

The Cultural Identity and Subjectivity of Translators in the Context of Cultural Globalization: A Case Study of *Globalization Studies and Classic Theories of Transnationalism*

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Abstract—In the context of cultural globalization, cultural exchanges between different countries have become increasingly frequent. The integration of cultures has brought profound changes to the global culture while also triggering cultural conflicts. As an important medium for cross-cultural communication, translators play a crucial role in handling the relationship between language and culture, with their cultural identity and subjectivity being of paramount importance in the translation process. This paper takes selected chapters of the Chinese and English versions of *Globalization Studies and Classic Theories of Transnationalism* as research objects, and explores in depth how translators find a balance between fidelity and adaptability from the perspectives of translators' cultural identity and subjectivity.

Keywords—cultural globalization, translator's subjectivity, cultural identity

I. INTRODUCTION

Amid the tide of cultural globalization, interactions and integration among diverse civilizations have become increasingly frequent. As a vital bridge for cross-cultural communication, the function of translation has long transcended mere linguistic conversion. Translators serve not only as mediators of different cultures but also as constructors of local discourses. Their cultural identities and subjectivity profoundly shape the pathways and effectiveness of knowledge dissemination. However, the translator's role is often overlooked in the translation process, making their cultural identity and subjectivity worthy of focused attention.

Globalization Studies and Classic Theories of Transnationalism is a collection of seminal essays on globalization and transnational nationalism, authored by leading Western scholars in these fields [1], with all source texts originally written in foreign languages. The book compiles cutting-edge Western perspectives on transnational nationalism, globalization, culture, and economics, and contains numerous culturally sensitive concepts. When rendering these terms, translators must faithfully convey the original intent while adapting to the socio-cultural context of the target language. Whether to retain source-cultural nuances through literal translation or enhance target-reader accessibility through adaptation—these choices inherently reflect translators' cultural identity and subjectivity.

This study takes selected bilingual chapters from this book as the research material, aiming to address two key questions: First, how does the translator's cultural identity

influence the choice of translation strategies in the context of cultural globalization? Second, how can translators balance textual fidelity and cultural adaptability in academic translation? This study explores the impact of the translator's positioning on the effectiveness of academic translation in the context of cultural globalization, contributing to the enhancement of international academic exchange and cooperation.

II. CULTURAL GLOBALIZATION AND TRANSLATION

At the core of cultural globalization lies the exchange and integration of diverse cultures, with the acceleration of globalization, culture is no longer confined by geographical or ethnic boundaries, but instead circulates across the globe through various channels. As a central tool of cross-cultural communication, translation plays a pivotal role in this dynamic process. This chapter focuses on the phenomenon of cultural globalization and its intrinsic relationship with translation.

A. Cultural Globalization

Since the 1980s, expanding global interconnectedness has propelled human development onto a worldwide stage, catalyzing the rise of global consciousness. Globalization is a multidimensional concept encompassing all aspects of human existence, including society, economy, culture, and politics. Although discussions on globalization often center on economic globalization, the rapid advancement of information technology and deepening global economic integration have fundamentally transformed the scope of human interaction and modes of cultural exchange. Increasingly, scholars have come to recognize that "a direct consequence of economic globalization in the cultural sphere is the emergence of cultural globalization" [2]. Cultural globalization refers to the dynamic process whereby diverse national and ethnic cultures transcend geographical and ethnic boundaries through interaction, dialogue, and integration, gradually giving rise to a new cultural pattern.

Cultural globalization not only dismantles traditionally enclosed cultural boundaries but also fosters diversified development in cultural cognition and value systems. Intensified intercultural exchanges enable ethnic groups to preserve their distinctive cultural identities while assimilating elements of foreign cultures. Consequently, cultures no longer exist in isolation but circulate and

converge globally through translation, media, tourism, and other channels. However, cultural globalization is not merely a celebratory fusion of global cultures, it also simultaneously triggers cultural conflicts and imbalances. Due to the longstanding dominance of Western countries in economic, technological, and scientific domains, their cultural exports have gained global prominence. Such cultural expansion carries the risk of cultural homogenization, potentially leading to the marginalization—or even extinction—of local and traditional cultures. As former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali once noted, one language disappears from the world every two weeks, taking with it its traditions, creativity, knowledge and cultural heritage [3].

