

A Study of the Subjectivity of the Translator in Zhu Shenghao's Translations

-- Taking the *Tempest* as an Example

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Abstract: Through the study of translator's subjectivity, this paper finds that the research on translator's subjectivity mainly focuses on the translation style and translation strategy, and lacks the research on the initiative and importance of translator's subjectivity. Based on the theoretical framework of hermeneutics, this study takes Zhu Shenghao's initiative in translating Shakespeare's *The Tempest* as an example to explore the importance of translator's initiative in the translation process. This paper expounds that the translator's motivation is closely related to his translation practice, translation strategy, literary accomplishment and social and historical context, so as to explore the profound significance of focusing on the translator's subjectivity.

Keywords: Translator's subjectivity; Hermeneutics; Zhu's translation of *The Tempest*.

1. Hermeneutics

For a long time, the translator has been under the influence of traditional translation theory. However, the emergence of hermeneutics has changed this situation. This theory not only demonstrates the creativity of translators in translation activities, but also provides a strong theoretical support for the study of the translator's subjectivity.

1.1. The Concept of hermeneutics

Schleiermacher is a famous German philosopher, theologian and linguist, the founder and main representative of modern methodological hermeneutics. His main contribution in the field of hermeneutics lies in raising hermeneutics from a simple interpretation of the Bible to the height of philosophy, making it an independent philosophy and a universal methodology in the humanities.

First, he defined hermeneutics as the art of understanding the meaning of texts, emphasizing that hermeneutics is the art of avoiding misunderstandings. He believes that the starting point of hermeneutics is misunderstanding, and that this misunderstanding is not individual, but universal, that is, when contacting the text, the normal situation is not direct understanding, but misunderstanding. He argues that the cause of misunderstanding is the inter-subjective interaction interrupted by differences in time, language, historical context, and setting between the author and the interpreter.

1.2. Hermeneutics and the translator's subjectivity

As a subject related to understanding and interpretation, hermeneutics has a natural connection to translation. With the development of hermeneutics, Heidegger and Gadamer, represented by hermeneutics even put forward an innovative translation research method, especially Gadamer, the three principles of Truth and Method, he put forward the "historicity of understanding", "threshold integration", "effective history" the basic principles of hermeneutics, not only embodies the importance of the translator, but also emphasizes the translator's subjectivity in the process of

translation.

When interpreting the grammatical and psychological interpretations of the original text, the translator's thinking must go back and forth between the part and the whole of the text in order to gain a true understanding of the thought and intention of the text. As Schleiermacher says, understanding should constantly return from the whole to the part, and from the part to the whole. Without this cycle, all understanding cannot take place at all. In this cycle, he argues, the whole and the part are both opposed to each other and dependent on each other, grounding and mediating each other, contradictory and unified, and although there is a boundary between them, this boundary is difficult to draw. Any understanding and knowledge is always expressed in such a circular relationship, and in this contradiction, it is constantly moving forward and deepening. The relationship between the whole and the part, which hermeneutics is concerned with, is in fact a contextual or contextual relationship. The meaning of an individual word in a text depends on the meaning of that word in the whole sentence, paragraph, or even chapter, and it is only in the context of a paragraph that the meaning of an individual word can be more accurately grasped. This issue is brought to the fore in translation - the circular relationship between the whole and the parts that is essential to understanding the text. The translator's grasp of the meaning of the whole must be based on the understanding of the part, and the understanding of the part must be predicated on the grasp of the meaning of the whole, and the two are interdependent and mutually explanatory. In this way, the cycle continues, with a deeper understanding step by step. From this, we can see that the cycle of interpretation gives the subject, i.e., the translator, not repetition, but a new ability to know oneself. Because human cognitive activity is not stagnant, but constantly evolving, that is to say, interpretation is not just a simple cycle, but an upward spiral, eventually reaching a kind of creation and qualitative change. This creation and qualitative change determine the existence of the translator's subjectivity. The translator uses two specific methods in the cycle of interpretation: "comparison" and "anticipation". The former is mainly concerned with grammatical interpretation, the latter with psychological interpretation; the former is

