



A Study on the Translation of “Red” Based on the Chinese-English Parallel Corpus of *A Dream of Red Mansions*

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Abstract

In “A Dream of Red Mansions”, an abundance of color words associated with “red” reflects the significance of the color in Chinese traditional culture. This study introduces a novel perspective by delving into the translational aspects of “red” color words through corpus translatology. Utilizing the existing Chinese-English parallel corpus of *A Dream of Red Mansions*, the paper conducts a quantitative analysis of the “red” words in the combined versions of Hawkes and Minford and Yang Xianyi and Danaidie. The analysis explores translation methods and strategies employed for “red” words in different contexts. The findings reveal that Hawkes primarily employs domestication and free translation, whereas Yang Xianyi leans towards foreignization and literal translation. At the lexical level, it becomes evident that varying cultural and linguistic disparities prompt translators to adapt and modify their strategies accordingly.

key words: *A Dream of Red Mansions*; Color words; Corpus; Translation

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INTRODUCTION

With the advent of computer-aided tools, corpora are increasingly employed in literary research and creative

endeavors. There exist various types of corpora, including Monolingual, Bilingual, and Multilingual corpora. Derived from authentic language usage, corpora provide reliable language collocations and facilitate word frequency analysis. The Parallel Corpus of *A Dream of Red Mansions*, developed by Zhejiang Shaoxing College of Arts and Sciences, intertwines with the masterpiece *A Dream of Red Mansions*, offering substantial benefits for thematic research.

A Dream of Red Mansions, a literary classic, continues to attract redologists exploring its cultural nuances and delving into the profound depths of the text. Its translation has garnered scholarly attention, prompting numerous translators to render foreign language versions, enabling global audiences to engage with the rich cultural essence of *A Dream of Red Mansions*. While extensive studies have yielded insights into various aspects such as poems, traditional dramas, and tea cultures, investigations specifically focused on color remain relatively scarce.

Given the frequent occurrence of the color red in *A Dream of Red Mansions*, this paper concentrates on exploring the cultural phenomena associated with it. Utilizing the Parallel Corpus of *A Dream of Red Mansions*, researchers can delve deeper into cultural nuances, understand various translation methods, and appreciate the cultural divergences between China and the West.

1. CORPUS TRANSLATOLOGY

Corpus translatology refers to the use of corpus tools to study a large number of translated texts and translation phenomena, and then conduct data statistics for a comprehensive and systematic approach. It is widely believed in the field of geography that the British scholar Mona Baker is the pioneer of corpus translatology. In her paper published in 1993, she mentioned that the research methods of corpus linguistics would have a direct impact

on translation studies, and explained the theoretical value and application value of corpus in translation studies.

1.1 The Definition of Corpus Translatology

As for the definition of corpus translatology, Laviosa has vividly called the combination of corpus, translation and interpretation as "partnership". She points out that corpus linguistics will provide research methods for empirical research, while translation research will determine the field of investigation and put forward feasible hypotheses. In fact, corpus translatology refers to the systematic analysis and study of the nature, process and phenomenon of translation based on the corpus. Real bilingual corpus or translation corpus is its research object, as well as data statistics and theoretical analysis are its research methods. The research is based on the linguistics, literature and cultural theories and translation theories. On the basis of electronic text and computer statistics, this paper describes various translation phenomena in a wide range or a specific range. With full description, it explores the process, characteristics and rules of the two languages and their conversion, analyzes and explains translation phenomena or verifies various hypotheses about translation.

In fact, corpus translatology is an interdisciplinary product combining descriptive translation studies with corpus linguistics. The main difference between corpus translatology and traditional translation studies lies in the scale and research approach of corpus. In traditional translation studies, the selection of corpus is subjective, random and individual, so it is relatively one-sided in terms of inference or verification. Based on a large number of factual and corresponding corpora, corpus translation research explores and guides translation phenomena or translation activities through analysis, statistics and extraction of high-frequency words and examples, which is a data-driven empirical research paradigm.

