

# The Impact of Feminist Movement on Translation and Gender Equality

Zixuan Li

School of International Studies, Guangdong University of Education, Guangzhou, China  
Corresponding author: lzixuan04@ldy.edu.rs

## Abstract:

This article examines how feminist works have evolved in literature, film, and social media. Studies show that the feminist movement changed translation, which led people to notice some unjust translation phenomena. The focus of the essay is how the feminist movement has affected translation. According to the current perspective, the feminist movement has prompted changes in the role of women in society. Although focusing too much on the theoretical aspects of translation may lessen criticism, people have a suspicious mindset. By presenting an overview of the feminist movement's development and the impact of the feminist movement on translation, this article also explores the development and trends of feminist translation theory. In China, due to the great difference between the cultural ideology of China and Western countries, feminist translation theory is not accepted universally; there is a large room for the practice of feminist translation theory.

**Keywords:** Feminist Movement; Feminist Translation Theory; Translator subjectivity.

## 1. Introduction

That period is represented by liberal feminism, beginning roughly at the end of the nineteenth century and ending in the early twentieth century. It was widely accepted before the first movement that women should stay at home, and the literature claims that Christine de Pisan, born in the fifteenth century, was the first feminist in the proper sense of the word. She opposed the idea that women are inferior or evil seducers. She argued that women and men are equally capable of reason and should naturally have the right to an education. In *The Book of the City of Ladies*, she exposed society's prejudices against women and offered positive role models for traits like bravery, tenacity, generosity, and wisdom. The French Revolution marked the turning point in the history of the feminist movement when it became apparent that women should have equal access to jobs and education. When the first feminist movement was nearing its end, most countries made great achievements in such aspects.

The second feminist movement that emerged in America happened in the sixties and seventies of the twentieth century, based on the first feminist movement, which claimed to liberate females from a patriarchal society. In her book *The Second Sex* [1], French author Simone de Beauvoir stated, "One is not born, but rather becomes a woman.

"She held that society, the law, and beliefs were the main sources of restrictions on women. The second feminist movement highlighted the distinctions between men and women, highlighting the superiority of women over men. The third feminist movement began in the nineties of the twentieth century, which was concerned with the sex minority and questioned the traditional binary relationship between men and women radically. Until now the impact of the third feminist movement has continued to this day. To be honest, there are more and more laws to protect women in China, such as the Marriage Law and Women's Rights Protection Law. Regarding employment, an increasing number of women are permitted to occupy upper management positions. Notable companies such as Facebook and Yahoo have female CEOs. Although women's status is improving, and they have the right to participate on an equal footing with men in society, there is still a significant disparity in the opportunities that women have for advancement. Even though certain discriminatory phenomena exist, humans can handle these problems.

## 2. The Development of Feminist Work

### 2.1 Literature

The feminist movement originated in Europe at the end of the eighteenth century and expressed women's demand

for equal rights with men. At the same time, the feminist movement had an immeasurable impact on literature. The explosion of the feminist movement brought up a number of extraordinary authors, represented by authors of the seventeenth century, such as Simone de Beauvoir, Jane Austen, and Mary Wollstonecraft. In order to appeal to people to join in the feminist movement, they modeled adamant and independent heroine and revealed that society was under a patriarchal system. *Pride and Prejudice* is considered one of the most famous plays worldwide. Xiaoshu Wang considered that the heroine Elizabeth expressed a desire and longing for freedom [2]. In addition to changing the feminine limited perspective to the omniscient perspective, pride and prejudice made the female character the genuine protagonist. Readers preferred this play. Jane, the protagonist of Charlotte Brontë's well-known novel *Jane Eyre*, demonstrates her feminism and independence in their chat with the hero, Mr. Rochester. Through their conversation, Jane demonstrates some traits typical of a woman. Furthermore, Mr. Rochester, or this era of masculine characters, appears to be a trigger to demonstrate the consciousness of women and the growth of the feminist movement [3]. Even though Jane was raised in a household where both of her parents passed away, she refused to accept her fate or become hopeless. Conversely, she not only took into account her worth, situation, and destiny but also steadfastly chased her joys and feelings. From Jane, the enthusiasm, independence, judgment, and personality of a new image of females can be reflected. In the Renaissance, with the social atmosphere opening up, people advocated people-oriented and desired independence. While the state of women was constantly increasing, some social phenomena of depriving women's rights were improving; some female-dominated literature became popular. Before the Renaissance, the image of women in literature was too weak, and a lot of them were accessories that flatter men. However, after the Renaissance, the female image became vivid and enthusiastic. Under the description of the authors, females exhibited their courage to fight for their happiness and pursue freedom.