objective, the latter subjective; the former is rational and analytical, the latter is intuitive and conjectural. The translator seeks a direct personal understanding of the author by means of anticipation, and a comparative understanding of the author by means of incorporation into a genre. Anticipation is the translator's understanding of the text as a whole, and its precision is not achieved all at once, but is adjusted and improved by comparing the comprehension of parts, which needs to be repeated over and over again to achieve an understanding of the author's intention or intent. Ultimately, the translation is the product of the translator's interpretation in this cycle. The above analysis of translator's subjectivity from Schleiermacher's hermeneutic perspective gives us a newer and deeper understanding of the concept of translator's subjectivity. Translation is an act of interpretation, and the act of interpretation cannot be separated from the act of subjectivity, so the intervention of translator subjectivity in translation is inevitable. From "avoiding misunderstanding", taking the path of reconstruction, grammatical interpretation, psychological interpretation, to circular interpretation, all these highlight the leading and subjective role of the translator in translation. The ideal translation is to seek a balance between the objective interpretation of the original text and the subjectivity of the translator, and ultimately to seek the original meaning of the original work.

2. Translator subjectivity

2.1. Subject-nature research and development of foreign translators

Translator is the subject of translation and an important participant in the construction of national culture. However, the translation subject has been covered in the pluralistic system of Chinese culture for a long time, and the marginalization of the translator's cultural status appears. For a long time, translation research was limited to the linguistic level. The status of translators is often "invisible" and their role is correspondingly ignored or underestimated. Traditionally, Western translation research focuses on "language level". The value of translation is in achieving the equivalence with the source text. Therefore, the translator should try not to change the original text to reflect the meaning and form of the original text. They believe that the subjectivity of translators should be avoided in the translation process. Therefore, translators are nothing more than passive workers of language transformation. In the traditional translation research, the subjectivity of translators is completely denied. Hermeneutics, represented by Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Steiner and two contemporary ontological philosophers, Heidegger and Gadamer, recognize the positive role of translators in interpreting the original text. As the subject of interpretation, the translator is not a passive recipient, but a subjective creator. The essence of the subject is manifested in its characteristics of initiative, motivation and self, which constitute the subjectivity of the translation subject and the translator.

Until the late 1970s, the school of translation research developed with the "cultural turn", and the focus of translation research had shifted from linguistic to "cultural oriented". Since then, the issue of translator subject has become a hot topic, attracting wide attention in philosophy, literature, psychology, ethics and other fields; cultural factors are regarded as the starting point of translation research, and scholars began to discuss the influencing factors related to

translation activities. Since then, western theories did not adhere to the traditional cognition of translators, covering multi-system theory and manipulation theory, and recognized the importance of translators' subjectivity in the translation process, and provided a new way for our translation research.

The first is the view of multisystem theory. Based on the concept of a hierarchical literature system, the Israeli scholar Evan Zohar proposed the term "multiple system", which refers to the entire network of related systems --of literature and external literature within a particular society. He sought to explore the role of translated texts in a particular culture in a multiplex system theory way. From Evan Zohar's perspective, a wide variety of writing, from classical forms like poetry to non-classical forms, exists in a particular culture (1990:50). His research on translation was written from 1970 to 1977 and published in the *Poetics Today* in 1978. He (1990) noted that the function of translation lies in its attribution and status in a certain literary system. In addition, Evan Zohar emphasized (1990) that the translated text is closely related to other elements in other literary systems. He explained this relationship in two ways: (1) how the receptive culture chose the text to be translated. (2) How the translated text adopts some specifications and functions due to its relations to other target language systems (Evan Zohar, 2005:22).

