

# Gender and ideology in translation studies: from the perspective of feminist tran...

[Sociology](#), [Gender Studies](#)



The cultural shift of translation studies in the 1980s combined translation with culture and thus, opened up a new perspective for translation studies—cultural perspective. The cultural turn of translation studies has made the public aware of the political, social, and historical factors of the subject of translation. Hence, increasing attention has been paid on the status of the translator. Gender, as an important part of cultural studies, has become a new and popular perspective for translation studies. As Von Flotow (1997) points out that translation is overwhelmingly influenced by feminist thoughts.

*In praise of loud women* (see appendix 1) written by a female writer Viv Groskop is an article demonstrating female's "voice" (in this situation, voice has double meaning) in the modern society. This article is published on 6, November, 2018, on the official website of "The Guardian". It reveals female's social phenomenon and status and conveys the message that female's voice need and is determined to be heard. This is an article supporting feminism in the modern society. To translate this source text, the target audience will be the general public in mainland China, including male and female. This article is published on the Chinese version of "The Guardian" website and is intended to advocate and support feminism in mainland China. The tone that should be conveyed in translation is informal.

This essay mainly focuses on the gender issues from the perspective of online article's translation and editing challenges in translation studies. It is divided into two parts—macro level issues and micro level issues. With the macro level issues, a brief introduction is given involving the discourse

features (for example, layout), visual content, captions, paragraphing and the organisation of information. As for the micro level decisions deal with word and sentence choices, it mainly introduces the challenges faced and the strategies used during translation. What leads to these issues (socially and historically) is also claimed with the demonstration of the background of feminist translation, the translation theories and ongoing debates.

### 1. Macro level issues

This online article gives the reader a strong, immediate and intensive feeling with the big, bold, violet headline that stands out at the top of the page. The heading conveys the author's opinion straightforwardly by using "in praise of". The hyphen applied explains the two main topics that will be discussed in the article clearly—being loud and being a female. When translating into Chinese, it is important to keep the original unambiguous and sharp heading style. As Brian (2014: 63) pointed out "if the intended readers are not already motivated, one task of the editor may be to liven up the writing to make the document more attractive, and the message more 'receivable'". Thus, when translating into Chinese, this feeling of intensity will be remained. The word will be big, bold with the colour violet.

Right below the heading, there are three lines of sentences with the same typeface but a smaller word size without overstriking. This paragraph is considered as an explanation of the motivation for the author to write this article, and also leads into the picture below of five tough women in the society. "Bleed in the first line" is considered as one of the gold rules by

James (2011) to show the personality of the writer and start the interaction with the readers.

This source text also involves non-verbal languages to communicate with the readers. A big picture of four women to represent the new generation of female who want to redefine loud women, with a short introduction below to indicate the names of them. The picture is with greenish light blue background and streaks of swirling in light green and darker blue on it. In the middle, there is a round, gradient deep pink loud-speaker like machine with four yellow triangle stripes seem bursting out. It expressively conveys the situation of women can and are encouraged to voice their opinions. Five strong women in the picture, including celebrities and women politicians. Michelle Obama is apparently making a speech in her white smart dress, with her mouth widely open and hands both tightly clenched. Her pose shows the power and the confidence from inside out that can be easily felt when looking at the photo. Lady Gaga and Merkel both with serious facial expressions and the microphones in front of them. These three women in the picture perfectly fit the theme of female voicing their opinions out loud. Rihanna stands tall and Adele with one hand on her waist, both with their tender smile on their face, show the soft and sweet of female. The contrast in colour of this picture is bright and bold, it strongly and clearly describes the theme of this article and extrude the subject. Since most Chinese know the western celebrities and politicians, this picture will be used in the Chinese translation version.

