

“Hard” Translation and Communication Effects and the Influencing Elements of English Translations of Li Bai’s Poems in America

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Abstract

To create a human community with a shared future, cultural exchanges between countries should be enhanced. Efforts should be made to sort out traditional Chinese cultural resources and bring ancient books back to life to “tell better and more accurate stories and make China’s voice heard” (Xi, 2020, p. 365). Classical Chinese poetry has been an important window to help overseas readers to understand China. Li Bai’s poems, as representative of classical Chinese poetry, have been widely translated in the English-speaking world, but the translation and communication (TC) effects remain unclear. This study attempts to investigate the “hard” TC effects of English translations of Li Bai’s poems in America by firstly retrieving the sales rankings of 16 English translations containing the most Li Bai’s poems from 18 representative translators of Li Bai’s poems in the world-famous online bookstore Amazon and secondly analyzing customer reviews from Amazon and reader reviews from the world’s largest reading website Goodreads. Mix methods, both quantitative bibliographic survey and qualitative text analysis, were used in the research. Research shows that although sales rankings are relatively low, Li Bai’s poems have a certain number of fixed readers in America. Four English translations of Li Bai’s poems made by Ezra Pound, David Hinton, Arthur Cooper and Ha Jin have been well received by target readers with good TC effects. Among the six influencing elements of the TC effect of Li Bai’s poems—TC motivation, TC subject, TC control, TC content, TC channel and TC audience, readers pay much more attention to TC control and TC content. Therefore, to achieve a better TC effect on Chinese literature, the Chinese government and concerned institutions should scientifically formulate policies on the above-mentioned six TC elements, especially on text selection and translation strategy. This research will contribute to the communication effect of translated Chinese literature and serve as a reference for the TC undertakings of literature from other non-English speaking countries, thus promoting equal cultural communication among countries.

Keywords: “Hard” TC effects, six TC elements, Li Bai’s poems, English translations, America

1. Introduction

The theme of International Translation Day in 2012 is “Translation is Intercultural Communication”, which is an affirmation of the fundamental goal of translation studies. However, there are great inequalities in international communication of translated literature. According to the translation database from Three Percent, only about 3% of all books published in the United States are translated works. And that 3% figure encompasses all books in translation. In terms of literary fiction and poetry, the number is closer to a mere 0.7% (“About”, n.d.). The expansion of English power has aggravated the inequality of the status of all languages in the world, which severely damaged the aspiration of equal cultural exchange among all countries.

To foster the world’s cultural diversity, Chinese scholars have made long-term efforts in communicating Chinese literature to the world. In the process of translation and communication (TC) of Chinese literature, the TC subject, TC content, TC channel, TC audience and TC effect constitute the fundamental elements of literary communication (Bao, 2015). The TC effect refers to “the reception of aesthetic taste and value system acquired by readers through a series of actions such as reading and sharing in the circulation of translated works” (Fu & Wu, 2021, p. 35). The study of TC effect in this research includes not only translation itself, but also the reception of a translated work by targeted audience in a target country. The TC effect can be measured through various dimensions by such two aspects as “hard” and “soft” effect. The “hard” effect could be measured by various objective data generated in the process of overseas communication while the “soft” effect could be

measured by the influence of the translated literature on target culture's social culture, literary styles, and human value etc. (You, 2017). The study of TC effect is indispensable for evaluating the international influence of Chinese literature and can promote the exchange and mutual learning between Chinese and foreign civilizations. However, much attention has been paid to the study of process, intensity and scale of TC, mechanism on TC effect has been very much neglected. In view of this, this study intends to provide some references for studying the TC effect by investigating the "hard" TC effect of Li Bai's Poems in America.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Li Bai, or Li Po, known as the "Poet Immortal", is a renowned poet in the Ancient China's Tang dynasty, the "Golden Age of Chinese Poetry". He and his friend, Du Fu are considered the most illustrious among many great poets from the Tang and other dynasties (Holyoak, 2014). Living some 1300 years ago, Li Bai's poems are still cherished for its unrestrained imagination and effortless artistry. If Chinese poetry is the authoritative representative of classical Chinese literature, Li Bai's poetry fully deserves to be called the quintessential embodiment of Chinese poetry (Ma et al., 2020). English translations of his poems have exerted a great influence on the American New Poetry Movement, reaching the first climax of American translating Chinese Tang poetry (Jiang, 2009). However, previous studies on TC effect of Li Bai's poems mainly focus on its translation and communication in Germany (Wang, 2019), Russia (Li, 2016), France (Dong, 2011), Britain (Gao & Zhan, 2015) etc. Most of them are research on the translation history of Li Bai's poems with little concentration on the reception on Li Bai's poems from real readers in target country. Their conclusions are rarely supported by quantitative data; the influencing elements of TC effect of Li Bai's poems also await to be investigated.

