

Original Paper

An Exploration of the Guiding Significance of Yangming's Philosophy of Mind in Contemporary Translation Studies

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Abstract

Translation, as a discipline, is not only a bridge for language communication but also an important way to facilitate mutual understanding between different cultures. The development of translation studies is not only about the improvement of translation techniques, but more importantly about the exploration and practice of translation theories. Contemporary translation studies mainly focus on Western translation theories, while China lacks a robust translation theory with distinctive characteristics. As an important school of thought in traditional Chinese culture, Yangming's philosophy of mind (Yangming Xinxue) offers rich wisdom and a unique perspective, which holds significant potential and meaning for guiding contemporary translation studies. This paper will explore the guiding significance of Yangming's philosophy of mind in contemporary translation studies, combining its core concepts with the practice of contemporary translation studies.

Keywords

Yangming's philosophy of mind, Translation studies, Unity of knowledge and action, Transmission of the mind through the heart, Attaining the good conscience

1. Introduction

With the accelerating process of globalization, communication and cooperation between different languages and cultures have become increasingly frequent. As both a specialized discipline and a practical activity, translation plays a crucial role in promoting cross-cultural communication and understanding. However, translation is not a simple process of information transfer; it involves a complex range of dimensions including language, culture, psychology, and ethics. Moreover, contemporary translation studies are largely composed of Western translation theories, while China lacks a robust and distinctive translation theory of its own. Therefore, seeking new insights and methods in translation theory and practice is of great significance for the development of translation studies in China. This study aims to explore the guiding significance of Yangming's Philosophy of Mind in contemporary translation studies. As one of the key branches of Chinese traditional philosophy, Yangming's Philosophy of Mind proposes several theories related to human nature and interpersonal

relationships, offering valuable insights. Combining the ideas of Yangming's Philosophy of Mind with translation studies can enhance the subjectivity and humanistic care in translation activities, improve translation quality and effectiveness, and foster cultural exchange and understanding.

This research adopts a combination of literature analysis and case study methods. First, by systematically reviewing the relevant theories and concepts of Yangming's Philosophy of Mind, including "Unity of Knowledge and Action," "Heart-to-Heart Transmission," and "Attaining the Good Conscience," this study delves into the guiding significance of Yangming's philosophy for translation studies. Furthermore, through the analysis of the applicability of Yangming's philosophy in different contexts, the study explores its practical applications in translation practice. Finally, it summarizes the significance and implications of Yangming's Philosophy of Mind in contemporary translation studies and proposes directions for future research. The findings of this study will contribute to enriching the theoretical system and practical methods of translation studies, providing new perspectives and approaches for cross-cultural communication and understanding.

2. Core Concepts of Yangming's Philosophy of Mind and Its Relation to Translation Studies

2.1 The Theoretical Foundation of Yangming's Philosophy of Mind

Yangming's Philosophy of Mind, founded by the Ming Dynasty philosopher Wang Yangming, emphasizes the importance of the mind and proposes several core concepts, such as "Unity of Knowledge and Action," "Heart-to-Heart Transmission," and "Attaining the Good Conscience" (Liu & Xu, 2019). Yangming's Philosophy of Mind holds an optimistic view of human nature, asserting that everyone possesses inherent moral conscience and good will, which can be awakened through self-cultivation practices to achieve self-perfection.

In the field of translation studies, the theoretical foundation of Yangming's Philosophy of Mind offers a new perspective on the subjectivity and objectivity in translation activities, as well as the relationship between language and culture. Firstly, Yangming's philosophy posits that subjectivity and objectivity are not opposing forces but rather interdependent (Yu & Yan, 2023). Translation, as an activity involving both subjective judgment and objective communication, requires translators to maintain professional objectivity while also exercising their own subjectivity. The idea of "Unity of Knowledge and Action" in Yangming's philosophy suggests that translators must align their subjective understanding with objective linguistic norms in practice. This means that a translation should not only faithfully convey the source text but also ensure that the translated text is natural and fluent, in accordance with the cultural habits and needs of the target language.

