

ONLINE INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP

Dynamics of knowledge transmission and linguistic transformation in Chinese textual cultures

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Intralingual translation from literary Chinese to literary Chinese in late Ming/early Qing vernacular stories

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ABSTRACT

Textual comparisons between late Ming/early Qing *huaben* story *xiaoshuo* 話本小說 and their source texts show a wide range of rewriting technical means implemented by the authors/editors in order to produce vernacular versions of narratives primarily written in classical language. These rewriting techniques imply indexical and denotational properties. While denotational properties pertain to textual micro-strategies involving a variety of textual transformation possibilities (intralingual translation, amplification, verbatim/quasi-verbatim quotation, relocation, etc.), changes made at an indexical level include narrative point of view (1st, 3rd person narration, dialogue, etc.) and linguistic characteristics: *wenyanwen* 文言文 (literary Chinese), *tongsu* 通俗 (vernacular, either standard or dialectal), and mixed language. This paper will focus on the latter category: the linguistic characteristics of the vernacular stories in relation with their source texts. Within this framework it will address this particular question: how is it that we so often find, in stories referred to as “vernacular” by the very admission of their authors/publishers (as expressed, for example, in their prefaces), translations, amplifications, quotations, from literary Chinese to literary Chinese? In the repertoire of the vernacular short story, we can find countless examples of occurrences in which the classical source is translated into literary language—and this in a manner obviously distinct from simple quotation. Why this constant effort on the part of authors/editors to adopt this way of (re)writing—aside from classical to vernacular? What can we infer from this practice? Can we define recurrent situations in which it is implemented, particular objectives it would fulfil? If intralingual translation is widely recognized as involving, among its core characteristics, the updating of a temporally distant state of a given language into a more “modern” version of the same (Zethsen 2009), what would be the role of intralingual translation, which would not imply a shift between these different states? What additional meanings are being sought if the need to translate remains confined to the same linguistic register? (Lefevere 1992) And after all does this kind of translation really make us stay in the same linguistic register, to begin with? Furthermore, what would distinguish such an intralingual translation strategy from a mere commentary? Through a series of localized examples drawn from short story collections by different authors/editors, we shall examine in detail how exactly these particular cases of intralingual translation occur, and make hypotheses about the effects they were intended to achieve. We believe investigation in this field not only may change the way we apprehend rewriting processes adopted by premodern authors/editors when relying on prior sources, but may have an impact on the very definition of the vernacular in the context of the classical culture of the time. In this definition, vernacular may not necessarily be determined by the use of vernacular language *per se*, but by other modalities that aim at opening up the meaning of the text. Our demonstration will rely on a systematic methodology we have developed in order to analyze, both qualitatively and statistically, the shift between source text and target text in the writing of late Ming/early Qing *huaben* stories.

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- Short story / novella
- *huaben* 話本
- History of the genre spanning from Song to early Qing (13th-17th s.)
- Compiled in collections
- Starting in the 1620's: published collections achieved great popularity, with editors / authors like:
 - Feng Menglong 馮夢龍 (1574-1646)
 - Ling Mengchu 凌濛初 (1580-1644)
 - *ca.* 200 stories

- This publishing trends was to last until the end of the 17th c., first decades of the Qing
- Dozens of collections
- Hundreds of stories
- One “story” (*i.e.*, one chapter in a collection) may in fact consist of a succession of several stories:
- Typically one short + one long (“introductory story” 入話 vs./ “main story” 正話)

- Characteristics of the genre : the majority of stories are the result of the rewriting / intralingual translation of sources in literary Chinese into vernacular stories
- Context of Chinese diglossia
 - literary Chinese (classical Chinese) 文言文 / vernacular Chinese 通俗
 - (Ignoring the H/L distinction established by Ferguson 1959)
- Numerous statements by critics of the time (prefaces), highlighting the 文 vs./ 俗, 通俗 differentiation, and the benefits of taking advantage of various registers they allow
- A large number of stories have several sources
- Several hundred stories make an even greater number of sources
- Modern scholars constantly discover new sources for known stories

Development of a methodology for describing ST to TT transformation

- Traditionally, in research literature, the description of the relationship between source text (hereafter ST) and target text (hereafter TT) remains strikingly vague
 - ➔ Ex.: “y is the faithful / loose amplification of x”
- No description comparable to, e.g., Vibeke Børdahl's (2013) detailed account of the variations of the story of Wu Song fighting the tiger 武松打虎
- RL currently developing a methodology to accurately describe the transformation processes occurring between a story and its source(s)
- This methodology enables the production of quantifiable results, of tables and charts highlighting the techniques employed by authors / editors to produce a story from its sources
- This methodology can be applied to *huaben* short stories but to other genres as well, e.g., theater plays based on earlier sources

From ST to TT in the construction of *huaben* stories: characteristics and criteria

I. Indexical Level ("How it is said")

→ Language and Enunciation Characteristics

I.a. Linguistic Characteristics

- Literary Chinese
- Vernacular Chinese: "Standard" Guanhua
- Vernacular Chinese: Dialectal
- Mixed Language

I.b. Narrative Point of View

- 1st Person Narration
- 3rd Person Narration
- Dialogue
- Inner Monologue
- Reported Speech
- 3rd Person + Dialogue Combination
- Rhetorical Dialogue / Storyteller's Stock Phrase
- Inserted Verse / Inserted Depiction

II. Denotational Level (Utterance) ("What is said")

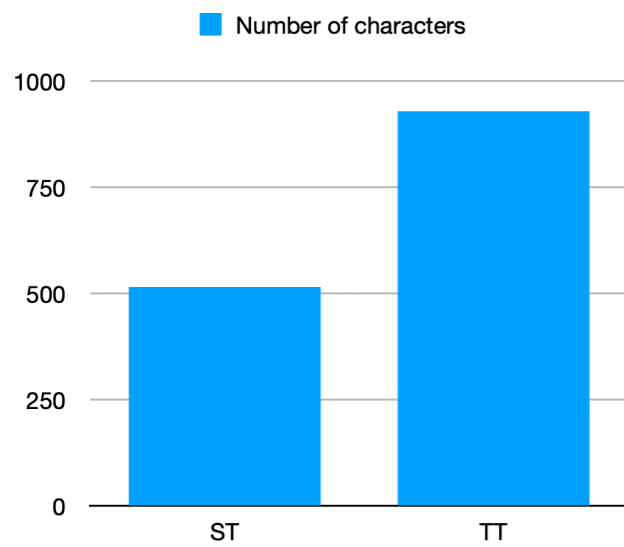
→ Textual Transformation Micro-strategies

- Verbatim Quotation
- Quasi-Quotation / Amplified Quotation
- Translation / Replacement by (Quasi-)Synonym
- Amplified Translation
- Explanatory Translation / Reformulating
- Divergence
- Addition
- Diverging Addition
- Omission

