

RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Corpus-based Study of Metaphors in the Translated English Texts of *Caigentan*

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Abstract:

Caigentan 菜根譚 (*Vegetable Roots Discourse*), a Chinese classic of Ming Dynasty, stresses self-cultivation and self-admonition with thoughts deep-rooted in Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism through metaphors. This research focuses on metaphors related to the key concepts of the book and adopts Critical Metaphor Analysis to facilitate the analysis of metaphors related to ‘*de* 德’ (virtue) and ‘*xin* 心’ (heart) in the translated English texts of *Caigentan*. The study aims to identify the meaning associations of *de* and *xin* and the cultural implications in comparison to the original work. Ten categories of *de* metaphors and twelve categories of *xin* metaphors are identified, and they are assigned with several human and natural metaphorical images including water, object, container, plant, soil, human, etc. Further comparison reveals that: 1) *de* and *xin* share some common characteristics such as variability, powerfulness and the need for cultivation; 2) *de* owns material property and invisibility while *xin* has spatial property and visibility; 3) *de* needs continuous accumulation to reach the ideal state whereas *xin* requires reduction and purification to achieve perfection. Furthermore, metaphor could be a process of meaning interpretation rather than meaning reflection of the source to the target domain. With the corpus-based approach, this article provides a methodological frame for metaphor studies and enriches literary studies from a metaphorical perspective. Meanwhile, it may also facilitate the exploration of cultural differences between China and the West.

Keywords: metaphor; Critical Metaphor Analysis; translation of Chinese classics; *Caigentan*

1. Introduction

As one of the four ancient civilization countries in the world, China has numerous literary works that serve as windows through which people learn about Chinese culture. *Caigentan* 菜根譚 (*Vegetable Roots Discourse*), though not as voluminous as some eminent classics, is a masterpiece highlighting a mixture of cultural heritages. Written by Ming scholar Hong Yingming four hundred years ago, *Caigentan* is a book of aphorisms and maxims containing abundant wisdom and philosophy. ‘*Caigen* 菜根’ literally refers to ‘vegetable roots’ while ‘*tan* 譚’ means ‘talk or discourse’. Composed of more than three hundred precepts, this book stresses self-cultivation and self-admonition with thoughts deep-rooted in three ideological systems, i.e., Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism. Promoting an attitude of simplicity and humility for life and society, *Caigentan* has charmed generations of scholars. It has been translated into numerous versions receiving prevalence initially in Japan, then all around the world.



This study focuses on the metaphorization in the English translations of *Caigentan*. In cognitive linguistic theory, metaphor contributes to a better understanding of the relationship between language and human thought. As a book of aphorisms and maxims, *Caigentan* addresses the attainment of intellectual and personal freedom by means of internal awareness. In the book, ‘*de* 德’ (*morality*) and ‘*xin* 心’ (*heart*) appear as the core concepts. Thus among various kinds of metaphors, metaphors related to ‘*de*’ and ‘*xin*’ convey the essential ideas of the whole book. Furthermore, these two kinds of metaphors appear more frequently than other metaphors in the book, enhancing the feasibility of the research. Through the analysis of the metaphors related to *de* and *xin* in *Caigentan*, this study aims to uncover the dominant theme of this classic from the literal and cultural meanings conveyed.

2. *Caigentan*: Editions and Translations

As a time-honored work, *Caigentan* belongs to the tradition of light literature (*xiaopin wen* 小品文), which was coming into its own in the late Ming. During hundreds of years of circulation, it has been appreciated by not only men of letters but also the common people. The precepts in the book are not long, usually with each entry containing fewer than 50 words, and each one serves as an independent entity, unrelated to the surrounding entries in terms of meaning. There are basically two versions of *Caigentan*. The Ming version was first printed in the Ming Dynasty while the Qing version became popular in the Qian Long period (Hua 1988, p. 152). The two versions differ not only in the number of entries but also in their order. The Ming version contains 360 entries of two subdivided books with no further classifications while the Qing version includes 383 entries, somewhat more than the Ming version. The Qing version also contains two books. The first book is subdivided into four sections sequentially titled “Self-cultivation”, “Social Relations”, “Critiques”, and “Leisure” while the second book is simply labeled “General Comments”. The differences in number and order result in differences in content. The Ming version is substantially closer to the original work whereas the Qing version shows many more editorial changes. Thus according to the researchers, compared to the Qing version, the Ming version is more suited for academic research for its “much adherence to Hong and the work” (Aitken & Kwok 2006, p. 171). In addition, researchers also evaluate the book in terms of the content and the thoughts implied, speaking highly of the author’s utilization of the thoughts from the three ideological systems to express his opinions on the current social situation (Wang, 1988; Fu, 2009). Zhou (2000), Sang (2007), and Yokoyama (2016) focus on certain religious thoughts such as the golden mean in Confucianism and Buddhism in the book, and these philosophical ideas still have positive implications for the present era.

