

A Visualized Bibliometric Analysis of Translation Studies of Mo Yan's Works Using VOSviewer from 2000 to 2024

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Abstract

Mo Yan's works hold a significant position in the global literary field, and the study of the translations of these works is considered a key approach to promoting literary cross-cultural communication and academic discussions in translation studies. This study, based on the journal articles in the CNKI database from 2000 to 2024, employs the software VOSviewer to carry out a visualized bibliometric analysis. The aim is to illustrate the annual publication volume, co-authorship, co-occurrence clustering of keywords, and the evolutionary trends. The results indicated that the research of translation studies of Mo Yan's works in China has gone through a process from slow start to rapid growth, with a recent decline in the number of publications followed by a gradual stabilization. A stable core research community has not yet formed. The primary areas of research interest are concentrated on translation strategies within theoretical frameworks, case studies of translators like Howard Goldblatt, and the global circulation and reception of Mo Yan's literary works. This study provided references for entry into the translation studies of Mo Yan's works and identifying future research directions.

Keywords: translation study, Mo Yan, bibliometric, visualized analysis, VOSviewer

1. Introduction

Mo Yan is regarded as an outstanding figure in contemporary Chinese literature, and his works have garnered widespread acclaim worldwide. In 2012, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature for his unique literary style and profound insight into traditional culture, which further propelled the international dissemination of his works. The study of translations of Mo Yan's works significantly advances translation studies as a discipline while also playing a crucial role in the

international dissemination of Chinese literature and fostering mutual understanding among diverse cultures. However, there is currently a lack of systematic review and summary in this area within the academic community. Bibliometric mapping is an important research topic in the field of bibliometrics (Börner et al., 2003). This mapping technique, which serves as a tool for presenting the progress and structure of scientific development through data mining and information analysis, can more effectively transform and display complex data compared

to traditional methods (Liu & Wang, 2019). The present paper conducts a comprehensive analysis of the literature on the translation studies of Mo Yan's works using VOSviewer software, based on data from the CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure) database. Through visualization and literature interpretation, the aim is to illustrate the annual publication volume, co-authorship, co-occurrence clustering of keywords, and the evolutionary trends. This paper not only facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the current state of research on the translations of Mo Yan's works but also provides a reference for future research directions.

2. Research Methodology

The research tool employed in this study is VOSviewer (version 1.6.18), a program that offers a viewer that allows bibliometric maps to be examined in full detail (Van Eck & Waltman, 2010). Our data for literature selection comes from the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) database, which stands as one of China's largest academic resource

databases, offering researchers an extensive array of literature resources and data support. The search criteria are established through multi-dimensional keyword combinations, with search themes including "Mo Yan" with "translation" OR "Mo Yan's novels" with "translation" OR "Mo Yan's works" with "translation". The search range spans from 2000 to 2024, capturing the research dynamics and development trends in this field since the dawn of the new century. The search was conducted on October 17, 2024. To ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data, this study meticulously selected the literature. Through manual review, non-research literature such as conference records, moderator comments, and interviews were excluded, along with other documents that had low relevance to the theme. Ultimately, 758 journal articles were identified for data analysis. After exporting in Refworks format, the data was processed using VOSviewer.

3. Data Statistics and Analysis

3.1 Analysis of Publication Time

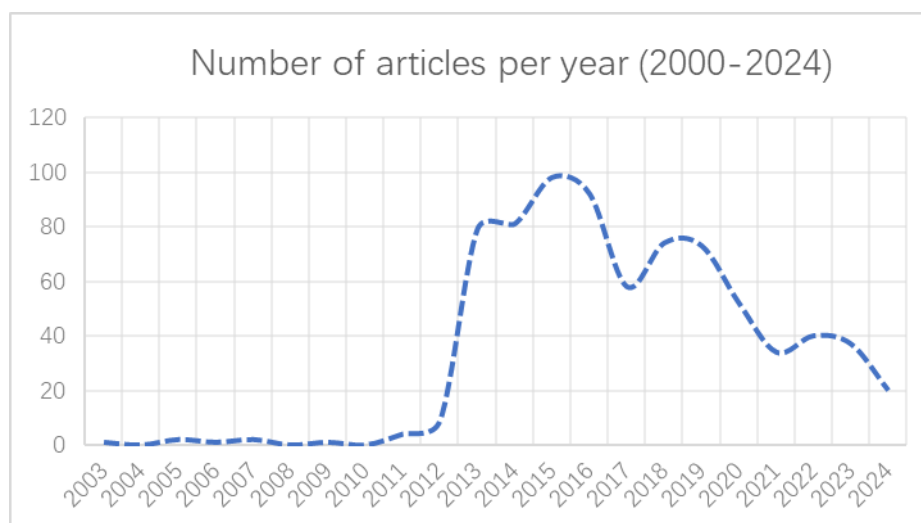


Figure 1. Chart of annual publication volume of translation studies of Mo Yan's works