### 2.2 Film and Television Work

The feminist movement also made an impact on film and television works. Directed by directress Shaohong Li, A new iteration of *Dream of the Red Chamber* demonstrated the potency of the feminist movement's television success. Shaohong Li was unquestionably an exceptional director. Shaohong Li modeled feminine imagery to a distinctive female figure while maintaining a feminine

attitude and mindset [4]. Under her lens, the female was no longer an appendix of the male but became some fire-cracker and cultured. To some extent, the Chinese film *You Only Live Once* is also affected by feminism. In this film, the director's handling of the sexual harassment of heroine Le Ying was well received. Ling Jia, a remarkable director in Chinese cinema history, used the perspective of the victim to oppose the abuser as well as the abuser's perspective as a lens. Who has the guts to refuse sexual harassment in front of Ling Jia's camera, regardless of the intelligent and vibrant girls captured on video by Shaohong Li or Le Ying? They both presented us with a picture of modern women demanding equality.

### 2.3 Social Media

After the feminist movement boom, the atmosphere of social media experienced significant changes. The waking consciousness that women demand equality with men, so people initiated a vote to make a law for protecting women. In China, Weibo is used to collect suggestions from netizens, such as encouraging females to use the law to defend their rights. Yan Xue claims that on October 15, 2017, Alyssa Milano disclosed that Harvey Weinstein had sexually abused female celebrities. This incident was known as MeToo. Alyssa urged a woman who had been raped by someone else to talk about it. We were shocked to see how quickly the #MeToo hashtag gained a lot of comments and transmissions. Eight hundred twenty-five thousand times have seen the tag since the afternoon. It was clear that the international community was interested in this effort to protect women's rights [5]. Social media is crucial for feminist idea dissemination and conversation starters. However, Yutong Wu's research has shown us that some female teenagers with worry and mild self-doubt have difficulties perceiving happiness [6]. All in all, on the way to fight for women's rights, we also need to consider how to circumvent the emergence of extreme feminism and take into account how to prevent making a sense of anxiety.

## 3. The Impact of Feminist Movement on Translation

### 3.1 Optimistic Influence

Language is seen as a functioning implement for women, which can challenge discrimination of aspects of life and give vent to their values and identities [7]. The English expression „history is made of his and story“ indicates that historically, it was generally accepted that history was the narrative of men, with women's participation neither expected nor necessary. There are numerous instances

in English when people are used to using terms that finish with „man,“ compound phrases, and derivatives that contain „man“ to refer to both men and women. These statements reinforce derogatory statements about women and lead people to deny the existence of women and their contributions to historical development. Although these phenomena were not solved effectively after the feminist movement, they still reduced the negative status of females. On the one hand, the translator's gender is also one factor influencing the work quality. After World II, the feminist movement rose in Western society and made a great difference in translation. With the subjectivity consciousness of female translators 'awakening, females create a new translation criticism and use the new criticism to translate some famous versions that abstain from male prejudice and discrimination [8]. Female translators prefer to adopt specific strategies to make translation closer to feminist work, allowing the reader to understand thoroughly.