Next comes the view of the manipulation school. As mentioned above, multivariate systems theory brings translation research to a broader system, but the exploration of other socio-cultural factors involved in actual translation, such as ideology, and the translator's poetry, has not yet been fully illustrated. With this limitation in mind, scholars such as Andre Lefevell and Theo Hermans have extended the preliminary study to more detailed studies. Subsequently, the term "manipulation" appeared in the title of the 1985 anthology "Manipulative Literature: A Study of Literary Translation", which mentions the studies of Andre Lefevell and some other scholars. They propose that both authors and target readers in the translation process should be manipulated by translators (Lefevell, 2004). According to Hermans (1985), translators must have a degree of manipulation of personal texts. That is, the translators will have more or less control over the source text to achieve their intentions. Thus, translators have become active participants in translation activities, rather than observers of Hermans' theory, and thus receive increasing attention in translation research.

According to the two theories, translators and their subjectivity play an important role in the translation process. Multiple systems theory insists that the cultural factors involved in specific literary systems have a great influence on translation. Translation works, whether literary or non-literary translation, cannot be released from the cycle of a certain language system. Therefore, the translator should actively coordinate all factors to achieve a better translation. Furthermore, manipulation schools have demonstrated translator subjectivity in manipulating the original text and contributed substantially to translation research by demonstrating some of the external factors involved in translation activities, including their personal awareness and sponsorship. Therefore, the study of the subjectivity of translators is promoted.

2.2. Subject-nature research and development of domestic translators

Domestic translation research has experienced the process from language orientation to cultural orientation, and then to

translation. Traditional translation has long been concerned about the three principles put forward by Chinese scholar Yan Fu. It rarely recognizes the existence of translators in literal translation and free translation. During that period, supporting translators' invisible voices prevailed. Many scholars believe that translation, as a parasitic art, is equivalent to the imitation of the original text. The translators thus became servants, submitting manuscripts to the original text and to the original authors.

Influenced by the western "pragmatic transformation" and "cultural transformation", the study on the subjectivity of Chinese translators has made great progress since the 1980s. Therefore, the subjectivity of translators has received wide attention from Chinese academic scholars in the past few decades.

Yang Wueng in 1987, titled *Interpretation, Acceptance and Recreation*, used modern hermeneutic theory to explore the position of translators, and regarded the translator as the interpreter and creator of the source text, rather than the passive worker (1987:3). He believes that translation is essentially building a cultural bridge between different languages, and that translators will undoubtedly play a leading role in the translation process and give full play to their initiative. In his article "Translator's subjectivity" (Chen, 2004) believes that the translator's subjectivity has active consciousness, passive humanistic and cultural attention. He also claimed that translators showed their subjectivity in the translation process to meet certain needs of the target readers. Xie Tianzhen proposed the concept of "creative rebellion" in his book *Introduction to Translation Studies*, and he (2007) pointed out the value of this concept in the study of translators' subjectivity. He believes that literary translation is a creative activity in which translators play an important role and have an influence on translation.

Overall, there has been a more comprehensive and insightful study of the translation research that has begun conducted in the country since the 1980s. Scholars in this period have made great contributions to the subjectivity of translators from different perspectives. They not only take the most important step in recognizing the subjectivity of the translators, but also emphasize the importance of their subjectivity in the translation process. This study aims to further demonstrate that the performance of the translator's subjectivity, especially the important role of the subjectivity playing, should be carefully observed when analyzing the translated works.

3. The subjectivity of Zhu Shenghao's *Tempest*

When the translator is translated, the translation motivation, aesthetic standard and creative and rebellious subjective factors involved in the translation process have left an indelible mark on the translation. When choosing the works, interpreting and expressing the works, the translator must grasp the pulse of *The Times*, and actively play his subjective initiative, so that the translation has the greatest artistic appeal. But on the other hand, it must not be divorced from the background of *The Times*, and rewrite the original text at will. Therefore, the translator's subjectivity must be limited. Zhu Shenghao's translation of the Shakespeare opera conforms to the domestic cultural trend at that time, with the purpose of popularizing Shakespeare's works, so as to realize the great ideal of saving the country and the people. His translation has

always been regarded as a classic, and has made outstanding contributions to the popularization of Shakespeare. With the implementation of China's reform and opening up policy in the 1970s, since the publication of Zhu Shenghao's translation of Shakespeare's works has been increasingly prosperous in China. This boom of dramatic translation presents a trend of free communication. Drama translation actually refers to cultural translation. In the process of language function transformation, translators often have to face the choice of the translation strategy, so what are the exact internal and external factors that drive the translation strategy. The author tried to jump out of the previous study of translator subjectivity and the influencing factors, but focus on the translator subjectivity ontology research, hermeneutics as theoretical guidance framework, directly from the perspective of the translator's subjectivity initiative, discusses, Zhu Shenghao translation Shakespeare the storm in the process of translation practice translator subjectivity.