Figure 1 shows the number of publications on the translation of Mo Yan's works per year from 2000 to 2024. It can be observed that the annual publication volume exhibits four distinct phases over this period. The first stage is the slow start period (2000-2011). Since the publication of the first paper in this field in 2003, the volume of research output in the following years remained relatively low. Notably, no new literature was published in 2004 and 2008, indicating a lack of sufficient attention from the academic

community during this early phase and a relatively weak research foundation. In 2011, Mo Yan was awarded the Manhae Literature Prize in Korea and the Mao Dun Literature Prize for his novel *Frog*, an achievement that significantly enhanced academic interest in his work. Consequently, the number of scholarly publications related to his writing increased substantially in 2012, with a total of 19 research papers being published. This surge in academic attention was further amplified by Mo Yan's

receipt of the Nobel Prize in Literature in the same year. In 2013, in response to the call of President Xi Jinping at the National Conference on Ideological and Political Work to “Tell Chinese Stories”, the number of related research publications surged, with nearly 100 papers published that year. In the subsequent years, the volume remained high, averaging around 90 papers annually. During this period, research on the translation of Mo Yan’s works became increasingly mature, forming clear research directions. The third stage is the fluctuation adjustment period (2017-2020). In 2017, there was a brief decline in publication volume, but it rebounded in the following two years. The fourth stage is the relative stability period (2021-2024). After experiencing brief fluctuations,

the overall publication volume stabilized, maintaining an annual average of over 30 papers.

Overall, research on the translation of Mo Yan’s works has followed a trajectory in publication volume that began with steady growth, escalated to a rapid increase, then experienced a recent decline, and finally stabilized. This development trend clearly demonstrates the academic community’s sustained interest in this research topic. However, there remains potential for further growth in publication volume, indicating that this field warrants more in-depth exploration and expansion.

