

A Study on the Effectiveness of Cross-Cultural Communication of Academic Discourse Based on PEST Analysis: A Case Study of the Translation Project of Chinese Humanities and Social Sciences

SHAN Hui^{[a],*}

^[a] English Department, School of Foreign Languages, Shandong Jiaotong University, Jinan, China.

*Corresponding author.

Received 21 March 2023; accepted 30 April 2023
Published online 26 June 2023

Abstract

Since the beginning of the new millennium, the cross-cultural communication strategy of “going global” has been practiced along with China’s remarkable rise in national power. Since the successful operation of the Translation Project of Chinese Humanities and Social Sciences, a large number of academic books have been funded for overseas distribution. However, their current publication and dissemination situation is still relatively weak, from the perspective of economic capital combined with the book sales data of the global online e-commerce giant Amazon. Through a PEST analysis model, this paper examines the causes of the poor sales and dissemination data of books funded by the Translation Project of Chinese Humanities and Social Sciences and proposes corresponding countermeasures.

Key words: Academic discourse; Cross-cultural communication; PEST analysis

Shan, H. (2023). A Study on the Effectiveness of Cross-Cultural Communication of Academic Discourse Based on PEST Analysis: A Case Study of the Translation Project of Chinese Humanities and Social Sciences. *Cross-Cultural Communication*, 19(2), 31-36. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/ccc/article/view/13023> DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/13023>

China has promoted cross-cultural communication of Chinese cultural discourse through a succession of strategic policies such as culture “going global” since the beginning of the new era. In this context, the Translation Project of Chinese Humanities and Social Sciences

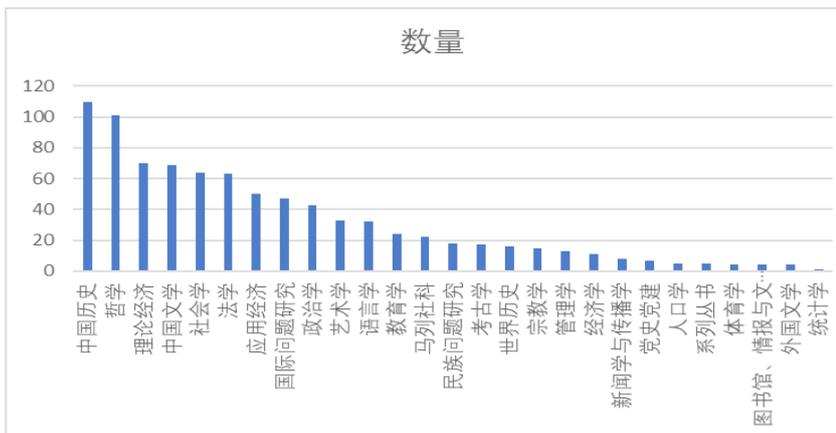
since 2010 has had a positive effect on the cross-cultural communication of Chinese academic discourse. The Translation Project of Chinese Humanities and Social Sciences selects classical Chinese academic works for foreign translation and publishes them by authoritative academic publishers in the target language countries, which should have a positive impact on a variety of fields.

Since its establishment in early 2010, the Translation Project of Chinese Humanities and Social Sciences, which relies on the National Social Science Foundation of China, has gained the attention of many scholars, and researchers have conducted comparative analyses at the level of the project institution, the project staff and other levels respectively. For example, Wang Wei (2019) analyzed the academic influence of the project through citation analysis, and the academic citation data of foreign translation originals and foreign translation books were counted through CSSCI and web of science, and the analysis of the citation frequency of the results in each project year showed that the Translation Project of Chinese Humanities and Social Sciences has formed a certain influence in the international arena. Ma Yumei (2019) pointed out that the scope and influence of the Translation Project of Chinese Humanities and Social Sciences are expanding overseas, and pointed out that the publications from this project are all included in major foreign libraries, and almost all of them can be searched on the major book online e-commerce giant Amazon, but there is a lack of further practical analysis of book sales data; Jiang Chunjie (2021) analyzed the Translation Project of Chinese Humanities and Social Sciences from the perspective of social capital analysis. Among the successful applicant of this project, the number of publishers’ projects is higher than that of individual projects, calling for the establishment of an effective system to ensure that publishers and individuals

can play a better role in social capital, so as to promote the smooth and sustainable development of China's academic discourse. But there is a research gap of analyzing the market influence of the publications of this project through the perspective of economic capital. This paper analyzes the book sales data of the international online e-commerce giant Amazon by selecting the Translation Project of Chinese Humanities and Social Sciences as a cross-section, explores the international environment of cross-cultural dissemination of academic discourse, and proposes corresponding countermeasures.