1.2 Research Questions

This research attempts to investigate the "hard" TC Effects and the influencing elements of English translations of Li Bai's poems in the United States. The research is guided by the following questions:

RQ 1: What are the "hard" TC effects of English translations of Li Bai's poems in America?

RQ2: What are elements influencing the "hard" TC effects of English Translations of Li Bai's Poems in America?

1.3 Significance of the Study

The research will provide important data for the "hard" TC effects of Li Bai's poems and enrich the empirical studies of Li Bai's poems in America. The findings will promote the development of assessment mechanism on TC effect of translated Chinese literature in international communication. Besides, the findings of the research can serve as a reference for the TC undertakings of literature from other non-English speaking countries, contributing to SDG 10 (Reduce inequality within and among countries) and SDG 17 (Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development).

2. Literature Review

Andrew Chesterman (2007) classified acceptance research as a sociological approach to translation studies and believed that interdisciplinary theoretical tools (such as behavioral science) and advanced methods (such as eye tracking and EEG technology) could be used and the reception of translated works could be investigated from three aspects: reaction, response, and repercussion. Although the relevant research on reception of film and television translation has been initiated in recent years (Filizzola, 2016; Burczynska, 2017), there are still few investigations on the reception of translated texts. Jääskeläinen (2012, p. 196) maintained that investigations of reception "still seem to be conspicuously absent from the entries of translation studies handbooks and encyclopedias". Translation scholars tend to study reception based on their own intuition and individual experiences, seldom providing enough empirical grounding, or supporting evidence (Kruger, 2013).

In terms of the TC effect of Chinese literature, due to the vagueness and dynamics of the Western audience, there are "only a handful of studies on the TC effect of Chinese literature" (Fu & Wu, 2021, p. 35). Current studies primarily investigated the TC effect of Chinese literature from the following ways: first, the world library collections and influential book reviews from newspaper and journals (Geng, 2014); second, international awards, world library collections, influential media mention rate, sales volume of translated works, questionnaire survey on professional readers, college students and ordinary readers who have read the translated works (Bao, 2014); third, letters from readers, book reviews and historical documents (Zheng, 2017); fourth, online survey, questionnaires, naturalist translation-comparison experiment with real readers (Mao, 2021); semi-structured interviews with translators and authors, literature research on biography of the translator, publication list of translated works, reprint of translated works, English book reviews, etc. (Wang, 2022).

It can be observed that although research on TC effect (including reception) has commenced relatively late in the translation field, many scholars have made much effort in contributing to the TC effect in designing research framework, defining theoretical concepts, and enriching research methods. However, almost all the above-mentioned studies are related to the TC effect of novels. The TC effect of other literary genres like poetry and drama is rarely touched upon. No studies have been made on the TC effect of Li Bai's poems in America. The research will fill the existing gap by investigating the "hard" TC effect, i.e., the reception of Li Bai's poems from ordinary readers and the influencing elements on the TC effect of English Translations of Li Bai's Poems in America by dint of retrieving sales rankings and analyzing reviews of major English translations of Li Bai's poems.

3. Methodology

The current research adopts mixed research methods combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches with realism used as both ontological and epistemological positions. The ontological position of realism assumes a realist epistemology, which on one hand, claims that social phenomena have an objective reality and exist outside the human mind and can be objectively investigated and measured with data. On another hand, it also "recognizes the existence of invisible but powerful structures and mechanisms that cannot be directly observable but whose effects are apparent, and these effects can provide evidence of the underlying structures and mechanisms" (Matthews & Ross 2010, p. 29). Specifically, textual analysis method, which is usually "creative and qualitative in its approach" (Caulfield, 2022) and the quantitative bibliographic survey will be employed for data analysis of the study.

Saldanha and O'Brian (2013) distinguished four types of research models in translation studies: process-, product-, participant- or context-oriented research model. This research is context-oriented research with the focus of study on "how translations are produced and received" (p. 5). The context-oriented research will be carried out through bibliographic research, which may be defined as "any research requiring information to be gathered from published materials, including more traditional resources like books, journals, newspapers, etc.; electronic media such as audio and video recordings; and online resources like websites, blogs, and bibliographic databases" (Boon, 2017, p. 1). By means of bibliographic research, the researcher will retrieve objective data from online websites and analyze the texts in online websites.

