

An Overview of Retranslation Hypotheses and Retranslation Study of *Pride and Prejudice*

Wenxun Zhang^{1*}

¹ School of Foreign Studies, Yangtze University, Jingzhou, China

Email Address

439454214@qq.com (Wenxun Zhang)

*Correspondence: 439454214@qq.com

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Abstract:

Retranslation, as a hot topic in the field of translation study, provides a vast world for the researchers of translation. Through the study of retranslation of literary works, we can know many aspects of a society and an era including the evolution of ideology, the transition of politics, the development of economy, the vicissitude of culture, the trend of aesthetic taste, the change of translation concept, the supersedure of translation strategy and the substitute of translation approach. At home, in the early 1930s, Lu Xun realized the importance and necessity of retranslation. In the recent 30 years, retranslation study at home has made significant progress. Many translation scholars, such as Lou Shiyi, Feng Yidai, Xu Yuanzhong, Luo Guolin, and Zhang Jinghao, investigated the causes of retranslation from different perspectives. Other translation scholars studied foreign and Chinese retranslation versions on the basis of different theories such as translatology, literature, and linguistics; still others studied retranslation from the angles of interdisciplinary sciences and academic trends. To sum up, the similarities between foreign and domestic retranslation study are the investigation of the cause of retranslation and the interdisciplinary study of retranslation. Most foreign studies of retranslation are diachronic, comparative and interdisciplinary ones. Early domestic studies of retranslation are mostly based on experiences of the translator. Domestic studies of retranslation in this century are mostly comparative based on the comparison of different retranslation versions from the angle of related theory.

Keywords:

Retranslation Hypotheses, Overview, *Pride and Prejudice*

1. Introduction

Retranslation, as a hot topic in the field of translation study, provides a vast world for the researchers of translation. Retranslation has been one of the hot issues in both translation studies and practice since the 1930s in China. Literature works, such as *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Gone with Wind*, *Camille*, *the Red and Black* had several Chinese versions to cater to readers' aesthetic expectations at different times.

Through the study of retranslation of literary works, we can know many aspects of a society and of an era including the evolution of ideology, the transition of politics, the development of economy, the vicissitude of culture, the trend of aesthetic taste, the change of translation concept, the superseding of translation strategy and the substitute of translation approach. In the early nineteenth century, great German literary giant Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe pointed out that the translation of classic foreign literary works would generally go through three stages: domesticating translation, imitating translation and foreignizing translation. In the recent 20 years, with the booming development of translation and retranslation studies, many western scholars were studying retranslation from varied perspectives. Du-Nour, through a study of different Hebrew versions of children's books from the perspective of translation and retranslation, investigated the leading language, the translation norm, and the change of the translation norm in Palestinian area in the past 70 years. [1] Pym, through a study of the translation instances in the translation history of Spain, maintained that retranslation should be divided two types: passive retranslation and active retranslation. He also clearly defined passive retranslation and active retranslation. [2] According to Pym, passive retranslation is one that has no mutual competition such as the translation of the same text version by using the same language in different stages of history or in different geopolitical areas while active retranslation is one that has strong mutual competition. Pym gave us a typical example of active retranslation, which is the three translation versions of *Elements of Geometry* by one same Spanish scholar for the sake of different pedagogical functions. Combining with an empirical research, Brownlie investigated the nature of retranslation, the ideology and criterion that influence translation, the multiple interpretability of translation, and individual difference of the translator from the perspective of narrative theory. Mathijssen pointedly pointed out that the cause of retranslation was the aging of the text version in his doctoral dissertation: *The Breach and the Observance: Theatre Retranslation as a Strategy of Artistic Differentiation with Special Reference to Retranslations of Shakespeare's Hamlet*. [3]

