉跄跄地走过院子，手里的灯笼泛出的光圈晃个不停。来到后门那里他踢掉脚上的靴子，从碗碟洗涤间的木桶里倒了最后一杯啤酒，一口喝下去，然后跌跌撞撞地上床睡觉。琼斯夫人早已酣然入睡。

Figure 1. Example 1

Rong Rude's translation adopts a continuous syntactic flow by embedding multiple actions within a single sentence, mirroring the original's cumulative effect. For instance, Rong's translation of "and made his way up to bed, where Mrs. Jones was already snoring." retains the English-style subordination ("where...") through the embedded clause "yǐ jīng zài nà er dà hu lu de (is already snoring)," creating a slightly rigid cadence. While this approach preserves the logical sequence of events, the excessive prepositional modifiers "wǎng ... de chuāng shàng" (to bed) disrupt the natural prosody of Chinese, resulting in a syntactic structure that prioritizes formal correspondence over idiomatic fluidity. Chen Chao's translation, by contrast, strategically segments the sentence into shorter clauses with punctuational pauses. The rendering of "and made his way up to bed, where Mrs. Jones was already snoring." separates the final action ("made his way up to bed") from the descriptive clause ("where Mrs. Jones..."), thereby aligning with Chinese readers' preference for paratactic phrasing. This division enhances narrative clarity by distinguishing spatial movement ("made his

way up to bed”) from auditory imagery (“was already snoring”), while the addition of “*yi kou he xia qu* (drink it down in one gulp)” explicates the implied action of drinking, compensating for the cultural gap in interpreting “drew himself a last glass of beer.” Chen’s syntactic restructuring demonstrates a conscious effort to achieve dynamic equivalence by prioritizing target-language readability without sacrificing critical semantic details.

Both translations reflect distinct approaches to Nida’s dynamic equivalence, which prioritizes equivalent effect over formal correspondence. Rong Rude’s retention of the English hypotactic structure adheres to formal equivalence but violates the principle of naturalness in dynamic equivalence. The overloaded prepositional phrase creates cognitive dissonance for Chinese readers, as noted in Zhang Xudong and Zhang Dongyu’s critique: If translators strictly copy the original text’s form to keep it foreign-sounding, the translation becomes hard to read and unclear. This confuses readers and blocks communication, instead of making it easy for them to understand [18]. In contrast, Chen Chao’s version achieves dynamic equivalence through strategic restructuring. The segmentation into paratactic clauses (mirrors Chinese narrative conventions.

Example 2:	He was twelve years old and had lately grown rather stout, but he was still a majestic-looking pig, with a wise and benevolent appearance in spite of the fact that his tusks had never been cut.
Rong Rude's translation	他有一十二岁了，近来颇有些发福，但他仍不失为一头相貌堂堂的猪，俨然一位睿智的忠厚长者，尽管事实上他的犬牙始终没有长出来。
Chen Chao's translation	他已经十二岁了，变得非常臃肿，但仍不失为一只仪表堂堂的猪，虽然两根獠牙没有被切掉，看上去却非常睿智慈祥。

Figure 2. Example 2

In this sentence, the semantic nuances are crucial to understanding the character’s portrayal. As tabulated in Figure 2, the phrase “rather stout” conveys a sense of moderate corpulence, which is essential to the pig’s dignified yet slightly comical image. Rong Rude’s translation renders this as *jin lai po you*

xie fa fu (has put on some weight recently), a rendering shown in Column B of Figure 2, which captures the colloquial and slightly euphemistic tone of the original, suggesting a gentle increase in weight without negative connotations. In contrast, Chen Chao’s translation, *bian de fei chang yong zhong* (has become quite bloated) leans towards a more exaggerated and potentially pejorative description, which may distort the intended balance between the pig’s majesty and his physical state.

The second semantic focus lies in the translation of “his tusks had never been cut.” Rong Rude’s version, *jin guan shi shi shang ta de quan ya shi zhong mei you zhang chu lai* (his tusks never grew), documented in Column C of the same figure, inaccurately suggests that the tusks never grew, which contradicts the biological reality that pigs naturally develop tusks. This error significantly alters the meaning, as the original text implies that the tusks were left uncut. Chen Chao’s translation, *sui ran liang gen liao ya mei you bei qie diao* (his tusks were never trimmed) correctly conveys this nuance, preserving the original’s implication that the tusks existed but were not trimmed, thus maintaining the semantic integrity of the text.

