

The Study of the Limitations and Solution of Feminism Translation Theory in Translation

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Abstract

In the Middle Ages, women formally entered the field of translation by translating the Bible and thus gave birth to the feminist translation theory. On this basis, feminist translators carried out translation practice. The application of the theory caused many limitations and dishonest problems, such as deliberately modify the original content, increase and bowdlerize footnotes. This article discusses the theoretical basis and the limitations of this theory, so as to the conflict and combination of theory and practice of puts forward possible solutions.

Keywords

The Feminist Translation Theory; Limitations; Traditional Translation.

1. Introduction

Feminism has been a quiet important issue in the world since its very beginning, which advocates the political and social rightful rights of females. The genesis of feminism interlocked with translation from the Medieval Age till today, and it still reflect much importance in latter's practice by now. The world has advanced than the past, fueled by the progress of morality, economy and science technology, from which the translation practice has evolved, thus the role of translator is getting more attention than ever before, especially the appearance and new face of modern female translator, in which the new conception and history of translation is sprouting.

Due to the differences between social environment and education resources, the natures of females, by which the remarkable differences than male translators shaped. Females are more sensitive and emotional than males, so does the female translators. In order that the chain and monopoly of the traditional translation, with which males at its core can be broken; the power of females can acquire more attention, via language to manifest the demand of equality in society, politics and literature. In 20th century, the world awakened from the lethargy, oppression and ignorance for centuries, translation, the optimal method of spreading foreign knowledge also earned its time: cultural turn, from which, the voice of females is heard. As the production of feminism and translation studies, feminist translation theory has opened a new world to translation and brought great impacts to the traditional translation system, the role of female translators is planning to be more important and protruding than ever before. However, the feminist translation theory is by no means an attempt for searching a clear and certain norm or standard of translation, which unavoidably leads to many limitations, yet the voice and intelligence of females is necessary to the development of translation, so it's quite essential to meet a ground, on which the theory and translation can reach an equilibrium and apply to each other.

The thesis will suggest some opinions and suggestions which serve this purpose firstly via careful comparison of texts between two genders and combining the reality and trends of time. And the thesis also gives the reference approaches of the limitation as to find a possible solution.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Studies on the Feminist Translation Theory Abroad

Feminism is a popular and highly sensitive topic in the foreign countries, it combined with translation studies since the Medieval Age. Due to the natural physical conditions, females could only stay at home and were obliged to translate *Bible*. Then feminism combined with translation, for literature is the ready method for females to fight for their rights. Feminism was divided into two genres since “May Storm” in France: Anglo-American Feminism and New French Feminism. The former focuses on the literature criticism, especially to classics; the latter, which afterwards became the main body of present feminist translation, turned its attention to linguistics and language system. The feminist translation theory thinks the language itself is the source of their pain, thus the nature of the theory is criticism. *Bible*, as the foundation of western culture and literature, was filled with various masculine words, also the first translation combined with feminist translation. Julia Evelina Smith, in 1876, under the oppression of unfair duties, she who the first female started to translate the Bible alone, for fighting for the right to vote. Besides, there are many representatives of feminist translation theory: Sherry Simon, Lori Chamberlain and Luise von Flotow. Sherry Simon mainly research the position of gender in translation theory, her work, *Gender in Translation: Cultural Identity and Politics of Transmission*, published in 1996, is the first dissertation that gives a comprehensive discussion to the translation problem under the view of feminism; *The Metaphor of Gender and Translation* written by Lori Chamberlain, has been the classic text in the studies of translation and gender, she thinks the behavior of committing unfaithfulness sporadically happens in translation, for the conflict of struggling the positive position between translators and authors; Flotow, whose translation strategies: adding preface and footer annotation, supplement and hijacking have been the basic strategies in the feminist translation.

The system and research of feminist translation theory are comparatively scientific and systematic. However, the theory is with intrinsic defects: It does not to find a norm or practical standard to be the criterion; it emphasizes translation is a political behavior, however, the literature is the true battleground; it's prone to be misguided and radical for lacking a norm.

2.2. Studies on the Feminist Translation Theory at Home

Unfortunately, since the May 4th Movement, translation theory has never earned the attention of translators, it's not to say there is no theory in China.

