

# **A Comparative Study of *Emma* from the Perspective of Feminist Translation Studies**

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## Abstract

Since the 1960s, the rise and development of the women's liberation movement has hugely affected social life. Women's desires to seek personal values and equal social status have promoted the development of it. Since 1970s, scholars have focuses on analyze translation studies from the cultural perspectives. Thus, it has generated feminist translation theory. Scholars do researches from a gender perspective, which challenge traditional translation theories. *Emma* was Jane Austen's last novel. The content of the novel *Emma* also contains the thoughts of feminism. This paper does the research based on two Chinese versions of *Emma* translated by Sun Zhiliand by Zhu Qingying and Zhu Wenguang. This paper uses comparative study in order to analyze the application of feminist translation strategies. It explores the differences between different gender translators in dealing with the same translation and how feminist translation strategies are applied in translations.

**Key words:** Feminist translation theory, translation strategies, *Emma*

## 1. Introduction

*Emma* was written by Jane Austen in 1814, which was first published in 1815. Just one year after publishing it, Jane passed away. Thus, *Emma* became the last novel of her whole life. Although *Pride and Prejudice* is regarded as her most popular book, many scholars and critics believe that *Emma* is the mature one. It is a comedy just like the other five novels she published before, which it's also about the love and marriages among young ladies and gentlemen. But the background of the heroine was totally different from others. In this novel, it described a smart landlord lady named Emma. She was beautiful, intelligent and wealthy enough, who refused to get married and would like to accompany with her father. And she felt that she was good at matchmaking and loved it very much. After Miss Taylor, her governess who accompany with her for so many years, married with Mr. Weston. She made friends with Harriet Smith, who was an orphan girl, kind but not clever enough and trusted all words Emma told her. According to Emma's own judgment, she recommended this young lady to love several men. But things changed and went beyond her imagination. When Harriet told Emma that she thought Mr. Knightly was her true love, Emma found that she loved that landowner, but she hadn't recognize this love before. In this novel, it also described the love between Jane Fairfax and Frank Churchill. In the end, everyone had happy endings and these young ladies found their matched husbands.

The heroine Emma in this novel breaks the traditional positive images of characterin Western traditional novels. She thought highly of herself and was too much self-righteous and self-contradictory in her character. But she gradually noticed her fault and corrected her mistakes. Jane Austen successfully depicted a young lady with some shortcomings but was fascinating and popular among the people in Highbury. At the same time, Jane Austen also tries to reveal and expose the social limitations and influence of their social status in their lives through depicting the love and marriages.

In our society, gender differences are the phenomenon that we cannot ignore. And translation theories and practices, as carriers of intercultural and interracial communications among countries in the whole world, are of great importance in the process of globalization. Thus, feminist translation theory is also the one we should pay our attention to. At the same time, although western scholars have already done a lot of researches in this field and made some achievements, this theory isn't really popular in Chinese translation fields. The author thinks that when translators translate some text through using some other theories and feminist translation theory together, they can better make the female images reappear and express the female consciousness in the source text.

This paper will make a comparison between two Chinese versions of the novel *Emma*; one is translated by a male translator and the other is mainly translated by a female translator. This paper will analyze the differences of these two versions from three translation strategies, which were put forward by Luise von Flotow. These three translation strategies refer to prefacing and footnoting, supplementing and hijacking. The purposes of this paper are trying to explore whether gender differences can influence the translation practices and what are the differences in translated works through using feminist translation practices. This paper also tries to explore the influence of the translator's subjectivity in the target texts. The author of this paper hopes that it can be helpful for the further study of translation strategies and feminist translation practices.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Text Introduction

Jane Austen, as we all know, is one of the greatest female writers in the history of literature and one of the most popular British writers in the twentieth century. Before she passed away at the age of 42, she published six novels, which depicted the real life of that age and mainly wrote about love and marriage. Her novel is a panorama of the life in countryside in the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth of England. At the beginning, in western countries scholars studied the images, characters, conversations and so on in her novels. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, scholars turned to analyze the irony expression in them. Then in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, critics noticed the ways of depicting characters and the ethics, philosophy in her works. Now, scholars do more research in many different kinds of fields.

