

# Study on Translator's Subjectivity in Two Chinese Versions of *The Color Purple* from the Perspective of Feminist Translation Theory

Kemin Zhou<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Nanjing University of Science and Technology, Nanjing, China

\*Correspondence: Kemin Zhou

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## Abstract:

As gender plays a significant role in translation studies, this paper aims to explore translators' subjectivity from the perspective of feminist translation, and selects two of the most representative translations of *The Color Purple* as the research objects: one is translated by female translator Tao Jie and the other by male translator Yang Renjing respectively. By making comparisons between the two versions in terms of translation strategies and language features, it is found that the female translator has stronger feminist consciousness than the male translator. In the aspect of gender cognition, the female translator's version rewrites the original text with feminist translation strategies and opposes linguistic discrimination against women to rebuild the status of women. However, in male translator's version, he only follows traditional translation theories, mostly opting for direct translation without tapping into the awakening awareness of the female characters.

## Keywords:

Feminist Translation Theory, *The Color Purple*, Translator's Subjectivity

## 1. Introduction

For a long time, the "loyalty" of translators to the source text has been the "golden rule" of translation. To some extent, the source text was seen as the sacred text and the absolute standard. Therefore, traditional translation was seen as a mechanical reproduction of the source text, negating translators' subjectivity in the translation process. This changed in the 1970s with the "cultural turn", which emphasized the translator's role, particularly in feminist translation theory.

Alice Walker is a contemporary black American female writer with strong political views. Her masterpiece, *The Color Purple*, was written in the 1980s in the context of "feminist criticism". This paper explores translator subjectivity through the lens of feminist translation theory by comparing two Chinese translations of the novel, one by a female and one by a male translator, to see how the female translator's subjectivity is more pronounced.

This paper is divided into five parts. Part one is the introduction which briefly outlines the research background, research purpose and research method. Part two is

the literature review. It first gives a general introduction of Alice Walker, *The Color Purple* and the two Chinese versions and then introduces previous studies on translators' subjectivity. Part three is the theoretical framework which presents the definition of feminism, the development of feminist translation theory and translators' subjectivity in feminist translation theory. Part four is a comparative study of Tao Jie's and Yang Renjing's Chinese versions to examine the translator's subjectivity especially female's subjectivity embodied in translation strategies and language features. Part five is the conclusion part in which major findings and limitations of the study are discussed.

## 2. Literature Review

Since this thesis focuses on comparative studies about translators' subjectivity manifested in the two Chinese versions of *The Color Purple*, this part firstly presents a brief introduction to the source text and two Chinese versions and then introduces previous studies on translators' subjectivity abroad and at home.

### 2.1. Introduction of the Two Chinese Versions of *The Color Purple*

Alice Walker is a prolific Afro-American feminist writer who encourages women to strive for independence and freedom. She published *The Color Purple*, an 92-letter epistolary novel that describes the growth of black woman Celie both in mind and body when suffered double oppression from the whites and black men. Two Chinese versions of this work are chosen to make a comparison about translators' subjectivity under feminist translation theory.

#### 2.1.1. Tao Jie and Her Version

Tao Jie, an expert on American women's literature with sharp gender awareness, specializes in gender issues. She has edited a large number of magazines such as *Women from Abroad* and published *Inspiration from American Female Literature* in 1983, fueling the growth of feminist literature studies in China.

Tao Jie noted that Walker shed light on racial oppression and racism, but focused on the problems of black women. Regarding her translation of *The Color Purple*, she revealed it was a personal choice, as the story echoed her mother's hardships. She lauded the epistolary writing style which is not only a traditional way of writing women but makes *The Color Purple* snatch the male writer's prevailing writing style. In the preface, she closely linked women's literature tradition to feminism, attracting female readers.

#### 2.1.2. Yang Renjing and His Version

Yang Renjing, a male translator mainly focusing on Hemingway's literature known for tough guys and male valor, seldom delved into feminist research. In his preface for the translation, he covered various topics from black families' domestic woes to America's social problems. He praised this novel for its realistic portrayal of American society, but he harshly criticized Shug Avery, an extroverted and transcendental character who helps the main character Celie develop spiritually. Yang also presented homosexuality as a malicious result under the influence of the immoral and declined social culture. In fact, Walker didn't stigmatize Sophia and Shug's relationship; instead, it showcased women's freedom and independence. Moreover, Yang had seldom emphasized gender issues in his prior works. In his view, *The Color*

*Purple* was primarily about black people's problems, which gives us a better understanding of their life and culture as well as America's past days [23].