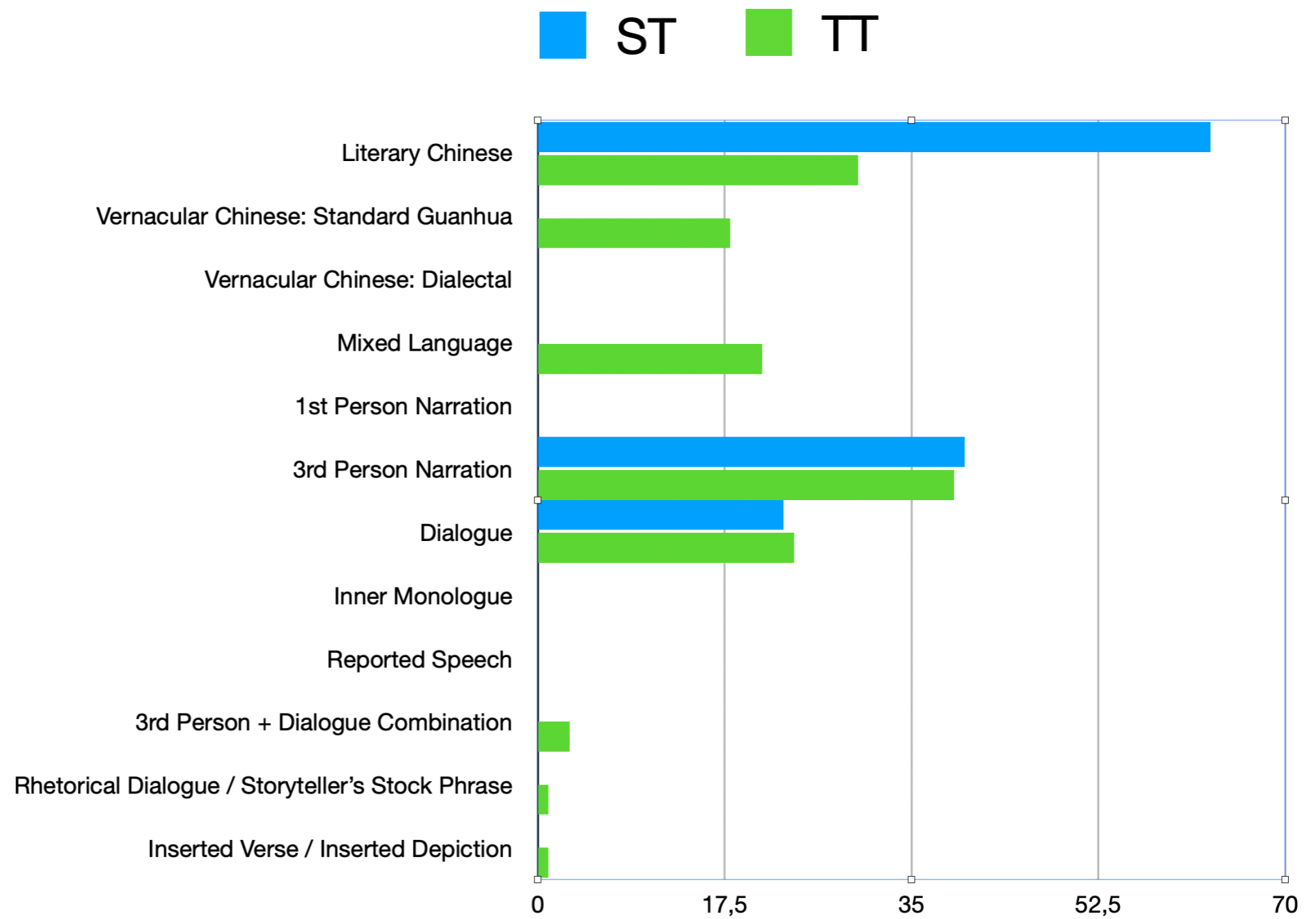
Possible Additional Feature

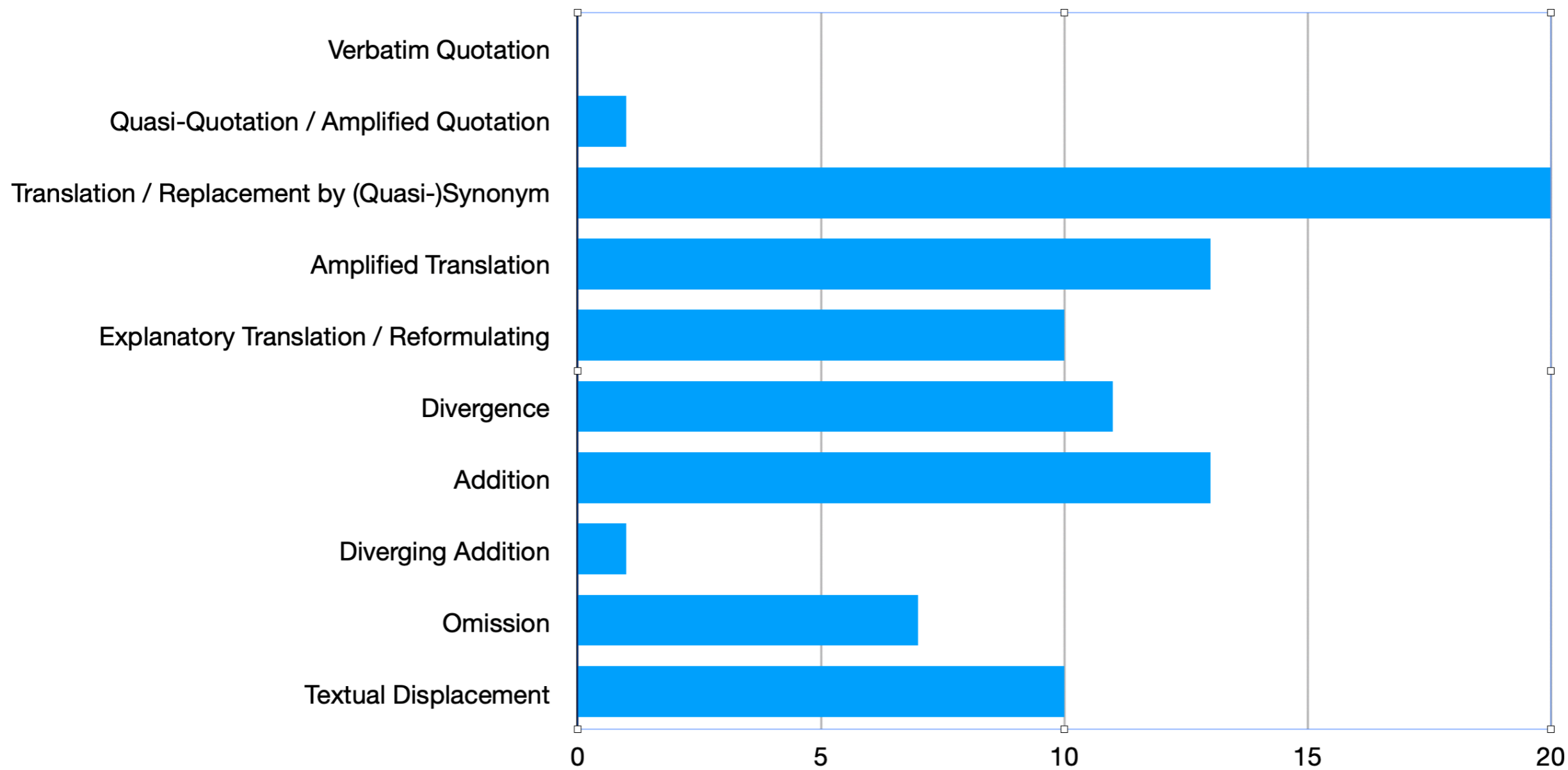
- Textual Displacement

- Basic methodology for comparing ST with TT
- The method consists of a segmentation of ST and TT
- An identified segment of ST is associated with the corresponding identified segment of TT
- Analysis of the transformation from one segment to another
- Each segment analysis necessarily involves one and only one characteristic from each of the three lists Ia, Ib and II (with the possible addition of textual displacement)
- The complete analysis of a rewriting of a source text (ST) into a story (TT) is the result of the succession of all the segments analysed in this way
- The results can be used for statistical purposes, such as the construction of tables or graphs
- A numerical database can be established for entire collections



Amplification rate: + 80%





- One of the most interesting issue, as far as language is concerned, is the role played by literary Chinese in vernacular stories
- Literary Chinese can be found associated with any of the textual transformation micro-strategies cited above
- Literary Chinese in TT can come from
 - more or less verbatim quotation from the ST
 - intralingual translation
 - addition
- It can be present in any narrative point of view (3rd person narration, dialogue, inserted verse / depiction, etc.)

Verbatim Quotation

- The most obvious situation is when the ST is quoted without change or with minimal change in the TT (as ST is almost invariably in literary Chinese)

• Ex.:

ST:

[...] 生自相門，窮極富貴，第宅宏麗，莫與為比。然讀書能文，敬禮賢士，故時譽翕然稱之。

This student came from a ministerial family, he enjoyed an immense fortune and a high status, lived in luxurious mansions, to such extent that no one could compete with him. And yet he had studied and was versed in literary composition, and expressed reverence for the virtuous scholars, which is why his good reputation at that time was unanimously praised.

TT:

生在相門，窮極富貴，第宅宏麗，莫與為比。卻又讀書能文，敬禮賢士，一時公卿間，多稱誦他好處。

This student was of a ministerial family, he enjoyed an immense fortune and a high status, lived in luxurious mansions, to such extent that no one could compete with him. But in addition, he had studied and was versed in literary composition, and expressed reverence for the virtuous scholars, and at that time, among the high-ranking officials, most praised his fine qualities.