“Faithfulness, expressiveness, elegance” proposed by Yan Fu, has always been the standard for Chinese translators to judge the quality of translation, which is, China's translation theory still focuses on the practice. Translators only know how to judge translations; however, few people would think about why it should be judged like this. The studies of feminist translation theory at home mainly focus on the translation comparisons and analysis translation theory, yet few words for its reason and rationale, let alone how to assimilate it into Chinese translation. China urges a systematic translation theory to illustrate how to combine Chinese culture and feminism, as to practically realize the equality of two genders through translation and literature. Females are fatal to the world, the studies of the theory and the internalization of it will bring a whole new harmony to the world, most importantly, new energy and direction to Chinese translation.

3. Organization of the Text

3.1. A Brief Introduction of the Feminist Translation Theory

The feminist translation theory is the production of feminism and translation studies. As early as in the Medieval Ages, males dominated most of aspects of society and politics, females were

restricted by various of rules, which debased them and ravened all kinds of rights with the exception of housework and translation. In France, some educated females were obliged to translate the Bible, however, from which they earned extremely limited space to manifest their thoughts and voice. Julia Evelina Smith, in 1876, under the oppression of unfair duties, she who the first female started to translate the Bible alone, for fighting for the right to vote. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the radical who advocated the right to vote for females, thus published *The Women's Bible*, in which she made some dispositions from the ideological aspect, however, the book is not a new version of the *Bible*, but an extraction of chapters relevant to females. In 1977, *The World for us*, translated by Joann Haugerud and *An Inclusive Language Lectionary*, published in 1983 are the representatives of the theory, the two translation abandoned the male language style, which filled the early version of the *Bible*, such as replacing "brethren" or "king" with "sisters and brothers" or "monarchy ruler"; using "women and men" or "people" to replace "man". There is an example:

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst...; and him who comes to me I will not cast out." (The Revised Standard version of John 6: 35-37)

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; anyone who comes to me shall not hunger, and anyone who believes in me shall never thirst...; and those who come to me I will not cast out." (Haugerud 1977: 14)

Haugerud replaced the masculine word: "he", "him" with the neutral word: "anyone", "those"; in order that show the role of females through translation and reducing the fixed impression of the world is controlled by males, however, females can only hide in the shadow.

Afterwards, the campaign spread into Britain and America and furtherly combined with translation. In 1968, the feminism split into two genres: Anglo-American Feminism, French New Feminism since the "May Storm", the former focuses on literature criticism, especially to the classic texts; the latter turns its attention to the language itself and believe it's the crux of female issues.

3.2. The Objects and Limitations of the Feminist Translation Theory

Influenced by the emancipation and revitalization of mind and economy, females began to realize the just rights of them and discrimination from the society, with which the males at its core. By the trend of "cultural turn", females poured their energy into literature and criticizing the traditional translation, through which they can acquire more attention and rightful rights. Then, the feminist translation theory came into being. It premises three main theories: deconstructionism, readers' response theory and post-colonialism. The propositions of the feminist theory are: First, canceling the binary opposition between original/author and translation/translator; second, advocating the subjectivity of translators; Third, emphasizing the practice of translation is actually a political behavior.

The first proposition-to cancel the binary opposition between original/author and translation/translator, actually indicates the unfair phenomenon in the practice translation. It appears that the original holds the domination by natural, translation is but a facsimile of it. Thus the importance of translation is ignored, and the role of translators is marginalized, which inflicts the salutary development of translation for the author taking the absolute position and translators servers as servant.

The feminist translation theory believes translators should be elevated to such the same equality as the authors, so do the translations and originals as to assure the voice of female translators could be heard and liberty to dispose some details, from which they feel disrespect and unfair. There is an example:

In the prelude and appendix of *An Inclusive Language Lectionary*, many masculine words were replaced by neutral words, for example; “God the Father” to “God the Father and Mother”, “Son of God” to “Child of God” and “son of man” to “The Human One.”

In fact, the proposition is salutary to male translators too. For the indisputable position of the original/author has been brought to same altitude as the translation/translator. Two sides are no longer opposite. Translators, who serve to spread the thoughts and ideas of certain text have been elevated to the role of second author, which means translators possessed rights to a certain extent to make some amendments to the originals, hence the misunderstanding and improper dictions in the originals which offend the feelings of target readers and culture could be avoided. Translators needn't to be limited by the originals, apply their creativity into translation. The position of translator will be improved. Hence, the common prosperity, mutual positive benefits and better conveying of knowledge can be reached.