B. *The Role of Translation in Cultural Globalization*

Due to the dominant economic power of the United States, American culture has become a global mainstream, leading many scholars to equate cultural globalization with “Americanization”—a perception that ignited conflicts between globalization and national cultures. However, today’s cultural pattern reveals a paradigm shift: young people worldwide embrace British and American pop singers, watch Japanese anime, and learn languages such as English, French, and Japanese. Concurrently, Confucius Institutes have been established abroad, while growing international interest focuses on Chinese cultural elements, such as hanfu attire, martial arts, and Peking opera. These developments illustrate that cultural globalization is not an exclusive domain of Western cultures, but rather a platform for the interaction and integration of diverse national cultures, ultimately giving rise to a new global cultural ecosystem.

In counterbalancing cultural hegemony and preserving cultural diversity, translation performs irreplaceable functions. It transcends mere linguistic conversion to become intercultural mediation. Translators must cultivate a profound understanding of both cultures involved, develop acute sensitivity to cultural distinctions, and demonstrate unwavering respect for ethnic differences, thereby actively safeguarding cultural multiplicity. Translation is not only a language service, but also a vital component of national cultural strategy. The effective dissemination of national culture through translation can help enhance a country’s discursive power within the global cultural system and promote a more equitable cultural dialogue among nations.

III. BASIC INFORMATION ON GLOBALIZATION STUDIES AND CLASSIC THEORIES OF TRANSNATIONALISM

Globalization Studies and Classic Theories of Transnationalism is a significant academic work that not only highlights the key trends of mainstream Western scholarly thought during the globalization era, but also delves deeply into the conceptual frameworks and value orientations underpinning transnational nationalism. This chapter provides a brief overview of the book’s content, including information about the editors, contributing authors, and translators.

A. *The Overview of Globalization Studies and Classic Theories of Transnationalism*

This book was published in April 2014 by Nanjing University Press, and co-edited by Professors Yin Xiaohuang and He Chengzhou. The book contains a general preface, an introduction, and 14 seminal essays exploring issues related to globalization and transnationalism. Professor He Chengzhou notes that the book synthesizes domestic and international academic resources—including the contributions of several Chinese diaspora scholars—to examine topics of globalization and Chinese culture from both theoretical and practical perspectives [1]. Professor Yin expressed hope that the book would “help readers critically examine the transformation of cultural traditions, cognitive paradigms, value orientations, and aesthetic sensibilities within the framework of globalization” [1].

Since the “Soviet Union and Eastern Europe” upheaval in the 1990s, the world has entered the post-Cold War and globalization era. In the West, especially in the United States, a large number of various academic trends have emerged related to these transformations [1]. Among these, the research of globalization and transnationalism has emerged as a major scholarly current with profound academic and practical significance. The innovative and pioneering essays collected in this book offer Chinese scholars’ new perspectives for engaging in academic conversations about globalization while presenting valuable perspectives to the worldwide academic community.

B. *Background of the Contributing Authors and Translators*

In the introduction written by Professor Yin Xiaohuang, he offers an overview of the contributing authors and the translation tasks associated with this book. Professor Yin emphasizes that the selected authors include both pioneering scholars and leading authorities in globalization studies, as well as emerging voices who have recently gained prominence in Western academia. These authors represent diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds, encompassing scholars from the United States, Europe, Asia, and the Chinese diaspora [1]. This diversity reflects the broad scope of the book, which brings together key theories and perspectives from leading figures in fields such as economics, literature, migration, and history. As such, the translation of this book carries significant academic value and presents considerable challenges.

In terms of translation, Yin and He [1] engaged 14 scholars with relevant academic backgrounds and proven translation competence to undertake the translation task. Each scholar was responsible for translating one chapter, while the two editors oversaw the overall review and revision process. Yin [1] acknowledges the complexity of academic translation, remarking that “the original English texts contain numerous globalization-related terminology, the translation of which is open to interpretation, and there is no universally agreed standard”. Throughout the editing process, two professors engaged in extensive discussions with the translators and revised the translations repeatedly in an effort to refine translation to the highest possible standard. Nevertheless, Yin [1] candidly admits that “some parts of the translation may still fall short of perfection”.

