

Research on the Evaluation Index System for Translated Books in Humanities and Social Sciences: Postprint

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Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] The translation of high-quality humanities and social sciences books constitutes an important pathway for Chinese culture to expand globally. Establishing an evaluation index system for translated books can effectively demonstrate their influence and provide guidance for selecting content types for translation. [Method/Process] This study refines evaluation indicators from 10 dimensions that reflect the academic and social influence of translated books. The entropy weight method is utilized to calculate the weights of each indicator, and weighted averaging is employed to obtain scores for academic and social influence. An empirical analysis is conducted on books funded by the Chinese Academic Translation Project. [Results/Conclusion] The results indicate that for 40.48% of books, the absolute value of the difference between domestic and foreign influence rankings exceeds 10. Some books with high domestic academic influence have not attracted attention from foreign scholars after translation. The overall social influence of translated books is relatively low. When selecting content types for translation, it is necessary to simultaneously examine the book's academic and social influence both domestically and internationally.

Full Text

Preamble

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Research on the Evaluation Index System for Translated Books in Humanities and Social Sciences*

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Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] The external translation of excellent books in humanities and social sciences represents a crucial pathway for Chinese culture to reach global audiences. Establishing an evaluation index system for translated books can reveal their impact and provide guidance for selecting content types for future translation projects. **[Method/Process]** This study refines evaluation indicators across ten dimensions that reflect both academic and social influence of translated books. The entropy weight method is employed to calculate indicator weights, and weighted averages are used to derive scores for academic and social influence. An empirical analysis is conducted on books funded by the Chinese Academic Translation Project. **[Result/Conclusion]** The findings show that 40.48% of books exhibit an absolute difference greater than 10 between their domestic and international influence rankings. Some books with high domestic academic influence fail to attract attention from foreign scholars after translation, and the overall social influence of translated books remains low. When selecting content types for translation, it is essential to examine both academic and social influence within domestic and international contexts.

Keywords: humanities and social sciences; book translation; book evaluation; evaluation index

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The “Chinese Culture Going Global” initiative aims to promote China’s outstanding culture to the world, introducing more excellent cultural projects with Chinese characteristics that embody Chinese spirit and wisdom [1]. Relevant Chinese authorities attach great importance to the role of books in this initiative. The National Social Science Fund has established a dedicated project to support the translation of high-quality academic books in humanities and social sciences, helping Chinese culture reach international audiences and enhancing the global influence of China’s humanities and social sciences research.

Translated books in humanities and social sciences bear the mission of promoting Chinese culture. Their evaluation must assess whether these books represent outstanding research achievements in their fields while also examining their post-publication impact abroad and their contribution to the “Chinese Culture Going Global” initiative. Establishing a scientific, comprehensive, objective, and feasible evaluation index system for translated academic books can improve translation quality, promote exemplary works that reflect Chinese research achievements, advance Chinese culture globally, and enhance national cultural soft power. Given the diverse types of translated books—including both academic monographs and popular readings—this study focuses on the unique characteristics of translated academic books, considering both academic

and social influence from domestic and international perspectives to construct a comprehensive evaluation system covering the entire process from book selection to translation impact.

2 Current Status of Book Evaluation in Humanities and Social Sciences

Book evaluation methods in humanities and social sciences are diverse, primarily including book reviews, library-based evaluation, citation analysis, Altmetrics-based evaluation, and comprehensive evaluation. Peer review directly reflects a book's innovation, academic value, and content quality [2]. Foreign book evaluation in humanities and social sciences mainly relies on peer review [3-4], while domestically, the number of truly valuable book reviews remains limited [5]. Online reader reviews tend to reflect social rather than academic impact [6-7].

Library-based evaluation primarily encompasses library collection status and circulation usage. The "Research Report on the Influence of Chinese Books in Overseas Libraries" evaluates the global impact of Chinese books using collection data from WorldCat and Japan's CiNii database. Book borrowing demand reflects usage effectiveness during circulation [8-9]. The RFM book evaluation model considers both borrowing demand and publication time factors [10].

