

How Translation Discourse Changes across Goodreads Ratings: Computational Evidence from Korean Literature in English*

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1. Introduction

Online reviews of translated literary works provide an opportunity to examine when translation becomes visible in readers' comments. Reviewers may discuss a novel's plot, characters, or style without referring to its translated status. When translation becomes salient, however, they may praise its fluency, attribute awkwardness or loss to it, or recognize the translator as an agent (Brems & Ceuppens, 2026, pp. 260-261; Kotze et al., 2021, pp. 163-67). Such judgments are particularly complex for readers unable to consult the source text. They evaluate the published English translation directly while making inferential claims about what has been preserved, altered, or lost (Kotze et al., 2021, pp. 165-67; Zheng & Fan, 2023a, p. 411). Reviewer comments, therefore, provide evidence of perceived translation quality and attribution rather than independently verified assessments of source-target correspondence (D'Egidio, 2015, pp. 69-74).

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Digital reading platforms such as Goodreads make these perceptions available on a scale not attainable through experiments or professional reviews alone. On Goodreads, the platform examined in this study, reviews constitute unsolicited responses produced during ordinary literary reception and reveal which aspects of reading reviewers choose to praise, criticize, explain, or qualify (Kotze et al., 2021, pp. 149-50; van Egdom & Kotze, 2024, pp. 203-208). The accompanying star ratings provide an ordered measure of the reviewer's overall evaluation of the translated book.

Previous studies of online translation reception, understood here as readers' discussion and evaluation of translated works on digital platforms, have examined individual works in depth or analyzed large multilingual corpora of online reader reviews (D'Egidio, 2015; Kotze et al., 2021; Zheng & Fan, 2023a, 2023b). Kotze et al. (2021, pp. 151, 163-78) show that the frequency of translation mentions varies across Goodreads ratings but stop short of investigating how reader comments on translation vary across the five star-rating levels. The present study seeks to fill this gap by asking not only how often translation is mentioned but also how translation discourse changes from one- to five-star reviews. In this study, 'translation discourse' refers to review passages that explicitly comment on translation, while 'discourse changes' refer to cross-rating differences in such review passages.

The present study examines 143,806 Goodreads reviews of 44 Korean literary works translated into English. We extract passages using trigger terms grouped under TRANSLATION, TRANSLATE, and TRANSLATOR and construct a collocational network for each rating. The networks thus formed represent reviewers' discourse about translation rather than independently measuring the quality of the translations.

Previous research has shown that the frequency of translation mentions varies across ratings, but has not systematically compared the lexical associations of translation-related comments across all five rating levels. The present study addresses this gap by tackling the following three questions:

RQ1. How visible are translation and translators, and how are translation-related passages distributed across the five ratings?

RQ2. Which words are most widely associated with TRANSLATION, TRANSLATE, and TRANSLATOR within each rating?

RQ3. How do these associations vary across ratings in terms of evaluation, epistemic qualification, attributed responsibility, and translator visibility?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Readers and translation reception

As defined earlier, translation reception concerns how readers process, interpret, and evaluate translated texts. Although translation theories routinely invoke target audiences and anticipated effects, empirical evidence concerning how readers actually respond to translated texts remains comparatively limited (Kruger & Kruger, 2017, pp. 71-74; Pym, 2020, p. 453). Translation reception research addresses this limitation by examining how textual features interact with readers' knowledge, expectations, cultural positions, and purposes. Experimental and survey methods can isolate particular variables, but often rely on relatively small participant groups, selected textual stimuli, and tasks or prompts that direct attention toward predetermined aspects of translation reception (Kruger, 2013; Walker, 2020, 2021; Whyatt et al., 2023). Online reviews complement these methods by showing whether and how readers themselves foreground translation under naturalistic conditions.

