

A Study on Translator's Subjectivity from the Perspective of Feminist Translation

Di Zhang¹, Lulu Cheng^{2,3*}, Yanyun Li²

¹Cognitive Science and Linguistic Research Center, School of Foreign Language, Linyi University, Linyi, Shandong, China

²School of Foreign Studies, China University of Petroleum (East China), Qingdao, China

³Shanghai Center for Research in English Language Education of Shanghai International Studies University, Shanghai, China

*Corresponding Author.

Abstract:

In the study, we analyze feminism works of Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* from the perspective of translators' subjectivity on the basis of feminist translation theory by using Flotow's three kinds of feminist translation methods, namely supplementing, prefacing and footnoting, and hijacking. We also explore the ingenious fusion of feminist translation view and translator's subjectivity, aiming at providing new ideas for how to reproduce the female image and highlight the translator's dominant position.

Keywords: *Feminist translation, Translator's subjectivity, A Room of One's Own*

I. INTRODUCTION

The development of the feminist movement and the "cultural turn" gave birth to feminist translation theory. The translator's subjectivity makes the translation of different literary works reach a harmonious balance. For feminist translation, translation can become a site to consolidate or resist social (gender) ideology in virtue of the translator's initiative. [1] Thus, the translator's subjectivity, which is isolated in the multicultural system, is recognized in feminist translation theory. [2] The purpose of this paper is to sort out the origins and strategies of feminist translation theories, to analyze the Chinese translation of *A Room of One's Own* on the basis of the harmony of the translator's subjectivity and passivity, and to explore how feminist translation theories can be used to highlight female images as well as how translator's subjectivity plays its important role in the translation process.

II. FEMINIST TRANSLATION THEORY

2.1 Feminism and Feminist Translation

Feminism research has experienced three waves, and theoretical schools are divided into categories, from traditional liberal feminism to radical feminism, to the third wave of "feminism" inspired by postmodernism. After going through a century of ups and downs, feminism research has subverted

cognition and broke through itself, showing a trend of wave-like advancement despite all the suppression, questioning, and challenges. The appeal of feminism is to challenge the patriarchal society and to pursue the equal social status between men and women. Feminism emphasizes that gender is divided into biological gender and social gender. While biological gender is innate, social gender is shaped by social and cultural factors. [3] In the process of shaping, whether it is through the reappeared media system or the mechanical media system, "language" is essential. In mainstream discourse, however, there is a lack of a "female" voice. This is mainly reflected in most literary works, the "female language" is what male writers ask them to speak; what they do is what male writers ask them to do. For a long time, "patriarchal language" dominated the creation and translation theory of speech and text, and early female translators were severely restricted in terms of language and insight.

In literature, Menage, a French scholar in the 17th century, believed that there was a metaphor of translation: translations were "unfaithful beauties (les belles infidèles)", and the original author and the original text were usually considered as "man", which was masculine and active. On the contrary, the translator and the translation were considered as "women", which was feminine and passive. This view directly pointed out the double discrimination that existed in Western society, which formed a binary oppositional structure with females and translations subordinating to males and meta-texts. From then, feminists advocated language evolution to achieve equal rights and political success.

With the development of feminism, women's social status has gradually improved. In the history of translation theory, feminists advocated that women's social status should be improved by raising the translators' status in the field of translation, so as to cater to the feminist movement and achieve language evolution. In the 1970s, translation researches became more diverse by breaking the linguistic conventions and linking itself to culture. In order to highlight language could be used as a political and social tool to play a fundamental role in women's translation theory, some female translation theorists, such as Mary Daly, Luce Irigaray, and Julia Kristeva, focused on "how to use language to help women improve their inferior social status and overcome psychological barriers". [4] Besides, Elaine Showalter studied the limitations of women in writing, bibliography, etc., and the public impact caused by these limitations.

As a separate discipline, translation researches made remarkable progress in the 1980s. And a few years later, this field brought various fields together and led a global boom. In the 1990s, in the field of translation, Lefever and Susan Bassnett put forward the concept of "cultural turn", which referred to "the unit that manipulates translation is not words, not chapters, but culture".[5]Feminists believed that for translation researches, "cultural turn" promoted the scope and angle of its development. And in order to obtain the same status and rights as men, some female translators began to add female insights or feminist discourses in the translation process to express the particularity of women, to stimulate gender awareness, to solve social gender issues, to eliminate binary opposition, and to attach importance to speaking right. Feminist translation theory advocates eliminating gender discrimination and redefining the relationship between the meta-text and the translation, the original author and the translator.