Apart from the original Chinese versions, the translated versions, especially the English translations have also boosted the interests of researchers. Wang and Gu (2017) have a review of the related English translations of *Caigentan*. Jiang (2002) tries to explore comprehension strategies for translated Chinese classics by adopting the translated texts of the book as a reference. Through the comparison of two translated versions, Guo (2005, p. 51) tries to figure out which translator is most suitable for the translation of Chinese classics. Chen (2011) focuses on the translation effect by exploring the related translated texts from a pragmatic perspective. These studies have greatly improved the understanding of *Caigentan* and indicated the significance of translator and translating norms. Yet, the cultural connotation conveyed in this time-honored work is sometimes neglected.



Overall, *Caigentan*, although a late Ming product, could still bring edification to people nowadays. Of the research on the corresponding translations, issues related to the translator's subjectivity and style, translating principles, and translation effect have attracted much attention. Yet, studies from the perspective of metaphor have rarely been conducted. Moreover, few researchers delve into the analysis and comparison of the cultural connotation hidden in this book and its translations.

3. Research Methodology

Metaphor is not only an important figurative device but a way of thinking with the integration of evaluative, persuasive and ideological qualities. It can provide insights into a specific cultural epoch, uncovering implicit ideological connotations and covert assumptions. In the 1980s, the field of metaphor research received a huge impetus with the emergence of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). In the past two decades, the field of metaphor research has received a huge impetus from emerging corpus-based methods. Corpus approaches, which emphasize authentic data and empirical verification of theoretical claims, could improve the understanding of metaphorical patterns and provide a firmer interpretation of conceptual metaphors from linguistic materials. The introduction of corpus approaches has revitalized the metaphor research field with various new findings. Yet, few studies are focusing on metaphors in the translated texts of classical literature. As noted earlier, metaphors in *Caigentan* and its translations have received very little attention. Moreover, most researchers prefer cognitive theory and approach. There are relatively few studies from the corpus perspective.

Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) is chosen as the main approach in this article. It is an integration of corpus linguistics with cognitive linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Both individual and social resources could influence metaphor choice in discourse (Charteris-Black, 2004, p. 41). This approach mainly covers three stages: metaphor identification, metaphor interpretation and metaphor explanation. Metaphor identification, as the first stage of the whole procedure, requires a close reading of the texts with the aim of identifying candidate metaphors; metaphor interpretation involves establishing a relationship between metaphors and the cognitive and pragmatic factors that determine them; metaphor explanation aims at identifying the social agency involved in metaphor production and their social role in persuasion. To some extent, metaphor explanation could identify the discourse function of metaphors enabling people to establish their ideological and rhetorical motivation.

As noted earlier, of the two versions of *Caigentan*, the Ming version is believed to have better adherence to Hong's original work, with the two-part division kept intact for clear provenance (Aitken & Kwok, 2006, p. 171). Its reverence to the original version could help readers follow the author's intellectual and sentimental passage through life (Aitken & Kwok, 2006, p. 172). Thus, the Ming version is chosen as the original version in this research. Two translated works are respectively from British translator Paul White and Chinese translator Zhou Wenbiao. Both are experienced in Chinese-English literary translation. Besides, the selection of works translated by native speakers of different languages could benefit research on cultural differences between China and the West.

There are altogether three texts used for this research: the original work as the source text and two English translations as the target texts. The three are supposed to form a parallel corpus with 61,006 words. For the sub-corpus of the original text, there are altogether 8972 tokens and 1309 types, with



the type/token ratio being 0.146; for the sub-corpus of the translated text by White, there are 22221 tokens and 4054 types, with the type/token ratio being 0.182; for the sub-corpus of the translated text by Zhou, there are 22975 tokens and 4051 types, with the type/token ratio being 0.176. Several research tools including Editpad Pro7, PowerGREP4, and Olifant are applied for data processing and analysis. Editpad Pro7 and PowerGREP4 are used to establish the corpus and process data at the initial stage. Then Editpad Pro7 is used for the alignment of the texts. At this stage, original and translated precepts are aligned one by one. After that, Olifant serves for the concordance analysis of the texts. With this tool, the selection of the related metaphors could be finished quickly.

