



## A Literature Review on Translation of Academic Literature on Economics

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### Abstract

Academic literature on economics has long been an elementary and indivisible component in the global economic picture. In view of unprecedented economic interdependence among economies nowadays, the translation of academic literature featuring economic lexis, syntax and discourse will be much likely to enjoy the burgeoning, even dominating translation significance and necessity in the decades to come. Based on the collection, selection and classification of related materials, this paper, taking the Nobel Prize lecture on economic sciences as an example, conducts a relatively comprehensive literature review on the translation of economics literature in terms of two research aspects -- academic literature translation and economics literature translation. According to the research perspectives, the paper further subdivides and illustrates in detail the previous studies both at home and abroad in an attempt to clarify the holistic research status quo and inner relations, cementing the foundation of subsequent researches.

**Key words:** Economics literature translation; Academic literature translation; The nobel prize lecture on economic sciences

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### INTRODUCTION

Economic development in the new era has played a more prominent role than ever in personal life, social change, country prospect as well as international stage. Whether the ultimate aim is to be in tandem with or outperform other economies, nearly every single country and region strives to engage in economic activities and discussions worldwide, therefore, economic texts, especially academic literature on economics have witnessed a boom of multilingual translation and cross-border dissemination, effectively and efficiently bridging language gaps and exchanging economic philosophies.

The Nobel Prize in economic sciences boasts the utmost global reputation and authoritative acknowledgement in terms of economic-oriented researches and studies, offering the crown annually to those who have accomplished the illuminating and rewarding economic work or related analysis that can withstand historical and empirical tests. The 2015 Nobel Prize in economic sciences finally goes to the prestigious micro-economist Angus Deaton from Princeton University for his remarkable contributions on measuring and understanding behavior, welfare and poverty. Deaton's economic researches generally concentrate on three dimensions: studies of household behavior, studies of economic advancement and price fluctuation as well as studies of poverty, health and welfare. The literature the present author chooses is Angus Deaton's Prize lecture delivered on 8 December 2015 at Aula Magna, Stockholm University, and mainly discusses the phenomenon, relationship, underlying reasons and future trends based on mass household behavior investigation and econometric models, paving a promising path for subsequent research on this regard and leaving clout in macro- and micro-economics and development economics.

After the collection, selection and classification of researches available online and offline, the present author finds that the previous studies on the translation

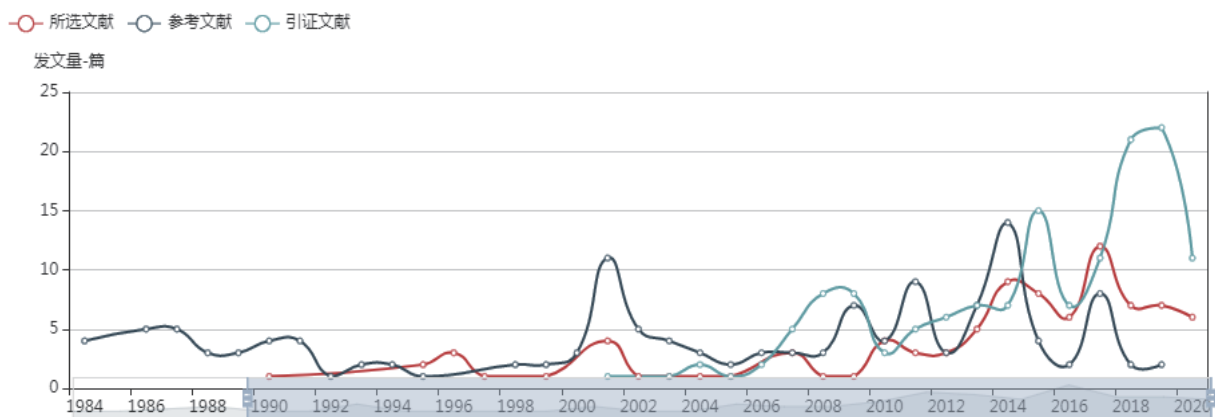
of economics literature, both at home and abroad, can be generally divided into the following two categories: previous studies on academic literature translation and previous studies on economics literature translation.

