A Sentiment Analysis Approach to Readers' Reception of Translated Metaphors

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In Cognitive Translation and Interpreting Studies (CTIS), there has been much more research on how the translation is produced by the translator than how the translation is received by the actual target readers (Jääskeläinen, 2012). Several calls have been made for more empirical research on translation reception (e.g. Kruger & Kruger, 2017; Walker, 2021). The possibility of accessing readers' online comments and the availability of big data tools have made it possible to study translation reception from the perspective of readers. This research takes a very popular Chinese novel *Weicheng* and its English version as a case to investigate into the effect of metaphor translation revealed by actual readers' comments. *Weicheng*, written by the Chinese scholar Qian Zhongshu in the 1940s, features a frequent use of metaphors. It was translated into English as *Fortress Besieged* by Jeanne Kelly and Nathan K. Mao in the 1970s. It has been well received in the English world and reprinted several times since its first publication by the Indiana University Press in 1979.

This research aims to explore how the translated metaphors are received through the comparison of Chinese and English readers' comments on the metaphors in the ST and the translated metaphors in the TT. Chinese and English readers' comments were gathered with data mining tools from the websites of Douban (an online Chinese readers' club), Twitter, Goodreads and Amazon. A sentiment analysis was conducted with Python tools on the comments on the ST and TT metaphors by the two groups of readers to get their sentiment polarities.

The findings suggest that there is a general positive acceptance among the English readers of the translation of metaphors, a prominent interest in the Chinese culture embodied in the metaphors and divided views on the effect of translated metaphors in terms of intelligibility, effort-costing and heavy cultural loads. Following this big data approach to translation reception studies, future research might focus on readers' cognitive process of reading the target text to possibly explain or solve the dilemma of meeting readers' strong interest in source language culture and increasing the intelligibility of the target text.

References

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