



A Pluralist Approach Illustrated by English Translations of Lu Xun's *Kuangren Riji*

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Abstract

This paper addresses the theoretical fragmentation surrounding the concept of "translation style," which is currently defined, operationalised, and evaluated in disparate ways across different research traditions. To address this, the study critically compares four major theoretical frameworks for analysing translation style—Venuti's domestication–foreignization continuum, House's SFL-based translation quality assessment model, Baker's corpus-driven translator style paradigm, and Jauss and Iser's reception aesthetics identifying their respective ontological assumptions, analytical methods, and explanatory strengths and limitations. Each framework is examined along four dimensions: its definition of translation style, its unit and method of analysis, its explanatory scope and blind spots, and its implicit or explicit evaluative criteria, using Lu Xun's *Kuangren Riji* (狂人日记) and its three English translations as a running illustrative case. The analysis suggests that these four frameworks are not competing theories of the same phenomenon but complementary lenses that illuminate distinct dimensions of translation style, specifically cultural–ideological positioning (Venuti), textual–registerial texture (House), empirical–distributional patterns (Baker), and readerly–historical reception (Jauss/Iser). Rather than seeking a unified theory, the paper proposes a framework-pluralist approach, wherein researchers select and combine lenses according to their specific research questions. Ultimately, this analysis aims to clarify the theoretical landscape of translation style research, provide a practical framework-selection heuristic, and demonstrate how a single translational case can reveal the specific insights and limitations of each framework.

Keywords: Translation style, domestication, systemic functional linguistics, corpus-based translation studies, reception aesthetics, retranslation, Lu Xun.

1. Introduction

Translation style is a deceptively simple concept. At an intuitive level, it refers to the characteristic linguistic and rhetorical features that distinguish one translation from another or a translation from its source text. Yet the scholarly literature on translation style reveals a landscape of profound theoretical fragmentation. Venuti (1995) analyses style in terms of cultural ideology and the translator's political positioning vis-à-vis target-culture norms. House (1997, 2015) operationalises style as register variation field, tenor, and mode mapped through systemic functional categories. Baker (2000) approaches style as a statistically measurable linguistic fingerprint, extractable through corpus-linguistic computation. Jauss (1982) and Iser (1978), working within reception aesthetics, locate style not in the text at all but in the historically conditioned reading experience of the audience.

The stakes of this fragmentation are not merely taxonomic but deeply practical. If a translation-studies doctoral student is designing a dissertation on "the style of X's translations of Y", the theoretical framework she chooses will determine everything downstream: what counts as data (textual features? corpus statistics? reader interviews? publishing paratexts?), what analytical methods are legitimate (close reading? computational quantification? sociological network analysis?), and what conclusions can be drawn (evaluative claims about translation quality? descriptive claims about translator preferences? historical claims about shifting reader expectations?). Without a comparative map of the theoretical landscape, the student is making a consequential methodological decision in the dark or, more commonly, defaulting to whatever framework her supervisor happens to favour.

The fragmentation also creates communication barriers across sub-disciplinary boundaries. A corpus linguist presenting TTR and STTR data at a translation studies conference may find her findings dismissed by Venutian scholars as "merely descriptive" and politically naive. A Venutian scholar presenting a domestication analysis at a corpus linguistics symposium may find her argument dismissed as "unreplicable" and insufficiently empirical. Each side is right about what the other's framework misses; neither side has the conceptual vocabulary to recognise that the frameworks address different questions. The present paper aims to provide that vocabulary not to adjudicate between the frameworks but to map their respective domains, methods, and criteria so that scholars from different traditions can engage productively across difference.

These four frameworks do not merely offer different methods for analysing the same thing; they embody different ontological commitments about what translation style *is*, where it *resides*, and how it should be *evaluated*. A Venutian analysis asks whether the translator has resisted or acquiesced to target-culture norms. A Housean analysis asks whether the translation's register profile matches the source text's. A Bakerian analysis asks whether the translator exhibits statistically distinctive lexical or syntactic preferences. A reception-aesthetic analysis asks how historically situated readers have experienced the translated text. These questions are not reducible to one another, and the answers they generate may conflict without any single framework having the resources to adjudicate the dispute.