→ !! Note how the grammatical articulations are **vernacularized**: 在 instead of 自 ; 卻又 instead of 然

Quasi-Quotation / Amplified Quotation

- Sometimes the quotation is slightly changed (sometimes inadvertently, for example when citing from memory)
- Sometimes the quotation is intentionally amplified, thus enhancing the sententious quality of the ST in literary language

• Ex.:

ST:

躍而吁天，俯而泣地。

Jumping up and down, I sighed towards Heaven; bowing my head, I sobbed to the earth.

TT:

躍而呼天，天不我憐。俯而泣地，地不我惜。

Jumping up and down I implored Heaven, but Heaven had no mercy on me; bowing my head I sobbed to the earth, but the Earth didn't care about me.

Intralingual Translation

- In a high number of cases, the translation process is from literary Chinese to literary Chinese or mixed language
- In such cases, there is no change, or very little change, of linguistic register, but there is nevertheless an obvious need for translation / rewording
- Examples like the following are ubiquitous:

ST:

家持所居售人，今為邸店。此室實吾故棲。

My owner sold my lodging, and it is now an inn. This room is actually where I used to live.

TT:

鴉兒以所居售人，今為旅店。此房，昔日妾之房也。

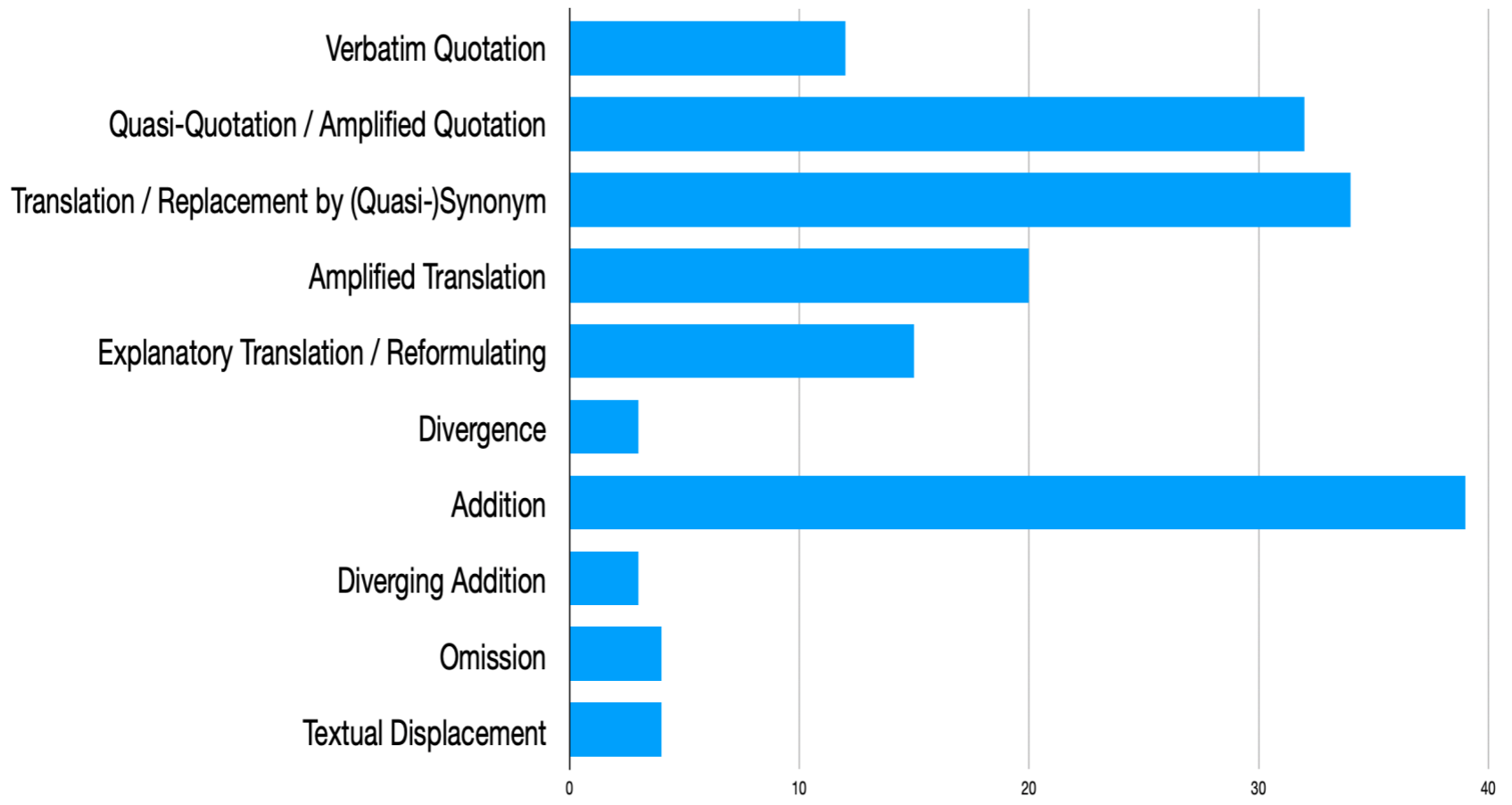
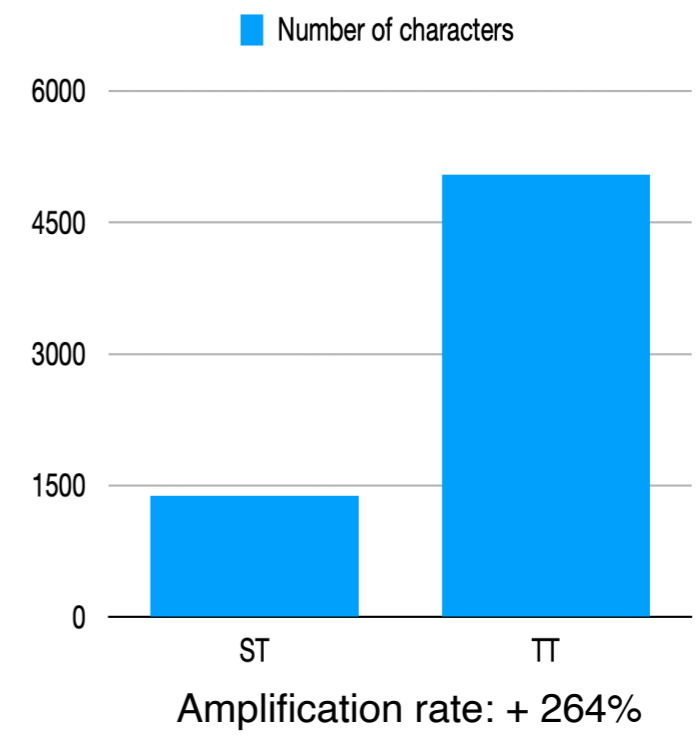
The madam sold my lodging, and it is now an inn. This room is the one I used to live in in the past.