I have had the privilege of studying under Professor Yin in his course, during which I engaged in in-depth reading of selected chapters from this book under his guidance. Even now, more than a decade after the book's publication in 2014, Professor Yin still vividly recalls the debates and decision-making processes surrounding the translation of key terms. In class, he frequently discusses the rendering of critical terminology, offering insights into the rationale and deliberations behind each translation choice. Although I have only studied a portion of the book, I have come to deeply appreciate the dedication and scholarly rigor Professor Yin invested in this work.

IV. THE MANIFESTATION OF TRANSLATOR'S CULTURAL IDENTITY IN THE TRANSLATION

In the Chinese translation of *Globalization Studies and Classic Theories of Transnationalism*, the cultural identity of the translators played a vital role. As cultural mediators, translators must negotiate a balance between source and target cultures while actively preserving cultural diversity.

A. The Cultural Identity of the Translator

In the context of globalization, translation is far more than a linguistic conversion, it involves deeper integration of culture, values, and identity.

According to Wang Ning, a renowned scholar in globalization studies, cultural identity refers to "fundamentally rooted in ethnic markers and culturally-embedded national characteristics within literary and cultural studies" [4]. Within the field of cultural globalization, the translator serves as a cultural intermediary with dual identities: on one hand, the translator has been shaped by long-term immersion in one linguistic and cultural environment, resulting in a stable and deeply rooted language competence; on the other hand, through educational experiences and to some extent personal encounters, the translator's knowledge and proficiency in another language and culture remain in a state of dynamic development. Given the inherent complexities of culture and translation, the translator's cultural identity constitutes a multidimensional construct requiring multilayered and multi-angular analysis for holistic comprehension.

B. Balancing Fidelity and Adaptability through Translator's Cultural Identity

In cross-cultural translation, the translator's cultural identity becomes a key factor in determining translation strategies. The core challenge lies in negotiating an appropriate balance between source-text fidelity and target-culture adaptability, particularly vital for academic translations where precise conveyance of scholarly ideas must align with cultural coherence to prevent misinterpretation.

In the Chinese translation of the book, it was essential to maintain fidelity to the original academic arguments while also aligning with the cultural context of Chinese readers. Professor Yin Xiaohuang, as both translator and chief reviewer, has long engaged in scholarly writing and translation in China, with extensive research experience in globalization, cross-cultural communication, and Sino-US relations. As the chief reviewer of the translated manuscript,

Professor Yin brought to the project a high level of academic competence and linguistic precision. His cultural identity played a decisive role in maintaining the overall quality and integrity of the translation. Moreover, the fourteen contributing translators of this book are primarily scholars with academic backgrounds in cross-cultural communication, many of whom had studied in the West. They possessed both a global perspective and a sensitivity to local issues. The translation team ensured that the translations retained the academic essence of the source texts while improving readability and accessibility for Chinese readers through appropriate linguistic adaptations.

When translating culturally embedded terms, translators must go beyond linguistic accuracy to consider their own cultural identity and cultural literacy, making adjustments in accordance with the norms and expectations of the target language. For example, in Chapter 9 of the book, the sentence "However, Clifford stresses the dislocation of culture, that in an age of accelerating globalization culture has become deterritorialized and diasporic" was rendered with "deterritorialized" translated as "去区域化". This translation precisely conveys the fluid and borderless nature of culture in the context of globalization. Similarly, in Chapter 6, the title "Places, Regions, Territories" was translated with "Territories" rendered as "领土", preserving the lexical meaning of the original term while ensuring it aligns with Chinese readers' conceptual understanding of "territory". These examples reflect the translator's ability to skillfully balance fidelity and adaptation in the face of complex academic texts, bridging linguistic and cultural divides to facilitate accurate understanding of the author's intended meanings.

C. The Translator's Cultural Identity as Guardian of Cultural Diversity

With the deepening of the globalization process, cultural homogenization and cultural hegemony have become increasingly pressing concerns. Globalization has promoted communication and interaction among different cultures. However, at the same time, the infiltration and dominance of strong cultures over weak ones have also brought about a crisis of cultural identity. Against this backdrop, translation, as a key instrument of intercultural communication, plays an essential role in cultural transmission and mediation. The cultural identity of the translator has become a key factor in protecting cultural diversity and avoiding cultural hegemony.

