

Digitalized Translation of Chinese Online Literature: Practice and Research

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Abstract

This study thoroughly explores the digitalized translation and overseas dissemination of Chinese online literature from the perspectives of industry practice and academic research. It points out that Chinese online literature has grown from a sub-cultural phenomenon in China to an essential component of contemporary Chinese literature, with digitalized translation being the primary mode for its overseas dissemination. The study defines the concepts of online literature and digitalization, discusses the diversified digitalized translation platforms of Chinese online literature, and analyzes their respective advantages and challenges. Thereafter, it scrutinizes the research on the translation of Chinese online literature, highlighting the richness of research perspectives and the diversity of research content, noting that current researches on the overseas dissemination of Chinese online literature is relatively scarce but holds significant academic and practical value. Finally, it looks forward to the future directions of research on the translation of Chinese online literature, including further exploration on translation content, translation subjects, translation modes, and translation criticism, and emphasizes the importance of theoretical integration and innovation.

Keywords: Chinese online literature, digitalized translation, translation platforms

1. Introduction

Chinese online literature has undergone more than 30 years of development, evolving from its nascent stage on voluntary forum websites to commercial website era and now into the mobile internet era. Currently, Chinese online literature is no longer merely a subculture territory exclusively for the “net generation” to entertain themselves. It has become an integral part of socialist literature with Chinese characteristics and an indispensable presence in contemporary Chinese literature (Liu, 2020). In November 2020, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) established the Online Literature Research Center in Beijing, marking a significant step forward in the academic construction of Chinese online literature research, as “the study of Chinese online literature has entered the realm of national academic institutions” (Bai, 2020). In February 2024, the Institute of Literature of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences released the “2023 Report on the Development of Chinese Online Literature”, pointing out that the market size of Chinese online literature, driven by trends of quality enhancement, IP transformation acceleration and globalization, had reached a scale of 40.43 billion yuan by the end of 2023. In the meantime, the overseas expansion of Chinese online literature exceeded 4 billion yuan, indicating immense development potential.

Within the Chinese context, the development of Chinese online literature in the past 30 years can be described as a journey from the “folks” to the “temple.” The overseas dissemination of Chinese online literature, however, has been an unexpected yet delightful by-product (Ji, 2018, p. 120). The overseas journey of Chinese online literature has undergone three major stages. Stage 1.0 involved the international sales of novel copyrights by Qidian, primarily targeting readers in Southeast Asia. In Stage 2.0, overseas fans of Chinese online literature spontaneously established online translation platforms aiming at readers in Europe and America. WuxiaWorld (established in 2014) and Gravity Tales (established in 2015) are typical examples of the above-mentioned platforms. WuxiaWorld once reached a comprehensive ranking of 1,121 on Alexa.com, a global web traffic monitoring tool. Seeing the immense potential of the overseas translation market, Chinese leading online literature enterprise Yuewen Group initiated the building of overseas platforms, culminating in the establishment of Webnovel, the international version of Qidian in 2017. Since then, capital forces has entered the market,

ushering in Stage 3.0, which featured the launch of export of IP adaptations, more specialized industrial chain division of labor and the migration of Chinese values and culture. It could be described as a transformation from content export to model export. Nowadays, Chinese online literature, along with Hollywood movies, Japanese anime and Korean dramas, is known as one of the four major cultural wonders of the world, significantly broadening the civilian channels for the overseas dissemination of Chinese culture.

2. Definitions

2.1 Online Literature

What is online literature? Where are the boundaries of online literature? Shao Yanjun points out that online literature is a new form of recreational literature mediated by the Internet (2021, p. 178). The “newness” of this “new recreational literature” lies in its decentralization, multi-pointed interaction, and other new media attributes based on the Internet. In the meantime, Chinese online literature has the positive features of “free enjoyment” and “free creation” (Shao, 2021, p. 179). The Internet is not merely a communication tool, but also a productive medium. Lai Jinping, the founder of WuxiaWorld, the most influential Chinese online literature translation website in North America, points out that online genre novels are usually presented to readers in serialized form, with authors continuously providing updates and readers continuously reading them on the internet (Lai, 2017). This comment actually points out two distinct and unique attributes of online literature: immediacy and interactivity. Based on the above academic and industrial explanations of online literature, the author attempts to define online literature as a new form of literature that uses the Internet as a production tool and connects writers with readers through the Internet, with immediacy and interactivity as two unique attributes.

