



# **A Visualized Analysis of Legal Translation in the West**

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## **Author's contribution**

*The sole author designed, analysed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

For the sake of future legal translation research, it is crucial to understand the history of legal translation. However, most historical studies of legal translation have concentrated on legal translation in China. They disregarded the legal translation in the West. Based on 78 papers from the Web of Science core collection, the paper reviewed the history of legal translation in the West using Citespace and visualized analysis in the Web of Science. The following questions are the focus of this paper. 1) What are the general patterns in the West between 2008 and 2023? 2) Who has had the most influence on the development of legal translation in the West? What is the reputable article in the West regarding legal translation? 3) What are the research hotspots in the West? The result demonstrates that (1) research on legal translation in the West is still in its early stages of development, with significant fluctuations in terms of the general pattern of research on legal translation in the West. (2) Ramos, FP of the University of Geneva has had the most influence on the research on legal translation in the West. (3) Of the highly cited papers, the paper written by Vieira, L.N., O'Hagan, M., & O'Sullivan, C is the reputable paper in the West regarding legal translation. (4) In terms of research hotspots, corpus-based translation studies, legal translation training, and translator education are the main areas of concentration for legal translation in the West. We contend that by examining the history of legal translation from 2008 to 2023, the paper provides valuable insights for future legal translation research.

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*Keywords: Legal translation; research hotspot; visualized analysis; citespace.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Different countries belong to different legal systems, so accurate legal translation is conducive to the exchange of the rule of law. Legal translation has a long history, therefore understanding the history of the legal translation will be crucial for any future legal translation study.

Numerous scholars have reviewed the literature on the history of legal translation in recent years. Nonetheless, the majority of research on the history of legal translation so far has focused on legal translation in China. After examining the evolution of legal translation in China, Zhang & Sun [1] divided the history of legal translation into five phases. Qu & Shi [2] examined the evolution of legal translation in China in modern times in chronological sequence. Li & Hu [3] examined 54 papers on legal translation that were published in CNKI between 1980 and 2006. However, They ignored the legal translation in the West.

The paper examines the history of legal translation in the West using 78 papers retrieved from the Web of Science core collection (hereinafter referred to as WOS) between 2008 and 2023 by using the Citespace and Citation report in WOS. The following questions are the focus of this paper. 1) What are the general patterns in the West between 2008 and 2023? 2) Who has had the most influence on the development of legal translation in the West? What is the reputable article in the West regarding legal translation? 3) What are the research hotspots in the West?

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This paper is based on data from the Web of Science core collection. The following will discuss the data collection and the method.

### 2.1 Materials

The material included 78 publications from the CSSCI database and core journal collections in WOS. Using the advanced search tool, the researcher first found 78 publications by putting the topic of legal translation in the core journal collections and CSSCI database from 2008 to 2023. Titles, authors, keywords, publication years, author units, and other information were among the materials acquired. After that, the

researcher carefully screened the collected data to increase the dependability. Ultimately, 78 articles from the CSSCI database and core journal collections in WOS were acquired.

### 2.2 Methods

The researcher used CiteSpace and the WOS Citation Report to analyze the data. CiteSpace is a software used to identify and display new trends in literature review scientifically. The WOS Citation Report is a report to show the annual publications. The specific steps are as follows. First, the researcher got the yearly publications in the WOS Citation Report. Secondly, the researcher used the Author in Citespace and imported 78 papers from core journal collections and the CSSCI database in WOS to obtain highly productive authors in the West. Thirdly, the researcher used the Citations in the WOS to rank the selected paper. Eventually, the researcher used Keyword in Citation to get the research hotspot list and hotspot map.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 General Pattern

Legal translation in the West has grown rapidly since its infancy. In Figure 1, The number of annual publications is shown on the vertical axis, while the year is shown on the horizontal axis. Research on legal research in the West began in 2008 and was on a fluctuating rise from 2008 to 2014 and peaked in 2017. And during 2018 to 2019, it suddenly plummeted. Since 2020, it has been stable. It can be concluded that legal translation in the West is still in its early stages of development, with significant fluctuations in terms of the general pattern of research on legal translation in the West.