At home, in the early 30s last century, Lu Xun realised the importance and necessity of retranslation. In *On Retranslation*, Lu Xun stated that among the foreign languages that we Chinese people understood, English was perhaps the most widely understood one and Japanese was perhaps the second most; if there was no retranslation, ... we would have no chance to read *Hans Christian Andersen's Fairytales*, Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote*. In *There Must Be Retranslation*, Lu Xun put forward his own opinions of how to do retranslation. Basil, H., & Mason, I. maintained that retranslation should take in the strong points of the old translation version and add the translator's new insights to the new translation version so as to create an almost perfect translation version. [4] In the recent 30 years, retranslation study at home has made significant progress. Many translation scholars, such as Lou Shiyi, Feng Yidai, Xu Yuanzhong, Luo Guolin, and Zhang Jinghao, investigated the causes of retranslation from different perspectives Other translation scholars studied foreign and Chinese retranslation versions on the basis of different theories such as translatology, literature, linguistics; still others studied retranslation from the angles of interdisciplinary sciences and academic trends.

To sum up, the similarities between foreign and home retranslation study are the investigation of the cause of retranslation and the interdisciplinary study of retranslation. Most foreign studies of retranslation are diachronic comparative and interdisciplinary ones. Early home studies of retranslation are mostly based on

experiences of the translator. Home studies of retranslation in this century are mostly comparative based on the comparison of different retranslation versions from the angle of related theory.

2. Retranslation Hypotheses

In the course of the study of retranslation, some western scholars put forward some hypotheses or inferences about retranslation on the basis of their own academic experiences and observations. Gambier pointed out that the early translation versions generally tended to be domesticatedly translated, since, in the name of culture or editing, the early translation versions were required to reduce the otherness in the original text version. In this sense and from this point of view, retranslation means the regression to the original text version. [5] Berman described the process of translation and retranslation of the same text version. He stated that the first version that appeared was an introduction to a literary work which was brave and without literary counterfeit for the benefit of those who wanted to study the literary work; the second version that appeared was the early translation version with literary aspiration which was not necessarily a complete translation version and which was usually full of imperfections; this was well known to all; the third version that appeared was the many retranslation versions among which a classic translation version appeared which would prevent new retranslation version from appearing for a long time. [6]

Chesterman clearly put forward his retranslation hypothesis. His hypothesis is as follows: the later translation version of a literary work was usually closer to the original literary work than the first translation of the same literary work. Williams and Chesterman offered us a train of thought to verify retranslation hypothesis. He suggested that we should use quantitative analysis to appraise translation and retranslation to see which is closer to the original literary work. According to Williams and Chesterman, the quantitative analysis could be made from two aspects: structural change and semantic shift or modulation. [7]

Gambier, Williams and Chesterman's retranslation hypotheses shed much light on the complex phenomenon of retranslation and help us to better understand the nature of retranslation. Gambier and Chesterman's retranslation hypotheses did not get much support among western scholars who are doing empirical research. Some western scholars even showed doubt about Gambier and Chesterman's retranslation hypotheses. These retranslation hypotheses have not yet been fully verified through empirical research at home. This is also the motivation of the author of this dissertation to do this research. The research objective and significance also lies in this. Based on *Pride and Prejudice* and its four Chinese retranslation versions, the dissertation is going to conduct an empirical research to verify the retranslation hypothesis as well as a few other assumptions on retranslation.

Lai Yu distinguished these two concepts: remodified translation and repeated translation. He held that remodified translation is an emendatory translation of one's own old translation while retranslation is the translation of a text version though there is an early translation version by someone else. The concept of the time of retranslation is a big problem. The translation of a literary work usually takes a long time: several months or even several years. We need to understand that the translation version that is published first is not necessarily translated first. For there are so many factors that affect the publication of a translation version such as the translation process, the publication process etc. A famous case is the translation of *Ulysses*. Xiao