This theoretical fragmentation is practically consequential. A researcher designing a study of translation style must choose implicitly or explicitly a theoretical lens that will determine what counts as data, what analytical methods are legitimate, and what conclusions can be drawn. The literature offers little systematic guidance on how to make this choice, or on what is gained and lost by adopting one framework over another. The stakes extend beyond academic taxonomy: how we conceptualise translation style shapes how we train translators, evaluate translations, and understand cross-cultural literary reception.

This paper undertakes a systematic, critical comparison of the four major frameworks. Its contributions are threefold. First, it provides a structured comparative map of the theoretical landscape. Second, it demonstrates the practical implications of framework choice through the illustrative case of three English retranslations of Lu Xun's *Kuangren Riji* showing what each framework reveals and occludes. Third, it proposes a framework-selection heuristic to guide researchers in choosing and combining theoretical lenses.

2. The Four Frameworks: Exposition

2.1 Text-Focused Frameworks: House and Baker

The four frameworks selected for comparison represent major, well-established traditions in translation style research, each with a substantial body of empirical and theoretical work. They were chosen to span the key axes of variation in the field: text-focused versus context-focused methods, qualitative versus quantitative approaches, and descriptive versus evaluative orientations. The selection is not exhaustive notably absent are Toury's (1995/2012) Descriptive Translation Studies, which foregrounds the sociological concept of translational norms, and Boase-Beier's (2006) cognitive stylistic approach, which links translators' stylistic choices to their mental representations but the four frameworks collectively cover the methodological spectrum from hermeneutic close reading (Venuti) to computational corpus analysis (Baker), from linguistic system description (House) to historical readership reconstruction (Jauss/Iser). Their juxtaposition reveals the full range of ontological and methodological commitments that translation style researchers navigate, whether they acknowledge it or not.

Juliane House's Translation Quality Assessment (TQA) model, developed over several decades (House, 1977, 1997, 2015), approaches translation style through Hallidayan systemic functional linguistics. Within this model, translation style is defined as the pattern of register choices field (subject matter and social action), tenor (participant relationships), and mode (channel and rhetorical medium) that constitute the text's "textual profile". The analytical method involves constructing a detailed register analysis of the source text and comparing it with the target text, identifying mismatches categorised as "overt errors" (denotative inaccuracies) or "covert errors" (register-inappropriate choices). The analysis culminates in a statement about whether the translation is an "overt translation" (one that does not pretend to be an original) or a "covert translation" (one that functions independently in the target culture). House's evaluative criterion is technical rather than political: a "good" translation achieves functional register equivalence with the source text or functions effectively as an independent target-culture text.

Applied to the *Kuangren Riji* retranslations, a Housean analysis would construct a register profile of Lu Xun's source text its mixture of classical literary Chinese and vernacular registers, its abrupt shifts in tenor, its unconventional mode as a "found manuscript" of a madman's diary. Lyell's elaborate, literary register in the frame narrative might be judged more register-equivalent to Lu Xun's classical-vernacular mixture than Lovell's consistent colloquialism, while the Yangs' grammatical explicitness might be judged a covert error (inappropriate mode simplification). The Housean evaluation would identify specific register mismatches without reducing the analysis to a binary polarity.

House's model has been refined through several iterations (1977, 1997, 2015), with the most recent version incorporating insights from cross-cultural pragmatics and genre theory. The 2015 revision explicitly addresses the challenge of cultural filtering the phenomenon whereby translators adjust register features to conform to target-culture genre conventions even when this produces mismatches with the source text's register profile. This concept is directly relevant to the *Kuangren Riji* case: the Yangs' low dialogue proportion (9.4%) may reflect cultural filtering towards an Anglo-American literary norm that favours indirect discourse in serious fiction, while Lyell's high dialogue proportion (40.7%) may reflect deliberate resistance to this norm. House's framework provides the vocabulary for naming this as a register phenomenon (mode simplification versus mode preservation) and for evaluating it within a systematic comparative framework rather than as an impressionistic "it feels different."