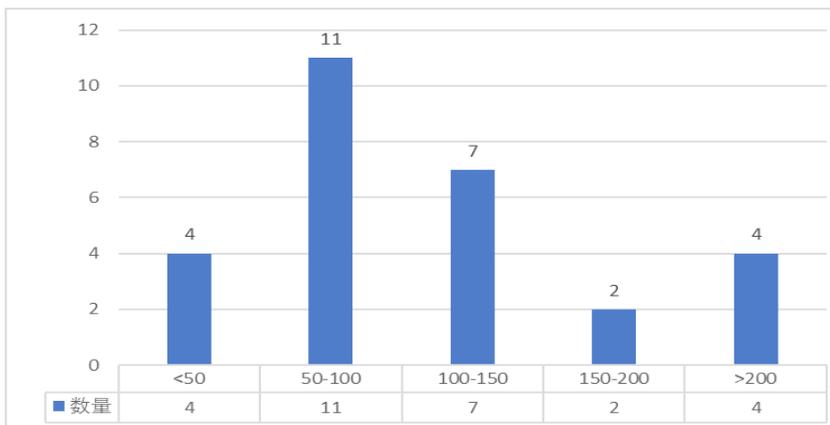
1. BASIC ANALYSIS OF PUBLICATION DATA OF THE TRANSLATION PROJECT

In this paper, all the publication items of the Translation Project of Chinese Humanities and Social Sciences from 2011 to 2018 were selected as the overall research projects. 806 foreign translation projects were established during the eight years, covering 18 different foreign languages as target language, including 503 in English, accounting for 59% of the total number of projects; covering 27 disciplines, the projects in each discipline accounted for as shown in Figure below, including 110 Chinese history projects, accounting for 13% of the total number of projects.



Since Chinese history accounts for the largest proportion of the whole Translation Project, and authoritative academic works in Chinese should have an authoritative voice in this field, 110 projects in the subject category of *Chinese History* are selected as a sample in this paper for further analysis of the effectiveness of the cross-cultural communication of translation project publications. Among all the translation projects in Chinese history, there are 10 foreign languages as target language, of which 61 are English, accounting for 55%. By searching the author's name

and keywords on the book online e-commerce website Amazon (US service), the writer found that among the 61 English translations of Chinese history projects, 28 results were on sale. Of the results for sale, 50% have kindle electronic versions for sale, 25% offer kindle rental services, and 50% are sold in paperback only. In terms of price, the price of paper books was taken as the lowest price for both hardcover and paperback editions, of which 54% were priced at less than \$100, and 14% of the books were sold at more than \$200. Further detailed information has been shown in Figure below.

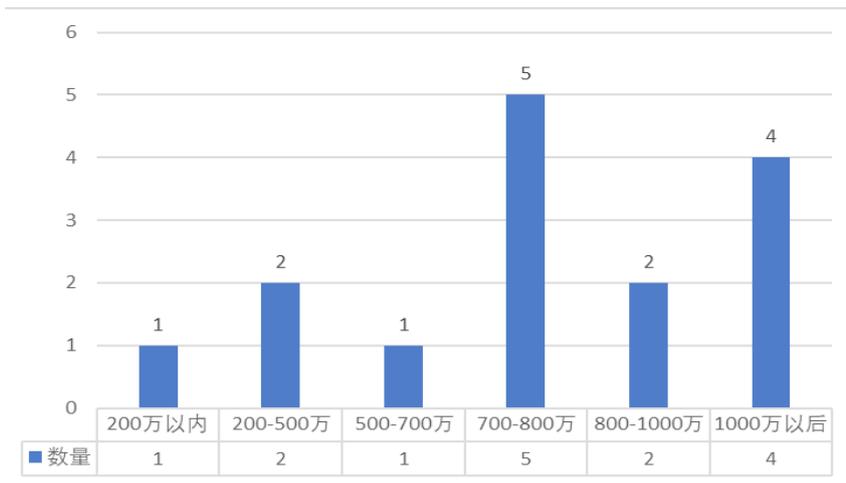


Given that the sales data of published books are currently internal data of publishers, this paper only

