



Study on Overseas Readers' Evaluation and Dissemination Effect of the English Translation of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*

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ABSTRACT

In evaluating the translation quality and translation value of literary works, one of the most important assessment links is to focus on the degree of acceptance of translations by readers. Through the study of overseas readers' evaluations and dissemination effects of English translations, we can comprehensively and accurately assess the impact of different translations on readers, provide more scientific guidance and decision-making basis for the translations of classical literature, and promote the dissemination of Chinese literature overseas, thereby contributing to the enhancement of China's cultural soft power. It can provide more scientific guidance and decision-making basis for the translation of classical literature, promote the overseas dissemination of Chinese literature, and boost the enhancement of the soft power of Chinese culture. This study collects readers' evaluations of *Martin Palmer's* English translation of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, which is ranked first in the review data on *Amazon* and the official website of *Goodreads*, through the *Octopus data collector*, and conducts text data mining on it, utilizing the *KHCoder* text analyzing tool and adopting a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, to analyze the readers' reviews of the high-frequency words and semantic mapping were analyzed. It was found that the factors affecting overseas readers' evaluation of the English translation of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* include: the length of the full translation, the confusion and difficulty in memorization and phonetic comprehension of Chinese character names due to the names and words in the English translation, and the completeness of the translation in retaining the essence of the original work. Therefore, the subsequent translation of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* not only needs to grasp the two perspectives of linguistic accuracy and cultural adaptation, but also should take more account of the preferences and needs of overseas readers, and optimize and adjust these aspects in a targeted manner.

Keywords: The English translation of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*; Martin Palmer; Reader evaluation; Dissemination effect; *Octopus Collector*; *KHCoder*

1. Introduction

This study selects the English translation of the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, which was translated and published by *Martin Palmer* in November 2018, the translator spent three years translating, grasping the content of the original work, which covers more than 800,000 words, more than 1,100 characters, and a total of 120 chapters, and ultimately presents an abridged version of the English translation of the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* with a personal color, which presents a new interpretation of the English translation of the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. It is a new interpretation of overseas dissemination. Literary translation is the process of generating the life of a text, and literary acceptance is an important part of the generation of the life of a text. At the same time, translation is always oriented to readers, no matter the establishment of the mode of translation or the choice of translation strategies and methods, it is always closely related to the acceptance of readers. Reader evaluation is an important index for assessing the translation effect of a work, and it is also a major basis for measuring the dissemination effect of a translated book. Through the study of overseas readers' evaluation and dissemination effect of their English

translations, the impact of different translations on readers can be comprehensively and accurately assessed, on the one hand, we can understand the preferences and attention bias of overseas readers to provide reference for the subsequent translation work and marketing, and on the other hand, from which we can dig out the defects and deficiencies in the translation of existing translations, so that we can target to improve and amend the translation work to provide a better understanding for the dissemination of Chinese. In addition, it explores the deficiencies in the existing translations, so as to improve and revise the translations and provide valuable references for the dissemination of Chinese classical literature overseas. The study in this paper focuses on the acceptance of the translation by overseas readers, and collects and explores overseas readers' comments and dissemination effects of the English translation.

By combing the text data of overseas readers' comments and analyzing readers' behavior and readers' emotions through a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, we have come up with specific factors affecting overseas readers' preferences for the English translation of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, so as to reveal the dissemination and acceptance of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* in the English-speaking world, and to explore the path of efficient "going out" of Chinese classical literature. This will reveal the dissemination and acceptance of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* in the English-speaking world, explore the path of efficient "going out" of Chinese classical literature, promote the international dissemination of Chinese literature, and boost the enhancement of Chinese cultural soft power.

2. Research Design

2.1 Data Sources

In this study, we selected the English full translation of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* translated by *Martin Palmer*, which ranked first in terms of review data on the official websites of Amazon and *Goodreads*, and collected its readers' review data respectively. Among them, 52 review data were collected from the official website of Amazon, and 460 review data were collected from the official website of *Goodreads*, totaling 512, of which 80 non-English review data were detected, and the total valid data after exclusion amounted to 432.

2.2 Data Collection Tool

Octopus Data Collector is a powerful tool for collecting internet data. It is able to customize the crawling rules and target websites according to user needs to achieve efficient and accurate data collection. The tool can help researchers and enterprises to conduct market research, public opinion monitoring, etc. providing powerful support for decision-making.

In this study, data from the reader review pages of the corresponding translations on the official websites of Amazon and *Goodreads* were captured by using the *Octopus data collector*. After entering the page, data recognition was first performed, the page flip function was set, and multiple acquisition tests were performed in order to fully collect all the review data. After the acquisition is completed, data de-duplication and deletion operations are carried out, and the final reader's

comment text data are exported in the form of excel table to be retained for subsequent use.

2.3 Data Analysis Tool

KHCoder is a powerful text analysis tool, which is specially designed for processing large amounts of text data and provides rich text analysis methods and visualization functions. With *KHCoder*, users can easily perform a variety of text data analysis operations such as keyword extraction, cluster analysis and co-occurrence network analysis. These features help users better understand and interpret text data, which is valuable in both academic research and business analysis.