Translation is both an interpretation of a source text and an object of subsequent interpretation in the receiving culture (Brems & Ceuppens, 2026, pp. 253-261). For reviewers unable to consult the Korean source text, reviews of translated works may evaluate the target text while making implicit claims about an inaccessible source. Kotze et al. (2021, pp. 165-167) find that expressions

such as lost in translation frequently co-occur with epistemic qualification, suggesting that reviewers identify a possible translational problem while acknowledging that they cannot verify it. This inferential position makes attribution central. Reviewers may assign credit or responsibility to several possible sources, including the author, translator, source text, translation, cultural distance, or their own reading difficulty. The specific alternatives vary with the evaluation: fluency is commonly credited to the author, translator, or both, whereas awkwardness may prompt a broader search for its possible cause. Against this background, the present study examines how reviewers evaluate translations, qualify their certainty, and assign credit or responsibility, and how these patterns vary across overall review ratings.

2.2 Online reviews and computational reception research

D'Egidio (2015) used Amazon, Goodreads, and Anobii reviews to compare target-language responses to English and Italian literary translations. Her analysis showed that translation visibility and attention to style or paratextual mediation varied across reception contexts. Zheng and Fan (2023a) combined descriptive statistics, sentiment analysis, and content analysis to examine Goodreads comments on *Fortress Besieged*. Their related study of four English versions of *Hong Lou Meng* investigated textual and literary dimensions of reception across digital media (2023b). These studies demonstrate the contextual detail available from review corpora, but their focus on one work or a small group of works limits claims about recurrence across a literary system.

Kotze et al. (2021) provide the principal large-scale precedent. Their DIOPTRA-L corpus comprised 278,883 Goodreads reviews across languages, translation directions, and genres. Frequency, collocational, keyword, and sentiment analyses showed that explicit translation mentions were limited overall but occurred more frequently in reviews of works translated into English. Their networks identified an Anglophone preference for stylistic fluency, recurrent mentions of loss (namely, claims that meaning or nuance had been lost in

translation), uncertainty surrounding judgments made without access to the source language, and uneven translator visibility (pp. 157-78). Jia et al. (2026) combined cross-platform sentiment analysis and topic modeling to examine 1,795 reviews of four English translations of *Journey to the West*. Their study extends computational reception research but analyzes overall sentiment and thematic composition rather than the rating-specific lexical environments of explicit translation discourse.

Evidence from online review platforms has clear limitations. Goodreads contributors are self-selected, their linguistic backgrounds and access to source texts are generally unknown, and their reviews vary greatly in length. Aggregate findings may also be affected by differences in book popularity, genre, translator prominence, publicity, and controversy. These limitations preclude generalizations to readers as a whole and claims about independently verified translation quality, but reviews can nevertheless provide evidence of public evaluative discourse (van Egdom & Kotze, 2024, pp. 203-34).

2.3 Research gap and analytical stance

Three related gaps motivate the present study. First, translation reception research has tended to focus either on individual works or on heterogeneous multilingual corpora. Studies examining multiple works within a consistent translation direction and literary context remain comparatively uncommon. Second, although previous research has related translation visibility to reader ratings, little direct evidence has been provided through systematic comparisons of translation discourse across rating categories. Third, Anglophone readers' responses to Korean literature in English translation also remain underexamined beyond individual works. By analyzing Goodreads reviews of 44 Korean literary works translated into English, the present study extends analysis beyond individual works while maintaining a consistent translation direction and literary context.

The study treats Korean-to-English literary reception as a coherent

comparative field and the five ratings as ordered reception contexts. Ratings indicate reviewers' overall evaluations of the books rather than directly measuring translation quality or translation-directed evaluation. The latter must be established from the review discourse itself. This analytical distinction makes it possible to test whether the visibility and lexical organization of translation discourse vary systematically across ratings while also accounting for exceptions to the general pattern, including translation criticism in highly rated reviews and praise in lower-rated reviews.