Through close reading and personal research, it is found that *de* and *xin* metaphors, with their focus on self-cultivation, appear frequently throughout the book. In the original text, *de* appears 33 times altogether in 29 entries while *xin* 115 times in 93 entries in total, which provides an appropriate starting place for study. Under the guidance of CMA, this research includes three stages: metaphor identification, metaphor interpretation and metaphor explanation. In the stage of metaphor identification, the entries that contain *de* and *xin* and in the original text and their corresponding translations are listed. The stage of metaphor interpretation requires a qualitative study of the discovered metaphors. In the stage of metaphor explanation, the focus is on the analysis of the meaning relationships displayed by metaphors in the original text and their translated counterparts with a following discussion on the cultural implication.

This study aims to address the following research questions:

- (1) What metaphors concerning key concepts of self-cultivation, i.e., *de* and *xin*, could be identified in the translated English texts of *Caigentan*?
- (2) From a phraseological perspective, what patterns could be identified in the use of metaphors?
- (3) What meaning relationships are displayed in such patterns regarding their counterparts in the original text?

4. The Translation of *De* Metaphors in *Caigentan*

Through close reading assisted with corpus search, it is found that *de* metaphors that center on self-cultivation appear frequently throughout the whole book, providing huge research space for this study.

4.1 An analysis of *de* metaphors

According to the statistics, in the translated works of *Caigentan*, *de*, which appears 33 times in the original text, has been translated into dozens of expressions including single words ‘virtue’, ‘morality’ and phrases ‘moral integrity’ and ‘moral character’. Table 1 provides an explicit list of the translated versions of *de*.



Table 1. List of Translated Expressions of *de* in the Translated Texts

In the work of Paul White (WV)	In both works	In the work of Zhou Wenbiao (ZV)
moral trait; nature; merits; conduct	moral integrity; moral character(s); gratitude; morality; virtue; quality(s); favor(s); beneficence	good turns; charities; morality and virtue; justice and virtue; bounties; benevolence(s); moral principles

Based on the collected data from the translated texts, *de* metaphors could be classified into ten kinds. As is shown in the table below, *de* is respectively regarded as substance, plant, person, money, rule, honor, a shining object, tool and metal. Further research on the difference between oriental and Western cultures with comparative analyses of metaphors in both the original and translated texts is needed.

Table 2. List of *de* metaphors in the Translated Texts

	Metaphor	Examples
1	DE IS A SUBSTANCE	A career pursued without storing up virtue is as transitory as flowers that bloom and die before one's eyes. (Entry 56)
2	DE IS A PLANT	That way you can hide your capacities and cultivate your virtue . (Entry 19)
3	DE IS HUMAN	The man who has attained the realm of perfect virtue is not the wonder maker who stands out from all his fellows. (Entry 7)
4	DE IS PROPERTY	...the bestowed will owe an endless debt of gratitude after your death. (Entry 12)
5	DE IS A RULE	Those who stick to their moral integrity might be lonesome for a time. (Entry 1)
6	DE IS A GIFT/HONOR	Do not toady to accomplished men; they do not bestow favors as ordinary people do. (Entry 189)
7	DE IS A SHINING OBJECT	When a man refines his moral character to the point of perfection, he does so not with the aid of any magic formula, but by letting his pure inborn nature shine forth . (Entry 102)



8	DE IS ACHIEVEMENT	Those who have devoted themselves to the attainment of morality and justice should disregard the fickleness of human nature. (Entry 252)
9	DE IS A TOOL	It is only by means of commonplace virtue and actions that one can preserve intact one's natural essence and lead a peaceful and stable life. (Entry 181)
10	DE IS METAL	...if such accomplishments do not arise from the moulding of your virtue ...(Entry 154)

4.2 The meaning associations of *de* metaphors

On account of *de* metaphors analyzed above, *de* metaphors in the translated texts of *Caigentan* could be classified into ten kinds. Based on these ten conceptual metaphors, five conceptual keys could be further inferred. These conceptual keys help to explain how conceptual metaphors are related and at the same time provide a higher level of metaphorical images of *de*.

4.2.1 Attainability

De is not something that could only be watched from a distance but a kind of result that could be attained by various means. The conceptual metaphors DE IS A SUBSTANCE and DE IS ACHIEVEMENT are interrelated through the conceptual key DE IS ATTAINABLE. For example, 'attainment' in Entry 225 directly points out the attainable quality of *de* 'Those who have devoted themselves to the attainment of morality and justice should disregard the fickleness of human nature'. 'Store up' from Entry 56 and 'accumulate' from Entry 78 prove that *de* which can be reserved or collected for future use, is not transient. Thus it could be inferred that *de* possesses attainability.