Mona Baker's (2000) corpus-driven approach inaugurated a fundamentally different paradigm: quantitative, computational, and focused on the translator rather than the source text. Baker proposed that "translator's style" could be operationalised as statistically distinctive linguistic patterns TTR, average sentence length, lexical density, reporting-verb preferences consistent across a translator's oeuvre. The analytical method is computational: a translator's corpus is constructed, and corpus-linguistic measures are compared against reference corpora or other translators' corpora. Baker's framework is deliberately non-evaluative: it describes what translators do without judging quality. Saldanha (2011) refined this by distinguishing "source-text-independent" translator style (consistent patterns across different source texts) from "source-text-dependent" style (consistent handling of specific source-text features).

It is instructive to note the methodological complementarity between House and Baker. House's framework provides a theoretically motivated, linguistically grounded vocabulary for describing *what* register dimensions a translation manipulates; Baker's framework provides the computational tools for measuring *how much* and *how consistently* those manipulations occur. A combined House-Baker analysis of a translation would identify register mismatches (House) and then test whether those mismatches form statistically significant patterns across the text (Baker). This combination of qualitative linguistic analysis and quantitative distributional evidence represents one concrete realisation of the framework-pluralist approach this paper advocates.

A Bakerian analysis of the *Kuangren Riji* translations would compute corpus-stylistic measures: Lovell's higher TTR (0.442) and lexical density (0.489), Lyell's higher dialogue proportion (40.7%) and exclamation-mark count (22), and the Yangs' lower lexical density (0.453) and near-elimination of direct dialogue (9.4%). The analysis would present these as descriptive profiles without normative judgment, though the patterns invite interpretation about each translator's stylistic preferences.

2.2 Context-Focused Frameworks: Venuti and Jauss/Iser

Lawrence Venuti's *The Translator's Invisibility* (1995) reconceptualised translation style as a site of cultural and ideological struggle. Venuti's central argument is that Anglo-American translation culture has historically privileged "fluent", "transparent" translations that render the translator's labour invisible, a practice he terms "domestication", contrasting it with "foreignization" deliberately preserving source-text features that signal cultural difference. Within this framework, translation style is defined as the set of textual choices positioning the translated text on a domestication–foreignization continuum. The method is qualitative and hermeneutic: the critic examines specific translational choices and interprets them as evidence of a broader ideological project. The evaluative criterion is explicitly normative: foreignizing translations are valorised as ethically resistant, while domesticating translations are critiqued as complicit in cultural imperialism.

Applied to *Kuangren Riji*, a Venutian analysis would characterise Lyell's version with its archaising diction ("boon companions", "rend us asunder") and retention of Chinese cultural references as a foreignizing intervention resisting the normalisation of Lu Xun's strangeness. Lovell's Penguin Classics version, with its contemporary register and accessibility, would be read as domesticating, assimilating Lu Xun to Anglophone literary expectations. The Yangs' state-sponsored translation would occupy an ambiguous position, neither fully domesticating nor aggressively foreignizing. The Venutian critique would valorise Lyell and problematise Lovell.

Reception aesthetics (Rezeptionsästhetik), developed by Jauss (1982) and Iser (1978) at the University of Konstanz, shifted the locus of literary meaning from the text to the reader. Jauss's concept of the "horizon of expectations" (Erwartungshorizont) argued that readers encounter texts through historically conditioned frameworks of genre, style, and theme. Iser's concept of textual "gaps" (Leerstellen) emphasised that literary texts require readers to actively construct meaning. Applied to translation studies (Chesterman, 2007; Brems & Ramos Pinto, 2013), reception aesthetics reframes translation style as an effect constituted in the act of reading by historically situated audiences not a feature of the text. The analytical method is historical and sociological: examining paratexts, institutional contexts, and critical reception to reconstruct each translation's horizon of expectations.