- Many observations could be drawn from the graphics resulting from the textual comparison of a story and its source

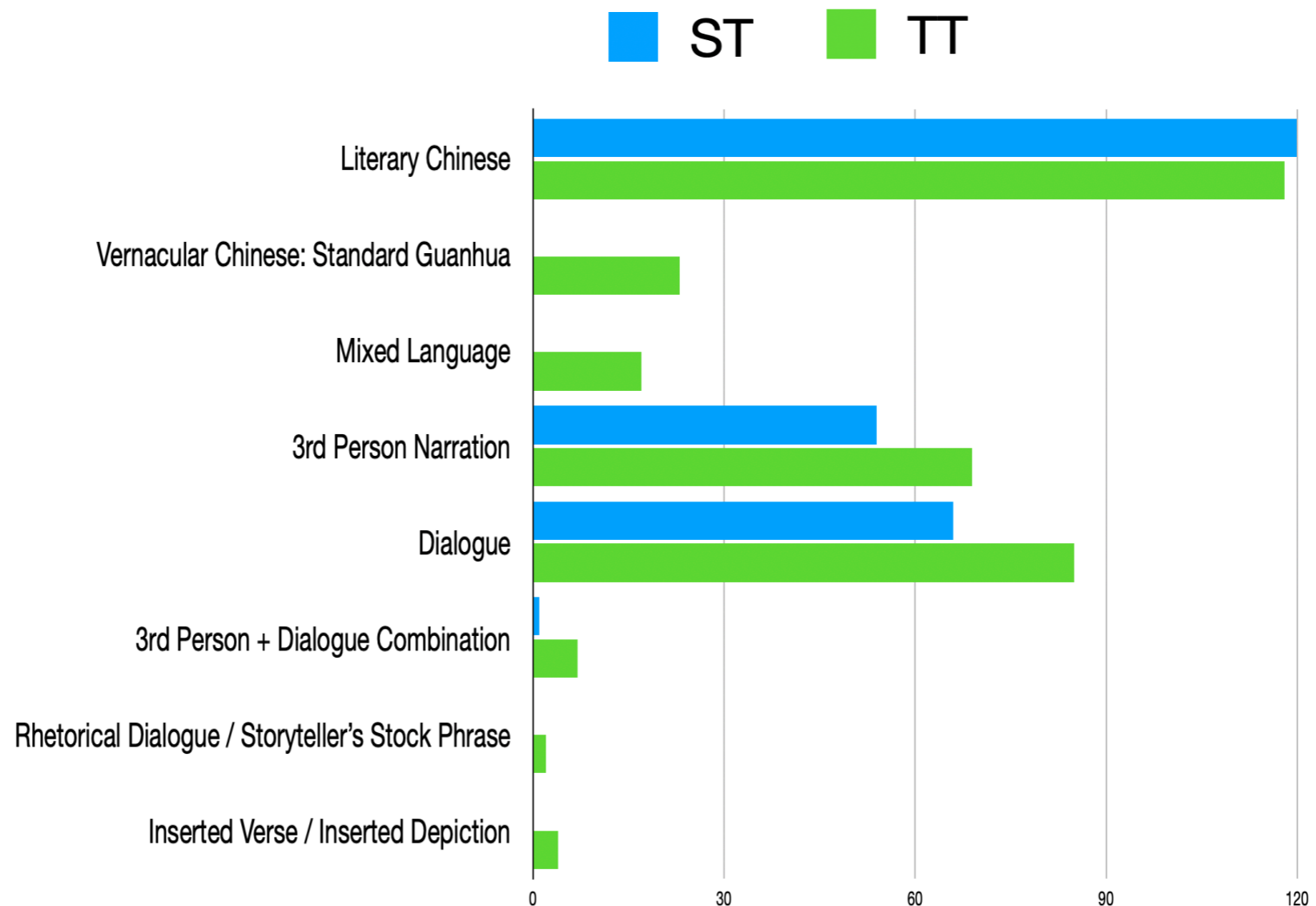
- Ex.: 東魯古狂生 《醉醒石》 6 main story



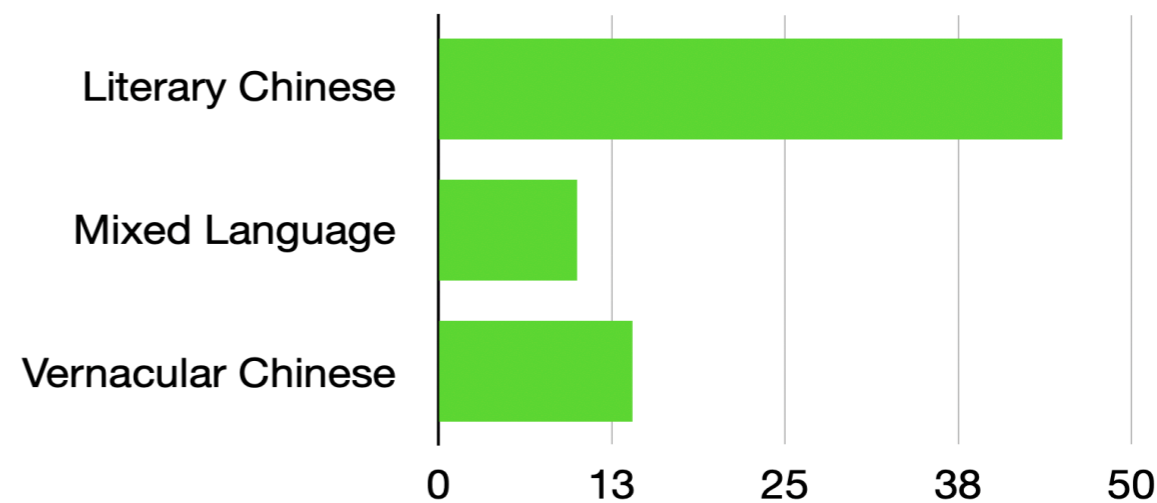
- High amplification rate
- Numerous additions
- The 3 categories of translation are well represented



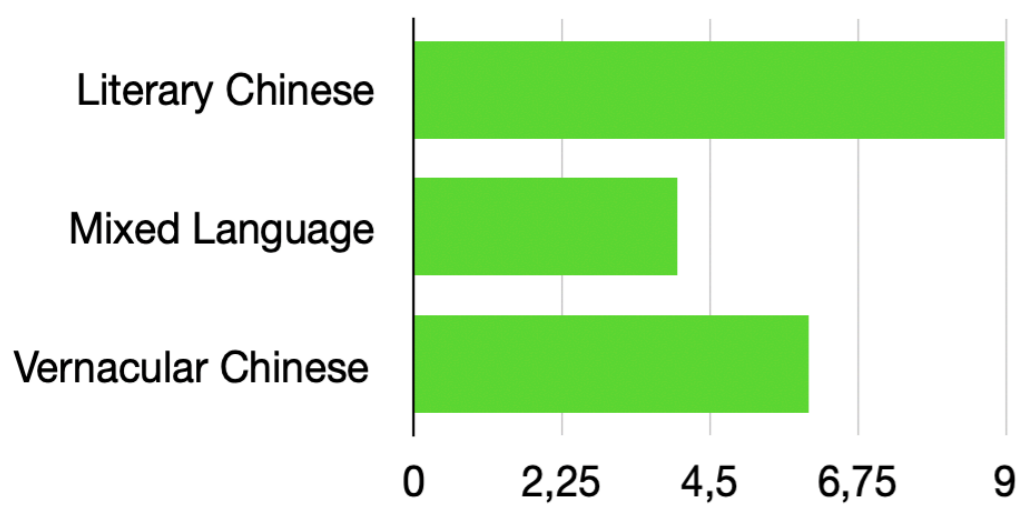
- No vernacular or mixed I. in ST
- Some vernacular in TT
- Lots of literary or mixed I. in TT
- Increase in 3rd person narration, but also in dialogue : literary style is a living language as much as vernacular