4.2.2 Valuableness

De is a kind of treasure. From the conceptual metaphor DE IS PROPERTY, the phrases such as 'owe an endless debt of gratitude', 'gratitude that he thinks others owe him' and 'earn a lifetime's gratitude' indicate the precious value of *de*. Besides, there are other conceptual metaphors echoing the precious quality of *de*. 'Bestow' is a word always used in the conceptual metaphor DE IS A GIFT/HONOR. For instance, 'bestow bounties' and 'bestow favors', together with 'grant' reflect the valuable nature of *de*. In the conceptual metaphor DE IS A SHINING OBJECT, the expression 'the shining purity of his inner nature' directly points out the priceless quality of *de*. The same connotation also appears in DE IS ACHIEVEMENT where the phrases 'the merits which we benefit from' and 'praise him for his virtue' also account for the value of *de*.

4.2.3 Variability

Instead of being still, *de* is sustainable and variable. The conceptual metaphor DE IS A PLANT supports that *de* is in development. In this conceptual metaphor, *de* is regarded as a plant growing under human care. Moreover, in Entry 90, both translators adopt 'increase the store of virtue' to express the



increase of *de*. In Entry 145, they respectively use ‘increase’ and ‘improve’ to describe a growth in size, amount or degree, conforming to the concept that *de* is variable. The word ‘improve’ is frequently adopted in other metaphors for the same purpose. In the translated texts, ‘improve his nature and virtue’ and ‘improve one’s conduct’ also indicate the variable quality of *de*.

4.2.4 Figurability

As mentioned above, *de* is something that can not only be attained and owned but also change with equal possibility of increase or decline. The conceptual metaphors DE IS A PLANT and DE IS METAL both relate to the concept that *de* needs cultivation. As for the concept DE IS A PLANT, the frequent occurrence of the word ‘cultivate’ in phrases such as ‘cultivate our moral characters’, ‘cultivate your virtue’, and ‘cultivate his moral character’ has provided evidence. Besides, in the metaphor DE IS METAL, ‘molding of your virtue’, ‘tempering will and virtue’, and ‘temper his virtue’ indicate that *de* needs cultivation. The figurability of *de* also suggests that it requires external efforts to gradually develop and achieve its ideal state.

4.2.5 Power

De doesn’t solely depend on external forces; it can also exert influence outward. In other words, it possesses a power that can have restraining effects, a quality reflected in several conceptual metaphors. In metaphor DE IS HUMAN, ‘the sermon of justice and virtue’, and ‘the strictures of worldly virtue and morality’ implies that *de* is a human with authority. This powerful influence manifests even more in the metaphor DE IS A RULE where ‘stick to their moral integrity’ and ‘abiding by ordinary moral principles’ shows the impact of *de* on humans. Another metaphor DE IS A TOOL explains this metaphorical sense from the aspect of function. Since the function of tools is mainly to facilitate the achievement of something, *de* embodies strong power that can significantly influence the external world.

5. The Translation of *Xin* Metaphors in *Caigentan*

5.1 An analysis of *xin* metaphors

In analyzing the metaphors related to *xin*, the same method is applied and involves four steps. According to the statistics, in the translated works of *Caigentan*, *xin*, which is related to 93 entries, appears altogether 115 times in the original text. Table 3 provides an explicit list of the translated versions of *xin*.



Table 3. List of Translated Expressions of *xin* in the Translated Texts

In the work of Paul White	In both works	In the work of Zhou Wenbiao
essence; sincerity conscience; inner selves; mental outlook; innermost thoughts; aspirations and ambitions; moral character; nature	heart; mind; thoughts; soul(s); spirit(s)	sense intentions; notion; exertion; hearted feelings; desire; psychology; mercy; innermost feelings; inherent quality; mood; integrities; natural characters; temperament

Based on the data collected from the translated texts, *xin* metaphors could be divided into 12 categories. As is shown in Table 4, *xin* is respectively deemed as water, human, place, a substance, a hidden object, a substance, a container, a moving object, a shining object, a tool, a plant, soil and something that has its responsibility.

Table 4. List of *xin* Metaphors in the Translated Texts

	Metaphor	Examples
1	XIN IS WATER	To be a true man, you should preserve a pure heart . (Entry 15)
2	XIN IS HUMAN	A pure heart can bequeath its noble virtue to generation after generation. (Entry 180)
3	XIN IS A PLACE: A) XIN IS A TERRITORY B) XIN IS A HOUSE	Likewise, a man of noble character must keep himself alert while unoccupied , and enjoy repose while exerting himself. (Entry 8) Likewise, a man of noble character must keep himself alert while unoccupied , and enjoy repose while exerting himself. (Entry 220)
4	XIN IS A SUBSTANCE	...But so long as you can guard against exterior temptations by keeping your heart unswerving ... (Entry 79)
5	XIN IS A HIDDEN OBJECT	The true subtlety of man's heart can be perceived when one keeps calm and unhurried at leisure. (Entry 87)