In this study, *KHCoder* is utilized to clean and process the reader's comment data with segmentation, followed by the use of manipulation tools to generate word frequency lists and keyword semantic mapping. In this way, the readers' focus of attention and emotional preferences are deeply understood and mined to achieve the research objectives.

3. Analysis of High-Frequency Words

In this study, the cleaned comment data are stored in the form of excel table files, open the *KHCoder* text analysis tool, import the excel file in the new project, and perform data preprocessing. After the data display is processed, click "Toolbar" to select "Extract Words", and then click "Word Frequency List" to generate high-frequency word maps, and the top 30 high-frequency word maps are shown in Figure 1.

#	词汇	POS / Conj.	频率
1	be	Verb	2833
2	I	PRP	1334
3	it	PRP	1016
4	have	Verb	558
5	book	Noun	520
6	not	Adv	517
7	he	PRP	460
8	they	PRP	411
9	read	Verb	367
10	you	PRP	363
11	character	Noun	362
12	do	Verb	334
13	story	Noun	315
14	Cao	ProperNoun	278
15	time	Noun	230
16	that	W	227
17	chinese	Adj	219
18	my	PRP	204
19	novel	Noun	201
20	history	Noun	194
21	Kingdoms	ProperNoun	193
22	get	Verb	187
23	so	Adv	186
24	,	Foreign	185
25	also	Adv	171
26	who	W	162
27	many	Adj	151
28	translation	Noun	151
29	which	W	147
30	how	W	145
31	very	Adv	143

Figure 1: Mapping of high-frequency words in readers' comments on the English translation of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (top 30)

The resulting word frequency mapping was converted into tabular form as shown in Table 1.

order number	name	frequency	order number	name	frequency
1	be	2833	16	that	227
2	I	1334	17	chinese	219
3	it	1016	18	my	204
4	have	558	19	novel	201
5	book	520	20	History	194
6	not	517	21	Kingdoms	193
7	he	460	22	get	187
8	they	411	23	so	186
9	read	367	24	also	171
10	you	363	25	who	162
11	character	362	26	many	151
12	do	334	27	translation	151
13	story	315	28	which	147
14	Cao	278	29	how	145
15	time	230	30	very	143

Table 1: Mapping of high-frequency words in readers' comments on the English translation of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*

By analyzing each high-frequency keyword one by one through *KHCoder's* indexing operation, it is found that in the reader's comments - the character roles of the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, the historical and dynastic cultural background in which the story takes place, as well as the comparison between *MossRobert's* full translation and *Martin Palmer's* translation - are mentioned and discussed a great number of times in the reader's comments. These aspects have received a great deal of repeated mention and discussion in the reader reviews. A large number of readers' comments mentioned that the purpose of reading the book was to learn about the real Chinese dynastic history and culture, and that they were attracted to read the book because of its status as a literary classic. Most of the readers showed a strong emotional inclination towards the characterization of the book, and in their reading perceptions, many readers mentioned that they were attracted by the beautiful spiritual qualities of loyalty and righteousness portrayed among the characters in the book.

But at the same time, in addition to these positive aspects, there are also a number of readers' comments mentioning that the length of the full translation is too long, resulting in a lack of perseverance in reading the book. The English translations of the characters' names in the book were a bit strange to read and difficult to memorize, and not a few readers decided to postpone reading the book because they could not distinguish the co-existence and differences between the character names and the words. Some readers have also mentioned that *Martin Palmer's* English translation has been abridged on the basis of the original work, losing part of the flavor of the original book, and that *Moss Robert's* full translation has a comparatively higher rating.

4. Semantic Graph Analysis

In order to reflect the themes of readers' comments more comprehensively, this study analyzed the collected data by semantic mapping. The collected and organized comment data were made

into the form of Excel table files and stored, opened the KHcoder text analysis tool, created a new project to import the table files, and then performed data preprocessing, after the data display processing, clicked on the toolbar to select the extracted vocabulary clicked on the hierarchical cluster analysis, resulting in the data pattern shown in Figure 2.