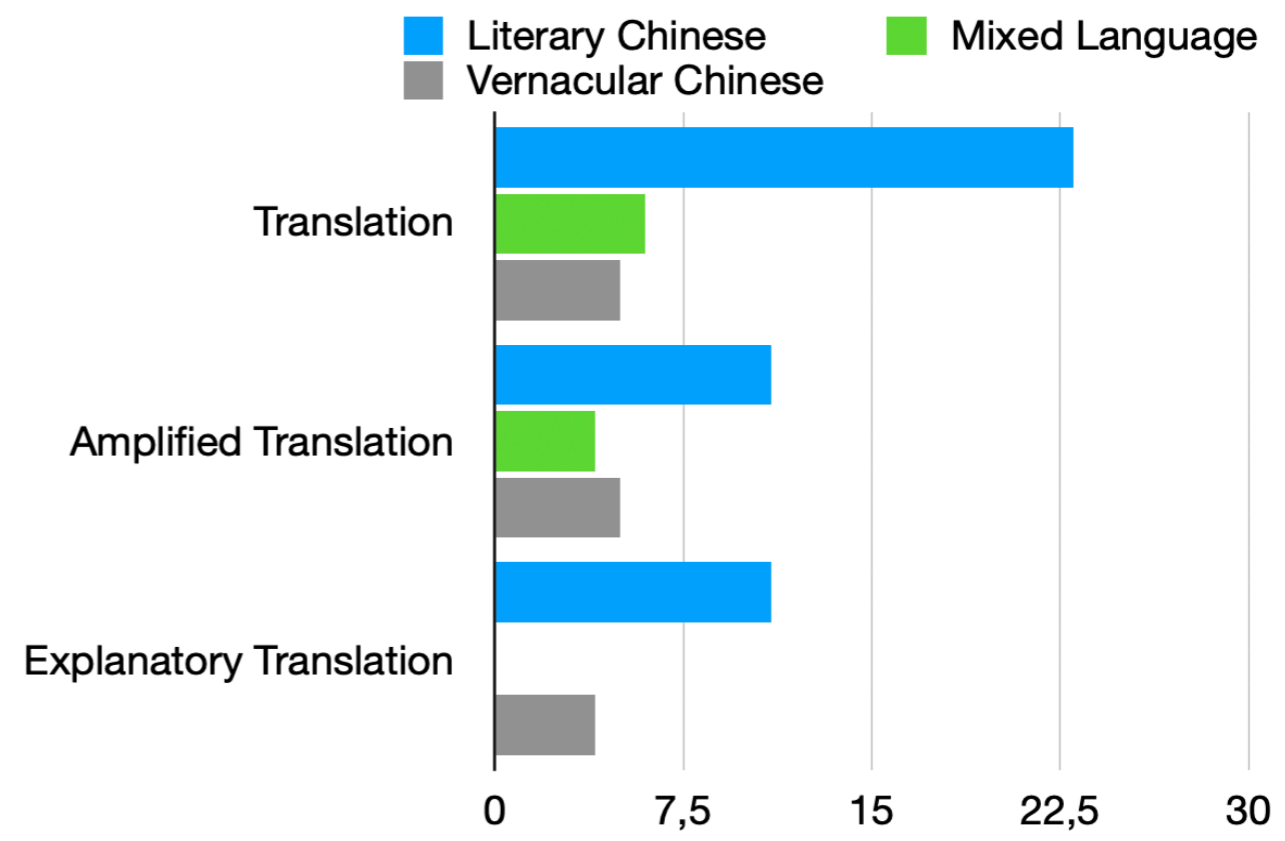
- Aside from quotations which are necessarily in literary I., many translations are from literary to literary I.
- We can extract sub-charts showing the ratio of the different language levels in relation with additions and translations



Ratio of translation to language type (all translations)

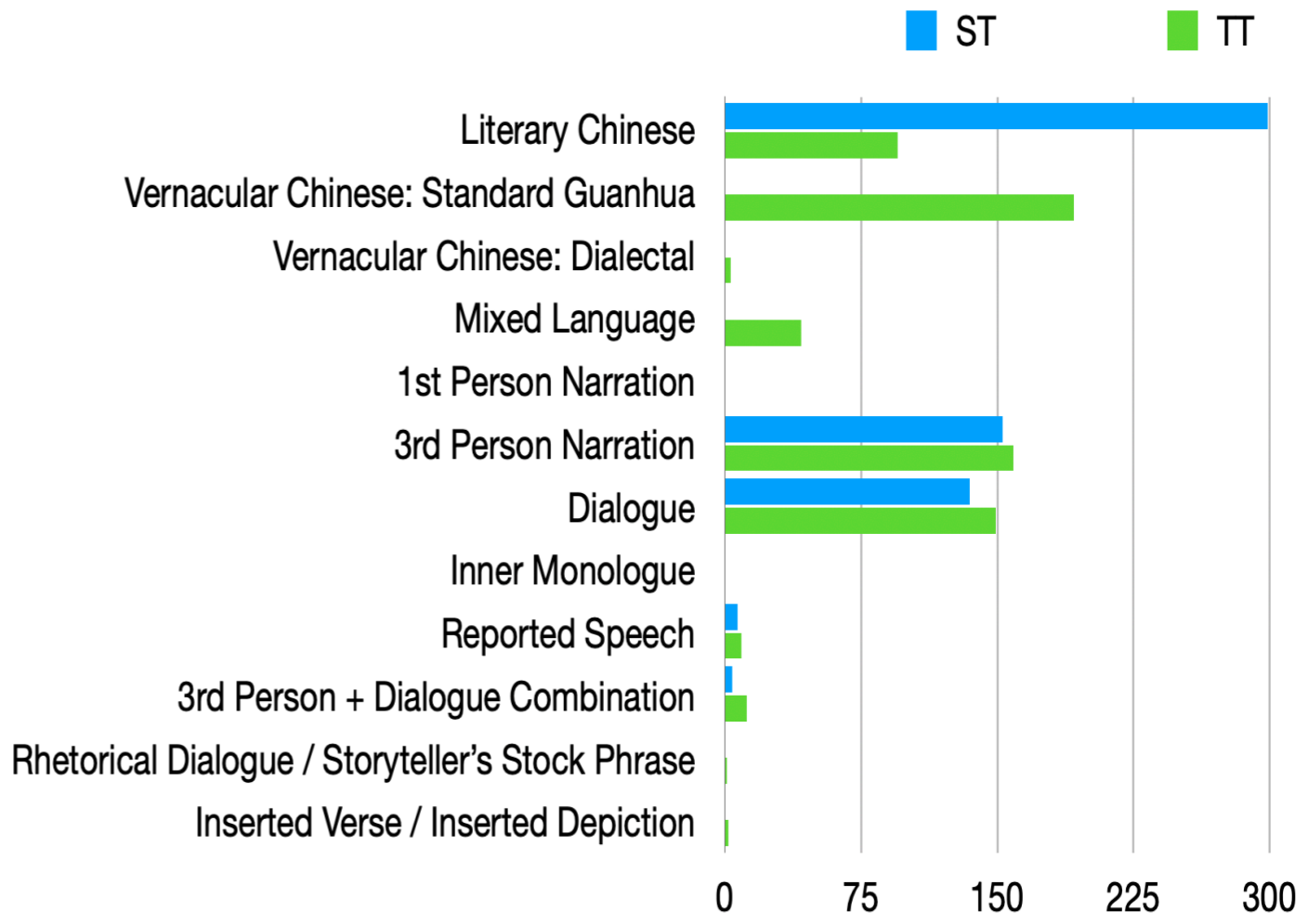
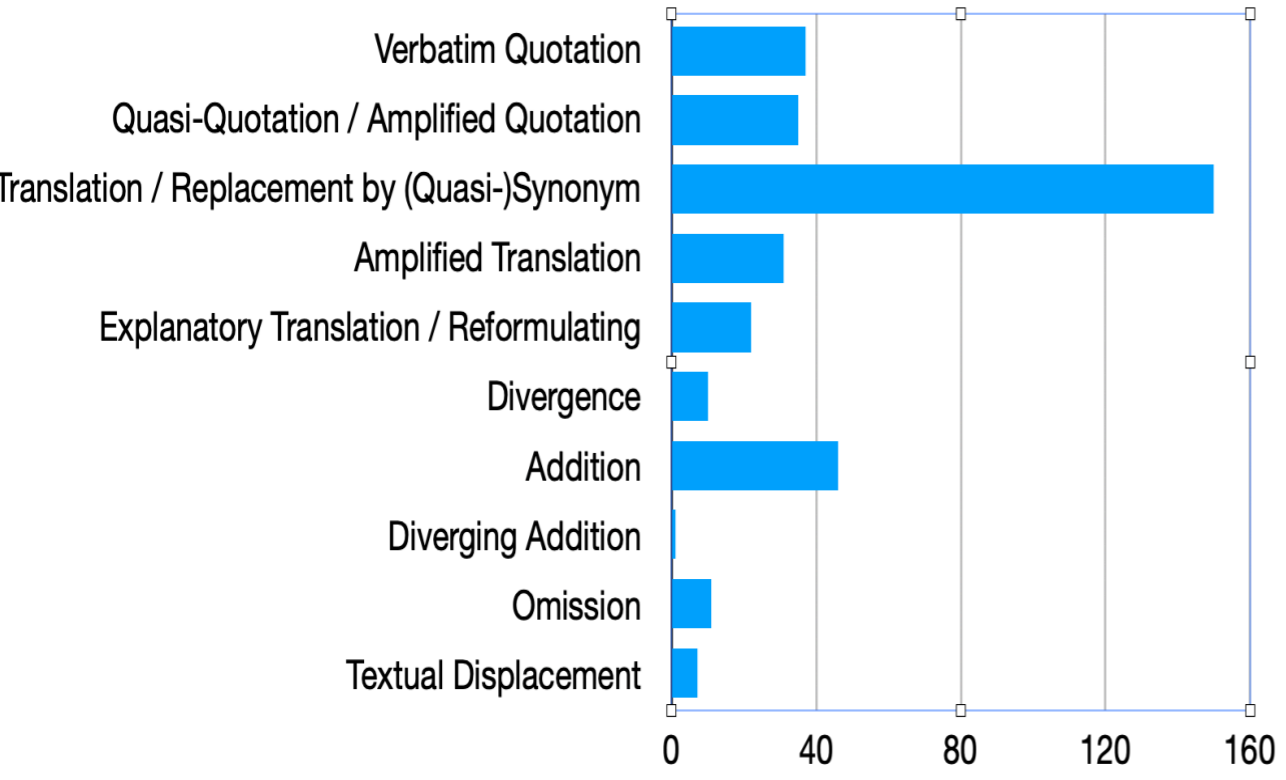
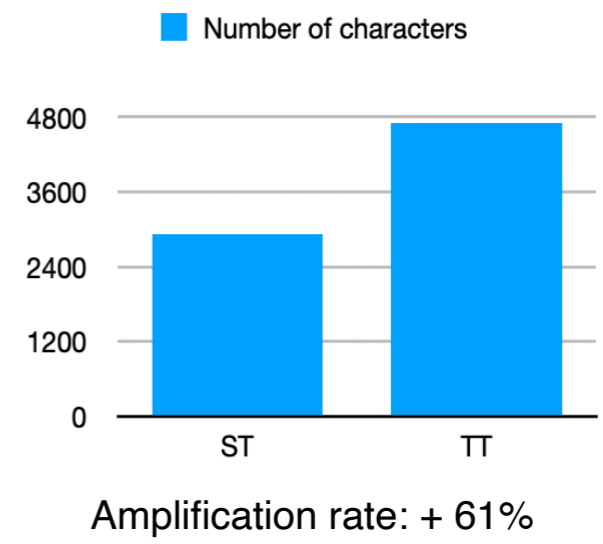