2.2 Digitalization

Digitalization has become the pulse of our times, constituting the underlying logic and primary mode of human existence, production, and life. In fact, as early as 1995, Nicholas Negroponte, a computer scientist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), has presciently noted in his book *Being Digital* that computing determines our existence (1995, p. 4). Today, humanity has entered the era of “everything being numbers,” as envisioned by the ancient Greek philosopher and mathematician Pythagoras. Digitalization is influencing the social organization and rewriting human existence with unprecedented breadth and depth. Whether one understands or accepts it or not, the digital age has arrived with an irresistible force.

As digitization progresses, there is still no consensus on its precise definition among the academia or industry. What is certain is that digitalization represents a revolution in information processing in the 20th century as computers transforming information into binary code, utilizing high-speed chips for numerical and logical calculations to produce software-preset results (Meng & Hu, 2019, p. 24). At the fundamental operational level of digits, digitalization refers to digital technology converting analog information into binary language, where discrete information, known as “bits” (a transliteration of English “bits,” short for binary digits, with 1 representing the “on” state and 0 the “off” state), is encoded as a two-digit sequence of 1s and 0s. This language is used to express and transmit all information, and the different combinations of 1s and 0s determine the decoding and reconstruction of information to present its original form. Negroponte argues that the fundamental definition of digital existence is the transition of humanity from the atomic world to the world of bits, where bits, as the “DNA of information,” are rapidly replacing atoms as the fundamental elements of human society (1997, p. 11).

3. Digitalized Translation Model of Chinese Online Literature

Michael Cronin observes that translation is in the midst of a revolutionary upheaval. The impact of digital technology and the Internet on translation is lasting, extensive, and profound. From online automatic translation services to the rise of crowd-sourced translation and the proliferation of smartphone translation apps, the translation revolution is omnipresent. For human language, culture, and society, this revolution is fundamental and far-reaching. The information age is also the age of translation, urgently requiring new ways of exploring and thinking about translation, particularly a comprehensive examination of the upheavals in the digital domain (2013, pp. 1–2).

Entering the 3.0 era of overseas expansion of Chinese online literature, the development and transmission exhibits four typical trends: firstly, AI translation accelerates the “one-click overseas expansion” of Chinese online literature; secondly, global co-creation fosters the large-scale development of overseas online literature; thirdly, social co-reading enables good stories to fuel up cultural exchanges; lastly, industrial integration builds a global IP ecosystem (Report 2023). At present, the new technological revolution represented by AIGC (referring to content automatically created and generated by AI) is gathering momentum, bringing new opportunities to

industry development. Translation-based overseas expansion remains the primary mode for Chinese online literature to go global.

Karin Littau has noted that the communicative technological environment can shape the form and behavior of translation (2011, pp. 261–281). Throughout history, the media for translation has evolved from oral tradition, manuscript copying, printing, to screens, and the nature of translation activities has shifted from performative, artisanal, industrial to electronic. In this era of digital existence, characterized by rapid change, emerging digital media represented by the Internet have fundamentally altered the way of information transmission and profoundly impacted the presence of translation as a cross-cultural communication act (Littau, 2011, pp. 261–281).

The translation of Chinese online literature on different translation platforms, including WuxiaWorld, Gravity Novels, Webnovel, and etc, is the most significant and prevalent mode of its overseas expansion and dissemination. The translated works on these online platforms are typically presented in a chapter-by-chapter format, with readers gradually accessing the translated texts through subscription-based payments, crowdfunding for specific chapters, tipping or donations and other means. In the context of online platforms, the presentation and medium of translated works are fundamentally different from the traditional approach of publishing translated works. Likewise, the manner and mindset of readers of the online translated works are also vastly distinct. The translation strategies and methods employed by translators, as well as the translated texts themselves, are continuously produced, altered, and refined based on readers' reading experiences and feedback. This iterative process ensures that translations evolve in tandem with readers' preferences and expectations.

The immediacy and interactivity of Chinese online literature leads to the fact that its overseas translation and introduction exhibit unprecedented groundbreaking features in terms of translation platforms, translation modes, translator identities and translated text forms. In the translation and introduction course of Chinese online literature, improving translation speed, enhancing translation quality, and building translation platforms will be the three primary issues to address and the focus of future research in this field.

