

ISSN 2414-4746

MODERN VECTORS OF SCIENCE AND EDUCATION
DEVELOPMENT IN CHINA AND UKRAINE
中国与乌克兰科学及教育前沿研究



2023
ISSUE № 9

ISSN 2414-4746

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**The State institution “South Ukrainian National Pedagogical
University named after K. D. Ushynsky”**

Harbin Engineering University

**2023
ISSUE № 9**

Odesa, Ukraine

Harbin, the People’s Republic of China

UDC: 81'25:811.581(082.22)(045)

DOI: 10.24195/2414-4746-2023-9-4

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**THE OVERSEAS DISSEMINATION AND RECEPTION OF THE
TRANSLATION OF *THE QUOTATIONS OF MAO ZEDONG*: BASED ON
AMAZON READER REVIEWS**

Abstract: For a long time, as the main object of foreign translation and dissemination of Chinese books, The Quotations of Mao Zedong has had a remarkable impact on China and the world. The comments and evaluations of foreign readers are an important aspect to study and measure the effectiveness of the work's foreign translation and distribution. In this paper, with the help of data crawler tool and text mining tool ROST CM6, a quantitative and qualitative study on the reader reviews of the translation of The Quotations of Mao Zedong on Amazon platform is conducted. The trends of star ratings, emotional attitudes and number of reviews show that most readers have positive attitudes toward it, and give it positive evaluations. Readers' motivation for reading is based not only on circulation but also on personal interests such as historical, philosophical or study needs; at the same time, its political ideology is another important reason. Although there are flaws in the quality of book design and the language quality of the translation, the overseas dissemination of the translation of The Quotations of Mao Zedong is on the rise and the overall acceptance is good.

Key words: *The Quotations of Mao Zedong; overseas dissemination and acceptance; Amazon reader reviews*

1. Introduction

The Quotations from Mao Zedong, also known as *The Quotations from Chairman Mao* or *The Little Red Book*, is a collection of quotations and aphorisms from the writings of Mao Zedong, first published in 1964, which largely reflects the essence of Mao Zedong's thought. *The Quotations from Mao Zedong* reflects the people's outlook in Mao Zedong's thought, Mao's understanding of socialist revolution and socialist construction, his program on the construction of revolutionary armies and military strategy, and his thoughts on the construction of the Chinese Communist Party. *The Quotations from Mao Zedong* is only a selection of fragments of Mao's many writings and does not encompass the vast river of Mao's thought, but the 33 chapters of quotations it compiles still enable the reader to grasp the essence of Mao's thought in general terms. The first bilingual edition was published by Foreign Language Press in 1966. In recent years, most scholars have reviewed the publication and distribution of Mao Zedong's Quotations on the basis of historical materials; some scholars have also analyzed Mao Zedong's thought through the historical background of its production and a scholarly review of Mao Zedong's Quotations. Putting aside its political nature, *The Quotations from Mao Zedong*, which shines with the essence of Mao's philosophical thought and moral and ethical outlook, is not only a valuable source for the study of Mao and his thought, but also a unique historical source for the study of Chinese history. Nowadays, *The Quotations of Mao Zedong* is still being reprinted and distributed overseas. For foreign readers, *The Quotations of Mao Zedong* is a window to their understanding of modern Chinese history and socialism with Chinese characteristics.

Therefore, this paper, based on Consumer Reviews on Amazon.com such a large information database, takes the reader reviews as the research object, and makes use of the data crawler tool and the text mining tool ROST CM6 to adopt a combination of

qualitative and quantitative methods to study the overseas dissemination and acceptance of *The Quotations of Mao Zedong*.

Founded in 1994, Amazon has become the second largest Internet company in the world. As one of the world's top four cross-border e-commerce platforms, Amazon is known for its guaranteed user experience, allowing users to decide whether to buy based on real feedback from product users. In the Amazon platform, buyers can rate products with one click, or add text, image or video reviews to the ratings. The specific components of a review include a title, rating star, reviewer identity tag, review body, images and videos, useful vote count display and vote button, and a comment button (Zhang, 2020). The Amazon platform has taken a series of strict measures to ensure the authenticity of reviews and improve the credibility of reviews. In view of the effectiveness and authenticity of Amazon product reviews, many scholars at home and abroad have taken Amazon online product reviews as the research object in recent years. Foreign scholars' research mostly focuses on computer science, and the related research involves sentiment analysis or opinion mining technology of python, machine learning, etc. (Aljuhani & Alghamdi, 2019; Rathor et. al, 2018). In terms of domestic, in the field of business research, some scholars have conducted research on Amazon online product reviews with the research purpose of improving e-commerce review systems and improving sellers' utility (Wu & Liu, 2017). In linguistics, Li Xiang (2017) analyzed how reviewers achieve their persuasive purposes based on the evaluation theory of functional linguistics; Hu and Li (2019) conducted a comparative study of British and American complaint speech acts from the perspective of variant pragmatics; Li Li (2020) used corpus as a research method to do a comparative genre analysis of online reviews of commodities. Many other scholars analyzed overseas readers' reviews of Chinese canonical translations or literary text translations based on Amazon.com user reviews.

