Original Paper

A Study of Linguistic Gender Differences in English-Chinese Translation—A Case Study of The Chinese Version of The Little Prince by Lin Zhenni and Li Jihong

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Abstract

Gender difference in language expression is a linguistic phenomenon in which males and females differ in the use of language, also a perspective for research on translator's subjectivity. The study of gender differences in language is beneficial to translation theory and translation practice. Based on gender differences in language, this paper takes the Chinese translation of The Little Prince as an example to make a comparative study. Since its publication, The Little Prince has been widely admired by readers. Up to now, there are more than 200 translations in the world, with numerous Chinese translations, which are operable and representative. This paper focuses on the Chinese translations by Lin Zhenni and Li Jihong, and makes a comparative analysis of the language differences between translations, and finds that the gender differences between male and female translators in English-Chinese translation are reflected in three aspects: The language expression of female translators is concise and specific, the language expression of female translators is delicate, and strong subjectivity of the translator in translation. Finally, it is pointed out that gender difference in language expression is affected by social development and psychological factors.

Keywords

linguistic gender differences, translation, translator's subjectivity, The Little Prince

1. Introduction

"The Little Prince" is a classic part of children's literature, which is extremely inspiring to read. As a part of literature, children's literature aims to create literary works for children to read, with

easy-to-understand content, popular form, and vivid language expression. "Translation in literature matters as a combination of the translator's thoughts, understanding, imagination and aesthetic knowledge, and as a relatively complex process of artistic re-creation." (Xu & Murray, 2009, p. 179) Similarly, the translation of children's literature requires translators should give full use of their own values and use their aesthetic vision to rewrite children's literature. In short, the translator exerts the "translator's subjectivity" in the process, and the difference in the translator's language expression depends on the translator's subjectivity. To a certain extent, the significance of the translation is affected by "gender". Kramer (1974) compared the language in speech that men and women use regularly, discovered that characteristics of men's language speech are more concise, direct, and decisive, while characteristics of women's language speech are mostly descriptive. Because women use the words, like nice, pretty and so on. The study of language differences between women and men contributes to research in translation fields such as translator subjectivity, and promotes practices in translation. Nowadays, using the online Chinese research platform to search related studies. There are a total of 91 research studies related to "The Little Prince" and "children's literature", a total of 2 research studies related to "The Little Prince" and "translator's subjectivity", but no research studies on "Translator's Gender Subjectivity". It is also known that the research content related to "The Little Prince" is also extremely rich, but there are not many studies involving the subjectivity and gender of the translator. As a children's literature, "The Little Prince" may have been ignored, to a certain degree, in translation research. This paper takes two influential Chinese translations of "The Little Prince" as the research objectivity: Lin Jenny's and Li Jihong's "The Little Prince" in Chinese. From the perspective of the translator's subjectivity and differences in language expression, it is concluded that the expression of the translation is affected by gender.

2. Translator's Gender Subjectivity

Subjectivity refers to the personal abilities, ideological perspectives, etc. that people's condition in practice. It also refers to the characteristics of autonomy, initiative, agency, and freedom in human thinking. Subjectivity embraces the characteristics of dynamic development and constant change. Descartes, a French philosopher, believed that all human knowledge, activity and existence rely on human subjectivity. Xu Jun (2003) believes that the translator is the main carrier of translation. It is noted that subjectivity of translators decides the effectiveness of translations in the process, and the language expression and form of the translated text are affected by the translator's subjectivity to a certain extent. Meanwhile, the translator's behavior can provide a new perspective for traditional research, taking "human being" as the center of the text and playing a major role. (Zhou, 2022) The understanding of the subjectivity of the translator in translation activities is of great significance. The translator's subjectivity means that the translator plays a subjective role in the process of conversion between source language and target language, understands the linguistic expression connotation of the source text, and converts it into the linguistic form of the target text. (Cao, 2020) The difference in

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gender roles between male and female translators causes the translator's subjectivity to exert different characteristics, affecting the language expression and presentation form in translation process. To some degree, in the context of social and cultural diversity, cultural and political patriarchal dominance results in different role in gender. Language is an important carrier in sharing knowledge of society. Besides, it just like communication tool and means of manipulation. (Ge, 2003) Different language expressions attribute to the different subjectivity among translators in translation. And Male's subjectivity initiative is valued more than women's.