Besides, Yangming's concept of "Heart-to-Heart Transmission" also provides significant insight into translation. In the translation process, translators need to understand the emotions and ideas embedded in the source text and transform them into forms that can effectively communicate these in the target language. This requires translators to possess not only linguistic skills but also emotional empathy, enabling them to perceive and grasp the inherent emotions of the source text, which allows them to

better achieve "Heart-to-Heart Transmission" and create resonance between the source text's emotions and the target language readers.

Lastly, Yangming's Philosophy of Mind emphasizes "Attaining the Good Conscience," which refers to awakening and triggering one's inherent moral conscience through self-cultivation and practice. In translation studies, translators must also continuously improve their professional competence and moral qualities through learning and practice (Cai, 2020). The concept of "Attaining the Good Conscience" in Yangming's philosophy provides crucial guidance on ethical issues in translation, reminding translators to uphold morality and conscience throughout the translation process, ensuring the accuracy, balance, and respect for the target language readers.

In conclusion, the theoretical foundation of Yangming's Philosophy of Mind offers new perspectives and philosophical reflections for translation studies. It encourages us to emphasize the coordination of subjectivity and objectivity in translation, exercise the ability of "Heart-to-Heart Transmission," and focus on self-cultivation and ethical improvement in the translation process.

2.2 Theoretical Analysis of Relevant Concepts in Translation Studies

In translation studies, several concepts and theories related to Yangming's Philosophy of Mind have been widely discussed and studied. These concepts include the relationship between subjectivity and objectivity, the cultural differences between the source language and target language, and the role and responsibility of the translator. Below is a theoretical analysis of these concepts. Subjectivity and objectivity are two key concepts in translation studies. Subjectivity refers to the translator's cultural, social, and personal attitudes and judgments expressed during the creation of the translated text. Objectivity, on the other hand, emphasizes that translators should accurately convey the meaning and expression of the source text based on its actual content (Munday, 2016). Yangming's Philosophy of Mind holds that subjectivity and objectivity are not opposing forces but are interdependent and unified. In the translation process, translators can apply appropriate subjectivity based on their understanding and insights to convey the source text effectively, while also maintaining objectivity to ensure the accuracy and fluency of the translation (Wang, 2020).

Furthermore, translation studies also focus on the cultural differences between the source and target languages. Due to the differences in language and thought patterns across cultures, translators face the challenge of dealing with these differences in cross-cultural translation. Yangming's Philosophy of Mind emphasizes the commonality of human nature and advocates communication through "Heart-to-Heart Transmission" (Zang, 2023). In translation practice, translators can uncover the cultural connotations and philosophical ideas within the source text and transform them into a form that is familiar and acceptable to the target audience, thereby promoting cross-cultural communication and understanding (Zang, 2023). At the same time, translators need to understand the target language culture and adapt to its habits and needs, ensuring that the translation resonates with the target readers. Yangming's Philosophy of Mind also highlights the role and responsibility of the translator. In translation studies, translators are not merely tools for transmitting information (Robinson, 1997); they

are mediators of culture and ideas. Translators must possess professional competence and linguistic ability, as well as an emphasis on ethical principles and a sense of responsibility. The concept of "Attaining the Good Conscience" in Yangming's philosophy reminds translators to adhere to moral integrity, always upholding the principles of truthfulness, accuracy, fairness, and respect. By following conscience and morality, translators can better fulfill their role and responsibility, making positive contributions to cross-cultural communication and understanding.

In conclusion, the concepts of subjectivity and objectivity, cultural differences, and the role and responsibility of the translator in translation studies are closely related to the ideas in Yangming's Philosophy of Mind. Yangming's philosophy offers us new perspectives and approaches for rethinking translation activities, encouraging us to balance subjectivity and objectivity, foster cross-cultural communication and respect, and focus on ethical integrity and responsibility in translation practice. The integration of these theories and ideas will bring new insights and directions for the development of translation studies and the deepening of translation practice (Yang, 2022).

