



A Literature Review on the Research and Development of Chinese and Western Re-translation

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ABSTRACT

Retranslation is one of the most important and controversial concepts in the history of translation. Although the definition of retranslation in different historical periods is different, more or less having a certain extended meaning reflecting the social and cultural background at that time, but the debates on “ancient and modern”, “accuracy and inaccuracy” and “literary and quality” produced by and around this phenomenon has promoted the further development of translation theories. With the frequent and increasingly diversified cultural exchanges brought about by economic globalization, the concept of “retranslation” has not only been eliminated by the times, but also has a new charm because of its characteristics of “overall problem-based research path” and “moving forward in a controversial pattern” (Gao, 2016a). As Gao Cun (2016a) said, “In the history of Chinese literary translation, the phenomenon of retranslation, which can be considered as the retranslation of the same literary works by different translators, is universal.” This paper is mainly divided into four parts, in which the body part is roughly classified in terms of chronological order, spatial order and different kind of viewpoints to present and discuss the various disputes and the development process and trend of retranslation.

Keywords: retranslation; reinterpreting; literature review; cultural communication

1. Introduction

1.1 Thematic Focus

Translation activities involve many complex aspects of language, culture, politics, ethics and economics (Tu & Wang, 2014). Retranslation and the first translation are accompanied by each other. On the one hand, because of the existence of retranslation, the multi-translations of classics at home and abroad have become more and more diversified in mutual absorption, collision and acceptance. At the same time, researchers continue to deepen the study of retranslation, in order to allow the retranslation to retain its own characteristics, while maximizing the content and ideas of the original text, and promote the inheritance and mutual understanding of Chinese and Western culture. On the other hand, the definition of retranslation in the process of development is not consistent, and the classification is not clear. For example, retranslation is defined in *the Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* as “usually referring to a previously translated work which is translated into the same language again, including the act of retranslation and re-translated works; sometimes referred to as ‘relay translation (*zhuan yi*)’”(Baker, 2010). However, retranslation is also classified as an “indirect translation” in *the Dictionary of Translation Studies*. Chinese scholars have not formed a unified statement, but use the concepts such as *zhuan yi* (relay translation/indirect translation), *fu yi* (repeated translation), *gai yi* (adaptation) and *hui yi* (back-translation) to refer to retranslation. (Zhou, 2013) In summary, it is necessary to further explore and summarize the historical background and current status of retranslation and its future development trends on the basis of learning from the relevant research experiences and results from the previous researchers.

1.2 Research Objectives

This paper will focus on the research and development model of the theory and practice of retranslation in China and the West in the past 30 years. It includes different definitions of

retranslation in different historical periods, motivations for retranslation theory and practice research, different paradigm approaches in Chinese and Western retranslation theory and practice research, Western Retranslation Hypotheses and empirical studies, and new developments in Chinese and Western retranslation practices. Nowadays, the heat of retranslation of literary classics remains undiminished. However, since the 1990s, as the market economy replaced the planned economy, the publishers that had been introduced to the market began to pay more attention to economic benefits rather than social benefits. Many Western literary classics were repeatedly published by various publishers, resulting in waste of resources. At the same time, due to the phenomenon of *qiang yi* (scrambled translation), *chao yi* (transcribe) and *luan yi* (ungrounded translation), the quality of translation has declined, which has led to many controversies over the retranslation of western literary classics (Zhou, 2012). Obviously, in order to improve the market status where the quality of the retranslation is uneven, it is the primary task of researchers to actively find solutions. Nevertheless, the road of Retranslation study is tortuous, but the future is bright. As Professor Tian Chuanmao (2014) put it, “Although the retranslation research has not formed a self-contained theoretical system so far, its research value in various fields of history, culture, society and economy is self-evident and there is no substitute advantage for retranslation studies compared to non-retranslation studies.”

Research questions are as follows: How to define the concept of “retranslation” more clearly? What is the difference between the characteristics (path) of Chinese and Western retranslation studies? What is the motivation for retranslation in the new era? How to judge whether a retranslation of a literary work has high quality in practice? What are the achievements and new developments in the theoretical and practical research of retranslation in China and the West? And so on.