3.2 Analysis of Co-Authorship

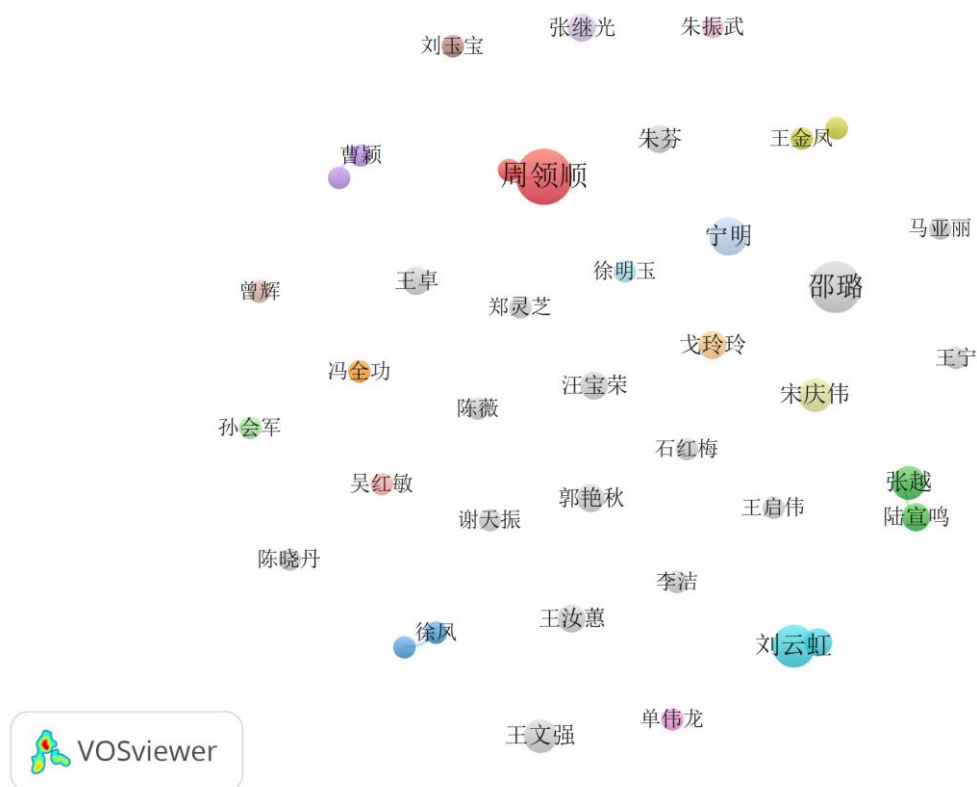


Figure 2. Core author co-occurrence network

The 758 documents included in the analysis were completed by a total of 799 authors. According to Price’s Law: $M=0.749\sqrt{N_{max}}$, substituting $N_{max}=10$, it is concluded that authors who have published 3 or more papers are the core authors in this field, and ultimately 40 authors are identified, as shown in Figure 2. In the map, the size of the nodes reflects the number of publications by each author; larger

circles indicate more publications. The lines between nodes represent collaborative relationships. The results indicate that the five most prolific authors in terms of publication volume are Zhou Lingshun (10 publications), Shao Lu (8 publications), Liu Yunhong (7 publications), Ning Ming (6 publications), and Song Qingwei (6 publications). Additionally, Xu Jun, along with 11 other scholars, emerges as a

notable contributor to the field, each having authored more than four publications, thereby significantly contributing to the research on the translation of Mo Yan's works in China.

Price's Law also states that in a specific field, half of the papers are written by a group of prolific authors (Ding, 1992). In the study of translations of Mo Yan's works in China, the 40 prolific authors have published only 155 articles, accounting for just 20.44% of all papers, which is far below the theoretical expectation of 50%. This indicates that a stable core research group has not yet formed. Among these authors, 12 (or 30%) have not collaborated with others in publishing papers. The collaboration links between authors are sparse, with only a few individuals having connections around them, suggesting a low level of collaboration among authors in this field and a relatively dispersed research effort.

3.3 Analysis of Co-Occurrence Clustering of Keywords

Keywords provide a concise summary of the

core content of a paper. By utilizing visualization software to construct a co-occurrence knowledge map of keywords from research literature in a specific field, we can highlight the research hotspots and development trends within that domain (Chen, 2022). In the present study, an analysis was conducted on 1,188 keywords extracted from 758 publications. With a minimum co-occurrence threshold set at 4, and excluding terms such as "Mo Yan" and "research", a total of 110 keywords were delineated as significant.

Figure 3 illustrates a visual network map of keyword clustering. In this map, individual nodes symbolize keywords, while the connecting lines represent their co-occurrence relationships. The size of each node is proportional to the frequency of co-occurrence, signifying the keyword's prominence in scholarly discourse. Different colors are used to distinguish various research clusters, with keywords in this field primarily divided into five clusters.

