

Bibliometric Analysis of Translation Studies of *The Great Learning* Using COOC/VOSviewer

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Abstract: Considering its predominant role among *The Four Books*, the Confucian classics, *The Great Learning* has been studied closely by scholars. However few researches have been conducted in terms of bibliometrics and visualized pattern. As this subject is receiving more and more attention, new research directions in this field are expected. The aim of the paper is to provide broad information on translation studies of *The Great Learning* including authors, keywords, references, journals, institutions and the future trends. By using COOC/VOSviewer, an analytic application, the paper applies a bibliometric approach to analyze the data collected from CNKI. The most productive authors and the journals that published most of the related studies are provided by this paper. The future research trends are predicted accordingly.

Keywords: *The Great Learning*; translation studies; bibliometric analysis; COOC/VOSviewer

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Great Learning is one of Confucian classics. It was originally the forty-second composition of *Book of Rites*. In Song Dynasty it was singled out and combined with *The Analects of Confucius*, *The Doctrine of the Mean*, and *The Book of Mencius* as a compilation by Zhu Xi, a notable scholar of Confucianism. The compilation was named as *The Four Books* and he ranked *The Great Learning* the first among the other three classics. It is fair to say that this book is the foundation of understanding the other three of *The Four Books* (Ding Ji, 2014). The book involves far-reaching philosophies of politics, personal morality and ethical standards, which makes it one of significant Confucian works. It also plays an important role in the history of cultural exchanges between China and the Western countries (Zhu Qianru, 2012). After the implementation of the Culture Exporting strategy, translations of Chinese classics have been drawing more and more attention of Chinese government, publishers and academic world. To study the translations of Confucianism, *The Four Books* are bound to be taken into consideration. Compared with the other three books, the translations of *The Great Learning* are quite abundant with a number of at least 12 versions. Although English versions of the book have been well translated, few studies have been conducted in this field using quantitative and visualized bibliometrics to analyze references instead of original papers. Therefore, a quantitative method has been used in this paper instead of the traditional citation counts and qualitative method. By doing so, a more comprehensive understanding of the evolution and prospect of translations studies of the book can be obtained. It is expected to comb through last ten years of studies on the translations of the book and provides useful information on further researches into translations of the book.

This paper uses a bibliometrics method through COOC/VOSviewer to provide an overview of the studies on the translations of *The Great Learning*. It begins with a brief overview of English translations of *The Great Learning* and is followed by the information about the tool (COOC/VOSviewer) used for the analysis and the searching procedure. Apart from the introduction of English versions of *The Great Learning* in the next section, this paper makes a close study of growth trends, core authors, top journals, institutions and important reference articles. Based on these results, future trends are predicted. Findings in the research, practical and methodological contributions and some limitations are concluded in the last section. Last but not least, the paper also provides a framework of visual and quantitative research for researchers in need and fills the gap between studies on *The Great Learning* and bibliometric analysis.

The English Versions of *The Great Learning* and Studies of *The Great Learning* at Home and Abroad

Before the nineteenth century, there was no English version of *The Great Learning* translated directly from Chinese to English. Most of the translations were translated from Latin or French versions. In the nineteenth century, thanks to their direct experience in China and relentless effort to translate Chinese classics, British Protestant missionaries played a pivotal role in studying and promoting Chinese culture (Wang Hui, 2011). Thus, with the influx of Protestant missionaries into China, the translation and transmission of the book started. Several English versions of Chinese classics emerged.

In 1812, Robert Morrison translated this book titled *The Great Science*. In 1814, Joshua Marshman, a missionary from Britain, published his work *Elements of Chinese Grammar* which included *Literally the 'Great or Important Doctrine'*, namely *The Great Learning (daxue)*, translated by his son John Marshman. In 1828, David Collie published *The Chinese Classical Work Commonly Called the Four Books; Translated and Illustrated With Notes* (He Yanan, 2016). James Legge (1982), a renowned Sinologist in modern Britain history, was the first to study and translate ancient Chinese classics. In 1861, James Legge (1982) published *Chinese Classics: with a Translation, Critical and Exegetical Notes, Prolegomena, and Copious Indexes* which contained his translation of *The Great Learning*.