Qian and Jin Di started almost at the same time in the early 1980s to translate *Ulysses*. Xiao Qian's translation version appeared and was published in 1994 while Jin Di's translation version appeared and was published in 1996. Can we say that Jin Di did a retranslation of *Ulysses*? The answer is obviously no. Another famous case is the translation of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. The earliest two translation versions of *Pride and Prejudice* are Yang Bin's and Dong Zhongchi's, and both translation versions were published in June 1935. These two translation versions are simply translation versions, and neither can be said to be a retranslation version of the other. There is a simple way to determine whether a translation version is a translation version or a retranslation version. If the translation of a literary work begins after a translation version of the same literary work has already appeared, then this translation is retranslation. Eugene Nida once said that a literary work should be translated once again every 50 years. But the dividing line between retractions does not need to be 50 years. It does not need to be that precise. The determination of whether a translation version is a translation version or a retranslation version should take many specific situational factors into consideration. In China, the translation of a literary work in the period of the planned economy (1949-1978) can be regarded as the retranslation of the same literary work in the period of the Republic of China. The translation of a literary work in the period of the market economy can likewise be regarded as the retranslation of the same literary work in the period of the planned economy.

There is still another concept that needs to be discussed briefly: indirect translation. *China Translation Dictionary* says that indirect translation is retranslation. *Nairobi Recommendation 1976* holds the same point of view and uses retranslation to refer to indirect translation. The author of this dissertation agrees with Pym's point of view that retranslation is not a simple revision or amendment of a previous translation version but a new translation of the original text version without reference to any previous translation version. According to Pym, a great modification of a current translation version can also be regarded as retranslation. Pym excludes indirect translation from retranslation. Indirect translation is a very complex phenomenon in the history of translation. It is better to study it as an independent category. Many Bible versions are in fact indirect translation versions because they are translated from English versions which in turn are translated from Hebrew version. Sometimes it is very hard to trace back into the original text versions of some Bible versions. Some Bible versions in the third country language are in fact compiled with reference to several previous translation versions. These Bible versions should be regarded as compiling versions rather than translation versions. Compiling translation is also a very complex phenomenon in the history of translation. It is also better to study it as an independent category as indirect translation. So the translation of the original text version seems to be the criterion to distinguish retranslation from indirect translation.

Among the scholars who have expressed their opinions on the hot topic of retranslation in China, there are four scholars, Jiang Zhiwen, Wen Jun, Xu Yuanchong and Yuan Xiaoyi, who have clearly defined the concept of retranslation. Shuttleworth, M. & Cowie, M. offered their definition of retranslation as "the original text version has two or more versions repeatedly translated by different translators". [8] Xu Yuanchong expresses the ideas that:

"By retranslation, it means, on the one hand, the process by which a translator retranslates a text version which has been translated by himself or herself before, or

on the other hand, it means the process by which a translator translates a text version which has been translated by other people”.

Wright, L. & Hope J. express the ideas that:

“Retranslation is done with the passage of time in which retranslators inherit, correct and even complement previous translation versions of a given text; it also applies to the phenomenon of various translation versions of the same text version within a given period”. [9]

Sebnem Susam-Sarajeva gives us a definition of the term “retranslation”, he defines “retranslation” as “subsequent translation of a text version”, or “part of a text version”, which have been carried out after the initial translation version which has introduced this text version to the “same” target language. To put it more precisely, retranslation actually means “a given text version is again translated into the same target language”. [10]

Different people have different ideas about the classification of retranslation. One idea holds that we can classify retranslation into three categories: back translation, indirect translation, and the retranslation itself. Back translation means translation from one language into another language and then translating it back later as quotations; indirect translation, which refers to the translation version that comes from the text version of the third language rather than the source language. For example, British poet Fitzgerald translated the *Rubaiyat*, which was written by a Persian poet Omar Khayyam, into English, and then our Chinese poet Guo Moruo and Huang Kesun retranslated the English version of *Rubaiyat* of Omar Khayyam into Chinese. This is a typical example of indirect translation. And then there is the retranslation, which includes multiple translation, which means that after the first text version has been translated, a different translation version is translated by another person, and new translation, which means a different version translated by the same person. What scholars and translators home and abroad usually investigate and research is the third type, but this dissertation uses the term retranslation mainly in its third sense. From another angle, in terms of time span, we can classify retranslation into two different types: which are synchronic retranslation and diachronic retranslation. Synchronic and diachronic are two terms borrowed from linguistics. Synchronic retranslation means retranslation of a text version at only one point of time in history without considering historical antecedents. Diachronic retranslation means retranslation of a text version through time in history. The present research of this dissertation is a diachronic one. The term retranslation is used mainly in its diachronic sense in this dissertation, but sometimes also in its synchronic sense.

