A Knowledge Mapping Analysis of Legal Translation in China

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Abstract: Legal translation in China is time-honored, so clarifying the history of legal translation in China is of paramount importance to the future research of legal translation. However, few studies on the history of legal translation in China were carried out based on the knowledge mapping analysis. To clarify the current development of legal translation in China, this paper aims to conduct a literature review of legal translation from 2008 to 2023 in China by making a knowledge mapping analysis. Based on 169 papers from the China National Knowledge Infrastructure core collection, this paper reviewed the development of legal translation in China by using the Citespace and visualized analysis in the China National Knowledge Infrastructure. The result shows that (1) as far as the overall trend of legal translation in China is concerned, the development of legal translation in China remains stable after entering a period of sustained improvement. (2) The main contributor to legal translation in China is Falian Zhang from China University of Political Science and Law and China University of Political Science and Law has made the most contribution to the development of legal translation in China. Moreover, Falian Zhang is highly acknowledged by other scholars in the field of legal translation. And Chinese Translators Journal is highly recognized in the legal translation community. (3) In terms of research hotspots in China, some Chinese scholars focus on legal terminology, modal verbs, and legal transplantation from the perspective of the research object. Some scholars focus on legal English, legal text, legal text and ancient law, dissemination of rule of law in terms of research objects. What's more, other Chinese scholars focus on translation strategy and translation principle as far as the research perspective related to legal translation is concerned. We argue that this paper gives us an insight for the future research of legal translation by analyzing of the development of legal translation from 2008 to 2023 in China.

1. Introduction

Legal translation is not only a "national translation program" [4], but also "a booster for foreign-related rule of law work" [1]. Since legal translation in China is time-honored, to clarify the history of legal translation in China is of paramount importance to the future research of legal translation.

In recent years, many scholars have conducted literature reviews on the history of legal translation in China. Li & Hu [26] concluded that theoretical considerations on legal translation, and

linguistic features of the legal text are the main themes in legal translation from 1980 to 2006 by making a critical review of 54 articles on legal translation published in the Chinese Mainland since 1980. Qu & Shi [25] elaborated that scholars began to study jurisprudence from the self-strengthening movement by studying the history of legal translation from the Opium War to the May Fourth Movement. Zhang & Sun [18] divided the development of legal translation into the budding period, the exploratory period, the transitional period, the developmental period, and the period of sustained improvement from the end of the Qing Dynasty to 2023. However, the existing literature reviews on legal translation are mostly made in chronological order. Few studies are carried out based on the scientific data analysis.

This paper studies the history of legal translation in China by analyzing the data of 169 papers from core journals of China National Knowledge Infrastructure (hereinafter referred to as CNKI) from 2008 to 2023. This paper aims to answer the following questions. 1. What are the overall trends from 2008 to 2023 in China? 2. Who has made the most contribution to the development of legal translation in China? And who is the most recognized scholar in the development of legal translation in China? 3. What are the research hotspots in China?

2. Data and Methods

2.1 Data

Data consisted of 169 papers from the core journal collections, SCI and CSSCI database in CNKI. First, I obtained 211 papers by setting the theme as legal translation in the core journal collections, SCI and CSSCI database in CNKI from 2008 to 2023 through advanced search mode. The data obtained included titles, authors, keywords, publication years, author units, and so on. To enhance the reliability of the study, I manually screened the retrieved data during the process. Finally, 169 papers from the core journal collections, SCI and CSSCI database in CNKI were obtained.

2.2 Method

I analyzed the data by using CiteSpace and visualized analysis of CNKI. Firstly, in order to obtain the research trends from 2008 to 2023, I obtained the annual publications in the overall trend analysis of visualized analysis of CNKI. Secondly, in order to who has made the most contribution to the development of legal translation in China, I imported 169 papers from the core journal collections, SCI and CSSCI database in Citespace and used the Author in Citespace and got the ranking of high productivity authors in China. Thirdly, in order to clarify the most recognized scholar in the development of legal translation in China, I ranked the highly cited papers in China according to the number of citations in CNKI. Finally, in order to get the research hotspots, I used Keywords in Citespace.

3. Analysis and Discussion

3.1 Overall Trend

The development trend of legal translation in China is different in different time period. The following are the development trends obtained from CNKI. The vertical axis represents the number of annual publications and the horizontal axis represents the year in Figure 1. According to Figure 1, the overall trend of legal translation in China remains stable in spite of a slight fluctuation from 2008 to 2023. And the number of annual publications remains at more than 7 articles per year.

