

A Study on the Award-winning Works of the “Translating Henan” Project from 2018 to 2023

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Abstract: The “Translating Henan” Project, which was initiated by the Foreign Affairs Commission Office of the CPC Henan Provincial Committee, has always adhered to its origins in the historical and cultural richness of the Central Plains and the promotion of traditional Central Plains culture since its establishment in 2018. This is of great significance for enhancing the international image and influence of our province, telling the story of Henan well, and constructing a distinctive external discourse system with Henan characteristics. This article takes the award-winning works of the “Translating Henan” Project from 2018 to 2023 as the research object, adopts a data-based quantitative research method, and focuses on analyzing the thematic characteristics, languages and countries, and research theories of the winning works. It identifies deficiencies and puts forward corresponding suggestions with the aim of providing references for the future research topics of the “Translating Henan” Project.

Keywords: The “Translating Henan” Project; Data analysis; Reflection

1. Introduction

The prosperity of a great nation’s development inevitably requires a substantial increase in cultural influence, achieving a complementary relationship between soft power and hard power. In order to enhance the influence of Chinese culture, Henan accelerated the construction of the foreign discourse system and launched the “Translating Henan” Project in 2018. This project is a specific measure taken by the Foreign Affairs Office of Henan Province to conscientiously implement the work arrangements of the provincial party committee and the provincial government, further enhancing the open soft power and external image of Henan. The aim is to vividly tell the story of Henan through the creation of new concepts, new categories, and new expressions that integrate Chinese and foreign elements, with distinctive Chinese and Henan characteristics, thus contributing to the construction of the country’s external discourse system and the enhancement of the influence of Chinese culture through providing strength from Henan. This activity has been ongoing since 2018, with an annual collection of outstanding papers from schools, enterprises, or relevant academic units. This paper intends to take the award-winning topics from 2018 to 2023 as the research object, analyze the thematic features of the award-winning excellent works, comprehensively grasp the development trends of the “Translating Henan” Project’s papers, translations, and practical articles, and reflect on the issues in the topics, in order to provide topic references for future participants writing articles for this project.

2. Basic Analysis of Research Topics

The author selected all the award-winning articles of the “Translating Henan” Project from 2018 to 2023. Due to the impact of the COVID-19, the essay competition was not held in 2019 and 2020, so there is no relevant data for these two years. However, this does not affect the overall analysis of the articles. Because the number of award-winning essays is considerable each year and is increasing, they still have reference value. Below, I will analyze the direction and trends of research topics in the past three years from three aspects: research themes, languages and countries, and research theories. It should be noted that due to space constraints, the following three tables only show 10 research topics, covering 3 languages and countries, and 5 theories.

Table 1 Research Themes

Topic	Word Frequency	Weight
Culture	183	0.6923
Henan	167	0.6199
Communication	144	0.4253
Central Plains	98	0.3529
External Publicity	60	0.1810
Martial Arts	52	0.1448
Image	46	0.1176
Yellow River	32	0.0995
Tourist Attractions	32	0.0995
BRI	29	0.0860

Table 2 Languages and Countries

Languages and Countries	Word Frequency	Weight
English	150	0.8506
Japanese	17	0.0496
Russian	6	0.0181

Table 3 Theories

Theories	Word Frequency	Weight
Eco-translatology	29	0.1086
Medio-translatology	28	0.1086
Skopos Theory	19	0.0588
Functional Equivalence Theory	13	0.0362
Text Typology	13	0.0362

Among these 600 or so articles, some topics and translation theories are particularly popular, so analyzing these topics will help us grasp the development trends of the “Translating Henan” Project in a timely manner.

