

Original Paper

Bibliometric Analysis of Chinese Community Interpreter

Research

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Abstract

In recent years, the research on community interpreting abroad has developed rapidly, while the research in this field in China is still insufficient and has not received sufficient attention. This study selected 90 domestic literatures on community interpreting research in the past 15 years, constructed a database, and used scientific measurement methods for analysis and exploration, aiming to clarify its development context, characteristics and trends, and provide useful references for the in-depth and refined research of domestic community interpreting in the future.

Keywords

community interpreting , bibliometric research, interpretation

1. Introduction

Community interpreting research originated in the 1970s and mainly focused on court interpreting, sign language translation and medical interpreting. In the early days, most community interpreting research originated from the research interests of individuals or individual groups. Until the 1980s, this field was still in a neglected state internationally. Although community interpreting has a long history, it was not until the 1980s and 1990s that due to the increasingly prominent problems and contradictions of cross-cultural communication in community services, community interpreting gradually attracted attention, and the research value of community interpreting began to be valued (Zhang, 2016).

2. Research Methods

This article is dedicated to studying the situation of domestic community interpreting research in the 15 years from 2009 to 2023. Bibliometrics provides the possibility and convenience for us to sort out the development context of a research field. Therefore, this article takes the papers on community

interpreting included in CNKI in China from 2009 to 2023 as the research object. Based on the method of bibliometrics, it reviews the situation of domestic community interpreting research from multiple levels, hoping to trigger some thoughts on the research of community interpreting.

2.1 Database

The database established in this study contains a total of 87 documents, of which the earliest document was published in 2009 and the deadline is December 2023.

2.2 Data Source

In order to obtain more comprehensive relevant documents, the researcher not only consulted the articles in domestic academic journals, but also included various academic papers and meeting minutes to strive to make the database complete. However, it must be clear that due to the limitations of one's own ability and resources, the inconsistent screening standards of materials and the influence of subjective factors, it is difficult to build a flawless and 100% complete database. Therefore, the database of this study is still relative in terms of completeness and accuracy.

2.3 Classification of Community Interpreting Research

According to the content of the research results of community interpreting, the documents are divided into five categories: comprehensive, legal interpreting, medical and health interpreting, sign language interpreting and remote interpreting (LIU & ZHANG, 2012). Comprehensive interpreting research is a study of community interpreting from a macro level, not limited to a specific professional field, such as medicine or law. Legal interpreting covers interpreting activities that occur in courts, police stations, shelters (refugees), immigration bureaus, detention centers, law firms and other places, among which court interpreting is the most common. Medical and health interpreting includes interpreting activities carried out in hospitals, clinics, health centers, emergency centers, traffic accident handling, psychological counseling centers and other occasions, among which hospital interpreting and health interpreting are the most common. Sign language is an important tool for deaf or hearing-impaired people to express their thoughts and feelings, obtain information and participate in social life. Sign language interpreting includes the mutual translation between oral language and sign language and the mutual translation between sign languages, and is the main bridge for deaf or hearing-impaired people to achieve effective communication. Remote interpreting mainly refers to community interpreting carried out with the aid of telephones, televisions, multimedia, networks and other auxiliary facilities.

2.4 Document Language

Most of the domestic literatures on community interpreting are in Chinese, but there are also some literatures in other languages, such as English and Japanese, and some literatures partially use Russian and Thai.

2.5 Data Analysis Tools

Excel spreadsheet tools, CNKI measurement visual analysis and SPSS statistical tools are mainly used for data analysis and chart drawing.

