

A Survey of English Translation Studies of Lu You's Poetry Based on the Data Analysis of Domestic Academic Journals (2001-2022)

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Abstract

This article presents a comprehensive analysis of the current state of research on the English translation of Lu You's poetry, utilizing a data sample comprising research papers published in the CNKI Full-text Database from 2001 to 2022. Employing rigorous longitudinal statistical methods, the study examines the progress achieved over the past two decades. Notably, domestic researchers have displayed considerable interest in the study of Lu You's English translation works since 2001. The research on the English translation of Lu You's poetry reveals a diverse range of perspectives, indicating a rich body of scholarship. However, several challenges persist, including insufficient research, limited translation coverage, and a noticeable focus on specific poems such as "Phoenix Hairpin" in the realm of English translation research. Consequently, there is ample room for improvement in the quality of research output on the English translation of Lu You's poems, as well as its recognition within the academic community. Building on these findings, it is argued that future investigations pertaining to the English translation of Lu You's poetry should transcend the boundaries of textual analysis and encompass broader theoretical perspectives and research methodologies. By undertaking this shift, scholars will develop a more profound comprehension of Lu You's poetic works and make substantive contributions to the field of translation studies. Thus, this article aims to bridge the gap between past research endeavors and future possibilities, serving as a guide and inspiration for scholars to embark on a more nuanced and enriching exploration of Lu You's poetry as well as other Chinese literature classics.

Keywords

Lu You's Poetry, English Translation Studies, Data Analysis, Translation Criticism

1. Introduction

Lu You is widely recognized as a distinguished poet of the Southern Song dynasty in China. Revered for his literary talent, he was nicknamed the “Little Li Bai” during his lifetime. According to Zhao Yi, a prominent scholar of the Qing Dynasty, “He has no intention of being meticulous without being meticulous, and no words are not new without touching the mark. In fact, he is unparalleled among poets of ancient times.” His extensive body of work includes over 9,000 poems and essays, the most among Chinese poets, as recognized by the World Record Association. Lu You’s patriotism also earned him the admiration of many, including Premier Zhou Enlai, who praised him as “the top poet of the Song Dynasty” and a “patriotic poet with integrity”. The English translation of Lu You’s poetry has been appreciated by many sinologists and translators worldwide, dating back to the early 20th century. Research on the English translation of Lu You’s poetry in China started in 2001 with Lan Lin’s critique of Kenneth Rexroth’s translation of the Song Poem “Phoenix Hairpin” [1].

In line with this historical backdrop, the present article aims to make a substantial contribution to the field of English translation of Lu You’s poetry. To achieve this, a comprehensive dataset of academic papers published in the CNKI Full-text Database from 2001 to 2022 is utilized. Employing longitudinal statistical methods, this study conducts an in-depth analysis of the current state of research in this domain.

Distinguishing itself from existing studies that primarily focus on the linguistic aspects of the English translation of Lu You’s poetry, this research provides a comprehensive overview of the studies conducted in this field. By identifying both accomplishments and deficiencies within the domain over the past two decades, the study sheds light on the progress achieved, the challenges encountered, and the potential avenues for further exploration. Through this meticulous examination, the article aims to enhance our understanding of the English translation of Lu You’s poetry and pave the way for future advancements in this captivating area of research.

2. A Diachronic Review of Studies on the English Translation of Lu You’s Poetry

2.1. Data Collection

In this study, a comprehensive search was conducted in the CNKI Full-text Database of Chinese academic journals to collect relevant data for the English translation of Lu You’s poetry. The search process involved the use of appropriate keywords such as “English translation of Lu You”, “English translation of **”, and “Translation of Lu You’s poems”. A total of 34 academic papers related to the topic were identified and selected as data samples for this study.

The identified papers were then meticulously categorized based on their publication dates, journals, and the poems that were translated. This categorization process was carried out with utmost care to ensure accuracy and reliability in the

statistical data generated for this study. The statistical data thus obtained were analyzed using appropriate statistical tools and techniques to obtain meaningful insights into the English translation of Lu You's poetry.