As a consequence, these two translators' versions are optimal examples to observe the differences in the process of translation. When translating *The Color Purple*, the female and male translators adopted distinct strategies and activities, yielding diverse results.

## **2.2. Previous Studies on Translators' Subjectivity**

Translator's subjectivity refers to the translator's subjective initiative in the process of translation, under the premise of respecting the original text [17]. Literally, it represents the translator's quality, more precisely reflecting their personal views, beliefs and values. As the subject of translation, the translator's role is to read the original text aesthetically and to convey this experience to the readers through creativity.

### **2.2.1. Previous Studies Abroad**

Foreign research on translators' subjectivity started earlier. Chronologically, it can be divided into three stages: nascent, developmental, and contemporary.

In the beginning, German translator Walter Benjamin [4] proposed that absolute "fidelity" between the original and its translation was impossible. He believed translators could add their own understandings to create relatively independent versions. These views were pioneering but overlooked in the 1920s, only to be recognized by western scholars decades later.

After the "cultural turn" in translation studies, research on translators' subjectivity gained momentum. George Steiner, a hermeneutic translation theorist, proposed his views on translator's subjectivity that there was no exact translation equivalent in terms of meaning and form. He summarized that translation was a kind of recreation, and proposed four steps of "trust, aggression, import and compensation" [14], closely tied to the translator's subjectivity. In the 1980s, the development of feminist translation theory gave impetus to the progress of translators' subjectivity research. Feminist translation theorist Barbara Godard [1] argued that translation should be a process of "production" rather than "reproduction". Under feminist translation theory, feminist translators' subjectivity embodies female translators as a voice for women.

By the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, Lawrence Venuti [14], a representative of deconstruction and post-colonialism, tried to make the translators "visible" through translation. He believed that a translator should have a certain "personality" in the process of translation and convey his or her understandings of the original text to the readers. In the 21st century, Andre Lefevere [10] proposed a series of factors, including cultural background, ideology and gender awareness, which affected translators and translations.

In summary, the initial stage witnessed the emergence of translators' subjectivity in Western academia. The developmental stage made it a focus, with hermeneutics and feminism adding new angles. The contemporary stage has seen extensive exploration, hinting at more comprehensive future research.

### **2.2.2. Previous Studies at Home**

In the Chinese cultural context, translators have historically held a peripheral position. In the 1980s, Chinese theoretical circles conducted research on the subjectivity and inter-subjectivity of literature, sparking discussions on the subjectivity of translators. Since then, a large number of translators have begun to emphasize the importance of translators' subjectivity. Research on translators' subjectivity in China can be divided into two stages:

The first stage was from around 1996 to 2001 when studies emphasized on discussing the status of translators and their roles in translation. For example, Trudier Harris [8] argued that translators' aesthetic sensibility and linguistic ability played an important role in the translation process. And Wang Shouren [20] suggested that what translators did was to create a new "language reality" that is different from the source text, and proposed that "translators can be considered as creators".

The second stage is from around 2002 to now, when the research center has shifted to conduct a more in-depth study of translators' subjectivity in different respects. Yang Wuneng [24] emphasized the role of translators in translation and proposed that the subject of literary translation is the translator. Chen Daliang [6] mainly analyzed the significance of inter-subjectivity in translation studies and explored the transition from subjectivity to inter-subjectivity. Then Wu Ying [21] summarized the relevant studies of translator's subjectivity in computer-aided translation process and aviation technology translation.

To sum up, all these scholars want to claim that translators no longer play a subordinate role in translation theory. Throughout the translation process, the translator's main role is to faithfully transmit the original text, but translation is a dynamic and creative activity that is undoubtedly influenced by the translator's subjective initiative.

### 3. Theoretical Basis

This part is mainly about the theoretical basis of the research in this thesis. The concrete contents include the basic information about feminism, feminist translation theory and the theoretical connection between translators' subjectivity and this theory.

