



A Bibliometric Analysis of Conceptual Metaphor Translation Research in China Based on CiteSpace

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Abstract. With the use of the visual analysis tool CiteSpace software, the paper makes a statistical analysis of the literature related to “conceptual metaphor translation” from the dimensions of the journal volume, high-frequency keywords and emerging theme words. It presents the current situation and trend of domestic conceptual metaphor translation research in the past decade. The results show that the study has three characteristics: the study of conceptual metaphor translation continues to rise; the construction of translation theory is widely applied to translation studies in many fields; the combination of conceptual metaphor and multi theory has become a major trend of translation research in the future under the guidance of Conceptual Metaphor Theory. Some suggestions are put forward such as the development of multilingual comparative studies and multi-domain discourse studies based on Conceptual Metaphor Theory.

Keywords: conceptual metaphor translation · Bibliometric analysis · CiteSpace · knowledge mapping analysis

1 Introduction

The study of metaphor has a long history, and it was just after the 1970s that the study of metaphor translation caught more attention from scholars. Although the choice of translation methods is the core issue of the translated text, the most important and difficult one is metaphor translation. The early metaphor translation mainly focused on the translatability of metaphor and the discussion of metaphor translation strategies, which was carried out from the perspective of traditional rhetoric. And the study of translation from the perspective of cognitive metaphor, that is, the study of conceptual metaphor translation, is to explore the process and internal mechanism of translation by using the theory of conceptual metaphor. Actually, the cognitive metaphor includes linguistic metaphor and conceptual metaphor. Conceptual metaphor is the basic cognitive mode of human beings, and linguistic metaphor is the embodiment of conceptual metaphor in linguistic form. Thus, the research objects of conceptual metaphor translation include the translation of all language forms with conceptual metaphor as the cognitive mechanism, and also include the metaphor translation of traditional rhetoric.

In recent years, Chinese scholars have made initial explorations in the theory and practice of conceptual metaphor translation. Sun Yi (2017) [1], Sun Yi and Li Ling (2019) [2] have conducted a preliminary literature analysis on metaphor translation studies, summarized the achievements of metaphor translation studies by foreign scholars, and analyzed and evaluated the current situation of metaphor translation in China. Zhao Hui and Feng Zhengbin (2022) [3] used software such as CiteSpace to study the research hotspots and trends of Chinese metaphor translation related literature from 2000 to 2020 by means of knowledge mapping analysis and co-word analysis. In the past decade, the development of cognitive translatology has made great progress, and new changes and developments have emerged. Facing the new hot spots and topics, we need to further track the research situation of conceptual metaphor translation, so as to better lead the future development direction. Therefore, this paper will study the data of journal papers in China with the theme of “conceptual metaphor” and “translation” from 2012 to 2021, and make a more comprehensive and timely judgment on the research status and trend of conceptual metaphor translation.

2 Research Methodology

The research on metaphor translation began in the 1970s and the study of conceptual metaphor translation began in the 1990s. In the past decade, conceptual metaphor translation has been widely concerned by researchers. Therefore, in this study, the research time span is set as 2012–2021, with an interval of one year. CNKI database is used as the data source. The retrieval time is from January 2012 to December 2021. “Conceptual metaphor” and “translation” are used as the subject words for advanced retrieval. Thus, a total of 803 relevant literatures are retrieved, and 678 effective literatures are obtained through manual screening. For these documents, the author presents the final analysis map by setting thresholds, using static clustering, and displaying the whole network visually.

In this study, CiteSpace is used as a research tool. It is an information visualization tool specially used for academic literature analysis, developed by Professor Chen Chaomei of Drexel University in the United States. This software can detect hot topics and the research trend in a certain discipline or field. This paper mainly uses CiteSpace 5.8.R3 information visualization analysis software to carry out visual analysis. It analyzes the literature data on conceptual metaphor translation collected from CNKI. And it aims at digging out the research hotspots and trends of conceptual metaphor translation research in China in order to provide reliable reference for relevant research.