The selection process was rigorous and comprehensive, thereby ensuring that the data samples used in this study were representative of the available literature on the topic. Furthermore, the use of appropriate statistical methods enhances the reliability and generalizability of the findings of this study.

2.2. Data Analysis

2.2.1. Quantitative Analysis of Published Papers on the English Translation of Lu You's Poetry

The translation of literary works has always been an important area of research for scholars in the field of translation studies. In this regard, the English translation of Lu You's poems has attracted the attention of scholars for more than two decades. As is demonstrated in **Figure 1**, the research on the English translation of Lu You's poems has gone through three distinct stages, namely the initial stage (2001-2005), the preliminary stage (2006-2011), and the development stage (2012-2022).

The initial stage (2001-2005):

The initial stage of research on the English translation of Lu You's poems dates back to 2001. During this period, only five papers were published, mainly by authors such as Lan Lin [1], Zhu E [2], and Xiong Li [3]. These papers mainly focused on the translation of "Phoenix Hairpin" and discussed it from the perspectives of the Theory of "Three Beauties" and "good poem but bad translation". This stage was characterized by the limited number of publications and the narrow focus of the research.

The preliminary stage (2006-2011):

The preliminary stage of research on the English translation of Lu You's poems saw a slight increase in the number of papers published, with seven papers in total. However, no papers were published in 2007 and 2008. The number of papers rebounded in 2009 and 2010, with three and two papers published respectively, and no related papers were published in 2011. During this stage, scholars began to pay attention to the translation of more poems by Lu You, rather than focusing on a single poem. Moreover, the research perspectives also began to expand.

The development stage (2012-2022):

The development stage of research on the English translation of Lu You's poems was marked by a breakthrough in the number of papers published. Except for 2020, papers were published every year, and the number of papers increased significantly. A total of 22 papers were published, with two peaks in 2012 and 2016, which had five and four papers respectively. During this stage, scholars continued to explore various aspects of the English translation of Lu You's poems. They analyzed the translation strategies used by translators, the difficulties encountered in translation, and the cultural differences between Chinese and English. They also examined the reception of Lu You's poems in English-speaking countries and the influence of translation on the reception of his poems.

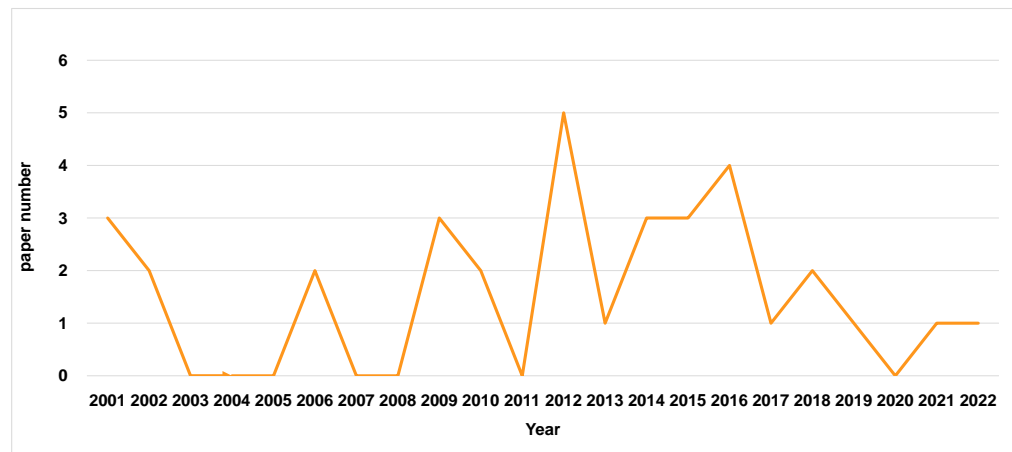


Figure 1. The number of journal papers on English translation of Lu You’s poems from 2001 to 2022.