However, due to the differences between social environment and educate resources, females are planned to be more sensitive and emotional, by the trend of females are fighting for more attention and more rights, as the optimal choice which is calculated to serve the purpose, translation, by which females advocate their propositions and voice, would be much more active than ever before. Were it be a positive trend, if there would be any norm or standard in the feminist translation theory. One of the greatest defects of the theory, is lacking one certain norm or standard which functions as the criterion. According to the propositions have been mentioned, the theory refuses to accept the application of masculine words in translation, However, how to judge what is “masculine words”? One point has to be known, translation is not just a simple behavior which turns source language into target language, it has to respect the reality and facts. “Son” is a typical masculine word, if translators replace it with “Child”, then “son of God” will be “Child of God”. Jesus is male, so proper pronoun must be “son”, however, “child” indicates boy or girl, then misunderstanding ensues. Another example has been mentioned, “God the Father” indicates Jehovah and “God the Mother” indicates the virgin Mary, the former is the Almighty, the latter, however, is not. It's no doubt that “God the Father and Mother” are more complicate in writing style, and would misguide readers to apprehend there are two gods. Thus, masculine word though “son” is, it's proper to be use in the example and the necessity of a criterion is obvious. An interesting point needed to be added, “history = his+story”, “chairman = chair + man”; the latter is a sensitive topic in interpreting, when the host is male, “chairman” is absolutely proper, yet the gender can't be known, translators and interpreters would better to use “chairperson”. However, many words have been used for centuries like “history”, whatever neutral or masculine they are, the objects they indicate are fixed in the context. The language system and linguistics will be much more complicate and chaotic, if translators have to use the neutral words, only to respect and care females without concerning the offense to facts and faithfulness. Therefore, could another form of impediment to the healthy development of the practice of translation. The truth of a translation theory should be judged by the quality of the text under the guidance of this theory and the experience of its readers of two genders, but the overmuch interference of translator's subjective thoughts, nor the likes and dislikes of individuals. The application of the feminist translation theory into translation must respect and obey nature and basic reality. So do the attention and care to females.

That is, practicing translation with the much respect and attention to females, assure the rightful rights of females without discrimination and debasement, while under the guidance of certain criterion which can meet common ground between the conflicts of the feminist translation theory and the traditional translation.

3.3. The Faithfulness of the Feminist Translation

As an essential part of population in this world, the remarkable intelligence of females has contributed to the world from many aspects, from society, culture to the root and prosperity of human beings. Women, under the guidance of feminism, fight for their own rightful rights, there is no any more powerful weapon than literature to manifest the voice and power, which is no less than males, of females. Hence, translation, naturally, has been good way to accomplish the object.

The distinguished natures of women bring the translation a breeze of softness. Which is apparently, females are more sensitive to the fluctuation of emotions, can better catch the most unperceived feelings than males can do, thus the feminist translation theory thinks the text about women should be translated by female translators.

According to the readers' response theory, the feminist translation theory thinks highly of the reading experience of readers, especially female readers, which means the faithfulness is to target readers, not to the author or the original. This "faithfulness" is well calculated to serve the subjectivity of the translator. Actually, since the conception of translation known by public, the author has taken the absolute core of it. If the translation possesses a good quality, the praises are only to the author, however, the criticism will swarm to the translator while the quality disappoints readers. The feminist translation theory, however, elevates the translator to the same height as the author, allow the former the space and freedom to dispose some details of the original through three strategies: adding preface and footer annotation; supplement; hijacking.

Adding preface and footer annotation, from which female translators are allowed to illustrate the strategies used in translation; manifest their personal opinions to the original; even to the original details which serve to show the males' bullying to females, they would never grudge criticism in the preface or footer annotation, the former, which focuses on carrying forward the power of females; the latter is planned to delve the deeper connotation of feminism from one specific details. It has been accepted by most of translators and put into their practices.

Supplement or amplification, which means adding some details which are out of the original to assure readers better understanding and experience of the emotions and feelings of the original. However, the remarkable difference between the feminist translation theory and traditional theory is the supplement will show more color of feminism than others, hallmark the text of feminism from one detail. There is an example:

Original:

And Pecola she hid behind hers. Concealed, veiled, eclipsed-peeping out of from behind the shroud very seldom, and then only to yearn for the return of the mask. (*The Bluest Eye*)

Translation:

And Pecola. She hides behind her ugly countenance. Concealing, cloaking and disappearing-she would give a look to the outside very few times, however, end up in coming back to her mask in more haste.