Altmetrics-based book evaluation utilizes social media data to assess scholarly impact, with main indicators including citations, online mentions, online editing, reader tags, social recommendations, and reader comments [11-12]. By classifying and integrating Altmetrics indicators, social influence can be measured [13-14], serving as a supplement to traditional metrics [15]. Su Xinning conducted a classification evaluation of humanities and social science books in China based on citation counts from CSSCI [16]. Beijing Century DuXiu Technology Co., Ltd. released a 2017 book citation report analyzing Chinese book citations from perspectives of highly-cited books, authors, and publishers [17]. The "Chinese Book Citation Index" (CBKCI) has established a citation database for Chinese academic books [18]. He Jun et al. identified core books across disciplines based on content quality and editorial quality [19].

Comprehensive evaluation methods integrate multiple dimensions. Li Yanling et al. established a book evaluation model covering five dimensions: libraries, publishers, sales, online public opinion, and author profiles [20]. Zhang Yu et al. employed qualitative indicators such as book reviews, expert evaluations, and online reviews, alongside quantitative indicators including citations, usage, and funding awards [21].

Existing research and practice reveal several limitations: (1) Although book reviews are considered the best evaluation method, the review mechanism is imperfect, evaluators' subjective preferences are strong, coverage is limited, and when professional reviews lack visibility, ordinary reader reviews struggle to

reflect true book value [22]. (2) Evaluation of book usage effectiveness is influenced by library collection scale, categories, and reader characteristics, making it suitable only for individual library assessments. (3) Book citations reflect academic influence but suffer from evaluation lag due to citation delays. (4) When using Altmetrics to dynamically and timely reflect social influence, attention must be paid to indicator coverage, data stability, and inter-indicator correlations [23]. (5) Existing research focuses more on academic value than social impact.

Unlike previous studies, this evaluation index system for translated books examines not only the academic value of selected books but also their global influence after translation, providing timely feedback on their reception among foreign scholars and the public to guide future content selection.

3 Evaluation Index System for Translated Books in Humanities and Social Sciences

3.1 Index Selection

The value of humanities and social science books lies in the unity of academic and social worth, with influence manifesting throughout the processes of acquisition, usage, and review. Therefore, evaluation indicators should cover the diffusion process of both academic and social influence. This study selects library collections, book citations, peer reviews, book awards, and author academic achievements to reflect academic influence, while online library collections, e-commerce availability, encyclopedia entries, social media mentions, and reader reviews serve as social influence indicators.

For academic influence: library collections ensure content quality; peer reviews provide expert judgment on academic value; citations demonstrate recognition by the academic community; awards directly reflect academic merit; and author credentials determine intellectual depth. These five indicators comprehensively cover academic influence while effectively distinguishing between books. For social influence: readers primarily access books through online libraries and e-commerce platforms—greater availability increases public awareness. Encyclopedia entries created by users indicate established social influence. Social media mentions reflect public attention, while reader reviews represent direct public judgment. These five online data indicators timely capture public awareness, accessibility, and reading experiences throughout the entire process.

3.1.1 Library Collections

The number of libraries holding a book indicates its academic value. This study counts domestic libraries holding original works via DuXiu (www.duxiu.com), which includes 3.1 million bibliographic records as an open digital library platform. Internationally, WorldCat data is used to count global library holdings. WorldCat is the world's largest online bibliographic database, covering 72,000 libraries across 170 countries.

3.1.2 Book Citations

Citation quantity, quality, and speed differentiate scholarly engagement. Total citation frequency indicates academic value, but ignores publication age. Therefore, average annual citation frequency is used to control for publication duration. Citation speed reflects how quickly a book attracts academic attention, while citing documents' academic value indicates citation quality. This study collects citation data from CNKI and Web of Science, establishing four indicators:

- (1) **Total citation frequency:** The total number of times a translated book is cited by other documents during the statistical year, representing its recognition in the academic community.
- (2) **Average annual citation frequency:** The average number of citations per year from publication year to statistical year, calculated as: total citation frequency / (statistical year - publication year). This allows newer books to be fairly evaluated.
- (3) **Attention heat:** Defined as the number of citations in the first citation year divided by the time interval between publication and first citation. To prevent division by zero when first citation occurs in the publication year, 1 is added to the denominator: Attention heat = Citations in first citation year / (1 + first citation year - publication year). This metric captures both the speed and intensity of initial scholarly attention.
- (4) **Book h-index:** Defined as the maximum value h such that h citing documents have each been cited at least h times [24]. This reflects impact depth, capturing both direct and indirect influence [25]. Note that due to limited time since publication, foreign citation data requires further accumulation, so this study does not consider the h-index's international performance.