3. Methodology

3.1 Corpus and extraction

The review data used in the present study are drawn from Goodreads, a reader-oriented social cataloguing and recommendation platform on which users can record books they have read or intend to read, organize personal bookshelves, assign ratings from one to five stars, and optionally post written reviews and respond to other users. Goodreads was selected because it combines a large volume of unsolicited review text with a standardized five-point rating system and has been used in previous research on online translation reception (Kotze et al., 2021; van Egdom & Kotze, 2024). Unlike retailer-oriented platforms such as Amazon, Goodreads is organized primarily around reading, book discovery, and reader interaction rather than purchase. These characteristics make it particularly suitable for examining how translation-related discourse varies across ratings. Goodreads maintains separate records for different editions while linking them under an overarching work record. To restrict the corpus to the relevant English editions, the review display settings were set to “English” and “current edition” for each title. Here, “current edition” refers to the specific edition displayed on the Goodreads page from which the reviews were collected.

The corpus therefore includes English-language reviews associated by Goodreads with the selected English editions.

The corpus comprised 143,806 English-language Goodreads reviews of 44 Korean literary works translated into English (see Appendix 1): 4,097 one-star, 12,913 two-star, 35,416 three-star, 51,548 four-star, and 39,832 five-star reviews. Each review was assigned a unique analytical identifier. We searched the cleaned review texts case-insensitively for lexical forms associated with five base terms: *translation*, *translate*, *translator*, *mistranslation*, and *retranslation*. Every match was then examined in its original Goodreads review sentence or passage. Occurrences unrelated to interlingual translation, such as translates into a lack of emotions, were excluded.

This context-based screening retained 16,615 uses of the search terms in 12,858 reviews. For each use, we extracted a passage containing up to ten words before and ten words after the search term. This span, referred to in corpus linguistics as a context window, is denoted L10-R10 to indicate its maximum extent on either side. It was selected to minimize the inclusion of words unrelated to translation while remaining broad enough to capture most translation-related terms in the surrounding passage. Extraction stopped at full stops, question marks, exclamation marks, semicolons, and line or paragraph breaks, but continued across commas, colons, dashes, and the conjunctions *and* and *but* so that closely connected wording was not unnecessarily divided. Six matches contained no usable surrounding words, leaving 16,609 context windows from 12,855 reviews. Words were converted to lowercase but otherwise retained in their original forms; for example, *translated* was not reduced to *translate*.

3.2 Distribution analysis

Before comparing the words associated with translation, we examined how frequently translation was mentioned at each rating. We first classified each review according to whether it contained retained translation discourse. We then used binomial logistic regression to test whether the probability of a review

containing such discourse differed across the five rating categories. Rating was entered as a categorical explanatory variable, so no linear relationship between star rating and translation mention was assumed. To test the overall effect of rating, we compared the model including rating with a baseline model that did not distinguish among ratings. A likelihood-ratio test determined whether the inclusion of rating significantly improved the model's ability to account for the presence or absence of translation discourse.

3.3 Node families and rating-specific collocates

For collocational network analysis, related search forms were grouped into three broad ways of referring to translation. These groups, referred to as node families hereafter, were TRANSLATION (*translation, translations*), TRANSLATE (*translate, translates, translated, translating*), and TRANSLATOR (*translator, translators*). Here, node refers to the search term at the center of each context window. *Mistranslation* occurred in only 20 windows and *retranslation* in one. Because these frequencies were too low for meaningful rating-specific comparison, the two families were excluded from the networks. The three retained families contributed 16,588 context windows.