3.1 Review of Major Translation Platforms for Chinese Online Literature

The primary translation platforms for Chinese online literature exhibit distinct characteristics across various regions globally, with Southeast Asia and North America serving as the primary centers of radiation, while others are scattered in regions with less used languages such as Russian and French. Currently, the primary method of exporting Chinese online novels to Southeast Asia is the traditional channel of publication, whereas translation platforms in minor language regions often adopt the approach of translating from English into their respective languages, essentially functioning as derivatives of North American native translation platforms.

Since the pioneering establishment of the WuxiaWorld website in 2014, numerous similar North American fan-translation platforms have sprung up. However, after a round of restructuring in 2018 triggered by the capital entry of Yuewen Group, many fan-translation platforms in North America underwent transformations or closures. At present, the overseas translation platforms of Chinese online literature collectively present two primary modes: human and AI translation platforms. Within the realm of human translation platforms, there are further distinctions between fan-translation platforms and commercial translation platforms, in addition to the highly influential translation navigation websites for Chinese online literature.

3.1.1 Human Translation Platforms

WuxiaWorld—Founded by Lai Jingping, an ethnic Chinese American and former U.S. Department of Foreign Affairs Counselor to Vietnam, WuxiaWorld is currently supported by Kakao, a South Korean internet company. Established in December 2014, it is the earliest and still one of the most influential websites for the English translation of Chinese online literature. Leveraging its first-mover advantage and innovative translation-donation system, WuxiaWorld experienced explosive growth in 2015 and 2016. According to the global traffic statistics of Alexa.com, it has once peaked at a ranking of 1131. In 2017, WuxiaWorld entered a period of stagnation, but in 2018 it implemented a preview-payment mechanism to transition towards a professional translator team. As of 2024, its Alexa global ranking stands at 3185.

Webnovel International—Established by Yuewen Group, Webnovel International represents the largest digital translation and introduction platform for Chinese online literature. As of the end of 2023, Webnovel International had over 2,900 translated works of Chinese online literature available, alongside approximately 500,000 original overseas creations, attracting around 170 million visiting users. Its content covers more than a dozen languages, including English, Spanish, French, and etc. Webnovel International has acquired numerous smaller fan-translation platforms, initially forming a global dissemination system for Chinese online literature. As the

leading portal for Chinese online literature, Webnovel International boasts unparalleled advantages in terms of novel content, technology, and capital reserves compared to fan-translation websites. The platform strongly supports overseas original authors, and its formidable entry has directly transformed the overseas dissemination model of Chinese online literature, assimilating some websites and facilitating the commercialization and formalization of the largest fan-translation website, WuxiaWorld.

Gravity Tales—Established in January 2015, Gravity Tales was once the second most popular English translation website for Chinese online novels, right after WuxiaWorld. Founded by Kong Xuesong, an ethnic Chinese American, it primarily translated Chinese online novels and some Korean novels as well. Since the launch of Webnovel International in early 2018, Gravity Tales has struggled to compete with industry leaders like WuxiaWorld and the powerful newcomer Webnovel International. In 2018, it was acquired by Webnovel International. The website has a solid foundation in original English online novels, boasting a group of authors nurtured and developed by the platform itself.

Volare Novels—Founded by Etvolare (Ai Feier), an ethnic Chinese American, Volare Novels primarily publishes English translations of Chinese online novels, focusing on fantasy and romance genres. With its own translation team, it was established in December 2015, making it the latest among the major translation websites. Volare Novels was the first to seek a differentiated development path, specializing in “alternative” genres (such as science fiction, which is non-mainstream in Chinese online literature) and female-oriented novels. Currently, the website has over 30 translators and approximately 30 editors. After the launch of Webnovel International in 2018, Volare Novels faced significant challenges but has since reached copyright cooperation agreements with iReader Group, 17K, and other websites.

Wattpad—Founded by Allen Lau (Liu Ailun) and Ivan Yuen (Yuan Yifan), both of Canadian Chinese origin, Wattpad positions itself as the world’s most popular storytelling social platform. It offers translations of Chinese novels into 27 languages, encompassing a wide range of genres from young adult fiction to poetry, action, adventure, and beyond.

3.1.2 AI and Machine Translation Platforms

AI and machine translation platforms developed quickly with the advent of Artificial Intelligence. These websites leverage machine translation programs to rapidly translate entire novels, utilizing glossary functions and user-driven proofreading to enhance translation accuracy. Despite the limitations of machine translation in translation quality, these platforms have gained immense popularity among overseas readers.