3. Analysis of Hot Topics

As can be seen from the data in Table 1, the frequency of words in Culture (183), Henan (167), Communication (144), and Central Plains (98) far exceeds that of other topics. The reason for this is not only because researchers closely follow the main theme of the activities, wanting to promote and carry forward the culture of Henan to make it better known to the world, but also because Henan Province has had an important and special status in China since ancient times. Henan Province is an important birthplace of the Chinese nation and the Huaxia civilization, and it is the core area of the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties' civilization. The civilization of the three dynasties laid the foundation for the continuous development of Chinese civilization, which coalesced into a mature form of civilization.^[1] The historical representation of Henan's culture is known as “Central Plains culture”. However, despite such rich historical and cultural heritage, it is difficult to attract attention from many people, and they don't have enough understanding of it, so it is imperative to spread “Henan culture”. Through the data, it can be seen that martial arts (52), Yellow River (32), scenic spots (32), the Belt and Road Initiative (29), Tai Chi (25), Shaolin (24), classics (9), cultural heritage (9), tourist attractions (8), traditional Chinese medicine (8), Tao Te Ching (7), Yu opera (7), Jiao Yulu (5), Shaolin Kung Fu (5), poetry (5), Chinese martial arts (4), and so on, are all ranked in the top 50. These themes reflect the diverse and well-known cultural symbols of Henan. When it comes to martial arts and Shaolin Kung Fu, people will think of the Shaolin Temple on Mount Song, which is located in the capital Zhengzhou, so Zhengzhou (11) is also a hot topic of research. But when mentioning Henan, many people will not immediately think of Zhengzhou, but rather the more famous cities of Henan - Kaifeng, Luoyang (10), and Nanyang (7). Luoyang is one of the birthplaces of Chinese civilization and the eastern starting point of the Silk Road. It was the center of the Grand Canal during the Sui and Tang dynasties, with thirteen dynasties in history making Luoyang their capital, with a history of more than 1500 years as a capital city.^[2] Kaifeng, formerly known as Bianliang, is one of the first batch of historic and cultural cities announced by the State Council. Seven dynasties successively established their capital in Kaifeng, earning it the name of the “City of Seven Dynasties”.^[3] As for Nanyang, the most famous aspect is traditional Chinese medicine, represented by the medical sage Zhang Zhongjing. Therefore, city research is also a popular choice in terms of topic selection.^[4]

After analyzing representative Chinese culture and cities, we can also see that “education” is a hot topic in terms of topic selection. Themes such as talent cultivation (23), teaching (22), corpora (22), universities (14), and classrooms (7) have high word frequencies and proportions, indicating strong research significance. Through the above analysis, it can be seen that overall, our range of topic selection is broad and the themes are distinct.

As can be seen from the data in Table 2, English (150) ranks first. This data shows that English articles are ranked first by a large proportion compared to articles in other languages. For this phenomenon, the author analyzes the following two reasons. First, language advantage. With a history of 1,500 years, English is the most widely spoken language in the world, and it has an advantage over other languages when it comes to reading literature. Regardless of whether an individual is proficient or not, through his own ability or with the help of machine translation, he can easily read the literature, so as to study the situation of Henan’s foreign propaganda in English articles and make corrections. And with computer-assisted translation, English is much more accurate than other languages. English is also an international language, and translating the Central Plains culture into English has a wider spread and stronger appeal. Second, the right to speak internationally. Through the analysis of the award-winning articles, the author found that many articles have keywords such as “communication path” and “overseas media”. From a historical perspective, along with the early colonial expansion activities carried out by the Western world under the “law of the jungle”, the global communication order of “strong in the west and weak in the east” has gradually taken shape.^[5] We have to admit that until now, the international influence of Western countries has continued to affect the development of the international community. Therefore, if our traditional culture can be exported through Western media, it will undoubtedly be a huge progress for the global dissemination of Chinese culture.

This is followed by Japan (8) and Japanese (6). Japan has a small land area, a high population density, and a lack of domestic resources, so it has to rely on imports, so Japan is accustomed to importing resources from other countries to meet its own production and living needs. And Japan is a maritime country, just like the United Kingdom, close to the sea, so they want to open up the world and look for greater opportunities to develop outward. But they are not satisfied with this, they also want to learn the culture of other peoples to increase their sense of security. The influence of Confucian culture on Japanese culture is not insignificant. Chinese culture is deeply ingrained in Japan. Ancient Chinese culture spread far and wide to Japan, and many books were copied by them to better learn about ancient Chinese culture. Even now, there are many old books that have been translated into Japanese and are still popular. For example, famous works such as “Analects”, “Sun Tzu” and “Mencius” are very popular. Books by well-known authors in China are often found in Japan. For example, Shi Tiesheng’s thoughts on life, death, and mutilation have a certain similarity with the aesthetics of mourning in Japanese culture. Therefore, it is not surprising that Japan, which is blessed with such a fertile soil for the dissemination of Central Plains culture, has a high proportion of articles on Chinese and Japanese literature and translation.

