

Gender in Translation: A Case Study of Translations of *The Woman Warrior*

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Abstract: This study selects two Chinese translations of a Chinese American literature *The Woman Warrior* as the research object. To analyze the feminist features inside and gender differences between translations, Catford's theory of translation shifts is adopted. Discussions prove the feasibility of translation shifts to compare translated texts and draw a conclusion that female translators are more sensitive to feminist elements in the texts. Future researches can focus on the feminist strategies included in the texts.

Keywords: *The Woman Warrior*; Catford; Translation Shifts; Feminism.

1. Introduction

Traditionally, women have been associated with translation, for they were both put in a degraded position and concerned with the problem of inferiority. The cultural turn in translation studies designates the move towards the analysis of translation from the perspective of cultural studies. Therefore, feminist translators are able to make themselves visible through translation. In feminist theory, translation is considered as production, not derivative from source texts. Feminist translators are expected to create differences and deconstruct the notions of fidelity, equivalence and the invisibility of the translator in the translation. With the adoption of this theory, both their secondary positions are no longer in existence.

In *The Woman Warrior*, Maxine Hong Kingston depicts the images of five women, exposing the oppression of women by feudal society, and at the same time, showing their struggles to fight against unfair treatment and try to build a new identity for themselves.

As a Chinese American literature that exhibits an encounter between two cultures, it has attracted numerous researchers focusing on its cultural connotation or the cultural identity involved in the work. As a bridge between two cultures, translation indeed is of great importance on the researches for such works. However, few scholars paid attention to its Chinese versions and the feminism embedded in the translation texts. To have a better understanding of feminism, it is essential to comprehend the way female and male translators lay out the texts and thus making a straightforward comparison. In this context, this study intends to analyze the differences between the male and female translators in revealing the feminism in the work.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Feminist Translation Theories

Feminist translation theories aim to identify concepts which put both women and translation in an inferior position and further attempt to deconstruct the male-dominated society which have maintained this association (Simon 1996:1). To do so, the feminized translation process needs to be analyzed

and stereotypes with severe sexism in translation studies and social perceptions need to be broken.

In feminist translation, translators openly show their manipulation of the texts and connect gender issues with rewriting or making changes. With feminist translation theories, the issues of fidelity, equivalence and the invisibility of the translator can be viewed from a new perspective.

Feminists believe that it is actually unfair to require the translation to be absolutely faithful to the original text. Because it is similar to female's surrender to male. Faithfulness often means depriving women of their voice and making them invisible (Jiang 2004:11). Therefore, in feminist translation, fidelity, or faithfulness is not the ultimate goal. Instead, feminist theories view "fidelity as directed towards neither the author nor the reader but toward the writing project", in which the author and translator co-work to achieve their equal status in translation. (Simon 1996:2). In addition, feminist translators tend to reread the feminist issues in the source texts and rewrite or create differences in their translation in order to make their voice heard. They pay less attention to the final product or its equivalence with or fidelity to the original and more attention to the processes and issues concerning cultural differences (Andone 2002:145).

The third important factor concerned is the subjectivity of translators. The theory includes the previously neglected gender factors in the research, revealing the influence of gender in translation; on the other hand, feminist translators are expected to manipulate the text and practice creative treason to highlight the position of women in the text, thus defying the male-centrism and feminist sexism (Xu 2004:17).

Three strategies used in feminist translation was discussed in Luise von Flotow's book (1991): supplementing, prefacing and footnoting, and "hijacking". Supplementing and prefacing and footnoting all are ways adding some elements on the basis of source texts to expose feminist translator's deliberate interventions and their active participation in the creation of meaning (Godard 1990:91). Hijacking refers to that feminist translators appropriate those contents which do not possess feminist features and rewrite them in the translation with the application of new words or phrases. In a word, all these three strategies are the results of feminist translators making changes based on the original text.

2.2. Catford's Theory of Translation Shifts

The analytical framework adopted in the present study is based on Catford's theory of translation shifts. According to Catford, translation shifts are "departures from formal correspondence in the process of going from the SL to the TL"(Catford 1965:73). Translation involves the process of transferring one language to another, to be more specifically, converting the phonetic, lexical, grammatical and structural elements in source texts to target texts. The fact that every language is unique and has its own way to express ideas leads us to the confirmation that changes or shifts inevitably occur during the translation process.