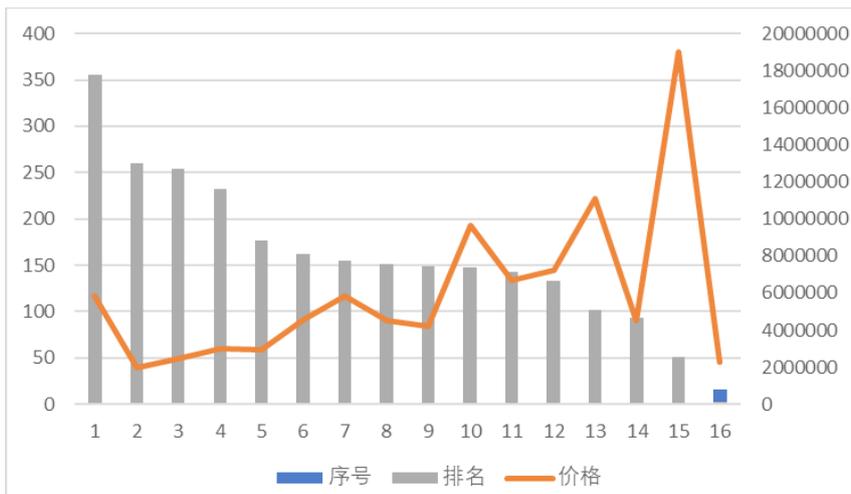
analyzed the sales ranking data provided by Amazon. The Amazon sales ranking data in this case refers to the

website's real-time updated list of most popular items based on sales volume. The best-selling book, *The Stone Room Writing Scriptures - The Dunhuang Legacy*, is ranked at 12,403,500 and under 2 million; 20% of the

books are ranked at 5 million or under, and 27% of the books are ranked after 10 million. The overall book sales ranking is not in an ideal situation. Further detailed information has been shown in Figure below.



By fitting the price and sales curves, the author did not find a significant correlation between the two.(Show in Figure 4)



To sum up, most of the current sales rankings of projects publications are after 5 million, which are on par with the performance of other academic books, but are poorly with the performance of popular academic books. This paper has applied the PEST analysis method, a tool of environmental analysis in management science, to analyze the international environment of the Translation Project of Chinese Humanities and Social Sciences and its changing trends from political, economic, social and technological factors. The countermeasures to promote the effective dissemination of Chinese academic discourse are also discussed in this paper in order to provide a basis for decision making to promote the cross-cultural communication of Chinese academic discourse.

2. ANALYSIS OF THE INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT FOR THE DISSEMINATION OF THE PUBLICATION RESULTS OF THE TRANSLATION PROJECT RESULTS

PEST analysis, as an effective analysis tool in management, can be used to scan and analyze the overall environmental factors of a research body, where P (Politics), E (Economy), S (Society), and T (Technology) represent the four environmental factors of political, economic, social, and technological perspectives, respectively. The analysis of this framework can provide

a new perspective for understanding the market-oriented dissemination of the publication results of the Translation Project of Chinese Humanities and Social Sciences, and can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the internationalized macro environment in which they are located, so that we can propose countermeasures to promote the cross-cultural dissemination of Chinese academic discourse.

2.1 Political Factors

The quantity and variety of books published in China have consistently ranked among the highest in the world. The Translation Project of Chinese Humanities and Social Sciences is another example of the government's strength and commitment to promoting academic discourse abroad, but it has not had the desired impact on the process of cross-cultural communication on a global scale. It has been clearly shown from the sales data on Amazon that the impact of books supported by the Translation Project so far is quite limited, and Chinese history written by foreign authors has long been at the top of the list when looking at the best-seller lists in the Chinese history category on Amazon.com. This reflects the ideological problems and stereotypes in the West, which do not favor academic books translated from Chinese even though in Chinese history category.

