



On Research and Application of Variation Theory of Comparative Literature in China

CAO Shunqing^{[a]*}, ZHUANG Peina^[a]

^[a]Sichuan University, Chengdu, China
 * Corresponding author.

Received 25 March 2014; accepted 15 May 2014
 Published online 27 June 2014

Abstract

Literary variation has long existed, ancient and modern, domestic and foreign, but it is the Variation Theory that first systemizes the study of variation and serves as guidance for research on the phenomena of literary variation in Comparative Literature. This thesis conducts a general overview on the domestic research on Variation Theory and also its application both from the synchronic and diachronic perspective with an aim to identifying the trend and the uncharted in the current research, thus enriching the frame and application of the Variation Theory.

Key words: Variation Theory; Inter-civilization; Heterogeneity

Cao, S. Q., & Zhuang, P. N. (2014). On Research and Application of Variation Theory of Comparative Literature in China. *Cross-Cultural Communication*, 10(4), 51-57. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/ccc/article/view/4805>
 DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/4805>

INTRODUCTION

The *Book of Changes* has the following saying that “Ultimateness leads to change, and change in turn entails unexpectedness, thus ensuring the lasting continuity”. Only when one is enlightened by the rule that “endless adaptations in the writing methods could be achieved from the limited genres therein” can one ensure the open-mindedness in his literary creation. It is even more so for the research conducted in an inter-civilization background for when a theory or a work “travels” from

here to the other destination, the new social and historical circumstances could give rise to a series of changes in it, thus stimulating new vitality of the theory or work in the new environment. Literary variation has long existed, domestic and foreign, but it is the Variation Theory that first systemizes the study of variation and serves as guidance for research in Comparative Literature. This thesis conducts a general overview on the domestic research on Variation Theory from the synchronic and diachronic perspective by dividing the development of this theory into three stages, namely the germination period, the early and expansion period and its existing problems and possible future solutions with an aim to identifying the trend and the uncharted in the current research, thus enriching the framework and application of the Variation Theory in Comparative Literature.

1. THE GERMINATION PERIOD

Germination means the occurrence of things or phenomena. Germination for “variation” has long existed since the sinicization of Buddhism. The Chinese Chan Buddhism can be seen as a complex form of varied religion from Buddhism if examined from the perspective of embryology. The character “变”(change) in “变异”(variation) signifies the dynamic process of variation and “异”means the static result entailed. The research of variation, either regarding it as a methodology or a phenomenon, has never ceased as demonstrated from the isogeneic in the sinicization of Buddhism, the Sino-western mutual elucidation by Wang Guowei, the literary variation of Japanese literature by Yan Shaochang to the variation study in Imagologie by Edward Said in his work. It is discussed in the research of literary variation of Japanese literature by Yan Shaochang that “Literary ‘variation’ means the ability of literature to absorb the foreign culture which is then ‘dissolved’ in the receiving culture, leading to a new consequent literary form; the

displayed ability of literature to ‘absorb’ and ‘dissolve’ a foreign culture is not the comprehension of the alien culture in the common sense” (Yan, 1987). Thus, “variation” means, to some extent, the innovation and development of the native literature based on the native experience during which, the national traits of the native literature will not disappear due to “variation”, but rather be sustained and enriched and “achieve its own ‘variation’ while undergoing the ‘repelling of alien culture’ ” (Yan, 1987).