Catford considers two kinds of shifts: level shifts and category shifts. Level shifts are shown in the mutual conversion of grammar and lexis from one language to another. For example, the tense and aspect in English are sometimes conveyed through auxiliary words in Chinese. Category shifts can be further divided into four kinds: structural shifts, unit shifts, intra-system shifts and class shifts.

Structural shifts are the most common practice in the translation shifts and relate to the changes in the grammatical structure. The basic English sentence pattern of subject-verb-object can be varied in Spanish as object-verb-subject pattern (Munday 2016:96).

Unit or rank shifts are shifts where the translation equivalent in the source language is at a different rank or unit with that in the target language. Units or ranks means linguistic units of morpheme, word, clause and sentence.

Intra-system shifts take place when the source language and target language encounter approximately corresponding systems, translation is supposed to select a non-corresponding term (Catford, 1965:79). Within a system such as number system, an uncountable noun in one language will sometimes become countable in another.

Class shifts involve shifts of part of speech. Nouns in English are translated as verbs in Chinese. Nouns with verb suffixes are used to refer to people and no longer indicate behavior or action, so English nouns are often converted into Chinese verbs in these cases. For example, "She is the best hater I've ever known". The noun "hater" in the sentence is translated as verb 记仇 (Lian 2010:138).

3. Shifts in the Translation of *The Woman Warrior*

In this present study, Catford's theory of translation shifts is adopted to analyze the translation versions of *The Woman Warrior*, respectively translated by a female translator Wang Aiyan (refer to as TT1 in the following part) and male translators Li Jianbo and Lu Chengyi (refer to as TT2 in the following part). With the application of this theory, differences between two versions are discussed, especially when they deal with expressions contained feminist characteristics.

3.1. Level Shifts

Example 1:

ST: Her husband's parents could have sold her, mortgaged her, stoned her. But they had sent her back to her own mother and father, a mysterious act hinting at disgraces not told me. (Kingston, 1976: 14)

TT1:

她丈夫的父母本可以把她卖掉，押给别人，或者乱石砸

死。但他们却打发她回娘家，没有人告诉我，这种奇怪的做法是为了羞辱女方家人。(Wang, 2008: 12)

TT2:

丈夫的父母可以把她卖掉，抵押掉，用石头砸死。但是公婆把她送回她父母的身边，这是一个令人不可思议的举动，目的是为了说明她做了丢人的事情。(Li&Lu, 1998: 6)

Level shifts are shifts between grammatical level and vocabulary level. Inflectional changes in the form of words can be used to express its grammatical functions, which in Chinese, are mostly indicated by a single character. "Could have sold" in the example indicates that parents of No Name Woman's husband had the choice to be more merciful to her, but they chose to humiliate her and her parents. With the diction in TT1, a sharp contrast is formed. Together with the translation of "sent", TT1 reflects the oppression of women in feudal society to a greater extent.

3.2. Structural Shifts

Because of differences between Chinese and English, shifts in structure refer to the changes in word order or the alteration of sentence structure. English is addicted to the passive voice on account of expression habits or rhetorical consideration. But too many passive sentences in Chinese seem to be awkward, we are accustomed to use active expressions to convey passive meanings. In the translation, the alteration of passive forms and active forms can be used to illustrate the translator's attitudes towards the subject or the protagonist in the story.

Example 2:

ST: After two years of study--the graduates of three-week and six-week courses were more admired by the peasants for learning at such wondrous speeds--my mother returned to her home village a doctor. She was welcomed with garlands and cymbals the way people welcome the "barefoot doctors" today..... My mother wore a silk robe and western shoes with big heels, and she rode home carried in a sedan chair. (Kingston, 1976: 101)

TT1: 经过两年的学习，妈妈回乡当了大夫。她的课程，有的三周结业，有的六周结业，村里人听说她竟如此神速地掌握了医术，更是钦佩不已。村里人给她戴上花环，敲锣打鼓地欢迎她，就像欢迎“赤脚医生”。.....而妈妈身穿丝绸旗袍，脚踩西式高跟鞋，乘着一顶轿子回到家。(Wang, 2008: 101)

TT2: 学完两年之后，母亲回村当了医生。她们每门课的时间很短，两周到六周不等。这么短的时间就学会医道，很为乡民敬慕。母亲受到乡亲们敲锣打鼓的欢迎，就同现今欢迎“赤脚医生”一样。.....而我母亲却是绸旗袍高跟鞋，被人用轿子抬回家的。(Li&Lu, 1998: 69)

In most Chinese cases, they convey unfortunate implication. With firm will and unremitting efforts, the mother in the example--Brave Orchid completed her studies and made an achievement as a professional women. Passive phrases in the ST are all transferred to be active in the TT1, showing the translator's praise and admiration for this female character while passiveness is maintained in the TT2, in which "被人用轿子抬回家的" seems to be derogatory.

