Exploring Reader Perceptions of Translation Book Covers by Chinese Émigré Writers through Questionnaires

Long Li
The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Hong Kong SAR

Sixin Liao
Macquarie University
Australia

Abstract

This study explores the intersection of Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996) visual grammar and reader perceptions of the covers of Chinese-translated books, revealing both the complexity of reader perceptions and the explanatory powers of visual grammar in this under-researched context. The research firstly applies visual grammar to semiotically analyze ten covers of Chinese émigré literature translated from English to Chinese and subsequently investigates, via questionnaires, how sixty-five Chinese readers interpret key semiotic elements on the covers. Results from the semiotic analyzes and questionnaires confirm the utility of visual grammar in predicting reader interactions with translation book covers, particularly in terms of the represented dynamism as achieved within the ideational metafunction. However, misalignment between predictions and actual reader perceptions is revealed in terms of the social distance between human figures and viewers by an interpersonal metafunction analysis. Visual grammar proves less efficacious in predicting reader interactions than in determining how readers understand the representations on covers. The study discusses implications of these findings for applying visual grammar to multimodal translation and for designing effective translation book covers, advocating for designs that are both appealing and ethically

inclusive of the translator's name. This research sets the stage for further studies involving controlled semiotic variables and broader engagement with the design and reader communities.

Keywords

book covers, Chinese émigré literature, multimodal translation studies, questionnaires, reception studies, visual grammar

摘　要

本研究探討克雷斯和范・李文（Kress and van Leeuwen 1996）的視覺語法理論與中文翻譯書籍封面，當中讀者感知之間的關係，揭示了讀者感知的複雜性，以及究探視覺語法在研究領域中，其解釋力較少受到關注的原因。首先運用視覺語法理論，對十本英譯中的華人移民文學作品封面進行符號學分析，隨後通過問卷調查了65位中國讀者對封面關鍵符號元素的解讀。符號學分析和問卷調查下，證實視覺語法在預測讀者與翻譯書籍封面互動方面的實用性，在概念元功能對動態性的表達尤其實用。然而，在分析人際元功能時，研究預測封面人物與觀者之間的社會距離，卻與讀者的實際感知出現了偏差。相比於預測讀者互動，視覺語法的效果更佳，確定了讀者如何理解封面表達的內容。在本文研究中，發現對於視覺語法在多模態翻譯領域的應用，以及有效設計翻譯書籍封面的啟示。本文主張書籍封面的設計應有吸引力，且應呈現譯者的姓名，以合乎倫理。本文為下一步研究奠定了基礎。下一步研究將控制符號學變量，並更廣泛地參與到設計和讀者社群當中。

關鍵詞

書籍封面、華人移民文學、多模態翻譯研究、問卷調查、
接受研究、視覺語法