2.2.2. Classification and Analysis of Journals Publishing Papers

This study investigates the quality of research output on the English translation of Lu You’s poems through an analysis of the distribution of published papers across different levels of journals. The author employs the classification of journals into core and general as the criterion for assessment, and examines the proportion of papers published in each category. The results, which is presented in **Figure 2**, indicate a significant disparity between the number of papers published in core and general journals, with the ratio being 1:33. This finding highlights the fact that the majority of papers published on this topic are in low-impact journals, and only a small percentage of papers are published in high-impact journals. Such a disparity raises questions about the quality of research output on the English translation of Lu You’s poems and the extent to which it is valued by the academic community. The limited number of papers in core journals is also a cause for concern, as it indicates a lack of scholarly attention and recognition for this area of research. As such, it is imperative for future researchers to focus on publishing in high-impact journals and for academic institutions to encourage and support such endeavors. The only paper published in a core journal in the development stage, by Gong Gang [4] in 2013 in the journal of “Comparative Chinese Literature” and indexed by the CSSCI, highlights the potential for high-quality research output in this area and serves as a model for future research endeavors.

2.2.3. Statistical Analysis of the Frequency of Research on the English Translations of Lu You’s Poetry

This study investigates the frequency of research on the English translations of three of Lu You’s poems, namely “Phoenix Hairpin”, “Ode to the Plum Blossom (to the Tune of Bu Suan Zi)”, and “Long Longing—the Rainbow Bridge”. Based on a specific set of criteria, the study examines the number of papers published on each poem and the time frame of publication. The results indicate a significant disparity in the frequency of research conducted on the three poems, as is shown in **Figure 3**. “Phoenix Hairpin” was found to be the most frequently re-

searched poem, with a total of 24 papers published by 2022, accounting for approximately 71% of all papers on the subject. The papers on “Phoenix Hairpin” were published between 2001 and 2021, with the majority of them being published in the last two decades. In contrast, there were only three papers on the English translation of “Ode to the Plum Blossom (to the Tune of Bu Suan Zi)”, mainly published in 2006, 2009, and 2016. Similarly, there was only one paper on the English translation of Lu You’s “Long Longing—the Rainbow Bridge” published in 2018.

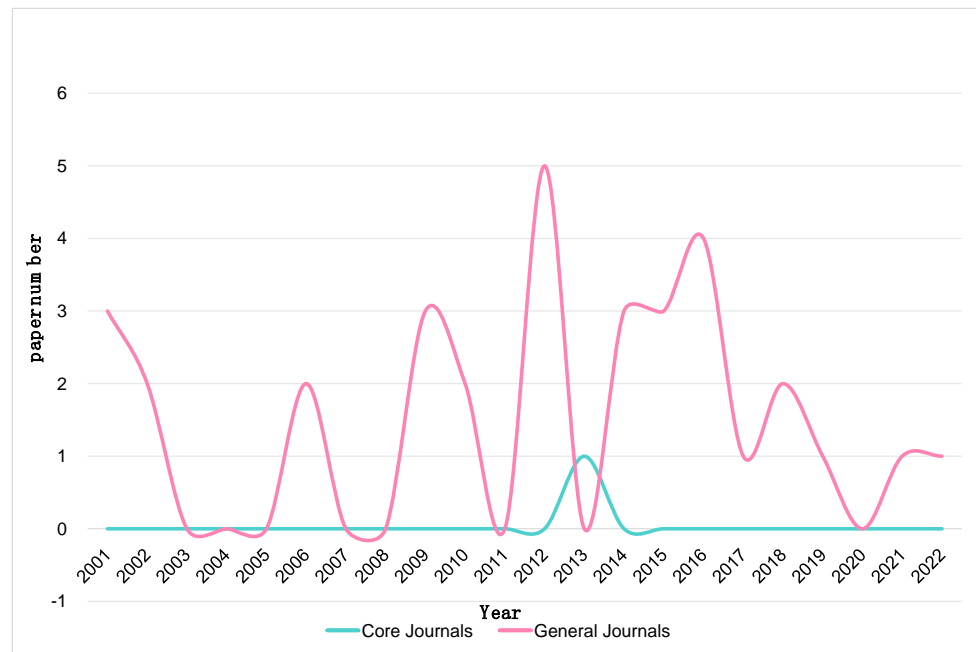


Figure 2. Classification of published papers and journals on the study of English translation of Lu You’s poems from 2001 to 2022.