3. Research Results

3.1 The Overall Development of Domestic Community Interpreting Research

The overall development of domestic community interpreting research from 2009 to 2023 is shown in Figure 1:

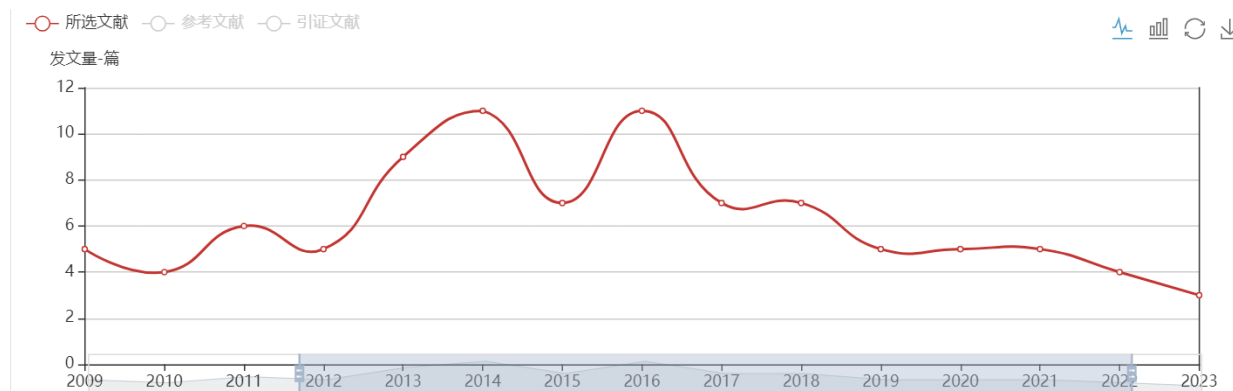


Figure 1. The Overall Situation of Foreign Community Interpreting Research

Between 2009 and 2014, there was an increasing trend of community interpreting research in China, with two peaks in 2014 and 2016, followed by a decline. From 2016, when the peak was reached, to 2023, the research heat has shown a fluctuating downward trend.

Researchers believe that the rising research heat from 2009 to 2014 can be summarized in three points: when community interpreting research was just starting in China, domestic scholars were curious about this emerging concept and had a strong desire to explore and conduct research; the continuous promotion of China's reform and opening-up policy attracted a large number of foreigners into China, and solving the difficulties of foreigners' lives became a new research trend; the continuous development of higher education in China drove the rapid increase of translation training programs and the continuous increase of PhD and master's degree holders in translation, thus driving the overall development of interpreting research.

The peaks in 2014 and 2016 can be summarized in two points: in December 2013, the three major operators obtained 4G licenses, marking the official entry of China into the 4G era, and the rapid development of information technology laid a technical foundation for online interpreting and remote interpreting became a research hotspot; in the second half of 2013, after the policy of the "Belt and Road Initiative" and the "21st Century Maritime Silk Road" was proposed, exchanges and cooperation between countries along the route and China became increasingly frequent, and the demand for interpreting talent grew rapidly, especially in international business communication and cross-cultural communication.

The slow decline from 2017 to 2023 can indicate that community interpreting research has reached a certain saturation and slowdown stage. At the same time, the outbreak of the epidemic at the end of 2019 also hindered community interpreting research. On the one hand, during the epidemic period, people reduced their social interactions, and the demand for interpreting decreased; on the other hand, traditional research methods such as case analysis and interview method could not be implemented.