Long before the research of literary variation of Japanese literature, the heterogeneity of literary theories uncovered by the “elucidation” method by Taiwan scholars has provided the objective ground for variation study for heterogeneous literary theories in their encounter could generate “a feverish state of mutual dialogue, bringing about the unsorted coexistence of different discourses on literary theories characterized by mutual understanding, identification and compensation under the diversified perspectives, leading to a new discourse” (Cao, 2001). Such new discourse on literary theories may come as a result of “amending” or “adjusting” the western discourse in this regard starting from the native cultural and literary background. For instance, advocates for romanticism during the May 4th Movement attaches more importance to the inheritance of emotional dimension in their adjustment of the western romanticism; or the native cultural elements are incorporated in the selection and absorption of the foreign “mould” so as to realize the sinicization of literary theories. This kind of variation is by no means the mere following or the repelling of the alien theories, but to effectively absorb and remold the foreign ones in light of its own cultural tradition and reality for the purpose of integrating the foreign theories into the Chinese discourse, avoiding the “aphasia” in this regard. Actually, the focus on heterogeneity in Variation Theory coincides with the prevalent interest in the nowadays’ western academia as exemplified by feminism, post colonialism and deconstruction featuring decentralization, diversification and differences.

Compared with that engendered in the “elucidation” method due to the heterogeneity in the discourse on literary theory, variation in the translation is more invisible. Chapter three “Migrating Variation” in *Dialogue of Sino-western Poetics—the Research on Ancient Chinese Literary Theory in the English World* elaborates the different understandings and interpretations of ancient Chinese literary theories in the English world with the media of language and points out the “trapping role” of language in the process of communication. This kind of “invisible” variation is called “creative treason” by Xie Tianzhen who has conducted systematic research in this respect. Chapter three “Translatology” in *Comparative Literature* is devoted to the discussion of “creative treason” and confirms its value, holding that

“this process or phenomenon is rather concentrated and pronounced in the cross cultural communication, collision and deformation” (Chen, Liu, & Xie, 1997) and further pointing out that the subject of “creative treason” not only includes the translator, but also the reader and the environment. In the author’s opinion, “creative treason” in essence, is the variability in the level of language, culture and reception in the inter-lingual translation and is the objective “deviation” from the original text. Viewing translation as an impossible task such as by William Humboldt, the German linguist, may go too far but it is true partially in reality, which could draw its testimony from the five kinds of “deformation” of the original scripture in the target one in translation of Buddhist scriptures as summarized by Dao An, a famous monk translator in Tang Dynasty in his “five kinds of meaning loss and distortion and three difficulties of translation” (五失本, 三不易). The author here sees eye to eye with the view held by L. A. Samovar that the other culture that we see is at most times our subjective idealization of that culture. Similarly, most of the western literary theories that we come across and research on are the adapted and varied versions of the original ones after the cultural filtering in translation.

2. THE EARLY AND EXPANSION PERIOD

Research on “variation” in literary works and theories stays basically in the level of phenomenon or rule either for “visible” or “invisible” variation and never reaches beyond that to research on “variation” from the perspective of theoretical framework of the discipline. Originating from the thoughts on issues of variation in Iamgologie and Mesologie in Influence Studies, such as the subjectivity and uncertainty in the production of collective imagination of society in Iamgologie and the consequent deviation from the true image of the foreign country, the author of the paper put forward the Variation Theory of Comparative Literature. The proposal of Variation Theory first came up in the third chapter “Literary Variation” in *Study of Comparative Literature*, which is divided into six subparts, namely, Translatology, Iamgologie, Reception Studies, Thematology, Genology and Cultural Filtering and Misreading, but not includes the investigation of the naming from the theoretical level. Some scholar probes into

the possibility of using Traveling Theory by Said to support the naming of Variation Theory or that the phenomenon of Traveling Theory could be served as important ground for the naming of a significant branch in the research of Comparative Literature as Variation Theory. (Wu, 2006).

Seeing in line with “Traveling Theory”, the change of situation could cause a variation of the theory since the path into a new environment of a theory is by no means unobstructed but involves the inevitable process

of representation different from that in the starting environment. Thus, it is the same case with the literary theory. The Variation Theory has caused wide interest in the domestic circle since its first proposal. According to the author's statistics (mainly from the period of 2005-2013), there have published about eighty or so papers on the elaboration of this topic, including nine master dissertations. These papers do not contain other publications that involve the discussion of this theory but not being shown in their themes, titles or not constituting the main part of them, which can be mainly categorized into the following three aspects.