Venuti's framework has been influential but also contested. Pym (1996) argued that the domestication–foreignization binary oversimplifies the translator's field of choices and that Venuti's valorisation of foreignization constitutes a prescriptivism inconsistent with descriptive translation studies' commitment to neutrality. Tymoczko (2000) extended this critique from a postcolonial perspective, noting that the valuation of foreignization presumes a Western target readership for whom foreignness is an aesthetic novelty rather than a lived experience of marginalisation. These critiques do not invalidate Venuti's framework but contextualise its application: domestication–foreignization is a useful lens for analysing translations into hegemonic languages (English, French), where the power asymmetry between source and target cultures is salient, but it may be less appropriate for translations between languages of comparable cultural prestige or translations into minority languages.

Iser's (1978) concept of the "implied reader" is particularly productive for translation studies. The implied reader is the reader a text seems to address not any actual historical reader but the reader-role the text's stylistic and rhetorical features presuppose. When a translator alters the register, dialogue proportion, or punctuation intensity of a source text, they are implicitly reconfiguring the implied reader. Lyell's archaizing, dramatic rendering implies a reader with literary-historical sophistication who appreciates stylistic pastiche; Lovell's accessible, contemporary rendering implies a reader seeking an immersive, unmediated narrative experience; the Yangs' explicit, grammatically complete rendering implies a reader approaching the text as a document of foreign literature, to be studied rather than inhabited. These differences in implied reader a concept that bridges the text-focused analyses of House and Baker and the context-focused analyses of Venuti and Jauss/Iser represent one of the most consequential but least theorised dimensions of translation style.

A reception-aesthetic analysis of *Kuangren Riji* would situate each version historically. The Yangs' 1960 Foreign Languages Press translation addressed a readership for whom "Chinese literature in translation" was a politically charged category a window into revolutionary China. Lyell's 1990 university-press translation addressed a readership shaped by post-1968 multiculturalism and an academic appetite for "authentic" cultural difference. Lovell's 2009 Penguin Classics translation addressed a readership shaped by the globalisation of the literary marketplace and the commercial expectation that translated literature be immediately accessible. The stylistic features identified by corpus analysis (Lyell's archaisms, Lovell's accessibility) would be reinterpreted as strategic responses to historically specific reader expectations rather than inherent translator preferences.

3. Critical Comparison

3.1 Ontological and Methodological Divergence

The four frameworks embody fundamentally different ontological commitments regarding the nature and location of translation style, summarised in Table 1. Venuti locates style in the text and its relationship to target-culture norms: style is what the translator does to position the translation within an ideological field. House locates style in the text's lexicogrammar: style is the register profile that constitutes textual meaning. Baker locates style in the corpus: style is the statistically significant pattern emerging across multiple texts. Jauss and Iser locate style in the reader: style is the historically conditioned experience of encountering the translated text.

Table 1: Ontological Commitments of Four Translation Style Frameworks

Dimension	Venuti	House	Baker	Jauss/Iser
Definition of style	Cultural–ideological positioning	Register–textual texture	Empirical–distributional pattern	Readerly–historical experience
Locus of style	Text + target-culture norms	Text (lexicogrammar)	Corpus (statistical pattern)	Reader + historical context
Unit of analysis	Individual textual choice	Lexicogrammatical feature	Statistically significant pattern	Reception document
Evaluative stance	Normative (foreignization preferred)	Technical–normative (register equivalence)	Descriptive (non-evaluative)	Historical–descriptive

Consider the practical research implications. A Venutian analysis of a 300-page novel requires the researcher to read the entire text closely, select passages that exemplify domestication or foreignization, and construct an interpretive argument linking those passages to the target culture's publishing and reviewing apparatus. This might take weeks of scholarly labour for a single text. A Bakerian analysis of the same novel, by contrast, requires constructing a machine-readable corpus and running pre-written scripts a process that, once the corpus is built, takes minutes. The Venutian analysis produces a richly contextualised, politically engaged argument; the Bakerian analysis produces a set of replicable, generalisable statistical profiles. Neither is "better" in absolute terms, but each is better suited to different research goals and different scholarly temperaments.

