

Further Study of Feminist Translation Theories

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Abstract: With development of feminist translation theories, numerous previous research in various fields have been studied by many scholars. In this paper, the author is going to sort out the development of feminist translation and its basic concept, theory, as well as some problems, then discusses and tries to figure out how to solve them combined with different theories such as androgyny and censorship. This paper will illustrate the achievements that previous researchers found and propose new perspectives in the light of existing theories. In addition, there are some case analysis about main topics to fill the gaps and demonstrate views of feminist translation theories.

Keywords: Tgender differences, androgyny, culture differences, censorship, translators' identities, translators' restriction

1. Introduction

For a long time, female have a lower position than male and it is an unequal phenomenon. Therefore, some women writers realize that they need to find an equal place as men in writing and translation. Translation has the same position where it is less important than the originals. Because of the similar position between female and translation, feminists tries to pursue an equal status as men in and out of words.

The previous feminist writers made great contribution to the improvement of feminist translation. For instance, some of them objected to using only male languages to translate originals and encouraged to use neutral languages or even female languages. Briefly, their main opinions can be placed as follows: first, it needs to eliminate discrimination of females in translation research and translation practice; second, it is necessary to redefine the relation between translations and originals because they need to enjoy the same equal place; third, translation is not only a "skill", but also the culture and ideology and so on.

Even though previous researchers have done a great job, there are still some gaps the author wants to fill. The previous feminist writers mostly described how to gain more power and position as men and their main purpose is to reach an equal position in translation. However, the paper is going to illustrate that the identity of translators is not fixed but varied during the translation period. People cannot observe things in an easy way since I believe that the physical identity of the translators cannot represent the psychological identity of the translators. Since there are some articles related to these, it is necessary for researchers to explore these articles deeply. For example, some researchers have proposed the theory of hermaphroditism. It means that the translators can translate articles in a man's voice or in a woman's voice or even hermaphroditism and it is normal and reasonable for translators

to transfer identity while translating. As a result, the male and female translators cast aside the constraint of physiological sex and accept equality on the base of admitting differences. Female translators can express manly words and male translators need to stand in women's shoes and find out what they are feeling and expressing. It shows that transgenders contribute to the new form of translation because of the stronger ability of putting themselves in others' shoes.

In this research, I will try to fill some gaps and illustrate these from four point of views: 1) the inferior role of female translators; 2) the concept of androgyny and the influence of it; 3) the translators' identities, backgrounds, and opinions influencing the translation; 4) the influence and restriction of translators. Although there are a lot of related research about these topics, further study is needed. For example, in order to make the women's voices heard, Suzanne came up with "re-sex language" which means that every translator can translate works using language in a male's way and a female's way [1]. Besides, when feminist translator Atwood translated the manly poems from the rock singer and poet Lucien Franeoeur, she realized that she needed to speak in a manly way because of the opinion and language of the poem [1]. All in all, a number of translators come to realize that if they can regard the identity of translators as fluent identity, they may overcome some restrictions while translating.

This essay contains not only a pile of examples and cases but also some clarifications. The author is going to discuss translators' identities from various perspectives. Firstly, translator's role and identity will be illustrated combined with previous research. Then the androgyny and censorship will also be introduced in this part. There are four questions that I mentioned above which will be answered step by step. Subsequently, as for each of the questions, there are three to four explanations to interpret it. After that, there is the case study and reference analysis. At last, it is the conclusion.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The role of female translators

For a long time, the female translators do not get enough respect and many people do not believe feminist translation theories. In fact, we are now living in a so-called post-feminist world. As a result, many issues are ignored by scholars such as the feminist theory itself [2]. In most people's mind, they get used to ignoring women's voice, therefore, many feminist translators hope to maintain women's right and power, which is one of the feminist translators' purposes. In history, translators, no matter their genders, are seen as servants and the writers as owners. In that case, the only task that "servants" can do is to copy the "owners" language in another different language [3]. Like translators, women are also not free as they also do not have many liberties to do things. If women do something which their husbands do not permit, it is called disloyalty and betrayal. Translators have an unequal position and female translators even have a lower position. For example, in a translation work, large sections of text recounting the names and achievements of women in history are cut from the English version [2]. A number of authors in western and eastern world despise female translators because of the degenerate systems and ideologies.

2.2. The translator's identity

The voice of male translators only expresses men's thoughts to the original texts. However, the female's voice and thoughts are often ignored by them. Because of this, the female readers may feel being abandoned while reading translation works from male translators. For instance, a women's magazine, which demonstrates the start of heart disease, uses men's pictures to illustrate the stages of obesity and this creates a disjunctive effect for the female readers who in a sense have to put themselves in a man's body in order to derive meaning from the text [2]. This process perplexes the female readers. But the translators themselves have not only the original gender identity but also the

political identity. Not only their biological sex can affect their view on translation, but also their political advocacy can influence their expression. It means that gender is not equal to the sex. To have an equal position as men is also feminist translators' aim and they translate articles in a males' way or from the third perspective. This behavior shows that translators should not restrict themselves because they have capacities to translate in an opposite side. Another difficult thing that translators are facing is the different culture backgrounds and many of them need to transfer source language into target language in order to make readers understand other culture.

2.3. The concept and influence of androgyny

Obsolete concepts believe that androgyny means excluding differences. But according to the feminist scholar Sisu, everyone needs to find the social gender of themselves. The existence of the two sexes, which, according to the male and female individual, is evident and resolute in a variety of ways, without excluding either difference or sex. This hermaphroditism does not eliminate the difference but encourages it, seeks it, and increases its quantity [1]. All in all, androgyny is an important concept in western feminist theory. Woolf, as a feminist writer and feminist work critic in Britain, also mentioned the gender differences in her book: *A House of One's Own*, which plays an important role in Western feminist theories [4].