### 3.2 Classified Description of Legal Translation in the West

This section includes the international high-productivity authors, highly cited papers, and research hotspots, based on the 78 papers retrieved from WOS.

#### 3.2.1 Highly productive authors and highly cited papers in the west

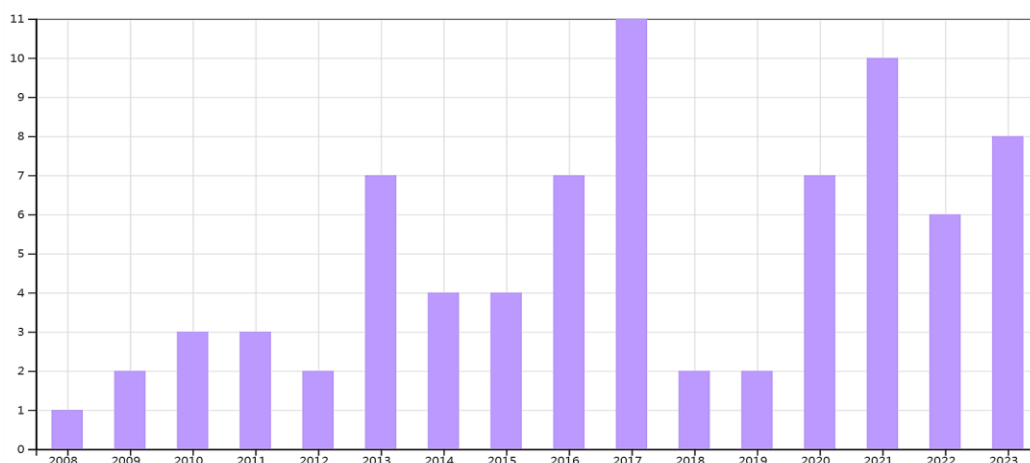
The scholars who have made the biggest contributions to the field of legal

translation are the most highly productive authors. The level of acknowledgment for their work is shown by the highly cited paper [2]. The following is the specific analysis.

Table 3 is a list of highly productive authors from WOS, including the name, as well as their number of publications and their affiliation. It reflects highly productive authors who have published most on legal translation from 2008 to 2023. These scholars have at least 2 published papers in CSSCI or SCI or core journals collection. As can be seen from Table 1, (1) in terms of highly productive authors, the scholar with the most publications is Ramos, FP from the University of Geneva with 4 papers published. (2) In terms of the number of publications, the overall number of publications is small and most scholars only have 2 publications. (3) From author affiliation, scholars come from different affiliations without centralized study. In conclusion, Ramos, FP of the University of Geneva has had the most influence on the development of legal translation in the West and scholars come

from different affiliations without centralized study.

According to Table 2, we can find that (1) from the perspective of authors, the more recognized article about legal translation is the article written by Vieira, L.N., O'Hagan, M., & O'Sullivan, C [4]. The top authors on the list of highly productive authors are not present above the highly cited list, which suggests that the most productive author is not highly recognized in the academic circle. In contrast, Biel [5] who is lower-ranking among the highly productive authors, is on the list in the author column of highly cited papers. This demonstrates that the recognition of scholars does not necessarily correlate with the quantity of papers they have produced in the development of legal translation in the West. (2) In terms of the journals, scholars publish more in *Linguistica Antverpiensia New Series-themes in Translation Studies and Interpreter and Translator Trainer*. (3) In terms of the contents of the highly cited paper, the hottest topic is the principles of legal translation, followed by the problems in legal translation and the strategies of legal translation.



**Fig. 1. The general patterns of research on legal translation in the West**

**Table 1. Highly productive authors in the West**

No.	Author	Count	Author Affiliation
1	Ramos, F.P.	4	University of Geneva
2	Hendrik J. K.	3	Hamad Bin Khalifa University-Qatar
3	Tomas, D.	3	Charles University in Prague
4	Biel, L.	2	University of Warsaw
5	Atabekova, A.	2	Peoples Friendship University of Russia
6	Engberg, J.	2	Aarhus University
7	Way, C.	2	University of Granada
8	Simonnæs, I.	2	Norwegian School of Economics (NHH)