Jane Austen's novels have been introduced to China for more than 80 years and went through a long way of acceptance. At first, scholars laid emphasis on the translation works of her novels. And till 1990s, researchers gradually recognized and admitted her literary works and achievement. Different from studies in the western countries, researchers had less interest in the writer herself and her background information but focused on her female consciousness. Now her novels have achieved more attentions and have been analyzed from various perspectives using different theories.

In Jane Austen's six novels, the most mature one is *Emma*. And many critics believe that *Emma* is her fullest achievement and the masterpiece of her six completed novels. Arnold

Kettle<sup>①</sup> has ever written in his book named *An Introduction to the English Novel* that Emma is Austen's only masterpiece. Although this novel had ever been degraded by some critics, it was finally praised by the whole society. The reason why *Emma* has gained such a high evaluation is not only because the author's perfect handling in describing characters and portray the characters' images, but also because the psychological descriptions the author uses in it. Jane Austen uses psychological description to revolve the plots and shape the characters. At that time, using this way in writing novels is rare in field of British literature.

## 2.2 Previous Studies of Feminist Translation Theory

With the rise and development of "Culture Turn" in the field of translation studies, some Canadian feminists and translation scholars wanted to set up a new system in doing researches of translation studies from the unique perspective of gender and culture. Thus, in this way their studies and achievements have already enriched this theory. While in 21<sup>st</sup> century, the academic field of Chinese translation studies has begun to focus on this newly developed theory and gradually accept it.

When talking about feminist translation theory, we should talk about feminism first. The origin of feminist theory can trace back to the period of French Revolution in 18<sup>th</sup> century. During that time, *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* was published through which people used as a weapon to fight for their legal rights and freedom. This declaration influenced all aspects of life. Therefore feminists were also influenced by it, holding the belief that women should enjoy the equal rights with men not only in laws but also in politics.

In the history of feminism thoughts, there are three waves. The first one was the period started at the middle of 19<sup>th</sup> century and ended in 1920s, in which feminists fought for their equal opportunities and legal rights in every aspect of social life, such as the right to vote and education. Virginia Woolf was the representative writer of that period and *The Women's Bible* was the important book. Then the second wave was the period from 1960s to 1970s. During this period, feminists' aims changed from focusing on gender equality, gender neutrality to gender differences and female uniqueness. *Sexual Politics* was viewed as the important work of this time and Kate Millett and Elaine Showalter were representatives. At the same time, another new theory was also popular that was French feminist criticism. The most famous scholar and work of this field were Simone de Beauvoir and her book, *Le deuxieme sexe*. The final wave of feminism thought started in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, which was viewed as the period of theoretical construction. At this time, feminism thought and theory were mixed with deconstructivism, post-colonialism and other thoughts, which made feminism thoughts become more inclusive and diverse. Therefore with the development and enrichment of feminism and feminism thoughts, translation scholars combined it with translation studies and practices and feminist translation theory came out.

In the field of feminist translation theory, there exist some famous representatives, such as Louise· Von ·Flotow, Shelly Simon, Barbara Godard and Susanne De Lotbiniere Harwood. Lori Chamberlain<sup>②</sup> first put out *Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation*. She did detail analyze into

the gender metaphor of translation. Then Barbara Godard<sup>③</sup> presented *Theorizing Feminist Discourse/Translation*. Shelly Simon<sup>④</sup> published her book, *Gender in Translation: Culture Identity and the Politics of Translation*, which is regarded as the first book of translation studies from feminism perspectives. This book focuses on the impact of feminism as a political and literary movement on translation theory and practice. She believes that there doesn't exist the definite faithfulness and in traditional theories men and women, source text and target text can never have equal status. Then Louise· Von ·Flotow<sup>⑤</sup> published *Translation and Gender: Translating in the 'Era of Feminism*, in which she pays a lot of attention on translation practice from feminism perspective. She concludes three feminist translation strategies, prefacing and footnoting, supplementing and hijacking.