Example 3:	Boxer was an enormous beast, nearly eighteen hands high, and as strong as any two ordinary horses put together.
Rong Rude's translation	拳击手则是个庞然大物，几乎有六英尺高，论力气顶得上寻常的马两匹合起来那么大。
Chen Chao's translation	鲍克瑟体格魁梧，约有18掣高，两匹普通的马加起来也未必有他那么壮。

Figure 3. Example 3

Rong’s translation, while idiomatic in its handling of “rather stout”, falters in its semantic accuracy regarding the tusks, potentially misleading readers about the pig’s physical characteristics. Chen’s translation, despite its slightly exaggerated rendering of “rather stout”, accurately captures the intended meaning of the tusks, aligning more closely with the original’s semantic intent. This analysis underscores the delicate balance between idiomatic fluency and semantic precision in translation, particularly in texts where subtle details carry significant interpretive weight.

This source sentence demonstrated in Figure 3 combines zoometric specificity with hyperbolic symbolism to construct Boxer's identity as a paragon of proletarian physicality. The term "eighteen hands" employs a culturally embedded equine measurement unit, grounding the narrative in agrarian realism while magnifying Boxer's exceptional stature. This choice not only reflects Orwell's attention to zoological accuracy but also subtly critiques the dehumanizing quantification of labor. The phrase "as strong as any two ordinary horses put together" merges literal zoological comparison with mythic amplification, reinforcing Boxer's symbolic role as both a literal and figurative workhorse. Lexically, "enormous beast" carries dual connotations: "enormous" emphasizes objective scale, while "beast" introduces ambivalence, oscillating between admiration for his strength and the inherent dehumanization of his exploited status. Rong Rude's translation achieves functional equivalence by prioritizing cultural accessibility over strict unit fidelity. The term *pang ran da wu* (colossal entity) effectively mirrors the semantic gravity of "enormous beast," preserving both denotative magnitude and connotative awe. By converting "eighteen hands" to "*liu ying chi*" (six feet), Rong substitutes an imperial unit more recognizable to Chinese readers, albeit one still foreign to China's metric-dominated context. This pragmatic shift sacrifices the agrarian authenticity of "hands" but ensures immediate comprehension. The comparative structure *ding de shang xun chang de ma liang pi he qi lai* (It weighs as much as two ordinary horses combined.) retains the rhetorical force of the original analogy, emphasizing superlative strength through relatable quantification. Chen Chao's rendition leans toward formal equivalence by preserving the numerical value "18" and approximating "hands" with the unit "*lv* (a calqued unit equivalent to 4 inches, used to translate "hands" in equine measurement)". While *ti ge kui wu* (physically burly) subtly anthropomorphizes Boxer, aligning with his allegorical role, the calqued unit *lv* creates semantic dissonance. Unlike "hands" which is standardized in equine measurement, *lv* lacks zoometric relevance in Chinese, rendering "eighteen hands high" metrically incoherent and culturally opaque. Neither translation fully resolves the tension

between cultural specificity and reader accessibility inherent in "hands." Rong's imperial-unit substitution (six feet) prioritizes clarity at the cost of agrarian texture, while Chen's *lv* adheres to formal fidelity but sacrifices comprehensibility. A functionally optimal approach might adopt metric units (e.g., 1.8 meters tall) paired with a contextual gloss (e.g., approximately equivalent to 18 hands high) to balance immediacy and cultural framing. This dual-layered strategy aligns with Nida's principle of closest natural equivalence. The source sentence, as shown in Figure 4, is a powerful rhetorical expression. The use of the rhetorical question "What then must we do?" effectively grabs the reader's attention and creates a sense of urgency. The phrase "work night and day" emphasizes the intensity and continuity of the action, while "body and soul" further highlights the whole-hearted dedication required. The final part "for the overthrow of the human race" clearly states the purpose, making the sentence both inspiring and goal-oriented. The rhythm created by the parallel structure of "night and day" and "body and soul" adds to its persuasive power. Rong Rude's translation of this sentence has its own merits. "*bai tian hei ye lian zhe gan* (work night and day)" accurately conveys the meaning of "work night and day," and "*quan shen xin tou ru gong zuo*" (dedicate oneself fully to work)" corresponds well to "body and soul." However, from the perspective of functional equivalence, the use of "*wei ba ren lei la xia ma* (to overthrow the humans)" may not fully capture the solemn and formal tone of "for the overthrow of the human race." Although it is a vivid expression, it seems a bit colloquial and may deviate from the original's serious and determined atmosphere.

