

A Scientific CiteSpace Analysis of the Current Studies on Translator's Subjectivity in China

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Abstract

Based on CiteSpace, an econometric analysis software, citations from 1986 CNKI papers related to translator subjectivity from 1997 to 2022 are taken as the data source. This paper makes a visual graph analysis of the overall number and time distribution of published papers, the published papers of major researchers, key word clustering and key word mutation of literatures related to translator's subjectivity research, and objectively presents the research status and research hotspots, with a view to predicting the future research direction. The findings are as follows: The study of translator's subjectivity has received a lot of attention in China and is on the rise in general; Academic exchanges and cooperation between scholars from different research institutions need to be strengthened; The research focuses on the study of the translator's subjectivity in literary translations and the interpretation and analysis of the translator's subjectivity from a theoretical perspective. In the future, the research texts will focus on the famous contemporary literary works and their translations, the foreign translation and publicity texts of Chinese classics, and the research on the translators themselves will focus on the translators such as Goldblatt and Xu Yuanchong, and the theoretical perspective of the research will shift to the emerging translation theory and interdisciplinary theory.

Keywords

Translator's Subjectivity; Visualization analysis; CiteSpace.

1. Introduction

In the 1990s, Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere introduced the concept of the "cultural turn", which shifted the study of translation from the linguistic to the cultural level, and shifted the study of the source language to the study of the translation. It also shifted the study of the source language to the study of the language of translation[1]. Scholars have gradually discovered that the process of translation is not simply a straightforward process of moving from the source language to the language of translation, but a process full of countless possibilities. Therefore, the subjectivity of the translator provides unlimited possibilities for the creativity of the translation, and various schools of translation and scholars began to reconceptualize and reaffirm the status of the translator. Since then, the identity of the translator has begun to be taken seriously, and has gradually been freed from the identity of the invisible person behind the scenes. The subjectivity of the translator has become one of the popular research objects, and domestic scholars have conducted a large number of studies on the subjectivity of the translator, and the research results are constantly enriched.

CiteSpace, an emerging bibliometric method with the advantages of comprehensive data and reproducible methods[2], can make up for the shortcomings of traditional research and avoid researchers making subjective evaluations of the development of their field[3]. This paper

discusses four issues based on CiteSpace: the current status of translator subjectivity research, researchers, research hotspots and development trends.

2. Results of the Data Analysis

2.1. Overall volume and time distribution of articles

Figure 1 shows the distribution of annual publications on the theme of translator subjectivity from 1997 to 2022 in the CNKI.