Compared with those versions by foreign scholars or missionaries aimed at propagating Christian beliefs, these translations by Chinese writers focus more on the essence of Confucianism and moral inspiration in a traditional Chinese way. In 1915, Ku Hongming, a well-known scholar in recent Chinese history, translated the book into English titled *Higher Education*. Well-educated and proficient in several foreign languages, he had a good command of both western sciences and Chinese literature, which provided him with a unique perspective of translation. In 1938, the English version titled *The Wisdom of Confucius* translated by Chinese scholar Lin Yutang came out. The fourth chapter of the book was Lin's translation of *The Great Learning*.

English Versions of *The Great Learning*

Within China			Beyond China		
Time	Translator	Title	Time	Translator	Title
1915	Ku Hongming	<i>Higher Education</i>	1812	Robert Morrison	<i>The Great Science</i>
1938	Lin Yutang	<i>Higher Education</i>	1814	John Marshman	<i>Literally the 'Great or Important Doctrine'</i>
			1828	David Collie	<i>The Great Learning</i>
			1862	James Legge	<i>The Ta Hsio, or The Great Learning</i>

TABLE1: English Versions of *The Great Learning* in China and beyond China

Despite all these translations by scholars and experts in China and beyond, studies on the translation are relatively few. According to Yuan Xiaoliang (2015), the number of researches on *The Great Learning* by 2015 is only up to 14. There is no latest research into an overview or predication of translation studies of this book. By searching in the database of CNKI, only dozens of papers come up and many of them are only related to universities and colleges because Chinese characters “daxue” also means universities or colleges. If changing the keyword “*The Great Learning (daxue)*” into “*The Four Books (sishu)*”, more results are presented. The studies on translation of *The Great Learning* were at the beginning combined with other three books. To put it another way, *The Four Books* were studied as a whole initially. These papers are mainly centered on translators, their contributions and the reason why translations of Chinese classics emerged. In the nineteenth century, a large number of missionaries came to China and tried to preach their beliefs. Their main power to translate these Chinese classics were missionaries either of Catholics or of Protestant Christianity. They put their emphasis on Confucian classics so they could break the cultural barriers and propagate their religions and beliefs (Hu Ruiqin, 2007). Paul Kranze, one of the missionaries, came to China in 1893 and his vernacular version of *The Four Books* perfectly combined Chinese culture with the doctrine of Christianity. He made tremendous contributions to the reform of traditional ways of teaching and the course content in China as well (Hu Ruiqin, 2007). The translating process of Chinese classics, however, is regarded as a win-win operation. It was rather reasonable and feasible for missionaries from all over the world who were so involved in disseminating their religions and beliefs and for thinkers and philosophers who desperately sought perfect solutions to settle their cultural or institutional problems to benefit from the translations of compilation of ancient Chinese philosophies (Sun Yingli, 2009). Wang Hui (2018) decided that *The Great Learning* translated by Robert Morrison included in his published collection in 1812 was empty in content and contempt in attitude. The version he offered to the Western readers used literal translation strategy without deliberation and had earned him suspicious reputation however it diminished Chinese people's wisdom. The version translated by Ezra Pound was published in 1928 and received a mixed reaction in academic world. Although his translation was not completely faithful to the original context, he comprehended and translated the work by decoding Chinese characters creatively. He was determined to

show his political opinions by promoting Confucianism(CaoShujuan, 2011). Cai Xinhui(2015) compared the translations of both Ku Hongming and James Legge and proposed that their productions perfectly conveyed the intended meaning of source text. The one by James Legge, however, was more concise and precise and was thought of as the standard version of *The Great Learning*. The other one by Ku Hongming preserved the sentence structures of the source text and better met the expectation of Chinese readers.

While searching for the studies of *The Great Learning* in the database of foreign languages including JSTOR or ScienceDirect and Google Scholar, no paper related to this topic could be found.

These domestic studies mainly focus on the translations of *The Four Books* at the beginning, seeing the four ancient Chinese classics as a whole. In other words, studies into *The Great Learning* cannot be separated from the compilation. These papers for the most part discuss over translators and their aims or goals of translating Chinese classics. Since the dedicated studies into translations of *The Great Learning* are gradually published, multiple perspectives of the research are on the rise as well. The study perspectives including thick translation, hermeneutics, translation ethics and eco-translatology and so on are adopted for translation studies of the book. More and more comparative studies between different versions are presented. Nevertheless, few studies using quantitative bibliometrics to analyze references have been conducted in this field. It is true that quantitative research cannot supplant qualitative research. Consequently, the way of integrating both methods can gain fruitful achievements.