According to the traditional translation norms, "concealed", "veiled", "hid", "eclipsed" are actually the relevant meaning of "shun", so the translation could be :

Feminist Translation:

And Pecola. She hides behind her ugly countenance-she would give a look to the outside very few times, however, end up in coming back to her mask in more haste.

Pecola, the protagonist of *The Bluest Eye*, a black girl with ugly countenance, hopes someday she could be beautiful, however, the time vanquished her dreams. Thus, psychological distortion and self-abasement settle down in her mind. If only use a simple phrase to cover aforesaid words in order that gratuitous repeat can be avoided, the feeling of self-abasement in

Pecola's heart would not be fully expressed, nor the emotion of the original could be experienced by readers.

However, hijacking is much more extreme, under the feminist translation theory, translator would insert details which express the strong color of feminism into the original or delete the parts in the original which show the color of male, even give another reversed narration.

Original: Now, however, she moves down an avenue gently buffeted by the familiar and therefore loved images. The dandelions at the base of the telephone pole.

Translation:

Now, however, she pats gently the avenues for the similar therefor beloved scenery. There grow dandelions at the foot of telephone pole.

"Buffet" means fight and punch, the word shows the power of black females, however, "Paidia" is obviously too gentle, translator used the phrase to weaken the impression of "power" and "strength" which express a masculine color, considering that the females are weaker and softer. It's obviously changed the meaning of the original for committing unfaithfulness.

Actually, the faithfulness to the original has always been the most important norm of translation as to make sure readers can understand the meaning of texts. However, the definition of faithfulness to the feminist translation is by no means to the original, but to the readers, to be more specific, to the translators. Thus, the subjectivity of feminist translators greatly elevated, even above the original or authors. Translation is not a creation of subjective will, it must follow certain norms and criteria, if not, the judge of the quality of translation would be determined only by personal will, however, the artistic appreciation is different from individuals, which leads to possible various and patchy standards. Of course, translation is a kind of subject behavior and calculated to serve one purpose, yet it can not be deemed as one good translation without the universal standard.

Obviously, the feminist translation is antagonistic to the translation with males at its core at every aspect, it advocates the basic faithfulness is to the translators but the true readers of two genders. The kind of thoughts will easily prone to be a radical individualism which only opposes males for opposition itself, if feminist translators can't handle the balance between their theories and true faithfulness which indicates the respect to the originals and readers of two genders.

Moreover, if translator overdoes the three strategies, the primary and secondary importance of translation would be chaotic, readers could be troubled with the longer length of writing and confused which part is the true text, from which, the terrible reading experience and tiredness emerge.

The feelings would be a harm to translator for the time and energy devoted into translation do not reach the prospective purpose.

Hence, the feminist translators should put themselves on a ground which indicates the equilibrium between the theory they hold and the traditional faithfulness, carry on translation under the compound guidance of the theory and the respect to the true readers. If the translation is practiced only by personal will and judged by individual likes and dislikes, how could the feminist translation theory accomplish the mission of advocating and promoting the power and rightful rights of females, and accepted by their true readers?

3.4. The Objective of Translation

SKOPOS theory thinks the translation is by no means a random behavior, which serves certain purpose and should be started from one end to the other end. Indeed, since the translation came into being, it has served many purposes, from literature, science to politics. All these branches greatly enrich the connotation of translation. However, the feminist translation theory regards translation as political tool and behavior. Translation is a method for them to acquire certain

political rights, which means the theory is by no means to find norms or standards of translation, but to construct a female poetics via translation.

Females are essential to the world, the glory and civilization of the world can never reach present magnificence without the wisdom of them, therefore, more and more people pay much more attention to females than ever before, and the position of females has been elevated much all over the world. The feminist translation regards the original as males, and translation, usually the adjunct to the former, which indicates females, therefore, feminist translators attempt to cancel the binary opposition between authors and translators as to manifest the affiliation of translations to originals is no longer accepted. Females shall not be affiliated to males, it's unfair and cruel, they shall enjoy the same equality as males and play an important role in every aspect.