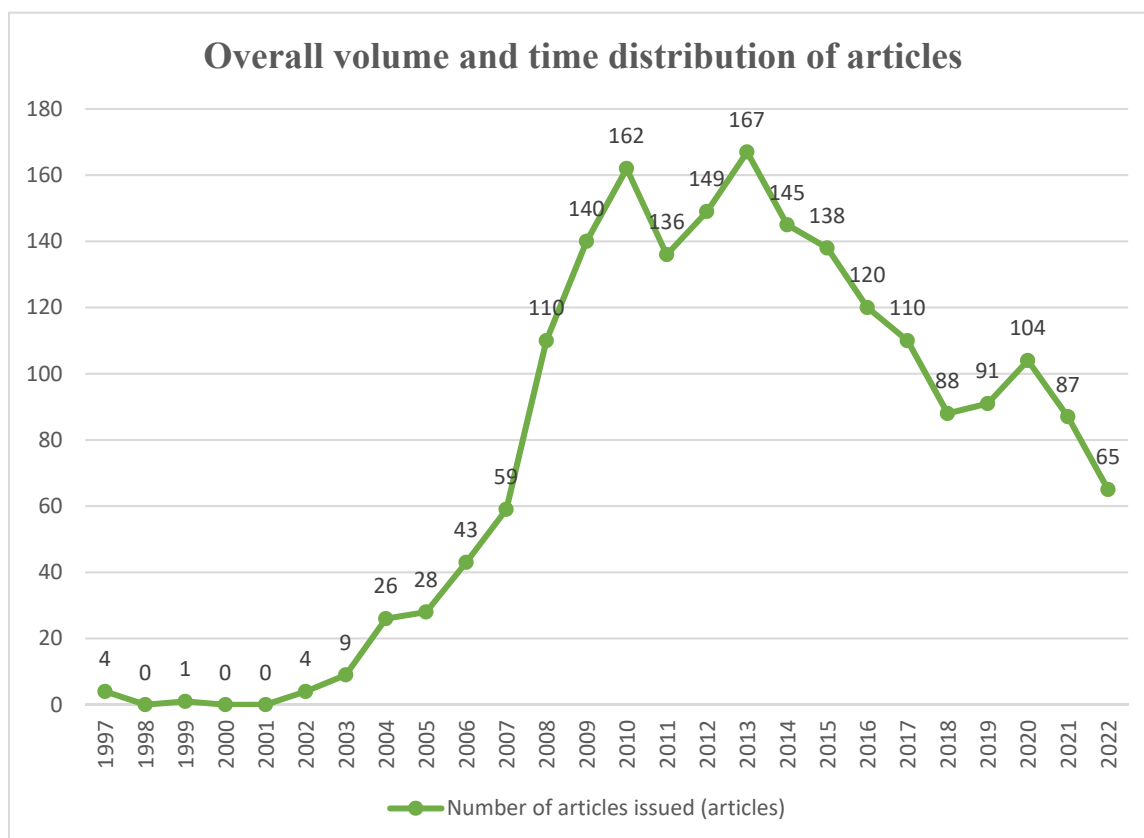


Figure 1. Line graph of the distribution of annual issue data

As shown above, the research literature on translator subjectivity began to emerge between 1997 and 2003. Subsequently, research findings have been enriched, with the number of publications in the decade from 2008 to 2017 being above 100, with an average number of 137.7 publications/year. Since 2018, the annual number of literature has slightly decreased, but after reading and analyzing the literature, it is found that this phenomenon does not mean that the study of translator subjectivity is gradually being left out by scholars, but that it has shown a trend of combining with emerging translation theories and interdisciplinary theories, and scholars have interpreted translator subjectivity from a richer and more diverse perspective, which is more conducive to the sustainable development of the study of translator subjectivity.

2.2. Principal Investigators

Table 1. Number of publications by principal investigators and their affiliations

Number of articles published	Author	affiliation/institution	Number of articles published	Author	affiliation/institution
8	Lin Xia	Wuhan University	5	Han Deying	Shanxi University
7	Tu Guoyuan	Ningbo University	4	Li Changbao	Zhejiang University of Finance and Economics
7	He Fang	Hengyang Normal University	4	Bian Jianhua	Qingdao University
7	Tan Yunfei	Hunan Police College	4	Lu Xiuying	East China Jiaotong University
6	Li Huifang	Hohai University	4	Chen Min	Huaihua College
5	Jia Dejiang	University of South China	4	Liu Shumei	Anhui University of Architecture
5	Li Qingming	Xi'an University of Technology	4	Zeng Erqi	Xuchang College
5	Xu Lan	Huaihai Engineering College			

From Table 1, three scholars, Lin Xia from Wuhan University, Tu Guoyuan from Ningbo University and He Fang from Hengyang Normal University, have the most research results on translator subjectivity, with as many as seven articles. More papers co-authored by Lin Xia from Wuhan University and Li Huifang from Hohai University focus on the translation of film subtitles from the perspective of translator subjectivity, arguing that the choice of translation strategies for English film subtitles should reflect the translator's subjectivity and intention. Other scholars have basically not launched cross-institutional collaborative research, but mostly co-authored papers by scholars from the same institution or unit. The co-authored papers by scholars from different research institutions are conducive to promoting the development of academic research in this field and broadening the scope of research in this field. Therefore, scholars conducting research on the subjectivity of translators in China need to strengthen academic exchanges and cooperation.

3. Keyword Cluster Analysis

Keywords are the distillation and condensation of the core content of a document [4]. With the help of CiteSpace, the keyword map of the literature related to translator subjectivity can be mapped and clustered for analysis. see Fig.2.