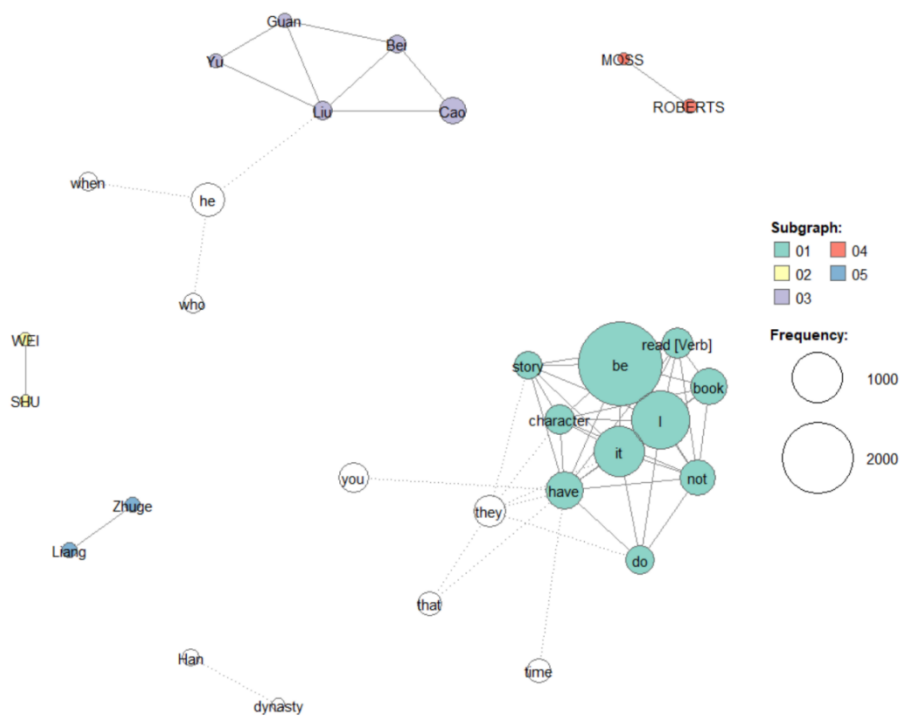


Figure 2: Semantic mapping of readers' comments on the English translation of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*.

In this study, the semantic maps will be interpreted through consulting semantic indexes, resulting in the following semantic clusters (Table 2).

Table 2: The semantic map of the English translation of *the Romance of The Three Kingdoms*.

S. No.	Cluster Name	Major High Frequency Words
1	Stories	Story, character, read, book
2	Historical Background	WEI, SHU, Han dynasty
3	Character	Liu Bei, Zhuge Liang, Cao cao
4	Acceptance	MOSS ROBERTS

Observation and analysis of the presented semantic mapping can lead to the main comments and focuses of the readers' evaluation of the translated book. It includes readers' subjective inner feelings when they read the translation of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, the focus on the historical and cultural background described in the book, the portrayal of the characters in the book, and the comparison of the popularity among the translations.

The readers' perceptions focus on the evaluation of the classic status of the book and the characterization of the characters, the chaos of the world, and the noble spiritual character of the characters, etc., as depicted in the book. In the process of reading, most of the readers give wonderful and classic comments and show their strong love and feelings for the characters in the book. Exploration of historical background is another driving force for readers to read books, and there are a few readers' comments showing that they want to read *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* to learn more about the culture of the Shu-Han dynasty. In addition to these two, in the comparison of the two translations in the comments, the majority of readers preferred to give a higher rating to Moss Robert's full English translation, while for the readers who preferred *Martin Palmer's* comments, it was more due to the fact that his translation was shorter and easier to read.

4. Discussion

The current research on English translation of canonical books in China mainly focuses on translation research, translation countermeasures, quality standards, etc., while the attention and research on the external dissemination, influence and reader acceptance of English translation of canonical books is relatively less. But the study of reader acceptance is an obligatory landmark on the road of exploration of overseas dissemination of literary works. Through the mining and comparison of readers' behavior and emotion, we can explore a more suitable and accessible road of cultural communication in the continuous translation practice. The ideal translation strategy is a compromise between the source language and the translated culture, and it is not easy to achieve an unbiased attitude.

Summarizing the results of the above research and analysis, in the future exploration of the overseas dissemination of the English translation of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, we have to solve the differences between different cultures that are difficult to overlap - for example, the differences in the separation of "name" and "character" in traditional Chinese culture. We have to solve the differences between different cultures that are difficult to overlap - for example, the differences in the separation of "name" and "character" in traditional Chinese culture, we have to solve the problem of optimizing the reading experience of the English translation while guaranteeing the complete preservation of the tone of the original work, and we have to solve the problem of the reading effect that can not be achieved within the limits of the traditional translation, and adopt more emerging forms of the new media in the information age for the translation of the traditional translation.

The Chinese canon represents a long, solemn and beautiful Chinese civilization, and its English translation must be serious and prudent. However, we must also recognize that there are natural differences in the readers of translated texts, which fundamentally determine whether a Chinese story can be told well. At the same time, we should also note that to tell a good Chinese story, we should not only pay attention to the story itself, but also to the positioning of the readers, the arrangement, and the publicity and promotion of the story, all of which play a vital role in "telling

a good Chinese story".

The purpose of letting traditional classic literature go overseas and spreading classical culture further abroad is not only to promote the international dissemination of Chinese literature, but also to promote the enhancement of China's cultural soft power and strengthen cultural self-confidence and national pride. While it is important to adhere to the goal of letting traditional literary texts go abroad, we should not simply stick to it, but also focus on the catalytic effect and impact of the texts after they have gone abroad, while advancing at a slow pace.

Conflicts of Interest: The author(s) declare(s) that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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