Conversely, the feminist movement advocates for the equal status of writers and translators. According to conventional translation theory, articles are original works, and translations are copies. The original appears like a chicken, and the translation resembles an egg. The translation must respect the original and the cause. The chicken cannot survive without the egg, but the egg must bear after the bird. After Fu Yan (1898) stated that translators in China should adhere to „Faithfulness, Expressiveness and elegance,“ an increasing number of female translators have added critical thinking to their translations [9] based on this concept. Some translators think that they must take responsibility for the texts; thus, they may not act as if the texts were rewritten by them [10]. The structuralist view of translation argues that translation seems like a process of copy and blunt language conversion, which leads to the translators becoming a “translation machine.“ There may be a significant discrepancy between the original text and the translation if translators just translate without drawing on their cultural background. This could lead to readers in both languages having preconceived notions about the work. Overall, the feminist movement encourages women to develop novel ideas in translation and emphasizes that translators and authors should have equal rights, which can lessen prejudice between the two languages.

### 3.2 Negative Influence

However, since the feminist translation theory emerged, the opposing voice has never stopped. Feminist theory of translation makes an argument that this theory too much emphasis on the theoretical nature of translation, leading

to a lower standard of translation. Some scholars believe that if they can express a main idea and the culture, it is not a big deal in language wrong. Yongqiang Xia thinks that many views of feminist translation are too radical, leading to a strong rebellion in political expression [11]. Some feminist translators place less value on correctness and instead view translation as a simple process of converting one language to another, ignoring the cultural, historical, and linguistic differences between the countries of origin and destination, which could sap a translator's enthusiasm. More and more women need to be encouraged to engage in feminist translation to ignite the passion of translators. This will help spread awareness of the impact of feminism on translation theory and advance the field of feminism in translation.

### 4. The Development of Feminist Translation Theory

In the beginning, translation started with religious translation; in Western countries, people translated the Bible so that they could get the truth of the world. With the development of society, translation has derived many famous theories, such as functionalism, Skopos theory, functional equivalent, and cultural translation theory. Feminist translation theory has been proposed in recent years, which was enlightened in liberal feminism in the eighteenth century and started with Canadian Feminist Translation Practices. In this theory, the main representatives of Feminist Translation Theory were Shelly Simon, Babara Godard, and Lori Chamberlain. Finding the importance of breaking the patriarchal sociolinguistics system from the area of civilization, they devoted themselves to fighting for the rights of females. Before the sixteenth century, the female was not allowed to participate in literature creation but was permitted to translate literature whose text categories were also limited by males, like The Bronte Sisters, only they used the male names they could publish works. Thus, female translators tried their best to fight against inequalities when they were working. The findings revealed that some female translators did not copy the meaning of the text when they were translating but added their perspective to the translation. Female translators attempted to spread their minds and appealed to people to pursue gender equality. Finding the correlation between gender, translator, and translation is simple. Gilles Menage, a French translator from the seventeenth century, once compared translations loyal to the source material to unfaithful beauties. Without a doubt, he discriminated against women, or perhaps more accurately, at the time, society discriminated against women. Luise von Flotow, a

feminist translator from Canada, identified three primary tactics used in translation practice: supplementation, preface, footnoting, and hijacking. Supplement refers to the fact that translators can incorporate their political trends and the culture of the target language nation, which may help avoid misunderstandings. Prefacing and footnoting indicate that the translator explained or introduced the discrepancies with the original. The most contentious practice is hijacking, where a translator modifies the text's meaning before rewriting it.

### 5. Stages of Translation Development in China

The first translation development was from the Eastern Han to the Song Dynasty. As proposed by Xuazang, in the beginning, translation was used to translate Buddhist scripture. In addition, Xuanzang made the "Five No's" principle, which demanded translators to transliterate but not Paraphrase in particular contexts. The second development happened during the Ming and Qing Dynasties; translators focused on religious and scientific translation in this stage. From the Opium War to the May Fourth Movement, flowing across China was the third development of translation. A large number of translators appealed to save the country and protect its people: Dazhao Li, who was an extraordinary national hero and said, "Learning from the barbarians to defeat them"; Fu Yan, who suggested "Faithfulness, Expressiveness and Elegance" and "Evolution and Ethics. The latest large-scale development was during the 1980s and 1990s; scholar Zhongshu Qian advised preserving the style and flavor of the original. The first expert who guided feminist translation theory in China was Hong Zhu, and then this theory was discussed in 2004[12]. Familiarizing with Western countries, females have also had a low social status in China for a long time. Thus, after coming into contact with translation, female scholars advocated liberating women from a patriarchal society. Unfortunately, the power of women's voices was still very weak, and the males dominated Chinese society as before. Besides, because there is a great difference between the cultural ideology of China and Western countries, it is nearly used feminist translation theory in Chinese translation practice. There is still a large gap in the practice of feminist translation theory in China. From then on, some works emerged and focused on how to deal with the relationship of gender, translation, and translation. As the field of feminist translation theory evolved, Chinese scholars' interest in it also expanded. Numerous multidisciplinary studies on feminist philosophy and 2019 novel translations have recently been published. Addi-