3.1.3 Peer Review

Evaluations, reprints, and discussions in publications such as *People's Daily*, *Guangming Daily*, Renmin University Photocopied Materials, *Xinhua Digest*, *Social Sciences Digest*, and *Chinese Social Sciences Journal* reflect academic value. To quantitatively compare qualitative evaluations, this study counts peer review occurrences in journals and major secondary literature.

3.1.4 Book Awards

This includes comprehensive and professional awards. Due to numerous award programs, only representative comprehensive awards are counted: National Book Award, China Book Award, China Publishing Government Award, China Outstanding Publications Award, "Five-One Project" Award, and "Three Hundred" Original Publishing Project. International award data is difficult to collect and considered for future research.

3.1.5 Author Academic Achievement

Books represent concentrated research outcomes. The h-index measures both

output quantity and quality, but is insensitive to highly-cited individual works. L. Egghe proposed the g-index as a complement [26]. Higher h-index and g-index values indicate greater academic achievement and greater likelihood of attracting attention. This study uses Baidu Academic's h-index and g-index data for first authors, as it comprehensively covers scholarly outputs across the web.

3.1.6 Online Libraries

Major domestic platforms like Baidu Wenku, Docin, and Douding enable document sharing, including book materials. Google Books aggregates resources from publishers and libraries to build a global full-text citation index. These platforms expand public awareness. This study uses whether translated books are included in these platforms as a social influence indicator.

3.1.7 Online Bookstores

E-commerce availability indicates accessibility. Domestically, Dangdang, JD Books, and Kongfz Old Book Network are used; internationally, Amazon availability serves as the indicator.

3.1.8 Online Encyclopedias

Baidu Baike and Wikipedia are open platforms where user-created entries indicate social influence. This study uses whether relevant book entries exist as an evaluation indicator.

3.1.9 Social Media Platforms

Mentions on social networks provide real-time feedback on book popularity, addressing citation lag. M. Erdt et al.'s meta-analysis found Mendeley, Facebook, Twitter, and Sina Weibo have relatively high coverage [18]. Domestic coverage research remains limited [27]. This study uses Sina Weibo mention counts domestically and Facebook, Twitter mentions plus Mendeley reader counts internationally.

3.1.10 Reader Reviews

Reader reviews reflect popularity among general audiences. Key indicators include rating scores, number of reviewers, review duration, and sentiment polarity. Platforms like Amazon incorporate multiple factors including review age, sentiment, and helpfulness votes. This study uses rating scores to represent evaluation quality and reviewer numbers to represent impact breadth, with Douban reviews used domestically and Amazon reviews internationally.

Based on this analysis, a comprehensive, multi-level, multi-feature evaluation index system is established (Table 1).

3.2 Entropy Weight Method

The entropy weight method objectively determines weights based on indicator variability—smaller information entropy indicates greater variation and higher weight. This approach yields influence scores that better reflect actual differences between domestic and international performance.

First, indicator data is standardized. For an evaluation matrix $D \times$ with n samples and m indicators, x represents the value of sample i for indicator j ($i=1,2,\dots,n; j=1,2,\dots,m$):

$$y_{ij} = \frac{x_{ij} - \min(x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n)}{\max(x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n) - \min(x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n)}$$

where y is the standardized value, $y \in [0,1]$, producing standardized matrix $R \times$.

The entropy value H for indicator j is calculated as:

$$H_j = -\ln(n)^{-1} \sum_{i=1}^n p_{ij} \ln(p_{ij})$$

where p is the proportion of sample i in indicator j .

The weight w is then calculated as:

$$w_j = \frac{1 - H_j}{\sum_{j=1}^m (1 - H_j)}$$

with $w \in [0,1]$ and $\sum w = 1$. When $p = 0$, $p \ln(p) = 0$.

The weight matrix $W = (w_1, w_2, \dots, w)$ is obtained, and final scores S are calculated as $S = 100RW$.

4 Empirical Analysis of Translated Book Evaluation

4.1 Data Sources

The National Social Science Fund's Chinese Academic Translation Project covers all humanities and social science disciplines, with 77 translated books published abroad. This study queries the project database for completed projects, collecting domestic data by original titles and authors, and international data by English titles and authors. As of March 2018, data for 42 English-translated books were collected.