These ontological differences have cascading effects on research design. A researcher who adopts Venuti's framework commits to an interpretive, case-based methodology that foregrounds cultural politics but cannot produce statistically generalisable findings. A researcher who adopts Baker's framework commits to a quantitative, corpus-based methodology that can produce generalisable findings but cannot address the political significance of translational choices. A researcher who attempts to "combine" both frameworks without acknowledging their ontological incompatibility risks producing an analysis that is neither politically engaged enough for Venutian standards nor empirically rigorous enough for Bakerian standards. The pluralist approach advocated in this paper does not deny these incompatibilities; it foregrounds them, treating framework choice as a deliberate, consequential act rather than a neutral methodological default.

The frameworks' methodological differences are equally consequential. Venuti's method is qualitative, hermeneutic, and case-based, rich in contextual detail but resistant to replication. House's method is systematic and linguistically grounded but labour-intensive, requiring detailed annotation across an entire text. Baker's method is quantitative, computational, and scalable highly replicable but sacrificing contextual sensitivity. Jauss and Iser's method is historical and paratextual, providing rich contextualisation but difficult to systematise across different periods and cultures.

These ontological and methodological differences mean the four frameworks are not directly commensurable. A Venutian claim that Lyell is "more foreignizing" cannot be refuted by a Bakerian demonstration that Lyell's TTR is lower than Lovell's the two claims are about different things: cultural positioning versus lexical diversity. A Housean finding that Lovell exhibits fewer register mismatches does not falsify a Venutian critique of Lovell's domestication.

The blind spots of each framework are not accidental but systematic they follow directly from the framework's ontological commitments. Venuti cannot account for fine-grained register variation because his unit of analysis (the ideologically significant textual choice) is too coarse to capture lexicogrammatical patterning. Baker cannot account for cultural politics because her commitment to descriptive neutrality precludes evaluative claims. House cannot account for historical readership because her method is text-immanent, comparing source and target texts without reference to their reception contexts. Jauss and Iser cannot account for linguistic texture because their focus on reader experience dissolves the text into its readings. Recognising these systematic blind spots is essential to the framework-pluralist argument: no framework is comprehensive, and the pretence of comprehensiveness the assumption that one's preferred framework captures everything worth knowing about translation style is the primary obstacle to productive cross-framework dialogue.

3.2 Explanatory Scope and Evaluative Criteria

Each framework has characteristic explanatory strengths and blind spots. Venuti's strength lies in revealing the cultural politics of translation why Lovell's accessible Penguin Classics rendering may participate in the erasure of cultural difference. Its blind spot is textual specificity: the domestication–foreignization binary can obscure fine-grained stylistic variation within a translation. House's strength lies in providing a linguistically grounded, systematic procedure for source-target comparison. Its blind spot is the cultural–ideological dimension: the model tells us that Lyell's register is more varied but cannot explain why this matters for the politics of cross-cultural exchange. Baker's strength lies in scalability and empirical rigour but is limited in interpretive depth and evaluative relevance. Jauss and Iser's strength lies in historicising reception but, taken to its conclusion, dissolves the text into its readings.

The frameworks' evaluative criteria are perhaps their most consequential point of divergence. Venuti's criterion is explicitly political: a stylistically "good" translation is one that foreignizes resisting target-culture domesticating norms. This has been criticised for prescriptivism (Pym, 1996) and for valorising a single strategy regardless of context. House's criterion is technical: a "good" translation achieves functional register equivalence. Baker's framework is deliberately non-evaluative a principled methodological stance that limits practical utility for pedagogy. Reception aesthetics reframes evaluation historically: a translation is "good" or "bad" only relative to a specific horizon of expectations. Lovell's accessible rendering may be "good" for a 21st-century general readership but "bad" for a Cold War-era scholarly audience.