2.2 Economical Factors

According to Figure 2 on the price statistics of books funded by the Translation Project of Chinese Humanities and Social Sciences in Amazon from 2010-2018, it can be seen that the price of books priced above 50 USD accounts for 85.17%, and the price of books priced above 100 USD accounts for 46.42%. It has indicated the overall market position price is pretty high and the market awareness of the project is relatively weak. The high price has a negative impact on the dissemination of the translated academic books and affects the effectiveness of academic discourse dissemination. High prices restrict market expansion and information transmission, lower sales volume and profits, and lower readers' purchasing power and intention. High pricing also limits the visibility and influence of academic books in the international market and affects academic exchanges and cooperation. A fair pricing approach that strikes a balance between price and market demand is necessary to prevent scholarly works in translation from being overpriced and to ensure their long-term influence.

2.3 Social Factors

The Translation Project of Chinese academic discourse is quite a popular topic to discuss in the academic community, but its publicity awareness and follow-up distribution in local and foreign markets are still inadequate. The project's establishment process is currently the focus of everyone's attention, but the publication's subsequent promotion and dissemination

after the project is finished are currently under insufficient attention. The distribution of academic works in other languages is negatively impacted by the lack of awareness of publicity. Academic books may have less exposure and visibility on the global market if there are insufficient effective advertising and promotion efforts. Additionally, it struggles to effectively identify, draw in, and set itself apart from other items, which restricts its ability to compete in the market. Additionally, a lack of understanding of publicity might restrict academic communication and resource sharing, minimize prospects for collaboration, and limit these opportunities.

2.4 Technical Factors

This paper focuses on Amazon as the primary source of sales data for books funded by the Translation Project of Chinese Humanities and Social Sciences, and the overall sales data are unsatisfactory. Although Amazon was the largest e-commerce platform in the world, especially for books sales online, it may not be the primary distribution channel for academic publications. The main marketing and dissemination method for academic books, especially for books funded by the Translation Project of Chinese Humanities and Social Sciences, is a combination of online and offline methods, probably mainly offline. Therefore, there is an objective problem in this study that Amazon may not be the main website for selling books funded by the program. However, it is undeniable that in the current information age, there are limitations to the dissemination of foreign translations of academic discourse through offline sales alone, and there are several disadvantages of offline sales for the dissemination of academic books. Firstly, the market coverage is limited and cannot reach a wide range of regions and readers. Second, stock and inventory limitations lead to insufficient supply or inability to meet demand. Thirdly, reliance on middlemen and distributors adds cost and complexity. Dissemination was slow and required time for distribution and purchase. In addition, offline sales limit interaction and feedback mechanisms, making it difficult for readers to communicate and discuss directly.

3. SUGGESTIONS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION OF THE ACADEMIC DISCOURSE FROM THE TRANSLATION PROJECTS RESULTS

3.1 Stronger Project Supervision and Tracking Management

The project management and end-of-project tracking management of the Translation Project of Chinese Humanities and Social Sciences can be further enhanced in order to further strengthen the dissemination effectiveness of the cross-cultural communication of Chinese academic

discourse by this project. In order to accomplish this, it is necessary to establish a clear project management process, assign accountable parties and a monitoring mechanism by the pertinent government departments, improve communication and teamwork, establish evaluation standards and indicators, implement technical support and information systems, and conduct end-of-project evaluation and data feedback. Depending on the data input, the project may be sponsored afterwards; for the best-selling category, projects with favorable effects on distribution may be funded with incentives;

3.2 Higher Market Awareness and Economic Efficiency

The publication of the Translation Project requires a combination of social and economic benefits. Bourdieu's field theory points out that scholarly foreign translation and publication is a field of interaction in which all participants need to balance different interests and rules. The foreign translation and dissemination of academic works can promote academic communication, cross-cultural understanding and knowledge dissemination, as well as the development of academic research and global academic cooperation. It helps to enhance the reputation of academia, the influence of scholars, and the international competitiveness of academic institutions. However, in addition to social benefits, economic benefits are also one of the factors that need to be considered in academic translation and publication. The profitability of the publisher, the author's payment, and the return on investment are all considered as economic benefits. Academic discourse translation publishing cannot be properly maintained or developed sustainably without a solid economic foundation. Before choosing a book for a commercial publishing, publishers will conduct several rounds of market research and estimate the potential audience size. When choosing topics for the Translation Project of Chinese Humanities and Social Sciences, market awareness should be increased, and economic benefits should be considered as a measuring factor to some extent. The pricing strategy should be developed flexibly through market research after the project is finished and published. The pricing strategy should be determined with differentiated pricing and flexible pricing based on readers' feedback, in order to better promote the positive interaction between academia and the market, promote the dissemination of knowledge, and promote academic development.