During this period, China, as an emerging economy, achieved rapid growth and became the second largest economy in the world. In the wake of the rapid economic growth in China, legal and cultural exchanges with other countries are becoming more frequent. With the increasing frequency of legal communication with foreign countries, the importance of legal translation has become increasingly prominent. These results support the findings of some previous studies which found that legal translation research in general shows a prosperous development trend of legal translation from 2009 to 2016 [5].
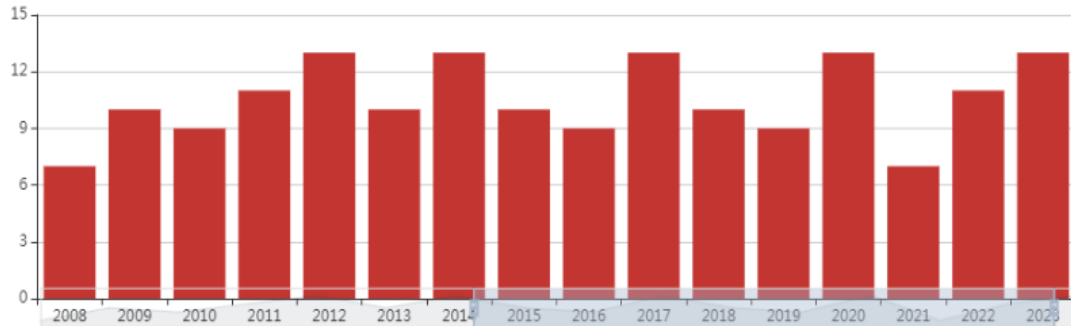

Figure 1: Overall trend of legal translation in China

3.2 Highly Productive Authors and Highly Cited Papers

Highly productive authors reflect the scholars who have contributed most to the field of legal English translation. Highly cited papers reflect the degree of recognition of their contributions [5].

Table 1: Highly productive authors in China

No.	Author	Count	Author Affiliation
1	Falian Zhang	20	China University of Political Science and Law
2	Wensheng Qu	6	East China University of Political Science and Law
3	Junfeng Zhao	6	Guangdong University of Foreign Studies
4	Xiaobo Dong	5	Nanjing Normal University
5	Weichen Gu	4	Hebei Normal University
6	Le Chen	2	Zhejiang University
7	Li Wan	2	East China University of Political Science and Law
8	Fagong Liu	2	Zhejiang Ocean University
9	Demi Xiong	2	Southwest University of Political Science and Law

Table 1 presents highly productive authors in CSSCI, SCI or core journals collection in CNKI from 1993 to 2023 in China, including the names of the highly productive authors, the number of articles and the author affiliation. These scholars have 4 or more publications in CSSCI or SCI or core journals collection. From Table 1, we can see that the most productive author is Falian Zhang from China University of Political Science and Law, whose number of publications is 20. Since the highly productive author reflects the scholars who have contributed most to the field of legal English translation, we conclude that Falian Zhang from China University of Political Science and Law has made the most contributions to legal translation. In addition, we can also find that most of productive authors come from China University of Political Science and Law, East China University of Political Science and Law and Southwest University of Political Science and Law, among which two productive scholars are from East China University of Political Science and Law. So, we can conclude that China University of Political Science and Law has made the most contribution to the development of legal translation in China.

Table 2: Highly cited papers in China

NO.	Title	Author	Journal	Time	Citations
1	The Principles of Legal Translation	Falian Zhang	Chinese Translators Journal	2009-09-15	348
2	On static equivalence in translating legal texts	Kexing Li	Foreign Language Teaching and Research	2010-01-20	298
3	Reflections on the problems and causes of translation of Chinese legal terms to foreign countries: Discuss the standardization of Chinese legal terms translation in recent years	Wensheng Qu	Chinese Translators Journal	2012-11-15	220
4	On the Chinese translation strategies of Anglo-American legal terms	Falian Zhang	Chinese Translators Journal	2016-03-15	198
5	An analysis of cultural factors in legal English translation	Falian Zhang	Chinese Translators Journal	2009-11-15	116
6	On Susan arevi's view of legal translation	Wensheng Qu	Chinese Translators Journal	2009-06-15	112
7	Cultural transmission in legal translation	Falian Zhang	Chinese Translators Journal	2015-09-06	107

Citation is an important indicator for evaluating a scholar's recognition as a researcher among his or her peers, reflecting the recognition of the scholar in the academic community, their contribution, and the influence of the scholar on the development of the discipline [16]. Table 2 contains the title, author, journal, time and citations of the highly cited papers. From Table 2, we can find that (1) The most cited article is *The Principles of Legal Translation* written by Falian Zhang. Since citation is used to evaluate a scholar's recognition by other scholars, we can see that Falian Zhang is highly acknowledged by other scholars in the field of legal translation and has a high status in the field of legal translation. (2) From the perspective of the journals, most of the cite articles are published in Chinese Translators Journal. So we can also conclude that Chinese Translators Journal is highly recognized in the legal translation community.

From the above discussion, we can see that (1) the main contributor to legal translation in China is Falian Zhang from China University of Political Science and Law and East China University of Political Science and Law has made the most contribution to the development of legal translation in China; (2) Falian Zhang is highly acknowledged by other scholars in the field of legal translation. And Chinese Translators Journal is highly recognized in the legal translation community.