In the translation of this book, the translators navigated diverse cultural contexts and discourses while maintaining academic fidelity and aligning with the cognitive and cultural expectations of Chinese readers. For instance, in Chapter 9, the term "contamination" appears multiple times. The translator employed a flexible approach based on contextual meaning. In the expression "cosmopolitan contamination", the term was translated as "城市浸染". The word "Contamination" in English usually has a negative connotation of contamination or dirtiness. Translating it directly might mislead Chinese readers into thinking that cultural assimilation in the source text is a negative and malignant process. However, the source author intends to emphasize the interaction and integration of cultures, which

is not a bad thing but a result of the continuous integration of cultures in the context of globalization. By translating it as “浸染”, the translator preserved the original’s conceptual intent while employing a term with aesthetic and cultural resonance in Chinese, emphasizing the subtle, pervasive nature of cultural influence. In another instance, from the sentence “because cultural authenticity is always a product of what he calls ‘contamination’, and cultural homogenization is always localized”, the term “contamination” was rendered as “混合”. This translation underscores the inevitability and positive potential of cultural plurality and exchange. The decision to use different translations—“浸染” in one context and “混合” in another—demonstrates the translator’s careful judgment based on cultural understanding and contextual analysis. Therefore, the translator needs to judge whether appropriate adjustments to the source text are necessary based on cultural understanding of the source language and cultural cognition. The translator’s handling of these two translations not only protects cultural diversity but also helps readers understand the positive significance of cultural exchange.

V. THE MANIFESTATION OF TRANSLATORS’ SUBJECTIVITY IN THE TRANSLATION

In the Chinese translation of the book, translators’ subjectivity emerged as a pivotal factor influencing translation quality, profoundly affecting the choice of translation strategies and translated text. This chapter explores the manifestation of translators’ subjectivity from two main perspectives: purpose awareness and service awareness of translators.

A. Translator Subjectivity

Translator subjectivity has long been an important research area of translation studies; scholars have explored it from various perspectives. However, there is still no unified definition of translator subjectivity in the academic community. Zha and Tian [5] offered a representative definition: “Translator subjectivity refers to the subjective initiative demonstrated by the translator as a translation subject, under the premise of respecting the original text, and in order to achieve the translation’s intended purpose. Its core features include the translator’s conscious cultural awareness, humanistic integrity, and cultural as well as aesthetic creativity” [5]. This definition emphasizes the translator’s role as an active subject, who engages with the original text not as a passive reproducer, but as a creative object. Such a viewpoint has provided valuable guidance for understanding the translator’s role and function within the translation process.

Translator subjectivity is not only in linguistic choices and cultural adaptation, but also in how the translator, drawing upon their cultural knowledge and translational stance, presents the translated text. In the Chinese translation of the book, the translator did not simply reproduce the source text mechanically. Instead, translation strategies were selected based on the translator’s academic background, translational objectives, and sense of service. This exercise of subjectivity not only contributed to the distinctive style of the target text but also endowed it with renewed vitality and interpretive depth.

B. Translator’s Awareness of Purpose

In the 1970s, German scholar Hans J. Vermeer proposed the Skopos Theory, which emphasizes that the core of translation lies in its purpose. According to this theory, all translation activities are governed by three types of purposes: the translator’s purpose, the communicative purpose of the target text within its intended context, and the strategic purpose behind the chosen translation methods. The question in any translation process is “why translate?”, and the choice of translation strategies should serve this core demand. When conflicts arise among translation demands, the translator should handle them hierarchically to achieve a balance among multiple purposes.

In the Chinese translation of this book, the translator’s purpose was determined by the cultural background and academic expectations of the target readership, as well as by the editors’ intended goals for the book. The target readers of this book are mainly domestic scholars with a global cultural background, especially those researchers who focus on globalization, transnationalism and so on. The editor hopes that this book can help readers understand the mainstream academic trends in the West and the theoretical connotations of transnationalism in the current era of globalization, and promote domestic scholars to actively discuss issues related to globalization and Chinese culture.

Therefore, in order to meet the academic needs of the target readers and the expectations of the editors, translators not only need to accurately convey the theoretical terms and ideological viewpoints of the original authors, but also need to adapt the language of the translation to align with Chinese linguistic and cognitive conventions. First of all, translators should ensure the standardization and consistency of academic terms. For example, the term “transnationalism” was uniformly rendered as “跨国民族主义” rather than the more general “跨国主义”, in order to reflect its specific theoretical context and prevent conceptual ambiguity. Similarly, “the common” was translated as “共有资源” rather than the literal “共有”, thereby clarifying its meaning in the context of global discourse and avoiding semantic vagueness.