The corpus for study is the English translation of Li Bai's poems published in the form of books. Specifically, the representative translators are classified into two groups: Western sinologists and Chinese translators. Based on the importance of translations in different historical stages, 16 English translations containing the most Li Bai's poems from 18 representative translators of Li Bai's poems are selected as corpus with main reference to X. J. Zhan and H. Gao's monograph *History of English Translation of Li Bai's Poems* (see Table 1).

Table 1. Major representative English translations of Li Bai's Poems in the study

Translator	Translated Text	First publisher	Publication year
Major Representative Translations of Western translators			
W.A.P Martin (1827–1916)	<i>Chinese legends and lyrics</i>	Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, Limited	1912–2010
Herbert Giles (1845–1935)	<i>Chinese Poetry in English Verse</i>	Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, Limited	1898–2019
Amy Lowell (1874–1925) & Florence Ayscough (1878–1942)	<i>Fir-Flower Tablets: Poems Translated from the Chinese</i>	New York: Houghton Mifflin Company	1921–2018
Ezra Pound (1885–1972)	<i>Cathay (the centennial edition & the critical edition)</i>	London: Elkin Mathews	1915–2020
Shigeyoshi Obata (1888–1971)	<i>The Works of Li Po, the Chinese Poet</i>	New York: E.P. Dutton Co.	1922–2015
Arthur Waley (1889–1966)	<i>The Poetry and Career of Li Po 701-762 A.D.</i>	London: East and West, Ltd	1919–2021
Rewi Alley (1897–1987)	<i>Li Pai 200 Selected Poems</i>	Hong Kon: Joint Publishing Co.	1980–1989
Arthur Cooper (1916–1988)	<i>Li Po and Tu Fu Poems</i>	Harmondsworth: Penguin Book	1973–1988
J.P. Seaton (1941–)	<i>Bright Moon, White Clouds: Selected Poems of Li Po</i>	Boston: Random House	2012
Sam Hamill (1943–2018)	<i>Banished Immortal: visions of Li T'ai-po</i>	New York: White Pine Press	1987
David Hinton (1954–)	<i>Selected Poems of Li Po</i>	New York: New Directions Publishing	1996–2010
Ha Jin (1956–)	<i>The Banished Immortal: A Life of Li Bai (Li Po)</i>	New York: New York Vintage Books	2019
Major Representative Translations of Chinese translators			
Weng Xianliang (1924–1983)	<i>An English Translation of Chinese Ancient poems</i>	Beijing: Beijing Publishing House	1985
Yang Xianyi (1915–2009) & Gladys Tayler (1919–1999)	<i>Poetry and Prose of Tang and Song</i>	Beijing: Foreign Languages Press	2005
Xu Yuanchong (1921–2021)	<i>Selected Poems of Li Bai Translated into English</i>	Changsha: Hunan People's Publishing House	2007
Zhao Yanchun (1962–)	<i>Whole English Collection of Li Bai's poems</i>	Shanghai: Shanghai University Press	2020

It is worth noting that English translations of Li Bai's poems made by Chinese translators are quite few and the only whole English collection of Li Bai poems' English translations by Chinese translators did not appear till the year 2020. Therefore, three translations by famous Chinese translators selected for study in this research only contain a small fraction of Li Bai's poems.

The main research tools of the study are the official websites of Amazon (<https://www.amazon.com/>) and Goodreads (<https://www.goodreads.com/>). Amazon has an enormous selection of novels, textbooks, kindle books, audio books, and second-hand books, providing great access to internet-users all over the world purchasing books online. Its mature customer review system is the most direct and systematic channel to understand the opinions of ordinary readers on the works (Che, 2014). Goodreads, founded in December 2007, is the world's largest global reading website that allows users to search books, annotations, quotes, and reviews etc. The massive user size, perfect book evaluation and recommendation mechanism could ensure the objectivity and credibility of the book evaluation data on the website (Thelwall & Kousha, 2017; Zhang, 2018). Thus, the sales and customer reviews of the English translation of Li Bai's poems on Amazon and Goodreads can objectively reflect the reception of Li Bai's poems by American readers in the online reading market.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Poor Sales Rankings and Less E-Books in Amazon

In this research, the researcher only chooses editions with best sales rankings as data and makes comparisons on their sales rankings in the forms of hardcover, paperback, kindle, and audio to evaluate their TC effects among ordinary readers. It is worth noting that the sales record data are updated in real time on Amazon. The sales rankings data in the current research were collected on January 10, 2023, as shown in Figures 1 and 2.