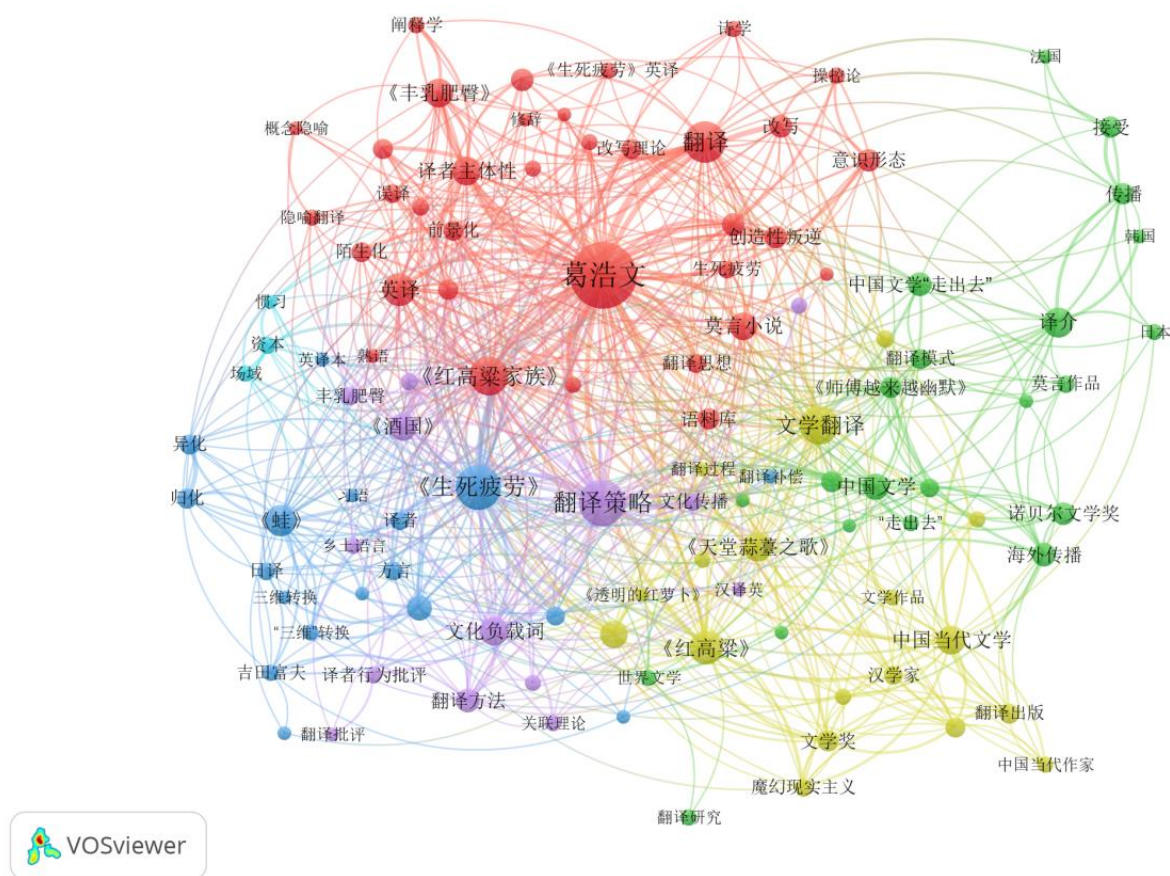


Figure 3. Co-occurrence network of keywords

Table 1 lists the top 10 keywords within each cluster, ranked by their link strength.

Table 1. The number of keywords in each cluster and the top 10 keywords by total link strength

Cluster	Total Number of Keywords	Top 10 Keywords by Total Link Strength
Cluster 1 (Red)	35	Howard Goldblatt, “Red Sorghum Clan”, English Translation, Translator’s Subjectivity, “Big Breasts and Wide Hips”, Rewriting, Creative Treason, faithfulness, Ideology, Corpus
Cluster 2 (Green)	22	Translation, Overseas Dissemination, Globalization of Chinese Literature, Dissemination, “Shifu, you’ll do anything for a laugh”, Models of Translation and Dissemination, Chinese Culture, Reception, Nobel Prize in Literature, Translation Model
Cluster 3 (Dark Blue)	18	“Life and Death are Wearing Me Out”, “Frog”, Eco-Translation Studies, foreignization, Domestication, Howard Goldblatt’s Translations, Three-Dimensional Transformation, Tomio Yoshida, Dialect, Japanese Translation
Cluster 4 (Yellow)	18	“Red Sorghum”, Literary Translation, Contemporary Chinese Literature, “The Garlic Ballads”, “Sandalwood Death”, Literary Awards, Translators, Translation and Publishing, Sinologists, Magical Realism
Cluster 5 (Purple)	14	Translation Strategies, Culturally Loaded Words, “The Republic of Wine”, Translation Method, “Big Breasts and Wide Hips”, Cultural Dissemination, Skopos Theory, Criticism of Translators’ Behavior, folk Language, Relevance Theory, Functional Equivalence

Cluster 1 (Red):

This cluster contains the largest number of keywords among all clusters, encompassing central concepts across various domains such as translation strategies, translation methods, the role and style of translators, and translation criticism. “Howard Goldblatt” emerges as the core keyword with the highest total link strength, co-occurring 202 times, and is closely connected to nodes including “translator’s subjectivity” and “translator’s style”. Scholars like Hu and Peng (2023) have illustrated Goldblatt’s subjectivity in translation and its multidimensional manifestations, highlighting how translators can effectively balance cultural differences and reader expectation. Keywords such as “creative treason” and “faithfulness” also extend into multiple nodes and have become popular research topics in this field. Studies by Shao (2013) and Liu and Xu (2014) have revealed that Goldblatt employs the translation method of “pseudo faithfulness”, which reduces cultural barriers in the target culture by omitting culturally loaded information, while successfully preserving the exotic flavor of the original work. Analyzing the textual rewriting of Goldblatt’s translations within the framework of Lefevere’s “rewriting theory” is also a significant theme in Cluster 1.

Researchers like Zhang (2014) have pointed out that the textual rewriting in Goldblatt’s translations encompasses not only linguistic conversion but also cultural and ideological repositioning, revitalizing the work in a new linguistic environment.