This concept makes great contribution to the translation. Translation is the continuation of the life of the original text and the "reincarnation" of the original text. Therefore, Benjamin believed that the task of all translators was to make the original work transcend the limitation of time and space, so that the original work was "reincarnated" and "reborn" [1]. As a result, the original work and translations are not independent, but are dependent on each other. There is no doubt that the proposal of androgynous ideal not only points out the direction of the development of female sexuality, but also prevents the feminist theory from being new binary opposition. Also, it proposes new blood and new vitality for the whole translation studies. Finally, it promotes the diversification of translation studies [1].

2.4. The influence and restriction of translators in translation behavior

One of the biggest problems that translators face is the disparity and this situation needs translators to try to seek the most suitable words and sentences to translate it because it is more natural and easier to understand.

Cultural difference makes a great influence on literal translation. For example, when translators translate articles, they need to find out "she" or "he". Otherwise, it will lead to ambiguity. When someone does something too grandiose, Chinese commonly use "brag" but in English, "horse" is used to describe arrogance. In addition, in describing that a person's strength is very big, Chinese expresses that "he is as strong as an ox" but English people will express that "he is as strong as a horse" [5].

Therefore, in order to make readers from different regions understand the articles, the translators must respect readers when they translate works. For example, Eugene A Nida believes that translation means decoding the meaning of a text in one language and encoding it into a different language [6]. Translators need to translate not only the lexical meaning of the translation but also the deep culture meaning to achieve the equivalence of meaning and style. However, completing equivalence is impossible and choices must be made. When there is a contradiction, the implied meaning should be chosen. The guiding principle of dealing with culture differences in translation is to take what is in the original language [7].

2.5. Censorship

For translators, they need to examine themselves and translation works frequently. For example, according to professor Tan Zaixi, the reason why our translatology has not formed a system is that we have not found out whether translation belongs to science or art. Therefore, translation cannot form a subject like math or chemistry and researchers cannot go along with a theory to study it. Also, the reason why translation theories are not developed is that people have always despised translation and that is a huge problem that needs everyone to focus on and correct that wrong thought. What is more, in order to solve the situation that people emphasize theory over practice, the only thing we can do is to raise their awareness of theories as well as add more practical value in theories [8].

Half the century ago, we did not have confidence in forming translatology compared with other countries. But after many years' exploration and censorship, we were proud of our work gradually.

The laws have some censorship to translators and translation works. When translating something formal and valuable, translators should choose the words and sentences with precision. If there is a mistake, the translator cannot bear the responsibilities therefore, many translation works should be examined and corrected when they are finished.

3. Case study and reference analysis

From my perspective, *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan* [9] is an amazing example to clarify the flow of translators' identity. *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan* is a feminist novel written by Lisa See. The author introduces the unique culture phenomenon of Chinese women's calligraphy to western readers, depicting the painful experience of Chinese women in the old society and exploring the theme of female friendship through two characters, Lily and Snowflake. The novel is written in English and translated in Chinese by an American businessman. The original language expresses the translation culture which is different from general literary translation.

Translator Xin Yuanjie mainly followed the translation strategy of being faithful to the original ideas and language expression and carried out accurate and aesthetic translation. Most of the translations can be dominated by the feminist ideas that the original author tries to express in the novel and completely reflect the main ideas of the original text. As a woman, the translator can exert her own subjective initiative and feminist thinking under certain conditions, which is especially evident in the description of "foot binding" and "sisterhood". However, the fierce conflict effect of the original text is obviously weakened when the translator presents the conflict between Lily and her mother. Based on the influence of Chinese traditional culture, the translator believes that it is difficult for Chinese readers to accept such a disobedient child. At this time, the translator seems to derogate the female consciousness of the original text and show her position as a male translator.

The culture differences between Chinese and other counties are tremendous and that bring some problems to translation. Culture differences include geographical differences, religious belief, the way of thinking, and value recognition, therefore, translators should take these into consideration. As for the religious belief, up to now, dragon in China has the imagination of the god and the public think highly of it unconsciously. However, in the western culture, dragon means evil, and it will break all peace. Also, in English, black tea means "Hongcha" but brown sugar means "Hongtang" and that is the different way of thinking. In addition, driven by the idea of conquering everything, westerners gradually build the value cognition that is against nature, but Chinese people are influenced by ancient culture and believe human and nature should be harmonious and peaceful.

Censorship is important in translation works. Professor Tan Zaixi made great effort to establish translatology in order to make our translation works more formal. Early in the 20s in the UK, there has already been Science of Translation, but up to now, it has experienced 80 years and translatology has not explored an objective rule to follow. It is a little bit confusing. However, the reason is also

simple to find. According to professor Tan, the theory that translation is art takes deep root in people's mind and he also acknowledges this viewpoint. However, if he insists this opinion, he will be on the road of "only god can understand, live, not subject to any theoretical constraint" [8]. That is a big problem because that will lead to dogmatism, empiricism, and mysticism, and the translation theories will not be developed. When professor Tan came to realize this situation, he tried his best to find a way out. He wrote a book called *Translatology* which clarifies translation from various aspects and dimensions and enlightens the posterity.

4. Conclusion

In this essay, the author mainly demonstrates the background of feminist theories and puts forward some ideas about the role of female translators, the translator's identity, the concept and influence of androgyny, and the influence and restriction of translators in translation behavior plus importance of censorship. From this research, the fluid of translator's identity could be helpful to their translation and avoid the language discrimination and gender ignorance. Moreover, the constraint on translators, such as censorship and cross-cultural communication can also distract their attention from gender. The author pays special attention on case analysis in order to distinguish what supplement needs to put on. However, these are not enough and future potential study is needed to make feminist translation perfect.

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