Since the researcher did not find the sales rankings of translated work of Li Bai's poems by Martin, Alley, Weng Xianliang, Xu Yuanchong and Zhao Yanchun, only 11 representative English versions of Li Bai's poems were compared and analyzed. No sales rankings of paperback editions were found in the translations of Li Bai's poems by Herbert Giles, so only 10 translations were compared and analyzed in the paperback edition. No sales rankings of hardcover editions were found in the translations of Li Bai's poems by Amy Lowell & Florence Ayscough,

Arthur Cooper, J. P. Seaton, Sam Hamill, David Hinton and Yang Xianyi, so only 5 translations were compared and analyzed in the hardcover edition.

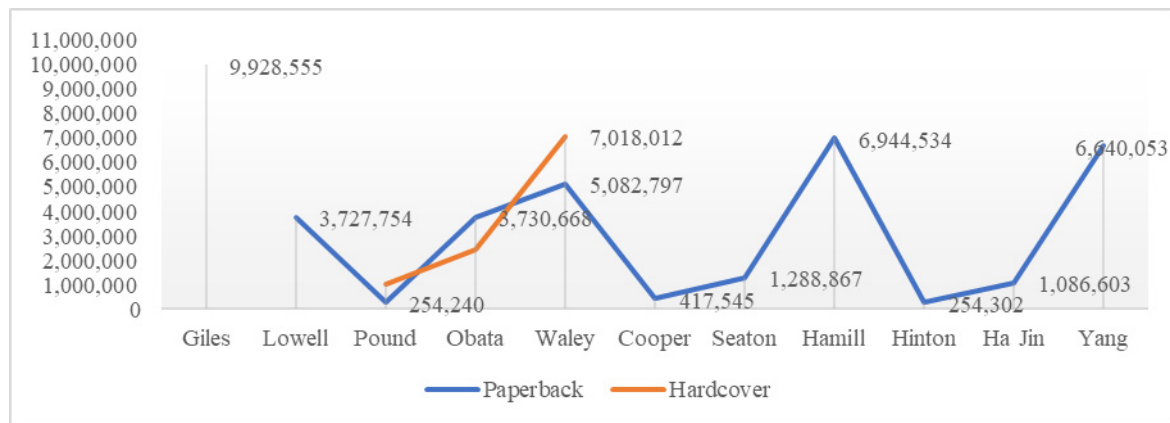


Figure 1. Sales rankings of English translations of Li Bai Poems in paperback and hardcover

Figure 1 shows that Li Bai’s representative English translations in the United States vary significantly in sales rankings. In general, they rank lower among ordinary readers in the United States, indicating that the translated classical Chinese poems in the United States are very much marginalized. As Liao (2012, p. 60) maintained, “The translation and reading of has not entered the mainstream of Anglophone literary and cultural repertoire. The target readership of classical Chinese poetry is still small.”

Despite this, the translation of Li Bai’s poems has never been interrupted in America. Although the overall sales rankings are lower, there are still several English translations whose sales rankings are relatively higher, indicating that Li Bai’s poems have a certain number of fixed readers in the United States. In addition, most paperback sales outperform the hardcover sales for its low price with exceptions of Obata’s and Ha Jin’s translations in which the prices of hardcover editions are little higher than those of paperback editions. Therefore, a cheap price is the main reason for ordinary readers choosing the paperback edition.

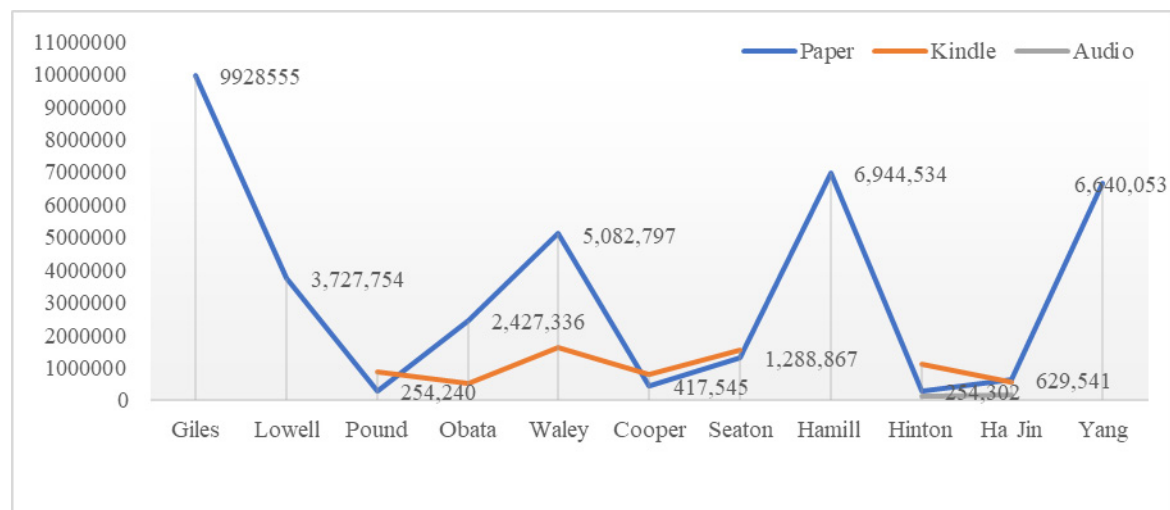


Figure 2. Sales rankings of English translations of Li Bai Poems in paper, kindle and audio edition

