

A Study on Translator's Subjectivity in the Era of AI Translation

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Abstract: *The iteration of artificial intelligence translation technology has profoundly reshaped the technical context of translation activities, and the translator's role and the connotation of subjectivity are facing reexamination. Based on an analysis of the technical principles of AI translation, this study addresses the theoretical reconstruction of translator's subjectivity. It examines, from the internal mechanism level, the projection of intention, value judgment, and aesthetic choice in translator decision-making, as well as the adjustment path of translator thinking under technological intervention; from the external manifestation level, it analyzes the stylistic imprint of translations, the negotiated construction of translator identity in cross-cultural communication, and the tension balance between technical constraints and subjective agency. The research shows that translator's subjectivity in the era of AI translation presents dual characteristics of connotation extension and form reconstruction. The translator always occupies a dominant position in meaning generation in human-machine collaboration, and his or her linguistic sensitivity, cultural judgment, and aesthetic creativity are the professional core that technology cannot replace.*

Keywords: *Era of AI Translation; Translator's Subjectivity; Human-Machine Collaboration; Translation Ethics.*

Introduction

The rapid development of artificial intelligence translation technology has made deep neural networks an important tool for language conversion. Machine translation exhibits a high degree of fluency at the level of text generation, which significantly improves the translation efficiency of informative texts. However, the statistically predictive nature of technical systems makes it difficult to reach the deep intentions and cultural presuppositions of a text, and this nature fundamentally differs from human cognitive pathways. This change in the technical context shifts the focus of translation studies from tool efficiency to the human dimension, and it prompts a reexamination of the translator's role and value. The deep involvement of technical tools does not eliminate the professional function of the translator; instead, it expands the translator's role from a language converter to a controller of the technical system, a reviser of machine output, and an interpreter of meaning generation. An in-depth investigation of the internal mechanism of this transformation helps to establish a balance between technical rationality and humanistic value, and it provides a theoretical reference for the positioning of the translation discipline.

1. Theoretical Reconstruction of Translator's Subjectivity in the Technical Context

1.1 Technical Principles and Text Generation Features of Artificial Intelligence Translation

The current technical foundation of artificial intelligence translation lies in the application of deep neural networks and large language models. Its operating mechanism simulates the connection mode of human brain neurons, and it learns the mapping relationships and probability distributions between language units through the training of massive bilingual corpora. Under the encoder-decoder framework and combined with the attention mechanism, the machine can capture long-distance textual dependencies and achieve contextualized semantic conversion. In terms of text generation, AI translation exhibits high fluency and regular surface structures, and it can achieve rapid syntactic correspondence. However, its generation logic is essentially prediction and reproduction based on statistical regularities, and it lacks substantive understanding of the deep intentions, implicit meanings,

and cultural presuppositions of a text. The technical principles determine that machine output tends toward the "most probable" expression rather than the "most appropriate" one, and the meaning generation path of the text fundamentally differs from the cognitive path of the human brain, which inevitably reserves space for subsequent translator intervention.

1.2 Traditional Understanding of Translator's Subjectivity and Its Contemporary Extension

In traditional translation studies, translator's subjectivity is generally defined as the translator's creative interpretive ability based on respect for the original work, and it encompasses the translator's cultural stance, aesthetic preference, and personal style. This understanding emphasizes the subjective initiative of the translator as a reproducer of meaning. In the era of artificial intelligence translation, the deep involvement of technical tools in the translation process has significantly extended the connotation of translator's subjectivity. The translator is no longer merely the operator of language conversion, but has also become the controller and corrector of the technical system. The domain in which subjectivity exercises itself has expanded from the purely textual and linguistic level to the design of human-machine collaboration processes, the evaluation of machine-generated texts, and the maintenance of translation ethics. The traditional binary relationship between the translator and the author has evolved into a triadic interaction among the translator, the machine, and the original text, and thus translator's subjectivity has acquired new implications from the technical dimension.