2.2 Feminist Translation Strategies

The female translators practiced personally by criticizing the concept of discrimination against women to constantly highlight the image status of women in literary works. In *Gender and Metaphors of Translation*, Lori Chamberlain emphasized that gender metaphors with fidelity and reproducibility should be advocated in translation theory, and he discussed how to compile value judgments in translated works into language. In addition, the language used in translation researches was also full of other characters, such as ghosts and stand-ins, slaves and traitors. [6] Thus, it is necessary to change the "original and creative" translation language advocated by patriarchy and authority into a weapon that enhances the female "secondary role", so that the translation is no longer a replacement for the meta-text, and the translator is no longer a slave to the original one.

Feminist translation theories attach great importance to the translator's gender awareness in the translation process. They also emphasize that "translation is not a simple language transformation, but the scope of meaning includes occasional textual networks and social discourse". [7] Simon believed that the translation of authoritative texts should be separated from the "utopian" fidelity and replaced by "rewriting" in a specific cultural context, history, and social environment. Translation is organically linked with other communication methods serving as an intermediary process, which should play its role through ideology rather than surpasses the ideology. [4] Additionally, feminist translation strategies can be practiced by relying on the combination of the translator's active writing and translation. As a leader of feminist translation, von Flotow published *Translation and Gender: Translating in the Era of Feminism* following Simon's *Gender in Translation*. In this book, he emphasized that "(social) gender" is the focus of academic discussions, and that language needs refining as a political tool. What's more, he proposed "rewriting in the feminine" to visualize females in language. He also paid attention to translation effects and to revise traditional translation metaphors. [8] Ashis translation theories and derived strategies are widely recognized by professional scholars, Flotow pointed out that feminist translation has three approaches including supplementing, prefacing and footnoting, and hijacking.

III. THE DIALECTICAL UNITY OF TRANSLATOR'S SUBJECTIVITY

As far as subjectivity in the translation process is concerned, there are two concepts including translation's subjectivity and translator's subjectivity. Furthermore, domestic scholars have different views on them. According to the differences in the conceptual understanding of the term "translation", Zha Mingjian et al. (2003) believed that the subjects of translation are divided into the subjectivity of the translator, the original author and the reader, as well as their inter-subjectivity.[9] Xu Jun (2003) pointed out that translation subjects are divided into broad sense and narrow sense with the translator being the narrow one while the original author and the readers being the broad one.[10] The purpose of the translator's activities is directed at the target readers. At the same time, the translator should be responsible for himself, the original work and the readers by expressing his views on the basis of "faithfulness" to the original work in line with translation theory and ethics. The translator, as the subject in the narrow sense, cannot exist in isolation. If the translator is excluded, it will be difficult to establish the connection between

the original work and the target language readers. Zhou Wenge et al. (2009) pointed out that the translator's subjectivity is unquestionably central and runs through the whole process of translation, while the subjectivity of other factors only appears in a specific link of translation. [11] As the manipulator of translation, the translator is an independent individual, a person with emotion, who achieves the purpose of translation by exerting his subjectivity and using translation strategies. Fang Mengzhi (2004) believed that the translator's subjectivity is also called translation subjectivity, which refers to the essential characteristics of the translator in translation activities, that is, the translator's subject actively manipulates the original version, transforms the original, and externalizes its essential properties during translation [12]. Therefore, different scholars hold different views on translation subjectivity and on translator's subjectivity. What exactly is "subjectivity"? Subjectivity refers to the externalization of the essential power of the subject in the object-oriented activities as well as the characteristics of actively transforming the object, influencing the object, controlling the object, and making the object serve the theme. [13] The "translator's subjectivity" discussed in this paper refers to the subjective initiative of the translator as the main body in the translation process. The translator starts from the objective conditions, the correct understanding of the original work, and the original author's writing purpose. Then, combined with his emotional will, values, the translator transforms the original work, and re-creates the text in line with the target language readers. In the process of translation, the translator plays both the translator's initiative and passivity, that is, the duality of translation under the translator's subjectivity.