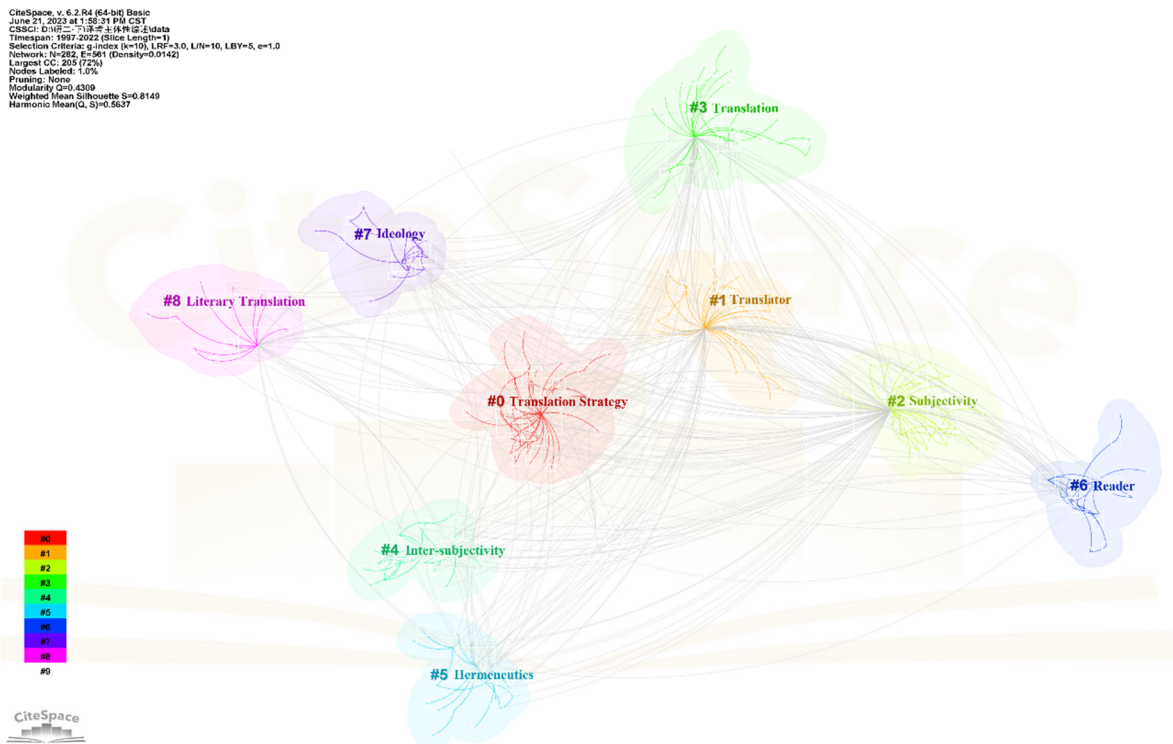


Figure 2. Keyword Clustering Map

As shown in Fig.2, the keyword clustering has a Q-value of 0.4309 and an S-value of 0.8149, indicating that the clustering is reasonable and significant[5]. There are eight keywords clustered in the figure, in the order of #0 translation strategy, #1 translator, #2 subjectivity, #3 translation, #4 intersubjectivity, #5 hermeneutics, #6 reader, #7 ideology, and #8 literary translation. The above eight keywords are classified according to different research directions in the study of translator subjectivity, and their main research directions can be divided into the embodiment of translator subjectivity in literary works by translators and the interpretation of translator subjectivity from a certain theoretical perspective.

In the first category, the translator's subjectivity in literary works is embodied in three main aspects: poetry translation, prose translation and novel translation. Taking the English translation of ancient poems as an example, Jin Shengxi and Lin Zhengjun attempt to reveal the cognitive mechanism of translators' subjectivity, and analyze and discover the process of constructing translators' subjectivity and its connotations[6]. Through the analysis of the translation of the *Tulenkirche*, Lin Juanfang found that some of the translations were mistranslations or even "defective translations", but they were all the result of the translator's self-consciousness in incorporating the translation subject while respecting the original work [7]. Taking Sun Zhili's translation of *The Old Man and the Sea* as an example, Yuan Rong suggests that the translator's own spiritual subject constitutes a complete system that influences and constrains translation activities, deepening and promoting the study of translation theory[8]. Zhou Chunyue takes young Bajin's translation stance and translation impulses as the subject of his study, and uses comparative analysis to discover the contradictions between what he says and what he does, thus revealing that the translator's subjectivity is gradually established through the intertwined interaction of personal choice and historical evolution[9]. Liu Yingjiao points out that the subjectivity factors of translators are divided into individual subjectivity factors of translators and social subjectivity factors of translators. After studying the full English translation of *Dream of the Red Chamber*, it is found that the individual subjectivity factors of translators Hawks and Yang Xianyi in terms of bilingual linguistic and cultural competence and attitudes towards *Dream of the Red Chamber*, the translation career and the English translation

of *Dream of the Red Chamber*, as well as the social subjectivity factors in terms of patron purpose, poetic form and translation strategies, all differ to different degrees [10].