Cluster 2 (Green):

This cluster contains 22 keywords, which can be categorized into three main areas of research: (1) Exploring translation models that effectively convey the literary and cultural value of Mo Yan’s original works. Scholars such as Han (2015) argue in favor of collaboration between foreign translators and domestic scholars to ensure translation quality and readability. Other scholars like Song (2018) suggest that different translator models should be flexibly employed at various stages of cultural translation. (2) Evaluation of Overseas Dissemination and Translation Effects. The study by Bao (2015) has exerted a significant influence within the academic community. It proposes the selective translation of contemporary and modern Chinese works that possess global appeal and are deeply rooted in Chinese culture. The research advocates for a domestication translation strategy and promotes dissemination through a variety of approaches, including international publishing collaborations, film and

television adaptations, and media campaigns. Moreover, keywords “Japan”, “France”, and “South Korea” in this cluster point to research on the translation and dissemination of Mo Yan’s works in these countries, with representative studies by Zhu (2014), Zhang (2017), Du (2022), and Liu (2022). (3) Analysis of the effects of the Nobel Prize in Literature. Ling (2015) and other scholars have delved into the mechanisms behind the global dissemination of Mo Yan’s works, exploring how literary awards influence the translation and circulation of these works.

Cluster 3 (Dark Blue):

The classic issues of “domestication” and “foreignization” in translation studies have received extensive attention within this cluster. Scholars such as Zhu and Qin (2014) highlight that Goldblatt’s translations transcend the binary opposition framework of domestication and foreignization by flexibly coordinating various translation strategies according to the specific content and characteristics of the text. This approach significantly enhances the acceptability of the translated works within the target language’s cultural environment. “Tomio Yoshida” is another keyword with high link strength in this cluster, attracting scholarly interest. Researchers like Song (2014) have conducted in-depth analyses of Tomio Yoshida’s Japanese translations of Mo Yan’s works, especially *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* and *Frog*, focusing particularly on his translation techniques for proper nouns and dialect expressions. They observe that Tomio Yoshida adeptly balances cultural depth and aesthetic quality in his translations, offering readers a reading experience that closely captures the essence of the original works.

Cluster 4 (Yellow):

This cluster primarily concentrates on the crucial role that sinologists and translators play in bringing Chinese literature to the global stage, as well as how their professional activities influence the reception of Chinese literary works abroad. These studies predominantly focus on the case of Howard Goldblatt, with a smaller

portion of work addressing other sinologists of various nationalities, such as Shozo Fujii, Noel Dutrait, Ye Gorov, and Amilton Reis. This cluster also examines how Chinese literary works, after receiving domestic and international literary awards, enhance their visibility and influence on the international stage through translation and publishing strategies, thereby successfully integrating into the global cultural market. Researchers suggest that the internationalization of Chinese literature requires a multifaceted approach: strengthening sino-foreign collaborative translation and advocating for direct writing in foreign languages (Wang, 2013); improving translation quality and focusing on cultural branding to expand international influence (Xie, 2012); while simultaneously being cautious of commercialization and entertainment trends to ensure the accurate conveyance of literary spirit (Sun, 2012). These strategies collectively facilitate the global dissemination and recognition of the value of Chinese literature.

Cluster 5 (Purple):

This cluster delves into the treatment of culturally loaded terms and folk language in English translations. The research frequently centers on works like *The Republic of Wine* and *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*, employing translation theories such as relevance theory, functional equivalence, and skopos theory. These studies provide detailed analyses of translation strategies, methods, translator behavior, and the influence of cultural factors in the translation process. Zhou Lingshun has made pioneering and systematic contributions to the field of English translation of Chinese folk language. He has clearly defined these dialects and established the scope and importance of the research (Zhou, 2016). Through a thorough examination of Goldblatt’s translation examples of folk languages, Zhou proposed a translator model that blends the strengths of both cultures to enhance the global dissemination of Chinese literature (Zhou & Ding, 2017).

3.4 Analysis of the Evolutionary Trends

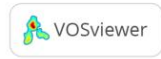


Figure 4. Overlay Network visualization map

Figure 4 of the overlay network visualization map depicts the relative chronological order of the keywords' appearance in the literature through variations in node color intensity. A darker node color indicates an earlier appearance of the keyword, and vice versa. By interpreting these color differences and integrating the publication timelines of the relevant literature, it is possible to infer the developmental trajectory of research topics and emerging research trends.