Ratio of addition to language type



Ratio of translation to language type (by translation type)

- Note that there is no necessary relationship between the accuracy of a translation and the fact that we find a high proportion of classical Chinese in TT
- In this example, with a low amplification rate, we can see that we are quite close to the original text, but with a high proportion of vernacular passages
- In this case, literary language is mostly a matter of quotations, whereas translation consists mostly of a shift from classical to vernacular language



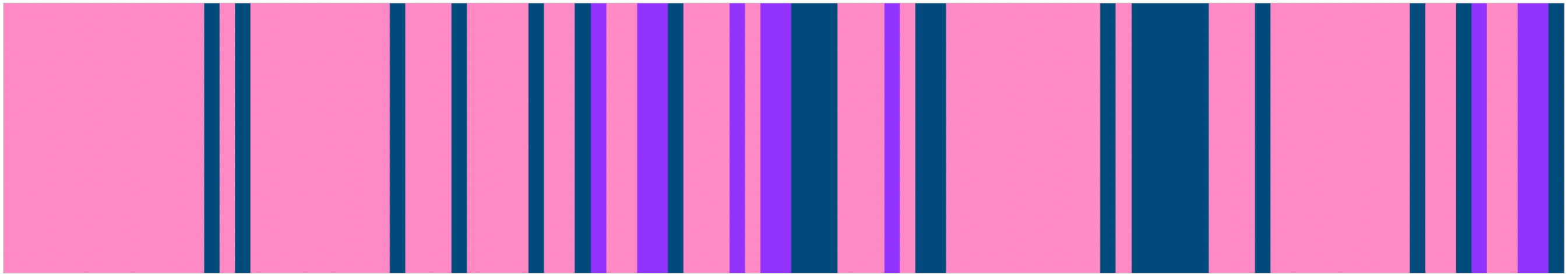
→ Each case is different, with different but always motivated textual strategies

- This research is still experimental, and I would like to be able to develop towards automated processes
- Therefore it is still difficult at this stage to define proven constants that would preside over the choice of classical or mixed language
- For this, we would need to be able to draw on a more significant number of textual comparisons than those I currently have (*ca.* 20 to date)
- One application of the method, which is very versatile, is to look at the uses of language in the whole narrative sequence



Beginning

End



Vernacular Chinese: Standard Guanhua



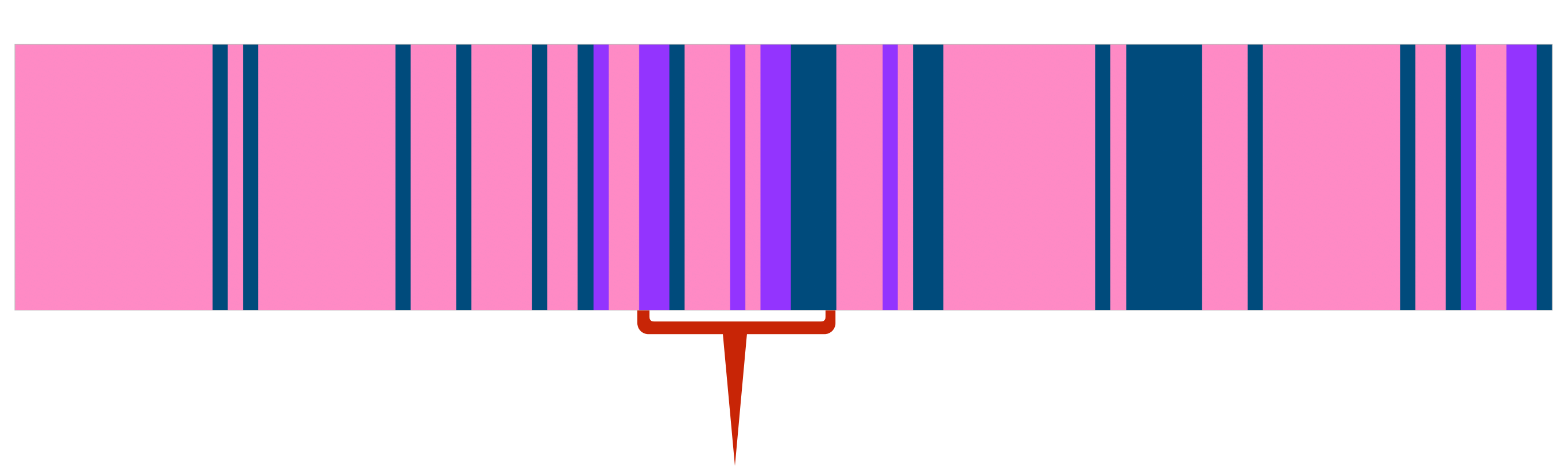
Mixed Language



Literary Chinese

Distribution of language registers in the story: 陸人龍 《型世言》 10 main story

- What can we infer from the course of the narrative in relation to the language it uses?
- We must not believe, for example, that classical language is confined to descriptions and that lively dialogues would rather be in natural, vernacular language
- In some stories, the opposite is true
- The story referred to here is about a young widow who decides to follow her husband in death, despite the opposition of her entire family-in-law, who urge her to stay alive
- The collection is known to adhere to a rigorous moral code
- Regarding the problem of widows in relation with their in-laws, it hardly hides its advocating of widow suicide
- ➔ If we look at some passages corresponding to the parts of the text that are in literary or mixed language, what do we get?

- 
- Dialogue between the heroin and her mother
 - The young widow tries to persuade her mother that she (the widow) should follow her husband into death
 - The young widow (systematically called “the exemplary / heroic woman” “烈女” in the TT) speaks in mixed or literary language, while her mother responds in sometimes very colloquial vernacular
 - The heroin is thus echoing the *Biographies of Exemplary Women* 《烈女傳》 in whose reading she has been immersed since childhood



Colours

烈女 母親

我有四件該死，無子女要我撫育，牽我腸肚，這該死；公姑年老，後日無有倚靠，二該死；我年方二十三，後邊日子長，三該死；公姑自有子奉養，不消我，四該死。

[...]