4.2 Index Weight Calculation

To better reflect differences between academic and social influence, entropy weights are calculated separately. Using formulas (1)-(4), the academic influence weight matrix is $W_1 = [0.0242, 0.0701, 0.0621, 0.0686, 0.0186, 0.0868, 0.225, 0.0391, 0.0342, 0.0401, 0.1205, 0.1102, 0.1004]$, and the social influence weight matrix is $W_2 = [0.0099, 0.0182, 0.0112, 0.0099, 0.0052, 0.0052, 0.0099, 0.0182, 0.0485, 0.0687, 0.0305, 0.0041, 0.1253, 0.1538, 0.1253, 0.0984, 0.127, 0.1307]$. Individual indicator weights are shown in Table 1.

4.3 Analysis of Evaluation Results

Based on calculated weights, comprehensive scores for domestic and international academic and social influence are obtained. Domestic influence scores combine domestic academic and social influence, while international scores combine international academic and social influence.

Comparison of rankings reveals that 4 books rank in the top 10 for both domestic and international influence. However, 17 books (40.48%) show absolute ranking differences greater than 10, with 7 books showing differences exceeding 20. Among these, 4 books have higher domestic than international influence: *Beyond Market and Beyond Government—On the Role of Moral Force in the Economy* (No. 42), *30 Years of Governance Change in China* (No. 20), *History and Current Situation of Xinjiang, China* (No. 25), and *Soft Law is Also Law: Public Governance Calls for Soft Law* (No. 24). These rank 2nd, 4th, 8th, and 10th domestically but 34th, 27th, 35th, and 37th internationally. Conversely, the top-ranked domestic book *China's Non-Equilibrium Economy* (No. 6) ranks 19th internationally, while the top-ranked international book *Fifteen Lectures on Chinese History* (No. 31) ranks 7th domestically.

Disciplinary analysis shows that top domestic books focus on theoretical economics, political science, management, religious studies, and Chinese history, while top international books emphasize Chinese history, architectural art, sociology, international studies, and philosophy. The disciplines of focus differ significantly between domestic and international audiences, with history and sociology receiving more foreign attention despite lower domestic influence. Although translated books cover 15 disciplines, distribution is uneven across fields.

Further analysis of academic influence scores (Figure 2 [Figure 2: see original paper]) shows that the 4 books with markedly higher domestic influence (Nos. 20, 24, 25, 42) score above average domestically but at the bottom internationally. *China's Non-Equilibrium Economy* (No. 6) shows stark contrast between high domestic and low international academic influence. These five books share characteristics of high domestic citations, extensive library collections, distinguished authors, and broad scholarly recognition. *China's Non-Equilibrium Economy* won the 4th National Book Award and was named among “10 Economics Works Influencing New China's Economic Development,” while *Beyond Market and Beyond Government* received nomination for the 5th National Book Award. Despite being published abroad for over five years, only *History and Current Situation of Xinjiang, China* and *Soft Law is Also Law* have received citations in Web of Science; the other three remain unnoticed by foreign scholars. Meanwhile, the book with highest international academic influence, *Analysis and Forecast of China's Social Situation 2013*, scores only average domestically.

Social influence analysis (Figure 3 [Figure 3: see original paper]) reveals that three books achieve relatively high international social influence: *Fifteen Lectures on Chinese History* (No. 31), *Why Study Chinese Architecture* (No. 17), and *Introduction to Modern Chinese Cultural Transformation: Cultural Trans-*

formation (No. 39). These focus on ancient Chinese history, architectural art, and intellectual history, with reader reviews highlighting their readability and engaging nature.

Overall, translated books show low social influence. While widely available through online bookstores and libraries both domestically and internationally, social media and review data indicate a lack of readership, particularly abroad. Books with higher international influence scores emphasize theoretical and innovative content for scholars, whereas general readers prefer knowledge and entertainment. Selected books focus on academic research with limited readability and appeal for general audiences, resulting in low reading interest despite easy accessibility. This suggests the need for pre-translation audience research and targeted selection based on different readerships.

Given disciplinary differences in focus, translation projects should consider the characteristics and developmental stages of different fields when expanding funding scope. Post-publication promotion through media, international book fairs, and Confucius Institutes should be strengthened to build brand identity for Chinese translated books.

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Author Contributions

Wang Wei: Conceived research idea, designed evaluation indicators, collected data, wrote manuscript.

Yang Jianlin: Provided revisions to research idea, indicators, and manuscript content.

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Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

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