## 1. PREVIOUS STUDIES ON ACADEMIC LITERATURE TRANSLATION

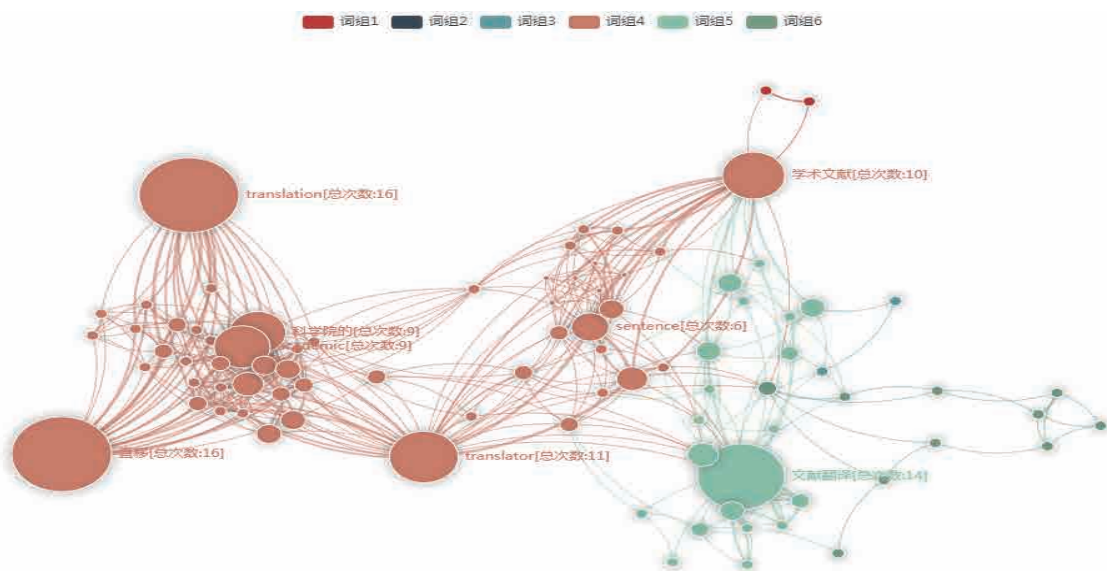
According to statistics from CNKI, studies on translation of academic literature started in 1990s, and in the following decade, there are some papers targeting on this topic showing up in a steadily manner. When it came

into the new century, research on translation of academic literature began to rise rapidly, especially between 2008 and 2018. During this period, the number of related papers on this issue reaches the peak as the figure presents. From 1996 to 2007, there are some fluctuations with this course, while after 2008, more and more relevant papers concerning translation of academic literature nearly began to increase year after year.

The overall tendency of the previous studies on translation of academic literature from 1990 to 2020 could be seen in figure 1, and the distribution of key words mentioned in the previous studies could be seen in figure 2.



**Figure 1**  
The overall tendency of the previous studies on translation of academic literature



**Figure 2**  
Distribution of key words mentioned in the previous studies

Based on the books and articles available, therefore, the previous studies on academic literature translation can roughly fall into five categories: perspective of relevance and adaptation theory, perspective of skopos theory, perspective of compensation theory, perspective of text typology theory as well as the miscellaneous.

### 1.1 Perspective of Relevance and Adaptation Theory

Under the guidance of the relevance theory, Zheng Xiaoxiao (2014) gives a general study of the combination concerning theory and academic translation practice, with an attempt to explore the guiding significance of