2. Theoretical and practical Issues on Re-translation

2.1 Definition and Connotative Changes in Re-translation

In the history of Chinese and Western translations, the definitions of retranslation are inconsistent. In China, “retranslation” the term dates back to Zhou Dynasty, and the series of records about “retranslation” appeared in the Han Dynasty literature. “*chong yi*”, “*chong jiu yi*” and “*jiu yi*” recorded in the Han Dynasty classics define “retranslation” as “*zhuan yi*”(relay translation), that is, “the language has been translated and translated over and over again” (Wang, 2010). Wang Zijin (ibid.) believes that “retranslation” is a cultural phenomenon in the history and diplomatic history of the Han Dynasty. In the period of translation of Buddhist scriptures, there were “*liu li*” that used to resolve various contradictions in translation (Ma, 2006), and “retranslation” still took the meaning of “relay translation”. In the period of the Republic of China, Lu Xun (2005) still interpreted “retranslation” as “relay translation”, but he adopted “two-point method” and put forward the concept of “*fu yi*”. But he believed that “*fu yi*” which can be considered as the repeated translations except for “*zhuan yi*” is only a form of “retranslation”. On the contrary, Gürçaglar (2009) in the West equates “retranslation” with “*fu yi*” and defined retranslation as “an activity or text in which the source language text is translated into the same target language again or more times.”

Modern scholar Xu Jianzhong (2003) also adopted the same two-point method as Mr. Lu Xun

did. He divided “retranslation” into two parts – “direct retranslation” and “indirect retranslation”. Some other researchers have made a more subtle division of “retranslation”. For example, Xu Yuanchong (1996), separated from the perspective of the translation itself, stands in the perspective of the translator and includes *zhuan yi* and *fu yi* in the retranslation. That is, “the self-translated works are re-translated once” and “the works translated by others will be retranslated by myself.” Lai Yu (1997) proposed “translator’s self-reform”—retouching and revising his own old translation; *zhuan yi*—translating from a non-original language; “except for the retranslation of the first two cases”—the different translations of the same original text. Kong Huiyi (2005) argues that “in Chinese culture, retranslation often points to translation from a third language rather than a source language”. Zhu Dehong (2006) divides “retranslation” from synchronic and diachronic perspectives, “the same piece was translated by different translators in the same period” and “the same piece was translated by different translators at different times.” With the development of time, “retranslation” has been given more connotations. Liu Guilan (2010) proposed that “new translation/adaptation” is also a retranslation. It can be seen from Fu Lei’s Retranslation Preface of *La Comedie Humaine* that “Mr. Fu Lei’s retranslation is actually a translation revision” (Tian, 2014). In this regard, France’s Vanderschelden (2000) does not agree, she believes that translation revision is not a retranslation, but often the precursor to retranslation. Judit Vándor (2010) argues that, when placed into historical /cultural context it can be argued that there is definite connection between adaptation and retranslation, and adaptation itself can be the reason of retranslation.

Wang Jiankai (2003) and Li Ming (2006) proposed the phenomenon of “back-translation” based on the definition of predecessors. Actually, the emergence of each translation phenomenon is closely related to the social and cultural environment in which the translator is located. Based on the above scholars’ views, Zhou Zhilian (2013) proposed that “when the translator does not get the original text or does not understand the original language, he will rely on or referring to the translation of the language he has mastered, and this translation phenomenon often occurs in the social or historical period in which literature is in a weak position.” According to different types of retranslations, the “relay translation” often used to study the phenomenon of translation history is divided into “multilingual relay translation”, “relay translation in the same language background”, “relay translation from the same person”, “transformation/revision translation”. “Repeated translation” is the focus of modern and contemporary research.