3. Retranslation Study in China

Retranslation is a very common phenomenon in China, and many of the retranslation versions of the same text version can be found and studied within the history of Chinese literature and translation, especially since the 1930s, in the special historical periods, retranslation has become more and more frequent and common. Among different types of translation versions, retranslation versions take up more than a half. Many famous translation experts, such as Lu Xun, Mao Dun, Zheng Zhenduo, Liang Shiqiu have done many retranslation works.

An important article was published by Lu Xun in 1935, *Indispensable Retranslation*, in which Lu Xun attached great importance to retranslation and hold firmly that

“retranslation is not only of great significance, but also of great necessity, since it is the best way to shut out translation versions of low quality; he also hold that retranslation is the need to advance the overall level of our new literature”. Lun Xun’s article and also his idea about retranslation really marks the beginning of the famous and hot dispute over the necessity and significance of retranslation. In his famous article, Lu Xun wrote:

“The aim and goal of retranslation is not only restricted to the putting right of the misunderstanding of the original text version. We can say that it is always of great necessity to retranslate it even though there already has a so-called perfect or ideal translation version”.

Since the article was published, retranslation had aroused much concern in the academic world of literary translation. Mao Dun also had a similar attitude towards the phenomenon of retranslation:

“Considering the stepping forward of our translation career, two or more translation versions of a text version will be of great benefit. If two retranslation versions are both of high quality, they can be used to compare and contrast their translation methods to provide suggestions and advices for other translators”.

Although George, S. had the idea that retranslation was not economically meaningful and that translators should spend their efforts on the text versions that do not have translation versions. But Mao Dun thought differently:

“In order to let the readers be benefited economically, we think that, on the one hand, it is necessary to criticize translation versions of bad quality, and, on the other hand, retranslation version is a good and an important solution to bad translation versions. Our readers’ time and money will be really saved if, for one thing, a translation version of bad quality is criticized and evaluated, and, for another, a retranslation version is being published very soon.”

Lu Xun had much the same idea as Mao Dun concerning the importance and significance of retranslation. Lu Xun, in as early as the 1950s, expressed his idea that the number of retranslation versions actually was in direct proportion to the cultural development of a country.

Holub, R. C. offered us his brilliant ideas about the necessity of retranslation. In his opinion, the function and purpose of retranslation lay not only in the importing of good expressions with foreign cultural flavor, but also in the exporting of expressions with strong Chinese cultural flavor. [11] Xu also said that, “as to retranslation, I think that the new retranslation version should be as different from the previous ones as much as possible, and what is more important, new retranslation version should be much better than the previous translation versions, and, if it is not, there is totally no need to do retranslation work”. Wolfgang, I. also expressed the opinion that “it is very necessary to take advantage of retranslation, if we want to make a literary work survive and outlive. If the initial translation version is a good way to broaden the reading scope of a literary work, then the retranslation version is the way to prolong the life span of a literary work.”. [12]

In the year 1999, there appeared an article entitled *On Retranslation Studies* by Professor Zheng Shiding in Chinese Translators Journal, in which the author not only probed into the necessity and causes of retranslation, but also advanced two methods for the study and research of retranslation, which are qualitative and quantitative analysis.

In china, the climax of retranslation appeared in the 1990s. Since then, much material and literature could be obtained for researchers of translation, and the academic study of retranslation has been paid much attention to in China.

While the author of this dissertation was doing this study, she collected all the literature and material through the internet about retranslation. The literature and material can be basically classified into two types: theories and practices concerning the study and research of retranslation. Theories concerning retranslation study and research include:

Analysis on Retranslation of Classics by Xu Jun, emphasizing the importance of acceptability of literary works in retranslation;

Conceptions on Comparative Translatology by Jiang Zhiwen and Wen Jun, mainly discussing such concepts as acceptability, translation style, mistranslation and standards of comparative translatology;

On Retranslation Studies by Zheng Shiding, illustrating constructive research of retranslation from the angles of inter-disciplinary research, the relation between diversity and identity;