4. Towards Framework Pluralism

The case against unification is both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, Venuti's "style-as-cultural-positioning" and Baker's "style-as-distributional-pattern" are not merely different methods for studying the same object they constitute different objects, irreducible to a common denominator. A framework that attempted to capture all dimensions of translation style simultaneously would risk collapsing into theoretical incoherence, producing analyses that are simultaneously political critique, register analysis, corpus computation, and reception history a methodological burden no individual researcher could reasonably bear. The quest for theoretical comprehensiveness would paradoxically produce practical paralysis.

Instead, this paper proposes a principle of principled eclecticism: researchers should select frameworks intentionally, according to the research question, and should make their framework choices explicit in their methodology sections so that readers can assess the scope and limitations of the resulting analysis. A study that uses corpus methods to investigate cultural positioning should explain *why* it is combining those particular frameworks and *what* each contributes. A study that uses only one framework should acknowledge what that framework occludes. Framework choice, under principled eclecticism, becomes a visible, accountable aspect of research design rather than an invisible, unexamined default.

4.1 Theoretical Pluralism and Case Analysis

Instead of theoretical unification which would risk collapsing ontologically distinct phenomena into a single, incoherent framework this paper argues for framework pluralism. Translation style *is* all of these things: cultural positioning, register texture, distributional pattern, and readerly experience. A unified framework attempting to capture all dimensions simultaneously would be methodologically unwieldy and theoretically incoherent. Rather than seeking consensus on the "right" framework, researchers should select and combine frameworks strategically, according to the research question, available data, and intended contribution.

Table 2 presents a framework-selection heuristic. For investigating cultural positioning, Venuti is primary with reception aesthetics as contextualisation. For register equivalence, House is primary with Baker as supplementary quantification. For a translator's characteristic oeuvre, Baker is primary with House deepening analysis for selected texts. For historical reception, Jauss/Iser is primary with Venuti linking reception to ideology. For multiple retranslations of the same source the most common scenario triangulation across Baker (quantitative profiling), House (register comparison), and Venuti (cultural-contextual interpretation) provides the richest account.

Table 2: Framework Selection Heuristic

Research Question	Recommended Framework(s)	Rationale
How does translation X position itself culturally?	Venuti (primary), Reception aesthetics (contextualisation)	Venuti provides the cultural-ideological lens; reception data historicises the analysis
Does translation X maintain register equivalence?	House (primary), Baker (supplementary)	House provides the register framework; Baker adds distributional evidence
What are the stylistic features of translator Y's oeuvre?	Baker (primary), House (supplementary)	Baker provides the corpus methodology; House deepens for selected texts
How have different audiences experienced translation X?	Jauss/Iser (primary), Venuti (reception-politics link)	Reception aesthetics provides the historical framework; Venuti connects to ideology
What are the stylistic differences amongst multiple retranslations?	Baker (quantitative), House (register), Venuti (cultural)	Triangulation: corpus methods identify patterns, register analysis explains them, Venuti contextualises

The running case of the *Kuangren Riji* retranslations illustrates the framework-pluralist approach in practice. A Venutian analysis alone would valorise Lyell and problematise Lovell on political grounds but miss the register-level complexity revealed by House and the distributional precision of Baker. A Bakerian analysis alone would produce a precise quantitative profile but lack resources to interpret the cultural significance of the patterns. Reception aesthetics alone would richly contextualise each historical moment but dissolve the texts into their readings.

Taken together, however, the frameworks tell a multi-dimensional story. Lyell's translation is simultaneously a foreignizing intervention (Venuti), a register-diverse rendering with motivated archaisms (House), a dialogue-intensive, exclamation-rich text (Baker), and a product of 1990s multicultural academic publishing (Jauss/Iser). Lovell's translation is simultaneously a domesticating accommodation to commercial publishing (Venuti), a register-consistent, accessible rendering (House), a lexically dense, TTR-efficient text (Baker), and a product of the globalised literary marketplace (Jauss/Iser). No single framework captures the full picture; each captures a dimension the others miss.

