

**RLMSEE-2020**  
**The Russian Language in Modern Scientific and Educational Environment****STUDY OF THE TRANSLATION OF CONFUCIUS  
PHILOSOPHICAL TREATISE LUN YU (THE ANALECTS)**

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**Abstract**

The relevance of the study is determined by the need to analyze the methods and techniques for translating ancient Chinese philosophical texts into Russian. The object of the research is the Russian translation by Popov of one of the main works of Confucianism *Lun Yu (The Analects)*. Translation made by Popov is the first in history complete translation of *Lun Yu* into Russian, the technique and methods of transferring philosophical thought of which from Chinese into Russian certainly deserve a detailed analysis. The subject of research is the lexical and syntactic units of the text *Lun Yu*, techniques and methods of preserving Confucius ideas when translated from Chinese into Russian. The aim of the research is to analyze the possibility of accurate rendering of the original text from Chinese into Russian. The research task is to study the possible practices of translating ancient Chinese texts into the Russian language. The methods of analysis are determined by the purpose and task of the research; the study is based on the method of linguistic analysis of Confucius text *Lun Yu*, the method of comparing the accuracy of translation of sentences from Confucius treatise into Russian, and the method of continuous sampling for the study of semantic and metaphorical units.

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## 1. Introduction

When it comes to translation, we cannot avoid the question of how to translate, which is inevitably related to translation goals, methods, strategies and other factors. The term strategy was borrowed from military science. Initially, it referred to the general planning of military operations, including consideration of all military or non-military factors. Many modern disciplines such as economics, psychology and political science, having borrowed this term, use it in a metaphorical sense. The term translation strategy is widely used in modern translation research to describe the translation process.

Lun Yu treatise is one of the classical Chinese philosophical texts, which had a great influence on the development of philosophy, politics and other areas of humanitarian knowledge. At the beginning of the 18th century, due to the lack of Russian translations of ancient Chinese philosophical and literary works, researchers used translations of texts from European languages, which made it difficult to understand these works. Thus, it was impossible to obtain a comprehensive, deep and accurate understanding of the essence of Chinese linguistic culture, philosophy and classical Chinese literature. Russian translations of the classical works of Confucianism appeared in the late 18th – early 19th centuries. In the 20th century, translations of philosophical texts and the ancient Chinese texts themselves, became the object of linguistic research.

The article focuses on Popov's translation strategy, his methods and techniques for transferring meaning from ancient Chinese to Russian and the interpretation of Confucius ideas.

## 2. Problem Statement

A philosophical treatise presents a certain difficulty for an unprepared reader, especially if the text is translated into another language. The treatise *Lun Yu* is also difficult for the translator, because the peculiarity of *Lun Yu* is the lack of the text structure; we have an impression of scattered parts of the text and the absence of a common plot line. In addition, when translated into Russian, the philosophical sayings of Confucius require additional cultural commentaries or a complete transformation of sentences.

*Lun Yu* treatise does not have a strict order of chapters; this philosophical treatise is characterized by a lack of structure: the same sentence may refer to different parts of the text. *Lun Yu* is differentiated by multidimensionality and duality, seeming absence of logical chains, therefore the meaning of the same sentence can be understood in different ways. All this creates a certain difficulty for translators who work with the text of the philosophical treatise. There are various options for translating *Lun Yu*, including translations into Russian.

The article discusses the methods of translation by Popov, with the help of which he made it possible to preserve and convey the meaning and ideas of Confucius.

## 3. Research Questions

From a linguistic point of view, a translation cannot be 100% equivalent to the original text, even if the translator considers it necessary to keep 100% of the original text (Xin Na, 2019, p. 100). Moreover, translators need to overcome linguistic, cultural and temporal barriers. Thus, a number of objective

difficulties arise in translating the text of Confucius, one of the problems is the misinterpretation of the very ideas of Confucianism and, as a consequence, their erroneous translation.

This article is to comprehensively study a number of issues: the strategy of translation of the classical Confucian text *Lun Yu* into Russian, performed by Popov; the main ideas of the philosophical treatise of Confucius and their rendering into Russian; selection of lexical and stylistic means for more accurate preservation of meaning.

#### 4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to study the technique of translating ancient Chinese texts into Russian, to assess the accuracy of conveying the meaning of a philosophical text, and examine techniques and methods of preserving Confucius ideas when translating from Chinese into Russian.