Until 1848, Feminist movement promoted the formation of feminist theory in translation. At the beginning of the 21st century, Western feminist translation theory spread to China, and scholars began to notice that gender is also one of the important factors affecting translation. (Li, 2007) As the research continues to deepen, it gradually transcends the field of feminist theory in translation, shifting from the field of feminist research in translation to the field of gender research in translation. In public, gender has made great progress in translator studies. Gender, as one of the factors for translators' subjectivity, has influence on the language expression, structure of the translation. Thus, Linguistic gender difference is an important factor that affects language, expression and content in translation. Translators' subjectivity can effectively understand the translated text, grasp the content and structure of the article, and promote translation activities.

3. The Introduction of the Translation of "The Little Prince" by Lin and Li

Over the past seventy years, Saint-Exupéry's "The Little Prince" has become the most translated, best-selling, and most beloved French literary work in the world. (Gao, 2018) "The Little Prince" is a story about a little prince who is from other planet, telling readers someone he meets and the various experiences he encounters on his journey to Earth. From the perspective of the little prince, the book aims to criticize the vanity, greed and pursuit of interests of "adults", showing the sincere "childlike innocence" and "dreams" in author's heart. The book has been translated into more than 200 versions of language around the world, making it most number of translated book in the world. Its influence is second only to the Bible around the world. Meanwhile, there are more than 70 Chinese translations. Comparing the characteristics and differences of all Chinese translations of "The Little Prince" is a task that is difficult to fully research and study. Therefore, Li Jihong's and Lin Jenny's Chinese translations are selected due to their popularity and representativeness.

Jenny Lin is a well-known female translator in China. She has translated more than 30 world-famous books such as "Petro Goriot", "The Little Prince" and "Notre Dame de Paris". She has published more than 10 translations and more than dozens of articles, whose are a total of more than 5 million words of translation. In 2011, Jenny Lin was awarded the title of "Senior Translator" by the Translators Association of China. Li Jihong is a famous male translator, and his translation is called "the only officially recognized simplified Chinese translation by the Saint-Exupéry Foundation in France." Li Jihong's translations include "Ten Lectures on the Classics", "The Kite Runner", "The Little Prince",

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etc. He is good at literary translation which not only in quality, but also in quantity. As is well-known, both translators enjoy representative translations in Chinese, which both of them recognize that "The Little Prince" contains profound meanings and important value in translation.

4. The Gender Language Characteristics of Translators in "The Little Prince"

4.1 Females' Translations Are Relatively Concise

The form of four-character words in Chinese are called four-character phrases or idioms, as a sign of unique language phenomenon in Chinese. (Chen & Li, 2005) As a conventional language form, four-character words are the accumulation of people's long-term social and cultural life with rich historical and cultural connotations. (Zhou & Zhou, 2017) The use of four-character phrases can enhance the expressiveness and convey clear and powerful language expression. The four-character phrases are simple expression means a lot, a concise language phenomenon. The book comprises of a total of twenty-seven chapters of "The Little Prince" divided according to the story. The chapter 1 is the foreshadowing, the Saint-Exupéry's self-narration; The chapter 2 to 10 are the connected development, describing the relationship between the pilot and the little prince, and interaction between each other; Chapters 10 to 15 are the climax, describing the little prince's experience during his visit; Chapters 16 to 23 are the fallback, describing the story of the little prince on Earth; other chapters describe the process of the little prince leaving "me" (the little prince). This article compares the number of four-character phrases in each part of Jenny Lin's and Li Jihong's translations. The number of four more characters in each part of Lin's version than in Li's version is shown in Table 1:

Table 1. The Number of Four More Characters in Each Part of Lin's Version Than in Li's Version

Divisions	foreshadowing	development	climax	fallback	End
The number of four-character phrases	8	23	11	17	6

4.2 Delicate Expression on Female Translation

Examples: And a brilliantly lighted express train shook the switchman' s cabin as it rushed by with a roar like thunder.