tionally, translations from English into Chinese account for the largest percentage of translations [13]. Nowadays, feminist translation theory is taught by many academics in the West and in many other parts of the world. The theory blends in with local cultures to create new sparks. In addition to fighting for women, feminist translation theory also takes into account neglected sexual minorities and other groups, such as Xiaoming Ai's translation of *The Vagina Monologues*, which Eve Ensler wrote. Translated from a lesbianism angle, Xiaoming Ai showed his attention to homosexuality; it could be said that feminist translation theory pays attention to marginalized groups becoming a trend.

### 6. Conclusion

This issue examines how language may express the identities and ideals of women and how, when used as a useful tool, women can fight inequality in many spheres of life. The feminist movement has significantly impacted literature, television, and social media, awakening women's consciousness and initiating the fight for equality. Feminist translation theory is urgent because it focuses on sexual minorities and promotes gender equality rather than improving the status of women in patriarchal societies. Feminist translation theory has continuously increased in depth and scope, emphasizing the subjective nature of translators and their importance. There is also bias in translation, although it might be resolved in the future. In the future, Chinese scholars should notice the differences between the cultures of Chinese and Western countries, strengthening the people's recognition of feminist translation theory.

### References

- [1]De Beauvoir S. *The second sex*[M]//*Social Theory Re-Wired*. Routledge, 2023: 346-354.
- [2]Wang Xiaoshu. The Expression of Feminism in English and American Literature [J]. *Journal of Pu'er University*, 2023,39 (1): 71-73
- [3]Wang Y. Reviewing the Development of Feminism in English Language Literature[J].
- [4]Deng Weilong, Chen Feng. Li Shaohong: A Specimen of Chinese Feminist Film and Television Research - Li Shaohong and One of Her Interpretations of Film and Television Feminism [J]. *Innovation*, 2011, 5 (3): 111-114128
- [5]Xue Yan. Exploring the Development Path of Women's Sports in the Era of Social Media [J]. *Yinshan Journal*, 2020, 33 (6): 79-86
- [6]Yutong Wu. The Impact of Feminism Movement on Chinese Teenagers' Mental Health through Social Media: A Metoo

- Perspective[J]. *Journal of Sociology and Ethnology*, 2023, 5(6)
- [7]Allam R A B. Analyzing the feminist stylistic features of reem bassiouney's novel professor hanaa: a feminist translational study[J]. 2018.
- [8] Jiang Xiaohua. The Influence of Feminism on Translation Theory [J]. *Translation in China* 2004 (4): 5-9
- [9]Hu Chan. The deconstruction and limitations of traditional translation theory in feminist translation [J]. *Journal of Huangshi Institute of Technology (Humanities and Social Sciences Edition)*, 2010,27 (6): 42-4453
- [10]Jansen H. I'm a translator, and I'm proud of how literary translators view authors and authorship[J]. *Perspectives*,2019,27(5):675-688.
- [11]Xia Y . Analysis on Features of Domestic Feminist Translation Theory and Limitation to Translation Practice[C]// 信息化与工程国际学会 .Proceedings of 2015 2nd International Conference on Education, Management and Computing Technology(ICEMCT 2015).Sichuan University of Arts and Science; 2015:4.
- [12]Hu Zuoyou, Hu Xiaojuan, Li Erwen. The Acceptance of Feminist Translation Theory in China [J]. *Academic Journal*, 2013 (3): 152-160286
- [13]Irshad I, Yasmin M. Feminism and literary translation: A systematic review[J]. *Heliyon*, 2022.