Methodology and Data

Bibliometrics is defined as a mathematical way to provide quantitative analysis of distribution, relationship among quantities and variation laws of publications. According to QiuJunping(1986), bibliometrics is such a subject based on math and statistics that it can be used to figure out characteristics and certain laws of the object of a study. The concept was originated from quantitative research of literature in the 1900s. In the 1970s, Pritchard(1969) put forward the concept of bibliometrics to replace quantitative research of literature. Since then, more concepts related to bibliometrics was brought about. Henry Small(1973) believed that co-citation is a useful measure of the relationship between publications. In 2000, based on cluster analysis of co-citation, words and articles, scholars in China designed an analytic system of co-citation. This system makes the analysis of publications visualized. With the rapid growth of science and technology, the number of publications in all fields is surging. It is difficult to unveil the whole picture of a specific field through reading or qualitative analysis. While bibliometrics can settle this problem by providing quantitative analysis of elements of publications. This paper adopts the definition by QiuJunping and analyzes the targeted publications based on the theory of bibliometrics. It aims to analyze authors, keywords, references, journals, institutions and the trends in this field.

COOC/VOSviewer is a Java-based application for analyzing publications, authors, institutions and generating visual maps. This tool is designed to find critical points in the development of a field, especially turning points and pivotal points. These various functions provided by this software help identify fast-growing areas, trending topics, and decompose a network into clusters and so forth. The software is able to analyze data from many databases including CNKI, CSSCI, Web of Science, ScienceDirect and so on. It can be found on its Wechat official account by searching for “Xueshudiandi(学术点滴)”. The software was co-founded by the team of academy and the team of bibliometric analysis.

This paper is intended to use COOC/VOSviewer 11.8(COOC) version as a visual and analytic research tool. Considering that few papers have been published in foreign language databases, all the articles analyzed in this paper were from the database of CNKI. Several restrictions were set before the topic search to get the original target articles. The keywords of ‘studies on translated versions of *The Great Learning* (*daxueyijieyanjiu*)’, ‘translation studies of *The Great Learning* (*daxuefanyianjiu*)’ were used as a whole phrase in the topic search. ‘*The Four Books*(*sishu*)’, ‘translation studies(*yijieyanjiu*)’ was put in box of topics to eliminate other studies related to colleges or translation teachings. The time span was set from 2002 to 2021 because the paper tries to analyze the development and evolution of translations of the book in the past 10 years. The source of data was limited within academic journals, dissertations and books.

By doing so, 989 articles and papers were presented. Then the data was imported into COOC for further data cleansing exercise. After the charts of publishing year, author, institution, journal, abstract and title were regenerated by the application, those unrelated publications were first moved out one by one. Those articles of which the elements mentioned above such as publishing year, authors and etc were missing were moved out. Next, meaningless words such as ‘the purpose(*zongzhi*)’, ‘studies(*yanjiu*)’, ‘review(*zongshu*)’ were eliminated and words and phrases sharing similar meanings were moved out by using COOC. The following words and phrases were processed in this way. For example, ‘translation(*fanyi*)’, ‘translation studies(*fanyianjiu*)’, ‘English versions(*yingyi*)’, ‘translation strategies(*fanyicelve*)’ and ‘translation methods(*fanyifangfa*)’ were replaced by ‘translation studies(*fanyianjiu*)’. ‘the English version of *The Great Learning*(*daxueyingyi*)’, ‘translations of *The Great Learning*(*daxuefanyi*)’ and ‘retranslation of *The Great Learning* (*daxuechongyi*)’ were replaced by ‘*The*

Great Learning (daxue)’. ‘English translations of classics(dianjiyingyi)’, ‘translations of classics written in Chinese(hanyujindianyanjiu)’, ‘translations of Chinese classics(zhongguojindianfanyi)’ and ‘translations of classic(dianjifanyi)’ were combined as ‘translations of classics(dianjifanyi)’. ‘Comparative analysis(duibifenxi)’, ‘comparative research(duibianyanjiu)’ and ‘comparative study(bijiaoyanjiu)’ were replaced by ‘comparative analysis(duibifenxi)’. ‘Jesuit missionaries(yesuhoichuanjiaoshi)’, ‘Protestant missionaries(xinjiaochuanjiaoshi)’ and ‘Western missionaries(xifangchuanjiaoshi)’ were processed as ‘missionaries(chuanjiaoshi)’. Other frequent keywords were processed the same way. After carefully screening, only 215 articles remained. Despite the fact that CNKI does not include all papers about translation studies of *The Great Learning*, the references collected cover almost every single important article in this field.