Inspired by the previous studies, this paper takes Amazon reader reviews as the basis of the study, and collects and analyzes the reviews with the help of web crawler technology and text mining tool ROST CM6 to further study the overseas dissemination and acceptance of *The Quotations of Mao Zedong*, in order to provide

inspiration for the translation and dissemination of other Mao Zedong's works. In order to facilitate the analysis later, it is first necessary to conduct data statistics and organize the reader reviews of *The Quotations of Mao Zedong* on the Amazon platform.

Firstly, "Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung: The Little Red Book" and "Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong: The Little Red Book" were used as the search criteria to collect relevant reader reviews on Amazon. Due to the large number of editions, the goal was to collect only the translations with star ratings, and a total of 251 reader reviews were crawled for 16 translations. Then the publication status and reader ratings of 16 translations were manually collected and sorted on Amazon to better present the situation of each edition. Next, the collection results were imported into excel and pre-processed to eliminate irrelevant information and non-text data. The revised table contains "user name", "review title", "star rating", "review date and region", "review details", and "helpful votes". Next, the author exported the text in the "comment details" column of the excel table to txt. text format, and used ROST CM6 to further process the text for word separation, blank line deletion, duplicate line deletion, lowercase conversion. Afterwards, ROST CM6 was used for English word frequency analysis, where the stoplist was set as a custom file (the author compiled a collection of stoplists of Harvard University, Machine Intelligence Laboratory of Sichuan University, and Baidu website). Then the word frequency statistics were exported to excel format, with a total of 11822 words, and 1748 words after subsuming word deformation. Finally, WordArt website was used to import the word frequency statistics and draw a word cloud.

2. Overseas Dissemination of *The Quotations of Mao Zedong*

Since the 1960s, *The Quotations of Mao Zedong* has been published in more than 500 editions worldwide, with a total print run of more than 5 billion copies, and its influence speaks for itself. The English, Japanese and French versions of *The Quotations of Mao Zedong* have all been international bestsellers for a while. Of the 16 translations analyzed in this paper, three were published by Foreign Languages Press in 1966 (serial number 7), 1972 (serial number 12) and 1974 (serial number 14). Then came *Quotations From Chairman Mao Tse-Tung: Mao's Little Red Book*

Original Version (serial number 3), published by Award Books on January 1, 1971. “Until February 1979, the foreign language version of *Quotations From Chairman Mao* ceased to be distributed abroad” (Tang & Tang, 2015). Few translations have been published in three decades ever since. On September 4, 2009, Yale University Press published *Annotated Quotations from Chairman Mao* (serial number 13). As a Chinese textbook in the DeFrancis Series, Yale University Press describes the reprint as an appropriate language textbook because of its generally straightforward writing style and the variety of topics discussed throughout China. It is therefore also an introductory material for understanding Chinese politics. With the rise of electronic reading methods, a kindle electronic version of *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung* appeared on April 15, 2014 (serial number 8). In the last five years, the publication of the translations has become diversified, with each edition available in paper and kindle e-edition, in addition to the appearance of an audiobook edition. Two independent publishers have published them: in December 2018 an independent publisher published *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung: The Little Red Book*, which is currently one of the most reviewed editions on Amazon (serial number 1); on April 20, 2019 the Italian independent publisher GAEditori published *MAO TSE-TUNG: the little red book* (serial number 4). Besides, there are some editions from unknown publishers, such as *QUOTATIONS FROM CHAIRMAN MAO* published on November 4, 2018 (serial number 6), a new Kindle e-edition *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung: Little Red Book* published on April 22, 2020 (serial number 9) as well as *Quotations from Mao Tse-Tung* published on September 14, 2020. In October 2020, the first audiobook version *Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong: The Little Red Book* was published, read by Ayrton Parham (serial number 9). In November of the same year, Pattern Books published *Mao’s Quotations: Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung* (serial number 5). On February 9, 2021, Terebess Asia Online released *Little Red Book: Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung* (serial number 15). There is also a *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung* published by Hinky Imports with an unknown publication date (serial number 2). The influence of *Quotations from*

Chairman Mao Zedong overseas is continuous, judging from its initial release in English in 1966 to its latest reprint by an overseas publisher in 2020.