**Table 2. Highly cited papers in the West**

No.	Title	Author	Journal	Time	Citations
1	Understanding the societal impacts of machine translation: a critical review of the literature on medical and legal use cases	Vieira, L.N., O'Hagan, M., & O'Sullivan, C.	Information Communication & Society	2021-08-18	36
2	Research models and methods in legal translation	Biel, L., & Engberg, J.	Linguistica Antverpiensia New Series-themes in Translation Studies	2013-01-01	33
3	The Challenges and Opportunities of Legal Translation and Translator Training in the 21st Century	Way, C.	International Journal of Communication	2016-02-24	28
4	What it takes to do it right: an integrative EMT-based model for legal translation competence	Scarpa, F., & Orlando, D	Journal of Specialised Translation	2017-12-12	20
5	From Problems of Living to Problems of Law: The Legal Translation and Documentation of Immigrant Abuse and Helpfulness	Lakhani, S.M.	Law and Social Inquiry-journal of the American Bar Foundation	2014-08-20	20
6	Comparative evaluation of online machine translation systems with legal texts	Kit, C., & Wong, T.M.	Law Library Journal	2008-03-01	15
7	Enhancing the communicative dimension of legal translation: comparable corpora in the research-informed classroom	Biel, L.	Interpreter and Translator Trainer	2017-01-01	14
8	The Admissibility of Behavioral Science Evidence in the Courtroom: The Translation of Legal to Scientific Concepts and Back	Faust, D., Grimm, P.W., & Sokolik, M.	Annual Review of Clinical Psychology	2010-01-01	13
9	Towards a new research model in legal translation: future perspectives in the era of asymmetry	Claramonte, M.	Linguistica Antverpiensia New Series-themes in Translation Studies	2013-01-01	12
10	Information-seeking behaviour of translation students at the University of Silesia during legal translation: an empirical investigation	Sycz-Opon, J.	Interpreter and Translator Trainer	2019-04-03	11

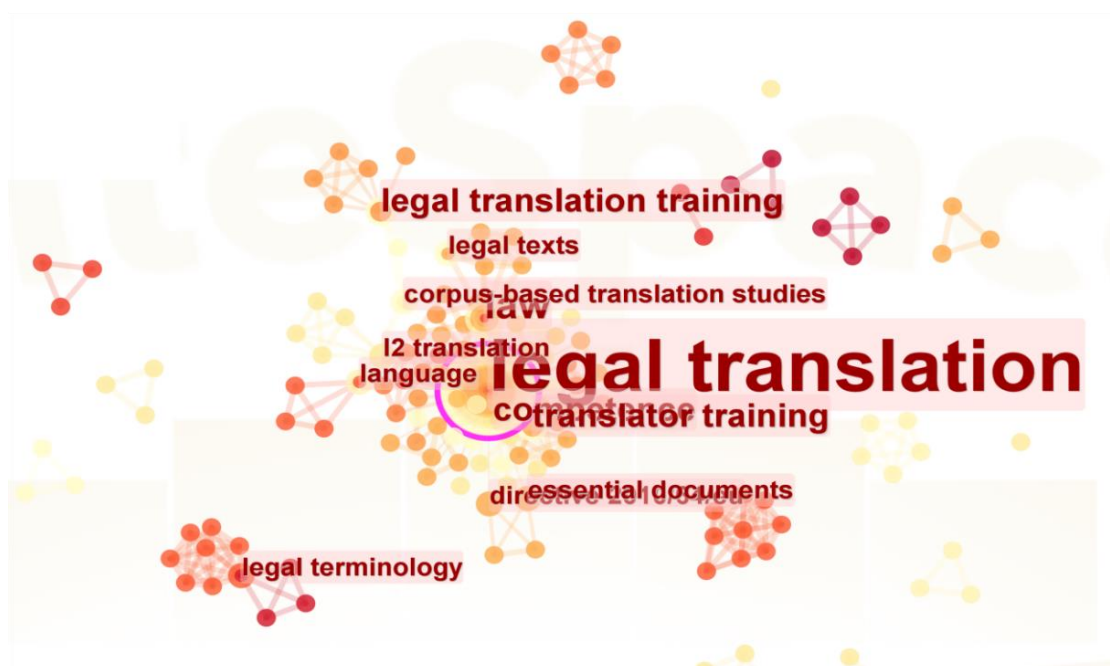


Fig. 2. Research hotspot map in the west

Table 3. Research hotspot in the west

No.	Keyword	Count	Year
1	legal translation	25	2013
2	law	4	2013
3	translator training	3	2017
4	legal translation training	3	2016
5	legal texts	2	2017
6	language	2	2014
7	legal terminology	2	2011
8	essential documents	2	2017
9	corpus-based translation studies	2	2022
10	L2 translation	2	2021