Drop caps is used to start the first paragraph in the original text, creating a stylised look for the opening paragraph. In this article, the colour of the first alphabet “ n” of the first word “ no” is violet, in order to catch reader’s attention. However, not like English as a West Germanic language, Chinese as a Sino-Tibeten language does not use alphabet. So when translating into Chinese, it is peculiar and impossible to use drop caps. The translation is “ 无”, which literary means “ no”. The same typeface, colour and word size with the main body will be used.

In the main paragraphs, names of celebrities and some key words (including campaigns, events and terminologies) are in violet colour, and can be clicked, and jump into another relevant articles. When translating into Chinese, the colour can remain violet for emphasising. As it is intended to be published on the Chinese version of “ The Guardian” website, all the links will be remained.

Another big portrait photograph of Germaine Greer is put in the middle of the article, illustrating the response to her in recent years is “ shut up”. This picture will also be used and will be kept the original format in the Chinese translation.

Another obvious feature worth paying attention to is the blockquote in the original text. The sentence is in bold and violet font. As a short sentence that captures the essence of this paragraph, being pulled from the article and placed alongside the main text, it emphasises the situation that at least 50% of the voters are women. However, blockquote is not common in Chinese

online article. Thus, when translating into Chinese, no blockquote should be used, regarding Venuti's (1998) strategy to use domestication and foreignisation to deal with the questions of " how much a translation assimilates a foreign text to the translation language and culture". He (2008) later develops the distinction between what he terms " domesticating" and " foreignising" translations to illustrate the two extremes of how a translated text is being positioned in the target language and target culture, which is discussed later in this essay. The blockquote will be omitted in the Chinese version, instead, a bold, violet font will be used on this sentence in the main paragraph.

## 2. Micro level issues

### 1. " Translator's invisibility" versus " Translator's visibility", " faithfulness" versus " unfaithfulness"

First published in 1963, Levy (2011: 19-20) points out that the difference between illusory and anti-illusory is whether the translator attempts to create the feeling of " looking like the original, like reality". Anthony Pym (2014) points out that anti-illusory translation is an ideally conception, because a translation is successful when the reader do not know it is a translation. This concept is then reformulated by Juliane House (1997), who purposes the " overt" and " covert" in translation studies. In 1995, Venuti considering the impact of culture and politics, and identifies the concept of translator's invisibility. Since then, translator's invisibility becomes a " common sense" in translation studies.

Cultural shifts link gender to translation, which is one of the main reasons for the emergence of feminist translation theories. These theories put gender issues into the scope of the translator's subjectivity, emphasising the influence of the translator's gender on translation. Therefore, one of the main contributions of feminist translation theory is to develop a new gender perspective for the study of subjectivity in translation—female translators are no longer invisible, they have the right to transform, even manipulate and possess the original text. Lotbiniere-Harwood (1991) put forward the idea of visibility. Feminist translation can be considered, from this aspect, as the “creative rebellion” of the original text. The engagement of female translators in translation is with a clear cultural purpose: to make women's voices heard; to subvert the domination of male discourse and the oppression of patriarchal social systems. Just like Simon's (1996) statement, female translators try their best to control the right to speak, use various language skills, and sometimes even break the rules of the language to make the language sounds “feminine”, and speak for women. Strategies including supplementing, prefacing and footing (1988), and appropriation (or hijacking) will be applied when translating.

However, these strategies are considered as a manipulation of the source text, which is going against the concept of the very fundamental concept in translation studies—faithfulness. Newmark (1991) considers translation as an attempt to produce an approximate equivalence or (considered synonymy) between different languages in varying levels.

Below is the example of the use of these translation strategies.

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expression of colloquialism is “to shake the universe”, which is a little bit negative in Chinese, and fit in the annoying feeling in the source text. “Outdated big hair”, “an old witch”, “a mean old shrew”, and “a stingy pub landlady”, all these modifiers added in front of the noun is based on the translator’s understanding of the source text. In this example, the source text author wants to create a character that is old-fashioned, loud, annoying, and even mean to others by describing her appearance, the way she dressed and talk, and also the behaviour. And it is also people’s stereotype of a noisy woman.