3.1 Translator's Initiative

The traditional translation concept emphasizes "absolute faithfulness". As time passes by, it is found that the translator's subjective color in the translation process is inevitable, and that the translator's initiative and creative work makes the translation conform to the target language and cultural connotation as well as satisfy the preferences of the target readers. Translation is not word-to-word, sentence-to-sentence equivalence, not a "step by step" process, but a transformation of form and meaning. Therefore, the translator's initiative work will inevitably lead to "creative treason". Escarpit pointed out in *Literature Sociology*: . . . that translation is rebellious because it places the work in a completely unexpected reference system; translation is creative because it endows the work with a brand-new appearance so that it can have a new literary exchange with a wider range of readers, and also because it not only prolongs the life of the work, but also gives it a second life.[14]Therefore, creative treason means that the translator processes the original work with a subjective color during the translation process, and actively participates in it so that the translator "shows himself" and makes the created text have the same meaning and effect as the original work.

3.2 Translator's Passivity

There is a dialectical unity of things so translator shows both initiative and passivity in the process of translation. Translation is both a creative process and a re-creative process. The so-called re-creation means that, based on the emotional tone and central theme of the original work, the translation should highlight the unique artistic effect of the original work and meanwhile show the unique expression style of

the original work, but cannot be separated from the original ideas and the author's true emotions. [15] When processing and creating, translator must fully express the meaning of the original work, which is known as "passivity". Therefore, the translator's translation and introduction process is not arbitrary or careless. The translator's image in the reader's mind is the author's "speaker", and his understanding of the text represents the author's view to a certain extent. However, overemphasizing the translator's active function will make it difficult for the translation to convey the author's point of view accurately, and the translation will be blind and random. Therefore, the translator's subjectivity is affected by the external environment, such as language system, cultural atmosphere, social norms, reader's choice and other factors. Thus, the translator's subjectivity will be "shackled", that is, "the dance should be beautiful, but it will be inevitably hindered from time to time". [11]

IV. THE EMPLOYMENT OF TRANSLATOR'S SUBJECTIVITY UNDER FEMINIST TRASLATION THEORY

The "cultural turn" provides a good era for feminist translation theory, and the translator's subjectivity injects fresh blood into feminist translation theory. Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* was translated as *yijianzi ji de wuziin* Chinese by Chinese female translator Wang Huan. As a pioneer member of foreign Chinese teaching, Professor Wang has unique achievements in sentence and grammatical comparison. At the same time, the work also combines the three strategies of feminist translation proposed by Flotow, which include supplementing, preface and footnoting, and hijacking. The translator respects the original work, uses innovative language, and brings the crystallization of the feminist pioneers to Chinese readers.

4.1 Supplementing

Supplementing means that in order to make up for the differences between languages, the translator is called on to take intervention actions during the translation process "mainly to make up for the cultural loss caused by the transformation from the source culture to the target culture, and the method is similar to 'compensation'". [2] In other words, the cultural ideology of the target language country is used to make up for differences in various aspects so that the translation can correctly express the concept of the original author. "Supplementing" is also often used in other translation schools, whose using method is to "add" some words, phrases, short sentences, etc. During the translation process to faithfully express the style and meaning of the original text. In most cases, this strategy is commonly used in English-Chinese translation, but it is also suitable for Chinese-English translation. However, feminist strategies tend to subtly supplement the female consciousness and gender consciousness relayed in the works. [16] Translators need to pay attention to the gender consciousness expressed in the original text and express it through supplementation.

Example 1: I am looking forward to the holidays.

Translation: wo qi daijia qi (dedaolai).