3.3 Effective Communication Strategies to Promote Cross-cultural Communication of Academic Discourse

In order to improve the cross-cultural communication of books funded by the Translation Project of Chinese Humanities and Social Sciences, effective publicity strategies should be developed to promote the cross-

cultural dissemination of scholarly foreign translation publications. The secret to ensuring that academic discourse translation is widely publicized and promoted is to strengthen the consideration of publicity strategies during the translation project creation phase. By clearly specifying the publicity requirements in the project proposal and including them in the contractual agreement, the visibility, impact, and visibility of the academic publications of foreign translation projects can be effectively increased, and the publicity goals and project success can be achieved. Publishers and relevant stakeholders should enhance awareness of publicity and develop and implement effective publicity strategies. This includes using multiple publicity channels and media, establishing partnerships, targeting target readership groups, and providing differentiated publicity content and promotional activities to enhance the visibility, attractiveness, and market competitiveness of academic books and promote their dissemination and influence in the international market.

3.4 Optimized Copyright Management with Broader Online and Offline Channels

Essential measures to improve the efficiency of academic translation project include optimizing the copyright of translated academic works and encouraging distribution through both online and offline channels. The key lies in ensuring copyright protection and management, using online channels for promotion, implementing electronic versions of book distribution, increasing exposure through social media and online publicity, participating in academic conferences and exhibition events to increase visibility, encouraging book recommendations and reviews, and collaborating with academic institutions to publish collections. These strategies help enhance the visibility, accessibility, and impact of books in academic discourse translation project, promote scholarly communication and knowledge dissemination, and achieve success in the publication dissemination of the academic discourse translation project. Through a combination of these measures, the dissemination power and social benefits of academic translation publications can be enhanced, and the sustainable development of academic discourse dissemination can be promoted.

4. CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

Through the PEST analysis model, the books funded by the Translation Project of Chinese Humanities and Social Sciences are facing the problems of stereotypical impressions brought by different ideologies in the process of overseas sales, and the lack of effective management, market awareness and publicity awareness in the process of project operation affects their subsequent dissemination. In response to these problems, we can improve the management of the whole operation process

of the Translation Project of Chinese Humanities and Social Sciences, such as enhancing the market awareness and publicity awareness in the operating process of topic selection, optimizing pricing and publicity strategies, optimizing copyright management, promoting offline and online sales channels, and providing real-time follow-up feedback on the sales situation.

REFERENCES

- Gao, G., & Qiu, H. (2022). Chinese cultural translation and national translation practice. *Chinese Translation*, (04), 129-132.
- Huang, Q. (2021). American mainstream media's discursive prejudice against China's image: Taking the "New Crown Epidemic" report as an example. *Foreign Languages*, (04), 85-96.
- Jiang, C. (2021). Social capital analysis of Chinese academic foreign translation (2010-2019). *Foreign Language Studies*, (01), 85-90. doi:10.13978/j.cnki.wyyj.2021.01.012.
- Ma, Y. (2019). Research on the current situation and promotion strategies of overseas communication of Chinese academic works: Taking the national social science fund Chinese academic foreign translation project as an example. *Shanghai Translation*, (05), 64-67.
- Wang, J., & Zhang, Q. (2021). The construction of the discourse system of Chinese excellent cultural translation. *Journal of Renmin University of China*, (03), 164-172.
- Wang, W. (2019). Citation analysis of achievements of Chinese academic translation projects (2010-2016). *Information and Documentation Work*, (05), 13-16.
- Wen, Q. (2021). Language rights in academic international discourse power. *Research on Language Strategy*, (03), 76-85. doi:10.19689/j.cnki.cn10-1361/h.20210306.
- Wu, L., & Yang, Y. (2018). Research on the internationalization environment of Chinese academic journals of humanities and social sciences based on PEST Analysis. *Research on Chinese Science and Technology Journals*, (05), 460-466.
- Zhang, J. (2022). Academic publishing and theoretical confidence: "East learning and west graduation" in news communication research—Based on the analysis of "Chinese Academic Translation Project". *China Publishing*, (22), 44-48.