#### 5. Research Methods

The main methods for solving scientific problems include the method of linguistic analysis of the Confucius text *Lun Yu*, comparative method with the help of which the analysis of the accuracy of translation of the sentences of the Confucius treatise into Russian was carried out and the method of continuous sampling of metonymic and metaphorical units for this study.

#### 6. Findings

Confucius (551 – 479 BC) is an ancient Chinese philosopher and thinker, the founder of Confucianism. Confucianism is a Chinese philosophy, a religion that has existed for over two thousand years. At present, the idea of Confucianism is viewed as an active spiritual force and a code of behavioral norms that structure Chinese society, order the development of society in the conditions of people's self-control (Perelomov, 2004). One of the main books of Confucianism *Lun Yu* was written by the students of Confucius in the early Zhanguo period (476/403 – 221 BC), the treatise contains records that literally convey the sayings of Confucius.

*Lun Yu* treatise, which has gained fame all over the world, has more than 40 translations into English. In Russia, the study of Confucianism has not been widely discussed. For the first time, Confucian works were translated at the beginning of the 20th century by Popov and were well known to a small circle of Sinologists (Bubnova & Wang Yong, 2011, p. 122). Currently, there are more than 14 versions of the *Lun Yu* translation into Russian (Wang Lingzhi, 2011, p. 116).

##### 6.1. Variants of translating the title of philosophical treatise *Lun Yu* into Russian

The translation of the very title of the philosophical treatise in consideration is difficult. The title of the treatise *Lun Yu* consists of hieroglyphic signs: 论 [lún] 'to discuss, to speak, to reason'; 语 [yǔ] 'conversation, aphorism, word, language'. Currently, there are several official translations of the treatise into Russian. Here are some of them:

- *Judgments and Conversations (Lun Yu)*, translation by Popov (2015);

- *Confucius Sayings*, translation by Popov (1910);
- *Lun yu. Ancient Chinese Philosophy*, translation by Krivtsov (1972);
- *Conversations and Judgments of Confucius*, translation by Golovacheva (1992);
- *Confucius. I believe in antiquity*, translation by Semenenko (1995);
- *Confucius. Lunyu*, translation by Perelomov (1998);
- *Reasoning in sayings*, translation by Vinogradsky (2013);
- *Confucius. Lunyu. Sayings*, translation by Semenenko (2015);
- *Confucius. Great Teaching*, translation by Malyavin (2018);

In the Chinese language, the hieroglyphs 论语 ‘lúnyǔ’ have a meaning of a code for guiding people’s behaviour in life, politics, military affairs and other areas. Literally, the treatise *Lun Yu* is translated as ‘Judgments and Conversations’, the second common name is ‘Aphorisms of Confucius’.

The complexity of the exact translation of the name is explained by the polysemy of hieroglyphic words in the Chinese language and the structure of the Chinese language, in which the word realizes its nominative function only in the sentence, which creates the preconditions for the interpretation of the meanings of the hieroglyphic word.

## **6.2. The strategy of translating the philosophical treatise *Lun Yu* into Russian**

A translation strategy is a macro method for carrying out translation activities, which is formed on the basis of the general method of bilingual communication between translators in a certain communicative situation (Sdobnikov, 2011, p. 165).

Despite the fact that translation theorists generally recognize the principle of translation equivalence, in practice not everything is so simple. There are two approaches to translation. In the first approach, the translator strives to convey the source text into another language as accurately as possible. This type of translation includes both literal translation and taking into account cultural realities, traditions, cultural connotation when rendering one linguistic form into another cultural-linguistic form. The second approach is to transfer content in one language into the so-called artistic linguistic form, in which the form and content are strongly transformed.

Those who adhere to the first approach to the translation strategy believe that when rendering the original text into another language, it is necessary to preserve the original rhetorical and expressive characteristics and, as accurately as possible, convey the content of the original work. The translation should not only convey what the original text expresses, but also express the grammatical, metaphorical and syntactic features of the original text (Komissarov, 1990). According to the Russian literary critic Belinsky, abbreviations, additions or changes are not allowed in literary translation. If the original work has flaws, logical errors – all these must also be translated. The purpose of the translated text is to convey the original as accurately as possible so that people who cannot read it in the original language also have the opportunity to evaluate and comment on the artistic and expressive means of the original (Levin, 1985). The retained deficiencies of the original work enable readers of the translated text to draw the same conclusions and judgments as those who read in the original language. Therefore, in order to achieve maximum semantic and compositional proximity to the text in the original language, the translator must first understand the meaning and expressive characteristics of the source text, choose the

appropriate linguistic expression in another language and ensure the ease of understanding of the translated text, taking into account the linguistic specific source material (word order, metaphorical means, syntactic structure, text structure, etc.).