3.3. Unit Shifts

Example 3:

ST: Whenever we had been in danger of losing, I made a throwing gesture and the opposing army would fall, hurled across the battlefield. (Kingston, 1976: 62)

TT1: 每当我身处险境, 只要我一挥手, 敌人便溃不成军, 横七竖八地倒在战场上。(Wang, 2008: 53)

TT2: 我快被打败的时候, 手一挥, 敌军准会溃败。(Li&Lu, 1998: 35)

In the story, Fa Mulan avenged her fellow villagers and heroically killed the enemy on the battlefield. The power of a brave female hero is vividly shown in this character. Shifts from sentence and words to phrases are involved in this example. In TT1, translators convert the underlined part into Chinese four character idioms, achieving the beauty in sound and form, and injecting readability and strength into the translation. While the in the TT2, a neat antithesis is not formed and it is difficult for readers to feel the power of Fa Mulan.

3.4. Intra-system Shifts

When dealing with roughly same components, translators need to choose a non- corresponding component to conduct their translation to ensure reader's better understanding of their genuine intentions and avoid ambiguity caused by cultural diversity (Chen, 2021).

Example 4:

ST: I watched powerful men count their money, and starving men count theirs. (Kingston, 1976: 49)

TT1: 我看到那些有权有势的人数着白花花的银子, 也看着食不果腹的人点着可怜的铜板。(Wang, 2008: 41)

TT2: 我看到权势者在数钱, 吃了上顿没下顿的人也在数着自己的钱。(Li&Lu, 1998: 27)

In the TT2, the translation of "money" and "theirs" are both literal and no alteration occurs. To make it clearer, translator in the TT1 translated them as "白花花的银子" and "可怜的铜板", which coincide with "powerful men" and "starving men", contributing to satisfying results that patriarchal society and hierarchy, also the main culprit for the low status of women, are satirically criticized. Moreover, "白花花的" and "可怜的" can be viewed as the modifiers translators supplement to deepen the irony, according with one of the feminist strategies mentioned in the second part.

3.5. Class Shifts (Combination of Shifts)

Sometimes there may not be just one kind of shift included in sentences. The above four shifts are often combined together to accomplish high quality of the translation.

Example 5:

ST: Chinese executed women who disguised themselves as soldiers or students, no matter how bravely they fought or how high they scored on the examinations. (Kingston, 1976: 63)

TT1: 旧时, 一个女人要是胆敢假扮男人从军或参加科举考试, 哪怕她英勇无敌, 或金榜题名, 都是要被处死的。(Wang, 2008: 53)

TT2: 在中国, 如果一个女人在军事上或学问上出人头地, 无论有多么杰出, 都会被处死的。(Li&Lu, 1998: 35)

The translation of "Chinese" is related to intra-system shift. "旧时" in that TT1 explains that the context in which women are difficult to realize their value is in the old days. Nouns

"soldiers" and "students" are transferred to verbs in the TT1 to specify ways women were banned from participating in social construction earlier. Unit shifts are embodied in the translation of latter part in the TT1 and translation of "soldiers" and "students" in the TT2, through which women's excellent performance is demonstrated. In addition, structural shift is involved in the translation of "execute". In this case, "execute" contains a wretched sense. Therefore, it is understandable to change it into passive voice in the TT. The difference between two versions lie in that TT1 is more specific, thus bringing higher accuracy.

4. Conclusion

Feminist translators are expected to make changes to make themselves invisible. By adopting Catford's theory of translation shifts, feminism in the translation of *The Woman Warrior* is discovered and differences between two versions are discussed. Through the above analysis and discussion, translators attitudes towards female are revealed. We are able to conclude that compared with male translators, female translator holds a more positive opinion for women and by all means tries to present powerful images of women and bitterly condemn feudal society's crush on female.

This study attempts to be a pilot research to find out gender differences in the male and female translation. However, the examples selected may be not adequate enough and other influencing factors inducing differences are not covered. For example, the two translation versions also differ in the preface and footnotes. In-depth analysis concerning three feminist strategies can be furthered in the future researches.

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