

# Core Issues and Theoretical Prospects of Contemporary Chinese Translation Studies in the Service of National Strategies

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**Abstract:** The comprehensive advancement of national strategies in the New Era has driven a paradigm shift in Chinese translation studies from “text-centeredness” to “national demand orientation.” Based on a systematic analysis of core literature from CSSCI source journals published between 2012 and 2025, this paper delineates the development trajectory and core issues of Chinese translation studies within the context of serving national strategies. The findings indicate that current research has coalesced around five key areas: international communication and national discourse construction, regional and country-specific translation studies under the Belt and Road Initiative, the overseas translation and dissemination of traditional Chinese culture, emergency language services, and translation technology and the development of national translation capacity. The research is characterized by distinct practice orientation, local consciousness, and interdisciplinary tendencies, yet there remains room for improvement in theoretical originality, methodological diversity, and thematic balance. Future research should concentrate on constructing a theoretical system of translation studies with Chinese characteristics, deepening empirical inquiry, and fostering interdisciplinary integration, so as to better respond to the country’s major strategic needs.

**Keywords:** National Strategies; Chinese Translation Studies; Research Paradigm; National Translation Practice; Theoretical Construction.

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## 1. Introduction

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the country has entered a new stage of development. From the Belt and Road Initiative to the promotion of a community with a shared future for mankind, from the Project for the Inheritance and Development of Fine Traditional Chinese Culture to the strengthening of international communication capacity, China is increasingly participating in global governance and civilizational exchanges with a more proactive stance. In this process, translation is no longer merely a technical means of linguistic conversion but has gradually become an important underpinning for serving national development and engaging in international communication and cultural exchanges, its strategic salience growing continuously (Wang Dongfeng, 2019.).

Correspondingly, the academic paradigm of contemporary Chinese translation studies has undergone a profound transformation. Since the reform and opening-up, Chinese translation studies have evolved from importing Western translation theories to constructing indigenous theoretical systems. Entering the New Era, the continuous advancement of national strategies has opened up new problem domains for translation research, shifting the focus from text-centeredness to approaches that attend more closely to socio-cultural contexts and practical needs (Zhong Weihe, 2019.).

In recent years, serving national strategies has become the core theme of Chinese translation studies, giving rise to a large body of scholarly output and becoming one of the most dynamic research areas in foreign language and translation disciplines. However, systematic review studies in this area remain relatively scarce. Most existing reviews focus on specific sub-fields, lacking a comprehensive grasp of the overall development trajectory, core hotspots, academic consensus, and limitations of translation studies in the context

of serving national strategies. Accordingly, this paper takes as its object of investigation the core literature related to “serving national strategies + translation studies” published in CSSCI journals from 2012 to 2025. Through systematic review and in-depth critical analysis, it seeks to clarify the current state and evolutionary logic of the field, reflect on the shortcomings of existing research, and propose directions for future inquiry.

## 2. Paradigm Shift of Translation Studies in the New Era

Since the beginning of the New Era, the comprehensive advancement of national strategies has driven a profound transformation in translation studies at three levels.

First, a shift in research stance. For a long time, Chinese translation studies exhibited a “Western-centrism” tendency, with a great deal of research taking Western theories as presuppositions. Although this orientation promoted disciplinary development to some extent, it also led to a disjunction between theory and practice—Western theories often failed to effectively explain Chinese translation phenomena. Since the New Era, the academic community has increasingly recognized the limitations of Western theories. Xie Tianzhen (2016) pointed out that translation should not be understood merely as an act of linguistic conversion but should be redefined from the broader perspectives of cultural dissemination and meaning construction, especially in the context of Chinese culture “going global,” where traditional cognitive frameworks need to be transcended. Building on this awareness, scholars have gradually strengthened problem consciousness and begun to explore research approaches with indigenous characteristics grounded in Chinese translation practices. This turn does not reject Western theories outright; rather, it aims to construct theoretical discourses capable of explaining Chinese phenomena and responding to Chinese

issues through critical appropriation.