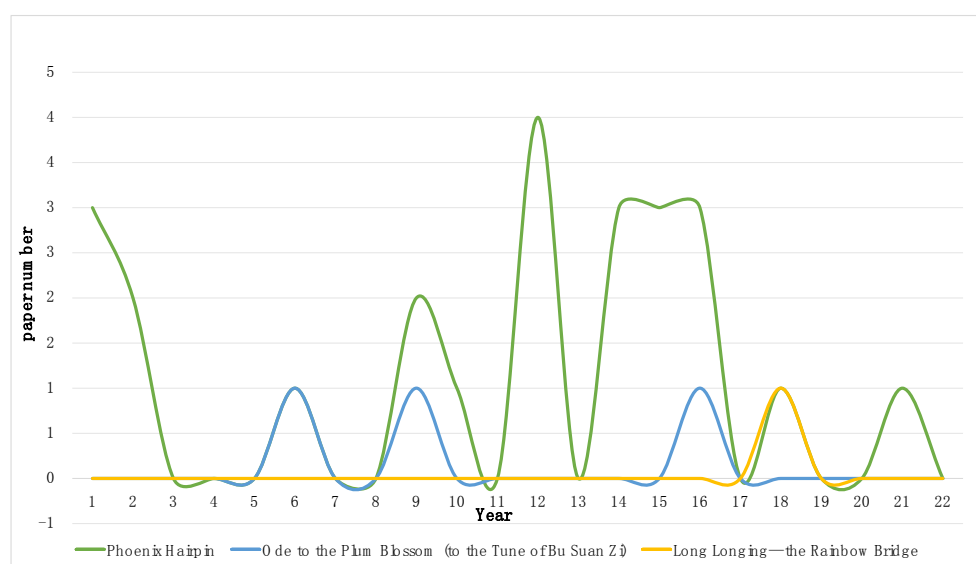


Figure 3. Frequency of studies conducted on the English translation of Lu You’s poems.

This study highlights the preference for certain works among scholars and the disproportionate amount of research conducted on “Phoenix Hairpin” compared to the other two poems. Furthermore, the findings suggest a growing interest in the English translations of Lu You’s poems, particularly in the last two decades. While this study is limited to a specific set of criteria, it provides valuable insights into the frequency of research on the English translation of Lu You’s poems, which can inform future research on the topic. In addition, the study contributes to a better understanding of the reception and interpretation of Lu You’s poetry in the English-speaking world.

The findings of this study have several implications for future research. Firstly, future studies should investigate the reasons behind the preference for certain works among scholars and the factors that influence the frequency of research on a particular poem. Secondly, future research can explore the gaps in knowledge and identify areas that require further investigation. Finally, the study highlights the need for a more comprehensive and systematic approach to research on the English translations of Lu You’s poems, with an emphasis on addressing the imbalance in research output on different works. Such research can contribute to a deeper understanding of Lu You’s poetry and its reception in the English-speaking world.

3. Analysis of Research on the English Translation of Lu You’s Poetry in Domestic Journals

3.1. Comparative Study of Translated Texts

Most of the comparative studies on the English translation of Lu You’s poems are concerned with the analysis of the translations. The papers published so far mainly discuss the translation text at the language level, or conduct a comparative study of different translations of a certain poem. The research angles are relatively diverse. Among the more than 30 papers, over half of them employ the “Three Beauties” theory as the research angle. Other research angles include concept integration theory (Yang Huan and Xia Riguang [5]), defamiliarization techniques (Zong Wen [6]), the perspective of cultural linguistics (Ma Yu and Liu Xiaolin [7]), the perspective of aesthetic value (Cai Aichun and Shen Dan [8]), the perspective of eco-translatology (Lin Yan [9]), the perspective of the translator’s subjectivity (Zhang Min [10]), the perspective of evaluation theory (Zhang Wei and Li Jing [11]), the perspective of translation aesthetics (Zhang Qiuting [12]), the perspective of words and description (Lin Fang [13]), and the translation strategies of domestication and alienation (Yang Dongyi [14]), among others.

