Interactive reception of online literary translation:
The translator-readers dynamics in a discussion forum

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Abstract

This paper examines the reception of Xiao Mao's online translation of *Charlotte's Web* through the interaction between readers and the translator posted on an Internet discussion forum. In 2000, Xiao Mao's translation was one of the first Chinese literary translations published online. In the analysis, I use Fish's concept of "interpretive community" in this research. I first collected forum messages between the translator and his readers. Through a content and conversation analysis of these posts, I identified recurring themes, including comparisons with multiple translations, and considerations about the translation of children's literature. How Xiao Mao's translation was received is then analyzed as a type of "interactive reception", showing that the readers' reception is collectively mediated and constructed through interactions between readers and translator. This study shows that, in the age of the Internet, reception is a socially situated communicative activity conditioned by interactional dynamics and shared understanding between readers. The roles of readers and translators appear to have become fluid and mutually constitutive, while such shifting roles increase empathy and achieve intersubjective understanding.

Biography

Dr. Xuemei CHEN is an Assistant Professor in the Programme of Applied Translation Studies at Beijing Normal University-Hong Kong Baptist University United International College. She obtained her doctoral degree from Lingnan University in Hong Kong. Her main research interests include translation in the digital age, translation of children's literature, sociology of translation, and reception studies. Her articles appear in internationally peer-reviewed journals such as *Perspectives*, *Translation Studies*, *Target*, *Babel*, and *Children's Literature in Education*.