Surpassing Retranslation of Masterpieces by Liu Xiaoli, generalizing three characteristics of retranslation, namely, a further understanding of the original text version, a reasonable expressing of the original style, and a better meeting of modern readers' aesthetic expectation;

On Retranslation by Zheng Hailing, putting forward the idea that translation version which is not always loyal to the original text version will be longevous and innovative ;

Analysis of Retranslation Phenomenon and Translation Criterion by Qin Wenhua , discussing the phenomenon of retranslation and retranslation standards mainly from the perspective of philosophical hermeneutics;

Interpretation and Retranslation by Huang Dexian, encouraging translators to develop their subjectivity and creativity to produce newly-retranslated versions;

Surpassing and Creating Retranslation by Liu Yunhong, stating that retranslation should be innovative, should do better than the previous translation versions, and should show respects to the original writers, readers and translation courses;

Retranslation of Literary Works from the Perspective of Inter-subjectivity by Li Ming, exploring the interrelationship among the original text version author, the translator, the reader and other factors involved in the retranslation of the original text version based on the inter-subjectivity theory.

Practices concerning retranslation include:

On Translation of Scientific Masterpieces and Retranslation by Hou Xiangqun , stating that all of scientific masterpieces in retranslation should be noted with the original text version so that the readers could make full use of these materials for their study and learning;

A Contrastive Study of Two Versions of Tess of the D' Urbervilles by Jin Bing, describing that retranslators should borrow and learn reasonably from and surpass their predecessors and that, on the whole, Sun Zhili's translation version has

surpassed Zhang Guroo's and should be justifiably considered a successful retranslation version;

On Necessity of Retranslation From Intentionality of Literature Translation by Zhang Jinhua, with the idea that the retranslation of literary works is indispensable and necessary since it meets the need of the society and readers based on different retranslators' intention;

Reception Aesthetics and Advertising Retranslation by Chen Dongcheng, thinking that an advertisement text version, like a literary text version, was an uncompleted appealing structure and the interpretation of its meaning relied on the readers' participation;

*Retranslation in the Historical, Social and Cultural Context — A Case Study of Chinese Translations of *Gone with the Wind* between 1940 and 1990* by Lu Ying, based on Bassnett's and Lefevere's theories of translation studies, taking into consideration their respectively historical, social and cultural context, mainly discussing three translation versions of *Gone with the Wind* and the disputes after the first translation version, finally coming to the conclusion that context plays a decisive role in retranslation.

From the above discussion, we can see that although the study of both theory and practice on retranslation has provided much valuable reference material and literature, empirical research on the retranslation hypothesis has been relatively few. Therefore, this dissertation is going to conduct an empirical research to verify the retranslation hypothesis as well as a few other assumptions on retranslation.

4. Retranslation Study in the West

Retranslations provide a fertile ground for case studies. In recent years, a growing number of scholars have become interested in the retranslation phenomenon. As early as 1990, Antoine Berman and Paul Bensimon began to pay attention to retranslation. Berman establishes a model of retranslation cycle that the appearance of a canonical translation will stop the cycle of retranslation for a long time.

Miryam Du-Nour and Pekka Kujamaki examined the relationship between retranslation and retranslation norms. Anthony Pym, Isbelle Vanderschelden and Jan W. Mathijssen explored the reasons for retranslation. Dr. Pym adds to the study of retranslation an active category. He argues that retranslations "with little active retranslations" might be called "a passive retranslation". Otherwise they are "active retranslation".

Outi Paloposki and Kaisa Koskinen have pointed out that retranslations are not necessarily more foreignizing due to the effects of the translating context and individuality of the translator. By employing narrative theory, Siobhan Brownlie made a systematic study of the retranslation phenomenon, challenging the retranslation hypothesis that later translation versions are closer to the original text version.

Here, the author of this dissertation is not satisfied with the use of "closer" in the retranslation hypothesis. What does it mean? It sounds somewhat "objective" but ambiguous. Does it mean that the translation version is closer to the original text version, to the meaning, to the spirit, to the function, to the style, or to all of them, or to something else? It is generally impossible to achieve "closeness" to everything in

the original text version. Some aspects have to be sacrificed to achieve the others. So, the hypothesis is quite misleading in the study of retranslation.