In summary, the division of the definition of “retranslation” has become more objective and comprehensive with the deepening of research. On the one hand, “retranslation” has often been confused with “repeated translation”, but the definition of the two is becoming more and more clear. Xu Xianwen (2010) proposed that “retranslation” refers to the same translator’s retranslation of the works he has translated in the past, including the revision, retouching or addendum of previous translations; “repeated translation” refers to that the translator translates the works translated by others again. Rong Liyu (2017) also clearly stated that “the meaning of retranslation and repeated translation is not the same.” It can be seen that the concept of dividing the two is mainly achieved by observing and distinguishing the objects of the former translation. On the other hand, “retranslation” has been specifically referred to as “relay translation” for a

long time. After the 1990s, many researchers and scholars have more precisely defined and divided this concept to make its meaning extend. It is not unrelated to the increasingly frequent exchanges between Chinese and Western cultures. In the new era, the definition of retranslation has also changed from narrow to general. Although retranslation has many meanings and definitions, it usually refers to retranslating the source language of the same work in the target language to form a new version (Qian, 2013). In short, “retranslation” is not only a cultural phenomenon in the history and diplomatic history of the Han Dynasty, but also a cultural phenomenon that the world needs, which can help to further spread Chinese culture to the world.

The Western world did not begin to pay attention to and study the phenomenon of retranslation until the early 1990s. It was marked by a paper published by the French scholar Berman (1990) in the special issue of *Palimpsestes*. Berman (ibid.) defined retranslation as ‘[t]oute traduction faite après la première traduction d’une œuvre’. (Any translation made after the first translation of a work) In western translation circles, there are many definitions of “retranslation” division method. Pym (1998) divides retranslation into “active retranslations” and “passive retranslations”. Gao Cun (2016c) classifies them as “indirect translations” similar to *zhuan yi* proposed and used by some Chinese scholars and the different translations of the same original work by different translators that match the “retranslation” adopted by some Chinese scholars. He actually did a good summary of the different definitions of retranslation in the West in different periods. The representatives of the previous statement are Gambier (1994), Shuttleworth and Cowie (1997) who named retranslation as translation from a mediating source language rather than the source language text. However, the supporter of the latter statement Chesterman (2000) who informally defines retranslation as “situations where there is more than one translation, in the same target language, of a given source text”, as well as Baker and Saldanha (2009). Tian Chuanmao (2017) summarized the relevant literature and summarized it as “indirect translation, translation revision and complete retranslation”. James St. André (2003) agreed that “Retranslation is taken to mean both translation twice into the same language and translation into a third Language (relay translation), and through the study of *The Orphan of Zhao*, proved that “retranslation as relay was undertheorized”. He clearly divided the concept of retranslation and summed up the present status of the retranslation definition well, but not comprehensive. When it comes to translation revising, Paloposki and Koskinen (2010) think that “some so-called revisions are actually retranslations”. Like many Chinese scholars, Pym (2011) claims that a retranslation is not just a modified or revised edition of a previous translation and revision is only a kind of retranslation. There are also researchers who have given more meaning to retranslation. For example, L. Deane (2011) considers retranslation as “the reversal translation of a given work into a given target language.” In fact, the definition of “retranslation” depends to a large extent on the background and environment of the times. “Retranslation” is a complex translation phenomenon and activity, and its meaning cannot be simply divided. Moreover, most of the current retranslation activities are used in the field of literary translation, mainly referring to the multiple translations of literary classics by the same author at different times or by different authors at different times. Therefore, the research on “retranslation” has a lot of room for development both in theory and in practice.

2.2 Motivations for Re-translation Studies

Regarding the motivation for retranslation research, the similarities between China and the West are far more than the differences. In China, in Wang Xiangyuan and Chen Yan (2006), the main motivation for the development of retranslation in the 20th century is “controversy”. They summed up the two peaks in the history of Chinese translation in the 1920s to 1930s and the 1980s to 1990s, the dispute on “economic and non-economic” and “whether there is a fixed version or not”. In the 21st century, from the perspective of necessity, the development of language is a very important reason. Because with the development of society and the evolution of language, it will be found that the traditional translation to some extent has problems such as language aging, misunderstanding and inaccuracy. New translations must be produced to accommodate the needs of readers in the new era (Yuan, 1995). Luo Guolin (1995) holds the same view. He proposed that “with the development of society, the evolution of language, and in a certain era, as a world famous book of human common cultural heritage, all translations are no longer suitable for readers. There must be a new translation to replace it.” From the perspective of possibility, the relationship between the various subjects involved in the translation (original author, translator and reader etc.) is dynamic, and retranslation is the result of dialogue between the subjects. Once any one factor changes, it means that the beginning of a new round of change, there is a possibility of retranslation. (Li, 2006) Some scholars have summarized their own motivations for retranslation of their works, such as Xu Yuanchong (1995) and Zhang Jinghao (1999). Some scholars have classified the motivations of retranslation. The relatively comprehensive classification is from Zheng Shiding (1999): 1. The translator's understanding of classic masterpieces has experienced sublimation from the surface to the inside, and it is found that the old translations are not well or appropriately understood; 2. With the deepening of the comparative study of language, the translator has a new understanding of the language rules, and finds that the old translation needs to be improved; 3. The expansion of the field of language and translation studies has enabled translators to propose new ideas for the processing of old translations from different angles; 4. Adjust the aesthetic appeal and aesthetic expectations adapting to the target audience.