Example 4:	What then must we do? Why, work night and day, body and soul, for the overthrow of the human race!
Rong Rude's translation	那么，我们该怎么干呢？ 毫无疑问，必须白天黑夜 连着干，全身心投入工 作，为把人类拉下马！
Chen Chao's translation	那么，我们必须怎么做？ 日夜努力，全身心努力， 为推翻人类的统治而奋 斗！

Figure 4. Example 4

Chen Chao's translation of this sentence is also a good attempt. The question "*na me, wo men bi xu zen me zuo*" (then, what must we do?) precisely translates "What then must we do?" The use of "*ri ye nu li*" (work day and night) and "*quan shen xin nu li*" (strive with full devotion) maintains the parallel structure and rhythm of the original text, which is in line with the functional equivalence in terms of rhetorical effect. "*wei tui fan ren lei de tong zhi er fen dou*" (fight for the overthrow of human rule) accurately renders "for the overthrow of the human race," keeping the serious and inspiring tone of the original. In conclusion, both translations have their own characteristics. Chen Chao's translation seems to achieve a better functional equivalence in terms of maintaining the rhetorical rhythm and the formal tone of the original text, while Rong Rude's translation is more vivid but may sacrifice some of the original's solemnity.

Example 5:	The animals listened first to Napoleon, then to Snowball, and could not make up their minds which was right; indeed, they always found themselves in agreement with the one who was speaking at the moment.
Rong Rude's translation	动物们先听拿破仑的主张，接着听雪球的见解，却无法断定哪种观点是对的。其实，他们此刻正在听哪一位发言，必定会发现自己认为这一位说的有理。
Chen Chao's translation	动物们先听了拿破仑的说法，又听了斯诺鲍的说法，不知道到底谁说的有道理。事实上，他们发现，只要一方在发言，他们就会表示赞同。

Figure 5. Example 5

The source sentence in Figure 5 employs a sequential narrative structure and psychological characterization to illustrate the animals' cognitive vulnerability. The syntactic parallelism in "listened first to Napoleon, then to Snowball" establishes an oscillating pattern of attention, while the causative construction "could not make up their minds" explicitly reveals their intellectual deficiency. The temporal marker "at the moment" crucially emphasizes the transient nature of their allegiance, exposing their susceptibility to rhetorical manipulation. Both translations

effectively preserve the core propositional meaning through lexical equivalents like "*wu fa duan ding*" (unable to determine) and "*bu zhi dao*" (not know), maintaining the essential denotative content.

Rong Rude's rendition introduces an epistemic modality through "*bi ding hui*" (inevitably would), which intensifies the deterministic aspect of the animals' cognitive process. His choice of "*zhe yi wei shuo de you li*" (this speaker's reasoning holds validity) employs evaluative lexis that subtly implies a false sense of logical validity, aligning with the text's ironic undertone. Chen Chao's version adopts a more behaviorist approach with "*biao shi zan tong*" (express agreement), foregrounding observable actions rather than mental states. The conditional structure "*zhi yao...jiu*" (whenever...then) effectively captures the stimulus-response mechanism in the original text. However, the omission of temporal specificity in "at the moment" slightly diminishes the situational immediacy conveyed in the source text. Both translations successfully operationalize Nida's functional equivalence by recreating comparable rhetorical effects through different linguistic strategies —Rong through cognitive verb phrases and Chen through action-oriented expressions— while maintaining textual coherence and satirical impact.

4.2.2 Equivalence of slogan

Example 6:	The animals formed themselves into two factions under the slogan, "Vote for Snowball and the three-day week" and "Vote for Napoleon and the full manger."
Rong Rude's translation	于是动物们在不同的口号下分成两大派：一派的口号是“拥护雪球和每周三天工作制”；另一派的口号是“拥护拿破仑和槽满粮”。
Chen Chao's translation	动物们分成了两派，一派的口号是“投票支持斯诺鲍，三天工作就是好”，另一派的口号是“投票支持拿破仑，饲料将会堆满仓”。

Figure 6. Example 6

The source sentence in Figure 6 employs a parallel structure with contrasting political slogans to underscore the ideological bifurcation among the animals. The phrase