The first aspect lies in the dimension of theory building of "Variation Theory". The books of *Study of Comparative Literature* (《比较文学学》) (2005), *The Variation Theory of Comparative Literature* (2014), *Lecturing on Variation Theory of Comparative Literature by Professor Cao Shunqing* (《南橘北枳—曹顺庆教授讲比较文学变异学》) (yet published) and the fourteen papers such as "Traveling Theory" and "Variation Study"—*Investigation on the Ground or the Perspective of a Research Field* (2006), *Variation Theory: The Breakthrough in Theories of Comparative Literature* (2008) and so on have all conducted deep analysis and elaboration on the historical background, theoretical framework and founding ground for the Variation Theory. Research in Comparative Literature before the systematic proposal of Variation Theory tends to focus more on the exploration of the "sameness or similarity" among literature in different civilizations marked with strong Eurocentrism. And the "aphasia" for antique Chinese literary theory is the result of such tendency. Some scholar comes to note such phenomenon and puts up corresponding viewpoints. A critical response to this can be exemplified by the book of *Detour and Access—Strategies of Meaning in China and Greece* by Francois Jullien. It is meaningful and of positive sense to explore and discuss the heterogeneity among different civilizations but in a way of directivity featuring one-way and being static bearing the ultimate aim to counter-view oneself through "the other". And Variation Theory comes further in its response to the traditional tendency of seeking "sameness or similarity" in Comparative Literature in that it not only pays attention to the heterogeneity but also strives to achieve complementarity of literature from different civilizations with the final goal to realize generality of world literature. The dynamic feature of Variation Theory endows itself with the capability to surpass the nationality and has the value of universality. Thus,

the paradigm of Variation Theory offers a new changing and dynamic mode for the study of heterogeneity. It is different from Francois Jullien's detour since though 'detour' constructs a dynamic path that ranges between itself and the other, the path in essence is static for it always follows the pattern of 'itself—the other—itsself', which could reduce 'the other' to a static object of reference. Orientalism can be seen as a product of such 'detour'. (Zhang & Qin, 2014)

In the framework construction of Variation Theory, *The Cross Feature of Discipline Theory in Comparative Literature and the Proposal of "Variation Theory"* (2006) elaborates on the three stages of development in Comparative Literature, proposes the Variation Theory as a new paradigm in the research on discipline theory on the basis of identifying the cross and literary characteristics of Comparative Literature and set up the definition and research field for literary variation, further adjusting the research scope of "Variation Theory" outlined in *Study of Comparative Literature* in 2005:

The study of literary variation of Comparative Literature, using variability and literariness as its pivotal points, strives to identify and explore the intrinsic rule of literary variation by way of studying the state of variation in literary interaction and communication among different countries and researching on the variation of literary expression in the same paradigm among literature in different cultures. It could be conducted in four aspects: variation in the lingual level, variation in image of a nation, variation in literary text and cultural variation. (Cao, 2006)

The Concept of Cross-cultural Difference and the Construction of Variation Study in Comparative Literature (2009) further elaborates on the issue of heterogeneity in Variation Theory and presents the view that

Professor Cao Shunqing guides the difference towards the variability of synchronized aesthetics of literary text and of the diachronic cultural function and conducts again the historization and aestheticization of Comparative Literature on the basis of civilization heterogeneity, while always upholding the literariness and culture as the two pivots of discipline theory and drawing the heterogeneity at the philosophical level back to literary variability of concrete application in literary research. (Liu, 2009)

and comes up with five discipline branches under this theory: variability in poetics, aesthetics, text, language and culture. In addition, another academic feature of theory building of Variation Theory is linked up with the legitimacy of research of Comparative Literature conducted in the inter-civilization background. *Study of Variation Theory of Comparative Literature in the Inter-civilization Context* (2013) holds that the Variation Theory is the result of communication and collision of Sino-western civilization against the backdrop of nowadays' globalization. The variation of image and sinicization of literary theory is of great significance in the breakthrough of discipline theory.