As we all know, the retranslation has more or less reflected the language characteristics and cultural background of a certain era. Therefore, the continuous advancement of retranslation research has provided possibilities for the development of culture. Qian Duoxiu (2013) took original text as the starting point, holding that “The original itself as classic should be the most important reason for its retranslation.” Xu Jun (2014) attributed the constant emergence of “retranslations” to “some non-literary factors are at work, especially driven by economic interests.” In this regard, Western Koskinen and Paloposki (2003) gave a relatively pertinent evaluation—“The force behind the decision to retranslate is probably rather cultural than financial, but one reward for retranslation is favorable publicity for the publisher, and this, no doubt, is not bad for the business”. Wang Zhenping (2015) concludes that meaning is always in the cycle of “introducing new ideas and innovation”. As far as translation is concerned, this can also be said to be the reason why classics need to be translated and translated again. Because even the meaning of the classics itself has changed, we need new translations to express the original works in the new era. Rong Liyu (2017) believes that the motivation for retranslation is relatively simple, and in general, retranslation is spontaneous, rather than external factors.

In the West, as early as the 1990s, Du-Nour (1995) showed “changes in linguistic and stylistic norms require re-translating”. Next, Robinson (1999) explained the reasons for retranslation from the perspective of “supplementation”. He believes that the “pre-translation” only partially conveys the meaning of the original work. The re-translation is complementary in nature, including the “temporal supplementation” that makes the original work for the times, the “quantitative supplementation” that is closer to the original in semantics and syntax and qualitative supplementation closer to the original inspiration and talent. In addition, he also pointed out that while supplementing and making up the gaps in the pre-translation, it also left a space for future retranslation. People who also agreed with the term “complementary relationship” are Toury (1999) and Koskinen & Paloposki (2003). Among them, Paloposki (2003) proposed that “The supplementary nature of retranslations suggests a positive attitude towards difference: variation is a facet of supplementarity”. In short, they believe that there is a complementary relationship between different translations to meet the needs of different readers, or to fill a gap in the language of translation. This statement is a good explanation of the relationship between “pre-translation” or “first translation” and “re-translation”.

Some researchers have extended the motivation of retranslation to the ideological field. For example, Lefevere (1992) argues that ideology and poetics sometimes play a decisive role in retranslation. Venuti (2003) also suggested that some less classical literary works sometimes get re-translation opportunities in a new ideology environment and reposition them in the language of translation. Similarly, Professor Tian Chuanmao (2014) believes that “ideology and political factors often become the motivation for the retranslation of classic literary works.” Vanderschelden (2000) presents five motivations as follows – 1. The existing translation is unsatisfactory and cannot be revised effectively; 2. A new edition of the source text is published and becomes the standard reference; 3. The existing target text is considered outdated from a stylistic point of view; 4. The retranslation has a special function to fill in the target language; 5. A different interpretation of the source text justifies a new translation. It can be said that the various types of motivation for retranslation are presented completely. Chesterman (2008), who earlier extended the study of retranslation motivation to other disciplines, proposed the “quasi-causal explanation”, which advocated that in the study of translation and retranslation, it should not be limited to finding a direct and clear causal relationship between a certain translation influencing factor and the translation result. There are quite a few researchers who have similar views. Chappelle (2001) starts with the retranslator’s personal life and translation perspective, and through research, proposed that the translator is the dominant factor that determines the final translation. Brownlie (2003) argues that translation, like all social phenomena, can only occur under the influence of multiple drivers.