Moreover, the translator needed to ensure cultural appropriateness by considering differences in linguistic and conceptual habits between English and Chinese readers. For instance, in the sentence “These critics see the periphery as the site of ‘homogenization and corruption’, but they ought to concentrate more on ‘reciprocity and synthesis’ in global cultural flows”, the phrase “homogenization and corruption” was not literally translated as “同质化和腐败” but rendered as “同化和腐化”. This translation retained the critical nuance of the source text while avoiding the overtly politicized connotations that the term “腐败” might invoke in the Chinese context. Likewise, “reciprocity and synthesis” was translated not as “互惠和合成” but as “交汇与融合”, which better fits the target language’s idiomatic style and emphasizes the dynamic nature of global cultural interaction. Throughout the translation of this book, the translator’s awareness of purpose remained a guiding force. This purposive orientation enabled the translator to strike a careful balance between academic rigor and cultural

accessibility, thus advancing both scholarly dissemination and intercultural communication.

C. Translator's Service Awareness

Translator's service awareness refers to the translator's ability to adopt the reader's perspective during the translation process, taking into account the needs and expectations of the target audience. This awareness influences how translators handle the cultural information and linguistic conventions of the source text, ensuring that the final translation offers the best possible reading experience for its target readers.

In the translation of this book, the translator's service awareness played a pivotal role. By thoroughly understanding the cultural background and academic expectations of target readers, the translator ensured not only the accuracy and consistency of key terminology but also the readability and comprehensibility of the translated text. To enhance the fluency and naturalness of the translation, the translator made necessary adjustments not only in terminological consistency but also in sentence structure and rhythm. When translating long and complex sentences, the translator adapted them according to the syntactic norms of Chinese, often breaking them down into shorter, more digestible segments to improve clarity and ease of reading. For example, the source sentence "The realignment of political, ethnic, and personal identities is not necessarily a process of 'win or lose', whereby political borders become 'insignificant' and the nation-state 'loses' to global trade in terms of its control over the affiliations and behavior of its subjects". The translated text is "政治、族裔和个人身份的重新调整不一定是'谁输谁赢'的过程。有鉴于此, 政治边界已变得'不重要', 民族国家在对公民关系和行为的控制上, '输给了'全球贸易". In this example, the translator deliberately segmented the original long sentence into two concise and logically structured sentences, better aligned with the syntactic and rhetorical conventions of Chinese. This approach not only made each information point more salient but also prevented potential confusion in logic and grammar that might arise from overly complex sentence constructions. Furthermore, the phrase "win or lose" was translated as "谁输谁赢", which accurately captures the oppositional nature of the source expression while maintaining fluency in the target language. This example illustrates the significance of service awareness in the translation process, which drives translators to continuously refine their strategies to ensure that translated text meets the needs of its readers, thereby facilitating effective cross-cultural communication and academic exchange.

VI. CONCLUSION

This paper examines the Chinese translation process of *Globalization Studies and Classic Theories of Transnationalism*, with a focus on how the translator's cultural identity and subjectivity are manifested in academic translation. When translating academic texts, the translator's cultural identity and subjectivity are decisive factors in the selection of translation strategies and significantly influence both the academic quality and cultural adaptability of the translated text. The key findings of this study can be summarized as follows:

First, the cultural identity of the translator is an indispensable factor in the translation process. A translator's cultural background shapes their comprehension and interpretation of the source text. When dealing with culturally sensitive content, the translator's cultural identity helps to strike a balance between fidelity to the source and adaptation to the target culture, thereby contributing to the preservation of cultural diversity.

Second, translator subjectivity plays a vital role throughout the translation process. The formulation of translational purposes and the embodiment of service awareness are closely tied to the translator's subjectivity. Guided by specific translation goals, translators adopt corresponding strategies that ensure both academic rigor and accuracy while taking into account the target readers' receptiveness and level of understanding. At the same time, they consistently uphold a strong sense of service, enabling the translated work to possess not only scholarly value but also to function effectively as a medium for cultural exchange. The translator's high degree of cultural sensitivity and professional expertise not only safeguard the integrity of academic transmission but also contribute significantly to the mutual enrichment of Chinese and Western cultures.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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