Flying Lines—Founded by Beijing Flying Translation Lingxi Information Technology Co., Ltd., Flying Lines holds authorized copyrights from Zongheng Chinese Literature Website. It primarily features English translations of Chinese online novels, having released 2,730 novels as of June 2024. Its translation team comprises mainly Chinese translators, collaborating with Xi’an Translation Academy and recruiting online translators. The platform pays translators through revenue generated from paid chapters and membership fees.

LNMTL—Launched in October 2015, LNMTL is the oldest machine translation website, founded by a software engineer and avid fan of Chinese online novels. It relies on user donations for operation. Currently, it is the largest Chinese online novel machine translation website in North America, with over 1000 English-translated novels as of June 2024. While facing severe copyright issues that may threaten its sustainability, the purely reader-created and self-governing model of LNMTL showcases the enormous potential of Chinese online novels in overseas markets, making it a top choice for international readers seeking machine-translated content.

Babel Novel—Established in 2019 by a Chinese tech company, Babel Novel is an AI translation platform that automatically monitors, extracts, translates, and publishes Chinese novels from across the web. It boasts the first AI translation production and distribution system tailored for literature and information fields. Babel Novel openly recruits proofreaders, allowing successful applicants to refine the machine-translated texts, thereby improving overall translation quality.

Comrademao—Launched in 2018, Comrademao is operated by a dedicated team of literature fans and features a relatively professional and user-friendly website design, attracting over 4 million monthly visitors. Its glossary comprises over 300,000 entries. The site hosts 395 machine-translated novels, covering Chinese, Japanese and Korean novels as well, differentiating it from LNMTL.

TapRead—Established by Beijing Huanxiang Zongheng Network Technology Co., Ltd., TapRead has translated over 100 Chinese web novels and comics into various languages. Its primary target markets include the United States, Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, India, the United Kingdom, Brazil, Canada, and Singapore, with over 1 million users worldwide.

Among the translation platforms native to North America, the Novel Updates website deserves special mention. It is not a translation site itself but rather a directory of English translations of Asian novels, serving as a bridge between translators, translation websites, and novice readers of Asian online novels in North America. Novel Updates (NU) was first established in 2006, yet not specifically tailored for English readers of Chinese web novels. In its early days, it primarily directed its users to translation websites for Japanese light novels. However, with the establishment of WuxiaWorld in late 2014, Chinese online novels gradually gained prominence and eventually dominated the platform.

In addition to major translation sites like WuxiaWorld, there are hundreds of smaller translation groups, some with only one or two translated works. These individual translators often struggle to reach readers, while readers themselves face difficulties finding translations of their desired works. Novel Updates addresses this issue by displaying all recently updated translations chronologically on its homepage, allowing readers to directly jump to the translation websites to follow their favorite series.

Moreover, Novel Updates provides a vibrant community forum where users can engage in discussions, contributing to its high user engagement despite its primary function being redirecting users to other websites. With an average user session duration of over seven minutes, Novel Updates offers a comprehensive view of the English translation landscape of Chinese web novels, providing a panoramic perspective on the overseas dissemination of Chinese online literature.

3.1.3 Observation and Reflection

To investigate and assess the actual overseas influence of Chinese online literature, this study introduces digital translation platforms for Chinese online literature into global traffic inquiry systems such as Alexa, aiming to evaluate the actual influence of each platform through quantitative methods. It is worth noting that although there are numerous domestic traffic inquiry tools, many platforms cannot reflect real global click-through rates. Alexa.com, a website specializing in publishing website world rankings and basic data, provides a range of evaluation index information, including comprehensive rankings, visit volume rankings, and page view rankings, which makes it more credible and authoritative among similar tools. Therefore, this study selects Alexa.com to query traffic data for comparing the actual communication effects and influence of various digitalized translation platforms. Alexa traffic data is generally measured by PV and UV. PV stands for page view, which refers to the number of page views, while UV stands for unique view, which refers to the number of unique visitors. Traffic is displayed on a daily, weekly, monthly, and three-month average basis, with access ratios by country and region also provided, offering more comprehensive traffic measurement data. This study selects and compares the three-month average ranking and average PV value of each website. For instance, on April 7, 2017, the traffic data ranking of WuxiaWorld once reached as high as 954, while the English website of China Daily (domain name: chinadaily.com) ranked 1043 and US News (domain name: usnews.com) ranked 728 on the same day, indicating that the WuxiaWorld platform has significant international influence and communication effects. Below is a table of traffic data for digitalized translation websites of Chinese online literature.