他母親道：「我兒，夫婦之情，原是越思量越痛傷的，這怪不得你。況如今正在熱水頭上，只是你若有些山高水低，你兄弟又無一個姊姊，又嫁著個窮人，叫我更看何人，況且你丈夫臨終有言，叫你與我過活，你怎一味生性，不顧著我。」

[...]

烈女道：「母親何必如此，兒雖在此，魂已隨歸郎，活一刻徒使我一刻似刀刺一般。」

[...]

殮時，出二玉珥，以一納善世口中，以為含。一以與母，道：「留為我含，九泉之下，以此為信。」

The “core principles” of the whole story

我有四件該死，無子女要我撫育，牽我腸肚，這該死；公姑年老，後日無有倚靠，二該死；我年方二十三，後邊日子長，三該死；公姑自有子奉養，不消我，四該死。

[...]

他母親道：「我兒，夫婦之情，原是越思量越痛傷的，這怪不得你。況如今正在熱水頭上，只是你若有些山高水低，你兄弟又無一個姊姊，又嫁著個窮人，叫我更看何人，況且你丈夫臨終有言，叫你與我過活，你怎一味生性，不顧著我。」

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烈女道：「母親何必如此，兒雖在此，魂已隨歸郎，活一刻徒使我一刻似刀刺一般。」

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殮時，出二玉珥，以一納善世口中，以為含。一以與母，道：「留為我含，九泉之下，以此為信。」

- A good example of what I call “mixed language” / “intermediate language”
- The ST in literary language is opened up towards some explanatory translation with vernacular characteristics (ex.: “該死” instead of “宜死”; “公姑” instead of “舅姑”; “不消” instead of “無須”);, in a way that tends to make the meaning clearer for everyone while retaining the commanding characteristics of the original, literary register (ex.: “無”, “無有”, “年方二十三”, “自有子奉養”)
- The rhythmic characteristics of ST are retained in TT, to a formulaic effect

ST:

自數宜死者四：無子宜死；年少宜死；舅姑老，異日無倚，宜死；舅姑自有子奉養，無須我，宜死。

She had listed the four good reasons she had for dying. She had no children: reason to die. She was young: reason to die. Her parents-in-law were old and one day she would be without support: reason to die. Her in-laws had sons of their own to support them, and did not need her: reason to die.

TT :

我有四件該死，無子女要我撫育，牽我腸肚，這該死；公姑年老，後日無有倚靠，二該死；我年方二十三，後邊日子長，三該死；公姑自有子奉養，不消我，四該死。

There are four reasons why I'd better die. I don't have children to bring up, and who would be a cause for concern: for this reason, I'd better die. My in-laws are old, and later on I will be left without any support: second reason why I'd better die. I am only in my twenty-third year, and I still have plenty of time to live: third reason why I had better die. My in-laws have sons of their own to support them, and don't need me: fourth reason I'd better die.



我有四件該死，無子女要我撫育，牽我腸肚，這該死；公姑年老，後日無有倚靠，二該死；我年方二十三，後邊日子長，三該死；公姑自有子奉養，不消我，四該死。

[...]

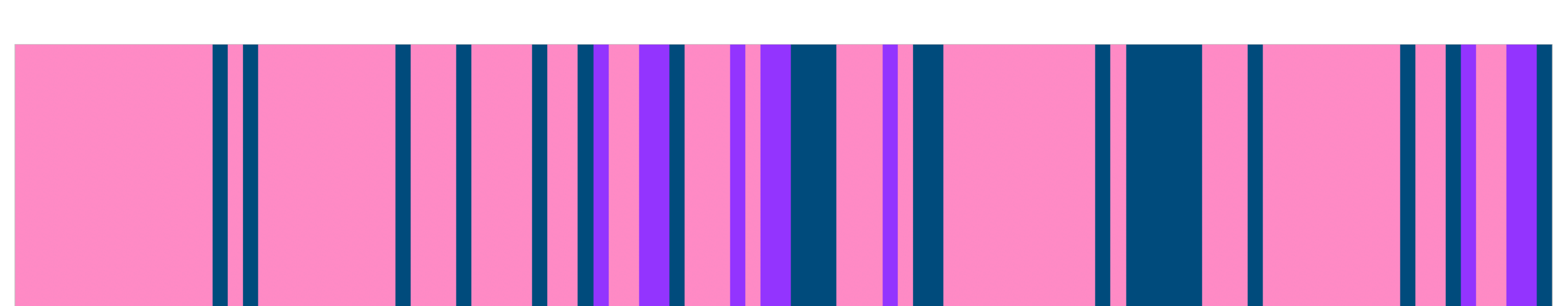
他母親道：「我兒，夫婦之情，原是越思量越痛傷的，這怪不得你。況如今正在熱水頭上，**The “heroic woman” ends her tirade with a verbatim quotation of ST**叫我更看何人，況且你丈夫臨終有言，叫你與我過活，你怎一味生性，不顧著我。」

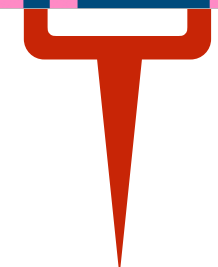
[...]

烈女道：「母親何必如此，兒雖在此，魂已隨歸郎，活一刻徒使我一刻似刀刺一般。」

[...]

殮時，出二玉珥，以一納善世口中，以為含。一以與母，道：**「留為我含，九泉之下，以此為信。」**

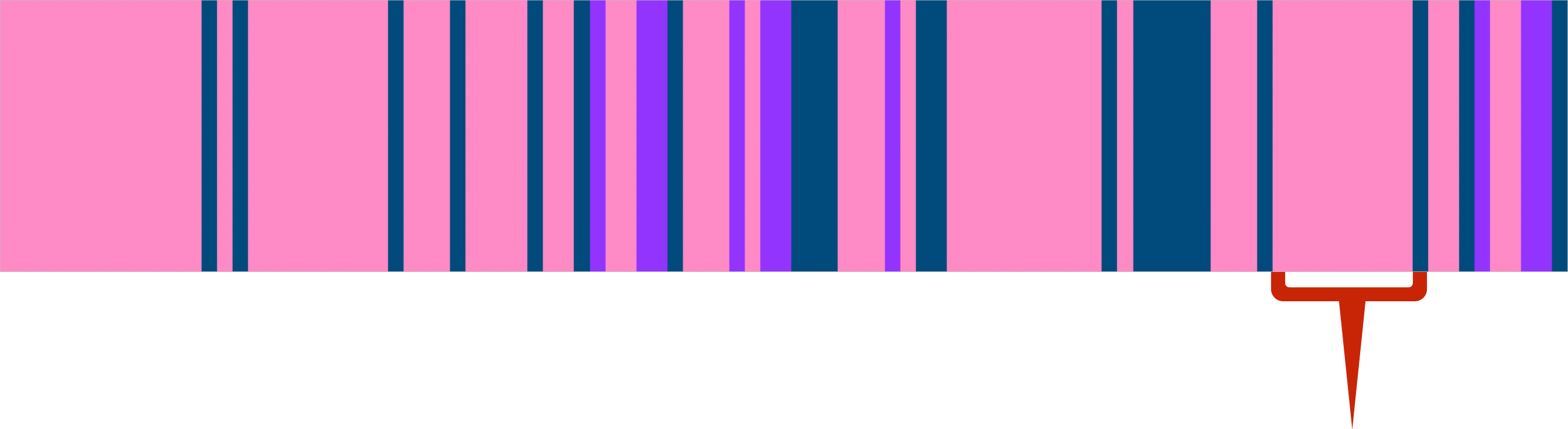
- 
- Again when the “heroic woman” reiterates her pledge to commit suicide in order to remain faithful to her deceased husband, she expresses herself with a mix of **verbatim quotation** and of **translation in literary language** of the ST
 - Her tirade in the 1st person ends up with an concluding, extradiegetic couplet—in the literary register as is to be expected in the versified parts
 - The couplet punctuates the stern moral significance (“一死有貞心”) of her words, in which she sticks to the dry, rhythmic, even rhymed, original text as well as to her ethical principles