Any theory will demonstrate different forms and connotations in entering into a new environment and one should set great store by the interpretation of western theories based on the Chinese framework and experience, the conflict of this interpretation with the original theory and also the reflective rational resistance and reaction towards the introduced theories proceeding from the Chinese experience and one's own theory. (Wan, 2013)

Theoretical elaboration constitutes the second aspect. Twenty-two papers such as *Inter-civilization "Heterogeneity Study"—An Important Field in the*

Research of Comparative Literature in the 21st century (2006), *Variation Study in Influence Research of Comparative Literature* (2009), and *Analysis of the Variation of Comparative Literature* (2009), etc. have conducted detailed analysis of the theoretical feature and academic basis of Variation Theory such as the basis of comparability, the issue of heterogeneity, the research of sinicization and its inspiration on Translation Studies, Influence Studies and Parallel Studies. In the research of discipline theory of Comparative Literature, the French school emphasizes the empirical relation of influence in their Influence Studies, which equals the “international history of literary relation of Comparative Literature”. But Influence Studies in its practice could encounter problems that go beyond the empirical dimension due to the complicatedness in literary relation. Variation will always be engendered in literary communication and relation among different countries subject to the different spatial and temporal elements such as language, culture, civilization and the recipients, etc. The Influence Studies does not deal with the aesthetic judgment and parallel comparison; neither does it realize the variation in the concerned research. But such neglect of parallel research and aesthetic appreciation has been compensated by American school while that of variability has yet been realized and solved. The American school does not wholly repel influence studies but criticizes the mere empirical study of literature and advocates for the integration of empirical study and aesthetic research. American scholars in their implementation of parallel comparison still stay blind to the issue of heterogeneity and variability under the guidance of seeking sameness or similarity. And some even go much further to negate the necessity and possibility of inter-civilization research in Comparative Literature. The vacancy of heterogeneity is identified and compensated by Variation Theory. *Research on Language Variation from the Perspective of Literary Variation* (2007) discusses and analyzes the variation in the level of language, pointing out that different from variation and mistranslation caused by the incapability of the translator, the lingual variation identified in the paper could contribute a lot to cross-cultural communication. The investigation of variation in translation from the perspective of Variation Theory could give new inspiration to the traditional relation between the original text and target text. That is, the shift of focus on the surface of language conversion to that on the underlying causes of variation is conducive to “the rethinking and redefining of the discipline goal and also to the exploration of germination mechanism of new literary elements and the stimulating factors for literary development (Wu, 2007)”. In addition, “comparability” always stands as a central issue in Comparative Literature. “*Incommensurability*” and “*Seeking Common Ground While Reserving Differences*”—*On the Basis for Comparability in Variation*

Theory (2008) elaborates on the basis for comparability in perspective of Variation Theory to view heterogeneity as another basis for comparability, thus breaking the limit in the former the basis for comparability of seeking sameness or similarity and providing new theoretical angle in inter-civilization research of Comparative Literature.

The proposal of heterogeneity as the basis for comparability is the inevitable necessity under the influence of the recent universal attention to the differences and the theoretical revolution faced with the development difficulty and discipline construction in Comparative Literature around the world. (Zhang, 2008)

Furthermore, Variation Theory provides deep insights for the variation in Imagologie and the discipline position of Imagologie in Comparative Literature.

The theoretical deficiency of French school lies in its lack of reflecting the loss, addition and misreading of information in literary dissemination and the differences in literary reading under the influence of different historical periods, recipients and civilizations. Though with a sense of the variation, it does not solve the problem and still categorizes Comparative Literature into the scope of an empirical study. (Cao & Zhang, 2008)

Theoretical elaboration could better help to understand the theoretical framework and its application in research.