Table 1. The ratings of each English translation on the Amazon

编号	书名	评分	星级 (满分 5)
1	Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung: The Little Red Book	514 次评分, 108 条文字评论	4.5
2	Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung	106 次评分, 47 条文字评论	4.2
3	Quotations From Chairman Mao Tse-Tung: Mao's Little Red Book	97 次评分, 53 条文字评论	2.7
4	MAO TSE-TUNG: the little red book	38 次评分, 6 条文字评论	4.3
5	Mao's Quotations: Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung	34 次评分, 1 条文字评论	4.7
6	QUOTATIONS FROM CHAIRMAN MAO	14 次评分, 13 条文字评论	3.7
7	Quotations From Chairman Mao Tse-Tung	13 次评分, 8 条文字评论	4.9
8	Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung	11 次评分, 7 条文字评论	3.8
9	Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong: The Little Red Book	10 次评分, 3 条文字评论	4.8
10	Quotations from Mao Tse-Tung	6 次评分, 1 条文字评论	3.2
11	Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung : Little Red Book	6 次评分, 0 条文字评论	3.8
12	Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung	2 次评分, 2 条文字评论	4.4
13	Annotated Quotations from Chairman Mao	2 次评分, 1 条文字评论	5.0
14	QUOTATIONS FROM CHAIRMAN MAO TSETUNG	2 次评分, 0 条文字评论	5.0
15	Little Red Book: Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung	2 次评分, 0 条文字评论	3.5
16	Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung	1 次评分, 1 条文字评论	1.0

3. Overseas Acceptance of *The Quotations of Mao Zedong*

Amazon's readers' reviews include two main parts: star rating and specific reviews. Combining the trend of readers' annual review numbers, the overseas acceptance of *The Quotations of Mao Zedong* can be analyzed in detail.

In terms of star rating, as shown in Table 2, from the data of readers of 16 translations, a total of 344 readers participated in the star rating, with an average value of about 4.0. In terms of emotional attitude, Amazon provides automatic emotional classification according to the content of the reviews. Among 251 reviews, 160 are positive and 91 are negative, with a ratio of about 1.8:1. In terms of the trend of the number of reviews, as shown in Figure 1, the annual posting of readers over 22 years is increasing. From the above data, it can be judged that despite the existence of different voices, most of the reviews are positive towards the translation, and the attention has been increasing. This also shows that the influence of Mao's works in the West has increased rather than decreased despite the changes of the times.

Table 2. Partial comments

用户名	标题	星级	评论日期	评论详情	有用投票数
mattgbl	Don't bother	1.0 颗星	2020年1月	It's total garbage but we bought it as	22 个人发现此评论有用
TheWildBoy	okay!	2.0 颗星	2019年12月	This was an okay book. I didn't find it	18 个人发现此评论有用
Amazon Customer	Power	1.0 颗星	2020年3月	This works claims to support the peopl	19 个人发现此评论有用
Thomas D.	Great Edition	5.0 颗星	2019年9月	This is a great and important book for	20 个人发现此评论有用
Wilbert Alvarado	Review of Mao's Book, Vin	5.0 颗星	2021年2月	This version is much better on the han	5 个人发现此评论有用
paul noles	then look for another ver	3.0 颗星	2015年9月	The Chinese quotations seem to be prin	47 个人发现此评论有用
Mick Gob	I got it to include with	3.0 颗星	2020年11月	It is exactly what the title says it i	3 个人发现此评论有用
Amazon Customer	Very Useful	5.0 颗星	2019年11月	This book by Chairman Mao is very usef	5 个人发现此评论有用
Amazon Customer	That communism is a farce	1.0 颗星	2020年10月	I bought this book for educational pur	1 个人发现此评论有用
Spink	Excellent service. Speedy	5.0 颗星	2018年1月	Excellent service. Speedy delivery.	2 个人发现此评论有用

reviews of *The Quotations of Mao Zedong* from three aspects: readers' reading motivation, book design quality, and translation quality.