optimal relevance. It is concluded that the relevance can be fairly increased by optimizing presentation modes of message via several feasible translation strategies. Similarly, Wu Jianguo, Li Yi and Zhu Mingye (2019) take the article “Applying Cognitive Pragmatics to Critical Discourse Studies: A Proximization Analysis of Three Public Space Discourses” as an example, and probe into relevant translation methods and skills, pointing out that translators should adapt the context of target language when it comes to four micro-angles: vocabulary, sentence, grammar and discourse, while adapting the context of source language in macro domains. This conclusion coincides with the one brought about by Li Jian (2019) who analyzes the Chinese translation of *Stylistic Approaches to Translation* (excerpts). Li Jian proposes three academic literature adaptations from lexical, syntactic and textual levels respectively, and agrees that the dynamic adaptation is mainly embodied in its vocabulary, sentence as well as discourse. By choosing Chapter One from the book entitled *An Intercultural Approach to English Language Teaching*, Di Xiqian (2019) makes a further research on academic literature translation from the four respects -- contextual correlates of adaptation, structural objects of adaptation, dynamics of adaptation and salience of adaptation. Apart from differences between Chinese and English ways of saying things, she lays more emphasis on the importance of background knowledge and cultural divergences during translation adaptations alike.

### 1.2 Perspective of Skopos Theory

In the aspect of skopos theory, Li Xuelian (2013) concentrates on the purpose of Japanese-to-Chinese academic translation in the hope of achieving an objective, precise, systematic and logical rendering. The paper sheds much light on translation strategies and approaches, such as adding translators' notes, dismantling syntactic structures, adjusting sentence order, employing addition, and so forth. Wu Yiyin (2014) highly recommends restructuring method, together with paraphrase, annotation and syntactic linearity, in academic literature translation. It draws a conclusion that skopos theory can be of great use as the theory is conducive to determining the principles and methods involved in and, guaranteeing the coherence and consistency of a specified translation style. What's more, Wu argues that academic rendering serves as a catalyst for translators as well. Taking financial academic paper as a case study, Yan Huimin (2017) not only acknowledges aforementioned advantages of skopos theory adopted in academic translation, but underlines some problems and challenges lurking beneath the surface. What is suggested is that language features and applicability should be the focal point in translation practice likewise.

### 1.3 Perspective of Compensation Theory

Tao Liangxiang (2017) trends on a different way when delving into academic rendering, discussing linguistic compensation strategies at the lexical, syntactic and textual levels. It explores the culprit of translation loss in academic text and the corresponding compensatory methods which may cut the clout of such loss in academic value. Qi Ji (2018) also highlights the heterogeneity of languages and cultures and the unavoidable resulting translation loss. The thesis then, summarizes such five rewarding strategies appropriate for analyzing the academic text *Consciousness and the Brain* as paraphrase, contextual amplification, combination, division as well as meaning extension. Besides, Qi advocates the critical thinking both towards translation theories and strategies. Wang Mengyin (2019) analyzes compensation approaches used at semantic, cultural and aesthetic levels, which differentiates it from the previous researches mainly focusing on the language level. Amplification, specification, annotation and explanation, as the thesis put it, play a more and more prominent role in academic literature translation, especially those surrounding complicated concepts and figures of speech.

### 1.4 Perspective of Text Typology Theory

Zhang Yuhui (2016) makes a comparative case study based upon two academic papers and communicative translation methods. She points out that firstly, these papers are representative informative articles which stand as an ideal test field for communicative translation methods. Secondly, translation techniques should be subject to lexical, syntactic and discourse contexts. Thirdly, academic translation does indeed place a high expectation and rigid requirement for translators. Li Ruojun (2016), although again, explores the lexical, syntactic and textual features coming down to translation approaches in academic paper fraught with information by adopting the text typology theory and illustrating its applications in detail. The paper puts text types as the very essence in the whole process for it is the beacon of translation methods and styles. Attention on precise and consistent terminology translation is also a high point in this research. From the same perspective, Yan Wenting (2017) introduces language features, culturally-loaded words and terms in particular, on the basis of two translated chapters of *Values and Choices in Television Discourse: A View from Both Sides of the Screen*. These two papers are quite similar on this regard. The latter one however, comes up with three refined principles with examples, such as the translation should convey effective information, being idiomatic as well as being concise and cohesive. Zhang Shuiqin (2019) conducts a research on Chinese translation strategies of academic thesis in a three-pronged manner, which echoes back to the previous

studies, holding that the communicative theory is a more suitable guiding philosophy when translators dealing with information-strewn texts. To fulfill the task of communication and exchange as well as to shy away from translationese, she stresses commonalities and differences between two languages coupled with meticulous attitude toward translation and interdisciplinary knowledge.