3.2 Geographical Distribution of Community Interpreting Research

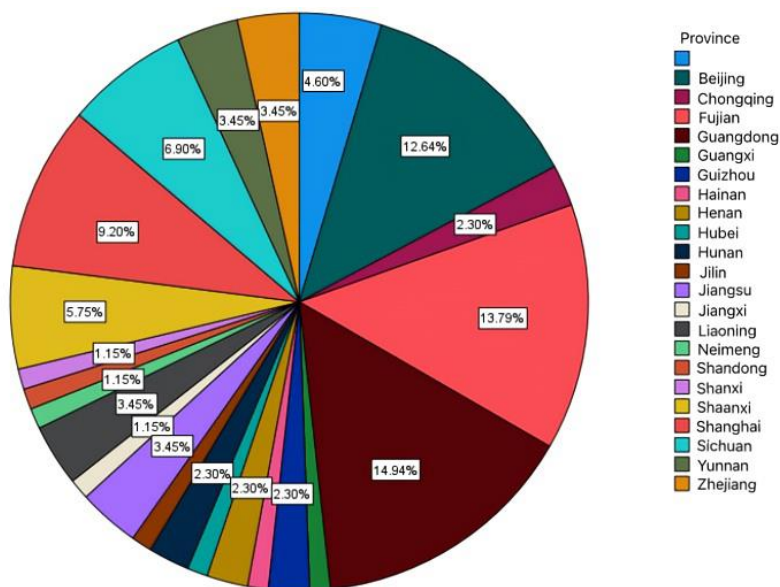


Figure 2. Shows the Geographical Distribution of Community Interpreting Research

As shown in Figure 2, the top five regions in terms of research are Guangdong (14.94%), Fujian (13.70%), Beijing (12.64%), Shanghai (9.20%), and Sichuan (6.90%). From the ranking, it can be observed that the research on community interpreting is mainly concentrated in several economically developed provinces in the eastern coastal areas, as well as Beijing, the capital, and Sichuan, a western economic powerhouse. In addition, Guangdong and Fujian, as coastal cities, have developed foreign trade, and there are large numbers of migrants within and outside the country, which has driven the development of community interpreting research in these two regions. Beijing has abundant higher education resources, with a total of 8 985 universities, 26 211 universities, and 34 universities classified as world-class universities. It also hosts a variety of large international conferences on a regular basis, which provides rich academic resources for research on community interpreting. In Sichuan, the research on interpreting is divided between Sichuan University and Sichuan International Studies University.

Figure 3 shows that of the 90 articles, 61 (67.8%) were in Chinese, 22 (24.4%) were in English, and 3 (3.3%) were in Japanese. It can be seen that in China, the majority of community interpreting research

is conducted in Chinese, making it convenient for Chinese scholars to read, discuss, and cite. Most of the English articles appear in Master's theses. There are three Japanese articles from scholars in the Japanese language field. Although writing in Chinese may be more convenient for communication, from an international perspective, English is indeed the "lingua franca" and the language with the widest distribution. In international academic platforms, English can better showcase one's voice than Chinese.

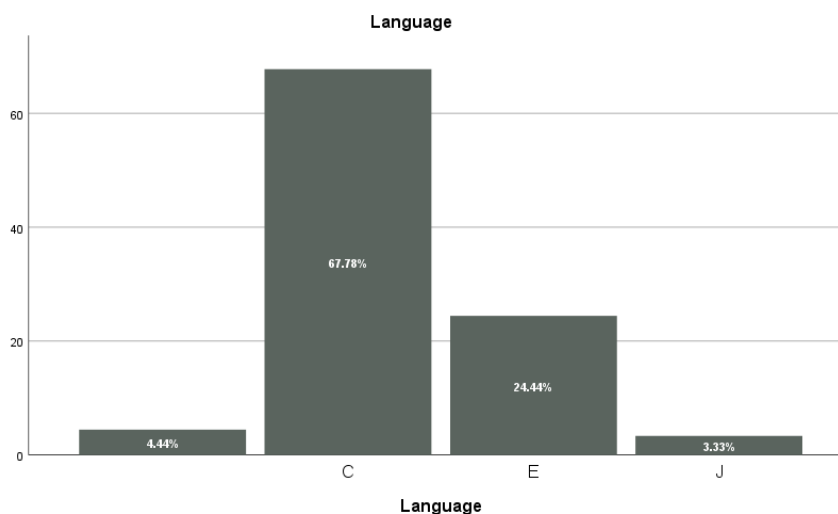


Figure 3. Language Used in Community Interpreting Research

3.4 Fields of Community Interpreting Research

According to the field of community interpreting research, all the literature can be divided into comprehensive community interpreting studies (73 articles), accounting for 81.11%, legal interpreting studies (2), accounting for 2.22%, healthcare interpreting studies (8), accounting for 8.89%, police interpreting studies (2), accounting for 2.22%, sign language interpreting studies (2), accounting for 2.22%, remote interpreting studies (3), accounting for 3.33%.