II. Discussion

Publishing Information

The number of the articles kept rising until the year of 2015. There was a decrease in 2015 but after that the number was on a rise until peaking at 28 in 2018, followed by a declining trend in subsequent years (shown in Figure 1). The total number of the publications was rising but some slowdowns in its growth presented itself. It is obvious that the growing rate of published articles slowed down after the year of 2005 yet it shows no sign of reaching a plateau. As for total number of the publications, it is highly likely to keep rising but the growing rate may go even lower. In other words, the studies of translations of *The Great Learning* are still thriving. However, the total number of publications each year is just not satisfying enough for the related research to be considered as a hot topic. Yet the related studies are waiting for a turning point considering its sluggish growing rate of publications.

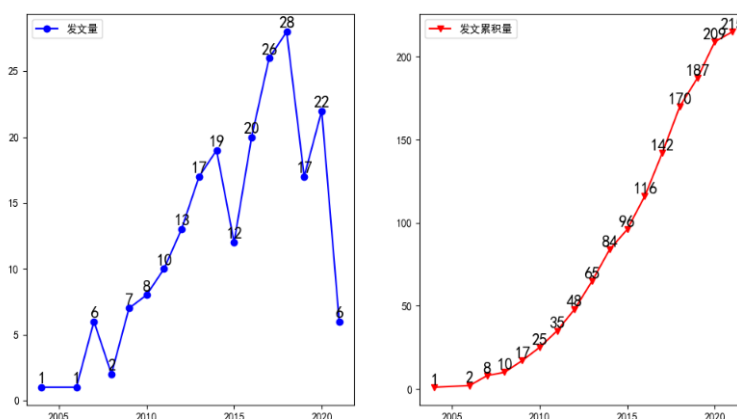


FIGURE 1: Number of publications on the studies of translations of *The Great Learning* for each year from 2002 to 2021 in the CNKI.

Authorship

By analyzing the data from CNKI from 2004 to 2021, there are 225 authors contribute to the studies. The top 19 most active authors are listed in the Table 2 and each of them published at least two articles. Yet the number of their publications is quite small and only accounts for about 23.3% of the total number of 215. Guo Lei mainly studied the achievement and life experience of Collie David, the first translator of *The Four Books* whose contributions to the transmission of Chinese culture was remarkable (Guo Lei, 2013). Writing and translating more than 10 works in Chinese and English, the historical achievements of this missionary was underestimated and more details of his academic contributions and life experiences were supposed to be revealed (Guo Lei, 2017).

Chen Shuqian introduced the dissemination of the English version of *The Great Learning* by James Legge. He held that new forms of ways and motives emerged in nineteenth century which promoted the exchanges between the Chinese traditional culture and the Western culture. He adopted the theory of Hermeneutics and launched a comparative study to reflect on the cultural transmission. His studies into *The Great Learning* are always inseparable from that of *The Four Books* (Chen Shuqian, 2013, 2015). He also focused on the educational function of the English version of *The Four Books*. He noticed that the translation of *The Four Books* once served as an important learning material for the missionaries and scholars to study ancient Chinese, which further promoted the transmission of Chinese and Chinese culture (Chen Shuqian, 2016).

Zhao Changjiang(2012, 2014) largely emphasized on the English versions from a perspective of dissemination of traditional Chinese works. He argued that translations of *The Four Books* and *The Five Classics* accounted for a larger proportion compared with other classics. More perspectives of researches were called upon and it was urgent to comb through the history of translations of classics. Yet there were not enough modes of promoting the transmission of traditional Chinese books.

Hui Ruiqin studied the contributions of a Germany missionary Paul Kranz as part of Confucianism study. Paul Kranz translated *The Four Books* into the first vernacular version. And his illustrations and annotations of the culture-loaded words as well as the comparative study of Confucianism and Christian beliefs had a huge impact on his successors(Hu Ruiqin, 2018). And it was due to his life experience in China where he witnessed a series of significant events burst out in rapidly changing Chinese society that he tried to convert Chinese people into Christians(Hu Ruiqin, 2020).