1.2 The Development of Corpus Translatology

Both in the West and in China, corpus translatology only has a history of more than 20 years because it is a sunrise subject. Scholars at home and abroad have different views on the definition of its development stage. Laviosa divided the development of western corpus translatology into three stages: the embryonic stage from 1993 to 1995, the stage of integration of corpus linguistics and translatology from 1996 to 1999, and the cultural turn stage from 2000 to now. Lavanser's definition was published in 2004, and was mainly divided according to research topics and paths. (Laviosa, 2004, pp. 29-57). Hu Kaibao, a Chinese scholar, divided the development of Chinese corpus translatology into two periods: the establishment period of research paradigm (1993-1998) and the rapid development period (1998-present). Since 2006, Chinese corpus translation studies have entered a stage of rapid growth, with an increasing number of papers and a wider range of research fields involved.

With the rapid development of corpus translatology, a large number of bilingual parallel corpora or translation corpora have been built and applied in the research of translation language features, translation norms, translator styles and translation teaching (Hu, 2016, pp. 39-44). Kruger pointed out that corpus translatology aims to reveal the universal and specific features of translation through the use of theoretical construction and hypothesis, various data, new descriptive categories and flexible methods. Corpus translatology can be applied not only to deductive and inductive studies, but also to product-oriented and process-oriented studies. The main research fields of corpus translatology include translation language features, translator styles, translation norms, translation process and translation teaching. The study explores the individual characteristics of translators in the selection of target language vocabulary and sentence structure, discourse layout, and the application of translation strategies and methods. The study of translation process is based on a large number of corpus data statistics and analysis to analyze the cognitive attributes and specific characteristics of translation process. Translation teaching research focuses on the application principles and methods of corpus in translation quality assessment, translation textbook development and translation teaching model construction.

2. "RED" IN A DREAM OF RED MANSIONS AND ITS BILINGUAL CORPUS

A Dream of Red Mansions is a classic masterpiece, according to its title, it can be seen that this book is closely related to "red". So, it is essential to count the frequency in the parallel corpus of *A Dream of Red Mansions*.

2.1 "Red" in *A Dream of Red Mansions*

The colors related to red in *A Dream of Red Mansions* are not single but have a variety of types. For example, there are red, pink, cerise, dark red, madder, pomegranate red, water red, peach-pink, scarlet and so on, which shows Cao Xueqin's preference for red. Here are some specific examples.

In terms of clothes, such as "鸳鸯穿着水红绫子袄儿", 芳官 "底下是水红撒花夹裤, 也散着裤腿". In terms of architectures, such as Jia Baoyu's house is "怡红院" and "后因曹雪芹于悼红轩中批阅十载, 增删五次, 篆成目录, 分出章回, 则题曰《金陵十二钗》". In terms of facial expression, such as "刘姥姥会意, 未语先飞红的脸, 欲待不说, 今日又所为何来?", "林黛玉红了脸, 一声儿不言语, 便回过头去了".

In *A Dream of Red Mansions*, red has two meanings. The first one is blood and tears, as Cao Xueqin says at the beginning of the book: every word seems to be blood, and ten years of hard work are not usual. The second is

girls in the boudoir. In the first chapter, there are two lines of poetry: Yesterday, yellow clay received white bones; Today, red lanterns light the love-birds' nest. In the eighth chapter, there are also two lines of poetry: Heaped high the white bones of the nameless dead. Who in their day were lords and ladies fine. The red colour here refers to girls in the boudoir.

Of course, there are many other metaphors for the colour red, and they have different symbols in different contexts, which needs to be dig deeper.

2.2 Statistics on the Frequency of Red

This paper carries out the research according to the Chinese-English parallel corpus of *A Dream of Red Mansions* developed by Shaoxing University of Arts and Sciences. The corpus selects 120 translations of the English Sinologist Hawkes and Minford, 120 translations of the Chinese Sinologist Yang Xianyi and Dai Naidie.

This is the first parallel corpus of “one-to-one” or “one-to-two” sentence-level alignment based on the translator’s selection of the original text. As an objective and scientific platform for the study of different English versions of “Redology”, it can provide rich resources for translation teaching and basic materials for the discussion of translation theories.

A series of measures have been taken in order to make it more convincing in terms of the frequency of red. Firstly, the Chinese-English parallel corpus of *A Dream of Red Mansions* is used as a search tool based on previous research as well as corpus linguistic analysis methods so that this paper can sort out the classification and statistics of the “red” words. The writer used the above-mentioned online corpus to search for the frequency of “red” words in *A Dream of Red Mansions*.