Table 1

Composition of the source corpus and rating-specific network data

Rating	All corpus reviews	Network reviews	Node windows
1 star	4,097	409	497
2 stars	12,913	1,518	1,892
3 stars	35,416	3,464	4,455
4 stars	51,548	4,574	5,936
5 stars	39,832	2,885	3,808
Total	143,806	12,850	16,588

We next identified collocates, which are words occurring near a node-family term within the extracted context windows. Counts were calculated separately for each rating-family combination and included total occurrences, distinct windows and reviews, position before or after the node, and frequency per 1,000 context words. The principal measure was review dispersion, or the proportion of reviews containing a collocate among all reviews containing that node family within the same rating. For example, a dispersion of 20% for *lost* around TRANSLATION indicates that *lost* occurred near a TRANSLATION term in one fifth of the relevant reviews. This measure reduced the influence of repeated use within individual reviews. To be included in the collocation analysis, a collocate had to occur in at least five reviews and reach 1% review dispersion. Common grammatical words were excluded, although *and* and *but* were retained because they can connect or contrast evaluations. For each rating and node family, the 15 eligible collocates with the highest review dispersion were selected.

3.4 Networks and interpretation

The selected associations were displayed as networks. In each network, square nodes represent the three node families and circular nodes represent their collocates. An edge indicates that a collocate met the selection criteria for a particular node family and rating. Edge weight represents review dispersion, with thicker and darker edges marking associations distributed across a larger proportion of relevant reviews. Collocate-node size reflects the strength of its associations with the three families, whereas the family nodes have fixed sizes. We constructed the networks in R with the *igraph* and *ggraph* packages using the same reproducible layout procedure. Because each network was arranged and scaled separately, apparent distances and node sizes cannot be compared directly across ratings. Cross-rating interpretation instead considers the selected collocates, their connections to node families, and the underlying review-dispersion values.

4. Analysis and Interpretation

4.1 Distribution of translation discourse across ratings

Explicit translation discourse retaining at least one translation-related mention occurred in 12,855 of the 143,806 reviews in the complete corpus (8.9%). For the three retained node families used in the rating-specific analysis, the corresponding review-level dataset contained 12,850 reviews. Using Table 1, the within-rating incidence ($= \text{network reviews/source reviews} \times 100$) was 10.0% at one star, rose to 11.8% at two stars, and then declined to 9.8% at three stars, 8.9% at four stars, and 7.2% at five stars. Translation discourse was therefore proportionally most frequent at two stars, although 85.0% of translation-related reviews (10,923 of 12,850) occurred in the three- to five-star categories because these categories contained considerably more reviews overall.

The logistic regression confirmed that the incidence of retained translation discourse differed significantly across ratings, likelihood-ratio $\chi(4) = 300.78$, $p < .001$. Ratings therefore provide statistically distinguishable contexts for examining when translation becomes salient. This result does not establish that ratings measure translation evaluation; the object and polarity of evaluation must still be identified from the translation-related discourse.

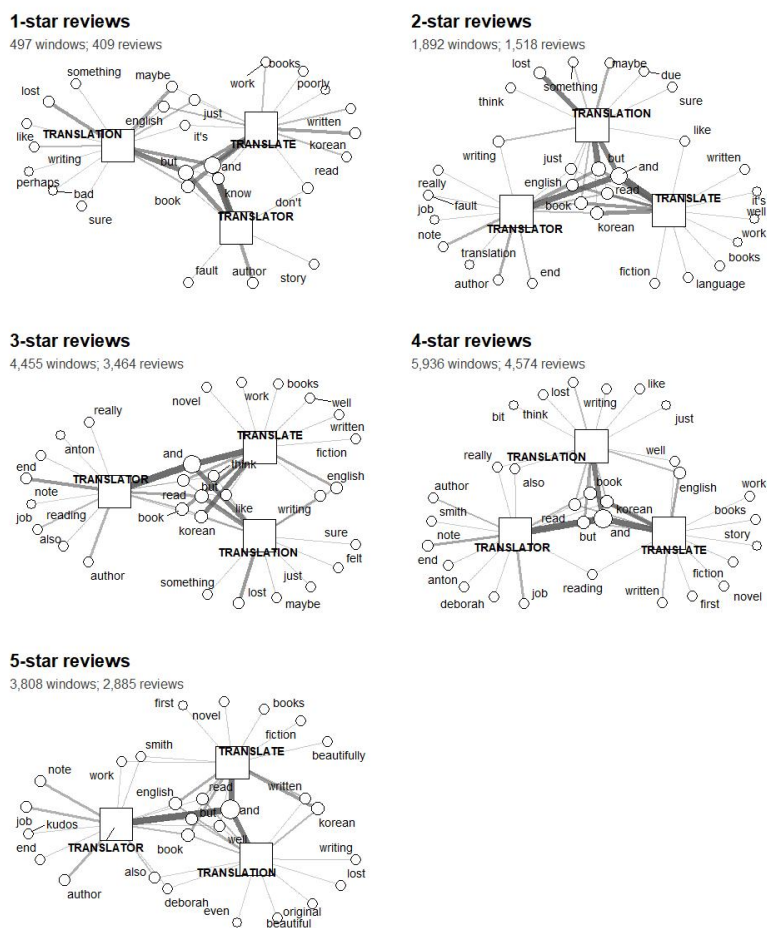
4.2 Collocational networks across ratings