In the second category, the subjectivity of translators is mainly interpreted from different perspectives based on a certain theory, mainly including traditional translation theories such as acceptance aesthetics, translation purposology, feminist theory, hermeneutic theory, etc. With the development of interdisciplinary translation studies, some scholars have also creatively introduced theories from other disciplines to study the subjectivity of translators.

Tong Tingting discusses the translator's subjectivity in literary translation from the hermeneutic perspective in terms of acceptance of the original text, active understanding, and choice of translation strategies[11]. Chen Weihong discusses the importance of manifesting the translator's subjectivity from feminist translation theory, and how the translator's subjectivity is manifested[12]. Wang Yujuan, on the other hand, creatively combines purposive and conformist theories, discusses how to choose translation strategies, and analyses the impact of the translator's subjectivity on the different choices of translation strategies[13]. Relying on philosophical hermeneutic theory, Qian Jiaying stands at the height of intersubjectivity and re-examines translator subjectivity, arguing for the return of the translator subject and its intersubjective existence, emphasizing that translator subjectivity is manifested in the dialogue of intersubjectivity^[14]. Tian Xia uses the theory of possible worlds in cognitive poetics to analyze the possible worlds in which the subjectivity of translators in the era of cultural globalization can achieve cultural pluralism when "Chinese culture goes abroad" [15].

Qiu Hemin uses postcolonial theory to reveal the role of translators' subjectivity in the "arena and testing ground of postcolonial contexts"[16]. Tu Guoyuan uses Bourdieu's sociological theory of "habitus" as an entry point to examine the choice of material by the modern Chinese translator Ma Junwu [17]. Jia Ru uses Lico's reflective hermeneutics as a lens to study the subjectivity of the translator, suggesting that the translator should correct his or her attitude in translation, accept the "test of difference", turn passivity into subjective initiative, and actively resolve the "conflict of interpretation"[18]. Mou Jia and Zhou Guijun explore the influence of translators' historical perceptions on the choice of translation content, the use of translation strategies, and the audience and effects of translation from the perspective of communication from Lasswell's communication model^[19]. Based on a cultural anthropological perspective, Zhang Hong uses the translation of *the Book of Filial Piety* as an example to explore why the subjectivity of the translator should be reflected, providing a new perspective for the study of English translations of Chinese cultural texts[20].

Therefore, research on translator subjectivity has focused on the study of the translator's personal subjectivity in literary translations and the interpretation and analysis of translator subjectivity from a certain theoretical perspective. It can be predicted that in the future, research on translators themselves will focus on such great translators as Ge Haowen and Xu Yuanchong, while the theoretical perspective of research will shift to the emerging translation theories and interdisciplinary theories, such as "ecological translation study", "Multimodal translation study", communication science and sociological theories, etc.

4. Burst Terms

Burst Terms are words that appear in large numbers and increase in frequency explicitly in a relatively short period of time. The dynamic changeability of mutation words can reveal the dynamic deduction and development mechanism of academic research more effectively[21], see Fig.3.