#### 3.1. Definition of Feminism

Feminism is both a political movement and a social theory. It is defined as a "doctrine or movement that advocates equal rights for women" according to *Concise Oxford Dictionary* [15]. It becomes a unique way of thinking, which provides a new research perspective for cultural studies. With its rapid development, feminism not only focuses on women's issues but also considers the entire social culture and historical tradition from a female standpoint. Therefore, feminine consciousness is strengthened and gender issues begin to be incorporated into many research fields.

Through the deconstruction and subversion of patriarchal culture, feminists aim to shatter the traditional cultural system and to rebuild a new one across society. It is seen that feminism has become a distinct ideological approach from the beginning, which tries to deconstruct many traditional cultural systems and value standards to highlight and uplift women's status in society and culture. Feminists use their words to show women's characteristics, which is a great way to better understand the existence of women and evokes more research on women's issues.

In the 1980s, the “cultural turn” caused a great shock in the translation field. Its broad perspective integrated feminism into translation studies, bringing a totally new methodology and angle to translation studies. Since then, translation studies have expanded to encompass cultural, ideological and historical issues, instead of focusing on the simple criteria of “fluent and faithful”. In this sense, it is not weird that feminist thoughts have influenced translation practice and theory in multiple aspects.

### ***3.2. The Development of Feminist Translation Theory***

Feminist translation theory sprung up during the “cultural turn” in the west in the 1980s, which added an important cultural dimension to translation studies. In translation practice, it was the radical feminist translators in Canada who first applied feminist theory to translation. Simon, one of the leading figures, proposed that feminist translation theory aims to “identify and critique the tangle of concepts that relegate both women and translation to the bottom of the social and literary ladder” [12]. In this statement, Simon excavated the purpose and mission of feminist translation theory and revealed the unfair treatment and inferiority of women. Moreover, Luise Von Flotow [7] came up with three translation strategies, including supplementing, prefacing and footnoting, and hijacking, to implement feminist translation theory into practice.

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, feminist translation theory captured the attention of Chinese scholars. According to Jiang Xiaohua [9], feminist translation theory aims at eliminating the discrimination against women in translation, reconstructing the relationship between the source text and the translation, and advocating translation as involving not only language but also culture and ideology. All these studies boost the development of feminist translation theory and promote the gradual awakening of translators’ subjectivity from a gender perspective.

### ***3.3. Translators’ Subjectivity in Feminist Translation Theory***

Different from other translation theories, feminist translation theory acknowledges translators’ subjectivity, initiative and the inevitable treason of translation due to linguistic, cultural and ideological differences as well as the disparities of translators’ artistic accomplishments. The unseen and silent status of translators in conventional translation theories is broken by feminist translation theory’s expression of the translator’s subjectivity. It specifically draws attention to the subjectivity of the translator during the translation process.

Feminist translation scholars seek to overturn traditional sexist notions in both translation studies and social concepts, which is the starting point of the struggle for women’s dignity and equality. Feminist translators use feminine language as a political weapon to overturn the patriarchal oppression imposed on women and to reconstruct their identities. Language, in feminist translation scholars’ eyes, is a means of conveying meaning and revealing women’s identities. The translator’s subjectivity and creativity are brought into full play during the rewriting process.

Feminist translators suffered from double inferiority because of their distinctive identities as both translators and women. Therefore, they view translation as a powerful weapon in the struggle against patriarchal tyranny. As translators, they make bold adaptations of the source texts to ensure their female identity is reflected in the translation. The double inferiority feminist translators experience allows them greater

freedom to exercise their subjectivity and dare to betray the source texts creatively, which is considered as a necessary and justifiable part of feminist translation theory.

## 4. Translator's Subjectivity Manifested in Two Versions

This part mainly studies how translator's subjectivity is manifested in these two Chinese versions in terms of translation strategies and language features. Comparing the two versions, the female translator tends to be more sensitive to women's emotional psychology and better exerts her subjectivity and creativity than the male translator does.

### 4.1. *Translator's Subjectivity Manifested in Translation Strategies*

With the purpose of making themselves be visible in the target texts, feminist translators use many translation strategies to manipulate and intervene into the source texts. Prefacing, footnoting, supplementing and hijacking are the main strategies adopted by them.

