

## Original Paper

# A Scientometric Analysis on Translation Studies of *Tao Te Ching* in China Based on CiteSpace

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### Abstract

Based on the data of research papers published between 1988 to 2023, which were retrieved from China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), this paper makes a scientometric analysis of the research focuses of English translations studies of *Tao Te Ching* in China by employing CiteSpace. The findings were presented in knowledge domains. Aiming to uncover the research development and hot-discussed topics, the paper probes into the number of published articles, the high-impact authors and institutions, high-frequency keywords. It is found that translator research and translation strategies are the focuses of this research field. Current research mainly focuses on three aspects: translators such as Roger T. Ames, Lin Yutang, D. C. Lau, and Legge; translation strategies such as domestication and foreignization; English translation of key words such as *Tao*.

### Keywords

translation study of *Tao Te Ching* in China, CiteSpace, scientometric analysis

## 1. Introduction

*Tao Te Ching* is a masterpiece of Taoist thought and a representative book of traditional Chinese culture. It contains profound philosophy, rich meaning and all-encompassing content. It carries the Chinese ancestors' thoughts and unique insights on the evolution of the universe, social politics, life, management, man and nature, and the use of force, and has a profound impact on the development of Chinese philosophy and culture. Since its introduction to the West in the 19th century, *Tao Te Ching* has become the most widely translated Chinese classic text, and its distribution and publication volume in the West is second only to *the Bible* and *the Bhagavad-Gita* (Liu Yuanchen & Xin Hongjuan, 2020). Misha Tadd, an American scholar, has published *the General Catalogue of Lao Tzu Translations*, which covers 73 languages and 1,576 translations (Misha Tadd, 2019). The author investigated the sales of

Chinese classics in overseas markets on the website of Amazon in the United States (September 30, 2023). The results show that *Tao Te Ching* is the best-selling Chinese cultural classic on the website. The translation of *Tao Te Ching* is generally highly evaluated and well accepted by readers on the website. *Tao Te Ching* has triggered a lasting wave of translation and research. In order to grasp the overall development and diachronic evolution of this research field, it is necessary to sort out and analyze the existing literature. With the help of software CiteSpace, this paper takes the literature on the translation of *Tao Te Ching* in CNKI as source data and makes a quantitative investigation and visual analysis of the high-influence authors and institutions as well as research hotspots in this field from the aspects of publication volume, high-frequency keywords, etc. By drawing the map of scientific knowledge in this field, this paper tries to visually present the research hotspots and focuses in China.

## 2. Method

### 2.1 Research Questions

What are the influential authors and institutions in the field of translation and research of *Tao Te Ching* in China?

What is the current situation of translation research of *Tao Te Ching* in China? What are the research hotspots and focuses?

### 2.2 Data Sources and Research Methods

#### 2.2.1 Data Sources

With CNKI as the data source and the theme of “Translation of *Tao Te Ching*” or “English Translation of *Tao Te Ching*” as the subject, this paper conducts a literature search on all journals included in the full-text database of Chinese journals. No limitation on the starting time of the search was set and 788 literatures were obtained. The results are manually filtered page by page. In the retrieved papers, the author excluded 23 non-research papers such as news reports, conference notices, journal catalogues, etc., and collected 765 valid papers. The data was updated on September 30, 2023. After screening the valid literature, the author downloaded the bibliographic information, including the title of the paper, the author, the author’s working institution, the journal name, abstract, keywords, publication year. By using “Export/Reference” tool on CNKI, all the document data were converted into Refworks format for export. We named the exported file as a text (txt) document “download\_XXX”, which is the format required by CiteSpace. Then the scientific knowledge graph is analyzed by Citespace software.

#### 2.2.2 Research Methods

In this study, CiteSpace software was used to quantitatively analyze the collected data by means of scientometrics. The software system, developed by Dr. Chaomei Chen of Drexel University in the United States, is an information visualization tool developed on the Java language, and “has become a very influential research tool in the field of information analysis” (Zhang Jiguang, 2016). It mainly relies on “co-citation analysis” theory and pathfinder network scaling to calculate the literature (collection) in specific fields (Chen Yue & Chen Chaomei, 2014) with the purpose to “investigate the



It consists of nodes and lines as shown in Picture 1. Nodes correspond to scholars and institutions, and the lines between nodes represent cooperative research relationships. The size of the node and the font size are proportional to the frequency of the node occurrence. The larger the node and the font size, the higher the frequency of node occurrence, the more active the scholar or research institution represented by the node. As can be seen from Picture 1, major scholars engaged in the study of English translation of *Tao Te Ching* in China include Wen Junchao, Wu Bing, He Fang, Yao Zhenjun, Wang Qing, Yuan Chen, Xin Hongjuan, Liu Kongxi, Yang Jing, etc. These prolific scholars, either independently or in cooperation with others, have published high-quality papers and put forward guiding opinions on the current theoretical research and practical activities of the English translation of *Tao Te Ching*.