From the analysis of the subdivided literature, community interpreting research is mainly concentrated on legal and healthcare interpreting, followed by police interpreting and sign language interpreting studies. Legal services and healthcare services are among the social services that people come into contact with most frequently in their daily lives and are also among the social services with the greatest demand. The most rapidly developing field is the comprehensive studies, which indicates that community interpreting is gradually becoming an independent interdisciplinary research discipline and is being recognized and receiving increasing attention. The situation where each research field (law, medicine, interpreting) developed independently and did not interact with each other is coming to an end, and interdisciplinary interpreting is becoming a popular research direction.

Remote interpreting, mainly including telephone interpreting and remote video interpreting. Since the 1970s, with the progress of technology, fiber optic network technology and large-capacity communication switching systems have been widely used, creating the possibility of providing large-scale, high-efficiency telephone interpreting services in terms of technology and hardware. At present, telephone interpretation, with its fast, round-the-clock, multilingual features, is widely used by various sectors of society, especially in the fields of medicine and accident rescue, and it has shown a strong development trend. After entering the 4G era, video interpretation, such as online conference interpretation and online video interpretation, is also increasingly being adopted.

The forms of community interpreting research findings published were input into the database according to the following categories: international conferences, journal articles from conference proceedings, journal articles, master's theses, and Chinese conferences, totaling 5 categories and 90 articles. Among the 90 articles, there was 1 article from an international conference, 3 conference proceedings, 56 journal articles, 29 master's theses, and 1 article from a Chinese conference. The specific numbers and percentages are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Forms of Community Interpreting Research Publication

Source Library		Frequency	Percentage
Effective	International Conference	1	1.1
	Proceedings	3	3.3
	Journals	56	62.2
	Master's Thesis	29	32.2
	Chinese Conference	1	1.1
	Total	90	100.0

3.5 Research Publication

Journals are still the preferred choice for publishing research results, especially in prestigious core journals in some academic fields. In this study, 62.2% of the papers were published in journals.

Table 2. Types of Periodicals

Journal Type	Number of Periodicals
Translation (interpretation, written translation)	6
Language	11
Society and Culture	14
Healthcare	6
Law (Courts + Police)	3
Sign Language	1
Other	17

Table 2 shows that the most papers submitted by domestic scholars on social and cultural aspects of community interpreting were 14, followed by those on language, 11. This indicates that domestic scholars pay more attention to cross-cultural communication problems and the use of language in the implementation of community interpreting, in addition to the most basic legal and healthcare social services. Proper understanding of the role of interpreters and the role they play, as well as understanding the cultural background and moral sensitivities of clients, can help improve the accuracy of interpretation and enhance the experience of foreigners receiving services.

3.6 Author Analysis

There were 92 authors in the 90 papers, including those who co-authored multiple papers (up to three co-authors per paper), with an average of 0.98 papers per author. Most authors only published one paper. Only six authors published two or more papers, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Experts and Scholars in Community Interpreting Studies

Author	Country	Colleges/Research Institutes	The Number of Papers	Main research field
Deng Chun	China	College of Foreign Languages, Chongqing University	2	General studies
Chen Yan	China	College of Foreign Languages, Guangdong University of Finance and Economics	2	Society and culture
Hu Jingfang	China	College of Foreign Languages, Guangxi Normal University	2	Translation
Hu Juan	China	Guizhou Normal University	4	Society and culture
Liu Jianzhu	China	College of Applied Foreign Languages, 2		General studies

		Shenzhen Vocational and Technical College		
Ye Hui	China	College of Foreign Languages, Fujian Medical University	2	Healthcare

Hu Juan from Guizhou Normal University has published the most works, a total of 4, and she is the head of the English Department in the School of Foreign Languages, Guizhou Normal University. She has been dedicated to interpreting studies for a long time. She has published articles on interpreting studies in journals such as *China Translation*, *Translation Circle*, *Journal of Beijing Second Foreign Studies University*, and *Minzu Translation*. She has also hosted a provincial-level research project and won the Second Prize of the 12th Philosophy and Social Sciences Achievement Award of Guizhou Province (https://www.sohu.com/a/256760833_722895).