There is also a data that cannot be ignored in Russian (6). Russia is a friendly neighbor linked by mountains and rivers and an important partner in the Belt and Road Initiative. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has provided a broader stage for people-to-people exchanges between China and Russia. The prosperity of people-to-people exchanges is of great significance to promoting the construction of the “Belt and Road”. People-to-people exchanges are an important part of the China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination in the new era.^[6] We can take advantage of people-to-people exchanges in the new era to vigorously promote the culture of the Central Plains. The Central Plains culture is the birthplace of Chinese culture, and the deepest and most enthusiastic culture of the Chinese land is here. Zhang Zhongjing, Xinyang Maojian, Henan Opera, Central Plains classical literature and other traditional cultures have been welcomed by the local people, and with these foundations, the spread of Central Plains culture in Russian-speaking countries will be more convenient.

Of course, not only the above countries, but also France, Germany, Tanzania, and ASEAN countries can be seen in the award-winning articles, which shows that we have rich topics, many entry points, and far-reaching cultural dissemination.

The last part is about the analysis of the theories. Table 3 shows that ecotranslation (29) accounts for the highest proportion of these translation theories. The reason why it is so popular in “Translating Henan” is not only because of the strong applicability of this theory, but also it is a translation theory of China’s local academic achievements. After more than ten years of development, it has gradually become complete and has become an emerging translation theory with research value. Professor Hu Gengshen has published hundreds of articles to explain this theory, and the researchers of this theory have published many articles in different journals to prove that Eco-translatology is “promising”. At present, the Eco-translatology has also received extensive attention from the international community. Therefore, with the

help of the platform of “Translating Henan”, there will be so many articles on it, which is also a good way to help it go abroad.

The second largest theory is Medio-translatology (28), second only to Eco-translatology. Like Eco-translatology, Medio-translatology is an original Chinese translation theory, proposed by Professor Xie Tianzhen. According to Professor Xie Tianzhen’s definition, “Medio-translatology studies were originally conducted from the perspective of media studies in comparative literature, and now more and more research is carried out on translation (especially literary translation) and translation literature from the perspective of comparative culture.”^[7] It is very different from traditional ideas. Due to the large number of research objects, the traditional concept has relatively little space to write, but as a new discipline, Medio-translatology has a lot of room to play and has good development prospects. Since the publication of the book “Medio-translatology”, more and more master’s and doctoral students’ theses have successively studied this theory as a theoretical support for their research. The theoretical viewpoint has enabled the domestic academic community to deeply understand the essence of translation, broadened the field of translation studies, and effectively promoted Chinese translation theory to go abroad and to the world.

The translation theories that come after are Vermeer’s Skopos Theory, Nida’s functional equivalence theory, and Reiss’s text typology. These are all well-known theories of translation, and they are written because they have been continuously improved and developed by many researchers, and have become classic theories in the academic community, which are convenient for direct application in their own articles. Another reason is that we know a lot about these theories of translation. Instead of learning a new translation theory, it is better to delve into these classical theories and analyze different perspectives from the classical theories to assist in the writing of articles. In short, these theories have been repeatedly studied mainly because of their importance and long history, which are the reasons why students and scholars continue to study and explore.^[8]