Second, an expansion of research objects. Traditional translation studies mainly focused on linguistic conversion in literary texts, with a relatively narrow scope. Since the New Era, research objects have expanded considerably to encompass diverse topics such as the translation and international dissemination of national discourse, cross-border applied translation, regional and country-specific translation, emergency language services, and the application of translation technology. This expansion has shattered the narrow perception that “translation equals literary translation” and revealed the multiple functions of translation in national development, mutual learning among civilizations, and global governance.

Third, an adjustment of research goals. Traditional translation studies emphasized theoretical speculation and textual analysis, often detaching from practical needs. Since the New Era, serving major national needs has become a core goal of translation research: translation studies are not only the construction of a knowledge system but also bears the important responsibility of serving national development and cultural dissemination, and it should play a more active role in national strategies and cultural practices (Xie Tianzhen, 2017: 13). This adjustment underscores that academic research should respond to real-world concerns and achieve the unity of academic and social value.

### **3. Analysis of Core Research Themes**

#### **3.1. International Communication and the Construction of National Discourse**

Enhancing international communication capacity is a major strategic task in the New Era, and relevant translation studies have unfolded along three dimensions.

The first is the translation and international dissemination of political discourse. The translation of political documents is a core component of external publicity translation. Scholars have conducted in-depth discussions on translation principles, strategy selection, and effect evaluation. Research shows that the translation of political discourse faces unique challenges: on the one hand, political texts possess high authority, and the translation must accurately convey the original stance; on the other hand, audiences in different political and cultural contexts have differentiated cognitive frameworks. The “Three Closeness” principle—close to China’s actual conditions, close to the needs of foreign audiences, and close to the thinking habits of foreign audiences—has become an important guiding principle for political discourse translation. Numerous scholars have adopted corpus-based methods to systematically analyze the translation strategies for core political concepts such as “a community with a shared future for mankind” and “whole-process people’s democracy.”

The second is research on translation effects and audience reception. In recent years, the academic community has increasingly attended to the question of “how well it is translated,” expanding the research horizon from the text itself to the entire chain of communication effects. This turn breaks through the traditional “text-centered” limitation of translation studies and examines translation within the theoretical frameworks of communication studies and reception aesthetics. Studies have found that translation effects depend not only on translation quality but also on multiple factors such as communication channels, publishing mechanisms, and cultural contexts.

The third is research on translation subjectivity and ethics. In response to the Western-centric translation paradigm, scholars have discussed issues such as the subjective position of Chinese translators and the reconstruction of translation ethics. Studies point out that for a long time, the translation and dissemination of Chinese culture abroad exhibited a “self-orientalization” tendency, deliberately accentuating the exotic features of Chinese culture to cater to Western readers’ curiosity. Translation in the New Era should break away from this tendency and uphold Chinese cultural subjectivity in cross-cultural dialogues.

#### **3.2. Regional and Country-Specific Translation Studies under the Belt and Road Initiative**

The launch of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has not only expanded the space for translation practice but also reshaped the problem consciousness and theoretical focus of translation studies. Against this backdrop, regional and country-specific translation studies have gradually developed a trend centered on culture and oriented toward cross-cultural communication.

First, the focus of translation studies has shifted from linguistic competence alone to the synergy between language and culture. Given the complex and diverse linguistic and cultural landscapes of countries along the Belt and Road, relying solely on linguistic conversion can no longer meet the practical demands of cross-cultural communication. Research has pointed out that culture is not a factor external to language but a fundamental condition that constitutes translation activity, directly influencing the process of understanding and expressing meaning (Marianne Lederer & Liu Heping, 2020: 4–9). Therefore, regional and country-specific translation studies emphasize strengthening cultural cognitive competence beyond linguistic competence, regarding cultural understanding as a core element of translation competence, thereby enhancing the appropriateness and effectiveness of translation in cross-cultural contexts.

Second, translation practice in the BRI context further highlights the complexity and interactivity of cultural dissemination. In discussions on Chinese culture “going global,” the academic community has gradually moved away from the previous one-way export model and instead emphasized multidirectional interaction and meaning negotiation in global cultural exchanges. Zhang Xiping et al. (2024) pointed out that the international dissemination of Chinese culture should not remain at the level of content export; rather, it should achieve the reconstruction of values and the dynamic generation of meaning through dialogue with other cultures. This understanding has propelled translation studies from an “instrumental view of communication” to a “cultural interaction view,” redefining translation as an important mediating mechanism for understanding and communication between civilizations.