Feminism was first introduced to China and showed its influence in 1919. And it also promoted the first women's liberation movement in the history of Chinese culture. Then in the past twenty years, feminism and feminist works have also rapidly developed with the development of our society and globalization of communication. But the development of feminism in China is totally different from the way in western countries. It didn't have fierce struggle and fight with the culture and society, but develop in a mild way. What's more, in the history of Chinese translation studies, Zhu Hong is regarded as an outstanding and famous representative. In 1980s, she published two translation works, *The Selection Works of American Female Writers* and *The Selection Works of American Female Writers' Short Novels*, in which she introduced the feminist movement in western countries in 1960s and the thought of feminism. However, at the beginning, Chinese scholars just used the thought of feminism to analyze literary works or just introduced the achievement of western feminist translation theory. Seldom of them combined translation studies and feminism together in their translation practices.

It was until 21<sup>st</sup> century that Chinese translation scholars started to focus on the feminist translation theory and practice. In 2000, Liao Qiyi published *Contemporary Translation Theory in the West*, which first mentioned the influence of feminism to translation. Mu Lei also wrote some articles about feminist translation theory. And Liu Yaru introduced the feminist translation theories of Susanne· De· Lotbiniere ·Harwood in detail, in which translation was regarded as the rewriting of source text in the way of feminism.

In 2004, feminist translation theory in field of Chinese translation reached a new stage. More and more translation scholars paid their attention on this new theory and put it into translation practices. Xu Lai, Liu Junping and Jiang Xiaohua were the representatives of this period. Among them Jiang was the most famous one. Jiang mentioned the influence of other theories on the feminist translation theory and believed that there must exist a deeper political motive behind translation and its practice in order to emphasize rebellion and equality. It could be easily seen that from 2004 to 2007, the development of this theory has already entered a new stage. These scholars have done systematic researches from the perspective of translated text, translation skills and strategies, translation criticism and so on.

In 2008, after the initial practice, the direction of feminist translation theory and research gradually shifted to cross-disciplinary research. Scholars began to put feminist translation theory and postmodernism together when doing translation studies. In this period, it came out a lot of articles about feminist translation theory which also made this theory rapidly develop from many different kinds of aspects.

However, at the background of Chinese society, it cannot have the massive popularity of feminist movement and Chinese scholars are less progressive than western scholars. So it influences the spread of this theory. And in Chinese translation field, some scholars also still doubt whether it's suitable for feminist translation theory to develop in China, while others hold positive attitudes. All in all, the development of feminist translation theory provides a new perspective for the Chinese translation studies and practices.

### **3. A Comparative Study of *Emma* from the Perspective of Feminist Translation Studies**

#### **3.1 Feminist Translation Theory**

Feminist translation theory is the theory to do translation studies and practices from the perspective of feminism. In some aspects, feminism and translation have some common features at that time. Just as males were superior to females, translation works were usually regarded as the inferior to original works or source texts. When feminists fought for their own rights as we talk in the chapter two, translation scholars also wanted to put it in the right position. Therefore with the many influence from various aspects of society at that time, feminism and translation combined together, which provided scholars a new thought and way to do further research.

Western feminist translation theory provides scholars with a new way and perspective in translation studies. There are four main propositions of it. First, Feminist translation theory is not derived from the discussion of translation problems or translation studies, but from the attention on the translation phenomenon from culture perspective. Feminist translation scholars insist that feminist translation theory is not only a translation theory but also a cultural strategy or political practice. The ultimate goal is to construct the identity of female translators through dissemination and transfer of knowledge. Second, these scholars redefine the standard of fidelity or faithfulness. In traditional translation theory, fidelity or faithfulness is a way to explain or define the relationship between the source text and target text. In some ways, it puts source texts or original authors in higher positions and target texts or translators in lower positions. While feminist translators hold the view that "faithfulness" of translated works is not faithful to the original author, nor to readers of target texts, but faithful to their own feelings of reading. They want to search for the equal status of original works and translated ones, just like feminists' fight for the equal status of males and females. Then third, they break the traditional two-dimensional opposition model of "source text-target text" or "original author-translator" and think the translation as the afterlife of the source text. They believe that translated works make the original one become much broader and let the readers in different cultures can have the same feeling. Fourth, they believe that woman's unique language perceptions, experiences and inner feelings can be helpful for them to better translate

works containing feminism sources.