LuoYing(2021) discussed the manuscripts of *The Four Books* by Michele Ruggieri, a missionary to China since Ming dynasty and the author also discussed about the translation strategies and techniques. Cao Shujuan(2011) studied the initiative of the translator in the English version of *The Great Learning* by Ezra Pound. Li Na(2016) argued the contributions of building parallel corpora of *The Four Books*.

TABLE 2: The top 19 most productive authors.

排名	作者名	发文量统计(篇)
1	郭磊	5
1	陈树千	5
2	赵长江	4
2	胡瑞琴	4
3	杨国强	3
3	罗莹	3
4	曹淑娟	2
4	王月	2
4	端木敬静	2
4	李娜	2
4	袁晓亮	2
4	方美珍	2
4	龙翔	2
4	李新德	2
4	彭秀林	2
4	王辉	2
4	张西平	2
4	张冰	2
4	王慧宇	2

Journals and Institutions

The top 20 journals that published the most of articles about translation studies of *The Great Learning* are displayed in Figure 2. Obviously, most of these journals are in translation and Chinese fields, and some are related to studies of Confucianism and Chinese culture. The information in this section provides a general view that translation and transmission of *The Great Learning* is more emphasized in certain fields and directs later coming researchers to journals that are better choices for article submission.

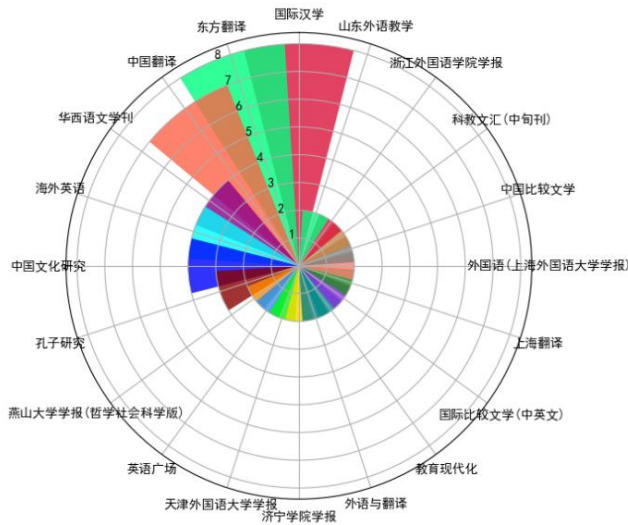


FIGURE 2: The top 20 journals for the articles about translations of *The Great Learning*. As shown in figure 3, the Foreign Language School of Southwest Jiaotong University ranks first with 4 publications, followed by the Foreign Language School of Guilin University of Electronic Technology with 3 publications and Beijing Foreign Studies University and other four institutions all with 3 publications.

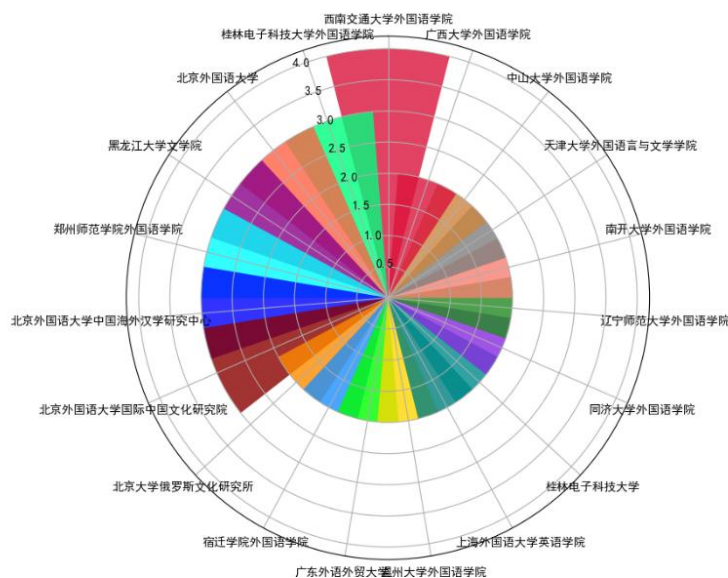


FIGURE3: The top 19 institutions for translations of *The Great Learning* publications.