As for the translation of “voice like a foghorn”, supplementing strategy is used here. A brief explanation is given when translating “foghorn”. It means “雾号” (literary “foghorn”), but it can be unclear to the Chinese audience who is not familiar with this term. Hence, supplementing strategy is used to briefly introduce the function of foghorn, which is often used as a warning in the thick fog. Someone’s voice sounds like a foghorn means that her voice is loud and strident, so “震震” is used here. This adjective also matches the features of a foghorn’s sound, and is suitable to describe human’s voice.

## 2. Use of neutral language and the domestication theory

Due to the different developments of the women’s movement, Western feminism has a different impact after its introduction into China. The radical feminist translation strategies used in the Western world can be sometimes too aggressive, and can be incompatible with the graceful and restrained cultural atmosphere in China. For the Chinese female translators with female consciousness, a rather moderate translation will be used based on Venuti’s

theory of domestication. It can also show the unique characteristics of women in terms of style, language expression, and aesthetic standards.

Example is as below.

En: Is it no longer acceptable to be a woman and a noisy, loquacious pain in the arse?

Ch: 这个社会再也不会接受一个吵闹、聒噪、惹人讨厌的女人了。

Back translation: The society will no longer accept a woman who is loud, noisy and annoying?

The tone of this source text is informal, and many informal expressions and even slangs are used. “Loquacious” means someone who likes to talk a lot and full of trivial details. It always has a negative connotation. It is translated as “聒噪” (back translation: talkative) here. Talkative can be used with either a positive or negative connotation, it is a rather neutral expression to describe someone who is never stop talking. It sounds more friendly than using the expression of “惹人讨厌”, which means someone who is fuzzy, picky and constantly speaking, often an incessant amount. “A pain in arse” is a rather rude expression to describe someone or something that is annoying or frustrating. The most direct translation is “混蛋/ asshole”, which literary means “bastard” or “asshole”. However, it cannot be translated as “bastard”.

Domestication strategy is used here. According to Venuti (2008), domestication refers to an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target language cultural values, bring the author back home. It is very indelicate to use a word like “bastard” to describe a woman in China.

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Chinese female readers will feel very insulted when reading this, and it is not compatible with the mild and roundabout in Chinese culture. Hence, the word “ 烦人 ” (back translation: annoying) is used here. Although the word still contains negative meaning, it is a moderate choice.

### 3. Translation the same word in different context

This article is talking about women who are “ loud ” and “ noisy ”. These two words have various meanings in different context. It is important to translate them properly in different sentences. Here are some examples for the word “ loud ”.

1. En: No one wants to sit next to a loud woman.

Ch: 谁也不想坐一个吵闹的女人旁边。

Back translation: No one wants to sit next a noisy and loud woman.

In English, “ loud ” here means the level of sound is very high, and produces a lot of noise. It can also be translated as “ 吵闹 ” in Chinese, which, however, can be both positive and negative, and it only means the volume of the sound is very high. It sounds neutral in Chinese if it is translated as “ 大声 ”, it will lose the annoying and frustrating feeling in this sentence.

2. En: The reality, of course, is that the expression: “ He is a loud man, ” does not exist.

Ch: 当然，现实是“他是个大声的人”这句话并不存在。

Back translation: The reality is that the expression like “ He is a loud man ” does not exist.



text in different cultures with different language issues. The cooperation between feminist translators' translation practice and contemporary women's writing can be described as a dual attack on the language and text of feminist movement, maximising the potential of women's self-expression.

However, it is undeniable that there are many limitations of feminist translation theory. It is in many cases, too emotional, sectarian, idealistic, and subjective. It is also too radical and overemphasises the translator's intervention and rewriting of the text. Thus, it may cause translators' infidelity and randomly translating the source texts. The aim of feminist translation is not to fundamentally subvert a language's convention and establish a new, equal way of expression, but to arouse readers' awareness, in order to produce thinking, understanding, resonance, even anger and opposition.

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