The second approach to translation strategy focuses on conveying the meaning of the original text and the artistic reality of the original work. With this approach, the original text undergoes strong compositional transformations; some parts of the text can be removed or added.

Let us further consider the technique of translation of Confucius philosophical treatise from Chinese into Russian in sections 6.3, 6.4 and 6.5.

### 6.3. The technique for rhetorical questions translation into Russian as a method of structural organization of the philosophical treatise *Lun Yu*

When translating the text of *Lun Yu* treatise, Popov preserves rhetorical questions as an element of the structural grid of a philosophical work.

An example of a translation of a rhetorical question made by Popov is considered in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Translation of rhetorical questions

Original text	Literal translation	Translation by Popov
子曰：学而时习之，不亦说乎？ 有朋自远方来，不亦乐乎？人不知而不愠，不亦君子乎？	‘Confucius said: learning and constantly exercising, isn’t it joyful? Friends came from distant places, isn’t it nice? The person stays in the shade and is not offended, isn’t he a noble man?’	‘The philosopher said: Isn’t it pleasant to study and constantly exercise? Isn’t it nice to meet a friend who has returned from far away? Isn’t he a noble man who is not angry because he is unknown to others?’

The translator preserved word combinations and syntactic modality of sentences in the translated text, namely, the rhetorical questions of the original text, in order to achieve the preservation of the rhythmic structure of *Lun Yu*.

### 6.4. Techniques for translating metaphors of the philosophical treatise *Lun Yu* into Russian

Treatise *Lun Yu* actively uses metaphors. The goal is to describe the different points of view of Confucius himself, morality, education, politics, history and philosophy (Chen Huihui, 2018, p. 188). Here are some examples:

**Table 2.** Confucius Metaphors Translation

Original text	Literal translation	Translation by Popov
南容三复白圭，孔子以其兄之子妻之	‘Nanzhong repeated three times about white jade, Confucius gave him his elder brother’s daughter in marriage.’	‘Nanzhong repeated three times a day (a Shih Ching poem) about a white scepter (A speck on a white scepter can still be polished, but a mistake in a word cannot be corrected); therefore Confucius gave him his elder brother’s daughter in marriage.’

Originally, the hieroglyphs 白圭 [bái guī] are borrowed from the Shih Ching and mean ‘a ritual vessel made of white jade’ in ancient China. Popov supplemented the translation with an interpretation, explaining that the stain on the white jade can still be erased, but the stains in our words cannot be removed. With the help of a metaphor, Confucius conveys the idea that an honest person’s words should be clear, without stains, and clearly express the meaning. See table 2.

**Table 3.** Confucius Metaphors Translation

Original text	Literal translation	Translation by Popov
子曰：君子不器	‘Confucius said: A noble man is not a tool.’	‘The philosopher said: A noble man is not a weapon suitable for only one use.’

In this example, 器 [qì] means ‘dishes, tools’. Confucius believes that one must be a literate person, have a wealth of experience and knowledge in order to govern. See table 3.

The *Lun Yu* metaphors cannot be accurately translated without context. Without additional interpretation, literal translation of metaphors leads to semantic ambiguities. Popov adds notes and reference materials that are missing in the original. However, notes and additions, in turn, complicate the compositional and semantic structure of the original text, and its simplicity is lost.

### 6.5. Translation of the terms of the philosophical treatise *Lun Yu* into Russian

Legal terms are often used in the original text of *Lun Yu*: 道 [dào] ‘law’, 德 [dé] ‘morality’, 仁 [rén] ‘humanity’, 智 [zhì] ‘wisdom’, 礼 [lǐ] ‘etiquette’, 义 [yì] ‘fairness’, 忠 [zhōng] ‘loyalty’, 信 [xìn] ‘trust’, etc. These terms are key concepts for understanding the content of the *Lun Yu* idea. These words contain a large amount of ethnocultural information, their translation allows us to draw a conclusion about the chosen translation strategy. Let’s analyze the examples of 仁 [rén] ‘humanity’ and 道 [dào] ‘law’:

**Table 4.** Example of translation of the term 仁 [rén]

Original text	Literal translation	Translation by Popov
子曰：苟志于仁矣，无恶也	‘Confucius said: If you strive for humanity, you will not do bad things.’	‘The philosopher said: If anyone has a sincere desire for <b>humanity</b> , then he will not do evil.’