3.1 Readers' Reading Motivation

Readers' desire to read will directly contribute to their purchase and reading behavior. *The Quotations of Mao Zedong* is the second most published and distributed book in the world, after the Bible, setting the record for the highest number of published and distributed books in the history of Chinese books, and it is its amazing print run that makes many readers carry out reading. In this case, readers' reading motives are very diverse. "This small book of quotations from Mao Zedong (as his name is more accurately transliterated these days) is one of the most widely-published books in all of history (after the Bible, etc.; perhaps more than 1 billion copies have been printed)" (Steven H Propp, 2012 Amazon reader). "I purchased this book because it is the most published book in history, but probably not the most read book. The Bible, Quran, and Torah are arguably the most read books in history" (Dr. Ali Fant, 2013 Amazon reader).

In addition to the circulation factor, many readers read based on personal interests such as history, philosophy or study needs. As China's power and influence continue to grow, more and more foreigners are interested in it and learn the Chinese language. "As a Chinese language student-beginner, I found it very helpful to have the Chinese (Mandarin) and English texts on facing pages... I would recommend this book for Chinese language students-beginners" (Dr. Ali Fant, 2013 Amazon reader). The interest of overseas readers in China is not limited to the Chinese characters, but is also reflected in the historical changes in Chinese society. "I read the Little Red Book in the 1970's. I was interested at that time in how rapidly China was developing" (Quo Vadis, 2010 Amazon reader). "A well made book. A 'must have' document for fans of history" (B, 2021 Amazon reader). "The little red book is an important addition to my library, which focuses on history, especially military history. While I in no way agree with most of what Chairman Mao had to say and write, I understand the power of his communication and its influence on the people not only of China but of other Asian and non-Asian countries as well" (Warren, 2012 Amazon reader). "A must read for anyone studying China" (Todd W., 2012 Amazon reader). "You may have heard of

'The Little Red Book' and the importance and encouragement that the Communist Party of the People's Republic has in reading it. Undoubtedly, Chairman Mao's "Communism with Chinese Characteristics" remains influential in a powerful Nation that sometimes rivals that of the United States of America" (Matthew M. Tobin, 2013 Amazon reader). "Mao was an extremely intelligent man and this book is a good chance to learn a piece of Chinese history in an interesting way. There are around 300 quotes about everything: communist party (of course!), war, peace, army, patriotism...and even about women! This book of golden Mao's quotes is of a great value for me" (Katrissa, 2017 Amazon reader). Some readers were deeply impressed by Mao's poetic charm. "Mao's gift for poetic license also pervades the work; had this man not been the galvanizing force behind a revolution, there is little doubt he would have been a poet or writer given his innate talent with the pen... it provides a priceless peek into the mind of the man that has undoubtedly altered the course of human history. For any literary or political scholar surfing for a source to supplement a thesis or simply get handle on the cyclone of modern political thought, *Quotations from Chairman Mao* is a must have addition to the bookshelf" (Matt Meltzer, 2001 Amazon Reader).

John McDonnell, the shadow minister of the British opposition party, once held the "Red Book" in his hand and recited from it to refute his colleagues in a parliamentary session on government spending plans in 2015. "British Parliament member John McDonnell intelligently quoted out of Mao's Little Red Book, 'We must learn to do economic work from all who know how, no matter who they are. We must esteem them as teachers, learning from them respectfully and conscientiously. We must not pretend to know when we do not know (pg. 583). (Vince Albanov, 2017 Amazon reader). This has led overseas readers to take more notice of the book, and is one of the key reasons for the rise in reviews of the book in 2015 in Figure 1.

In political terms, "maoist" is also a word that appears many times in reviews. Mao has had a prominent influence on left-wing intellectuals in Western countries, and his ideas have always been respected and revered by the left. "This is a great and important book for any Marxist-Leninist-Maoist or leftist in general." (Thomas D., 2019 Amazon Reader). "I first read this book in about 1968 at the age of 9. I read it

again in high school and started to grasp more than the word paper tigers. I understood the idea of party politics and it helped me do well in high school political science. Later in life reading it invigorated me along with the bible I started to rebuild my life. I became a left-wing survivalist. Nowadays I think I can see the bitter truth's of idealism mixed with blood and guts that was Mao and his experience” (Peter Timusk, 2001 Amazon reader).