### 1.5 The Miscellaneous

In *English-German Self-Translation of Academic Texts and Its Relevance for Translation Theory and Practice* written, Verena (2002) gives a detailed linguistic analysis on self-translation phenomenon with corpus techniques, proposing a new model and underpinning the significance of self-translation study in translation teaching. As to the macro facet of academic translation, Li Junmin (2012) attaches importance to concepts and meanings of the original text before choosing the corresponding translation methods. The paper holds that the top priority of academic translation generally lies in the accurate expression of source language by thinking out of the “literal or liberal” box. What is similar to Li’s proposition is that in Rainer Schulte (2012)’s paper, it also probes into the overall relationship and interplay between the academic world and translation, and concentrates on the whole picture of these two domains. Based upon translation practices of Martin Heidegger’s work, Sun Zhouxing (2013) then, puts forth that the ultimate goal of translation is to make it in compliance with prevailing requirements rather than pursuing ideal versions. On the contrary, Wang Xiangbin and Mu Lei (2013) deeply discuss the ideal mode of academic literature translation from both macro and micro perspectives. They also agree with the point that translation legislation bears profound meaning and leverage when it comes to healthy development of translation industry and the “go global” strategy.

Peterlin (2014), by contrast, reveals several pedagogical obstacles that need to surmount in translation teaching and translator training, including the familiarity of academic community and awareness of rhetorical factors. Moreover, Wu Wen’an (2014) makes a close case study on the difficulties as well as underlying reasons and solutions of academic translation and, emphasizes the collaboration of relevant departments and translators themselves, only by which can the kernel question of lacking bilingual capability be addressed. Zheng Jing and Ge Xiaoyan (2015) keep a tight grip on characteristics and fields of academic translation in *A Translation Course of English for General Academic Purposes* in which they arrange pragmatic and progressive exercises at the lexical, syntactic and discourse levels, so as to improve learners’ comprehensive translation competence.

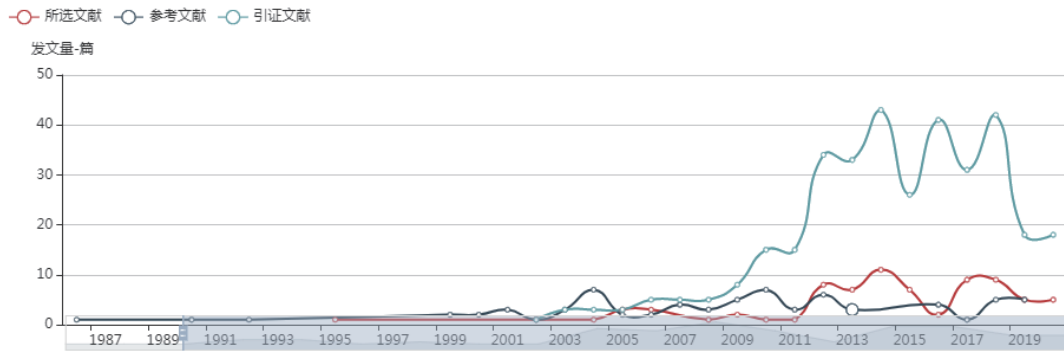
Around the same period, Odacıoğlu and Köktürk (2015) put forward that there is a paradigm shift within

academic translation teaching that sways the localization industry in the digital age. The paper tries to discover underlying reasons for the acceptance of a new paradigm and, calls for creativity on both theories and paradigms targeting commercial translation and more broadly, localization markets. In another paper, Odacıoğlu and Köktürk (2016) finally make a conclusion that translation studies and translation teaching have begun a journey from inter-disciplinarity to trans-disciplinarity, which requires the integration of localization and CAT tools with traditional approaches.