“Vote for Snowball and the three-day week” juxtaposes a leader’s name with a pragmatic policy promise, while “Vote for Napoleon and the full manger” pairs another leader with an appeal to material abundance. This dichotomy reflects Orwell’s critique of propaganda tactics, where rhetorical simplicity and rhythmic cadence enhance memorability and emotional resonance. The slogan’s brevity and rhyming potential (“week”/“manger”) align with the conventions of political rhetoric, prioritizing persuasive efficacy over syntactic complexity. Functionally, the text demands a translation that preserves both semantic fidelity and the performative force of rallying cries, necessitating a balance between lexical accuracy and idiomatic adaptability.

Rong Rude’s rendition adopts a formal register through the term “*yong hu*” (support/uphold), mirroring the solemnity of political mobilization. However, the asymmetrical phrasing—*mei zhou san tian gong zuo zhi* (three-day workweek system) versus *cao man liang* (full manger of grain)—disrupts the original parallelism. While semantically precise, the latter slogan sacrifices rhythmic cohesion, as *cao man liang* lacks the syllabic balance and rhetorical flourish of its counterpart. In contrast, Chen Chao’s version, introduces colloquial rhyming couplets. The imperative “*tou piao zhi chi*” (vote to support) injects a democratic veneer absent in the original, while the appended evaluative clause “*jiu shi hao*” (is truly good) and predictive assertion “*jiang hui dui man cang*” (will pile the granary full) amplify the slogans’ persuasive intent. Though “*cang*” (granary) slightly deviates from the specific agrarian imagery of “manger,” the strategic use of rhyme and rhythm better approximates the mnemonic quality of Orwell’s slogans, aligning with Nida’s functional equivalence principle by prioritizing analogous audience response over rigid lexical correspondence.

The source text of “Seven Commandments” presented in Figure 7 employ a prescriptive and universalizing syntactic structure to mimic the authoritarian tone of religious or legal decrees. Orwell’s repetitive use of “whatever” (in the first two commandments) and “no animal shall” establishes a rigid, absolutist framework, reflecting the pigs’ manipulation of language to institutionalize control. The shift from “whatever” to “no animal” and

finally “all animals are equal” subtly mirrors the ideological contradictions inherent in totalitarian regimes. Functionally, these commandments demand translations that preserve both their lexical precision and their performative authority, balancing formal equivalence (structural parallelism) and dynamic equivalence (rhetorical impact).

Example 7:	THE SEVEN COMMANDMENTS 1. Whatever goes upon two legs is an enemy. 2. Whatever goes upon four legs, or has wings, is a friend. 3. No animal shall wear clothes. 4. No animal shall sleep in a bed. 5. No animal shall drink alcohol. 6. No animal shall kill any
	other animal. 7. All animals are equal.
Rong Rude's translation	七诫 1. 凡用两条腿行走的都是敌人。 2. 凡用四条腿行走或长翅膀的，都是朋友。 3. 凡动物都不可穿衣服。 4. 凡动物都不可睡床铺。 5. 凡动物都不可饮酒。 6. 凡动物都不可杀任何别的动物。 7. 凡动物一律平等。
Chen Chao's translation	“七诫” 一、所有两条腿走路的都是敌人。 二、所有四条腿走路，或有翅膀的都是朋友。 三、动物们不得穿衣。 四、动物们不得睡床。 五、动物们不得饮酒。 六、动物们不得互相残杀。 七、所有动物皆平等。

Figure 7. Example 7

Rong Rude’s translation consistently adopts the archaic determiner “*fan*” (literally “all that”) to render “whatever” and “no animal,” creating a classical, quasi-legal register. For instance, “*fan yong liang tiao tui xing zou de dou shi di ren*” (all who walk on two legs are enemies) and “*fan dong wu dou bu ke chuan yi fu*” (all animals must not wear clothes) rigidly replicate the original’s categorical prohibitions through syntactic uniformity. The repetition of “*fan*” amplifies the commandments’ solemnity and universality, evoking the weight of