Therefore, in the process of describing the translation results, we must maximize the various influencing factors. James St. André (2003) argues that “literary merit in the source culture does not seem to play a large role in determining why these texts were often translated.” On this basis, he proposed “eight inter-related factors” which includes “the rise of Sinology as a profession”, “canon formation” etc. The views of the above three scholars can be said to be similar to the “multiple motivations” of Pym (2007), and they are mutually supportive and closely related. He borrowed Aristotle’s “material or initial cause, final cause, formal cause and efficient cause” to

guide translation and retranslation practice. Pym's point of view clearly summarizes the motivation of retranslation research, and provides a new perspective and broader ideas for future generations, but it is not comprehensive enough from a diachronic perspective. In recent years, some researchers have supplemented and expanded his theory, such as O'Driscoll (2011), Dasjerdi & Mohammadi (2013) and so on. It is also worth mentioning that the change in social environment and translation norm evaluation is an important factor affecting the choice of the retranslation text proposed by Brownlie (2006). Brownlie began to try to study the motivation for the choice of re-translation text, which indicates that the researchers in the new period will study the re-translation motivation more concretely and carefully, and expand the horizon of re-translation motivation research.

3. Theoretical and Practical Issues on Re-translation

3.1 Research Approach to Re-translation

Translation theory comes from translation practice, which in turn is tested by translation practice. When it comes to the study of retranslation practice, the research path should first be clarified. Western translation studies mainly adopt the "paradigmatic approach", while the translation studies in China take the "problematic approach"(Lu & Hou, 2009). The Chinese and Western retranslation studies have formed these two ideas in general. Gao Cun (2016a) summarizes the characteristics of the problematic approach into the following three points: 1. It makes the retranslation research in China move forward in a controversial manner, but it also gives Chinese retranslation research characteristics that are unmatched by western countries, such as concentration, depth, fineness and openness; 2. The diversity of theoretical perspective and research methods; 3. Lack of continuity on the chain of "hypothesis—empirical study—correction hypothesis—empirical research" and the continuity of the overall research model. In addition, for the western paradigmatic approach, he summarizes as follows: 1. Dynamic continuity in the construction of re-translation theory system; 2. Deep in the mindset of re-translation hypothesis, it is difficult to explain the complex factors and phenomena in the process of re-translation, thus has a certain degree of closure.

Like theoretical research, Chinese research on retranslation practical application relies mainly on the debate mode and the problematic approach. The Chinese retranslation practice can be traced back to the Buddhist translation period. At that time, there was the *Vimalakirti Sutra*, which was retranslated by the post-Qin eminent monk Kumarajiva. This paper is mainly to summarize the practice of retranslation in the past 30 years. The 1980s and 1990s were the second peak of retranslation research. The focus of the debate was on the issue of "whether there is a fixed book or not" in literary translation (Gao, 2016). There have been some empirical studies around this issue. Different from what Mu Mutian said in the 1930s, there is a set of "one-size-fits-all" (Liu, 1999). Most researchers agree with Fang Ping (1995), Xu Wei (1996), and Xie Tianzhen's (1996) words—"translation versions cannot be fixed". Since then, a series of case-based retranslation practices have begun to increase. Xu Yuanchong (1995) used Yan Fu's faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance principle and Nida's equivalent translation principles to test and evaluate three translations of *Jean Christophe*. Then, Xu Yuanchong (1996) combined with his own