Table 1. PV ranking of Chinese online literature translation websites

| Website Name | Alexa Average Global Ranking for Three Month's Duration | Alexa Average PV for Three Month's Duration |
|---------------|---|---|
| Wattpad | 781 | 10794000 |
| Webnovel | 3177 | 2813000 |
| Novel Updates | 3185 | 2336000 |
| WuxiaWorld | 7998 | 793000 |
| Novel Full | 22272 | 1228000 |
| Box Novel | 28441 | 790000 |
| LNMTL | 32698 | 345000 |
| Rulate | 73494 | 153000 |
| Volarenovels | 120989 | 192000 |
| Chireads | 149851 | 153000 |
| ranobe hub | 176941 | 99000 |
| Babel Novel | 272419 | 16000 |
| SPCNET | 310419 | 11000 |
| Flying Lines | 413745 | 29000 |
| Book Bar | 763120 | 3000 |
| TapRead | 1715747 | 3000 |
| FANmily | 0 | 0 |

The data from these websites underscores the thriving development of digital translation platforms for Chinese online literature, with a proliferation of fan-based, commercial, machine, and AI translation platforms. Despite the entry of commercial forces like China Literature Limited (formerly known as Qidian Group), with their substantial capital and exclusive copyright advantages, no single commercial entity has monopolized the field. WuxiaWorld, the leading fan-translation platform for Chinese online novels in Europe and the Americas, continues to hold a significant reader share and remains the most influential platform. Commercialization has also fostered healthy competition among platforms, optimizing the entire digital translation ecosystem.

Common characteristics are observed across these platforms. First, comprehensive digitization: all platforms have achieved full digitization of translation products, processes, and functions. Readers primarily engage in real-time online reading, inheriting the chapter-by-chapter update mechanism from Chinese online literature platforms. Second, genre-specific platforms: beyond Qidian International (formerly Webnovel), each platform specializes in promoting certain types of Chinese web novels, fostering highly engaged reader communities. Third, high reader participation: across fan-translation, commercial, and even self-developed machine translation platforms, reader engagement is paramount. Active commentary on translations and participation in the translation process are prevalent phenomena in the development of these platforms.

Wattpad, the top-ranked platform globally in terms of PV and ranking, represents a novel digital reading concept as an open platform offering free access to literary texts in various genres and languages. It attracts vast audiences and reflects the new reading ecology in the digital media era.

Meanwhile, WuxiaWorld, the pioneering translation platform for Chinese online literature, now lags behind Webnovel International, backed by the financial strength of China Literature Limited. This shift reflects the trends and dynamics of platform development in the digital and commercial era.

Novel Updates, as a navigation platform, consistently maintains high rankings and traffic, demonstrating the international appeal of new genre-based online literature. LNMTL, a purely reader-developed and self-governed machine translation platform, ranks among the top ten in traffic for Chinese online literature translation platforms, indicating the urgent reading demand for Chinese literature among overseas readers. Their preference for machine translation platforms underscores the importance of “story” and “content,” potentially inspiring future translation paths and methods for certain types of Chinese literary texts.

4. Current Research Status

The spontaneous, bottom-up translation initiatives that occur in the cyberspace subvert the traditional top-down literary translation model dominated by the government in China. This new realm and mode of translation urgently require in-depth research from translation scholars. Innovative research concepts and methods should be integrated with new perspectives and theories from other disciplines in the thorough research and interpretation of this new translation phenomenon. In the era of Chinese culture going global, the importance and timeliness of research on the translation of Chinese online literature are self-evident.

The author has made a thorough study on literature related to the translation of Chinese online literature, covering Chinese academic sources including China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), Wanfang Database, Duxiu Chinese Academic Search, Chaoxing Chinese Books, VIP Chinese Periodicals, National Social Science Fund Project Database, Master and Doctoral Dissertation Database, Chinese official media reports including Guangming Daily and People’s Daily, as well as influential official self-media and relevant foreign academic sources including Google Scholar, Web of Science, Elsevier Science Direct, John Benjamins, Taylor & Francis, etc. The author has also used big data crawling to collect reports from Western mainstream media on the overseas translation of Chinese online literature.