The multi-dimensional reading that framework pluralism enables is not merely additive each new framework does not simply add "more information" to a growing pile. Rather, the frameworks interact dialectically, with each reframing what the others reveal. Baker's finding that Lyell has the lowest TTR (0.394) appears, in isolation, as a simple descriptive fact. Viewed through Venuti's lens, however, it becomes evidence of a strategic choice: Lyell repeats words *because* he is preserving Lu Xun's distinctive patterns of lexical repetition and parallelism, which a domesticating translation would vary for the sake of "good English style." Viewed through House's lens, it becomes evidence of register equivalence: Lu Xun's Chinese prose is itself characterised by patterned repetition, and Lyell's lower TTR is a strategy for reproducing this source-text feature at the lexical level. Viewed through Jauss and Iser's lens, it becomes a reception question: did 1990s academic readers experience Lyell's repetitiveness as stylistic authenticity or as translational awkwardness? Each framework recontextualises the same data point within a different explanatory narrative and the full picture emerges not from any single narrative but from the tension amongst all four.

5. Implications and Conclusion

The framework-selection heuristic (Table 2) is not prescriptive but indicative. In practice, researchers may find that their specific context calls for combinations not listed in the table; a study of colonial-era missionary translations, for instance, might productively combine Venuti's politico-ideological lens with Jauss/Iser's historical reception framework and add a postcolonial theoretical layer that none of the four frameworks provides natively. The heuristic serves not as a constraint but as a starting point for deliberate framework selection an invitation to think explicitly about what each framework contributes and what it forecloses.

The value of making framework choice explicit extends to the peer-review process. Reviewers who disagree with a study's conclusions often do so on the basis of different and unarticulated theoretical commitments. A reviewer critiquing a Bakerian corpus study for failing to address "the translator's cultural positioning" is applying a Venutian criterion to a Bakerian study a category error that the framework map developed here can help identify and resolve. If authors specify their framework and reviewers recognise their own framework preferences as preferences rather than universals, scholarly debate can shift from "you're using the wrong framework" to "your framework illuminates X but occludes Y; here is what a complementary framework might add."

5.1 Theoretical and Practical Implications

The paper's central theoretical contribution is the articulation and defence of framework pluralism. By demonstrating that Venuti, House, Baker, and Jauss/Iser constitute different objects of analysis under the shared term "translation style", the paper challenges the assumption that there is a single correct way to analyse translation style. Framework choice is not a neutral methodological decision but a substantive epistemological one that shapes what can be seen and said.

The implications extend beyond academic research design. Publishers commissioning translations, editors shaping translator briefs, and reviewers evaluating translated literature for prizes and reviews all operate with implicit frameworks for evaluating translation style, typically some version of "it reads well" (a domesticated fluency criterion). Making these implicit frameworks explicit through the comparative map developed here would enable more informed, transparent, and accountable evaluation practices. A reviewer who criticises a translation for being "too foreignizing" or "too domesticated" would be recognisable, under the framework-pluralist lens, as applying a Venutian evaluative criterion, and the reviewer's own cultural-political commitments would become visible alongside the translation's.

For research design, the framework-selection heuristic (Table 2) provides practical guidance while encouraging methodological triangulation. Extending the pluralist programme, future research could incorporate Toury's (1995/2012) Descriptive Translation Studies with its sociologically richer account of translational norms and Boase-Beier's (2006) cognitive stylistic approach, which links translators' choices to their mental representations of the source text's mind style. A full-scale multi-framework analysis of the *Kuangren Riji* retranlations, with independent analyses through each lens and systematic comparison, would constitute a direct test of the pluralist thesis.

Translation pedagogy also stands to benefit. Curricula presenting a single analytical framework risk inculcating a methodological monoculture. A pedagogical intervention in which students analyse the same translated text through multiple frameworks producing parallel Venutian, Housean, Bakerian, and reception-aesthetic analyses would cultivate the theoretical reflexivity that the pluralist approach demands. The *Kuangren Riji* retranlations, with their manageable length, canonical status, and rich translational history, would serve as an ideal case.