1.3 Redefinition of the Translator's Role in Human-Machine Interaction

The deepening of human-machine interaction has led to a structural transformation of the translator's role. Against the background where AI translation undertakes the basic text generation process, the translator's focus shifts from word-by-word transfer to higher-level text manipulation and quality control. The translator becomes a reviser of machine output, and he or she is responsible for identifying semantic deviations, pragmatic errors, and stylistic mismatches generated by algorithms. At the same time, the translator also serves as a decision-maker in the translation process, and he or she needs to make trade-offs between efficiency and quality, as well as between fidelity and flexibility. More critically, in the translation of literary texts, intellectual texts, and highly contextualized texts, the translator assumes the role of an interpreter who endows the text with vitality. This role positioning highlights the irreplaceability of human agency in the chain of meaning generation: machines can process "information," but only the translator can interpret "significance." Human-machine collaboration is not a simple functional addition but a deep-level professional division of labor, in which the translator always occupies a dominant and directional position[1].

2. Internal Dimensions and Operational Mechanisms of Translator's Subjectivity

2.1 Intention Projection and Value Judgment in the Translator's Decision-Making Process

In the face of multiple linguistic options during translation, the translator needs to activate corresponding cognitive processing modes according to the specific textual context. In the translation of routine informative texts, the translator tends to adopt heuristic processing, and he or she quickly completes language conversion by relying on candidate translations provided by artificial intelligence translation. In the processing of complex texts or high-context texts, however, the translator switches to systematic processing mode, and he or she conducts an in-depth analysis of the syntactic structure, semantic levels, and pragmatic intentions of the original text. This switching of cognitive modes constitutes the underlying mechanism of the translator's decision-making, and it reflects the human ability to flexibly allocate cognitive resources under technical assistance.

The translator's grasp of the original author's intention is not a simple extraction of information, but rather an activity of meaning construction based on the translator's own horizon of understanding. The translator enters the meaning world of the text through reading, and he or she mobilizes his or her own pre-understanding structure to speculate on and reconstruct the author's possible intention. In this process, the translator must not only respect the linguistic clues provided by the text, but also inevitably integrate his or her own cognitive schema and cultural stance. The depth and accuracy of the intention projection determine whether the translated text can achieve functional equivalence with the original text's intention in the target language context.

The translator's decision-making is consistently guided by value judgment, which operates with

reference to multiple dimensions. At the linguistic dimension, the translator needs to weigh the normativity against the innovativeness of expression. At the textual function dimension, the translator needs to establish the priority between information transmission and aesthetic presentation according to the text type. At the audience dimension, the translator needs to consider the target readers' cognitive level and reception expectations. Against the background where artificial intelligence translation provides efficient solutions, the translator also needs to make a professional judgment between the pursuit of efficiency and the adherence to quality, and this judgment itself embodies the translator's understanding and positioning of the essential nature of translation activities[2].

2.2 Creative Interpretation and Aesthetic Choice in Language Conversion

In language conversion, the translator faces the issue of adjusting the interpretive distance. If the distance is too close, the translator easily falls into mechanical conversion of literal correspondence; if the distance is too far, it may lead to excessive deviation from the original work. The translator relies on his or her judgment of the text type and translation purpose to establish an appropriate interpretive distance, and he or she seeks a balance between fidelity to the spirit of the original work and consideration for the target readers. This adjustment process enables the source text to achieve a regeneration of meaning in the target language, and the implicit information, cultural images, and rhetorical effects of the original text reappear in a heterogeneous linguistic environment through the translator's interpretation.

Aesthetic judgment permeates all levels of the translator's linguistic processing. At the lexical level, the translator distinguishes subtle semantic differences and stylistic nuances among synonyms, and he or she selects the expression that best harmonizes with the overall context. At the syntactic level, the translator adjusts sentence length and rearranges information focus to create a rhythmic flow that conforms to the aesthetic conventions of the target language. At the textual level, the translator ensures logical cohesion and stylistic consistency across paragraphs, thereby guaranteeing the artistic integrity of the entire translated text. Although artificial intelligence translation can achieve corresponding conversion at the lexical and syntactic levels, it struggles to perform such refined processing and selection at the aesthetic dimension.

Translator's style is the concentrated manifestation of creative interpretation and aesthetic choice, and its formation originates from the linguistic habits and aesthetic orientations that the translator has accumulated through long-term translation practice. When different translators face the same source text, they produce distinctly different target texts due to differences in their cultural backgrounds, linguistic sensitivity, and artistic tastes. These differences can be traced in lexical selection, syntactic preference, rhetorical treatment, and the conversion of cultural images. The imprint of translator's style is not only an external manifestation of subjectivity but also strong proof of translation as a creative activity, and in the current era where artificial intelligence translation is becoming increasingly prevalent, such individualized linguistic imprints are even more precious.