3.1. Social background of the translator

Everyone living in a certain society is influenced by a certain social background, and translators are no exception. Of course, the translator will be influenced by the social background, so it is particularly important to analyze the translator's social background.

For exactly twelve years, from 1938 to 1949, China experienced fierce struggles and wars. The incident of July 7, 1937, changed the living environment and the political environment of China, and of course, it also had a great influence on the translation of foreign literary works. During the war, the translators, regardless of the harsh living environment and various difficulties and hardships, used translation as a weapon to encourage and encourage the people of the whole country. Therefore, saving the nation is the only theme of this period, and anti-war works are the popular theme of this period. The outbreak of the Anti-Japanese War is also of great significance in the history of western literary translation.

In the history of modern foreign literature translation, the development of drama translation is later than the translation of novels and poetry. Shakespeare's translation began in the 1920s, and it was during the May 4th period that began to translate Shakespeare comprehensively. Despite the constant war and the turbulent life, Shakespeare's translation did not stop. In the 1940s, Shakespeare's translation continued despite the severe social situation. During this period, some famous translators of Shakespeare's works emerged, such as Zhu Shenghao, Cao Yu, Sun Yanyu, Yang Hui, etc. In 1935, Zhu Shenghao began his translation of Shakespeare. He had completed nine comedies before the outbreak of the Anti-Japanese War. During the war, Zhu Shenghao, facing livelihood difficulties, completed only 31 and a half of Shakespeare plays before he died early in 1944.

3.2. Translator's translation motivation and strategy

Due to the differences in the historical context, the translators will have their own "prejudices" in the translation process. By studying the historical background of translators, it is necessary and valuable to understand their translation motivation. It can let us clearly know why they choose to translate a work or a writer when facing different works, which is also a manifestation of the translator's subjectivity.

3.2.1. Substantial performance of translation motivation

Zhu Shenghao translated Shakespeare during the eight years of the Anti-Japanese War, when the cultural undertakings were once depressed. However, Shanghai was calls for foreign literature, especially in 1936, when various translations emerged. During that days, the Japanese imperialists often offended the Chinese and mocked the gaps in the translation of Shakespeare's works. Zhu Shenghao regarded the cause of translation and translation as a cause similar to a national hero. In 1936, after translating a part of Shakespeare's drama *The Tempest*, Zhu wrote in a letter to Song Qingru: "Do you worship national heroes? My brother said that if I translated Shakespeare, I would become a national hero. Because a country once said that China is an uneducated country, not even Lao Sha's translation." Zhu Shenghao's translation is precisely adapted to the background of *The Times*.

During Zhu's life, he translated 31 half-Shakespeare parts of Shakespeare's plays, and the first one he began to write was "The Tempest", a classic of Shakespeare's later works, which also shows the translator's love for drama. Therefore, Zhu's translation of *The Tempest* can systematically reflect the translator's conscious choice of the translated text under its dynamic habit control, including how it has consciously manipulated Zhu Shenghao's translation practice. His translation of the *Tempest* is his own habit of constantly changing and developing in specific space and time environments, and it plays an important guiding role in translation standards and aesthetic values.

3.2.2. Subjectivity performance of translation strategy

Due to the limitations of history, the translator will interpret the original text with his own bias under a certain historical background. Therefore, it is possible for translators to creatively generate translations by choosing different translation strategies, which is a clear embodiment of the translator's subjectivity.