From Figure 2, we can find out the first four top sales rankings of the paper editions of English translations of Li Bai’s poems—Pound’s *Cathay* (ranking 254, 240), Hinton’s *Selected Poems of Li Po* (ranking 254, 302), Cooper’s *Li Po and Tu Fu Poem* (ranking 417, 545) and Ha Jin’s *The Banished Immortal: A Life of Li Bai (Li Po)*

(ranking 629, 541). The first four paper editions are in consistent with the top four kindle editions, albeit with slight difference in sales rankings.

The sales rankings of Chinese scholars' translation are rather lower compared with those of Western translators. There are no product details of the English translations by Chinese translators Weng Xianliang and Zhao Yanchun. Although the product details of Xu Yuanchong's translations can be found on Amazon, no sales ranking record is retrieved. Among 16 representative translations of Li Bai's poems, only 7 kindle editions and 2 audio editions are retrieved on Amazon. Quite a small number of e-books and audio books are not conducive to expanding potential readers in the target country.

4.2 Customer Reviews on Amazon Goodreads

According to the sales rankings of the paper edition of Li Bai's main English translations, this paper investigates 302 readers' reviews from the top 4 translators' translations on Amazon and Goodreads. To reflect the overall effect of each translation objectively, reviews are divided into such three categories as positive, neutral, and negative ones. Positive reviews refer to comments reflecting readers' praise and affirmation of the translation, mainly represented as 4 or 5 stars. Negative reviews are comments that reflect readers' criticism and dissatisfaction, mainly rated as 0 or 1 star. Neutral reviews are those that have no obvious emotional orientation or contain both positive and negative reviews, rated as 2 or 3 stars. The distribution of the three types of comments in each translation can be shown in Table 2. The data was collected on January 10, 2023.

Table 2. Number of customer reviews of top four English translations of Li Bai's Poems

Sales rankings	Translators	Translations	Number of Customer Reviews					
			Amazon	Goodreads	Total number of reviews	Number of positive reviews	Number of central reviews	Number of negative reviews
Top 1	Ezra Pound	<i>Cathay</i>	7	36	43	28 (65.12%)	10 (23.26%)	5 (11.63%)
Top 2	David Hinton	<i>Selected Poems of Li Po</i>	23	61	84	65 (77.28%)	10 (11.90%)	9 (10.71%)
Top 3	Arthur Cooper	<i>Li Po and Tu Fu Poems</i>	26	39	65	49 (75.38%)	12 (18.46%)	4 (6.2%)
Top 4	Ha Jin	<i>The Banished Immortal: A Life of Li Bai (Li Po)</i>	39	71	110	78 (70.91%)	25 (22.73%)	7 (6.4%)
Sum			95	207	302	220	57	25

As shown in Table 2, the customer and reader reviews are very limited in number and the most widely reviewed book is Ha Jin's *The Banished Immortal: A Life of Li Bai (Li Po)* with only 110 comments, suggesting that the ordinary readership of Li Bai's poems is relatively small. All the top four translations receive more than 65% of positive reviews and less than 15% of negative reviews among the total number of their respective reviews. The high percentage of positive customer reviews indicates that Li Bai's poems have achieved good TC effects among the relatively limited readership. This paper will present specific customer and reader reviews of the top four translations from both positive and negative perspectives.

4.2.1 Ezra Pound's *Cathay*

Most readers commented on Pound's work "historically important", "intellectually impressive", "emotionally moving", "delightful", "amazing", "a classic in every sense" etc. They believed that "it not only helped transform English free verse into the flexible instrument of today, but also exalted the poet-translator over the scholar-translator and influenced the West's ideas of 'The Orient'". However, some readers disapproved of his translations, particularly of his linguistic competence—"a guy who could neither speak nor read a single character of Chinese and did not seek out any who could". Their devaluation was mainly concerned with his "poor" translation strategy. His use of "rewriting" and "the most extreme form of domestication" made the final product "alien to" the original text. His translations "riddled with errors", were even reckoned by some readers to be the "manifestation of ethnocentric violence".