**Table 5.** Example of translation of the term 仁 [rén]

Original text	Literal translation	Translation by Popov
子曰：不仁者不可以长处约，不可以长处乐。仁者安仁，知者利仁	‘Confucius said: A person without mercy cannot remain in poverty for a long time and live long in joy. A person with mercy keeps calm in love and an intelligent person understands the benefits of love.’	‘The philosopher said: A person who does not have <b>love</b> cannot endure poverty for a long time and cannot constantly be in joy. A man-loving person finds peace in love, and a wise man finds benefit in it.’

Popov translates 仁 [rén] in two ways as *humanity* and *love*, uses the same root words humanist, humanity, rarely – philanthropy. In Christian culture, love means love for God, for all people; the concept of humanism appeared in the 15th century during the Renaissance, initially it was the humanistic

education system that contributed to the maximum development of human potential. 仁 [rén] is the core and essence of the ethical category of Confucius, which permeates the entire system of thought of Confucianism. However, Confucius does not give a clear definition of notion 仁 [rén]. According to Confucius, 仁 [rén] is a sophisticated complex of concepts, conveyed in one word: love for a person, respect for oneself, masculinity, reticence and humanity. It also has a wide and ambiguous meaning. See tables 4 and 5.

In Russian linguoculture, the meanings of the words *love* and *humanism* have common semantic components with the hieroglyph 仁 [rén], but there are significant differences.

In Confucianism, 仁 [rén] is a sophisticated complex of concepts that includes *consanguinity*, *psychological principles*, *humanism*, and *individuality*. Popov uses the words *love* and *humanism* to convey the meaning of the hieroglyph 仁 [rén].

Let us now consider some examples of the translation of the term 道 [dào].

**Table 6.** Example of translation of the term 道 [dào]

Original text	Literal translation	Translation by Popov
子谓南容，邦有道，不废；邦无道，免于刑戮。以其兄之子妻之	‘Commenting on Nanzhong, Confucius said: When the national politics is clear, he will not be punished; when the national politics is grim, he can also be exempted from punishment. Therefore, Confucius gave him his elder brother’s daughter in marriage.’	‘The philosopher said about Nanzhong: In a state where there is a <b>law</b> , he will be all right; where there is not any, he will escape execution; and, as a result, he gave him his elder brother’s daughter in marriage.’

**Table 7.** Example of translation of the term 道 [dào]

Original text	Literal translation	Translation by Popov
子曰：志于道，据于德，依于仁，游于艺	‘Confucius said: Take truth as an aspiration, virtue as a basis, humanity as support and entertainment as arts.’	‘The philosopher said: Strive for <b>truth</b> , stick to virtue, rely on humanity and amuse yourself with the free arts.’

Popov translates the word 道 [dào] as *law*, *truth*. The term 道 [dào] is an important semantic dominant of the *Lun Yu* concept. The concept 道 [dào] includes the origin of all things in the world, the regularity of things, the norms of life and the principles of business. Popov translates this hieroglyph in a few words in order to convey its meaning as accurately as possible. See tables 6 and 7.

The difficulty of translating Chinese philosophical terms lies primarily in cultural differences. Popov adheres to the second approach when translating the text of Confucius: he seeks to convey the meaning, and not to make a literal translation.

## 7. Conclusion

The analysis showed that in the translation by Popov, ancient Chinese realities are often conveyed through objects of Russian culture.

In Russian translation by Popov, there are traces of stylistic means of imitation of the original text, but his translation is replete with linguistic comments, which creates semantic redundancy and difficulty

in reading, since his translated lines are much longer and differ significantly from the style of the original. To bring the translation in line with the religious knowledge and cultural traditions of the Russian reader, Popov translates Confucian concepts through Christian realities. Thus, the analysis showed that Popov used two approaches when translating Confucius text. To convey philosophical terms and metaphors, the translator significantly adjusts the form and their meaning.

The original text uses rhetorical questions that Popov preserves during translation in order to convey the structure of the original philosophical text in the Chinese language.

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