5. Retranslation of *Pride and Prejudice*

Research on the Chinese retranslation of the novel *Pride and Prejudice* in mainland China began in the mid-1990s. When the new millennium arrived, research papers and theses in question were produced in large numbers. Specifically, ten excellent MA theses and twenty-seven major articles are devoted to the study from different perspectives.

There are impressionistic laudatory comments on a single retranslation, such as those on the retranslation by Sun Zhili. It is noteworthy that Sun's translation of *Pride and Prejudice* has been most studied. He Xin focuses on her translation, by discussing some specific examples, to explore the equivalence between the original text version and the translation version in terms of irony, narrative technique and style from a narratological perspective. Her translation is also examined by Zhu Jianxun who summarizes its merits like this: correct handling of the relation between formal and spiritual resemblance, good choice of words and vivid representation of dialogues.

Comparative study on two or more translations of the novel *Pride and Prejudice* is conducted to explore various kinds of problems. Hong Zhongxiang compares the retranslation by Sun Zhili and Fang Huawen, to point out the problems in understanding and expression in Fang's retranslation, and offers some advices. Li Yingying and Wu Liu compare the retranslation by Sun Zhili with the couple Zhang Ling and Zhang Yang to explore the influence of feminist awareness on translating with respect to linguistic expression, aesthetic criterion and translation style. They conclude that there is more feminist intervention in Sun's translation. Ji Xiaobin and Shen Yingli compare the retranslation by Wang Keyi, Sun Zhili with Zhang Jinghao, to analyze the different reproductions of the conversation in the original text version. They conclude that Sun's translation, by means of conversation translation, better reproduces the image of characters in the original text version with respect to their personality, background and psychological state.

Other research perspectives and focuses include George Steiner's *four-stage theory of hermeneutic motion* (trust, aggression, incorporation and restitution) which is used to explore the translator's subjectivity, Mikhail Bakhtin's *discourse dialogically* which is used to analyze the reproduction of "double-voicedness" in the original text version, addition of the translator's "voice", the tempo-spatial dialogic nature of retranslation, deviation of the style in the translation version caused by the dialogue between the translator and the target-language reader and the dialogic nature of translation, and the schema theory of cognitive psychology which is used to discuss the translation of the humor in the original text version.

Undoubtedly, the previous studies on the Chinese retranslation of *Pride and Prejudice* have added to people's knowledge of the original text version and perception of retranslation. However, the single-retranslation research papers mentioned above are neither convincing due to the lack of examples, nor constructive due to the praise-but-no-criticism analysis. The research based on a comparative model pays no attention to the change in translation strategy in the retranlations of the 1950s and 1990s. The analysis is not systematic and the exploration is not deep because the literature available has not yet situated the translators in the politico-economic and socio-cultural context where the translation action took place.

6. Conclusions

Retranslation study is a field that deserves to be strengthened in the translation study circles at present. The further study of retranslation might be concerned with such issues as the reflection or the verification of retranslation hypotheses. Groundbreaking study could be also made such as the contrastive study of retranslation and converted translation. This empirical research, based on *Pride and Prejudice* and its four Chinese (re)translation versions, has been conducted to verify the retranslation hypothesis as well as a few other assumptions on retranslation. The research findings have verified Gambier's claim that translation strategies shift from domestication in the early translation versions to foreignization in later translation versions of the same original text version and denied Berman's assumption that the occurrence of a canonical and classic translation version may stop the cycle of retranslation versions. As far as the retranslation hypothesis is concerned, the research results support it in structural changes but they cannot support it in semantic modulations. The reason for this is that publishing houses and translators will pursue their financial gains and the readers lack the ability to distinguish whether a translation version is of excellence or of low quality. Low-quality and high-quality Translation versions of classic foreign literary works will coexist at market for a long time. That is to say that later translation versions are not necessarily closer to the original text version than earlier translation versions.

Conflicts of Interest

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

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