#### 4.1.1. *Prefacing & Footnoting*

##### (1) Prefacing

According to Flotow, prefacing is the introduction part of a book or text [7]. To let readers focus on the translator's identity, translators add some descriptions and records in the preface, including the reasons for selecting the source text, translation methods and the translator's purposes.

In her preface, Tao notes that *The Color Purple*, based on the conflicts between black men and women, mainly explores how a woman liberates herself and pursues her individuality. Only two subplots explicitly illustrate white-black conflicts. From Tao's comments on these important female characters, it is quite simple to clarify her sympathy to the female characters and her preference for displaying female identity.

Yang's preface is a long one in which he devotes many paragraphs to Alice Walker's life, education and thoughts. Through a deliberate introduction of the novel, he aims to discover its underlying purposes and the reasons why it has gained such wide acceptance and praise. The novel involves social problems in America, the upbringing of a black girl and her awareness of identity with the help of her black female friends. But Yang stresses that the book intends to reveal a variety of social issues in America and analyzes the writing style with no indication of female preference [23].

##### (2) Footnoting

Footnoting means adding notes as supplementary information placed at the bottom of the page [7]. Footnotes offer readers a chance to better understand the intention of the source text and also serve as a platform for translators to display the translator's feminist consciousness in the translated text [5].

Example 1:

(1) It's a nice pattern called Sister's Choice.

(Walker, 1982: 22)

T: 图案很漂亮, 叫 “姐妹的选择<sup>①</sup>”。

① 这是一种精心缝制的被子，用各种碎布拼成，碎布可以是三角形、方形或长方形，并组合成各种图案。

(Tao Jie, 1998: 53)

Y: 这是个好花型，名叫“妹妹的选择”。

(Yang Renjing, 1987: 76)

This example indicates that the female translator is more attuned to elements unique to women or with distinct female traits in the source text than her male counterpart. She elaborates on such details via footnotes.

Here, Tao [16] explains in her footnote what “piecing a quilt” is, a typically female manual labor demanding patience and skills. Since Alice Walker wrote that if Celie deems her quilt perfect, she would give it to Shug. Tao’s detailed note on quilting can more or less reveal Celie’s love and infatuation for Shug, while Yang literally translates “Sister’s Choice” into “妹妹的选择” without any further explanation.

Example 2:

(2) Man oh man, say Buster. Fire department won’t do. Somebody call the Law.

(Walker, 1982: 85)

T: 天哪，天哪，白斯特说。救火队都没有用了，得去找司法机关①。

① 指莎格的歌热情奔放，十分挑逗人。

(Tao Jie, 1998: 66)

Y: 男人啊，男人，多么狂热！巴斯特说，消防队来了也没用，有人得求救法律呢！

(Yang Renjing, 1987: 79)

In this example, the male translator, Yang Renjing, simply translates “the Law” as “法律”，which is loyal to the original without creative translation to highlight his subjectivity, thus omitting the heroine’s character traits. However, the female translator Tao jie, not only selects the word “司法机关” that relates to the law, but also adds a footnote to show Shug’s enthusiasm and open-mindedness. Shug represented women who dared to challenge patriarchal power at that time.

In fact, the female translator’s version abounds with explanatory footnotes. Due to space constraints, only two typical instances are presented here. However, throughout the male translator’s version, there are few footnotes in the whole text [13]. In most cases, he just follows the literal translation without expressing the hidden meaning of the original text.

#### 4.1.2. Supplementing

Supplementing, also called compensation, refers to the compensation of differences among languages or a voluntary action for the text [7]. It means adding the difference between the source language and the target language and adjusting word spellings to highlight gender awareness.

Example 3:

(3) It say, because you are who you are, the future look happy and bright. I laugh. Pass it on to Shug. She look at it and smile. I feel at peace with the world.