experience of translating more than 40 Chinese-France and Chinese-English literary works, put forward that “literary translation, especially retranslation, must play the advantage of the translated language, that is, the best expression of the translated language.” Yu Zhongxian (1997) summarized the current situation and difficulties of French retranslation research by comparing and analyzing some famous French novels. Zheng Shiding (1999) analyzed some sentences in *Pride and Prejudice* from quantitative and qualitative perspectives, and compared their retranslations, old translations and original texts and believed that “To obtain the deepening in the theory and the continuous improvement in practice, the ‘constructive research’ of the retranslation is the key.” Zhang Jinghao (1999) shared the impression after re-translating the famous classic *Emma*—The retranslation should remove the translation cavity, be vivid, appropriate and thorough, and dare to create. Liu Xiaoli (1999) started from the three translations of the English novel *Wuthering Heights* to discuss the meaning of retranslation of famous works. She believed that retranslation is not a useless repetition, but a meaningful re-creation. The practical research of the above researchers reveals the basic laws of retranslation from different directions, and more or less provides the theoretical basis for the later research. However, the thinking mode is relatively plain and the practical research needs further exploration, and there are still some problems that need to be discussed. For example, what is the criterion for judging whether a retranslation has high quality? What are the principles that should be followed in retranslation? In the new century, the perspective of research retranslation has become more and more diversified.

3.2 Multi-dimensional Perspectives in Re-translation Application

In addition to translations and original works, researchers have begun to pay more attention to translators and readers. Gu Zhengkun (2003) put forward the idea of “retranslation theory of screening and accumulation” through many years of practice, providing ideas for how to screen the works worthy of retranslation and the strengths of the old translation. Li Shuangling (2012) studies the famous children’s literature from the perspective of translation ethics, and proposed three principles that should be followed in retranslation: Close to the original author, cherish the reader, and respect the original translator. At the same time, she also tried to learn the rational theoretical connotation of “retranslation theory of screening and accumulation” and she advocated that researchers should innovate and transcend on the basis of old translation to complete the process of re-translation of “learning-transcendence”. Wang Suzhen (2008) attempted to examine literary translation with “receiving theory”. From the perspective of translators and readers, she tried to analyze the causes and necessity of the retranslation of literary works and the significance of guiding the specific translation practice. As a development of the “receiving theory”, Wang Zhenping (2015) takes the translation of *Ulysses* as an example and found that through the analysis of the laws of language development and the theory of readers’ acceptance, it enriches the reasons and significance of the retranslation of literary classics. Sun Zhili (2015) also believes that when re-translating masterpieces, they should strive for excellence and transcend old translations. He revised the ten British and American literary classics he had translated, some of which can be called retranslations because of the great changes.

Qian Duoxiu (2013), from the perspective of translation and reading practice and its interaction with teaching, did some case studies on the series of social science classic retranslations published

by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, discussed them from the aspects of the background of retranslation, translation and reading practice and then drew the conclusion that “the old translation cannot fully and faithfully present the original text”. Gao Cun (2016c) explored the multiple dimensional relationships between “complementary” and “enclosed relationship”, “cold translation” and “hot translation”, “active translation” and “passive translation” by examining the retranslation of *The Old Man and the Sea* in the context of multi-dimensional construction, as well as reaffirmed the value of retranslation. Peng Wenqing (2017) takes the two English translations of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* as an example to explore the translator’s self-referential from the perspectives of indirect translation and self-referencing, providing an explanation path for constructing the translation model of Chinese classical literature and the research paradigm of translation.

These practical studies have summed up the problems that need to be paid attention to during the process of retranslation research very well and also put forward many viewpoints worthy of reference. In recent years, in addition to the retranslation of literary classics and classic books, researchers have paid more attention to the retranslation of scientific books. One of the most representative is Xu Mingwu (2017)’s research on the retranslation of *Tiangong Kaiwu*. In addition, the heat of poetry retranslation has gradually increased. For example, Xiao Tianyou (2015) compared and analyzed the three retranslations of Dante’s *Divine Comedy* and put forward some reflections on the translation of metrical poetry. Xu Yufeng (2017) examined the “Negative Capability” of the poetic concept proposed by Keats, and analyzed the original meaning of this poetic concept on the basis of analyzing and summarizing various Chinese translations. In addition, some researchers have conducted retranslation studies on legal or diplomatic terms in different periods in China, such as Qu Wensheng (2014) and Cai Xiangyu (2018). Some researchers have carried out modern retranslation of Buddhist theoretical terms and texts, such as Li Youzheng (2011). From this point of view, the scope of the practice of retranslation has become more extensive and in-depth. This also means that in addition to the famous literary classics with many translations, some of the works that are not well known will be studied and even re-translated by more and more people. To a certain extent, this is conducive to the mutual exchange and dissemination of Chinese and Western cultures.