The author then classified these documents into three major categories: academic journal articles, master’s and doctoral dissertations, and media news reports including traditional print media and official mainstream self-media. The rationale for sorting the literature by different types is that the research on the translation of Chinese online literature, with strong practicality and reality, is an emerging topic that has attracted widespread attention both in China and overseas. Due to the high integration of the research object with the real society, newspaper documents and journal documents are different in terms of writing purpose and academic depth, with the former for reporting and the latter researching. On the other hand, master and doctoral dissertations, due to the limitations of writing standards and discipline nature, are also different from academic journal documents in research depth. However, due to the short duration of the phenomenon (about a decade), although the number of documents has increased explosively, it is still relatively small (around 270).

Newspaper documents account for 35% of the total, indicating that the translation and introduction of Chinese

online literature is highly valued by authority represented by print media (e.g., *Guangming Daily's*, *People's Daily*, etc.). It is a manifestation of Chinese Online literature entering the mainstream academic field. However, newspaper articles are mostly general descriptions, often painting the broad background of Chinese online literature going global, briefly discussing the past, present, future, and impact, while also looking forward to the prospects. They provide possible dissemination paths and strategies for Chinese culture to go global from a macro perspective. Newspaper articles are generally short in length and not strongly academic in nature; their role is to provide a broad background for research in this field.

Academic journal documents make up the rest 65% of the total, among which core journals account for 24%. The documents mainly distributed in core journals of publishing and literature research; the number of core journals in foreign language disciplines is scarce. This indicates that Chinese online literature going global has received great attention in the publishing and journalism field, but has not yet attracted widespread attention in the foreign language and translation fields. Therefore it urgently needs in-depth exploration by translation researchers. Overall, the research perspectives on the translation of Chinese online literature are rich, including three major categories: communication studies, translation studies and journalism and publishing. There are also some documents that study this phenomenon from the perspectives of comparative literature, literary studies, cross-cultural studies, narratology, etc. Subsequently, the author has sorted out the literature from the perspective of the temporal changes in the number of documents and reached the following conclusions:

Firstly, the gradual overseas expansion of the cultural industry and the establishment of overseas translation websites (fan websites/commercial websites) have created favorable conditions for the external dissemination of Chinese online literature. Research on the translation of Chinese online literature almost synchronizes with the development of translation websites;

Secondly, research on the external dissemination of Chinese online literature accounts for only 0.43% of the total number of Chinese online literature research, indicating that the research is still mainly focused on local context studies, and the research on the dissemination and translation of Chinese online literature overseas urgently needs to be strengthened. Subsequently, the author of this paper analyzed journal documents from four perspectives: research perspective, research content, research method, and theoretical framework.

Papers in the category of communication studies account for the highest proportion, with a broad coverage of research content. These papers often discuss the current situation, process, characteristics, trends, crises and future prospects of communication; they also touch upon various aspects such as communication models, strategies, paths, types, elements, system construction, motivations and challenges. Additionally, there are papers that provide a diachronic summary of the characteristics of the global dissemination of Chinese online literature, as well as micro-studies on translation platforms and the dissemination paths of specific online novels. In terms of communication elements, these papers mainly involve key elements such as text content, translators, website platforms, and audiences(readers). Regarding the problems existing in the overseas dissemination of online literature, there are currently many issues, such as unclear copyright ownership, uneven types of texts, the limited types of translated works(mainly fantasy and martial arts novels), uneven translation quality, and the lack of a reader payment habit to support website operations, which can easily lead to conflicts between fans, readers and website operations. In terms of exploring solutions to problems, these papers cover the macro level of national policies, the meso level of communication strategies and the micro level of platform operations. Some authors suggest that the global dissemination of Chinese online literature requires international policy support and the cultivation of more translation talents. Other authors suggest that it is necessary to explore high-level translators, diversify the types and themes of translations, organize professional competitions, and develop multi-channel dissemination at the micro level. Overall, researches from the perspective of communication studies are relatively numerous, but there are issues with strong repetition and uniformity. Individual papers often lack depth in argumentation. Such research papers often pursue breadth rather than delving deeply into a specific point; they can easily fall into the report-like background information prompt. The overseas dissemination of Chinese online literature is a complex emerging phenomenon involving many aspects, and it is difficult for a single paper to cover them all.