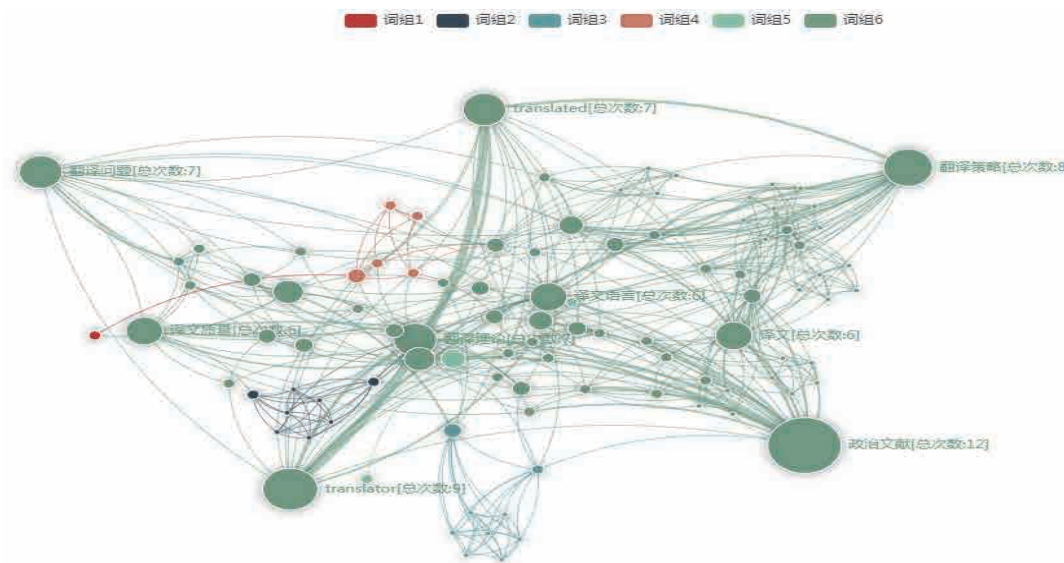
Peterlin (2019) also takes a similar path to investigate key issues encountered by authors-translators through an empirical research, and finds out that the potential of academic self-translation can satisfy contrastive, intercultural and pedagogical needs. Martin (2017) as well as Schögler (2019) demonstrates further that the circulation, visibility and status of academic text translation largely hinge on the engagement of translators and their co-workers. Wu Changhong and Fu Jingmin (2019) pinpoint the five main principles applied in academic translation, especially the systematic principle. The paper highlights the significance of the translator’s safeguard mechanism which stipulates the translator’s identity, qualification, responsibility, rights and obligations and the like. Siepmann (2019) combines traditional methods with state-of-the-art corpus analysis in order to unveil problems associated with the translation of general academic lexis from German into English. It draws the conclusion that a particular attention needs to be paid to spatial metaphors by re-metaphorization in a wider context. Influenced by the recent global pandemic, He Daqing and his peers (2020) also use open-source software and conduct a research over translation and the COVID-19 academic collection, making strenuous efforts to help laypeople to access the COVID-19 literature. They find that the translation and expansion (T & E) process can tackle the medical term mismatch problems, indeed.

## 2. PREVIOUS STUDIES ON ECONOMICS LITERATURE TRANSLATION

After referring to available materials on CNKI from 1990 to 2020, it can be seen based on figure 1 that before 1995, there is little research aiming at translation of economics literature. From 2011 to 2019, relevant papers soar and reach the climax in 2014 and 2018, while after that, research on this realm seems to fall and few papers are represented in the figure. The overall tendency of previous studies on translation of economics literature can be seen in figure 3, and the corresponding distribution of key words in papers can be told in detail in Figure 4.



**Figure 3**  
 The overall tendency of previous studies on translation of economics literature



**Figure 4**  
 Distribution of key words mentioned in the previous studies

The other part of the literature review is concerned with economics texts. After reading and classifying loads of available materials, the previous studies on economics literature translation are conducted mainly in the following three perspectives: perspective of functional theory, perspective of linguistic strategies, as well as the miscellaneous.