3.3 Mutual Integration in Chinese and Western Research Ideas

Western retranslation practice is mainly embodied in the empirical study of “retranslation hypothesis”, which is developed in the way of “hypothesis—empirical study—correction hypothesis—empirical research” (Gao, 2016). Firstly, the author will briefly introduce the Western Retranslation Hypothesis. Berman (1990) first proposed the concept of Retranslation Hypothesis. He claims that translation is an “incomplete” act and it can only evolve through later translations. He also considers that a first translation tends to be more assimilating and tends to reduce the text’s otherness in the name of cultural or editorial requirements, whereas a retranslation would mark a return to the source text. Gambier (1994) suggested several factors that might be at stake in retranslation and formulates retranslation hypothesis as « [...] une première traduction a toujours tendance à être plutôt assimilatrice, à Réduire l’altérité au nom d’impératifs culturels,

éditoriaux [...] La retraduction dans ces conditions consisterait en un retour a texte-source » which means “[...] a first translation always tends to be more assimilating, tends to reduce the otherness in the name of cultural or editorial requirements [...] The retranslation, in this perspective, would mark a return to the source text.”(Koskinen & Paloposki, 2003) The coinage and spread of the hypothesis can be traced back to Chesterman (2000, 2004). He notes that “the so-called retranslation hypothesis is a descriptive hypothesis that can be formulated as follows: Later translations (same ST, same TL) tend to be closer to the original than later ones”. And several years later, He and Williams explained the retranslation hypothesis as “later translations tend to be closer to the source text”. And they suggested that retranslation hypothesis could be studied in a corpus.

In the 21st century, some researchers questioned retranslation hypothesis through empirical research. Their differences are mainly reflected in two aspects. One is “Chinesation and foreignization” familiar to us. The other is “whether the quality of retranslation will continue to be improved”. Koskinen and Paloposki (2003) found two important pieces of information by studying several Finnish translations of Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* and Oliver Goldsmith’s *The Vicar of Wakefield*: 1. The old translation was not eliminated, but was reprinted. This is determined by the complementary concept of Finnish culture market; 2. The textual profiles of translations are not determined simply by their chronological order of appearance, but respond to a number of different reasons and settings. They also demonstrated the rationality of supplementarity as a retranslation motivation by studying multiple translations of *The Thousand and One Nights*. As a result, they proposed amendments to the retranslation hypothesis, arguing that after the so-called naturalization translation of the original translation text, the retranslation was a return to the original. And the naturalization tendency of the first translation is not necessarily related to a single translation, but more likely to be related to certain stages of literary development (Tian, 2014). Later, Paloposki and Koskinen (2004) questioned the claim that “the first translations are more Chinesating than retranslations”. And by taking a close look at the hypothesis and comparing its claims with data from Finnish first translations and retranslations, they suggest that many different factors, not just the order of appearance, affect the profiles of these translations. Judit Vándor (2010) took those English and American novels of the 19th century written by woman writers were chosen that were retranslated after 2000 and had successful film and television adaptations for example to object to Paloposki and Koskinen (2004)’s claim— “the first translation tends to use foreignization strategies, whereas the later ones uses Chinesation.” Simultaneously, Judit Vándor (ibid.) also considered that “retranslation hypothesis has some theoretical problems. One is the question of getting nearer to the message of the source text, the other is the implicit suggestion that the more we translate, the better results we get and sooner or later the ideal translation can be achieved.” The words “controversy between Chinesation and foreignization” stays at the strategic level, and the question of “whether the quality of retranslation will improve” means that researchers have begun to focus on the text itself. Brownlie (2006), from the perspective of narrative theory, found that the quality of the retranslation is not improved compared with the original translation, let alone the emergence of the classic translation by studying the five English translations of Zola’s *Nana*, and later proposed that translation is closer to the source language culture. She is also explored the contextual factors behind different