traditional Chinese moral codes (e.g., Confucian edicts). However, this choice risks anachronism, as “*fan*” carries archaic connotations less resonant with modern readers. Conversely, Chen Chao’s version alternates between *suo you* (all) and *dong wu men bu de* (animals shall not), prioritizing clarity and contemporary fluency. Phrases like “*suo you liang tiao tui zou lu de dou shi di ren*” (all who walk on two legs are enemies) and “*dong wu men bu de chuan yi*” (animals shall not wear clothes) simplify syntax but dilute the original’s rhetorical rigidity. While “*bu de*” (“shall not”) retains a prohibitive tone, the inconsistent phrasing—switching between nominalized subjects “*suo you dong wu* (all animals)” and collective agents “*dong wu men* (animals)” —weakens the structural parallelism critical to Orwell’s satire of dogmatic authority. Notably, Rong’s translation of the seventh commandment, “*fan dong wu yi lv ping deng*” (“All animals are uniformly equal”), intentionally echoes the cadence of legal statutes through “*yi lv*” (“uniformly”), reinforcing the irony of the commandment’s eventual corruption. Chen’s “*suo you dong wu jie ping deng*” (“All animals are all equal”) opts for the classical particle “*jie*” (“all”), which, while elegant, lacks the juridical force of “*yi lv*”. Both translations, however, struggle to fully convey the subversive subtext of the original’s final line, where “equal” is stripped of qualifiers to expose the emptiness of totalitarian promises. Rong’s adherence to formal parallelism aligns more closely with Nida’s functional equivalence by replicating the source text’s coercive rhythm, whereas Chen’s flexible phrasing prioritizes accessibility at the expense of ideological texture.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Research Summary

This study, grounded in Eugene Nida’s functional equivalence theory, systematically compares and analyzes the Chinese translations of George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* by Rong Rude and Chen Chao, focusing on lexical delivery and semantic expression. The research reveals distinct translation strategies in cross-cultural literary text conversion: (1) Lexical Level: Rong’s translation adopts a localized approach, utilizing “cultural

filtering” to transform source-language cultural imagery into expressions more accessible to Chinese readers. In contrast, Chen’s translation prioritizes fidelity to literal meanings, characterized by a combination of direct translation and annotations. (2) Semantic Level: Both translators demonstrate a profound understanding of the allegorical style of the original text but differ in their approaches to functional equivalence. Rong employs dynamic equivalence strategies to reconstruct narrative logic, while Chen retains structural features of the original through formal equivalence. (3) Cultural Adaptation: The handling of political metaphors and animal symbolism reflects divergent ideological considerations. Rong enhances readability through semantic compensation, whereas Chen preserves the defamiliarization effect of the original via foreignization strategies.

5.2 Theoretical Contributions and Practical Implications

The theoretical significance of this study lies in three aspects. First, it verifies the applicability of functional equivalence theory to allegorical literary translation criticism, expanding the theory’s scope. Second, it constructs a three-dimensional analytical model (lexical, semantic, and cultural layers), providing an operational framework for translation quality assessment. Third, through empirical analysis, it elucidates the dialectical relationship between formal and dynamic equivalence in literary translation.

Practically, the findings emphasize the necessity for translators to cultivate “dual sensitivity”: balancing fidelity to the original text’s literary essence and ideological core with adaptive strategies that align with target readers’ cognitive frameworks. Specifically, when translating politically allegorical texts, translators must negotiate between cultural acceptability and ideological safety.

5.3 Limitations and Future Directions

This study acknowledges several limitations that warrant attention in future research. Firstly, the analysis is confined to two Chinese translations of *Animal Farm*, which restricts the generalizability of the findings; expanding the scope to include multilingual versions could yield richer comparative insights. Secondly, while the study prioritizes linguistic

dimensions such as lexical and semantic layers, it overlooks deeper stylistic features and narrative strategies, leaving room for further exploration into how translators negotiate textual coherence and rhetorical effects. Thirdly, the absence of empirical reader reception surveys limits the assessment of the translations' practical dissemination and cultural impact. To address these gaps, future studies could employ corpus-based methodologies to establish parallel multilingual corpora, enabling hybrid quantitative-qualitative analyses of translation patterns across languages. Additionally, integrating reception aesthetics theory could illuminate how target audiences perceive and interpret translated allegorical texts, thereby refining our understanding of cross-cultural communication mechanisms. Finally, diachronic investigations into the evolution of translations under shifting socio-cultural and ideological contexts would deepen insights into the dynamic interplay between translation practices and historical contingencies. These proposed directions aim to foster a more holistic and interdisciplinary paradigm for literary translation research.

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