After Mo Yan won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2012, his international reputation significantly increased. This achievement not only accelerated the global spread of his works but also sparked a keen interest in the translation studies of his writings, making it a prominent topic in international literary circles. During this period, the research mainly focused on the overseas dissemination of Mo Yan's works. As research continues to deepen, scholars have begun to expand their focus to broader translation issues, encompassing cultural transmission, translation models, and the introduction and application of translation theories. Articles on the translation of Mo Yan's works from the perspectives of various translation theories, including relevance theory, functional equivalence, and skopos theory, hermeneutics, and domestication and foreignization, have been published. The primary focus of the research subjects has been

on the English translations of Mo Yan's works, particularly *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*, *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out*, *Red Sorghum Clan* and *The Garlic Ballads*. Since 2020, researchers have shown an intense interest in the translation of *Frog*. Concurrently, discussions regarding translations into other languages and their translators have been gaining momentum, especially concerning the translation practices in Japan and Korea. Due to the cultural similarities with the Chinese context, the translation strategies and translator behaviors in these regions have drawn significant academic attention. Furthermore, translator behavior criticism, idiomatic expressions, and strategies for translating culturally loaded terms remain hot topics of persistent interest in this field.

4. Conclusions

This paper employs VOSviewer software to conduct a visual analysis of 758 articles on the translation of Mo Yan's works, as indexed in the CNKI database. The study reveals that research on the translation of Mo Yan's works has evolved from a slow start to rapid growth, followed by a recent decline in publication volume, which has now stabilized. With respect to the research community, although there are a few groups led by Professor Zhou Lingshun, they are overall more dispersed and have not yet formed a stable core research team. Regarding research content, studies focusing on translation

strategies and methods within specific theoretical frameworks or perspectives have consistently been a hot topic in this field. However, current research tends to concentrate on specific translation details, resulting in homogeneity among findings, thus necessitating further exploration in terms of innovation and depth. Translator studies are also among the focal issues in this field, with certain scholars focusing on exploring the translator's style, subjectivity, and their critical role in promoting the global dissemination of Chinese literary works. Howard Goldblatt, as a prominent translator of Mo Yan's works, has garnered significant attention from academia, yet systematic research on other translators, such as Blas Piñero Martínez, needs to be strengthened. Similarly, the research on the overseas dissemination and reception of translations has been fruitful. However, there are still limitations: current reception studies often rely on traditional qualitative analyses of online book reviews, with a significant lack of quantitative analysis of reader comments using information extraction techniques. Empirical studies based on surveys and interviews with target language country readers are relatively few. Additionally, research on the dissemination and reception in non-English-speaking countries is relatively insufficient. In terms of work selection, research has primarily focused on a limited number of works such as *Red Sorghum Clan*, *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*, *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out*, *Frog*, *Sandalwood Death* and *The Republic of Wine*. There is less enthusiasm for translation studies of Mo Yan's other works, which may limit a comprehensive understanding of the diversity and richness of his writings. Additionally, research often focuses on the main text, with few studies addressing paratextual elements such as cover design, illustrations, and annotations. Moreover, English dominates the research languages, studies on Japanese, Korean, and French translations are also increasing, but attention to other language versions remains limited.

In response to the previously mentioned issues, this paper proposes the following suggestions:

(1) Enrich Research Topics: Building on existing research, continue to explore new research areas. For example, study the application of technologies such as translation memory and machine translation in the translation of Mo Yan's works, and evaluate their impact on

translation quality and efficiency. Investigate the adaptation of Mo Yan's works into multimedia forms such as the film *Red Sorghum Clan*, exploring translation strategies for cross-media narratives. Further deepen research on paratextual elements.

(2) Broaden Research Scope: Encourage researchers to move beyond the limitations of focusing on a single or a few works and to explore the translation practices of Mo Yan's entire corpus of works. At the same time, broaden the examination of translators to gain a comprehensive understanding of different translators' styles and strategies.

(3) Strengthen Empirical Research: Advocate for the use of diverse empirical research methods to enhance the objectivity and scientific nature of research results. For instance, design questionnaires to collect feedback from translators, editors, and readers; carry out interviews to obtain a deeper understanding of the translation process; use eye-tracking technology to explore translators' visual attention; and employ evaluation tools to assess translation quality.

(4) Conduct Multilingual Translation Studies: Actively promote multilingual translation studies of Mo Yan's works, engaging in a thorough investigation of how translation is disseminated and how audiences respond in various linguistic and cultural contexts, to advance the spread of Chinese literature in a globalized context.

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