The search was conducted in three steps.

Table 1
Frequency Search Results for Red Words

Terms	红	赤	绛	霞	朱	猩	丹	茜	樱	荔	赭石	南赭	玫瑰	胭脂	藕合	蜜合	藕香榭	杨妃色	Total
Frequencies	490	20	23	51	22	5	40	19	2	8	1	1	17	25	2	1	14	1	742

Table 2
Classification of Red Words - Search Results

Terms	红	赤	绛	霞	朱	猩	丹	茜	樱	荔	赭石	南赭	玫瑰	胭脂	藕合	蜜合	藕香榭	杨妃色	Total
Colours	229	3	11	4	4	4	3	0	0	1	0	0	5	6	2	1	0	0	273
Cultural words	74	13	1	12	7	1	3	8	2	3	0	0	1	4	0	0	0	1	130
Terminology	187	4	11	35	11	0	34	11	0	4	1	1	11	15	0	0	14	0	339
Frequency	490	20	23	51	22	5	40	19	2	8	1	1	17	25	2	1	14	1	742

Table 3
Frequency Calculation of Red Words - Search Results

Terms	红	赤	绛	霞	朱	猩	丹	茜	樱	荔	赭石	南赭	玫瑰	胭脂	藕合	蜜合	藕香榭	杨妃色	Total
Frequency of "Red" series color words	229	3	11	4	4	4	3	0	0	1	0	0	5	6	2	1	0	0	273
Total word frequency of "Red" series words	490	20	23	51	22	5	40	19	2	8	1	1	17	25	2	1	14	1	742
Percentage (%) of frequency	6.7	15	48	8	18	80	8	0	0	13	0	0	29	24	100	100	0	0	36.8

According to the tables and Liu Zequan and other scholars, the total frequency of all the colour words is 1,631 times, the total frequency ratio of “red” words is about 45.49%. These figures clearly show that Cao Xueqin’s preference for the words related to red in his choice of colour words (Yang, 2014, pp.196-215).

typical. Other colors also have associative differences. Only by understanding the difference of association meaning and considering different cultural backgrounds can we correctly understand the cultural connotations of English and Chinese. In different contexts, the translation of red words is different. Here are some examples.

3. METHODS AND STRATEGIES FOR TRANSLATING RED IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

Red is only one of the colors, and the difference between English and Chinese associative meanings of red is

3.1 Red in Title

Firstly, two of the better-known translations of the title of the book are from Yang Xianyi and Hawkes. Yang Xianyi translated the title as *A Dream of Red Mansion*, while Hawkes translated it as *The Story of the Stone*.

Yang Xianyi is Chinese, so he translated the title literally. This means a dream in a red mansion. In Chinese culture, red is a colour of celebration and prosperity, so the

Red House is also considered a mansion. Analyzing Yang Xianyi's version, people can see that he used the strategy of foreignization and the method of direct translation to emphasize the fidelity of the original text. The purpose of using the strategy of foreignization is to take into account the differences in national cultures so that the translation can preserve and reflect the characteristics of foreign nationalities and linguistic styles.

Hawkes translated the title of the book as *The Story of the Stone*. Hawkes avoided the translation of the colour red because in Western culture, red represents blood, violence, uncertainty, sin and a host of other negative words. That is very different from the Chinese culture. To avoid the book's title sounding like a horror story, Hawkes adopts domestication, which means that the source language serves the target language or the readers of the translation, and the expressions used by the target language readers are adopted to convey the content of the original. Hawkes' domestication translation helps the reader to better understand the translation, enhances the readability and appreciation of the translation, and also helps to attract the reader's interest.