3. Application of Yangming's Philosophy of Mind in Translation Practice

3.1 Coordination of Subjectivity and Objectivity in the Translation Subject

Translation is an activity that involves both language proficiency and the translator's subjective agency. The philosophy of Yangming offers a deeper reflection on how to coordinate subjectivity and objectivity in the translation subject. Subjectivity in translation involves the translator's perception, understanding, judgment, and expression, while objectivity focuses on the accurate transmission of the source text and adherence to the norms of the target language. In actual translation practice, how to balance subjectivity and objectivity becomes a key challenge that translators must address.

First, Yangming's concept of "Unity of Knowledge and Action" emphasizes the unity of subjectivity and objectivity. In translation practice, translators must maintain an objective and accurate transmission of the source text while creatively producing the translation based on their subjective perception and understanding (Wang, 2017). This requires the translator to achieve a unity of subjectivity and objectivity in both thought and action. Specifically, translators can coordinate the relationship between subjectivity and objectivity in the following ways:

1. Preparation Stage: Before beginning the translation, translators can thoroughly understand the background, ideas, and cultural connotations of the source text to accurately grasp its overall meaning and purpose. This provides the translator with a solid subjective foundation for subsequent translation work.
2. Translation Process: During the translation, translators need to combine their language skills with an understanding of the target language culture to choose the appropriate methods and expressions. This requires consideration of the characteristics and demands of the source text while also considering the needs and receptivity of the target audience. Translators can apply their subjective judgment to select words and adjust sentence structures in accordance with the cultural context of the target language,

achieving a balance between subjectivity and objectivity.

3. Evaluation and Revision: In the evaluation and revision stage, translators need to objectively assess the translation. This requires translators to overcome personal bias and objectively evaluate the accuracy, fluency, and effectiveness of the translation. If the translation is found to be problematic or not in line with the target language requirements, the translator should be willing to revise it, reflecting and improving upon their work in a timely manner.

In conclusion, Yangming's idea of "Unity of Knowledge and Action" provides a new perspective and method for coordinating subjectivity and objectivity in translation subjects. In translation practice, translators should integrate preparation, execution, and evaluation to achieve the unity of subjectivity and objectivity. The guidance from theory, combined with practical experience, will help translators mature in handling the balance between subjectivity and objectivity in translation.

3.2 Establishing Emotional Resonance

Emotional resonance is a crucial means of establishing connection and understanding between individuals, and it is also an important aspect of translation practice. The philosophy of Yangming offers an enlightening approach to emotional communication, particularly through the concept of "Heart-to-Heart Transmission." In translation practice, translators can better convey the emotional intention and meaning of the original author and establish emotional connections and recognition with the target language readers by resonating emotionally with the source text (Yang, 2015).

First, translators need to engage deeply with the source text to uncover the emotional information embedded within it. Yangming's Philosophy of Mind asserts that everyone possesses "good conscience," which is the ability to perceive and pursue goodness and beauty. Translators can use their emotional perception to understand and grasp the internal emotions of the source text, translating them into forms that resonate with the target language text. Through emotional resonance, translators can more accurately convey the emotional intentions of the source author and allow the target language readers to deeply experience and understand the emotions expressed in the original text.

Secondly, establishing emotional resonance requires the translator to possess a certain level of cultural literacy and cross-cultural communication skills. During the translation process, translators need to understand the cultural background and meaning framework of the source text and interpret and perceive the cultural connotations and emotions contained within it. At the same time, translators must also be aware of the target language culture's acceptance and aesthetic preferences. By making appropriate adjustments and transformations, translators can ensure that the emotional information of the source text is conveyed in a way that resonates with the target language readers.

Finally, establishing emotional resonance also requires the translator to enrich the expression of the translation through their own emotional experience. Translators can connect their personal experiences, emotions, and cultural backgrounds with the emotions in the source text, using appropriate language expressions and rhetorical techniques to convey the original emotions. This requires creativity and flexibility, allowing the translation to remain faithful to the source text while also aligning with the

emotional needs and reading habits of the target language audience.