4. Problems in Community Interpreting Studies and Countermeasures

4.1. Problems

Community interpreting studies, whether in China or abroad, have experienced ups and downs and alternating hot and cold periods. Overall, community interpreting studies are still moving forward in a tortuous way. Despite this, there are still some problems in current community interpreting studies:

First, limited research themes. The research themes are mainly concentrated on court and medical interpreting, while the community interpreting industry pays relatively less attention to media interpreting, remote interpreting, educational interpreting, and immigrant interpreting. Especially in scenarios such as immigrant resettlement and community activities, the demand for interpreting services is increasing, but the related research is relatively behind. This uneven distribution of research may limit the overall development of community interpreting and prevent it from meeting the diverse needs of various sectors in society.

Second, the certification and pre-service training of community interpreters face real challenges. In practical operation, its feasibility and operability are relatively low, which may affect the professional quality and service quality of interpreters. We often see that in some community medical services, due to the lack of professional training of interpreters, communication between doctors and patients may be impaired, affecting the effectiveness of medical services (Hu, 2018). At the same time, the setting, evaluation, and quality assessment of community interpreting courses at home and abroad are not satisfactory, which makes it difficult to ensure the cultivation of professional talents with high-level interpreting skills.

Third, in terms of the geographical distribution of community interpreting studies, the top five regions are Guangdong (14.94%), Fujian (13.70%), Beijing (12.64%), Shanghai (9.20%) and Sichuan (6.90%). There are relatively few studies in other regions, which indicates that there are great regional

differences in the attention paid to community interpreting in China. It is still relatively niche on the whole. Community interpretation has received relatively little attention in China, and has received insufficient support and attention. This makes the domestic community interpreting research face difficulties in resource investment and academic exchanges, which is not conducive to the in-depth development of this field.

Fourth, domestic scholars lack in-depth research and understanding of the latest developments in interpreting abroad, which leads to a relatively single perspective and limited scope of interpreting research, which is difficult to keep up with the forefront of interdisciplinary interpreting research abroad. This lag may make the domestic interpretation research lag behind the international level in terms of theoretical innovation and practical application.

Although the development of community interpretation faces many difficulties, the demand for community interpretation market is growing from the communication and exchange at the national, social and cultural levels along the “Belt and Road”, to the smooth promotion of community work, as well as the needs of a large number of foreigners in China for public procedures, medical treatment, education, legal advice and other matters. This not only prompts us to think about how to promote the standardized management of foreigners in China through community interpretation, but also highlights the urgency and importance of solving the existing problems in the current community interpretation research.

4.2 Coping Strategies

First of all, strengthening the research is an important basis to solve the problem of community interpretation. Schools and the government should actively play a guiding role in encouraging more scholars to focus on other areas of community interpreting, such as media interpreting, educational interpreting, and immigrant interpreting. These fields play an important role in social life, but the current research is relatively few and needs to be further explored. By broadening the scope of research topics, the needs and challenges of community interpreting can be more comprehensively understood, and more theoretical support can be provided for solving practical problems. Schools can stimulate scholars' interest in these fields by offering relevant courses, holding academic lectures and seminars. At the same time, the government can introduce relevant policies, provide financial and resource support, encourage scholars to carry out interdisciplinary research, and promote exchanges and cooperation between different fields. For example, special research funds can be set up to provide financial guarantee for scholars engaged in these fields and support them to conduct in-depth field research, data analysis and theoretical discussion. In addition, an academic exchange platform can be established to promote cooperation and exchanges between domestic and foreign scholars in the field of community interpretation. By sharing the research results and experience, we can learn from the international advanced research methods and concepts, and promote the development of community interpretation research in China. At the same time, strengthen cooperation with related industries to

understand the actual needs, so that the research is more targeted and practical.