Figure 1 presents the five collocational networks, which permit comparison of the lexical associations surrounding TRANSLATION, TRANSLATE, and TRANSLATOR across ratings. Translation discourse changes from uncertainty and perceived loss in lower-rated reviews toward positive aesthetic evaluation and named translator recognition in higher-rated reviews. A stable lexical core—*book*, *read*, *English*, *Korean*, *and*, and *but*—nevertheless places all five networks within the shared context of reading a Korean work in English. The principal

patterns are introduced below and then examined separately in Sections 4.2.1-4.2.5.

Figure 1

Rating-specific collocational networks for TRANSLATION, TRANSLATE, and TRANSLATOR



L10–R10 contexts; review dispersion $\geq 1\%$; top 15 collocates per node family and rating. Edges: family–collocate review dispersion within each rating. Node size: weighted node strength.

4.2.1 One-star network

The one-star network is dominated by problem-oriented collocates around TRANSLATION. Around TRANSLATION, *lost* occurs in 23.6% of relevant reviews and *maybe* in 21.7%, together with *bad*, *perhaps*, and *something*. TRANSLATE connects with *poorly*, while TRANSLATOR connects with *fault* and *author*. The negative collocates *lost* and *bad* identify a perceived deficiency, whereas *maybe* and *perhaps* qualify the reviewer's certainty: something may have been lost, but responsibility may lie with the author, translator, or translated text. The TRANSLATOR area is comparatively sparse because it is based on only 53 family windows. However, its simplicity should therefore not be interpreted as evidence that attribution is unimportant.

4.2.2 Two-star network

Two-star reviews contain the strongest loss discourse. *Lost* occurs with TRANSLATION in 29.1% of relevant reviews, the highest proportion across ratings, and appears in the displayed environment with *something*, *maybe*, *sure*, *due*, and *fault*. These words represent three recurrent moves: identifying perceived loss, qualifying certainty, and assigning causality. The network is also more interconnected than the one-star graph. *Book*, *English*, *Korean*, *read*, *just*, *and*, and *but* link the three families, placing translation criticism within broader judgments about language, reading experience, and the roles of author and translator. *Note* and *job* further indicate attention to paratext and translatorial work.

4.2.3 Three-star network

The three-star network occupies an intermediate position. *Lost* remains prominent at 22.8%, while *felt*, *think*, *maybe*, *something*, *just*, and *sure* frame judgments as subjective or tentative. Shared nodes such as *think*, *like*, *book*, *Korean*, *read*, *and*, and *but* connect the three families. These associations suggest negotiation between evaluative targets: reviewers may appreciate the

book while questioning its translation or present a translation problem as an impression rather than a categorical judgment. In the concordance lines examined, reviewers used expressions such as *think*, *felt*, and *like* to frame translation judgments as personal responses, while *but* sometimes contrasted appreciation of the book with reservations about its translation. Translator-related *note*, *author*, *job*, and *Anton* indicate increasing visibility, although not yet the explicitly commendatory profile found in five-star reviews.