(Walker, 1982: 209)

T: 上面说，因为你是你，所以你的未来幸福光明。我笑了。把纸条递给莎格，她看了也微笑了一下。我觉得心地平和，与世无争。

(Tao Jie, 1998: 171)

Y: 上面写着：因为你就是现在的你，所以前途光明而幸福。我笑了，把纸条递给莎格。她看着，微笑了。我觉得世界很安宁。

(Yang Renjing, 1987: 229)

Celie and Shug are having dinner at a restaurant and the cookies have some letters of lucky words. At present, Celie has left Mr. X and has her own career. She is mentally and financially independent. In addition, she has Shug who is the most important person in her life and Celie loves her. Therefore, when she reads these words, she feels happy and content.

Yang, the male translator, simply translates the literal meaning of the text. However, the female translator Tao employs a supplementing strategy and adds the phrase “与世无争” in the translation to show that Celie is satisfied with her life, successfully playing her subjectivity as a translator.

#### 4.1.3. Hijacking

Hijacking, in the form of rewriting, indicates the appropriation of the source text. Under the guidance of this strategy, translators tend to modify the generic masculine language of the original work into a feminine one, leaving the authoritative status of the source text and the original author behind [22].

Example 4:

(4) Shug say, well, ah, and I thought it was only white folks do freakish things like that.

(Walker, 1982: 112)

T: 莎格说，天啊，我以前一直以为只有白人才干这种伤天害理的事情。

(Tao Jie, 1998: 78)

Y: 好啦，就这个样子，我以前认为只有白人才会做出这种反常的事。

(Yang Renjing, 1987: 109)

This sentence pertains to Shug's reaction upon hearing what Celie's stepfather did. The word “freakish” means “反常古怪的”. Yang translated it literally, while Tao used “伤天害理” to fortify the degree of the original meaning. In women's ideology, rape is a kind of oppressive crime that hurts them deeply both in spirit and body. Therefore, the strong emotional word “伤天害理” fully expresses Shug's and even Tao Jie's own indignation towards the stepfather and pity for Celie's miserable life experience.

By using the hijacking strategy, feminist translators can aggravate or alleviate the original meaning of the words according to their own demands. In this way, they can express their emotions more precisely and reflect women's social status more authentically. However, Yang Renjing's translation fails to capture the intense emotions specific to women.

Example 5:

(5) Annie Julia was a nasty woman about the house.

(Walker, 1982: 19)

T: 安妮·朱莉亚实在不是个会持家过日子的女人。

(Tao Jie, 1998: 15)

Y: 安妮·朱立娅是个不会管家的臭女人。

(Yang Renjing 1987: 21)

When describing a person, “nasty” is a derogatory and negative word. In Yang’s translation version, he simply translates it as its original meaning “臭女人” which represents sexism against women. At the same time, he has been influenced by the idea of male power which is deeply rooted in his mind. Therefore, when he reads this sentence, he does not have a deep understanding and comprehension of women’s unequal status and ignores their feelings.

However, as a feminist translator, Tao Jie is sensitive to words that disparage women and cannot tolerate any discriminatory words. She, therefore, alleviates the actual meaning of these words to represent her pity and sympathy for the women who have been suffering from miserable lives and enormous oppression in a patriarchal society.

## 4.2. *Translator’s Subjectivity Manifested in Language Features*

In addition to adopting special translation strategies, female translators also fully express female images in such language features as narrative intonation and word choice.

### 4.2.1. *Narrative Intonation*

Intonation displays the important order of plots and represents the degree of tension that plots reflect [3]. Through contrasting the original and the two versions, the paper perceives different intonation between the lines.

Example 6:

(6) It took him the whole spring from March to June to make up his mind to take me.

(Walker, 1982: 10)

T: 他拖了整整一个春天的时间，从三月一直拖到六月，最后才下决心要我。

(Tao Jie, 1998: 8)

Y: 从三月到六月，他花了整个春天，才下决心娶我。

(Yang Renjing, 1987: 9)

The word “him” refers to Celie’s husband Mr. X, who is uneducated. He loves Shug and has three children with her, but his father objects him to marrying her. He wants to marry Celie’s sister, Nettie, but is refused by her stepfather. Mr. X marries Celie not for love, but to find a nurse for his children and a housekeeper, using her also to satisfy his sexual desire. He is a lazy and patriarchal, believing only women should work. Tao deliberately uses the words “拖”, “一直拖到”, “最后才” to emphasize the

long period. At first glance, this seems heavy-handed, but her translation captures Mr. X's conflicted psychology and Celie's anxiety, conveying that Celie would rather sacrifice her than destroy her sister. At that time, Celie was in a period of ignorance and obtuseness of feminist consciousness. She felt helpless and distressed by the inhumane maltreatment. However, Yang complies with the literal meaning and translates it word by word, which downplays the subtle psychological characteristics. His translation “从三月到六月”, “花了整个春天” with crude intonation only narrates the reason of the event calmly and impersonally.