4. Reflection on Topic Selection

First, the research object of the paper is repetitive and not innovative. Through analysis, it is found that researchers mostly take traditional Chinese medicine, Shaolin Kung Fu, the Yellow River, Henan Opera, etc. as the research objects, and there are such studies every year, which inevitably lacks novelty. There are several reasons for the duplication of research subjects: First, it is difficult to obtain information. For example, some traditional cultures are on the verge of having no successors, and the inheritors who still exist may not be able to learn about these traditional cultures because of their old age or illiteracy. Second, it is important to replicate the object of the study. Traditional Chinese medicine, Shaolin Kung Fu, Tai Chi, etc., are indeed Henan’s business cards and symbolic cultural industries. There is not only one angle to study a thing, and the researcher must have done a lot while selecting the research object to avoid duplication of research. But we can’t just look at these important cultural industries. Therefore, we must conduct a sufficient literature review before doing research, understand the previous research results, avoid selecting objects that have been widely studied, and we can analyze the research objects from multiple perspectives and try to connect them with other related fields to discover new research directions and objects. In short, in order to avoid duplication of research objects, we should continuously improve the sensitivity and depth of the research field, flexibly apply various research methods, and constantly update our research horizons.

Second, there is little theoretical support and the theoretical selection is too limited. The limitations of Skopos Theory, functional equivalence theory, and other well-worn traditional theories are reflected in their insufficient ability to respond to contemporary social and linguistic changes, and cannot effectively solve the new problems that arise in current translation practice. At the same time, some traditional translation theories may have certain limitations in specific contexts, and it is difficult to meet the diverse translation needs. Based on local language and culture, local translation theory has a deeper regional and contextual nature, and can better respond to the challenges brought about by contemporary social and linguistic changes. Moreover, it can specifically pay attention to the practical problems of translation in a specific context, and construct theories in combination with the local social and cultural background, so it has stronger applicability and practical effect in a specific context. It can more accurately capture the Chinese way of thinking and the connotation of traditional culture, and can play its unique value and role in cross-cultural communication. The popularization and development of indigenous translation theory is an important topic in current translation studies. In order to better promote local translation theory to the world, we need to encourage the innovation of local translation theory, constantly innovate and meet the translation needs in different contexts, so as to make greater

contributions to the development and progress of the translation field.

Third, there are translations and practical articles. First of all, papers are usually more valued by the academic community, which pays more attention to the development of research and theory, so writing papers will get more attention and more research opportunities. In addition, some fields may be more inclined to conduct empirical research, resulting in more essays. For example, for papers such as “Research on the Transmission Routes of ××”, empirical research is required. Finally, translated articles require excellent linguistic skills and a deep cultural background, so they are relatively rare. Therefore, the author believes that we should continue to improve our translation skills, including solid vocabulary accumulation, grammar skills, language expression skills, etc., and improve the quality and efficiency of translation by doing more translation exercises. We can also enrich our knowledge and comprehension ability by reading a wide range of original books of various genres, including novels, essays, professional books, etc., and better understand and translate articles on various topics. Write more applied and translated articles. Because application articles can more directly reflect the actual impact of research results on society, they have a positive effect on promoting the transformation and application of research results. Encouraging researchers to participate in the writing of applied articles can improve the social value and influence of the research project. Translated articles can help foreigners better understand Chinese culture and spread Chinese culture.

5. Conclusion

The “Translating Henan” Project is the “Henan practice” of the foreign discourse system with Chinese characteristics, and it is a vivid practice of disseminating Henan culture. This paper analyzes the characteristics and shortcomings of the topic selection of the award-winning works of the project in recent years, in order to bring useful enlightenment to the relevant topics in the future and further spread the “Henan story”. The results show that: 1) the research objects in the topic selection over the years are relatively limited, and there are many repetitive studies, which need to be further broadened; 2) the theories on which the related studies are based are relatively single and lack more diversified theoretical support; 3) the results are mainly papers, and there are few more systematic and heavy research results and application achievements, which limits the dissemination of “Henan Story” to a certain extent.

Acknowledgement

This project is supported by Social Science Foundation of Ministry of Education of China (Grant No.22YJC740075), Culture Rejuvenation Project in Henan Province (Grant No.2023XWH037) and Postgraduate Education Reform and Quality Improvement Project of Henan Province (YJS2022JD44)、(YJS2023JD50).

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