3.3 Research Hotspot

The analysis of co-occurring words helps to clarify the research hotspot of legal translation. The specific data of keywords is shown in Table 3. According to Table 3, I find that the top 15 keywords be classified into different categories according to different prospective. (1) In terms of research objects, the research hotspots are legal English, legal text, legal text and ancient law, dissemination of rule of law, etc.; (2) in terms of the research field related to legal translation, the research hotspots are legal terminology, modal verb and legal transplantation, etc.; (3) as far as the research perspective related to legal translation is concerned, translation strategy and translation principle are the main the research hotspots. The research object on legal translation is characterized by diversity [3]. So it is hard to give an exhaustive description. The following section will further discuss the research field related to legal translation and the research perspective related to legal translation, excluding the research object.

As far as the research field related to legal translation is concerned, some scholars study the legal

terminology, modal verbs, and legal transplantation of legal translation. In terms of legal terminology, some scholars study the distinction of certain legal terminology. Zhao & Qu [24] explained the translation of the plaintiff and defendant, suggesting that the plaintiff should be used as the common name of "plaintiff", while the defendant should be used as the common translation of "defendant". Chen [17] studied the translation of layout-design and illustrated the best translation of layout-design by comparing three official legal translations. Wan [6] examined the equivalence "force majeure" in Chinese and finds that the issue of equivalence should be considered under different circumstances. Zhu & Liu [2] made a comparative study of terms of civil subjects in the Civil Code of the People's Republic of China based on the Corpus. What's more, some scholars studied issues such as the principles and strategies of terminology translation. Zhang & Zhao [12], Wu [9], and Bao [21] studied the strategy of legal translation while Yu [23], Chen & Hoffman [14], Hu & Dong [11] studied the principle of legal translation. In terms of modal verbs, Chen &Liu [22] and Li & Dong [10] studied the translation of "shall" while Jiang &Yang [27] and Chen [15] studied modal verbs by using a corpus. In terms of legal transplantation, Wu [20] explored the functions and roles of translation in legal transplantation by reviewing the practice of legal translation in the late Qing Dynasty. Zhao & Xue [7] explored the issues of legal transplantation and legal equivalence in the process of English translation of legal terms by comparing the concepts related to property rights in the civil law of Germany and Japan.

Table 3: Research hotspot in China

No.	Keywords	Count	Year
1	legal translation	90	2008
2	translation	15	2008
3	legal terminology	12	2008
4	legal English	10	2008
5	legal transplantation	7	2009
6	translation strategy	7	2010
7	legal text	6	2010
8	legal language	5	2012
9	civil code	4	2021
10	translation principle	3	2008
11	legislative text	3	2014
12	translation criticism	3	2018
13	ancient law	3	2008
14	dissemination of rule of law	3	2023
15	modal verb	3	2011

As far as the research perspective related to legal translation is concerned, scholars mainly focused on translation strategy and translation principle. In terms of translation strategy, Zhang & Zhao [12] proposed that the idea of subtractive translation can be used when translating from English to Chinese to omit the English singular and plural marker words in the source language while the strategy of augmentative translation is appropriate when translating from Chinese to English; and the strategy of translation by convention can be used for some legal English sentences. Han [19] put forward the functional approach and strategy of legal discourse translation by combining the functional translation theory. Chen [15] proposed to combine naturalized translation and alienated translation strategies in the process of legal translation. Zhao & Zheng [12] analyzed the differences between the defined terms in Chinese and American criminal laws by comparing the terms in parallel texts, and put forward the viewpoint of de-ambiguating the terms in Chinese laws. In terms of translation principle, Zhao [13] put forward four basic principles that legal translation

should follow: accuracy and rigor, clarity and conciseness, consistency and stylistic norms. Han [19] illustrated the basis of the application of Grice's principle of cooperation in the production of legal texts, especially the application of the maxim of manner. Qu [8] proposed that translators should abide by three systematic basic principles such as the law of reciprocity, the law of identity and the law of equivalence in the translation of Chinese legislative texts.

4. Conclusion

Based on the CNKI core collection from 2008 to 2023, this paper reviews the development of legal translation in China by using CiteSpace and visualized analysis of CNKI. The following conclusions are made.

First, as far as the overall trend of legal translation is concerned, the development of legal translation in China remains stable after entering a period of sustained improvement.

Second, the main contributor to legal translation in China is Falian Zhang from China University of Political Science and Law and China University of Political Science and Law has made the most contribution to the development of legal translation in China. Moreover, Falian Zhang is highly acknowledged by other scholars in the field of legal translation. And Chinese Translators Journal is highly recognized in the legal translation community.

Third, in terms of research hotspots in China, some Chinese scholars focus on legal terminology, modal verbs, and legal transplantation from the perspective of the research object. Some scholars focus on legal English, legal text, legal text and ancient law, dissemination of rule of law in terms of research objects. What's more, other Chinese scholars focus on translation strategy and translation principle as far as the research perspective related to legal translation is concerned.

This paper is helpful for readers to understand the development trend of legal translation and to explore the future development of legal translation. However, there are still many limitations. The data sample of this research is limited, the research data only includes core journals but does not include master's and doctoral theses. Future investigation is suggested to expand the sample to enhance the reliability.

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