When faced with different cultures, translators usually adopt two translation strategies: naturalization and naturalization. Naturalization refers to the destination language culture-oriented translation, and the translator adopts the acceptable usage in the destination language culture to ensure the readability and naturalness of the translation. Alienation refers to the translation oriented by the source culture. However, the translator retains the exotic flavor of the source culture in the translation process, thus maintaining the original meaning of the source culture. In order to meet the needs of ordinary readers, the naturalized translation strategy of translating Shakespeare was adopted in many places, which successfully realized the purpose of translation and promoted the spread of Shakespeare opera in China.

It has been made clear that Zhu's translation motive was to let as many Chinese people as possible know more about Shakespeare and his works. He wants to integrate the vision of Chinese readers and Shakespeare's readers. Thus, he tried to make his translation readable, without much exotic appeal, as it was true for the average Chinese. Only in this way can the bias of the translation reader enter the world of translation. On the one hand, Zhu managed to maintain the charming quality of the original, which helps unfold the just world described in the original. On the other hand, he disagrees with word by word or sentence by word translation, which will certainly create confusing horizons. Therefore, he used naturalization as his main translation strategy to make the

translation easy to read and understand. His language was rooted in traditional Chinese, which helped him to create more colorful ways of expression, even if some changes made the translation less faithful. He declared that the purpose of translation was readable to express the source text in the target culture readable for those who cannot understand the source language.

Through the study of the translation process of *The Tempest*, it shows that Zhu Shenghao has a special interest in the four-character structure of Chinese. In addition to the four-character idioms existing in classical Chinese literature, Zhu Shenghao also invented many four-character phrases in the process of translating "The Tempest". The unique preference for four-word phrases is also based on Zhu Shenghao's emphasis on musicality in translation. Proper use of four-word phrases will make the translation more readable and deductive, while keeping the sentence structure concise and compact.

According to Zhu Anbo (2014), the circulation of Zhu's translation of Shakespeare's plays plays an important role in the popularization of idioms such as calm, pretentious, following, and deep-rooted. The survey found that Shakespeare's Chinese readers prefer to understand English literature through Zhu's translated Shakespeare plays, precisely because his translation style is more familiar and friendlier. For the differences in English-Chinese grammar, he chewed repeatedly and revised the structure of the original text if necessary. He believed that the absolute loyalty to the original text will make the translation lose its "spiritual atmosphere", and cause understanding obstacles due to the obscurity of the expression. If the basis of communication is not clear, the successful dialogue between the translation reader and the translation cannot be realized. As he explained in his short preface to the translation of Shakespeare's Complete Drama: Whenever I find that the sentence structure in the original text is inconsistent with Chinese grammar, I think repeatedly for hours or even days until I get a completely different version from the original text. He further explained why he preferred naturalization: I would do what I could to keep my primitive spirit. If I can't, I will at least try to convey the original meaning in plain Chinese. I dare not agree to a verbatim translation.

3.2.3. Determine the subjectivity performance of the target readers

Obviously, Zhu wanted to popularize Shakespeare in China, not to give the translated readers the difficulty in understanding foreign language grammar. Obviously, Zhu Shenghao is quite serious in his translation. In translating "The Tempest", after he completes a paragraph, he considers the reader, changes it over and over again until there is no ambiguity, and then reads aloud to ensure that the translation is smooth and rhythmic.

Through the above analysis, we can find that Zhu Shenghao's translation of *The Tempest* is a product of a specific socio-cultural background.

3.3. Transtranlator's literary accomplishment

Zhu Shenghao has a deep foundation of the traditional Chinese language. As a representative of the conservative forces, he advocates the traditional Chinese culture and advocates the purity of the Chinese language. Therefore, he used naturalization as the main translational strategy in natural readable language, maintaining cultural aesthetics and values. Zhu Shenghao adopted a natural and fluent pure

Chinese expression in the translation process, in a way of cultural filtering, which is consistent with his purpose of promoting the translation among ordinary readers.