Tao and Yang differ in their portrayal of Shug. Tao protects women's social position and weakens the language of depreciation intentionally with her special narrative tone. In contrast, Mr. Yang establishes a flat even disdainful tone with derogatory words to describe Shug in his version, just like the following example.

Example 7:

(7) She have the nerve to put one hand on her naked hip and bat her eyes at me.

(Walker, 1982: 34)

T: 她居然敢把一只手放在光屁股上对我飞个媚眼。

(Tao Jie, 1998: 55)

Y: 她厚着脸皮把一只手放在光屁股上，还对我挤眉弄眼。

(Yang Renjing, 1987: 49)

“She” refers to Shug and this scene happens when Celie is helping Shug take a bath. Celie feels what her ego needs and cannot help but fix her eyes on Shug when she sees her body. Shug perceives it but does not mind, even showing herself boldly. Tao Jie sees through Celie's amazement and jealousy, so she chooses the neutral words “居然敢” “飞个媚眼” to express her amazement with admiration. However, Yang Renjing, unaware of Celie's true feelings and consciousness, uses derogatory words like “厚着脸皮” and “挤眉弄眼”, giving readers a feeling that Shug is thick-skinned and Celie is disgusted with her.

From this point, it can be seen that, unlike the female translator, the male translator uses derogatory words to suppress the female voice without reflecting the awakening consciousness of the heroine.

#### 4.2.2. Word Choice

Word selection in translation is pivotal as it subtly conveys the translator's perspectives, beliefs, and intentions, influencing how readers perceive the source text. From feminist perspective, some samples about the translators' choices of words are screened out to contrast and analyze translators' subjectivity from three aspects: modal particles, physiological words and appellations [18].

##### ① Modal Particles

“Particle” is a broad term for words that have no clear part of speech, like “hmm”. Many English particles are also described as “interjections” [2]. A modal particle is used in speech to convey extra emphasis or emotion, without any real grammatical function. Translators can actively intervene in and manipulate the text through modal particles. The following example is illustrative.

Example 8:

(8) Oh, hold on hell, I say. If you hadn't tried to rule over Sofia the white folks never would have caught her.

(Walker, 1982: 130)

T: 哼，等个屁，我说，当年你如果不是一心要管索菲亚的话，她绝对不会给白人捉走的。

(Tao Jie, 1998: 134)

Y: 哎呀！等什么狗屁呢？我说，假如你不想压服索菲娅，拜仁根本不会把她抓去！

(Yang Renjing, 1987: 145)

For the modal particle “Oh”, Yang simply translates it as “哎呀”, which could not indicate Celie's revolt against Mr. X and her awakening of awareness. Instead, Tao uses “哼” to convey Celie's anger and resistance to Mr. X, highlighting her defiance against the patriarchal system. The novel centers on the ideological awakening of Celie and other black women. For the phrase “hold on hell”, Yang adds a Chinese modal particle “呢”, which weakens Celie's fierce combat with her husband, making it hard for readers to perceive her shifts in thoughts.

Mu Lei [11] contends that capturing the original tones lies in manipulation. Often, feminist translators insert adverbs and modal particles. Obviously, in those examples, the feminist translator Tao adds appropriate modal articles to faithfully convey the original intonation, while Yang's translation with a flat tone cannot attain the artistic effect of the original.

## ② Physiological words

For words about women's physiological feature, feminist translators usually use appropriate euphemism. Influenced by feminist consciousness, female translators can understand and express women's psychology and physiology more directly and accurately than their counterparts. The following samples are good examples for this.

### Example 9:

(9) I tell you something else, Shug say to Mary Agnes, listening to you sing, folks want to think about a good screw.