6	XIN IS A CONTAINER	A heart filled with desires could create surging waves on a frozen pond. (Entry 227)
7	XIN IS A MOVING OBJECT	...but as soon as the matters are disposed of his mind will return to stillness again. (Entry 82)
8	XIN IS A SHINING OBJECT	...it is only when a person has retained the shining purity of his inner nature that he can live and work as an honest man... (Entry 183)
9	XIN IS A TOOL	When you meet a sly and crafty man, use sincerity to make him change his ways . (Entry 179)
10	XIN IS A PLANT	...So I know that the original essence never withers and that the divine spark instills life into everything it touches. (Entry 316)
11	XIN IS SOIL	The heart should be made open to conviction so that righteousness will put down to its roots there. (Entry 75)
12	XIN HAS A RESPONSIBILITY	That time is long or short hinges on man's subjective conception; likewise, that space is broad or narrow rests with man's mental perception . (Entry 214)

5.2 The meaning associations of *xin* metaphors

Based on the earlier analysis, the metaphorical images of *xin* include water, place, plant, soil, etc. From these conceptual metaphors, five conceptual keys with the meaning associations of *xin* could be further explored.

5.2.1 Inclusiveness

Xin could be either a vast land or a closed space. It may contain several things or just be empty. It depends on the cultivation, which will be mentioned in the following section. The concept that *xin* is inclusive is associated with several conceptual metaphors. The conceptual metaphor XIN IS A TERRITORY emphasizes *xin*'s quality of specificity. As for metaphors, XIN IS A HOUSE/ROOM and XIN IS A CONTAINER, the quality of the storage is shown by the adoption of words such as 'depth', 'bottom' and 'fulfill' in the translated texts. Overall, *xin* is of compatibility or inclusiveness.

5.2.2 Changeability

As for the state of *xin*, it is not always static or confined to its initial condition. Rather, *xin* is a dynamic entity that can be influenced by the external world. The metaphor XIN IS A MOVING OBJECT shows *xin*'s development through the words like 'return to stillness' and 'sailing' in the translated texts. As for the conceptual metaphor XIN IS A SUBSTANCE, *xin* is described as something



that can be developed or purified. ‘Upgrade our moral integrities’ in Entry 249 certifies the possibility of *xin*’s development. Additionally, expressions like “his moral principles should be fortified and his temperament moderated” and “have his mind cleaned and spirit purified” further illustrate the changing nature of *xin*. Together, these elements indicate that *xin* is subject to change.

5.2.3 Power

Despite being affected by external things, *xin* could also exert its influence on the outside. In the metaphor XIN IS A TOOL, the phrases such as ‘approach with’, ‘use’ and ‘affect with’ indicate that *xin* could serve as a tool to facilitate the fulfillment of goals. When one wants to complete something, they adopt *xin*’s power to achieve the goal. Another metaphor XIN HAS A RESPONSIBILITY is closely related to this quality. For instance, ‘rest with man’s mental perception’ in Entry 244 shows the dominant place of *xin*, pointing out the strong power *xin* owns in affecting and even deciding matters.

5.2.4 Secretiveness

Like water, *xin* could be pure and clean for quick understanding. Yet sometimes it can be confusing and difficult to comprehend. In other words, it is not the kind of thing that can be easily discovered. This is obvious in the conceptual metaphor XIN IS A HIDDEN OBJECT where the words such as ‘found’, ‘look into’ and ‘perceived’ show the hidden nature of *xin*. In Entry 225, the expression ‘acquire knowledge of the real aspect of the human nature’ is used to imply that people need to make efforts to get a full understanding of *xin*. Hence sometimes *xin* possesses the secretive quality and could arouse confusion, hence requiring further investigation for its genuine sense.

5.2.5 Figurability

As mentioned above, *xin* could be puzzling and changeable under external forces. Together with the conceptual metaphor XIN IS A PLANT, *xin* needs to be cultivated and improved. In the related metaphors, the word ‘cultivate’ is frequently mentioned, directly showing the necessity of cultivation. Besides, the metaphor XIN IS SOIL confirms this concept by saying ‘let the body and mind be molded’ (Entry 317), which makes this quality more convincing.

To sum up, the conceptual metaphors analyzed above result in five characteristics of *de* and five characteristics of *xin*, which contribute to the formation of *de* and *xin*’s patterns. For *de* and *xin*, some of their qualities coincide, indicating that they share a similar metaphorical sense. Based on the images these metaphors and concepts evoke, it can be inferred that in the translated texts of *Caigentan*, *de*, with its inherent value and dynamic nature, can be improved through human effort and can influence the external world through behavior management or the cultivation of virtue whereas *xin*, sometimes puzzling, also requires human improvement to fully realize its value and benefit the external world.