3 Knowledge Mapping Analysis

3.1 Time Distribution Map of Conceptual Metaphor Translation Studies

In order to investigate the research results of conceptual metaphor translation, this study has collected relevant literatures published by CNKI from 2012 to 2021, as shown in Fig. 1. Since 2012, translation studies from the perspective of conceptual metaphor have shown a strong development trend. In the past ten years, the highest number of articles

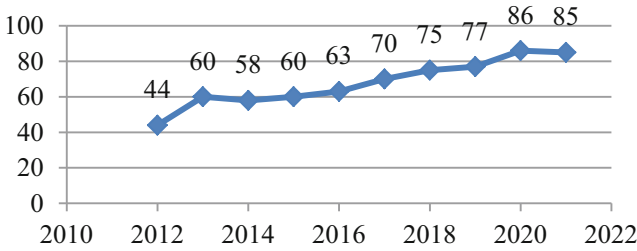


Fig. 1. Literature statistics of conceptual metaphor translation studies in China

was in 2020 and 2021, and the number of articles remained above 80. The overall situation is on the rise and the growth rate is stable. Moreover, the number of articles issued in most years remained above 60.

3.2 Knowledge Mapping Analysis of Conceptual Metaphor Translation Research in China

3.2.1 Keyword Analysis

The frequency and centrality of key words in the paper can reflect the distribution of research hotspots. Keywords with high centrality and high frequency represent issues of common concern to researchers for a period of time, that is, research hotspots (Yang Xianmin, Li Jihong, 2015) [4].

As shown in Table 1, the high-frequency keywords in the Chinese literature on conceptual metaphor translation include “conceptual metaphor”, “translation strategy”, “translation”, “metaphor”, “metaphor translation”, “cognition”, “translation method”, “English translation”, “mapping” and “image”. The words with high centrality include “conceptual metaphor”, “translation strategy”, “translation”, “metaphor” and “metaphor translation”, which indicate that these aspects are relatively important, especially confirming the close relationship between conceptual metaphor and translation. Metaphor is a cross-conceptual domain specific mapping, and translation is also a cross-conceptual domain specific mapping. Conceptual metaphor mapping and translation process are based on the principle of similarity. The keyword clustering function of CiteSpace can identify the hot spots and development trends of a research field (Duan Chunyu, Cai Jiandong, 2016) [5]. Keyword nodes are represented by circles. The larger the circle is, the higher the frequency of the corresponding topic is. Figure 2 shows that "conceptual metaphor" has the highest frequency and is in a basic and important position, followed by “translation strategies”, “translation”, “metaphor”, “metaphor translation”, “cognition”, “translation methods”, etc., which is consistent with the statistical results of the keyword frequency table, and reflects the current theoretical research in conceptual metaphor translation in China (translation research combining conceptual metaphor with multi theory, translation strategy research), applied research (translation of multi text and multi subject metaphor translation research) and comparative research, and began to seek new development in the innovation and promotion of conceptual metaphor translation theory.

Table 1. Co-occurrence frequency, centrality and year of key words

No.	Frequency	centrality	Key words	No.	frequency	centrality	Key words
1	388	1.18	conceptual metaphor	13	11	0.02	animal metaphor
2	129	0.24	translation strategy	14	10	0.01	Culture
3	110	0.14	translation	15	10	0.01	interpretation strategy
4	92	0.27	metaphor	16	9	0.00	comparative analysis
5	88	0.12	metaphor translation	17	8	0.00	emotional metaphor
6	49	0.04	cognition	18	8	0.02	translation technique
7	33	0.05	translation method	19	8	0.01	functional equivalence
8	28	0.02	English translation	20	8	0.00	relevance theory
9	16	0.01	mapping	21	6	0.00	image schema
10	13	0.00	image	22	6	0.00	cognitive metaphor
11	12	0.00	political text	23	6	0.01	interpretation
12	12	0.00	<i>Fortress Besieged</i>	24	6	0.01	cultural difference

There are 401 nodes and 961 connections in the keyword co-occurrence network of conceptual metaphor translation research in China. The overall density of the network is 0.012. Although the structure and performance of the keyword co-occurrence network are good, the overall structure of the keyword co-occurrence network is still relatively loose and the density is not high. In the future, researchers should select appropriate topics to conduct in-depth research, so as to avoid being superficial.