3.2 Red in Clothes

Example 1

Source text: 台阶之上，坐着几个穿红着绿的丫头，一见他们来了，便忙都笑迎上来。

Translation: Several maids dressed in red and green rose from the terrace and hurried to greet them with smiles. (Translated by Yang)

Some gaily-dressed maids were sitting on the steps of the main building opposite. At the appearance of the visitors, they rose to their feet and came forward with smiling faces to welcome them. (Translated by Hawkes)

In the first example, from the point of view of color matching, red and green are complementary colors, forming a stark contrast, giving people the strongest sense of visual stimulation. The girls, dressed in red and green, shows a lively, lovely and pleasant feeling. Yang Xianyi used the literal translation but Hawkes used the free translation. Yang Xianyi has directly translated "红" as red, while Hawkes has translated "穿红" as "gaily dressed", meaning to wear brightly coloured clothes. Hawkes deliberately avoids the translation of red and opts for the paraphrase. He explains the connotation, which is in line with the cultural tradition of Westerners, and avoids any ambiguity or misunderstanding due to cultural differences. Hawkes's translation is in line with the context and more readable for the foreigners.

Example 2

Source text: 碧纱橱后，隐隐约约有许多穿红着绿，戴宝簪珠的人。

Translation: and behind the green gauze screen the doctor glimpsed other figures wearing gay silks and trinkets set with precious stones and pearls. (Translated by Yang)

Vaguely discernible glimpses of brightly-coloured dresses and golden hair-ornaments betrayed the presence of numerous younger women behind the green muslin curtains at the back. (Translated by Hawkes)

In the second example, Yang Xianyi translates "穿红着绿" as "wear red and green", and Hawkes translates "穿红着绿" as "brightly-coloured dresses". The translation of "穿红着绿" as "brightly-coloured dresses" is also free translation. In the context here, because the character is behind the green gauze, it is not possible to see clearly the person behind it, so the translator describe color vaguely and use the free translation, which does not necessarily require a clear translation of the colour. This version is more delicate and is in lie with the context. However, as a Chinese reader, Yang Xianyi's version is more understandable because her translation is faithful to the original text.

Example 3

Source text: 又看包袱，只得一个弹墨花绫水红绸里的夹包袱

Translation: Now, seeing that Xiren's wrapper was of black and white silk gauze, lined with pink silk. (Translated by Yang)

After giving Aroma the jacket, Xi-feng inspected her bundle. The carrying-cloth was of silk gauze in a nondescript black-and-white pattern, lined with strawberry-colored silk. (Translated by Hawkes)

Example 4

Source text: 又看身上穿着桃红百花刻丝银鼠袄子

Translation: and was wearing an ermine-lined peach-red silk tapestry jacket with a hundred-beads design. (Translated by Yang)

She had on an ermine-lined silk tapestry dress of peach-pink satin, sprigged with a pattern of different sorts of flowers, a leek-green padded skirt embroidered in couched gold thread and colored silks. (Translated by Hawkes)

Example 5

Source text: 凤姐忙道：“昨儿我开库房，看见大板箱里还有好几匹银红蝉翼纱。”

Translation: "When I opened the storeroom yesterday", put in Xifeng, "I saw several rolls of pink cicada-wing gauze in one of the chests". (Translated by Yang)

The other day when I had to open the silk-store," said Xifeng, "I came across a lot of rose-coloured "cicada wing" gauze in a long wooden chest. (Translated by Hawkes)

In these three examples, Yang Xianyi simply translates the '水红', '桃红' and '银红' into similar colors, such as peach-red, pink and so on. However, Hawkes uses strawberries, peaches and roses, which are very familiar to Westerners, to represent these three colors, and he uses the physical colour word plus colored, which is an altered translation method. This method means that when one language uses a physical object to represent a certain

colour, and another language does not have the habit of using that object to represent that colour, another physical object can be found in the translation that is similar to the original colour. Using this method, readers can imagine the color of the described object because this description is vivid and visual.

Example 6

Source text: 到了第二天开箱，这姑爷看见一条猩红汗巾，方知是宝玉的丫头。

Translation: The next day when her chests were opened and he saw his old scarlet sash, he realized that this was Baoyu's maid. (Translated by Yang)

The next day, when they were unpacking her cases together, Jiang noticed among her things a crimson cummerbund. From this clue he deduced that his bride must have been one of the maids in attendance on Bao-yu, to whom he had once presented this cummerbund. (Translated by Hawkes)

In this example, “猩红” is translated as scarlet and crimson respectively, both avoiding the word red. The translation of “猩红” is word that has the similar meaning with red. In this context, the red scarf has a beautiful connotation. In ancient times, a man and a woman would be married with a red and green scarf and sent to the bridal chamber. In the story, Jiang Yuhan gives Jia Baoyu a red scarf, and Jia Baoyu gives Jiang Yuhan her green scarf in exchange. To some extent, Jia Baoyu contributes to the marriage of Jiang Yuhan and Xiren.