6. Comparison of *de* and *xin* Metaphors Between the Source Text and Translations of *Caigentan*

De and *xin* with a series of related metaphors have different images in the English translations of *Caigentan*. Some of these images serve as the corresponding translations of the original text while some are unique and new in the translated versions. With further exploration of *de* and *xin* in the original text, some connotations of these two concepts that are not clearly represented in the corresponding translations are discovered, from which cultural implications could be inferred.

6.1 Comparison of *de* and *xin* metaphors

6.1.1 Cultivation of *de* and *xin*

From the previous analysis of *de* and *xin* metaphors, it is obvious to see that both *de* and *xin* can be changed and need cultivation for improvement. People should make efforts to enrich *de* and *xin* so that the two can reach the perfect state. Yet, the adopted approaches are widely divergent. In some entries of *Caigentan*, there are expressions like *yangde* 养德 (cultivate your virtue), *jinde* 进德 (improve virtue), *houwude* 厚吾德 (increase my store of virtue), and *dejin* 德进 (virtue increase), which show that *de* can be raised (养, *yang*), advanced (进, *jin*), and thickened (厚, *hou*), indicating a series of actions imposed upon *de* via metaphoric use of the lexis. The words ‘*jin* 进’, ‘*hou* 厚’ and ‘*yang* 养’ are used to describe the act of cultivation. Among them, the word ‘*hou* 厚’ which means increasing profundity, is especially typical. It implies that accumulation attaches great importance to the perfection of *de*. The other two words, ‘*jin* 进’ (improve) and ‘*yang* 养’ (cultivate) show that the improvement of *de* can be a process that lasts a period of time. Thus, all the words indicate that it calls for continuous accumulation to make *de* reach the ideal state.

As for the cultivation of *xin*, the adopted approach may be different from that of *de*. In the original text, expressions related to *xin* include *suxin* 素心 (pure heart), *xindiganjing* 心地干净 (pure moral character), *xinqing* 心清 (heart becomes clear), *cunxinjiebai* 寸心洁白 (white heart), *xinti yingran* 心体莹然 (shining purity of nature), and *xinjingchengche* 心境澄澈 (heart feels limpid), from which it could be inferred that the ideal state of *xin* people strive to reach is plain (素, *su*), clean (干净, *ganjing*), white (洁白, *jiebai*), clear (清, *qing*), glittering (莹然, *yingran*) and limpid (澄澈, *chengche*), implying the perfection of *xin* via metaphoric adoption of the lexis. Moreover, it is obvious to see that unlike *de* which needs unceasing accumulation, the ideal state of *xin* is plain and limpid. ‘*yingran* 莹然’ (shining), ‘*su* 素’ (plain) and ‘*jiebai* 洁白’ (white) address the crystal-like pureness while ‘*ganjing* 干净’ (clean), ‘*qing* 清’ (clear) and ‘*chengche* 澄澈’ (limpid) describe *xin* in terms of cleanness and limpidness. All these adjectives indicate that the ideal *xin* should be pure and clean. Instead of accumulation which is suitable for the improvement of *de*, the perfection of *xin* requires reduction and purification.

6.1.2 Nature of *de* and *xin*

Although both *de* and *xin* are variable and own the power to influence the outside world, their innate properties are different. In the original work, expressions related to *de* appear as *qishoudaode* 栖守道德 (preserve moral integrity), *zhongde* 种德 (plant virtue), *yidexingrongzhi* 以德行陶熔之 (the moulding



of virtue), showing that the development of *de* is usually indicated with a series of action words like *rest in and keep* (栖守, *qishou*), *plant* (种, *jin*) and *melt* (陶熔, *taorong*). The verb phrase ‘*qishou* 栖守’ brings a kind of metaphorical sense that *de* can be a tree or tree branch serving as a holder offering support for people. ‘*zhongde* 种德’ appears to arouse *de* is like a seed. ‘*taorong* 陶熔’ (mould) regards *de* as a tool. Besides, it is worth noting that in the expression ‘*zhongyinde* 种隐德’ (quietly cultivating virtues) (Entry 110), the word ‘*yin* 隐’ (hidden) indicates the invisibility of *de*. Rather than be obvious and easy to notice, *de* is always kept inside.