### 2.1 Perspective of Functional Theory

From a functional view, Chifane (2012) throws light on economic features and the “equivalence” effect in the course of English-Romanian translation and Romanian-English translation, focusing upon the problems emerging from the lack of lexical equivalence with examples. Consequently, the research points out that non-equivalence issues can be successfully addressed by means of employing appropriate translation strategies, such as paraphrase, explanation, cultural substitution word, omission and so on. Base on the Chinese-English translation of *Chinese Economy at the Crossroads* (excerpt), Pan Lingling (2013) highlights the unique characteristics of economic literature, specifically the

expertise and normalization. She also agrees with Cristina over the aforementioned translation methods to realize the final equivalence, and lays much more stress on the preciseness of terminology translation as well as translator’s preparation, attitudes and responsibility.

Zhang Lijie (2014) chooses the source text from a conference proceeding *Economic Pluralism*, and under the functional guidance theory totally makes three conclusions: the first one is in line with the former scholars that translation is definitely not an easy job; secondly, a translation practice may involve two or more theories; thirdly, functional theory from Germany is be of great use in economic text translation. Lin Qiuxian (2014) mainly discusses the advantages and disadvantages of economic literature translation by functional criteria, concluding a batch of difficulties and corresponding strategies at lexical, syntactic and discourse levels. To achieve equivalence of meaning and style, this thesis holds that the professional economic vocabulary and relevant cultural background knowledge are the most unavoidable but desirable obstacles for translators. In a similar manner, Sun Zizhong (2015) delves into the characteristics of

economic literature from vocabulary, syntax and discourse aspects combined with domestic translation strategy. In his opinion, translator's entire qualification can be divided into the two categories -- soft qualification and hard equipment. The former refers to the translator's literature cultivation which consists of bilingual capability, cultural sensitivity and attitudes, while the later refers to not only the selection but usage of various available tools for translators, including both paper dictionaries and online auxiliary equipment.

Tergui (2016) looks into the economic report translation from English into Arabic and French, and again, acknowledges the difficulties -- non-equivalence cases -- in economic rendering process, making a study in its entirety of what kind of strategy translators can adopt to swallow and digest bitter pills and achieve functional equivalence then. Tergui finally claims that diagnosing the aim of economic translation and target audience in view of social and cultural considerations is the key to such rendering. Likewise, He Xizi (2018) probes into a case study of economic text which surrounds the English-Chinese Translation of Congressional Budget Office's Economic Forecasting Record, recognizing and disentangling lexical, syntactic and discourse difficulties under the guidance of functional equivalence theory as well. The paper lists three important things for translators: economic expertise, full preparation and careful modification.

## 2.2 Perspective of Linguistic Strategies

On linguistic strategies, Lianos (2009) elaborates the long tradition of interaction of law with economic theory, lays out its origin and transformation and puts forward several translation strategies, holding that some of the confusions and problems may result from mistranslation of economic and law discourse. Also, there are several studies expounding problems or obstacles in economics literature translation. A case in point is the research "Voice Problems in Translations of Romanian and English Economic Texts" conducted by Sim Monica Ariana (2011). The research draws the conclusion that passive constructions are wildly used in both English and Romanian, but overuse of the passive voice at times can only blur the meaning and even obscure the whole text. What's more, it lists just five reasons that passive constructions are appropriate and recommended in economics literature translation, like conveying objectivity, putting emphasis on an action and the process, or shunning away from a tedious active subject.

Besides, Şerban (2012) and Cao Meiting (2014) both make in-depth researches on the translation of economics terminology and further, by standing upon the functional equivalence theory, seek their specific translation tactics, sprawling from literal and liberal translation to explanation, annotation and paraphrase. Additionally, Cao who underlines cross-cultural terms rendering

argues that translators should update themselves on a daily basis and always keep in touch with new economic phenomena and terms, in particular those with Chinese characteristics.