3.3 Red in Architectures

Example 7

Source text: 怡红院

Translation: Happy Red Court (Translated by Yang)

The House of Green Delights (Translated by Hawkes)

In this example, Yang Xian Yi's version is a direct translation from the Chinese, “怡” means happy, so it is translated as “happy”. The word “red” is a positive word in Chinese, so it is directly translated as “red”. The word “courtyard” means courtyard and is translated as “court”. This version is translated from word to word, so it is easy for the original readers to understand.

David Hawkes' version avoids the direct translation of red and uses a literal translation. In Western culture, green has a positive connotation of vitality and energy. Green in Western culture has a similar meaning to red in Chinese culture. So translated “红” as green is helpful for the reader to avoid cultural misunderstandings and to better understand the content of *A Dream of Red Mansions* as faithfully expressed. The method of translation depends on the cultural connotation of the color.

Example 8

Source text: 绣鸳鸯梦兆绛云轩 识分定情悟梨香院

Translation: A Dream During the Embroidering of Mandarin Ducks in Red Rue Studio Foretells the Future, Baoyu Learns in Pear Fragrance Court That Each Has His Share of Love (Translated by Yang)

Bao-chai visits Green Delights and hears strange words from a sleeper, Bao-yu visits Pear-tree Court and learns hard facts from a performer (Translated by Hawkes).

In this example, there are different versions of the translation of ‘绛云轩’. The word ‘绛云’ means a red cloud. Legend has it that the heavenly emperor's residence was often surrounded by red clouds. Jiang Yun Xuan was the name of Jia Baoyu's original residence, which was later renamed Yi Hong Yuan when he moved into the Da Guan Yuan. However, in many later episodes, the name Jiang Yunxuan is also used. Literally, Yang Xianyi translates it as ‘Red Rue Radio’. Instead of translating the chapter names literally, Hawkes explains the general content of the chapter, and Jiang Yunxuan is also explained by the new name ‘Yi Hong Yuan’. Hawks is more flexible in his translations, making the meaning of the context clearer to the reader.

Example 9

Source text: 上面悬着一个匾额，四个大字，题道是“怡红快绿”

Translation: while above its door hung a tablet inscribed with the words: Happy Red and Delightful Green. (Translated by Yang)

above which a horizontal board hung, inscribed with the words: CRIMSON JOYS AND GREEN DELIGHTS (Translated by Hawkes)

In this example, there are two versions of the translation of “怡红快绿”. Yang Xiangyi adopts a direct translation, literally translating it as Happy Red and Delightful Green. “怡” and “快” have similar meaning in Chinese, so he translated “怡” and “快” as happy and delightful. Hawkes' version is CRIMSON JOYS AND GREEN DELIGHTS, which is more grammatical and avoids the need to translate red as red. This version has a symmetrical structure and sounds like the name of the house.

3.4 Red in Cosmetics

Example 10

Source text: 平儿倒在掌上看时，果见轻白红香，四样俱美

Translation: Pinger holding it on her palm found it light, pinky white and fragrant, delightful in every respect. (Translated by Yang)

Patience emptied the contents of the tiny phial on to her palm. All the qualities required by the most expert perfumers were there: lightness, whiteness with just the faintest tinge of rosininess, and fragrance. (Translated by Hawkes)

In this example, the described object is a powder made by crushing the seeds of garden-jalap, which is a kind of rouge. There are two versions of the translation of “白红”, Yang Xiangyi adopts a direct translation, literally translating it as pinky. white, he uses pinky to modify white, so in this version, “红” is a modifier. Hawkes' version is whiteness with just the faintest tinge of rosininess,

“红” is rosiness as a noun. Both of them do not use red because in the context, the color describes rouge. Their translations are close to the real situation.