Picture 1 shows that the research institutions with active publications in this field are Central South University (School of Foreign Languages), School of Foreign Languages of Xuchang University, School of Foreign Languages of Southwest University, Shandong University, Shanghai International Studies University, Beijing Foreign Studies University, School of Foreign Languages of Ningbo University, Henan University, Southwest University, School of Foreign Languages of Yunnan Normal University, School of Foreign Languages of Shanghai Jiaotong University, etc.

It can be seen from the picture that some research institutions have cooperative relations with scholars, but they do not have a certain scale. Teamwork on a large scale has positive and constructive significance for the development of translation practice and theory.

### 3.2 Keyword Cluster Analysis

Keywords show the core content of a document. By using big data metrology tools to extract literature keywords and plot their frequency distribution, the development direction and research hotspot of a field can be studied (Li Jie & Chen Chaomei, 2016, p. 194). By analyzing the keywords of translation studies of *Tao Te Ching* in China, we can draw a knowledge map of co-occurrence of keywords, which can be used to analyze the research hotspots in this field.

Data was imported into CiteSpace, the period was set from 1988 to 2023, and the time slice was set to 1 year. Keyword was selected for Node type, Top 10 was set for each time slice, and the pathfinder algorithm was adopted. Pruning was carried out on the operation results. The font and node size were adjusted at the same time. Threshold was set to 3, which means the occurrence frequency of keywords in the picture was not less than 3 times. Then the Logarithmic Algorithm (LLR) was used to obtain the keyword co-occurrence knowledge graph.

Nodes in the picture represent the keywords of the paper. The size of nodes is proportional to the frequency of keyword occurrence, the lines between nodes represent the co-occurrence relationship, and the radius of nodes represents the total number of citations. The larger the radius, the more the total number of citations of corresponding keywords or literatures, which indicates that the research receives more attention. Some large nodes are surrounded by some small nodes, which indicates that these nodes are closely related to each other. Thus a cluster is formed.

According to the size of nodes in Picture 2, the author looks for key nodes to find research hotspots.



4	translation of Chinese classics	9	14	intertextuality	4
5	Roger T. Ames	7	15	<i>Lao Tzu</i>	4
6	D. C. Lau	6	16	Cultural intention	4
7	Lin Yutang	6	17	ideology	4
8	Legge	6	18	Lao Tzu	4
9	paratext	5	19	translator	4
10	Translation strategies	5	20	memetics	3

#### 4. Discussion

By classifying the themes and attributes of the keywords in Table 1, the research hotspots of Chinese classics translation can be roughly classified into the following four areas: studies on English translations and translators (*Tao Te Ching*, *Laozi*, English translations, Roger T. Ames, D. C. Lau, Lin Yutang, and Legge); a part of the study of translation of Chinese classics (English translation of Chinese classics, translation of Chinese classics); theoretical studies (paratext, intertextuality, memetics); Methodological studies and others (translation strategies, domestication, foreignization, cultural intention, ideology).

The study of the English translation of *Tao Te Ching* has always been the focus of academic research. Xin Hongjuan and Gao Shengbing (2008) made a diachronic description of the English versions of *Tao Te Ching* since Legge and analyzed their reception in the English-speaking world. Yu Shiyi (2016) studied the historical context of American cultural scholar and publisher Paul Carruth's translation of *Tao Te Ching*. Combining with Western religious traditions, Yu explored the interpretive significance and value of the translation acquisition as well as the complex role of cultural translation. Yin Bo (2018) studied the ecological translation principles of Arthur Waley's *Tao Te Ching*, guided by the theory of adaptation and selection in ecological translation. Meng Jiangan (2018) analyzed the English version of Arthur Waley's *Tao Te Ching* under the guidance of relevance theory.

This paper uses CiteSpace software to analyze the title data of 765 literature on *Tao Te Ching* translation studies collected on CNKI. The scientific knowledge map of the translation of *Tao Te Ching* from 1988 to 2023 is drawn, the overall development of the translation of *Tao Te Ching* in the past 30 years is sorted out. The research hotspots and focuses in this field are explored. Through the analysis of keyword co-occurrence knowledge graph, it is found that translator research and translation strategies are the focuses of translation studies of *Tao Te Ching* in China. Current research mainly focuses on three aspects: translators such as Roger T. Ames, Lin Yutang, D. C. Lau, and Legge; translation strategies such as domestication and foreignization; English translation of key words such as Tao.

The data in this paper is selected from the database of China National Knowledge Network, and the

research has some limitations. The first is the limitation of the database. After the data from CNKI is converted into the format required by CiteSpace, reference information is not included. Therefore, function such as document co-citation analysis in CiteSpace cannot be used. Secondly, due to the limited scope of search, some documents could not be identified and it could not be ensured that there were no omissions for the data. In the future, the source database can be expanded to make a more comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the research objects.

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