Secondly, improving the professional system is the key measure to solve the problem of community interpretation. First, it is essential to develop clear standards and norms for the professional certification of community interpreters. Through the establishment of strict standards and norms, interpreters can be comprehensively evaluated in terms of professional knowledge, language ability, interpretation skills, etc., to ensure that they have solid professional quality. For example, it can be stipulated that interpreters must pass professional examinations and obtain corresponding qualifications before they can engage in community interpreting work. This can screen out qualified interpreters and improve the professionalism of the entire industry. Secondly, strengthening the pre-job training and on-the-job training of interpreters is an important way to improve their ability. Pre-job training can help interpreters get familiar with the working environment, work requirements and related norms of community interpreting, and make full preparation for their formal work. On-the-job training allows interpreters to constantly update their knowledge and improve their skills to better cope with a variety of complex interpreting scenarios. The training content can include language skills improvement, professional knowledge learning, cross-cultural communication training, etc. In addition, practical links such as simulated interpretation activities and case analysis can also be organized, so that interpreters can accumulate experience in actual operation and improve their coping ability. Thirdly, establishing an evaluation and supervision mechanism for interpreters is a powerful measure to guarantee the quality of interpretation services. By establishing a scientific evaluation system, interpreters' work performance can be objectively and fairly evaluated, problems can be found in time, and feedback and improvement suggestions can be given. At the same time, strengthening the supervision of interpretation services can ensure that interpreters comply with professional ethics and norms and provide high-quality interpretation services. For example, a complaint channel could be established to allow users to evaluate and give feedback on interpretation services; Interpreters can also be assessed on a regular basis, and interpreters who do not meet the standards can be retrained or eliminated.

Thirdly, increasing domestic attention is an important link to promote the development of community interpreting. On the one hand, we should not only vigorously strengthen the publicity and promotion of community interpretation, but also widely disseminate the importance and role of community interpretation through various channels and methods, and improve the profound understanding of its importance from all walks of life. Media and online platforms can be used for publicity, and relevant lectures and training activities can be held to let more people understand the key role of community interpretation in promoting cross-cultural communication and solving language barriers. On the other hand, it is important to add community interpreter-related courses in universities and educational institutions. In this way, more talents with professional knowledge and skills can be systematically cultivated, and fresh blood can be sent to the field of community interpretation. The curriculum should cover interpreting skills, language and culture, professional knowledge, and pay attention to practical

teaching to improve students' practical operation ability.

Finally, strengthening policy support is a solid backing to ensure the sustainable development of community interpreting. The government should fully recognize the importance of community interpreting, actively introduce relevant policies, and encourage and support the development of community interpreting with a clear attitude. Through the formulation of specific policies and measures, the necessary resources for community interpretation are provided, including capital investment, personnel training, technical support and so on. For example, the government can set up special funds to support the development of community interpreting projects, the setting up of training courses and the promotion of research. Policies such as tax incentives can also be provided to encourage relevant institutions and enterprises to participate in community interpretation services. In addition, the government has the responsibility to promote the standardization and standardization of community interpretation services. The establishment of unified industry standards and norms, and the clarification of the qualification requirements, service processes and quality standards of interpreters will help improve the professionalism and reliability of community interpreting services. At the same time, the supervision of community interpreting services should be strengthened, a sound quality assessment system should be established, and services that do not meet the standards should be timely rectified and dealt with, so as to ensure the quality and credibility of community interpreting services. In addition, the government can strengthen cooperation with industry associations, universities and other institutions to jointly promote the development of community interpretation. Industry associations can play a role as a bridge, promote exchanges and cooperation in the industry, and strengthen industry self-discipline; Colleges and universities can strengthen the training of interpreting talents, cooperate with the government to carry out relevant research and training work, and provide professional support for community interpreting.

5. Conclusion

This study reveals the current situation and trend of community interpreting to a certain extent, but there are still many problems to be further explored. Future research can be conducted from multiple perspectives, such as in-depth research on the quality assessment system of community interpreting, exploring the training model of community interpreters, and paying attention to the application of emerging technologies in community interpreting. In addition, strengthening interdisciplinary research, combining linguistics, sociology, psychology and other multidisciplinary theories and methods, will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the nature and role of community interpretation. We believe that with the deepening of research, community interpretation will play a more important role in promoting social harmony and cultural exchanges.

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