3.5 Red in Handiwork

Example 11

Source text: 蒋玉菡情赠茜香罗 薛宝钗羞笼红麝串

Translation: Jiang Yuhua Gives a New Friend, a Scarlet Perfumed Sash, Baochai Bashfully Shows Her Red Bracelet, Scented with Musk (Translated by Yang)

A crimson cummerbund becomes a pledge of friendship, and a chaplet of medicine-beads becomes a source of embarrassment (Translated by Hawkes)

In this example, “红麝串” is made of musk and some other materials into beads, holes and strings, made of art handicraft. Yang Xianyi translated “红麝串” as red bracelet scented with musk. He used the literal translation. According to this version, readers can know the colour and materials of this handiwork. Hawkes translated it as a chaplet of medicine-beads. This version is a kind of explanation. It explains that “麝” is a kind of medicine, but it does not describe the color of this handiwork.

3.6 The Meaning of Red in Chinese Culture

There are many reasons why the colour red has been so cherished in the history of the Chinese nation. According to the five-element theory, red represents the south. To the ancients, the south was the place where everything grew and “sun” was at its peak.

Since the sun and fire can bring light, warmth and happiness to people, people like to use red to symbolize happiness, festivity, good luck, joy and enthusiasm, so red has the relevant meaning such as prosperity, development, smoothness, success, good luck, achievement and so on (Zhang, 2011, pp.115-116)

The symbolic meaning of colour words varies greatly in different national cultures. Different nationalities, due to differences in geography, folklore, religion and values, are bound to give different associative meanings to words and accumulate a great deal of cultural information when expressing the same concept, under the role of their unique cultural traditions. They can make language more vivid, interesting, humorous and affectionate, so when we learn and understand English-Chinese colour words, we should not only grasp the transmission of their superficial semantic information, but also pay attention to the transmission of their deep cultural information. Through continuous comparative studies, we can recognize and master the different cultural meanings of Chinese-English colour words. This is not only conducive to the improvement of English learning, but also serves as a guide to promote and enhance the exchange and integration between Chinese and Western cultures (Zhang, 2008, pp.367-368).

CONCLUSION

A Dream of Red Mansions accurately and creatively uses a large number of color words especially red with rich variety and semantic meaning. These color words are stained by Cao Xueqin's brilliant brush to create a colorful painting of red Mansions.

Under the guidance of Corpus translatology, this paper analyzes and researches the different English translation of *A Dream of Red Mansions* with the help of parallel corpus. In the different contexts, the English translation of red words is different at the lexical and syntactic levels. The study finds that Hawkes often uses the translation strategy of naturalization and the method of Italian translation, while Yang Xianyi often uses the translation strategy of dissimilation and the method of direct translation. The reason maybe translators in different countries have different understanding of color and culture. Hawkes adopted this strategy of literal translation for two reasons: first, literal translation can preserve the unique aesthetic value and thematic significance of these words in the original works; Second, there are a large number of “red” color words in English with the same meaning which can be flexibly used. Only for a very few color words involving strong feelings or negative emotional expression, when there are obvious differences between Chinese and English, free translation will be carried out to avoid cultural misinterpretation.

In the writing process of thesis, the author carefully consulted the data, drew the tables, carried out theoretical analysis, and treated the thesis with a rigorous attitude. Although the author try her best to improve the paper, there are still some cognitive limitations. First of all, the author have only done some basic work on the collation and analysis of color words, and there is still a problem of insufficient statistical accuracy. Moreover, the author only made a tentative exploration on the semantic field of red color, and the tracing analysis is not thorough enough. Due to the lack of in-depth research on translation theory, the author cannot perfectly combine theory with practice in the process of analyzing the translation strategies and methods embodied in translation examples. Thus, the theoretical basis of the paper is a little weak. In addition, the author can't use rich sentence patterns in the process of writing, so the paper is less readable. These are drawbacks which need to be improved in the future. Because of the limited materials, the research is limited to only one version, and there is no more comparison, which make the research seem superficial. In the future, the author will continue to improve the professional level and strive to broaden the research vision, so as to make the research more in-depth and valuable in terms of translation research.

In short, the English translation of *A Dream of Red Mansions* has different characteristics, which shows culture differences. Analyzing such different versions in order to do a good job in the translation of other texts and learn their culture backgrounds. The translator should not only have a solid language foundation, but also have a comprehensive understanding of the target language country and target readers.

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