Example 2: Condition in Middle Ages of, Habits in the Fiji Island of, Weaker in moral sense than, Idealism of, Greater conscientiousness of..... [17]

Translation by Wang: zhonggushi ji fu nü de zhuangkuang, Fei Ji dao fu nü de xi guan, bei nan ren dang shenlaichong bai de fu nü, dao de guan nianjiao nan ren weiruo de fu nü, fu nü de li xiangzhuyi, fu nüjiao nan ren wei xi xin.....[18]

This record was written when Virginia Woolf went to the British Museum for reading and found that there were no novels about women. In order to show her mood at that time, she wrote a note called Women and Poverty. The term "poverty" not only represented the economic poverty of women mentioned above, but also included the lack of women's fiction and the lack of society's attention to women. The note is presented in the form of poems. During the translation process, the translator added the subjects "man" and "women" to the corresponding nouns according to Virginia Woolf's psychological activities and inner feelings at that time. Thus, in the reading process, readers can deeply feel the hardships of women's writing under that social environment and the flow of feminist thoughts under Virginia Woolf's pen. At the same time, the translator's subjectivity is also vividly conveyed through translation activities. The author wanted to highlight the subjectivity status of women, sangpraises to women, and was dissatisfied with the low social status of women in that social environment. The translator appropriately captured this idea and applied supplementing to enhance the readability of the translation in cross-language communication. The contrast between Example 1 and Example 2 can be regarded as a difference between supplementing in common translation methods and supplementing in feminist translation strategies. This contrast also indicates the pursuit of equal social status of men and women as well as the cry of feminists in different eras.

Example 3:Chastity had then, it has even now, a religious importance in a woman's life, and has so wrapped itself round with nerves and instincts that to cut it free and bring it to the light of day demands courage of the rarest (Virginia Woolf,1929:49).[18]

Translation by Wang: zhenjiezhainageshihou, shenzhishixianzai, zai nü ren de yi sheng shang you yizhongzongjiao de zhongyaoxing, er qie ta beishenjing he ben nengjinjin bao zhu, ruoxiangge kai ba ta nadaoguang tian huarizhixiajiu xu yaojue da, nan de deyong qi.[16]

The genius of women in the 16th century was trampled. If a woman tried to write and sign her name, her religiously important chastity would be tainted. The translator used the supplementary strategy to translate "rarest" as "jue da, nan de de". If women patently wrote, signed and published, they needed extraordinary courage. By this way, it was satirical to indicate the suppression of women's talent and women's society low status at that time.

4.2 Prefacing and Footnoting

Prefacing is generally placed before the main text to discuss the writing background or publication

purpose of the article which can be written by the author, translator, and others. In the preface of Virginia's book *A Room of One's Own*, the publisher introduced Virginia and cited "a women must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction" to indicate her writing purpose. Besides, this book was written on the basis of two academic reports on Virginia's "Women and Novels" and provided background information for the translator. For feminist translators, prefacing not only provides the above-mentioned information as a part of the feminist translation strategy, prefacing also helps the translator to produce creative translation, to express feminist thoughts, and to demonstrate the translator's subjectivity.

Footnoting refers to supplementary explanations to the content of the article or to mark the sources of references. In translation, if the information is lacked, in order not to destroy the original language aesthetics and writing style, the translator will use footnotes to clarify the information asymmetry caused by cultural differences.[17] This strategy makes the translator's subjectivity and meta-text ideas ingeniously integrated, which provides the translator with a larger creative space. It also shows feminism and gives full play to feminist translation strategies rather than blindly follow the original author's ideas.

Example 4: Indeed, if woman had no existence save in the fiction written by men, one would imagine her a person of the utmost importance; very various; heroic and mean; splendid and sordid; infinitely beautiful and hideous in the extreme; as great as a man, some think even greater.[18]

Translation by Wang: zhen de, jiashi fu nü chu le zai nan ren suoxie de xiaoshuo, shi, juzhizhongjiubucunzai, na wo men jukeyixiang ta shiyigezuizhongyao de ren; bianhuawuqiong, yonggan de he bei bi de, gaoshang de he xiajian de, gai shiwushuang de mei ren he mo mu wuyan de qi chou; he nan ren yi yang de wei da, shenzhi you ren yiwei bi nan ren haiwei da.[17]

This idea originated from F.L. Lucas's *On Tragedy*. The translator quoted the part of the original text in this paragraph to discuss a strange and incomprehensible thing. Actually, women in the city of Athens were deeply oppressed and enslaved. However, women portrayed on the stage occupied a superior position. They were equal to or even more than men, regarded as "heroines". Such contradictions have never been perfectly solved. The female characters of Shakespeare, Racine, Marlowe, and Ben Jonson all were equipped with permanent excellence and enterprise. But in the real world, women could hardly read or write, and they were the property of their husbands. Virginia cited this paragraph to satirize the unexplainable phenomenon that existed in the real world. The translator used footnotes to mark F.L. Lucas's thoughts so that the original plot was more coherent and the reader had a more profound understanding of the article to catch the original meaning.