In the original texts, the nature of *xin* is indicated by a series of lexis in collocations including *xindi* 心地 (intention), *xinjing* 心境 (mood) and *xinkuang* 心胸 (broad-minded). The words ‘*di* 地’ (land), ‘*jing* 境’ (border) ‘*kuang* 旷’ (broad) and ‘*yuan* 远’ (remote) all relate to land or area, showing the spatial property of *xin*. Besides, the lexical words used to describe the ideal state of *xin* include *clean* (干净, *ganjing*), *comfortable* (宽舒, *kuanshu*), *limpid* (澄澈, *chengche*) etc., which coincide with the metaphorical sense that *xin* owns the spatial property. Moreover, this spatial property showing the expanse of *xin* also manifests the visible nature of *xin*. This could also be found in Entry 9 where the phrase ‘*guanxin* 观心’ (observe the heart) stresses the act of seeing, echoing the inference that *xin* has the property of visibility.

Therefore, through the comparison of *de* and *xin* metaphors, a deeper understanding of *de* and *xin* could be achieved. *De*, with its material property and invisibility, needs continuous accumulation for its improvement while *xin* with spatial property and visibility requires reduction and purification to reach perfection. However, these differences are not fully reflected in the translated texts. In the English translations, the metaphor that *de* and *xin* need cultivation is mentioned, but without any further explanation on the planting approaches. Additionally, some metaphorical meanings of *xin* such as secretiveness in the target texts contradict its quality of visibility in the original text.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that there are differences in the metaphorical images of *de* and *xin* between the two translated versions. White’s work contains relatively more metaphors of *de* and *xin* that resonate with the Western audience, while Zhou’s version opts for simpler lexis that closely aligns with the Chinese counterparts. These differences may result from various reasons including both individual and social factors. The individual aspect mainly includes translators’ thoughts and experiences of the world, their understanding of contextual meaning, and their knowledge of the linguistic system. Meanwhile, social factors such as ideology, culture and history could also exert an influence on the choice of metaphor. Overall, metaphors which are based on the context, are not simply a reflection from the source domain to the target domain. Better effects could be achieved when context is taken into account.

6.2 Cultural implications

Comparing metaphors in the original text and their corresponding translations in English versions could facilitate the exploration of the cultural implications. In the original text of *Caigentan*, the author tends to draw his inspiration from his experience of natural things to illustrate his ideas, comparing *de* and *xin* to things related to nature such as plants, animals, water and land. For instance, the verb phrase ‘*qishou* 栖守’ in its metaphorization serves to present imagery of birds resting in and guarding their



nestle on a tree. Such imagery is used to build association with people resting and persisting in *de* (virtue). Likewise, the metaphor ‘*zhongde* 种德’ associates the meaning of virtue with that of seeds. The metaphoric expression ‘*deze* 德泽’ (moisturized by virtue) connects virtue to water, for ‘*ze* 泽’ in Chinese usually means a place with gathered water. Thus *de* is compared to water which could be accumulated and benefit people. The metaphoric nature is also widely depicted in the author’s favorable expounding of *xin*. In the metaphoric expressions ‘*xindi* 心地’ and ‘*xinjing* 心境’, *xin* is illuminated in terms of farmland and territory, requiring protection and guard.

However, in the corresponding parts of the translated texts, the metaphorical sense is not fully manifested. As for ‘*qishou* 栖守’, it has been translated into ‘preserve’ or ‘stick to’, losing the metaphorical sense that *de* is like a tree or branch, thus losing the metaphorical sense of self-cultivation of virtue. Meanwhile, for the conceptual metaphor DE IS A PLANT, some directly adopt self-cultivation instead while some use ‘store up’ or ‘accumulate’ in the total absence of the plant metaphor. As for ‘*deze* 德泽’, the translator respectively uses ‘bounties’ and ‘merits’, which totally lose the original metaphorical sense. As for *xin* metaphors, it is regretful to see that ‘*xindi* 心地’ and ‘*xinjing* 心境’ with their original metaphorical sense and significance have been translated without preserving their original metaphorical significance. Some are translated together with the following expressions in the entries as ‘open-minded’ and ‘muddle-headed’ while some are simply translated as ‘mind’ or ‘heart’. Moreover, some are even not mentioned in the translated texts.

While it is a fact that some original metaphors are not translated into the target texts, it is also found that new metaphors are created in the target texts, for which there are no corresponding images in the source text. For instance, DE IS METAL, as a new conceptual metaphor that is frequently in translated texts, hardly finds its counterpart in the source text. For instance, in Entry 5, ‘*jinde* 进德’ is translated as ‘refine our nature’ (WV). The word ‘refine’ is usually termed as ‘remove impurities or unwanted elements from (a substance), typically as part of an industrial process’ in the dictionary. Here it is obvious that the translator has attached *de* to a metaphorical sense that does not exist in the Chinese version. In this conceptual metaphor, cultivation of *de* is regarded as an industrial process where *de* is like a kind of metal. A similar situation appears in the expression “temper his virtue” (Entry 242, ZV). ‘Temper’ is usually used in the condition where something becomes hard or strong by heating it and cooling it. ‘Temper his virtue’ implies that virtue is like a kind of metal that needs processing. This metaphorical image addressing the forged quality of *de* does not appear in the original text.