4.2.4 Four-star network

At four stars, *lost* remains present but falls to 11.8%, approximately half its two-star dispersion. The lower-rating cluster of *maybe*, *something*, *sure*, and *perhaps* no longer appears among the displayed collocates. The network instead emphasizes language and reading (*Korean*, *English*, *read*, *reading*), literary classification (*novel*, *fiction*, *story*), positive or moderating evaluation (*well*, *really*), and translator visibility (*Deborah*, *Smith*, *Anton*, *note*, *job*). Translators appear more often through generic terms of responsibility in the lower-rating networks. At four stars, named translators enter the prominent environment, making translatorial agency more individual.

4.2.5 Five-star network

Five-star reviews show the clearest affirmative and attributional vocabulary. TRANSLATION connects with *beautiful*, *original*, *well*, *Deborah*, and *written*; TRANSLATE with *beautifully*, *well*, *written*, and *Smith*; and TRANSLATOR with *Deborah*, *Smith*, *kudos*, *job*, and *author*. *Deborah* and *Smith* connect the three families. Translator visibility therefore extends beyond bibliographic acknowledgment: named translators are integrated into evaluations of how the work was translated and how the English text reads. *Lost* remains present but declines to 6.5%. Perceived loss can therefore occur within enthusiastic reviews, confirming that rating and translation judgment are associated but not equivalent.

4.2.6 Cross-rating interpretation

The TRANSLATION-*lost* edge shows the clearest cross-rating trajectory, with review dispersion of 23.6%, 29.1%, 22.8%, 11.8%, and 6.5% from one to five stars. Loss discourse linking TRANSLATION to *lost* therefore peaks at two stars and declines sharply across the higher ratings, while affirmative evaluation and named translator recognition become increasingly prominent. This lexical trajectory corresponds to the distributional pattern reported in Section 4.1, where translation discourse was also most prevalent at two stars. The regression and network results thus indicate that both the likelihood and the lexical profile of translation mention are related to reviewers' overall evaluation of the book.

The conjunctions show a similar cross-rating difference. Around TRANSLATION, *and* rises from 25.9% of one-star reviews to 41.0% of five-star reviews, whereas *but* falls from 33.9% to 13.6%. Concordance reading indicates that *but* often separates appreciation of a book from criticism of its translation or limits the significance of a translational problem. *And*, in contrast, may accumulate favorable qualities or allocate recognition to the author and translator. Both conjunctions are grammatically flexible; the interpretation therefore concerns recurrent discursive functions rather than inherent evaluative meanings.

These systematic differences support the use of ratings as ordered contexts for reception analysis. Overall book evaluation and translation evaluation are strongly related, but their imperfect correspondence remains equally important. Critical comments occur in five-star reviews, praise may occur at lower ratings, and reviewers can distinguish the work from its translation. Ratings, therefore, organize the comparison, while review language identifies the evaluative target and polarity.

4.3 Synthesis in relation to the research questions

For RQ1, explicit translation discourse occurred in 8.9% of the complete corpus and varied significantly across ratings. Its incidence was highest at two

stars and declined progressively from two to five stars. Ratings therefore provide statistically meaningful contexts for comparing translation reception, although they do not independently identify the evaluative object or polarity.

For RQ2, the shared core of *books*, *read*, *English*, *Korean*, *and*, and *but* shows that the three node families do not function as isolated technical labels. These three node families occur within accounts of reading a Korean book in English and within relations constructed between propositions. Recurrent *author*, *note*, and *job* around TRANSLATOR further identify three routes to translator visibility: comparison with the author, attention to paratextual information, and evaluation of translatorial work. These stable associations provide the common background against which rating-specific differences can be interpreted.