4.2.2 David Hinton's *Selected Poems of Li Po*

Most readers commented on Hinton's translation "lyrical", "quite accessible", "serene" and "thoroughly enjoyable". However, some readers believed that Hinton's translations were "so off for some poems" and were "choppy and often inaccurate in interpreting the original". They expressed their wish to see "the original Chinese version to go with the English translation in order to recognize which translation goes with which original poem."

4.2.3 Arthur Cooper's *Li Po and Tu Fu Poems*

Most ordinary readers believed that Cooper's translations were "rather informative" with "illuminating and interesting introduction, annotations and appendices" even though "the translations themselves are not great". The main flaws of Cooper's version were that his translations were "flat", "dimmed in translation" and "it still uses Wade Giles" with "virtually no usable reproductions of the original poems in Chinese characters (hanzi), or romanization (Chinese Pinyin)."

4.2.4 Ha Jin's *The Banished Immortal: A Life of Li Bai (Li Po)*

Ordinary readers believed that "Ha Jin has crafted a masterful, highly readable account that brings Li Bai to a vivid life.". They commented on Ha Jin's work "stunning", "rewarding", "fascinating" etc. "That's quite an accomplishment for the biography of a man who lived 1,300 years ago". The major drawbacks were that his biography was "a mixture of fact and fiction", and "the way of writing is dull". "The fictionalized account of Li Bai" in some chapters, made some readers "read like a short story", which was "unfortunate" for some readers.

4.3 *Influencing Elements of TC Effects on Li Bai's Poems*

The readers' comments also contain reasons why they select a particular English translation. The comments have shown six influencing elements of TC effects of Li Bai's poems—TC motivation, TC subject, TC control, TC content, TC channel and TC audience. The researcher will make a statistical analysis of the six TC elements. If more than one influencing element is involved in the same comment, the calculation will be repeated—that is, the comment includes more than one influencing element simultaneously (see Table 3).

Table 3. Number of reviews of six TC elements influencing the TC effect

Sales rankings	Translator	Translations	TC Motivation	TC Subject	TC Control	TC Content	TC Channel	TC Audience
1	Ezra Pound	<i>Cathay</i>	11	28	30	23	5	7
2	David Hinton	<i>Selected Poems of Li Po</i>	0	9	68	34	0	4
3	Arthur Cooper	<i>Li Po and Du Fu Poems</i>	0	5	45	33	6	8
4	Ha Jin	<i>The Banished Immortal: A Life of Li Bai (Li Po)</i>	0	42	96	57	2	14
Sum	527		11 (2.1%)	84 (15.9)	239 (45.4%)	147 (27.9)	13 (2.5%)	33 (6.3%)

As shown from Table 3, among six TC elements, TC control (45.4%) and TC content (27.9%) are elements which readers mention most and are the most prominent elements influencing the TC effect of Li Bai's poems. The impact of six TC elements on the TC effect of Li Bai's poems is as follows.

4.3.1 TC Motivation

Translation motivation studies the reasons why the translator translates the texts or why the initiator initiates the translation. It can be seen from Table 3 that 11 readers' reviews of Pound's version are concerned with the TC motivation, which is an important factor that should not be ignored.

Most Pound's readers appreciated the importance of *Cathay*. They chose his version because they really cared about Pound's motivation in choosing Li Bai's poems for translation and identified with Pound's achievement. One reader commented that the literary status of Pound's *Cathay* being a landmark "changed so much about how American poetry was written for whole groups of future poets". Another reader remarked that "Even if I wasn't specifically impressed by each poem he translated individually; however, I could appreciate the importance of *Cathay*. Without Pound's innovative translations, the face of literature 20th century would be substantially different." It can be observed that Pound's TC motivation in translating classical Chinese poems for challenging the prevailing literary norms and the significance of *Cathay* enormously attract ordinary readers to read his

translations. As Toury (1985) indicated, “translators operate first and foremost in the interest of the culture into which they are translating, and not in the interest of the source text, let alone the source culture” (p. 19).

4.3.2 TC Subject

The study on TC subject is concerned with “who” should be translators (Bao, 2015). Readers’ attention to the TC subjects of Li Bai’s poems is mainly reflected in their concern with the translator’s identity and status. There are 84 comments in the four translations involving TC subject, which is the third most important element influencing readers’ selection.