In conclusion, establishing emotional resonance is an important goal in translation. Yangming's concept of "Heart-to-Heart Transmission" provides a valuable approach and method for achieving emotional resonance in translation practice. By deeply experiencing and understanding the source text, along with their own emotional and cultural backgrounds, translators can better convey the emotional intentions of the original text and establish emotional connections and recognition with the target audience (Yang, 2015). This process of emotional resonance enriches cultural exchange and understanding in translation.

3.3 Guiding Translation Ethics

Translation ethics is an important area within translation practice, involving the moral character, sense of responsibility, and behavioral norms of translators. Yangming's concept of "Attaining the Good Conscience" offers an important reference for thinking about and guiding translation ethics. In translation practice, translators should promote the ethical principles of Yangming's philosophy and adhere to translation ethics to enhance the quality of translation activities and their social responsibility (Liu, 2018). Translators should possess good moral character. Yangming's Philosophy of Mind holds that everyone has a "good conscience," the basic ability to discern good and beauty. Translators should maintain integrity, honesty, and trustworthiness in their work, adhering to the principles of truth and honesty in the translation process. This includes faithfully transmitting the source text without distorting its meaning and ensuring the accurate expression of the target text, without misleading the readers.

In addition, translators should have a strong sense of responsibility and mission. Yangming emphasizes the spirit of responsibility and dedication, and translators should always remember their mission in translation, which is to contribute to cultural exchange and cross-cultural understanding based on professional competence and moral cultivation. This means that translators should focus not only on accurately conveying the source text and cultural adjustments in their work but also on the social impact and value of the translation. Guiding translation ethics also requires translators to consider the relationship between the individual and the group. Translation often involves multiple stakeholders and cultural groups. Translators should always strive for balance and fairness, adhering to principles of justice, inclusivity, and respect, and applying and respecting diverse cultures and ideas in the translation process. This reflects the ideas of Yangming and also aligns with the ethical requirements in translation practice. Therefore, translation ethics is an essential area within translation practice. Yangming's concept of "Attaining the Good Conscience" offers spiritual guidance and value orientation, encouraging translators to possess good moral character, a sense of responsibility, and ethical norms in their practice. Translators should focus on self-cultivation and moral awareness, adhering to principles of honesty, fairness, and integrity while also balancing cultural diversity and promoting harmonious cross-cultural communication. By guiding translation ethics, we can improve the quality of translation and its social impact, further advancing cross-cultural exchange and understanding.

4. Applicability of Yangming's Philosophy of Mind in Translation Studies

4.1 Situational Awareness to Overcome Cultural Barriers

Overcoming cultural barriers and differences is one of the common challenges in translation. Yangming's concept of situational awareness can help translators overcome cultural obstacles. For example, differences between Chinese and Western cultures in values, expression methods, and customs require translators to make appropriate adjustments and transformations based on the specific context. For instance, humor in Western culture differs significantly from humor in Chinese culture in terms of both expression and understanding. When translating a Western humorous work, translators must consider how to appropriately convey the humor of the original text in the context of Chinese culture. In this process, translators need to consider the cultural background and familiarity of the audience, using language and cultural symbols flexibly to maintain the original humor while ensuring the audience can understand and appreciate it. When the humor in the original text involves specific regional cultures or customs, translators may need to adjust it to fit different cultural backgrounds. For example, a joke about the American Thanksgiving holiday, such as one involving turkey or pumpkin pie, may be replaced with a joke about Chinese New Year or tangyuan (sweet rice dumplings) in the Chinese translation to ensure that the Chinese audience can understand and find it humorous. Such adjustments help preserve the humor of the original work while ensuring it resonates with audiences from different cultural backgrounds.

4.2 Innovation in Personalized Translation

Yangming's philosophy emphasizes the development of subjectivity and creativity, which is essential for translators when engaging in personalized translation. Personalized translation is a method that focuses on the translator's creativity and style, highlighting the individuality and uniqueness of the translation. Through personalized translation, translators can better showcase their translation thinking and cultural perception, making the translation more vivid and emotionally engaging. When translating a literary work, translators can apply different translation strategies and methods based on their own feelings and understanding to make the translation stand out.