### 3.2.2 Research hotspot in the west

This study uses the Keyword in CiteSpace to evaluate the co-occurring keywords in international research hotspots in order to shed light on the legal translation research hotspot. As shown in Figure 2 and Table 3, we can see from the chart that there are two main features. (1) Focus of research objects related to legal translation is “legal texts”, “essential documents”, “language” and “essential documents”, “legal terminology” and “L2 translation”, etc.; (2) From the standpoint of research perspective related to legal translation, the main focuses are “corpus-based translation studies”, “translator training”, “translator training” and “legal translation training”, etc.

As far as international research hotspot is concerned, “corpus-based translation studies”,

“translator training” and “legal translation training” are the focuses. Orozco-Jutorán [6] who was responsible for the contents of a subject named online Masters Degree on Translation and Interpreting in the USA, made the didactic materials and teaching subject. Way [7] changed the first steps of online training courses previously in order to make use of the potential presented by the twenty-first century, with a particular emphasis on the significant prospects and problems facing legal translators as well as their trainers. Pietrzak [8] stressed the importance of self-study in the specialized translator competence development stress the importance of self-study in the specialized translator competence development. Parra-Galiano [9] proposed a hierarchy of translator and reviser competence in prototypical scenarios in legal translation to determine the most

appropriate revision foci to ensure translation quality.

In terms of corpus-based translation studies, Bajcic & Basaneze [10] investigated foreignizing and domesticating strategies in the translation of EU legislative texts and concluded that the foreignization elements are especially visible if someone overused nominalizations in translation. Bozovic [11] examined 60 English judgments and their Montenegrin translations found in the HUDOC collection and came to the conclusion that the majority of the metaphors were lexicalized, lifeless metaphors and conveyed via image. Ramos.& Cerutti [12] made a corpus-driven analysis of the density of legal terminology and phraseology and that of terminology of other specialized domains. Lin, Afzaal & Aldayel [13] made a corpus study to compare the linguistic difficulty of legally translated texts with the syntactic complexity of native English legal writings to demonstrate the statistically significant differences between the two big datasets.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Using CiteSpace and the WOS Citation Report, the paper examines the history of legal translation in the West based on the Web of Science core collection from 2008 to 2023.

First, regarding the general pattern of research on legal translation in the West, legal translation is still in its early stages of development, with significant fluctuations.

Second, in terms of highly productive authors, Ramos, FP of the University of Geneva has had the most influence on the development of legal translation in the West. Scholars come from different affiliations without centralized study.

Third, in terms of highly cited papers, the more recognized article about legal translation is the article written by Vieira, L.N., O'Hagan, M., & O'Sullivan, C. What's more, from the perspective of authors, the most productive author is not highly recognized in the academic circle. In contrast, there is no necessary connection between the number of publications and the recognition of scholars in international research on legal translation. In terms of the journals, scholars publish more in *Linguistica Antverpiensia New Series-themes in Translation Studies* and *Interpreter and Translator Trainer*. In terms of the contents of the highly cited paper, the hottest topic is the principles of legal

translation, followed by the problems in legal translation and the strategies of legal translation.

Fourth, in terms of international research hotspots, the focus of legal translation is on corpus-based translation studies, translator training, and legal translation training.

The paper examines legal translation in the West between 2008 and 2023, which is conducive to understanding the development of legal translation. But there are still a number of limitations. First, the research sample is small; master's and doctoral theses are not included in this paper. It is recommended that future research enlarge the sample in order to improve the reliability. Second, it is suggested that future research be conducted in a more thorough manner as this work only examined the evolution of legal translation in the West and ignored the comparison between the histories of legal translation in the West and China.

#### COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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