The top four English versions of Li Bai’s poems are translated by well-known American scholars. Psychologists Shui Miao have found that people are more likely to trust and accept those who share a common belief, language, cultural, or religious background with them, demonstrating the phenomenon known as “the acquaintance effect” (as cited in Bao, 2014, p. 67). Their identity of being prominent American scholars can make their translated works more credible for native American readers who show great affinity with their “own people”. For example, some readers chose Ha Jin’s translation because “Ha Jin has a good reputation as a writer”. As readers commented, “Hajin is the winner of the 1997 Morton Landon Translation Award”. “I admire Ha Jin as a writer, a thinker, and a humanist”. “As a fan of Jin’s fiction, I am eager to read this mashup of biography/poetry analysis.” This accounted for reasons why translations of Li Bai’s poems from sole Chinese translators achieved such bad TC effects. As Wolfgang Kubin, a famous German Sinologist, indicated, “even if the Chinese scholars completed translation themselves, Western Sinologists would not accept it, no matter how good or bad the translation itself was” (as cited in Feng, 2020, pp. 83–88).

4.3.3 TC Control

TC control, a term derived from international communication control (Cheng, 2006), refers to study on translators or initiators’ control of text selection. A total of 239 comments are related to TC control, accounting for 45%, which is the most important element affecting the TC effect.

Readers mainly chose their favorite version because of the content or theme contained in Li Bai’s poems. Ha Jin’s reader held that “The themes (of Li Bai’s poems), especially the tension between the desire to contribute to society and the need to get away from society, and the tension between the demands of art and the demands of practical statecraft, are just as applicable today as in 7th China.” Hinton’s reader mentioned that “Li Bai’s appreciation for the beauties of nature encourages a stillness in the soul we don’t find in many places today.” One of Pound’s readers expressed his fondness for Li Bai’s poem “The Jeweled Stairs’ Grievance”, commenting that “It is only 4 lines long, but it’s extremely vivid and evocative. It’s almost ineffable how I feel while reading these poems.” Therefore, readers are thrilled with the extraordinary self-confidence, unrestrained bearing and romantic optimism reflected in Li Bai’s poems. Li Bai’s vivid life stories, common struggle between personal desire and secular success, great emotional experience etc., all fill overseas readers’ imagination and expectation for exotic oriental literature.

4.3.4 TC Content

TC content, a term derived from international communication content (Cheng, 2006, p. 8), focuses on the study of features of the translated text, which include translation strategy and the para-text (notes, prefaces, introductions, etc.). It is the second most important element affecting the TC effect with 147 comments in total, accounting for 27.9%.

All top four English translations provide exhaustive para-text information, including the introduction, preface, appendices, or explanatory notes, etc., which have proved quite beneficial for Western readers who are not familiar with ancient Chinese poetry or Li Bai’s poems. In terms of specific translation techniques, many readers expressed their desire to read original poems with Chinese pinyin, appreciate Chinese calligraphy in translations. For example, Hinton’s reader commented that “some of his translations don’t match up at all to the original and it’s very frustrating!” The reader also added that, “please stop ‘Americanizing’ authors for capitalistic consumption! His name is Li BAI, not Li PO!!”. Cooper’s reader also expressed their complaint about Cooper’s using “Wade Giles” with “bare minimum of Chinese characters” contained in his translation. Ha Jin’s readers were happy to see Ha Jin’s providing of “Chinese original poems along with his English translation”, but complaining that there was no “phonetic translation of the original poems” so that they could not “get a real idea of the sound and rhythm which are crucial to the art.”

4.3.5 TC Channel

The study of TC channel mainly focuses on the ways that TC content is communicated, including publishers, mass media literary agents, book fairs etc. (Bao, 2015). Table 3 shows that there are 13 comments (2.5%) related

to TC channels and most readers offer comments and suggestions on the publishing, delivery service and prices of books.

One of Cooper's readers mentioned the publisher of Cooper's translation—"Penguin", one of the leading trade book publishers in the United States, comprised of imprints with a long and rich history dating back to the 19th century. All the top four sellers of translations of Li Bai's poems are those published by well-known Western commercial publishers—E. Mathews, New Directions Publishing, Penguin Book, New York Vintage Books. With great lack of overseas marketing and distribution, most Chinese translators' English versions, published either by Chinese commercial press or Chinese university press, could not even be found on American Amazon or Goodreads even though they enjoy great popularity in China with good translation quality.

4.3.6 TC Audience

The ordinary audience has always been the target of communication (Bao, 2015). A total of 33 comments are related to the TC audience. Readers often evaluate a translation by stating whether it is suitable or unsuitable for a particular group of readers.