However, personalized translation requires balance. Translators need to retain the original intent and style while appropriately expressing their personal characteristics, ensuring that the core meaning and overall effect of the original text are not compromised. This requires translators to have aesthetic sensibility and an understanding of the needs and background of contemporary readers to create a personalized translation that is both valuable and impactful. For instance, when translating a poem about love, translators can choose appropriate words and expressions based on their cultural background and emotional experience to convey the emotions and artistic conception of the original poem. If the original poem describes a romantic love, the translator might choose expressions that align with contemporary readers' emotional experiences of romance, making the translation more vivid and resonant with the readers. Such personalized translation allows the poem to be more relatable, creating deeper emotional resonance with the audience.

4.3 Adherence to Professional Ethics and Standards

Yangming's philosophy emphasizes the cultivation of character and moral integrity, which has important guiding significance for translation studies. Translators should always maintain professional ethics, adhering to translation ethics and norms, and pay attention to copyright protection and academic integrity. Translators should respect the original author's copyright and intent, avoiding arbitrary changes to the original text's content and structure while maintaining a neutral and objective attitude. Furthermore, when translating sensitive or controversial topics, translators should handle them with caution to avoid causing misunderstandings or controversy. If the original text involves a speech by a political leader from a particular country, and this leader's speech may be controversial internationally, the translator must aim to maintain the objectivity and neutrality of the original text during the translation process, avoiding the insertion of personal opinions or emotional bias. Additionally, they should choose precise words and expressions to ensure the accurate conveyance of the original meaning, preventing misunderstandings or controversy. In such cases, translators need to handle the material with care to follow translation ethics and standards while respecting the original author's intent and copyright.

Moreover, translators should establish a proper awareness of communication and collaboration, respecting all parties involved in the translation process. Translators should actively communicate with the original author, proofreaders, and the audience, addressing issues and providing feedback in a timely manner to improve the quality and accuracy of the translation.

5. Conclusion

Through exploring the guiding significance of Yangming's philosophy of mind in contemporary translation studies, the following conclusions can be drawn. First, Yangming's philosophy provides significant insights and guidance for translation activities. Yangming emphasizes the unity of subjectivity and objectivity, reminding translators to integrate their subjective agency with the objective and accurate transmission of the source text. Second, Yangming emphasizes the importance of emotional resonance, urging translators to resonate emotionally with the source text and convey emotions precisely to the target language readers. Finally, Yangming emphasizes the ethical responsibility of translators, requiring them to possess moral character and a sense of responsibility to ensure the legitimacy and social value of the translation activity. Through a thorough examination of Yangming's core concepts, such as the unity of subjectivity and objectivity, heart-to-heart transmission, and the cultivation of good conscience, we gain new perspectives and methods for contemporary translation theory and practice.

Although this study provides an initial exploration of the guiding significance of Yangming's philosophy in contemporary translation studies, there are still some limitations. First, the scope of the study is limited and only covers part of the application of Yangming's philosophy in translation activities, without fully addressing all aspects of contemporary translation studies. Second, the number

and depth of case analyses could be further expanded and refined to more comprehensively validate the effectiveness of Yangming's philosophy in translation practice.

Future research can expand in the following areas. First, further investigation can be conducted on the application of other core concepts of Yangming's philosophy in translation activities, such as the unity of knowledge and action, storing the heart, and good conscience, to deepen the understanding of Yangming's theoretical system and practical methods in contemporary translation studies. Second, through more collaborative research and in-depth analysis of practical cases, the effectiveness and practical outcomes of Yangming's philosophy in translation practices across different languages, genres, and professional fields can be verified. Additionally, further exploration can be made regarding the integration of Yangming's philosophy with other translation theories and methods to enrich and expand the theoretical framework of contemporary translation studies.

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