3.2.2 Analysis on Research Hotspots in Conceptual Metaphor Translation Research in China

CiteSpace's "mutation detection calculation" can be used to detect the sudden increase of research interest in a discipline. A group of emerging dynamic concepts and potential research problems in the mutation detection calculation results represent research hotspots in a certain field. In order to clearly observe the emerging research hotspots of conceptual metaphor translation, "mutation detection calculation" is conducted. The

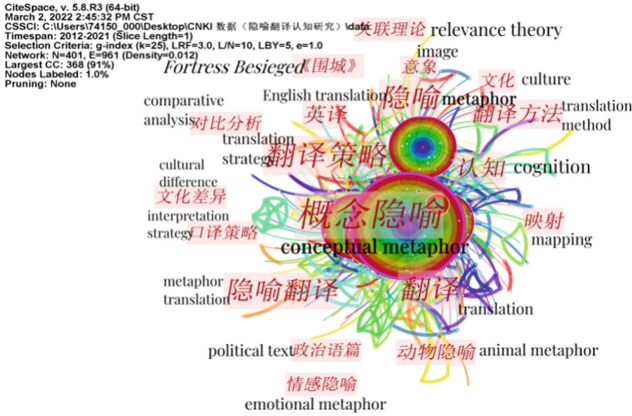


Fig. 2. Network map of key words co-occurrence in domestic conceptual metaphor translation research

Top 19 Keywords with the Strongest Citation Bursts

Keywords	Year	Strength	Begin	End	2012 - 2021
interpretation	2012	2.45	2012	2013	█
culture	2012	1.77	2012	2013	█
Fortress Besieged	2012	1.43	2012	2013	█
mapping condition	2012	1.54	2013	2014	█
cognitive metaphor	2012	1.35	2013	2017	█
emotional metaphor	2012	1.34	2013	2014	█
political speech	2012	1.27	2013	2015	█
cognitive perspective	2012	1.28	2014	2017	█
translation technique	2012	1.31	2015	2016	█
rhetoric	2012	1.22	2015	2017	█
translation teaching	2012	1.92	2017	2018	█
English translation	2012	1.67	2017	2018	█
mapping	2012	1.45	2017	2018	█
comparative study	2012	1.23	2017	2018	█
Xi Jinping	2012	1.23	2017	2018	█
political text	2012	2.18	2018	2019	█
translation strategy	2012	1.42	2018	2021	█
political discourse	2012	1.41	2018	2019	█
Skopos Theory	2012	1.74	2019	2021	█

Fig. 3. List of the top 19 keywords in conceptual metaphor translation research in China

CiteSpace software is used to analyze and identify 19 emergent words, and the presentation mode of “sort by the beginning year of burst” is selected to sort the emergent keywords according to the burst start time (see Fig. 3).

As shown in Fig. 3, the part where the sudden node turns into a red color block represents that the corresponding theme has seen a surge in the number of documents issued in the corresponding year. Since CiteSpace’s “burst keyword time sequence list” is arranged from top to bottom in the order of the burst start time from far to near, the research topics in the list in Fig. 3 are more advanced as they are closer to the bottom.

To judge whether a topic is an emerging research hotspot, it needs to meet the two conditions of “near first appearance time” and “near burst start time”. The translation application studies (such as translation teaching and English translation strategies), the theoretical perspective studies (such as Skopos Theory) and translation studies (such as political discourse and political discourse) listed in Fig. 3 are all research topics whose sudden start time is later than 2017 (i.e. nearly five years). The theme of translation studies from the perspective of English translation strategies and Skopos Theory is not only the closest to the present day for the first time, but also the closest to the present day in terms of the onset time. Therefore, it is an emerging research hotspot and research frontier in this field.