Feminist translators put forward some translation strategies and approaches in order to achieve their propositions mentioned before. Among them, Luise von Flotow<sup>⑤</sup> contributed the most. She published *Translation and Gender: Translating in the 'Era of Feminism'*, which was greatly influenced the field of feminist translation studies. In it, she concluded three strategies frequently used by feminist translators that are prefacing and footnoting, supplementing and hijacking.

Supplementing shows the translator's active involvement in the original texts. Although other translators also often use it, feminist translators pay more attention on expressing and compensating the meaning of gender in source texts. For example, in the translated works of *the Bible*, feminist translators add 'sisters' in the front of vocative 'brothers'.

In Flotow's view, prefacing and footnoting are approaches often used by feminist translators. These approaches contain the explaining the background of the source text and the original author's intentions and so on. These approaches are used to highlight translators' identities and made the translators to express their thoughts.

Hijacking is the approach that feminist translators used to rewrite or rectify the languages in the original text which don't contain meanings of feminism in order to assert their identities. Hijacking obviously and vividly reflects feminist translators' intentions to let readers and the academic fields to hear their voices. For example, hystory is created from the Greek root 'hyst' and add with 'story', which is meaning "female history", as opposed to history.

### 3.2 Prefacing

First of all, as we mentioned before, feminist translators would like to write prefaces as a strategy to assert their identity in their translated works. They add preface to explain intention and theme of the original author to the readers. At the same time, they may also expound the specific strategies, ideas and proposals of their own. In some ways, preface is a direct way for the readers to perfectly understand the meaning of the whole work. Although some male translators also write prefaces, the content of them are totally different. Male translators pay much attention on the content of the whole book and background of the original author, while feminist translators would also add more things about feminism and feminism thoughts. In these two Chinese versions of *Emma*, both Sun Zhili and Zhu Qingying write their own prefaces, but their focuses are really different.

In the preface of Sun's version, he introduces the publishing background and the content of the whole novel. Moreover, he mentions the characters in the novel, writing techniques and writing characteristics of Jane Austen. He adds the preface of the novel from a more general way and believes that each character created by Jane serves as a mirror in the novel, reflecting the problems of the society at that time. But he emphasizes the feminism or women's problem. When we notice the brief introduction of the novel, it is easy to find out that the words he uses patriarchal language, such as the word '异想天开', '一时冲动' and '乱点鸳鸯谱'. These words to some extent show

some discrimination against women. And the words he uses are more rational and objective.

While in the preface of Zhu's version, she first introduces the life of the original author and novels she has ever published. Among these words, she also adds some good comments about Jane Austen. Then she briefly writes the content of the novel *Emma* and also, she adds some scholars' comments which are all good words and praises. Most importantly, she mentions the issues of marriage and women. And the words she uses are more emotional and gorgeous, but these words don't contain the meaning of criticism of any character.

Therefore, it's not difficult to find the differences or preferences of translators. Feminist translators would like to let the readers notice the feminism or characteristics of female characters in the novel. It also reflects that feminist translator not only just a translator when they write prefaces, but also an author creator of a small part of the novel.

### 3.3 Supplementing

As one of feminist translation strategies, supplement is a kind of compensatory strategy. It is used by translators to add some information that cannot be found or remove some information that are not obvious in the original work. Different from the strategy of supplement in the traditional translation theory, supplement in feminist translation theory uses by female translators in the omitted parts that can reflect the gender meanings. Female translators add more information related to the original one to show the awareness of females, assert their subjectivities and strength the good images of female. Here are some examples.

The first example is in the chapter 6 of volume 1. It is depicted such as scene that Emma draws a picture of Harriet under the urge of Mr. Elton.

The sitting began; and Harriet, smiling and blushing, and afraid of not...<sup>⑥</sup>

Sun:开始画像了。哈丽特脸上笑吟吟、红扑扑的。。。。。

Zhu:哈丽埃特开始坐下来让她画。哈丽埃特微笑着，脸上泛着红晕。。。。。

The difference of these two translated versions is that Zhu adds the subject in front of the verb sitting, while Sun doesn't. Sun's translation makes the other female character as the initiator of this action, while Zhu translates in this way can emphasize this female character and the original author's intention to some extent. Although the readers can understand who sit down according to the description above, this supplement can show translator's attention on female characters in this novel.