烈婦道：「人各有幸有不幸，今公姑都老，媳婦年少，歲月迢遙，事變難料，媳婦何敢望祖姑？一死決矣。」

正是：

九原無起日，一死有貞心。

- 
- When the “heroic woman” ceases to speak and is no longer anything but action, the extradiegetic narration or her mother's words revert to the vernacular, until she hangs herself
 - This is followed by the final punctuation that crowns her death in the form of a five-character eight-line regulated verse trumpeting her memorable and exemplary action

- It is clear that the moral authority of the vernacular narrative is supported by a repeated use of classical language, which in this case echoes authoritative texts
- Classical language intervenes from all possible points of view: 3rd person, dialogue, versified forms, etc...
- Classical or mixed language is part of a narrative continuum where clearly different levels of moral authority contrast and are emphasised by differences in linguistic register

- Another good example could be given by another story referred to above:

→ 《醉醒石》 6 main story

- As we have seen, this is a tale with very significant proportions of amplification, additions, translation, and literary language
- Its linguistic distribution in the continuum of the narrative is as follows



Beginning

End



Vernacular Chinese: Standard Guanhua



Mixed Language



Literary Chinese

Distribution of language registers in the story: 東魯古狂生 《醉醒石》 6 main story

- For lack of time, we will not go into the details of the story here
- Suffice it to summarise it briefly:
- Essentially, it is the story of a man who, because of his cruelty and harshness, has been transformed into a man-eating tiger
- One of his former friends passes through the mountains where he now roams, and the better part of the last two thirds of the story is taken up by the conversation between the two characters, the tiger and the former friend
- The tiger explains his torment to his friend, and how he has reflected deeply on his past conduct
- He reveals that he has undergone profound moral reform, even though his appearance has not changed
- The tiger does not speak in the vernacular: on the contrary, the classical or mixed language he speaks throughout what is essentially a long monologue is the very mark of the elevation of his spirit and the exemplarity of his personal journey
- The classical eloquence of the language in which he expresses himself seems to be in proportion to the lesson he is likely to offer the reader

- The linguistic treatment of this story is all the more interesting as the same author (pseudonym 東魯古狂生) shows an otherwise outstanding command of the most vernacular language, often with dialectal aspects and even slang
- Moreover, there is good reason to believe that the author of the collection is none other than Jia Fuxi 賈鳧西 (ca. 1590-ca. 1676), “Mupi sanke” 木皮散客, a great lover of *dagu* 大鼓 and a particularly renowned exponent of the transmission of knowledge in vernacular form
- We have preserved from him whole sections of Chinese history, but also passages from the *Lunyu*, told in vernacular for performance in *dagu* 大鼓
- The usage of classical Chinese is not therefore the work of scholars who are ill at ease with the codes of the vernacular, quite the contrary

- Instead of concluding that stories that make extensive use of classical language are not truly vernacular, we should rather say that the presence of vernacular language should not be considered a prerequisite for a text to be called a vernacular narrative
- What defines vernacular narratives can lay elsewhere, e.g.:
 - rewriting / re-entextualisation / recontextualisation processes
 - in the use of multiple effects, such as:
 - change in point of view
 - dis-location/re-location
 - phatic function, etc...
- The phatic function is of particular importance
- Function of language whose purpose is to maintain communication between the speaker and the addressee without necessarily communicating a specific message (cf. Jakobson, Malinovsky)
- It is partly what I am referring to when talking about “indexical level” in my analysis of the rewriting procedures (*i.e.*: not “what is said”, but “how it is said”)
- It creates a certain relationship with the reader (ex.: exerting a moral authority)

- This intimacy with the reader, and thus this capacity to create identification, is well summarised in this couplet found in the middle of a story (《京本通俗小說》 16 + 馮夢龍 《警世通言》 12, main story):

話須通俗方傳遠，
語必關風始動人。

- Dictionary definition of 關風 = “涉及風趣，有趣味” → be interesting, intriguing, amusing
- Without excluding this meaning, it could also be understood in a more literal way: it has to do with customs, with personal experience



“Only when the language is *accessible to the vulgar* is it able to carry far,
The talk has to *be intriguing / deal with the mores* if it is meant to touch people”

- There is a direct link between being 通俗 and having a lasting transmitting effect 傳遠, especially in the area of moral authority
- Moral authority, on the other hand, remains a traditional function of the literary language

- If we go back to the tiger story and compare it with its source (a 志怪 story from the late Tang, 9th c.), we can see that the phatic function is very different in the “vernacular” version

ST:

TT:

「君今既為異類，何尚能人言耶？」	「君既為異類，則有咆哮而已，何尚能人言耶？」
虎曰：	虎對道：
「我今形變而心甚悟，	「我形雖虎，心猶人也。
	往昔之事，念念不忘。自居此處，不知歲月，但見草木榮枯，亦時時泣下，沾草被木。恨無人可與言，亦不得與人言也。近日絕無過客，久饑難忍，忽見馳驅，故挺身而出，冀得一飽餐。
故有搗突。以悚以恨。」	不意唐突故人，慚惶無地。」

- Let's just compare the line

ST:

TT:

「我今形變而心甚悟，	「我形雖虎，心猶人也。
Today my form has been changed but my heart is very much awake	Although my form is that of a tiger, my heart is still human

- The Tang text is expressed in Buddhist terms
- I don't think the 17th century 心猶人也 would have been possible under the Tang, as it appeals to a more intimate subjective experience
 - ➔ In the story it is completed by a whole added amplification which gives substance to this assertion: “I had forgotten nothing”, “I often cried”, “I suffered from not having anyone to talk to”+ my ferocious food needs, as a tiger, are something I have to endure, but which give me no pleasure
- While the original story inspired dread, the *huaben* story aims at an effect of common experience, therefore of identification of the reader

- This is why we can find vernacular narratives that are vast patchworks of classical language sources
- It is their re-arranging that creates the vernacular narrative
- The additions are also in classical language, as if to erase the trace of collage
- A spectacular example is the suite of biographical vignettes about the Prince of Hailing 海陵王 (1115-1234) with a completely transformed narrative based on copy-pasted chunks from an official history

→ (《金史》 → 馮夢龍 《醒世恒言》 23 main story)

Conclusion

- If one wants to create a digital humanities tool that can provide useful data, one is always compelled to proceed through differentiation and classification
- This appears here through the distinction that I must operate with between literary language and vernacular language
- This type of distinction always has a certain character of artifice
- However, while using them, what we have contributed to remind here is how porous the borders are between the different linguistic registers referred to
- In the other direction, we must also remember that the consciousness of this distinction, this situation of *diglossia*, is not the fabrication of modern scholars
- This difference in registers is something which the literati of the time are immensely aware of
- Actually, the 文 / 俗 (通俗) binarity is one of the most frequently encountered themes in their critical statements (prefaces, commentaries, and even, as in the example cited above, in the texts themselves)
- It is a major preoccupation of literary criticism at the Ming-Qing junction
- Their practice as authors / editors, when examined in detail, word for word, often shows remarkable translating / rewording capabilities, and often demonstrates a real virtuosity, both grammatically and lexically, in finding vernacular equivalents of formulations in literary language

Conclusion

- For all that, we should also be aware that the literati of the time, who so often talk about the subject, never actually give us a definition of what exactly the notion of 通俗 means to them
- They don't even tell us that the 通俗 would necessarily carry a linguistic meaning in their eyes, or at any rate in all situations
- I think we need to separate the 通俗 as a “vernacular register” from what would be the 通俗 as a strict “vernacular language”
- I believe I have contributed to showing here that what is 通俗 can perfectly well fall within the linguistic domain of classical Chinese, as long as there has been some form of colonization of that domain by the living, vernacular speech
- It is clear—this has been described in the research literature—that narratives such as *huaben*, novels, drama, have tended on the long run to help standardize the vernacular, modelled on the standardization of literary language
- But one of the purposes of the vernacular narrative is also to spread classical literacy, to make it accessible to new audiences

Conclusion

- As my final words I would like to quote this beautiful definition of what an “extraordinary text” would be
- It is borrowed from a marginal commentary 眉批 on the closing scene of Kong Shangren's 孔尚任's (1648-1718) great play, *The Peach Blossom Fan* 《桃花扇》, in the original 1708 edition:

“原於古而通於俗，真奇文也。”