Overall, regional and country-specific translation studies in the context of the Belt and Road Initiative are transitioning from the traditional paradigm centered on linguistic conversion to a comprehensive research approach centered on cultural understanding and mutual learning among civilizations. This shift not only deepens the theoretical connotations of translation studies but also provides important academic support for China’s participation in global cultural governance.

### 3.3. Translation and Overseas Dissemination of Traditional Chinese Culture

In the context of the strategy to build a culturally strong nation, promoting fine traditional Chinese culture “going global” has become an important topic in translation studies. In response to this goal, the academic community has gradually reflected on the limitations of existing translation paradigms and reconstructed them at the theoretical level.

In terms of theoretical orientation, research has gradually shifted from sole reliance on Western translation theories to the integration and reconstruction of Chinese and Western theories. Wang Hongyin (2008) argued that the development of Chinese translation studies should not remain at the level of transplanting and applying Western theories; rather, it should absorb their beneficial achievements while basing itself on Chinese cultural traditions and translation practices to promote theoretical innovation with indigenous characteristics. This proposition provides important methodological inspiration for the translation and dissemination of traditional Chinese culture abroad: when interpreting Chinese cultural texts, a theoretical framework that reflects the connotations and expressive modes of Chinese culture should be constructed so as to avoid the interpretive biases caused by mechanically applying Western discourse systems.

In terms of research objects, the scope has expanded from elite classics to popular cultural forms such as intangible cultural heritage, local cultures, and folk culture. Traditional translation studies mainly focused on elite culture, such as Confucian classics and classical literature, paying insufficient attention to popular culture. Since the New Era, with the advancement of intangible cultural heritage protection projects, translation issues related to cultural forms like folk opera, traditional craftsmanship, and local customs have entered researchers’ horizons.

In terms of research methods, interdisciplinary perspectives such as cognitive linguistics and cultural anthropology have been introduced, providing new analytical tools for issues like the translation of culture-loaded words and the transfer of cultural imagery. Translation research from the cognitive linguistics perspective focuses on the audience’s cognitive experience and cross-cultural cognitive differences, analyzing cognitive mechanisms such as conceptual metaphors and category boundaries to provide a cognitive-scientific basis for translation strategy selection.

### 3.4. Emergency Language Services Research

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly heightened the importance of emergency language services in national emergency governance. Wang Lifei et al. (2020) pointed out that emergency language services refer to multilingual language support provided during public emergencies to ensure effective information dissemination, with the core aim of serving public safety and social stability. At the same time, Cai Jigang (2020), from the perspective of language competence and education, emphasized that emergency language services are cross-disciplinary and comprehensive, imposing higher demands on talent cultivation.

In this context, emergency translation exhibits distinctive features: first, high timeliness—multilingual information must be transferred within a short period; second, high professionalism—it involves multiple fields such as medicine

and law; third, high risk—translation quality directly affects information dissemination effectiveness and social security.

In terms of system construction, scholars advocate building multi-level linkage mechanisms and strengthening the construction of multilingual talent pools, terminology databases, and resource platforms. At the technical level, the application of machine translation and artificial intelligence has significantly improved translation efficiency, and human-machine collaboration has gradually become an important mode of emergency translation.

### 3.5. Translation Technology and the Development of National Translation Capacity

With the rapid development of artificial intelligence technology, translation research has gradually extended to the national level, and “national translation technology capacity” has become an important component of national translation capacity research. Wang Huashu (2023) pointed out that national translation technology capacity is a crucial foundation supporting national translation capacity, mainly encompassing elements such as technological resources, platform systems, application capabilities, and governance mechanisms, and its developmental level directly affects the country’s language service capacity and international communication efficiency.