(Walker, 1982: 157)

T: 我再告诉你一点，莎格对玛丽·阿格纽斯说，听你唱歌叫人想好好干私房事。

(Tao Jie, 1998: 165)

Y: 我告诉你一点别的事吧！莎格对玛丽·阿格尼斯说，听听你唱歌，听众能够想起一次……

(Yang Renjing, 1987: 177)

Shug's choice of a career in singing goes against the values of criteria and sexual taboos that men impose on women in a patriarchal society. In feminist culture, sex is seen as taboo, which has long served to uphold the traditional “male chauvinism”. However, feminists claim to break the taboo and to tear down the vicious veil in the relationship between men and women. Her emphasis on the integration of women and culture leads her to speak out boldly on this taboo topic, “sex”, in her dialogue with Mary Agnes. She sees no shame in associating singing and dancing with sex, as these

activities allow her to appreciate life and herself. She even encourages Mary Agnes to get out of her home and sing outside.

For the original phrase “a good screw”, Ms. Tao translates it with an appropriate euphemism “干私房事” to convey Shug’s openness, vitality and love for life. Constrained by traditional translation thoughts, Yang does not translate the original text and uses ellipses to avoid sexual topics.

### ③Expression of the appellations

Appellation is the name or title given to a person, place, or thing. Translator’s active manipulations to the text can also be realized through modal articles, like the following example.

Example 10:

(10) He gives her a little nickname, too, call her Squeak.

(Walker, 1982: 183)

T: 他给她起了个小外号，叫她“吱吱叫”。

(Tao Jie, 1998: 187)

Y: 他也给她起了个外号，叫斯贵客。

(Yang Renjing, 1987: 195)

Mary Agnes, the girlfriend of the heroine Celie’s stepson, initially appears so different from Celie that her name is forgotten. Like other black women, she also believes that girls are of little worth and should obey their husbands.

Ms. Tao translates her nickname “Squeak” as “吱吱叫”, reflecting her reliance on men. On the other hand, “吱吱叫” is merely an onomatopoeic word, highlighting the fact that people ignore Mary Agnes’s real name and only remember her by this nickname, which truly reflects women’s humble social status. Yang translates “斯贵客” by transliteration without any implicit meaning, which lacks depth and fails to convey Alice Walker’s intended meaning, leaving readers confused.

All these examples show that the female translator has stronger gender awareness than the male translator. In most cases, the male translator translates literally without digging into the implications of the original text. But the feminist translator makes greater efforts to convey the intention of the original author and to make readers better understand the hidden information in *The Color Purple*, thus representing a stronger translator’s subjectivity.

## 5. Conclusions

This paper compares and analyzes translator’s subjectivity manifested in these two Chinese translations of *The Color Purple*, one by a female translator, Tao Jie, and the other by a male translator, Yang Renjing, focusing on their translation strategies and language use. Through those detailed comparison, there are some major findings and limitations.

### 5.1. Major Findings

Firstly, it is found that Tao Jie, with a stronger feminist consciousness, often “rewrites” and “hijacks” the original text to voice for women. She adopts three major

translation strategies in the feminist translation theory: supplementing, prefacing and footnoting. In contrast, Yang Renjing, showing less concern over gender issues, mainly adopts literal translation and sometimes even adopting derogatory words depicting the heroines.

Secondly, both the male and female translators show their subjectivity in the process of translating, but the exertion of the male one's subjectivity under feminist translation theory is much weaker than the female one. To put it another way, Tao Jie's Chinese version of *The Color Purple* is much more faithful and proper to the original novel than Yang Renjing's Chinese version, owing to her strong gender awareness and ideology.

## 5.2. Major Limitations

Firstly, it is unavoidable that some viewpoints seem to be a little subjective due to different background of me and these two translators.

Secondly, the influence of patriarchal ideology on the female translator has not been mentioned in this thesis while it is an important fact in the two translations.

Thirdly, given the length of the whole novel, it is hard to make a full study of the two Chinese versions of this famous novel lack of sufficient examples. Maybe more findings would be presented if all the samples were analyzed. More comparative studies on translated works are needed to fully illustrate the subjectivity of feminist translators.

In a word, this paper is just a tentative study on translator's subjectivity from the perspective of feminist translation theory. If possible, more relative research is suggested to be done to contribute to this field.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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