Top 8 Keywords with the Strongest Citation Bursts

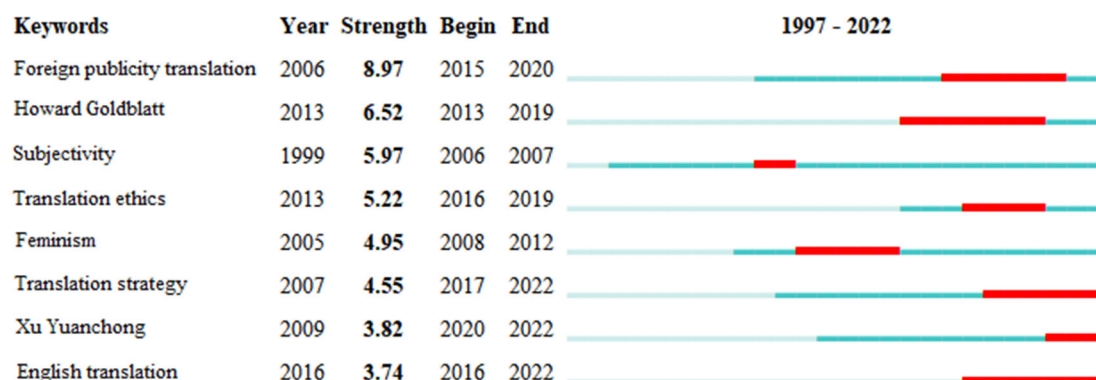


Figure 3. Burst Terms

The thick line in the graph indicates the time interval in which the mutation of the keyword occurred; Begin and End represent the start and end time of the mutation; Strength represents the intensity of the mutation of the keyword, the higher the intensity, the more influential the keyword is in the corresponding time interval of the research field.

As shown in Figure 3, the influential mutation keywords include foreign propaganda translation, Goldblatt and subjectivity. The study of translator subjectivity in foreign propaganda texts produced a large number of research results from 2015 to 2020, which indicates that scholars gradually pay attention to the study of Chinese cultural outreach and the construction of China's image as China's influence expands and its international status improves. Liu Jinling and Li Nan argue that the translator's subjectivity is mainly reflected in the process of selecting foreign propaganda materials, interpreting the original language materials and converting them into the target language, which is constrained by the political context and ideology, etc[22]. Yu Li uses the evaluation theory of systemic functional linguistics as an analytical framework to reveal the ways of constructing the subjectivity of translators in different translation directions in the translation of government documents, and finds that the different translation directions in the translation of political documents lead to different ways of reflecting the subjectivity of translators [23].

From 2013 to 2019, the keyword "Howard Goldblatt" has become a research hotspot with a strength value of 6.52, second only to foreign propaganda texts in terms of influence. Ge Haowen is an American sinologist whose major translations include *Fatigue of Life and Death*, *The Red Sorghum Family*, and *The Bounty of the Breasts*. In order to investigate the factors that influence the translator's subjectivity in the English translation of Chinese contemporary literature, Hu Weihua and Guo Jirong take ecological translation as the research perspective, and interpret the embodiment of Ge Haowen's subjectivity from two aspects: the selection of text before translation and the selection of translation strategies and methods during translation. The study finds that Ge Haowen's English translation shows both his subjectivity based on his own aesthetic tendencies and translation ideas, and his passivity in front of the cultural system of the translated language, which is the comprehensive manifestation of his adaptation to the translation ecological environment[24]. In his study of the English translation of Mo Yan's novel *The Red Sorghum Family*, Zhang Yue explores the Ge Haowen's subjectivity in three areas: text selection, text interpretation and the translation process. The author argues that, in the context of the strategy of "cultural strengthening", the harmonious play of the translator's subjectivity will bring very useful insights for the overseas dissemination of Chinese culture[25].

Combined with the mutation keywords, it can be predicted that future research on famous contemporary literature and its translations, foreign translations of traditional Chinese culture and the enhancement of our discourse will be more adequate.

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5. Conclusion

Based on CiteSpace, an econometric statistical analysis software, this paper visualizes and analyzes the journal literature related to translators' subjectivity from 1997 to 2022, and finds that: firstly, the research on translators' subjectivity has received a lot of attention in China, and the number of research literature in recent years is in a flat state, but the overall trend is on the rise, and the research field is constantly broadening; secondly, scholars from the same institution or unit cooperate; third, research hotspots focus on the study of translators' personal subjectivity in literary translations and the interpretation and analysis of translators' subjectivity from a certain theoretical perspective; fourth, future research texts will focus on famous contemporary literary works and their translations, foreign translations of classical works of Chinese studies and foreign promotional texts, and research on translators themselves will focus on Fourth, the future research texts will focus on famous contemporary literary works and their translations, foreign translations of classical works of Chinese studies and foreign promotional texts, and the research on translators themselves will focus on such great translators as Ge Haowen and Xu Yuanchong, while the theoretical perspective of research will shift to the emerging translation theory and interdisciplinary theory.

Acknowledgments

Hunan Provincial Education Science "13th Five-Year Plan" Project: Research on TPACK Ability Development of College Teachers in the Context of Education Informatization (No. XJK20BGD050)

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