The next one is in the chapter 9 of volume 1. It is the content of the charade.

And woman, lovely woman, reigns alone.<sup>⑥</sup>

Sun:唯有淑女主宰一切威风凛凛。

Zhu:而女人，可爱的女人，独自称王称帝。

Although these two translators try to translate the super power of woman herself, Sun translates as ‘主宰一切’ which the power of woman expresses much weaker than Zhu’s translation. Zhu’s translation put woman as the same status of god which does exactly emphasize the huge ability of woman. This translation does really show woman’s spirit of freedom, desire and reveal their existence and subjectivity.

### 3.4 Hijacking

Hijacking is the most controversial strategy of all feminist translation strategies. But in some ways, it’s the best strategy to reflect the thoughts of feminism. There are some exact ways to use hijacking in translation by female translators. First, female translators may use word to the gender differences in the original works become fuzzy. Second, female translators would correct some words that contain hostility and filthiness to women into neutral words. In this way, they want to convey relatively positive female images and affirm the social value and importance of women. Third, they may use words create by themselves to describe woman’s experiences to show their uniqueness. Here are some examples in these two translation versions.

This example is in the chapter 5 of volume 1. It’s the conversation between Mr. Knightley and Mrs. Weston.

How can Emma imagine she has anything to learn herself, while Harriet is presenting such a delightful inferiority? <sup>⑥</sup>

Sun: 哈丽特甘愿摆出一副低首下心、讨人喜欢的样子，爱玛怎能觉得自己还有什么不足之处呢？

Zhu: 哈丽埃特处处显得不如她，她看了得意洋洋，那她怎么会想到自己还有东西要学呢。

When translating the description of Harriet’s image compared with Emma, Sun uses the words like ‘低首下心’, which are more radical and belittle the status of female characters. It also reflects male translator’s thought of inherent thoughts. In opposite, Zhu translates in a mild way and uses implicate language to depict Harriet’s images. This does reflect the differences between feminist translators and male translators.

Here is another example in the translated works. It is chosen from the chapter 9 of volume 1. This is the conversation between Emma and Harriet. And these words are said by Emma.

He loves anything of the sort, and especially anything that pays woman a compliment. <sup>⑥</sup>

Sun: 他可喜欢这种东西啦，特别是恭维女性的。

Zhu: 这一类谜语他都喜欢，尤其是任何赞美妇女的谜语。

This example is just like the one mentioned above. Zhu changes the word into more positive

one, while Sun uses the word which may put woman in the lower status than man. Zhu's translation defends the status of women in the translation and sets positive images.

#### 4. Conclusion

Feminist translation theory is a combination of feminism and translation theory together. It's the theory to show females' existence and to improve the culture status of women. It's also a best way to let the whole world heard women's voice through the original works of female authors and feminist translation works. In this way, feminist translation theory is far more than just a theory, but a cultural means.

What's more, through the comparison of two Chinese versions of the novel *Emma*, it can easy find that feminist translators trend to use more feminist translation strategies in their practices consciously or unconsciously than male translators. They may put their unique psychological activities and feminism opinions in the process of translation. In their translation, they often defend the independence and equal status of women, and correct the words that are ironic, insulting and demeaning to women. When translating some works containing feminism thoughts or based on female characters, female translators' translations can better reflect the original author's intention and better depict the female characters for the target language readers.

This paper not only finds the differences between different gender translators and their translation works, but also makes a deeper research of feminist translation theory from the perspective of its strategies and illustrates female translators' practices. But it has also some limitations. This paper just makes a comparison between two translators of their versions. It's just a case study and the data are not huge enough, which may cause the results not convincing enough. And to some extent, the chosen examples are limited, which may make this study not comprehensive. Thus this paper needs more improvement and efforts in order to do further studies in this field.

All in all, because gender differences are the important issues existed in the society, it's also necessary to pay more attention in the field of translation studies. Although feminist translation theory is still not popular in Chinese translation field as it's in western countries, I believe more and more Chinese female translators will enrich it and do more researches in this field in the future.

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