Based on the comparison of *de* and *xin* metaphors between the original and translated texts, some social and cultural implications could be found. Since China is a continental country, in ancient times Chinese people made their living mainly on agriculture. In their thinking, agriculture is “the root” while commerce is “the branch”, the former possessing a dominant position in the economy throughout the centuries. Thus, in the original work of *Caigentan*, *de* and *xin*, important elements for one’s development, are closely associated with natural images such as plants, water and land. Yet, in the Western world the Industrial Revolution has laid the foundation for the development of the economy as well as the society and metal is a necessary element. This focus has been transferred into the cultural field. Therefore, in the translated texts, *de* is preferred to be given a metaphorical sense as metal.



The English translation of *Caigentan* features metaphorical expressions related to *de* and *xin* that convey a strong sense of admonition and reasoning, often employing descriptive phrases. The translators use various strategies, such as reasoning, analogy, and classification, to effectively present the original content. Additionally, while offering guidance on self-cultivation, a condescending tone is avoided in the translated text and instead an interactive effect by considering the reader's perspective is fostered. For instance, White frequently employs the first-person point of view in his translation. The frequency analysis reveals that "I" appears 34 times, "we" 61 times, "our" 21 times, and "me" 16 times, along with related expressions like "us", "my", "myself", and "ourselves". This use of first-person language enhances the reader's engagement, facilitates the process of moral teaching, and gives the translation an interactive quality that brings it closer to readers. These rhetorical features are partly shaped by the original text's content and style, such as the use of admonitory language and descriptive phrasing, and partly by the translator's strategies to increase acceptance among Western audiences.

7. Conclusion

This article probes into *de* and *xin* metaphors in the translated texts of *Caigentan*. Based on CMA and using several corpus tools, it identifies ten categories of *de* metaphors and twelve categories of *xin* metaphors. Specifically, in the translated texts, *de* is respectively interpreted as substance, plant, person, property, rule, honor, a shining object, tool and metal. Meanwhile, *xin* is deemed as water, human, place, a substance, a hidden object, a substance, a container, a moving object, a shining object, a tool, a plant, soil and something that has its responsibility. Based on the analysis of *de* and *xin* metaphors, the research findings are enriched with a further exploration of the two key concepts. *De*, with its great value and changing nature, can be improved and exert its influence on the outside world while *xin*, which could make people confused, also needs external efforts to realize its value.

Based on the metaphorical analysis, it could be further inferred that metaphors could be explained via the analysis of the co-text and context. Instead of being fixed, its meanings come from the text, by the associative lexis shaping a series of lexical relationships to indicate metaphorical senses. The comparative study reveals both *de* and *xin* need cultivation by external forces and own certain power to influence the outside. The difference lies in that *de*, with its material property and invisibility, needs continuous accumulation to reach the ideal state whereas *xin* with its spatial property and visibility, requires reduction and purification to achieve perfection. Both individual and social factors could affect the metaphor choice in discourse, from which the cultural implications behind the differences of the metaphors are discovered. The dominant status of agriculture in the ancient Chinese economy addresses nature as the core. Thus, in the original work of *Caigentan*, *de* and *xin*, are more related to natural elements such as plant, water and land.

Through this study, a better understanding of the connotations of *de* and *xin* is developed, and the method adopted in this research for the analysis of metaphors could be applied to other works and their translations. This study may offer some insights into Chinese literary translation study from a metaphorical perspective and for metaphor comprehension. Moreover, it may be beneficial for people to develop a critical stance toward language use and cultural diversity. Comparing metaphors across different texts requires not only a deeper understanding of key terms but also an exploration of the cultural meanings behind these metaphors. The use of metaphors in discourse is influenced by both



individual and social factors. Individual factors include the translator's knowledge of language systems, personal experiences, feelings about the world, and their grasp of context. Social factors primarily derive from ideology, culture, and history. Therefore, metaphor research should go beyond the surface mapping from the source domain to the target domain; it must also consider the impact of context and other influences. In Eastern texts, nature serves as a rich wellspring of metaphors, while Western works frequently draw metaphors from religion and mythology. Cultural equivalence is essential in metaphor interpretation and translation. Thus, translators must navigate various levels of choices regarding language and discourse traditions in order to effectively convey the cultural nuances of the original work in the target language. Many phrases in Chinese classics are concise yet rich in meaning and packed with cultural significance. Achieving functional equivalence between the translation and the original text, especially in maximizing the transmission of cultural meanings from Chinese, remains a significant challenge for translators of classical texts.

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