The second most prevalent research perspective is that of translation studies. Regarding the research content, studies on specific translated texts account for nearly half of the research on the international dissemination of Chinese online literature from a translation studies perspective. The research focuses on various aspects such as translation strategies, techniques, the translation of culturally loaded words, and mistranslations. The other half of the research delves into new models of translation, platforms, ecological fields, operational mechanisms, relationship of translators and readers, and quality assessment.

From a theoretical framework standpoint, ecological translation studies is the most frequently referenced translation theory, followed by field theory and translation sociophysiology theory. A few papers starting from the perspective of translation studies discuss the future paths of translation and dissemination, the connotations of translation, and the dimensions of paths and impacts, as well as comparisons between the translation of online literature and traditional literary translation. However, in terms of quantity, the total number of papers from the translation studies perspective is still very limited (12%). Apart from 20 core journal papers from the translation studies perspective, most papers lack depth and breadth, and there is room for improvement in research methods and the integration of research perspectives.

There are also a few other papers with unique research perspectives, ranging from copyright importation to publishing mechanisms, from narrative priorities to audiences and consumer behaviors. These diverse research perspectives greatly expand the breadth of research on the overseas translation of online literature. Studies on platforms and interviews with key platform figures have deeply explored the translation of Chinese online literature, allowing researchers to deeply understand the motivations behind the phenomenon. However, currently the number of such articles is still small. Although these research perspectives are of original significance, some papers leave much room to be desired, with unclear research methods and a lack of academic depth. Therefore, the importance of such meta-research for deepening the theoretical understanding of Chinese online literature is self-evident.

5. Conclusion and Outlook

The emerging phenomenon of online literature dissemination overseas has attracted high public attention. Chinese online literature itself has broken away from the inherent pattern of highbrow literature and started with “feel-good stories”, which fits the spirit and hobbies of the new generation in the new era, forming a new chapter of “decentralized” Chinese literature.

In the internet era, participatory culture has seen an explosive growth, leading to the rise of civilian forces and the transformation of popular cultural forms. Chinese online literature has flourished within these virtual communities, giving rise to a bottom-up literary production movement, a “carnival of literature for all” (Shao, 2018, p. 7). New media technologies empower the general public to continuously deconstruct and reconstruct social networks and power relations. Influenced by these developments, the overseas translation and dissemination of Chinese online literature have exhibited entirely new characteristics in terms of content, models, agents, and criticism. The main manifestations are as follows: 1) The scope of translation content has expanded from single textual materials to multi-modal digital content; 2) Translation models have transcended top-down driven models, giving rise to new bottom-up driven models, such as crowd-sourced translation, fan translation, and community translation; 3) The diversification of translation agents has progressed, being no longer confined to professional translators. The lowered barriers to entry in the translation industry have allowed a large number of non-professional translators to participate in translation activities, gradually shifting translation power from cultural elites to the masses and challenging the status and identity of professional translators; 4) Translation criticism has constructed a new discursive space within the internet, fostering a new type of noisy online translation criticism with the active participation of the general audience.

The author of this paper attempts to outline the future prospect in the arena of Chinese online literature translation : 1) In the study of translation content, research on the quality of Chinese online literature translation, the digital carriers of Chinese online literature texts, and micro-level translation studies are all new fields awaiting exploration; 2) In the study of translation agents, research on translators, readers, translator-reader relationships, and the integration of human and AI translation all warrant further investigation; 3) In the study of translation models, comparative studies of various translation platform models, research on new types of translation operations and the implications of Chinese online literature translation for the translation of traditional popular literature (such as Jin Yong’s martial arts novels) are all topics that merit in-depth analysis; 4) In the study of translation criticism, the meta-research on the overseas translation and dissemination of Chinese online literature needs to be enhanced. In fact, it is only when the meta-research in this field is relatively mature and scientific that we can say that the field of translation studies on the overseas translation and dissemination of Chinese online literature has reached maturity. 5) In terms of theoretical integration and innovation, in addition to perspectives and theoretical frameworks such as communication studies, publishing studies, comparative cultural studies, and sociological theories, there is a need to explore theories that are more applicable to the overseas translation and dissemination of Chinese online literature.

In summary, it is in urgent need to expand the theoretical horizons, diversify the research methods, and strengthen the textual studies in the field of research on the overseas translation and dissemination of Chinese

online literature urgently. The exploration of the motivations behind translation phenomena (translators, works, translation readers) needs to be deepened. From macro, meso and micro perspectives, there are many areas that are worth expanding and of significant academic and practical value.

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