3.2 Book Design Quality

Generally speaking, the design quality of a book is closely related to its binding design, content layout, and printing, which directly affect the reader’s reading experience of the book. Except for one edition of audiobook, most of the readers’ reviews involving book design quality in other paper editions are negative. In the word frequency table, “quality” appears 28 times; “edition” appears 18 times; “printed” appears 18 times; “errors” appears 10 times. It can be seen that readers are concerned about the quality of the design. Here, the review content of the translation with the most readers’ comments published in December 2018 (the first book in Table 1) is the basis of analysis. The first one is about the size of the book. The first edition of the Chinese version of *The Quotations of Mao Zedong* contains 427 quotations, mostly taken from *The Selected Writings of Mao Zedong*, divided into 33 chapters according to themes. The Chinese version of *The Quotations of Mao Zedong* is generally thin, small and portable, so the design of the related English version matches it. “This version is much better on the hand and is very small and portable, so I absolutely recommend this one if you want something that is both compact and authentic” (Wilbert Alvarado, 2021 Amazon reader). However, when it comes to content layout and text printing, most readers reported a poor reading and viewing experience. “This printing is plagued with errors. Just flipping through the book for the first time, I noticed many strange spelling and grammatical errors which should have been easy to spot. For example, the word ‘should’ appeared in one line as ‘sho9uld’. The layout is also bad, with the paragraphs and lines laid out in a clumsy manner. They are often interrupted right in the middle of a page with a reference. Even worse, it appears that every hyphen in the version I got was replaced with a square symbol... I can’t possibly recommend this edition” (Cola

Beaker, 2019 Amazon reader). Some readers held that the content of the translation is set up reasonably well. “Organization of the quotes by relevance is great. It cites every quotes source and in most cases the date too” (Eric from IT, 2017 Amazon reader).

3.3 Translation Quality

For non-native Chinese readers, translation is an important bridge to connect the thought and culture of different nationalities. As the theoretical cornerstone of socialism with Chinese characteristics, Mao Zedong’s thought has always led the Chinese people forward. When it is disseminated overseas, the translation quality should be given the greatest attention. But based on the reviews, the translation is not of high quality. “I didn't find it that interesting and it could be either because of the content or that the translation is not good enough” (TheWildBoy, 2019 Amazon reader). In the database of review texts, “translate” (including the cognates “translation”, “translated”, “translating”, “translator”) appears 13 times and distributes across all the versions. The reviews show a wide range of problems with the translations. “The English translations seem, as if they were printed by several different machines and printers and then made into a book” (Paul Noles, 2015 Amazon reader). “The translation is sometimes awkward so I have given my own translations above” (Bernard M. Patten, 2016 Amazon reader). “It’s just a flimsy and ugly print of a bad internet translation with a low res jpg as a cover.” (Tamisian, 2020 Amazon reader). “The translation is full of misspellings and odd grammar... like a cheap book made by people who have are translating Chinese into English without ever having spoken English with aa native English speaker” (Matthew King, 2020 Amazon reader).

4. Conclusion

The Quotations from Mao Zedong reveals the essence of Mao’s thought, not only covering Mao’s political, economic, cultural, and moral views, but also showing an important page in the long history of China. In the context of today’s call for Chinese culture to go abroad, *The Quotations from Mao Zedong* and other Mao’s works remain significant. Judging from the number of releases and the dissemination effect of *The Quotations of Mao Zedong* overseas, there are three main reasons why Mao’s works have been able to create a situation and form a scale. First, it comes from China’s own

need to enhance its national image. Second, it provides experience and theoretical guidance for other developing countries. Third, it opens a window for the developed countries in the West to understand China.

The study of the overseas dissemination of *The Quotations of Mao Zedong* based on Amazon reader reviews not only helps us understand its overseas dissemination and acceptance, but also provides inspiration for other works to go abroad: on the one hand, attention should be paid to publication and printing management; on the other hand, translators should take up the responsibility of dialogue in the exchange of ideas and transmit the essence of Mao Zedong's thought to overseas readers to the greatest extent possible.

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《毛泽东语录》译作的海外传播与接受——基于亚马逊读者评论

摘要：长期以来，作为中国图书对外译介与传播的主要对象，《毛泽东语录》对中国乃至全球产生了显著影响。国外读者的评论与评价是研究和衡量作品对外译介效果的一个重要方面。本文借助数据爬虫工具八爪鱼采集器、文本挖掘工具 ROST CM6，对《毛泽东语录》译作在亚马逊平台的读者评论进行了定量、定性研究。从星级评价、情感态度与评论数趋势可以看出，多数读者对《毛泽东语录》译本关注度较高，对其持积极态度，且给予了正面评价。读者阅读动机不仅基于发行量，还基于个人兴趣（如历史、哲学或学习需要）；同时，其政治思想也是《毛泽东语录》在海外受到关注的重要原因。虽然在图书设计质量和译本语言质量上存在瑕疵，但《毛泽东语录》译本海外传播呈上升趋势，总体接受度较好。

关键词：《毛泽东语录》；海外传播与接受；亚马逊读者评论