Similarly, Cristina and González (2015) aims to demonstrate linguistic obstacles in economic translation caused by language learners' negligence of the management of non-native language. Through the case study, they cry for a great command of the general use of English when translators intend to render texts into English, rather than concentrate on the apprehension and translation of economic terms one-sidedly when texts are interspersed with jargons. Apart from what have been mentioned by Rebeca and López, Dennis (2016) casts more light on a certain amount of preparation work of ordinary language prior to economic translation, which will be effective to overcome unnecessary linguistic problems and then, produce adequate and desirable translation.

Tcaciuc and Mackevic (2017) combine such two research methods as analysis of the translated text and description of institutional layout, finding out that institutional regulations, translation memory, the target language framework and expectations from the target readers when it comes to the translation of economic metaphors as well as the whole article. Relying on several translated chapters from *The Only Game in Town*, Feng Chao (2018) also basically lays emphasis on figures of speech enrolled in this economic discourse featuring metaphor and metonymy as typical. Considering the functional equivalence, Feng analyzes, for one thing, the most effective translation method of structural and orientational metaphor -- the extension of meaning; for another, he illustrates metonymy translation cases in which a specific part of an article is used to refer to the entire body, or a concrete part is used to refer to the abstract. More specifically and technologically, Wu Guangjun and Wang Ruiyang (2019) select the marriage metaphor only as the benchmark to make an investigation about the cognitive effort that translators invest in their work. Equipped with the eye-tracking and key logging data, the thesis concludes that cognitive efforts vary from metaphor to metaphor. The novel point is that the M1-M2 strategy (metaphor substitution), largely applied in the dating contexts, stands as the one that requires the most cognitive efforts.

Cong Dandan (2019), however, rolls out her research from an unlike dimension, focusing on semantic functions of parentheses in economic texts and classifying them into five categories: explanation, supplementary specification, attitudes' demonstration, indication of sentences' relations and emphasis. In order to translate these parentheses without losing functional equivalence, she comes up with five strategies, namely, preposition, symbol insertion, construction, sequence adjustment and no treatment, while Tian Dandan (2020) attaches importance to measurement

units, another element showing up frequently in economic literature. The paper explains general rules of measurement unit translation with examples and some points for attention, summarizing that translators should keep pace with the international translation standard over weights and measures. From another point of view, Chen Yuting (2020) mainly investigates two types of nominalization structure (VN structure) and highlights the real meaning of terminology in related fields, which is mentioned by the previous studies, too. The center argument in the thesis is that VN structures in economic texts of high formality are usually translated into verbs in the target language -- Chinese.

### 2.3 The Miscellaneous

Wang Enmian (2005) concentrates on the overall translation of economic newspapers and discusses the features as well as translation tactics with a host of examples, thinking that the rendering of economic newspapers shares many common elements with general newspapers translation but requiring more professional knowledge and expressions. Lu Mingzhi (2006) presents a chronological review of economic literature translation in China spanning from 1840-1949, and designs an integrated model to make a deeper study of translation history at the macro level. The paper finally sums up that economic translation has made significant contributions to the modernization of China, to the establishment of the discipline of economics as well as the skyrocket development of the oriental country. In addition, the proposition of Mirabela and Ariana (2012) is in accordance with that of Lu, for both of them advocate that translators' ability and vision play a determining role in the quality of translated works. Pop and Sim also underlines the significance of terminology and necessary analyzing skills when reading and translating economic texts which, as they quote, are beneficial both for personal progress and job requirement. Moreover, the time span and research format in Wu Yangbo (2013)'s study is identical with the former one conducted by Lu. The chronological view indicates that translators living in those ages seek various domesticated methods for revolutionary purposes, such as addition, deletion and omission.