Li: 这时有辆灯火通明的特快列车轰隆隆地驶过，震地扳道工的小屋摇摇晃晃。

Lin: 一列灯火通明的火车风驰电掣般奔来，轰隆隆的响声震得调度室抖动摇晃。

Compared with "一列" in Lin's translation, "有辆" in Li's translation uses numerals to illustrate the objective quantity; "风驰电掣" describe the fast speed of the train; "轰隆隆的响声" directly highlights the loudness of the train's moving. "一列" "风驰电掣""轰隆隆的响声", a contrast in expression in

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speed and sound, vividly describing the scene of the train driving, forming a sense of picture. "有辆", "特快", "轰隆隆的驶过" in Li's translation expresses directly connotation in Chinese, reducing the sense of imagery and imaginary plot of a train passing by, which like a sign of a real life. All of show that women's language expressions in translation are delicate when expressing certain emotions and describing the environment, which promotes the effect of language expression, boosting the picture and storyline of the article, making reader's imagination more vivid.

4.3 Subjectivity of the Translator in Translation

Example1: By this time my patience was exhausted, because I was in a hurry to start taking my engine apart.

Li: 我不耐烦了，因为急着要去把发动机拆下来.

Lin: 我急于着手拆卸我的发动机，失去了耐性.

Chinese belongs to parataxis whose real meaning of expression is hidden when expression; English is a part of hypotaxis which needs connectives to connect sentences logically.

Moreover, Chinese is a comment-like structure, and the key of the content is generally placed at the end of the article. But English is different involved the place of key sentence. Generally speaking, while translating from English to Chinese, unimportant content is placed at the beginning of the content or article.

From the above example sentence, Li's translation directly use "自己" into the role-playing, firstly translates impatience, and directly expresses the emotion of the "pilot". Lin's translation first described the reason for my anxiety, and then explained that I "lost my patience."

从上例句李译本直接将"自己"代入角色，先翻译不耐烦，将"飞行员"的情绪直接表达出来。而林译本先是将我着急的原因描写出来，再说明我"失去了耐性"。

Example2: "What does this mean?" I demanded. "Why are you talking with snakes?"

Li: 怎么回事！你为什么要跟蛇说话？

Lin: 怎么回事，你和蛇说话啦？

Li's translation directly translated "why" as "为什么", with a bit of direct "blaming" tone, due to the care of the little prince, the translation is complete, and the translator seemed to play a role of "pilot". But, Lin's translation is more euphemistic, translating as "你和蛇说话啦？" with a cute tone, ignoring literal translation of "why". Female translators can produce more personalized and special translations with vivid language expressions. The translators easily indulge themselves into the plot, as if he is the protagonist, when the translator and the protagonist are of the same gender.

5. Reasons of Gender Differences in Language

Apply the concept of gender stereotypes to the semantic analysis of Chinese words. According to different gender semantic stereotypes, refer to or describe gender. The differences and oppositions in the semantic gender stereotypes of words are thus formed, resulting in differences in semantic clustering of words referring to different genders. Opposition content permeates every level of Chinese

words. (Qian, 2000) Biological gender roles are the basis of social gender roles. As society continue to develop, the social role positioning of men and women is affected by the labor force to a certain extent. The faster society develops, the more obvious the differences become. In the past time, the importance of men's roles is increasing day by day, and their strong psychology means more attention and appreciation from others, leading to men's right to speak becoming more direct and profound. As the "weaker" side, women's language expressions are relatively more tactful and delicate. However, in fact, there are many sources of gender differences in language, among which the most influential factors are social development and personal psychological state.

5.1 Social Factors

The hunting hypothesis of "Evolutionary Psychology" believes that hunting is the main driving force of human evolution. Biological factors require women to give birth and raise children. For women, hunting is a risky way of foraging with limited returns. Overall, the cost of women participating in hunting activities is higher than that of men. Meat is high in calories so that males can take it home to their offspring, making hunting males a huge investment in their offspring. The cost of hunting is often too much for one person to pay alone, so teamwork is necessary. But the distribution of meat remains a problem, so some tribes agree that the owner of the arrows has the right to distribute the meat (property rights), and the owners of the meat often share the meat with their partners or exchange their own arrows. Men play an important role in social development due to their strength, bringing more economic benefits to the labor force. The post-war society has gradually formed a development environment in which "men work outside and women care about home". The social environment requires men to "provide for the family" and women to "take care of their husbands and raise their children." This means that in terms of language expression, men have a stronger voice and use more strong and confident expressions to become the "core" role; while women present gentle virtuous and direct expressions. At the same time, as generations and generations are born, their biological gender is integrated into the social gender environment, forming gender role positioning, thus forming a cultural environment of gender role differences. This makes men and women show differences in expression. The difference in language expression interacts with the subjective of the translator.