Keywords

The top 20 keywords are listed in figure 4 and several modifications were applied to ensure the comprehensiveness of the keywords information as mentioned in the part of methodology and data. Apart from the topic words '*The Great Learning(daxue)*', the most frequent word is '*The Four Books(sishu)*', followed by 'translation studies(fanyiyanjiu)'.

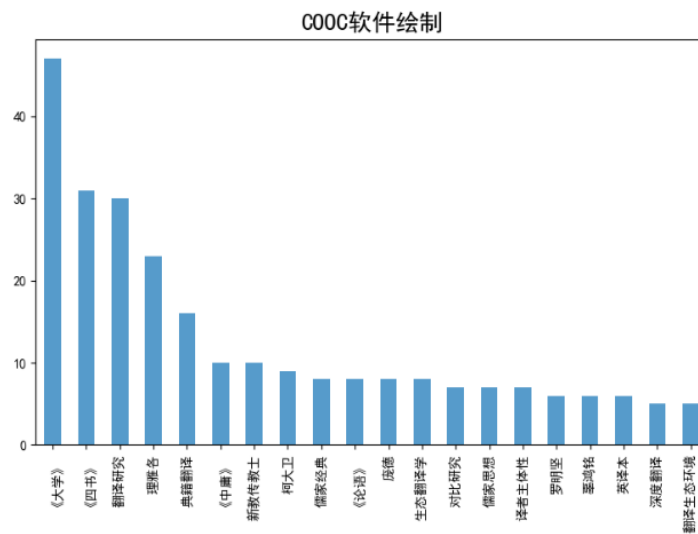


FIGURE 4: The top 20 keywords from the publications

As shown in figure 5, the top 5 most frequent keywords are quite different from year to year. Different perspectives into this topic kept emerging every year including the initiative of the translators, Chinese classics, theories such as eco-translatology, and studies on translators such as Ezra Pound and James Legge. It is not until recent years that the concept of corpora is introduced into the studies of classic translations. Hence, it can be predicted that the future research trend will be relatively stable which means the studies of translations of *The Great Learning* remain part of translation studies of Chinese classics and the focus stays with its translators. New perspectives including corpora will find their way into related studies.

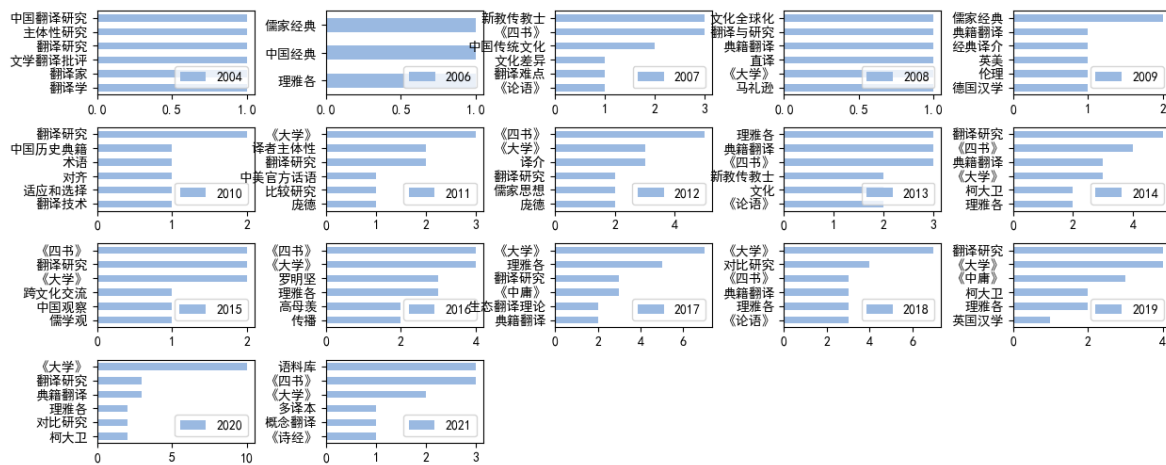


FIGURE 5: The frequency of the top 6 keywords from 2002 to 2021

The keywords co-citation relationship is used for the analysis shown in Figure 6. The top 30 keywords were analyzed using VOSviewer and these words were divided into 5 clusters according to co-citation relationship. Keywords in the same color as shown in the Figure 6 are highly connected and were co-cited. It is obvious that ‘*The Great Learning*(daxue)’, ‘*The Four Books*(sishu)’, ‘translation studies(fanyiyanjiu)’ and ‘James Legge(Li Yage)’ remain the pivot points among other words. ‘Ezra Pound(Pang de)’, ‘comparative studies(duibiyianjiu)’, ‘eco-translatology(shengtaifanyixue)’ and ‘thick translation(shendufanyi)’ are expected to be centered on or to form a new branch in the near future. Additionally, apart from these keywords, topics including ‘corpora(Yuliaoku)’ and ‘Collie David(KeDawei)’ recently identified as trending topics may become the future research directions.