3.2.3 A Multidimensional Study of Conceptual Metaphor Translation

Cluster the keywords and get Fig. 4. The main clusters are “metaphor”, “translation”, “conceptual metaphor”, “translation strategy”, “metaphor translation”, “translation method”, “interpretation strategy”, “cognitive perspective”, “English translation”, “translation skill”, “anthropomorphic metaphor” and “translation process”. Thus, conceptual metaphor translation research focuses on the following multidimensional topics:

1) Research on translation theory based on Conceptual Metaphor

The derivation and systematization of conceptual metaphor are introduced into translation theory (see cluster #2conceptual metaphor). Conceptual metaphor has the property of derivation, and the derivation of conceptual metaphor gives birth to its systematization. Feng quangong (2017) [6] analyzes four typical conceptual metaphors in contemporary Chinese novels and discusses the systematic representation of conceptual metaphors and the pros and cons of corresponding English translation. It is found that the translator Howard Goldblatt’s translation basically reproduces the systematization of conceptual

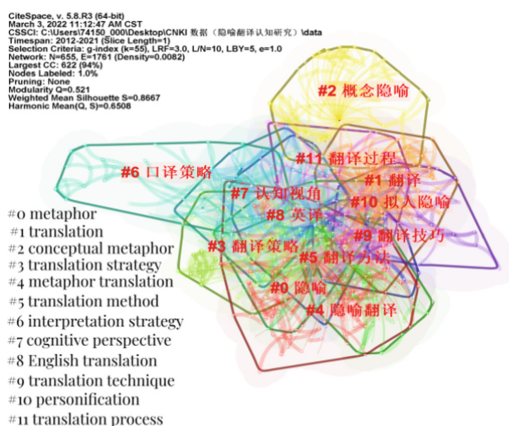


Fig. 4. Keyword co-occurrence frequency clustering map of conceptual metaphor translation research

metaphor in the original text. In addition, many scholars have explored effective translation strategies (Liang Xiaohui, 2013; Cao Lingmei, Liu Chaojian, 2018; Huang Chunfang, 2021, etc.) [7–9]. Under the guidance of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, the study of translation strategies has risen to the conceptual level, which makes the classification and selection of translation strategies more accurate and helps to guide the application of translation studies (see cluster #3 translation strategy).

2) Conceptual metaphor translation in literary works

The translation study of conceptual metaphor in literary works mainly focuses on novel translation and poetry translation. The study of novel translation based on conceptual metaphor is an important focus, including ancient Chinese novel translation, modern Chinese novel translation and Western novel translation.

In the aspect of ancient novel translation study, the translation of *Shui Hu Chuan* and *Hong Lou Meng*, two of the four famous works in China, has received more attention. Cao Lingmei and Liu Chaojian (2018) [8] identified the “grass” metaphor in *Shui Hu Chuan* according to the MIP metaphor recognition program proposed by Praggeljaz Group, analyzed the iconicity representation, cross domain mapping and cognitive experience of the “grass” metaphor in the four versions, and proposed the English translation methods of literal translation metaphor, translational metaphor, literal translation metaphor and interpretation, and translational metaphor and interpretation. The study of conceptual metaphor translation of modern novels mainly focuses on Howard Goldblatt’s translation works. Liang Xiaohui (2013) [7] applied cognitive Conceptual Metaphor Theory to systematically examine the translation strategies of the translator Howard Goldblatt for Mo Yan’s novel *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*.

In contrast, domestic scholars have done relatively little research on the translation of western novels. In the study of poetry translation, there are many studies on the translation of *The Book of Poetry*. Quan Xunlian and Tian Debei (2012) [10] put forward four translation strategies to achieve mapping equivalence by means of concrete examples: English corresponding image source field, changing Chinese image source field to English image source field, English corresponding image source field plus Chinese target field and English corresponding image source field plus notes.

3) Conceptual metaphor translation in non-literary works

(1) Study on conceptual metaphor translation in political texts

Wang Ruiyun (2016) [11] analyzed the translation examples of conceptual metaphor in the 2014 Report on the Work of the Government from the perspective of Skopos theory, and discussed the essence of cross-cultural English translation of conceptual metaphor. Cao Lingmei and Wang Hong (2017) [12] based on the self-built parallel corpus of Xi’s speeches, explored the metaphors’ experiential features in terms of double frames, metaphoricality and the scenario of source domain, and probed into the source-language-oriented translation strategy of the metaphors in contemporary context of “Chinese Culture Going Abroad”.