4. Summary

As Gadamer says, an absolutely perfect translation is not available because of historical authenticity. That is, translation is an open and dynamic system, and translators with a certain historical and social background constantly give full play to their subjectivity and realize their ideal translation. According to the thorough study of this paper, the main findings are as follows:

First, through a comprehensive analysis of the three principles of the understanding of history, visual threshold integration, and effective history, this paper finds that the subjectivity of translators is penetrating into the whole process of translation. From a historical point of view, translators exist historically, and their translation ideas and practices are inevitably influenced by factors such as the historical background and the personal experience of the personal bias formed. Therefore, translators with obvious bias tend to make different choices on the choice of the source text, and also to understand and interpret the source text in different ways. Thus, bias becomes the driving force of subjective performance throughout the translation process. From the perspective of visual threshold integration, two kinds of vision appear in the translation process, namely, author vision and reader vision. For a more accurate interpretation of the source text, the translator first enters the author's vision through their advance understanding, and then attempts to integrate the vision by considering the author and the target reader. In this process, the translator's cultural consciousness and literary view will inevitably have some influence on the translator's adoption of the translation strategy. From an effective history perspective, the source text never has only the same meaning in different historical stages. Thus, translators produce different versions of the same source text, as their understanding changes over time. Therefore, the subjectivity of translators is reflected in the translation activities, which deserves due attention in the translation research.

Secondly, this paper discusses the existence and significance of the translator's translation subjectivity in the whole process of translation through the specific study of Zhu Shenghao. From the "historical perspective of" understanding", this paper has found from the macro level that Zhu's translation activities are mainly influenced by two factors: one is the history of the individual, and the other refers to Zhu's literal thought. Due to his influence, Zhu developed an initiative for translation, including his choice of source texts and for translation purposes. Among them, Zhu's translation motivation, literary view and cultural consciousness, as the historical results, have had a great influence on the adoption of various translation strategies in the translation of *The Tempest*. Zhu Shenghao advocates direct translation to spread western culture at home; based on Zhu's literary view, vernacular is the main language form to pursue the beauty of art, Zhu is heroic in the choice of cultural consciousness and eager to achieve "equality" in Chinese and Western cultures. In this way, Zhu's subjectivity is clearly manifested in the visual threshold fusion. Moreover, despite the difficulty of translating Shakespeare's plays, Zhu insisted on the retranslation of the literary classics and featured his subjectivity in showing the public a unique translation of

Shakespeare's plays. Therefore, this study demonstrates the importance and significance of subjectivity in the subjectivity of translators.

Zhu Shenghao devoted his life to translating Shakespeare's plays, but did not have time to leave us much translation theory. We can still analyze the positive subjective factors in Zhu Shenghao's translation process, which guide the translation practice of more translators. From the translator's educational background, we learn that his profound bilingual language skills allowed him to freely transform and even creatively reproduce the rhetorical effects of the original; from his hobbies and patriotic enthusiasm, we can understand Zhu Shenghao's attitude of translating Shakespeare's plays even under the most difficult living and working conditions and in the most frail physical condition; from the translator's preface and letters, we can directly get in touch with From the translator's preface and letters, we can directly contact the translator's idea of "aiming at the charm", the translation purpose of "making Shakespeare popular among Chinese readers", the translation strategy of flexibly reproducing the style and cultural context, the rigorous translation attitude and the aesthetic orientation of musicality. All these factors, consciously or unconsciously, are reflected in the whole process of his translation of Shakespeare. Of course, it should be pointed out that each subjective factor of the translator and the reproduction of various aspects of literary characteristics are not all one-to-one, but interactively, and the final presentation of the literary character of the translated text is the result of the combined effect of each subjective factor of the translator. Zhu Shenghao's translation of Shakespeare has a high literary value, which readers can read and study in conjunction with the translator's subjectivity, and scholars engaged in translation can also learn and learn from the advantages of improving their own subjectivity.

Finally, this paper still has some limitations. First, this paper conducts qualitative research by collecting some descriptive data for quantitative research rather than through statistical data, and the data support is incomplete. Second, Zhu's translation of *The Tempest* is far from enough to provide a more solid foundation for conclusions. It is, therefore, hoped that other materials in Shakespeare plays will be fully utilized in further studies.

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