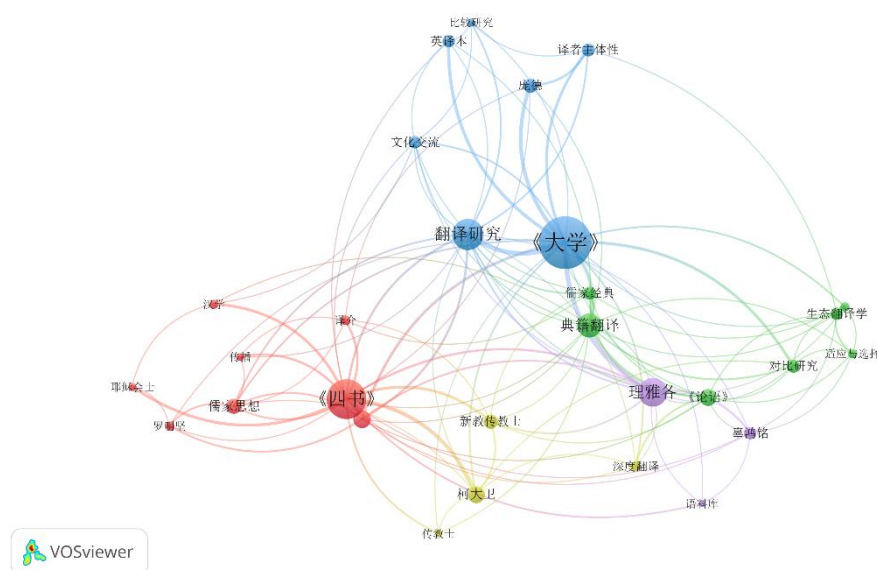


FIGURE 6: The map of keywords in co-citation relationship

III. CONCLUSION

This article starts with a brief review of the translations of *The Great Learning* and its contributions to the transmission of Chinese classics. Several major scholars and their studies are introduced to further understand the significance of translation studies of *The Great Learning*. After carefully screening by using COOC/VOSviewer, the publications published from 2002 to 2021 are analyzed. Key points including authors, keywords, references, journals, institutions and the trends in this field are visualized as shown in figures and tables. As shown in the figures and tables above, the translation studies of *The Great Learning* are thriving and heading for new research directions. The most productive authors with at least five articles are Chen Shuqian and Guo Lei. The journals that published the most of related studies are *International Sinology* and *Eastern Journal of Translation* which are rather suitable for researchers to publish their findings. The Foreign Language School of Southwest Jiaotong University ranks the first in terms of most productive institutions. The paper predicts that keywords including 'Ezra Pound', 'comparative studies', 'eco-translatology' and 'thick translation' may be the future research trends. 'Corpora' and 'Collie David' may become new branches of the future research directions.

This paper can also be thought of as methodological contribution for it uses visualized method supported by COOC/VOSviewer. The analytic tool is designed to show the development of a certain subject based on quantitative method. It can capture the hot spot and the trending topic for further studies in related areas. Compared with reviewing the literature on a large scale, this tool serves as a filter which is able to locate theme related journals and thesis quickly and thoroughly.

However, three main limitations of this paper are supposed to be discussed. Firstly, although the analyzed articles cover the most important articles in the field of translation study of *The Great Learning*, only the database of CNKI is taken into account which is not comprehensive and some major journals may be excluded. The publishing year is limited from 2002 to 2021, which does not start the research from the very beginning when the first related article was published. Secondly, the content the analyzed articles cannot be processed directly by COOC/VOSviewer. Thus, the details of important articles were analyzed manually, which is time-consuming and may be not as accurate as the application. Finally, information collected from the database is just a brief introduction to the publications, thus the detailed information could be left out while unrelated information may be included. Therefore, these three limitations are still problems to be settled for further studies.

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