However, feminist translation is interlocked with feminism, and feminism has been insulted much by its abnormal branch. Recent years, some people have added hideous intentions into feminism, they camouflaged themselves with the disguise of feminists and the champions of females as to obtain despicable profit which will be brought to them via the passion of females to earn equality. The noble passion and enthusiasm of females are guided into narrow misunderstanding, the evil debases their pure souls and reasonable minds, turn them into blind enemies to truth and facts, especially to the true feminism which appeal equality and independence.

Thus the rights of females turn to "Nv Quan", females misguided throw their blind and unreasonable anger to males as to ask for superabundant profit. Painfully, the equality of two genders at every aspect is also degraded by them. True feminism appeal females to be independent and strong, whatever males can do, so do the females. After the abominable depravity resulted from those graceless and immoral worms, it becomes whatever males can do must be done only by males, females have no obligation to help them. It's obvious that the true nature of "Nv Quan" is the most despicable insult and shame to the true feminism and innocent victims of two genders. True feminism denounces materialization of females and they should be the independent to males, however, the very crime culprit that undermines and sabotages the development feminism and harmony of two genders. It brings the true materialization of females, excuses that females should be treated well, instigate females to be the material slave to males' fortune. To whoever can meet their endless desires, they praises, to those who is incapable, they curse. What a grovel and slavish face!

Literature can't exist and reach the glory without females; politics also needs females. However, being lacking a criterion and guidance, the feminism can be easily misguided; as the core of the feminist translation, it must bring influence to it. It will be a mess, if the abnormal feminism penetrates into literature and translation. The solution is finding a equilibrium between translation and feminism through the guidance of translators of two genders. Such as Gu Zhengkun, whose works shows the attention and care to females.

To Comrade Ding Ling

To the Tune of Immortal at Riverside

The red flag over the wall fluttering in the setting sun, / The west wind caressing the separate town, / Now in Bao' an County new heroes throng. / An entertaining banquet is offered to hail.
/ A heroine who was just released from jail.

What can be compared to her slender pen? / With Mauser-rifles three thousand picked men. / Beyond north of Longshan our war plan is under way, / A literary lady yesterday, / Now a general in battle array.

In November, 1936, Ding Ling was elected to be the director of China Literature and Art Association. In this poem, Chairman Mao expressed his trust and praise to Ding Ling, and described a modern female through the poem. "What can be compared to her slender pen? / With Mauser-rifles three thousand picked men." is the high praise to Ding Ling, it's rare in Mao Zedong's poem. A slim pen is the weapon of females which appears weak and negligible, however, the power behind it can parallel three thousand soldiers with muskets. It expresses though the physical power is weaker by natural, yet, females with pens can spark endless power. But it's not enough, male translators account for a huge part of translators, so they are obligated to fight for females with the respect to the truth and reality. Gu translated "who was released from jail" into "heroine", expressed his care and admiration to Ding Ling, praised her bravery and passion.

Thus, a feasible criterion is necessary to be given as to guide the feminist translation correctly; male translators, as the main body of translation, must abandon discrimination to females and respect the rightful rights of females, working with feminist translators to find a middle ground.

4. Conclusion

Females are the essential source of every aspect, it's necessary to elevate them to the same equality as males. Though the physical conditions of females are weaker than males, yet, there is a more powerful potential hidden behind the wisdom of females. Coincidentally, Feminism combined with translation studies since its very beginning, thus literature has always been the foothold and method for females to advocate their own rights, as its result, though it has many positive points: Thinking highly of the rights of females; elevation of the subjectivity of translators via three translation strategies: Adding preface and footer annotation; supplement and hijacking; feminist translation came into being with intrinsic defects: First, it has no a specific criterion functioned as guidance; second, its faithfulness is not to readers of two genders, but to translators, which is prone to be extreme without proper strategies; third, being combined with feminism, it's easily to be misguided and led to be radical. The solutions could be: First, constructing a feasible and practical criterion for feminist translation with the respect to females and truth, in order that overmuch subjective interference could be avoided; second, proposing correct and just guidance to the trend of feminism, spread its true meaning in the range of society in case the abnormal mind penetrates into translation, as to avoid the appearance of radical feminist translation; third, male translators, as the main body of translators, should foster a careful and sensitive mind to experience the feeling of texts about females, always hold respect and attention to them. The equality of two genders can't be done only by the efforts of females, males are obligated to fight for this.

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