For RQ3, the principal change concerns the organization of causality and agency. Low-rating vocabulary combines a perceived outcome (*lost*, *poorly*, *bad*) with uncertain knowledge (*maybe*, *perhaps*, *sure*, *something*) and possible responsibility (*fault*, *due*, *author*, *translator*). This represents a discourse of diagnosis rather than unqualified blame. At higher ratings, agency becomes individualized and rewarded: names such as *Deborah*, *Smith*, and *Anton* occur with *well*, *beautifully*, *written*, *job*, and *kudos*. The progression is, therefore, not limited to a change from negative to positive vocabulary. It represents a shift from identifying the possible source of a problem to recognizing the agent of an achievement, as summarized in Table 2.

Table 2 organizes the principal patterns identified in the networks into five descriptive dimensions. As with higher-rated reviews, lower-rated reviews also contain praise, while higher-rated reviews retain criticism and references to loss. The rating-specific design reveals changes in relative prominence while preserving this internal heterogeneity. Treating ratings as translation judgments would obscure cases in which the overall rating and the reviewer's translation judgment diverge, whereas rejecting ratings as irrelevant would obscure the systematic association demonstrated by the networks.

Table 2

Principal cross-rating changes in translation discourse.

Dimension	Lower-rated discourse	Higher-rated discourse
perceived outcome	<i>lost, poorly, bad</i>	<i>beautiful, beautifully, well, written</i>
Epistemic stance	<i>maybe, perhaps, sure, something</i>	less prominent among selected collocates
Attribution	<i>fault, due, author, translator</i>	<i>job, kudos</i> , named translators
Translator visibility	primarily generic and responsibility-oriented	individuated and recognition-oriented
Loss	peaks at two stars (29.1%)	declines to 6.5% at five stars

5. Conclusion

Across 44 Korean works translated into English, explicit translation discourse was limited but systematically associated with overall book evaluation. It occurred most frequently in two-star reviews and declined from two to five stars. Lower ratings foregrounded perceived loss, poor rendering, uncertainty, and negotiated responsibility. Three-star reviews retained loss while qualifying judgments, whereas higher ratings increasingly associated translation with successful writing, named translators, and the allocation of credit.

The study contributes to translation reception research by treating all five ratings as separate lexical environments related to multiple works translated from Korean into English. The gradual shift from problem diagnosis to recognition demonstrates that Goodreads ratings provide meaningful ordinal contexts for analyzing translation reception. This does not make them direct measures of translation quality: review discourse remains necessary to identify what is evaluated and how. The distinction allows systematic association and counterexamples to coexist within the analysis.

Some limitations apply to the current study. First, the collocational analysis

in Section 4 is primarily interpretive. Although concordance lines were spot-checked to ensure that the principal interpretations were consistent with the original review passages, determining the precise meanings and functions of the associations would require systematic qualitative analysis of their contexts. Such an analysis lies beyond the scope of the current study, which primarily aims to identify changing profiles of lexical association computationally. Second, the findings are confined to Goodreads users who reviewed the 44 Korean literary works included in the corpus and cannot be generalized to all Goodreads reviews of translated literature. Third, because the rating-specific networks aggregate reviews of multiple works, the patterns observed may partly reflect differences among titles, genres, publicity contexts, and translator prominence. Subsequent research could model variation at the level of individual books and compare works according to genre, public visibility, and translator prominence.

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<Appendix 1> Korean literary works represented in the Goodreads corpus