Globally, Corcodel and Corcodel (2013) stresses that the concept of economic language and the corresponding translation bear immense value in business community and the international markets at large. They propose at the end of the paper that great comprehension and full fidelity of the original meaning are among the top prerequisites for economic translators. In this regard, Wang Jianjun and Fan Yize (2014), Shen Yang (2015) and Miguel Tolosa Igualada (2016) also mentioned that to be a qualified translator for economic literature, he should accumulate relevant expertise, put target readers as the core, abide by certain prevailing norms, as well

as revise and polish renderings again and again. By contrast, Pym (2017) conducts a comparative study over two translation approaches, unveiling some universal defects of economic language and trying to set up ethical bases for language policy, translation policies included. In the paper entitled "The Translation of Economics and the Economics of Translation," Biela and Sosoni (2017) also explore the specificities and particularities of economic translation and pore over new research trends emerging in the domain at a macro level. By contrast, Tétart (2020) mainly discusses economic models applied in the definition of the future scenarios of food security, exemplifying that sound economic models and smooth transnational circulation of relevant knowledge, indirectly referring to well-performed economic translation in some degree, will be of prominent importance to the global agricultural system.

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## INNOVATIONS OF THE PREVIOUS STUDIES

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The issue of academic and economic literature translation has experienced a long journey from the immature stage to a gradually expanding status. During the course, there are some admirable innovations that can be listed.

Firstly, the diversity of research work has come into being in the form of massive papers and books. Different kinds of perspectives are employed to analyze academic translation and economic translation, which can be clearly told from figure 5 (key words based on English literature) and figure 6 (key words based on Chinese literature). Scholars apply various theories and guiding principles to elaborate prominent issues in academic translation of economics, including skopos theory, text typology theory, functional equivalence theory, etc.

Secondly, incisive and comprehensive studies were made and flooded into the realm of translation of academic and economic literature. A majority of previous researches on this topic are not only skimming through the question or matter, but also diving into the very bottom to explore the field of economic translation for academic purposes. Most of propositions or ideas advocated in these papers are fresh, pertinent and cutting-edge.

Thirdly, researches over the translation of academic and economic texts already began to be equipped with advanced high-techs, especially the corpus, big data, eye-tracking and key logging techniques. An increasing number of scholars, both home and abroad, use these technologies to analyze source texts in order to draw a more reasonable and accurate conclusion. The phenomenon as such has never been witnessed in any previous period of time, however, the combination of academic and economic translation with high-techs will be a trend in the years to come for its indispensable merits.



Figure 5  
Key words based on English literature



Figure 6  
Key words based on Chinese literature

## DEFICIENCIES OF THE PREVIOUS STUDIES

As soon as the translation studies on academic and economic literature pop up worldwide, it has caused a sensation all over the global translation circles, followed by an outpouring of related researches in the recent decade. Nevertheless, from the mentioned advantages

above, the present author thinks that although lots of the previous studies on the translation of academic and economic texts are rather systematic and impressive, there is still much to be explored in this field.

First of all, the coverage of translation language and guiding theory involved in academic and economic literature rendering relatively falls short of both



expectation and demand, leaving many a realm to be further explored as figure 7 shows, such as localization, circulation, and digital fields. It is obvious that relevant researches are still limited and need to be further on. Great efforts should be cast in multilingual researches on

academic and economic translation practice from more diverse perspectives, which conceivably, will be likely to meet multifarious needs of the translation community and other potential users.



**Figure 7**  
**Word cloud of cited literature**

Apart from that, previous studies in China on the translation of academic and economic literature densely center on English-Chinese (E-C) issues instead of striking a balance with the opposite Chinese-English (C-E) research branch. Albeit more studies concerning E-C translation can stoke the furnace of authentic English comprehension and absorption, researches on this sociocultural issue may need more creativity and divergent thinking, especially when it comes to the “going global” strategy or put it in another way, the dissemination of the Chinese language on a broader sense and scale.

In addition, employing corpus, eye-tracking and key logging data in the researches on academic and economic literature translation is indeed a remarkable and promising step, whereas the focal point still merely lies in the analysis of data together with reasons for the translation non-equivalents, misinterpretations or translationese. Only

a handful of papers make quite effective and thorough use of data to put forward tactics available with concrete and feasible translation procedures, criteria and backup plans, which, to some degree, is of more practical and instructional significance.

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