2.3 The Adjustment Path of Translator's Thinking Under the Intervention of Technical Tools

The intervention of artificial intelligence translation has changed the structure of the translator's cognitive load. Under the traditional translation mode, the translator needs to simultaneously undertake multiple tasks, including source text comprehension, language conversion, and target text production. Under the human-machine collaboration mode, however, part of the language conversion tasks is shared by technical tools, and the translator is thus able to direct more cognitive resources toward the overall control of the text and the fine processing of key nodes. This restructuring of cognitive load requires the translator to reallocate attentional resources, and it establishes a new balance among the revision of machine output, the evaluation of problematic points, and the overall optimization of the translated text.

The translator's ability to master technical tools constitutes a new dimension of his or her professional competence. Technical awareness is reflected in the translator's clear understanding of both the advantages and the inherent limitations of artificial intelligence translation, and he or she can predict which text types are suitable for machine-generated initial translation and which linguistic phenomena require manual intervention. As experience accumulates, the translator gradually develops an intuitive judgment of machine output quality, and he or she can quickly identify potential semantic deviations and pragmatic mismatches when faced with seemingly fluent machine-generated texts. This technical awareness becomes an important component of the translator's professional judgment.

Under the background where technical tools are deeply involved in the translation process, the translator faces the challenge of maintaining his or her thinking autonomy. Over-reliance on machine output may lead to the degradation of the translator's linguistic sensitivity and the weakening of his or her critical awareness. To maintain thinking autonomy, the translator needs to keep a professional critical distance from technical tools, and he or she should position artificial intelligence translation as an auxiliary tool rather than a substitute. When dealing with texts rich in cultural connotations, vivid emotional colors, or clear value orientations, the translator actively returns to his or her own linguistic understanding and cultural judgment, and he or she maintains a necessary tension between technical efficiency and professional autonomy, ensuring that translation activities are always under human dominance[3].

3. External Manifestations and Textual Presentation of Translator's Subjectivity

3.1 Translator's Imprint and Individual Expression in Translation Style Markers

The translator's tendency in lexical selection constitutes the basic marker of translation style. Faced with multiple possible translations for the same concept in the source text, the translator makes a personalized lexical choice based on his or her understanding of the text type, his or her grasp of target language usage conventions, and his or her judgment of readers' reception expectations. This selection tendency gradually accumulates across a series of translated works, and it forms a relatively stable stylistic feature, which may lean toward the solemn elegance of written language or the vivid fluency of spoken language. Against the background where artificial intelligence translation can provide standardized lexical correspondences, the translator's personalized selection that deviates from machine recommendations precisely serves as an important sign of his or her subjectivity at work.

The translator's configuration of sentence structures profoundly influences the rhythm and readability of the translated text. The alternation between long and short sentences, the interweaving of simple and compound sentences, and the fronting or postponing of information focus all reflect the translator's sensitive grasp of linguistic rhythm. In the translation of technical texts, the translator may tend toward regular sentence structures and explicit logic; in the translation of literary texts, the translator pays more attention to the variation of sentence patterns and the creation of rhythmic quality. This preference in syntactic configuration is not only constrained by the syntactic features of the source text, but also incorporates the translator's exploration and exploitation of the expressive potential of the target language.

In dealing with the rhetorical devices and cultural images of the original text, the translator faces a choice between preserving heterogeneity and seeking domestication. Figures of speech such as simile, metaphor, personification, and irony have different manifestations and reception effects in different languages and cultures, and the translator needs to decide whether to transplant the rhetorical form of the original work or to seek a functionally equivalent alternative expression in the target language. The treatment of cultural images also reflects the translator's subjective judgment. For images with specific cultural connotations, the translator may either retain the foreign color through literal translation with annotations or adopt domestication conversion to enhance reader understanding. This level of rhetorical and cultural processing becomes the most recognizable component of translator's style[4].

3.2 The Negotiation and Construction of the Translator's Identity in Cross-Cultural Communication

The translator always faces the issue of identity positioning in translation activities, that is, whether he or she acts as the spokesperson of the original author, the guide of the target language readers, or the mediator between the two cultures. Different identity positions lead to different translation orientations and textual presentations. The translator who tends toward the author's stance pays more attention to preserving the expression patterns and thinking characteristics of the original work in the translated text; the translator who tends toward the reader's stance focuses more on the intelligibility and acceptability of the translated text; and the translator who acts as a cultural mediator strives to find a path of communication between differences. This identity positioning is not fixed, but rather adjusts dynamically with changes in text type, translation purpose, and communication context.