The third aspect in current research of Variation Theory is its application. Papers devoted to this end mainly utilize the Variation Theory to analyze a case study that centers on translation and reception of literary works and on the basis of this investigation of the variation of the original work in traveling to the other environment and the underlying reasons therein. Any translation is not carried out in a vacuum but subject to ideology, literary discourse and the translator’s subjectivity. The “image variation” and “creative treason” in translation are the indirect reflection of the heterogeneity between two involved cultures. Thus, one should trace and analyze the essence behind the phenomenon of variation in translation from the perspective of Variation Theory, exploring and confronting the heterogeneity in-between instead of judging translation with the single static standard so as to create sound ecology for literary translation. *On the Creative Treason in Translation of Poetry by Guo Moruo from the Perspective of Variation Theory* (2009), taking the translated version of *Ode to the West Wind* and that of *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* as its example, analyzes the variation in translation in the level of tone, form and image so as to discuss the creative treason of the translator in their efforts to vividly represent the poetic context in the original work. Another good example is *A Controversial Case Study of Empirical Literary Relation—Matsuo Basho and Chinese Literature* (2009) that combines the empirical study with the Variation Theory. It uncovers and explores another unempirical aspect of literary dissemination—literary variation on the basis of acknowledging the inter-literary influence to clarify the fact that the influence of foreign literary

works on the author will not stay unchanged but rather is absorbed into the literary creation based on the individual comprehension of the work. This article sets equal store by the empirical and unempirical aspects of the case study and comprehensively probes into the relation between Matsuo Basho and Chinese Literature, displaying the compensation of enquiry on literariness by Variation Theory in the empirical nature of Influence Studies so as to view the inter-national literary communication and relation on an equal and objective footing. It comes to the conclusion that

The reason for the controversy over the empirical case study of the influential relation between Matsuo Basho and Chinese Literature is attributable to the fact that though under the influence of Chinese culture, Matsuo Basho and his Haiku is in the final analysis Japanese and the Chinese culture undergoes some variation therein after its being received into Japanese. (Han, 2009)

3. RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

After the systematic study of the current research on Variation Theory, the author holds that there also exist some gaps in the study of this theory though Variation Theory has aroused wide interest and attention and shown great potential as a new paradigm in the theoretical framework in Comparative Literature.

An obvious feature, firstly, is that most researches conducted currently adopt a diachronic perspective while rarely combining the synchronic one. Most papers tend to elaborate on Variation Theory against the backdrop of the diachronic development of the discipline of Comparative Literature. That is, the sequence in conducting research on the Influence Studies, to Parallel Studies and then to the Variation Theory, which could reduce the dynamic and multi-dimensional discipline paradigms to a static and plane one. The future research focus should be properly shifted to the synchronic dimension. Concretely speaking, that is, whether the Influence Studies and Parallel Studies witness some changes or adjustment in the development of the discipline in the context of the proposal of Variation Theory in times of the difficulty to conduct inter-civilization research in Comparative Literature. What are the changes of the Influence Studies and Parallel Studies in the current context? And compared with such changes, what are the advantages of Variation Theory? Issues falling into such category require further exploration. Every theory lies in its specific response to certain historical and social context. Changes in historical context inevitably render influence on the former theory, which may better interpret the uniqueness and universality of Variation Theory as a discipline paradigm of Comparative Literature.