5.2 Psychological Factors

More than 20 kinds of sexual differences psychology related to verbal communication between men and women (Wang, 1995) confirm that there is a connection between verbal communication and gender development. The long-term influence of the patrilineal clan after the matrilineal clan has gradually formed a social psychology in which "men are superior to women". This long-standing model has formed a stereotype that places a lot of demands on women, emphasizing that women must be careful and polite in their words and deeds, their language must be elegant, their speech must be soft-spoken, and their written expression must be neat and meticulous. The physiological differences between men and women are obvious in their personalities. Men are rigid and direct but careless, and their language is not delicate enough; women are nuanced but their language is less firm. Women's expressions mostly

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focus on questions and are more sensitive in emotional expression; while men are different and express their language directly. This speech phenomenon is affected by the psychological factor of "men are strong and women are weak". The development of the social environment gradually forms a cultural phenomenon and integrates into the society. Generations of companions grow up in the social language environment, accept the corresponding psychological elements and atmosphere, and slowly absorb and penetrate it.

6. The Relationship between Language Gender Differences and Translation

Translation, a way for conversion in two languages, refers as is exchanges between cultures. Translation is inseparable from language expression, and its support lies in the fact that language itself is a loaded culture, and language gender differences are a part of culture. Gender cannot be separated from culture, and language cannot be separated from culture. The connection between the phenomena of language difference and gender plays an important role in translation studies. Translation requires crossing the barriers between two cultures, which understanding the content and culture of the original text. The conversion of dialects into Mandarin and the conversion of Chinese and English languages all enable communication between different cultures in a way of translation. Translation is the phenomenon of converting and adapting content related to two different cultures based on two different cultures. In a narrow sense, translation involves content limited to language conversion, but broadly speaking, translation involves not only language conversion, but also the circulation of culture. Everything, including content understanding, transformation and expression, is inseparable from the subjectivity of the translator. Gender translator subjectivity takes gender as the starting point and emphasizes the important role of the translator's subjectivity in translation, rather than elaborating on the translator's invisibility and weakening the translator's role. The expressiveness of language gender differences is affected by the translator's subjectivity, and the translation expression shows "translator's subjectivity". A diversified gender map of translation studies gradually emerges, and a new space for gender and translation studies continue to combine others. (Li, 2019)

In a society under the influence on system, gender inequality and deformed political oppression are common. Feminism launches a social movement that crosses class and racial boundaries, aiming to criticize male-centered ideologies, resist gender discrimination, eliminate stereotypes, and strive for a better future in society. During the social movement, feminist scholars originally aimed to change the social status quo, endowed translation activities with interpretive and critical political functions, and injected new perspectives into the translation theory of gender roles; they strived to subvert the absolute dominance of men in academic discourse. position, actively practicing women's participation in "feminine intervention" in the original text (Butler, 1990). The phenomenon of male and female language expressions in translation being distinctive, and language expression should be regarded as an objective phenomenon.

7. Conclusion

The gender perspective provides a unique research for translation studies. From this perspective, the issues of gender and translation that have been ignored have acquired more attention. A diverse gender map in the history of translation has gradually emerged, and new paths for gender and translation research have been opened up. (Li, 2019) This article analyzes the Chinese translation of "The Little Prince" by Jenny Lin and Li Jihong based on the linguistic gender differences and basic characteristics of male and female translators, and concludes that female translators use more refined words, more delicate expressions, and same-gender's subjectivity of translators. It also explains the phenomenon of translators with strong substitutability and more direct expressions, and explains the social and psychological factors behind the differences in language expression between male and female translators. Understanding the differences will help understand the characteristics of male and female translators' translations, bring a new perspective for translator's subjectivity research and promote the development of research and practice in translation.

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