The degree of the translator's presence in the translated text presents an alternating state between concealment and manifestation. In text types where information transmission is the primary focus, the translator tends to conceal his or her own voice, and he or she strives for a transparent and fluent translation that makes the reader barely feel the translator's existence. In text types that require the

translator's interpretive intervention, the translator manifests his or her own voice through means such as footnotes, prefaces, and postscripts, and he or she explains to the reader the considerations and choices made during the translation process. Even within the main body of the translation, the translator's choice of specific words and his or her handling of problematic sentence structures also convey the translator's understanding and judgment. This alternation between concealment and manifestation constitutes the dynamic presentation of the translator's identity at the textual level.

In cross-cultural communication, the translator assumes the function of a mediator, and he or she needs to handle the differences and conflicts between the source culture and the target culture. When the original text involves concepts, customs, or values specific to a particular cultural context, the translator needs to assess the acceptability of these cultural elements in the target language context, and he or she decides whether to retain, transform, or omit them. In cases where cultural differences may lead to misunderstanding or reception barriers, the translator builds a bridge of understanding for the reader through appropriate explanation or contextual supplementation. The exercise of this mediating function requires not only the translator's in-depth understanding of both cultures but also his or her accurate anticipation of the communication effect.

3.3 The Tension Balance Between Technical Constraints and Subjective Agency

The widespread application of artificial intelligence translation technology imposes implicit constraints on the translator's scope of choice. The algorithm logic and training data built into the technical system determine the basic tendency and possible range of machine output. In the process of long-term use of technical tools, the translator may unconsciously be influenced by machine expression habits, and he or she may develop a language processing approach that converges with the technical system. The interface design of the translation platform, the preset options of the terminology database, and the matching mechanism of the translation memory also subtly guide the translator's path of choice. This technical constraint is not a compulsory external restriction, but rather it subtly influences the final form of the translation product by changing the translator's working environment and cognitive habits.

Faced with the output of the technical system, the translator always maintains professional intervention in the form of screening and correction. When machine translation deals with linguistic phenomena such as semantic ambiguity, unclear reference, and culture-loaded expressions, it often produces comprehension errors or inappropriate renderings, and these issues require the translator to identify and correct them based on his or her understanding of the source text and grasp of the context. For rhetorical devices, emotional tones, and implicit meanings that machine translation struggles to handle, the translator compensates for them through manual intervention. This process of screening and correction not only constitutes the translator's quality control over technical output but also reflects his or her recognition of technological limitations, and it forms an important dimension of subjective agency in human-machine collaboration.

In the translation process with deep technological intervention, the manifestation of translator's subjectivity exhibits new path characteristics. The translator no longer manifests himself or herself only through the creativity of language conversion, but also demonstrates his or her overall control over translation activities through the selection of technical tools, the evaluation of machine output, and the design of human-machine collaboration processes. In translation tasks where efficiency takes priority, the translator makes good use of technical tools to increase output speed; in translation tasks where quality takes priority, the translator appropriately detaches from machine assistance and returns to manual refined translation. This metacognitive ability to flexibly adjust the human-machine collaboration mode according to task demands constitutes an advanced form of translator's subjectivity in the technological era, and it enables the translator to maintain a dynamic tension balance between technical constraints and professional autonomy.

Conclusion

This study examines translator's subjectivity in the era of AI translation from three levels: theoretical reconstruction, internal mechanisms, and external manifestations. At the theoretical level, technical principles determine the surface features of machine output, which reserves space for translator intervention, and this situation prompts the translator's role to shift from language converter to reviser and interpreter. At the level of internal mechanisms, the translator's intention projection, aesthetic judgment, and thinking adjustment constitute the core dimensions of the operation of subjectivity. At the level of external manifestations, subjectivity is presented through translation style,

identity negotiation, and human-machine tension. Future research may focus on the expansion of multimodal translation scenarios, the exploration of cognitive mechanisms in human-machine interaction, the reconstruction of translation ethics, and the innovation of translator training models. The study of translator's subjectivity in the era of AI translation will continue to deepen in the interplay between technological development and humanistic values.

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