The future research should also emphasize the macro-perspective that means the integration of Variation Theory with Influence Studies and Parallel Studies. The majority of papers incline to investigate the advantages of Variation

Theory in inter-civilization research. *The Theoretical Deficiency of Parallel Study from the Perspective of Variation Theory* (2009) investigates the deficiency of Parallel Studies in the three aspects: western centrism and orientalist, universal truth and heterogeneous civilization and the dilemma in the pattern of X + Y (Qiu, 2009). But one may sometimes shift his angle and put the Variation Theory in the framework of the other two, which may produce encouraging results so as to substantiate the research paradigm of Variation Theory. At the same time, in the aspect of theoretical application, the variation in literary works is mostly appreciated from Variation Theory with much neglect of the other two. *The Western Feminism and the Comments by the Chinese Female Writers* set a good example in that the book combines the Variation Theory with Influence Studies and Parallel Studies to elaborate on the chosen topic. Actually long before the proposal of Variation Theory, some scholar has advocated for combining the two paradigms in research, deeming that “Will it not be more complete to explore absorption condition and the consequent similarity and difference on the basis of influence if any literary influence existing among countries (Wang & Cao, 1998)?” Thus, why not the integration of the Variation Theory with Influence Studies and Parallel were studies? Furthermore, the reality dimension of Variation Theory. The Interdisciplinary Studies break down the barrier between literature and other disciplines and realize to some extent the social relevance of literature research, closely related with the historical context at that time.

The decades of the 1960s and 1970s of turbulent and intense social and cultural upheaval generated a sense of ‘crisis’ since it was expected that all academic disciplines must address the issues that had been thrown up by the socio-political ferment and re-organize themselves to retain their social relevance. (Totosy & Mukherjee, 2013)

Thus, René Wellek in *The Crisis in Comparative Literature* stands for the expansion of comparison scope, such as the inclusion of folklore study and the relation between literature and other forms of arts into the framework of Comparative Literature, which may explain the resurgence of the discipline in the U.S after its crisis of focusing on the empirical research. Just as some scholar points out that “What makes the comparative approach vital in the analysis of literature and culture is the social relevance of humanities scholarship (Totosy & Mukherjee, 2013)”. It is even more so in nowadays’ world of fast development in Internet and new media. Much room remains unexplored in social relevance of Variation Theory.

In addition, some issues need further detailed clarification. How does variation come about? Why and where does variation arise? What are the extent and rule for variation? And what is the starting object of variation, or variation from what? *Opening the Door for Eastern-*

Western Culture Dialogue—On “Gap” and “Variation Study” (2013) expounds on the research scope of variability.

Variation Theory sets the validity for literary comparison between the east and west and confirms the comparability of differences, but it emphasizes the comparability of heterogeneity which should and could be identified among literary phenomena with some homology or similarity. (Cao & Shen, 2013)

which may enlighten the future research on the “extent” of variation. This issue resembles “creative treason” in translation in that if no scope is set for the extent of variation, it may decompose itself finally. Similar cases exist in Interdisciplinary Studies in Comparative Literature for the inclusion of any comparison between literature and other forms of art into the scope of Comparative Literature may lead to pan-disciplinary crisis. It is the same case with the “extent” of variation.

The last aspect is the normativity and unity in translation of the terminology. The disciplinary development entails the new coining and expansion of discipline terminology. Thus, the systemization of terminology introduction in Comparative Literature plays a significant role in the importation and exportation of discipline thought and the normativity in terminology translation can promote the development of discipline and the integration of different thoughts. “Terminology is a distinctive mark of a discipline and whether it is scientific, systematic and normative is representative of the development level of the discipline (Fang, 2008)”. The translation of key terminology in Variation Theory could do much in the reception of this theory in the cross-lingual context. But the current terminology translation for this theory needs further improvement. There appear the following English versions of the name for this theory: “variation”(The Research Field of Literary Variation in Comparative Literature) (2006), “Mutation”(The Localization of Mutation—Dissemination of Folk Tales in Cross-ethnic Groups) (2006), “Variationology”(On Influence Study in Comparative Literature from the Perspective of Variationology) (2006), “variation theory”(Comparative Literature, the Chinese School and the Variation Theory: An Interview with Douwe Wessel Fokkema) (2008), “Theory of Variation”(The Academic Background and Theoretical Assumptions of the Theory of Variation of Comparative Literature) (2008), “the Variation”(The Variation: The Breakthrough in Theories of Comparative Literature) (2008) and “Variation Theory”(Variation Theory: A Breakthrough in Theorizing Comparative Literature Studies) (2010). Wang Guowei once noticed the importance of the translation of literary terminology and holds that “the importation of new thoughts inevitably is entwined with introduction of new terms (Chen & Wang, 2013)”. It is vice verse.