These diverse research angles demonstrate the multidisciplinary nature of the research on Lu You’s poems and provide valuable insights into the reception and interpretation of Lu You’s poetry in the English-speaking world. Further research could explore additional research angles and methodologies to expand our understanding of Lu You’s poetry and its translations.

3.2. Translator Research

Poetry translation studies have long been a significant field of inquiry within the wider discipline of translation studies. Scholars in this area frequently explore the ways in which translators approach the task of rendering poetic works from one language into another, and the challenges and opportunities that arise in this process. In addition to analyzing the translations themselves, it is also common to conduct research on the translators, examining their backgrounds, experiences, and personal perspectives, and the ways in which these factors might shape their translations.

For instance, Lan Lin [1] examined the English translation of “Phoenix Hairpin” by the American poet Kenneth Rexroth, and argued that while the translation was a technically proficient poem, it failed to fully capture the essence of the original due to the translator’s limited knowledge of Chinese language, history, culture, and customs. This analysis underscores the importance of understanding the broader cultural context of a work when translating it, and suggests that a translator’s familiarity with the cultural and linguistic nuances of the source text is crucial for achieving a successful translation.

Similarly, Zhang Min [10] conducted a detailed analysis of Professor Xu Yuan-chong’s translation of Lu You and Tang Wan’s “Phoenix Hairpin”. Zhang’s study focused on Xu’s subjective choices in selecting translated words, as well as his strategy of “translating poetry with poetry”. Xu’s approach, according to Zhang, creatively realized the “beautiful in sense, in sound, and in form” in the original artistic conception, and effectively spread Chinese culture by embodying “comprehension, appreciation, and admiration” in the translated content. Zhang’s analysis highlights the potential benefits of a translator’s subjective interpretation and creative expression in rendering a work in a new language, while also demonstrating the importance of careful attention to the nuances of the original text.

Taken together, these studies illustrate the complexity and richness of poetry translation, and the importance of both linguistic and cultural knowledge in achieving successful translations. Moreover, they underscore the role of the translator as a creative and interpretive mediator, whose choices and perspectives can significantly impact the final product. These findings have implications not only for the field of translation studies, but also for broader discussions of intercultural communication and the role of literature in fostering cross-cultural understanding.

4. Limitations and Prospects of Research on the English Translation of Lu You’s Poetry

4.1. Limitations

Despite the notable advancement made in the research on the English translation of Lu You’s poems over the past two decades, several inadequacies remain in terms of both the quantity and quality of published scholarly works. These

inadequacies are discernible in various aspects, including but not limited to the insufficiency of research papers, and the suboptimal standards of the journals in which these works have been published.

1) The current study suffers from a dearth of translated poems. As is shown in **Figure 3**, the most frequently researched poems in the published works are “Phoenix Hairpin”, “Ode to the Plum Blossom (to the Tune of Bu Suan Zi)”, and “Long Longing—the Rainbow Bridge”. Notably, the English translation of “Phoenix Hairpin” accounted for 70% of the total research papers. The author conducted a survey of the available English translations of Lu You’s poems and found that British sinologist Arthur David Waley’s “A Hundred and Seventy Chinese Poems” (1918) included four poems by Lu You, while Herbert Allen Giles’ “Gems of Chinese Literature” (1922) included one poem. Sinologist Clara M. Candelin’s translation work “The Herald Wind, Translations of Sung Dynasty Poems, Lyrics, and Songs” included six of Lu You’s poems, and “The Sword of Lu You - Chinese Patriotic Poet Lu You Poetry” translated 42. Robert Payne’s “The White Pony: An Anthology of Chinese Poetry from the Earliest Times to the Present Day” collected 27 poems by Lu You. In Kenneth Rexroth’s “One Hundred Poems from the Chinese” and “Love and the Turning Year: One Hundred More Poems from the Chinese”, 27 and 11 poems by Lu You respectively were included. Additionally, Burton Watson’s “The Columbia Book of Chinese Poetry” contains 21 poems by Lu You. Furthermore, there are several translation monographs dedicated to Lu You’s poems, such as Burton Watson’s “The Old Man Who Does as He Pleases: Selections from the Poetry and Prose of Lu Yu” and “Late Poems of Lu Yu”, as well as David M. Gordon’s “The Wild Old Man: Poems of Lu Yu”. These findings demonstrate that the current research on the English translation of Lu You’s poems is not proportional to the available English translations.