5.2 Research Limitations and Future Directions

This analysis has several limitations. It examines only four frameworks, selected for prominence; other frameworks including Boase-Beier (2006), Munday (2008), and Toury (1995/2012) would enrich the comparative map. The single illustrative case demonstrates the pluralist approach but does not test its generalisability; future research should apply the heuristic to other language pairs, genres, and historical periods. The framework-selection heuristic remains a theoretical claim pending empirical testing a systematic review of published translation-style studies could assess whether principled multi-framework designs produce richer or more highly cited findings.

The framework-pluralist thesis advanced here also carries a risk that should be acknowledged: it could be read as endorsing an "anything goes" relativism in which all frameworks are equally valid for any purpose. This is not the intended argument. Frameworks are not equally valid for all purposes a Bakerian corpus analysis is poorly suited to investigating a translation's cultural-political positioning, and a Venutian ideological critique is poorly suited to producing replicable generalisations about translator style. The pluralist thesis is not that frameworks are interchangeable but that they are complementary: each illuminates dimensions of translation style that the others cannot see, and research programmes that strategically combine frameworks can produce richer accounts than any single framework alone.

A second risk is that framework pluralism, as a meta-theoretical position, may appear to offer no practical guidance for the working translator or translation teacher. The framework-selection heuristic (Table 2) partly addresses this concern by providing concrete decision guidance, but the heuristic's utility for practitioners as opposed to researchers remains to be demonstrated. Future work should develop practitioner-oriented adaptations of the heuristic, perhaps in the form of a "translation evaluation checklist" that prompts reviewers, editors, and teachers to consider which framework(s) they are implicitly applying and what alternative frameworks might reveal.

The four frameworks examined here emerged from different intellectual traditions poststructuralist cultural theory (Venuti), Hallidayan linguistics (House), British empirical corpus linguistics (Baker), and German hermeneutic aesthetics (Jauss/Iser) and bear the marks of their origins. Venuti writes as a polemicist, House as a systematic linguist, Baker as an empirical scientist, and Jauss and Iser as philosophers of interpretation. Their frameworks are not neutral analytical tools but situated intellectual projects with normative commitments and characteristic rhetorical styles. Recognising this situatedness is itself part of the framework-pluralist stance: to choose a framework is not merely to select a method but to enter a scholarly tradition with its own history, debates, blind spots, and insights.

The framework map and selection heuristic offered here represent a first step towards a more theoretically self-aware translation style research programme. Their value will be tested not by philosophical argument but by practical application: do studies that adopt principled eclecticism produce richer, more generalisable, or more influential findings than studies that default to a single framework without justification? Do reviewers and editors find framework-explicit studies easier to evaluate? Do doctoral students find the heuristic helpful in designing dissertation projects? Future meta-research systematic reviews of the translation style literature coding for framework explicitness could provide empirical answers to these questions, transforming the theoretical argument of the present paper into an empirically testable programme.

The three English retranslations of Lu Xun's *Kuangren Riji* produced by the Yangs for Cold War cultural diplomacy, by Lyell for multicultural academic publishing, and by Lovell for the globalised literary marketplace embody this multiplicity. Each version asks to be read through a different theoretical lens, and each resists reduction to the questions that any single lens can ask. The frameworks are not obstacles to understanding translation style; they are the instruments through which understanding becomes possible. The challenge for translation studies is not to choose amongst them but to learn to play them in concert.

Translation style is not one thing. It is cultural–ideological positioning, register–textual texture, empirical–distributional pattern, and readerly–historical experience simultaneously and irreducibly. The four frameworks are not competing explanations of the same phenomenon but complementary lenses that bring different dimensions into focus. Translation style research would benefit not from consensus on the "right" framework but from a more self-conscious, reflexive, and pluralist engagement with the frameworks we have inherited.

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