CONCLUSION

It has been a decade since the Variation Theory was proposed. But one decade may not be far from being long enough for the mature development of a theory in a discipline. The Influence Studies, Parallel Studies and the Variation Theory are all responses to the certain social and historical context in the development of the discipline. History stands as testimony to the beneficial role of the shift in the discipline’s paradigms in face of the crisis. So it is the same with the proposal of Variation Theory that marks another new innovation and breakthrough in the theoretical framework in Comparative Literature. Variation Theory is of universal value in not only promoting the innovation and development of discipline theory in China but also those around the world. And its role could better be brought to its full play in guidance of future research with its vacant and uncharted room needing to be further explored.

REFERENCES

- Cao, S. D. (2001). On the three development stages of discipline theory of comparative literature. *Comparative Literature in China*, (3), 14.
- Cao, S. D. (2006). The cross feature of discipline theory in comparative literature and the proposal of “variation theory. *Cultural Studies and Literary Theory*, (1), 124.
- Cao, S. D., & Zhang, Y. (2008). The academic background and theoretical assumptions of the theory of variation of comparative literature. *Foreign Literature Studies*, (3), 146.
- Cao, S. Q., & Shen, Y. Y. (2013). Opening the door for eastern-western culture dialogue—On “gap” and “variation study. *Dongjiang Journal*, (3), 6.
- Chen, D., Sun, J. Y., & Xie, T. Z. (1997). *Comparative literature*. Beijing: Higher Education Press.
- Chen, Z. G., & Wang, Y. F. (2013). A probe into the terminological translation studies and the lack of literary terminology translation studies in China. *Contemporary Foreign Languages Study*, (3), 59.
- Fang, M. Z. (2008). On the orientation of translation studies from the translation of concerned terminology. *Shanghai Journal of Translators*, (1), 6.
- Han, D. (2009). A controversial case study of empirical literary relation—Matsuo Basho and Chinese literature. *Academic Exchange*, (1), 174.
- Huang, W. L., & Cao, S. Q. (1998). *The cultivation and expansion of discipline theory of comparative literature in China*. Beijing: Peking University Press.
- Liu, S. P. (2009). The concept of cross-cultural difference and the construction of variation study in comparative literature. *Journal of Jishou University*, (2), 103.
- Qiu, M. F. (2009). The theoretical deficiency of parallel study from the perspective of variation theory. *Qiu Suo*, (3), 192.

- Totosy, S., & Mukherjee, T. (2013). *Companion to comparative literature, world literatures, and comparative cultural studies*. India: Cambridge University Press India Pvt. Ltd.
- Wan, Y. (2013). Study of variation theory of comparative literature in the inter-civilization context. *Innner Mongolia Social Sciences*, (1), 107.
- Wu, L. (2007). Research on language variation from the perspective of literary variation. *Theoretical Research*, (1), 103.
- Wu, X. M. (2006). "Traveling theory" and "variation study"—Investigation of the perspective for a research field. *Jiangnan Tribune*, (7), 114.
- Yan, S. D. (1987). *On the ancient literary relation between China and Japan*. Changsha: Hunan Art and Literature Press.
- Zhang, T., & Qin, L. (2014). "Harmonious but individual"—Theoretical basis and identity of comparative literature studies. *Cultural Studies and Literary Theory*, (manuscript submitted for publication).
- Zhang, Y. (2008). "Incommensurability" and "seeking common ground while reserving differences"—On the basis for comparability in variation theory. *Cultural Studies and Literary Theory*, (1), 137.