Driven by technological changes, the form of translation practice has undergone significant transformations. In particular, the emergence of large language models (LLMs) has notably improved machine translation in terms of fluency and accuracy, greatly enhancing translation efficiency and propelling translation activities toward intelligence (Li Defeng et al., 2025: 18–24). In this context, the traditional human-led translation model is gradually shifting toward a human-machine collaboration model: basic translation tasks are increasingly handled by technology, while translators focus on post-editing, quality assessment, and process management.

This shift imposes new requirements on translator training, namely the need not only for solid linguistic competence but also for a certain level of technical literacy and tool-use capability, so as to adapt to the industry trend of continuous development of intelligent technologies represented by LLMs.

## 4. Research Characteristics, Problems, and Prospects

### 4.1. Research Characteristics

A comprehensive analysis reveals three distinct characteristics of current research. First, practice orientation: research topics are closely aligned with national strategic needs, with applied and policy-oriented research predominating, and research findings showing a relatively high rate of policy conversion. Second, local consciousness: the academic community increasingly values the theoretical distillation of Chinese experience, exploring a translation discourse system with Chinese characteristics, with a notable enhancement of theoretical self-confidence. Third, interdisciplinary trends: research extensively draws on theoretical resources and methodological tools from related disciplines such as communication studies, political science, sociology, and computer science, rendering disciplinary boundaries increasingly blurred.

## 4.2. Existing Problems

Despite the fruitful achievements, existing research still exhibits notable deficiencies. First, theoretical construction is relatively weak. A large body of research remains at the level of phenomenon description and policy recommendations, lacking systematic and original theoretical innovation; thus, the construction of an independent knowledge system remains a formidable task. Second, research methods are rather monolithic. Qualitative speculative research predominates, while empirical research based on corpora, big data, and fieldwork is relatively insufficient, and the scientificity and verifiability of research conclusions need improvement. Third, the research domain layout is not well balanced. Research is highly concentrated on political discourse and literary-cultural translation in widely used languages, while non-commonly-used languages, applied translation, and regional and country-specific studies are relatively weak, creating a mismatch between the research landscape and national strategic needs. Fourth, the depth of interdisciplinary research is inadequate. Most existing studies merely borrow concepts from other disciplines superficially, lacking genuine interdisciplinary integration and methodological innovation, making it difficult to effectively address the complex needs of translation practice.

## 4.3. Future Prospects

Looking forward, translation studies serving national strategies should strive for breakthroughs in the following aspects: first, strengthening theoretical innovation—basing on Chinese translation practice, distilling original theories with explanatory power and forward-looking vision, constructing a translation studies knowledge system with Chinese characteristics, and breaking free from the path dependency on Western theories; second, deepening empirical research—expanding methodological plurality, strengthening quantitative analysis and field surveys based on first-hand data, and enhancing the scientificity and credibility of research; third, balancing the domain layout—increasing research efforts on non-commonly-used language translation, applied translation, and regional and country-specific translation, with a focus on translation and communication studies in countries along the Belt and Road and developing countries, filling research gaps, and optimizing the research landscape; fourth, reinforcing the orientation toward practice and effects—shifting from “text-centered” to “whole-chain” translation-communication-reception research, concentrating on the overseas communication effects and audience reception of translated texts, and promoting the practical application of research findings.

## 5. Conclusion

Since the New Era, serving national strategies has become the core theme of contemporary Chinese translation studies, driving a fundamental paradigm shift from “text-centeredness” to “national demand orientation,” and forming five core research hotspots: international communication and national

discourse construction, regional and country-specific translation under the Belt and Road Initiative, translation and dissemination of fine traditional Chinese culture, emergency language services, and translation technology and national translation capacity building. These studies have significantly expanded the boundaries of translation studies, broken the discursive monopoly of Western translation theories, and propelled Chinese translation studies into a new stage of independent innovation. At the same time, existing research still suffers from problems such as lagging theoretical construction, single research methods, imbalanced domain layout, and insufficient interdisciplinary integration. In the future, Chinese translation studies must root themselves in Chinese soil, uphold a sense of national commitment, align with national needs, strengthen theoretical innovation, deepen empirical research, promote interdisciplinary integration, construct a translation studies knowledge system with Chinese characteristics, and contribute to enhancing international communication capacity, promoting fine traditional Chinese culture globally, and building a community with a shared future for mankind.

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