4.3 Hijacking

Hijacking has always been questioned and debated. The hijacking proposed by Flotow refers to the appropriation of texts by feminist translators. They use all means to interfere and correct the original texts so that female images can be prominent. [19] Furthermore, female status can be highlighted. The process of using hijacking can be viewed as a political process, a manifestation of women being visualized in

language and language speaking for women.

In Wang Huan's translation, "hijacking" is subtly integrated with Virginia's feminist thought, and the translator's subjectivity is brought into play mainly by highlighting the image of women and the visualization of women in language.

Example 5: ...but if one reads them over and marks that jerk in them, that indignation, one sees that she will never get her genius expressed whole and entire. Her books will be deformed and twisted.....She is at war with her lot. [18]

Translation by Wang: buguo wo men ruoshikan le zhe ben shu, zhuyidaonaxiejingluan, nazhong fen kai, jiukeyikan chu ta yong yuan bunengba ta de tian cai wan wanzhengzheng de zhanxian chu lai. ta de shuyi ding shi ji xing, wainiu de.....ta he zi ji de mingyunzhengzha.[17]

Virginia compared Jane Austen's and Charlotte Bronte's writing styles and their texts. She made a conclusion of Charlotte Bronte's painful writing experience. Besides, Bronte showed that women had the same feeling as men, and that they also needed to practice senses and to exert their strength. But the constraints of the times made them miserable. Women, who had no real experience but wrote such masterpieces, were screaming with their lives. The translator here translated "genius" and "be at war with her lot" as "tian cai" and "he zi ji de mingyunzhengzha", highlighting that women expect equality with men in terms of "social gender". The translation also indicated female's struggle under oppression, which expressed the underlying pain and resentment.

Example 6: But I maintain that she would come if we worked for her, and that so to work, even in poverty and obscurity, is worthwhile.[18]

Translation by Wang: dan shi wo jian chi shuojiashi wo men wei ta nu li, ta yi ding hui lai, suoyiqu nu li, na pa zaiqiongkun, luo po zhong nu li ne, zongshizhi de de.[18]

Virginia viewed Shakespeare's sister as a great poet, even though she was illiterate. Although having passed away, she lived in real life, in the flesh of every woman. The resurrection of Shakespeare's sister alluded to the emergence of female poets and the social acceptance of women's status. The translator translated "would" as "yi ding", showing that even though the road ahead was long and full of bumps, with the efforts of countless feminists and feminist translators, sexism would eventually dissipate, and the status of women's works and translations would also be recognized by society.

Example 7: A thousand stars were flashing across the blue wastes of the sky. One seemed alone with an inscrutable society.[18]

Translation by Wang: chengqian de xingxingzailan se kongkuo de tian kong li shanyao. wo jue de fang fu dan du de he yigebuke chu mo de she hui zaiyi qi.[17]

This sentence was inspired by Virginia's experience when she was prevented from getting into the library, and she was told that women must be accompanied by graduate students of the college or hold a letter of introduction to enter. The translator translated the preposition "one" into "wo", bringing the target readers into the heart of the original author to experience the dissatisfaction and loneliness of the original author at that time. Whether the society thought that males were more secure and prosperous, while females were poor and dangerous? "I" could not help but denounce social sexism.

V. CONCLUSION

All in all, supplementing, prefacing and footnoting, and hijacking proposed by von Flotow reinvigorate feminist translation theories and break new ground. The combination of feminist translation theories and the translator's subjectivity gives the translator a wider creative space, makes the translator "show up" in the text, breaks the binary opposition in the translation field, and rectifies the translator's subordination status. However, in the actual translation process, all translators need to work together to combine the two theories perfectly while giving full play to the translator's subjectivity and using the feminist translation theories in a targeted manner so that the translated work can cater to the readers' reading interests and more truly reflect the ideas of the original work.

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