Most Pound's readers believed that his translations were "not the most faithful translations" and "not suitable for those who wish to know Chinese poetry" since "Pound does not even know any Chinese". But his translations were suitable for those who would like to "get a sense of what Pound did for Modern poetry in the 20th century." Cooper's translations were suitable for those "who want to gain better understanding of Asian classic culture" due to its "veritable wealth of informative introduction and annotations". Hinton's readers believed that his translations were "a good read for any poetry fans". But since Hinton's "selection of Li Bai's poems gave readers little idea of the boldness and vigor of the poet's work, nor did his translations convey the range of the poets' imagination", his translations were "not suitable for those who would like to know more about artistry of Li Bai's poems". Most readers believed that Ha Jin gave a "meticulous account" of Li Bai's life, including "a goodly number of poems" by Li Bai "with erudition and empathy". His biographical English translations of Li Bai were suitable for "those unfamiliar with Li Bai or Chinese poetry in general".

5. Recommendation

This study sheds light on some possible recommendations that contribute to better TC of Chinese literature in the West.

Firstly, in the text selection, classical Chinese poetry, thanks to its rich aesthetic conception and universal themes shared by all human beings, can serve as a great medium to promote cultural exchange between China and other countries, enriching cultural diversity of the world.

Secondly, the cultivation of target readers should be a long-term plan for Chinese literature "going abroad". Chinese governments and educational institutions at all levels should set up a wide range of scholarship programs so that more overseas young people can visit and study in China. Those overseas young people would be very likely to become potential sinologists spreading Chinese literature and culture.

Thirdly, more opportunities should be provided for better cooperation between Chinese and Western translators in translating and communicating classical Chinese poetry. Exhaustive para-text information, including the introduction, annotation, or appendices etc., should be provided to help Western readers to have a better understanding of classical Chinese poems. Besides, the target language readers care more about the fidelity of translated Chinese poems. Many readers express their desire to read original poems with Chinese pinyin, appreciate Chinese calligraphy etc. along with translations. Chinese translators have greater advantages in transcribing poems with Chinese Pinyin and providing cultural guides for Western translators.

Fourthly, cooperation between Chinese and international publishers should be strengthened in such various aspects as selecting translation texts, translators, and distribution in the overseas market, etc. For the utilitarian purpose of making profits, Western commercial publishers usually select materials for translation to cater to the reading habits and tastes of the target readers. They can generally ensure the marketing and circulation of books for effective dissemination of a translated work (Wang, 2020). By dint of cooperation, Western publishers can be more involved in TC of Chinese literature and provide professional distribution channels for Chinese publishers.

Fifthly, more electronic and audio books of translated works should be provided to expand potential readers in the context of the increasing proportion of multimedia reading in the Internet era. The international communication of Chinese literature needs to make full use of various overseas mainstream social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube, etc. to promote the "secondary transmission" or "N times transmission" of translated works. In addition, pricing should be diversified to meet the needs of different readers. In terms of binding design, an appropriate number of Chinese illustrations, Chinese calligraphy

or picture of Chinese poets should be selected to fulfill Western readers' reading demand for original exotic flavor with oriental features.

Finally, to promote better TC effect, the TC motivation cannot be ignored. Target culture's ideology and poetics should be taken into consideration in the selection of source texts and translation strategies. Chinese and Western translators should cooperate fully to figure out respective demands and motivation in promoting each other's literature and culture by dint of translation so that the world's language, literary and cultural diversity could be achieved.

6. Conclusion

This research investigated the "hard" TC effects and the influencing elements of English translations of Li Bai's poems in America through qualitative text analysis and quantitative bibliographic survey by retrieving the sales rankings of 16 English translations comprising the most Li Bai's poems from 18 representative translators of Li Bai's poems in world-famous online bookstore Amazon and analyzing customer reviews from Amazon and reader reviews from the world's largest reading website Goodreads.

Research shows that firstly the 16 representative English translations of Li Bai's poems in the United States vary significantly in sales rankings. In general, they rank lower among ordinary readers in the United States, indicating that the target readership of classical Chinese poetry in America is still small. The translated classical Chinese poems in the United States are still marginalized. Secondly, Li Bai's poems have a certain number of fixed readers in America. The top four English translations of Li Bai's poems—Ezra Pound's *Cathay*, David Hinton's *Selected Poems of Li Po*, Arthur Cooper's *Li Po and Du Fu Poems* and Ha Jin's *The Banished Immortal: A Life of Li Bai (Li Po)* have been well received by target readers with good TC effects. Thirdly, there are six major influencing elements of TC effect on Li Bai's poems—TC motivation, TC subject, TC control, TC content, TC channel and TC audience, among which, readers pay much more attention to TC control and TC content. The Chinese government and concerned institutions should scientifically formulate policies on the six TC elements, especially on text selection and translation strategy.

To investigate the TC effects of English translations of Li Bai's poems, the study on the "hard" effects is not enough. The "soft" effects such as the Li Bai's poems' influence on American literature and culture should also be probed into in detail. Besides, more empirical studies like questionnaires and interviews should be applied altogether for further research.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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