2) The research angle requires innovation. Since the late 20th century, translation studies have undergone a paradigm shift wherein translation is no longer viewed solely as a linguistic category. This shift has led to a reorientation of the focus of translation studies towards the target language culture, target text translators, and readers. Additionally, there has been a growing interest in research beyond the text itself. Presently, the research on the translation of Lu You’s poems into English mainly concentrates on the language’s internal study, with little attention given to the cultural assimilation of the target language, the social structure, economic conditions, cultural milieu of the target country, and the expectations of the target readers. Consequently, the research needs to be broadened to integrate the cultural context of the target language, and the social and cultural aspects that affect the readers’ response to the translated texts.

4.2. Prospects

Given the relative scarcity of domestic research on the English translation of Lu You’s poems, this paper suggests several possible directions for future research that can enhance our understanding of the translation of his work from Chinese

to English.

Firstly, a more comprehensive textual study can be conducted that encompasses a wider range of Lu You's poems and their English translations. This could involve analyzing the translation strategies employed in the translations and comparing them with the original text, as well as examining the stylistic features of Lu You's poetry and how they are conveyed in the English translations.

Secondly, a comprehensive diachronic analysis and textual study of the overseas English translations of Lu You's poems in the past century can be conducted from a historical perspective, using the descriptive translation method. This approach can provide a panoramic view of the English translations of Lu You's poems, exploring various aspects such as the number of translations, the selected poems, publishing houses, publication dates, cultural background of the time, comments on the translated poems, and their influence. Additionally, it is essential to examine the translator's motives, cultural perspectives, text selection, publication, acceptance, and dissemination of the translated poems, as well as the impact of the text on literature and culture in the target language. The study should also consider the reception of the translations among the public and academic circles, particularly the translation community, and their impact on literature and culture. Furthermore, new translation theories and technologies, such as corpus-based translation studies, cognitive translation studies, and machine translation, can be applied to enrich the research, providing new insights into the translation of Lu You's poems.

Thirdly, the methods of historical philology and cultural communication can be utilized to explore the hypertextual phenomenon of English translations of Lu You's poems in different historical periods and analyze the impact and reception of hypertextual elements on these translations. This approach can enrich the theoretical perspective of overseas English translations of Chinese classics. By examining the historical development and cultural background of the English translations of Lu You's poems, this method can uncover the hypertextual components and their significance in each translation. Furthermore, it can investigate how these hypertextual components have been received and accepted by different audiences and academic circles in various historical periods. The findings can provide valuable insights into the evolution of English translations of Chinese literature and the interaction between different cultures.

Overall, these potential avenues of research can contribute to a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the translation of Lu You's poetry from Chinese to English, shedding light on the challenges and opportunities that arise in the process of literary translation, as well as on the broader cultural and historical contexts in which these translations are situated.

5. Conclusions

This study presents a rigorous metrological analysis of the literature in the field of English translation of Lu You's poetry. The investigation reveals several key

characteristics: 1) Domestic researchers have shown considerable interest in the study of Lu You's English translation works since 2001; 2) The research on the English translation of Lu You's poetry demonstrates a rich variety of perspectives; 3) There is a notable focus on specific poems, such as "Phoenix Hairpin", within the English translation research; and 4) There is room for improvement in the quality of research output on the English translation of Lu You's poems and its recognition within the academic community.

The findings of this study provide valuable insights for scholars and translators engaged in the English translation of Lu You's poetry. Through a comprehensive examination of existing research within the domestic academic community, this study offers an in-depth overview of its strengths and weaknesses, pinpointing areas where enhancements and innovations are needed. Furthermore, by identifying emerging trends and outlining future research directions, this study serves as a roadmap for advancing the quality and depth of English translations of Lu You's poetry. The insights and recommendations of this study will encourage further exploration and improvement in the translation of Lu You's timeless literary works, thereby enriching the global appreciation and understanding of this esteemed poet's invaluable contributions to Chinese literature and facilitating wider dissemination of Chinese literary heritage.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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