English title	Author	Translator(s)
A Magical Girl Retires	Park Seolyeon	Anton Hur
Almond	Sohn Won-pyung	Sandy Joosun Lee
At Dusk	Hwang Sok-yong	Sora Kim-Russell
Black Flower	Kim Young-ha	Charles La Shure
Counterattacks at Thirty	Sohn Won-pyung	Sean Lin Halbert
Cursed Bunny	Bora Chung	Anton Hur
Diary of a Murderer and Other Stories	Kim Young-ha	Krys Lee
Greek Lessons	Han Kang	Deborah Smith and Emily Yae Won
Human Acts	Han Kang	Deborah Smith
I Have the Right to Destroy Myself	Kim Young-ha	Chi-Young Kim
I Want to Die but I Want to Eat Tteokbokki	Baek Sehee	Anton Hur
I'll Be Right There	Shin Kyung-sook	Sora Kim-Russell
Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982	Cho Nam-joo	Jamie Chang
Lemon	Kwon Yeo-sun	Janet Hong
Love in the Big City	Park Sang-young	Anton Hur
No One Writes Back	Jang Eun-jin	Jung Yewon
Nowhere to Be Found	Bae Suah	Sora Kim-Russell
One Hundred Shadows	Hwang Jungeun	Jung Yewon
Please Look After Mom	Shin Kyung-sook	Chi-Young Kim
Princess Bari	Hwang Sok-yong	Sora Kim-Russell
Return to the DallerGut Dream Department Store	Miye Lee	Sandy Joosun Lee
Saha	Cho Nam-joo	Jamie Chang
Shoko's Smile	Choi Eunyoung	Sung Ryu
The Court Dancer	Shin Kyung-sook	Anton Hur
The DallerGut Dream Department Store	Miye Lee	Sandy Joosun Lee
The Good Son	Jeong You-jeong	Chi-Young Kim
The Healing Season of Pottery	Yeon Somin	Clare Richards

The Hen Who Dreamed She Could Fly	Hwang Sun-mi	Chi-Young Kim
The Hole	Pyun Hye-young	Sora Kim-Russell
The Investigation	Lee Jung-myung	Chi-Young Kim
The Old Woman with the Knife	Gu Byeong-mo	Chi-Young Kim
The Plotters	Kim Un-su	Sora Kim-Russell
The Rainfall Market	You Yeong-gwang	Slin Jung
The Second Chance Convenience Store	Kim Ho-yeon	Janet Hong
The Vegetarian	Han Kang	Deborah Smith
The White Book	Han Kang	Deborah Smith
Untold Night and Day	Bae Suah	Deborah Smith
Violets	Shin Kyung-sook	Anton Hur
Walking Practice	Min Dolki	Victoria Caudle
We Do Not Part	Han Kang	e. yaewon and Paige Aniyah Morris
Welcome to the Hyunam-Dong Bookshop	Hwang Bo-reum	Shanna Tan
Whale	Cheon Myeong-kwan	Chi-Young Kim
Yeonnam-dong's Smiley Laundromat	Kim Jiyun	Shanna Tan
Your Utopia	Chung Bora	Anton Hur

How translation discourse changes across Goodreads ratings: Computational evidence from Korean literature in English

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Abstract

This study examines how readers discuss translation in Goodreads reviews of Korean literature translated into English and how these discussions vary across star ratings. The dataset comprises 143,806 reviews of 44 translated Korean literary works. Reviews explicitly referring to translation or translators were identified through three node families (TRANSLATION, TRANSLATE, and TRANSLATOR). Binomial logistic regression showed that the frequency of translation discourse differed significantly across ratings: translation was mentioned in 12,855 reviews (8.9%), most often in two-star reviews, with its proportion declining steadily from two to five stars. Rating-specific collocational networks further revealed a corresponding shift in lexical associations. Lower-rated reviews more often linked translation to uncertainty, loss, inadequacy, and linguistic difficulty, whereas higher-rated reviews increasingly associated it with fluency, aesthetic appreciation, successful mediation, and named translators. These patterns were gradual rather than categorical, as criticism remained present in highly rated reviews and positive evaluations also appeared in lower-rated ones. The findings show that readers' overall evaluations are associated both with whether translation is mentioned and with the language used to discuss it, while confirming that Goodreads star ratings cannot be treated as direct measures of translation quality or translation-focused evaluation.

Keywords: Translation reception; Korean literature in English; Goodreads reviews; translation visibility; collocational networks

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