(2) Study on the translation of conceptual metaphor in TCM texts

Fan Chunxiang (2012, 2016) [13, 14] explored the language metaphor features of TCM classics from the perspective of conceptual metaphor. He believed that the thinking feature of TCM is “taking images and comparing categories”. Therefore,

conceptual metaphor is ubiquitous in TCM classics. In translation, the translator needs to select the best target language and equivalent language to convey the essence of TCM. Gu Feng (2018) [15] introduced conceptual metaphor into the translation study of *Treatise on Febrile Diseases*, summarized various translation strategies, and constructed a “cognitive psychological model of the translation process of metaphorical terms in traditional Chinese medicine”. Li Xiaoying (2018) [16] proposed that, in order to get out of the traditional Chinese medicine culture, we should first solve the difficulty of interpreting the text language of traditional Chinese medicine by interpreting the conceptual metaphors, especially the emotional metaphors, in the language of traditional Chinese medicine, so as to better provide the second language translators of traditional Chinese medicine culture with cognitive thinking methods for accurately understanding the classics.

(3) Study on conceptual metaphor translation in financial texts

Chen Jiaxu (2016) [17] starts with the types of metaphor in financial reports, and relies on Conceptual Metaphor Theory to explore the cognitive mechanism and cognitive translation strategies of metaphor in financial reports. Hu Chunyu and Tan Jinlin (2017) [18] analyzed the Chinese-English versions of the letters to shareholders in the annual reports of ICBC from 2006 to 2015, discussed the metaphorical features and relevant translation methods in the letters to shareholders, and proposed that translators should adopt different English translation methods in different situations to pursue meta functional equivalence rather than simple text equivalence. Shang Lijun (2019) [19] analyzes the meaning construction and Chinese translation strategies of conceptual metaphors in business English from the perspective of frame semantic theory, and believes that there are three translation strategies for ontological and structural conceptual metaphors in Business English: frame transplantation, frame borrowing and frame element highlighting.

4) Study on Interpretation from the perspective of Conceptual Metaphor Theory.

As is shown in the cluster #6 interpretation strategy, study on interpretation has been conducted intensively. Yang Linlin (2018) [20] based on Conceptual Metaphor Theory, identified and classified metaphors in the parallel corpus of government press conferences. At the same time, it summarized the metaphorical interpretation strategies in the corpus, and revealed the characteristics of metaphorical interpretation and the reasons for translators’ choice of interpretation strategies. Sheng Dandan (2021) [21] applied the parallel corpus of Chinese-English conference interpretation, based on the descriptive translation research paradigm and the cognitive metaphor translation research path, and took journey metaphor as an example to investigate the types and distribution of metaphor interpretation strategies in the Chinese-English interpretation of the Premier’s press conference.

4 Conclusion

In summary, it can be seen that conceptual metaphor translation studies in China show the following prominent features: first, the research continues to heat up. From 2012 to 2021, the number of conceptual metaphor translation studies has been on the stable

rise with 2020 and 2021 as the highest number of articles. The research on conceptual metaphor translation becomes more and more popular, and gradually expands to many fields, attracting more and more scholars to participate in practice and research. Secondly, the construction of translation theory is widely applied to translation studies in many fields. At present, conceptual metaphor translation in China presents a diversified research trend: that is, theoretical construction research (translation research combining conceptual metaphor with other theories; translation strategy research) is widely applied to translation practice research (translation research of multi-texts and multi-themes) and comparative research, and gradually seeks new development in the innovation and promotion of conceptual metaphor translation theory. Thirdly, the theme of English translation strategy and Skopos Theory is the emerging research hotspot and frontier of metaphor translation in China. The combination of conceptual metaphor and multiple theories (e.g. Skopos Theory, Frame Theory, Cognitive Construal Theory, etc.) has become another trend of translation research in the future under the guidance of Conceptual Metaphor Theory. The translation research based on Conceptual Metaphor Theory can be improved from the following aspects: first, to enhance the multilingual comparative study of translation models based on Conceptual Metaphor Theory. There are many contrastive studies on English translation in the literature, but there are few contrastive studies on other language versions. Secondly, the study of translation model based on Conceptual Metaphor Theory needs to be further extended to multi-disciplinary discourse, such as law, publicity, film subtitles, teaching, science and technology.

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