translations. In this regard, Paloposki and Koskinen (2010) showed many similar cases in *Alice in Wonderland* in their own data. And they believed that “later translations are closer to the original or better than an earlier translation (and/or substituting earlier translations), is not sufficient alone to cover the field of translations.” O’Driscoll (2011) studied six English translations of Verne’s *Around the World in 80 Days*, negating retranslation from the perspective of each retranslation’s own style, literary value, and status in the history of retranslation, and denied the assertion that “there is an authoritative version of literary classic translation” in the retranslation hypothesis. In other words, the quality of the retranslation is definitely possible higher. Dastjerdi and Mohammadi (2013) selected *Pride and Prejudice*’s first translations of Persian and later retranslations for empirical research. By comparing and analyzing the two translations, they found that the retranslations tend to be more centered on the original, and the degree of assimilation of the original culture is reduced. This result is basically consistent with the retranslation hypothesis. Nevertheless, they also suggested that the style of retranslation is close to the original is not the same as the improvement of translation quality. From this point of view, case studies are not universal, and more cases of different language translation are needed in the future to continue to confirm this view.

Some scholars have also proved through empirical research that the retranslation hypothesis does not have universal theoretical value. Desmidt (2009), by studying the 18 Dutch translations of S. Lagerlof’s *Nils Holgersson’s Wonderful Journey through Sweden*, concluded that the conflict between various norms weakens the explanatory power of the retranslation hypothesis, which does not have universal theoretical value, but still has a certain degree of rationality. Deane (2011) undertakes a case study of the British retranslations of Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* and Sand’s *La Mare au Diable* and argues that “the retranslation hypothesis is untenable when confronted with the polymorphous behavior of retranslation”. In addition, Chapelle (2001) conducted an empirical study of *Snow White*’s and *Grimm’s Fairy Tales*’ seven translations to prove the irregularity and unpredictability of retranslation development. It is worth noting that from the perspective of the translator, Chapelle aims to explore the social and cultural life of the translator during retranslation. This not only breaks the retranslation hypothesis that simplifies and regularizes actual problems (Gao, 2016), but also provides a new breakthrough for the future research of retranslation practice, which is of great significance to the study of translation history.

In recent years, in addition to the empirical research on the retranslation hypothesis, there have been some new developments in the field of Western retranslation practice. For example, Koskinen and Paloposki(2015) take Harold Bloom’s notion of anxiety of influence in poetry as a starting point, look at two cases of Finnish retranslation that share the same famous first translator to analyze how and where the voice of this first translation can be heard in the retranslations. Cheesman’s experimental project began with the intuition that quantitative variation in a corpus of historical retranslations might be used to project quasi-qualitative annotations onto the translated text and they present a web-based system which can support any corpus of variant versions (Cheesman, Flanagan, Thiel, et al, 2016). There are also some Chinese scholars and researchers who have put forward their own views on contemporary Western retranslation theory and its progress through practice, such as Li Yanjie (2013), Tian Chuanmao (2014, 2017) and Gao Cun (2016b) and so on. In fact, whether in China or in the West, the practice

of retranslation cannot be limited to a line of thought or a path. After all, retranslation as an integral part of the history of translation is not just a phenomenon, but a concept of empirical research that can be studied from a multidisciplinary perspective and dimension. Through their own practice, Chinese and Western researchers have led the study of retranslation to a deeper level.

4. Conclusion

Retranslation is a phenomenon occurring during the process of translation practice. In a certain sense, retranslation is indispensable for promoting the development of translation and improving the level of translation (Luo, 1995). This article gives a brief overview of the theoretical and practical issues of retranslation in China and the West in the past 30 years. The main contents are: the definition of retranslation, the motivation for retranslation and the practice of retranslation. For the definition of retranslation, the *Chinese Translation Dictionary* explains the retranslation as follows: 1. It is also called “*fu yi*”, usually refers to different versions of the same original, and the later translator’s translation is regarded as retranslation; 2. The translator compares the old translation a large degree of retouching modification; 3. It is not directly translated from the original language, mainly translated in English (Fang, 2011). For the most confusing “*chong yi*” and “*retranslation*” at present, Xu Mingwu (2017) states the papers published in China with “*chong yi*” and “*fu yi*” as the theme and title in 2000–2006. In the case, it is concluded that “*chong yi*” is generally accepted by Chinese scholars as the corresponding Chinese term for retranslation. In Western countries, there are also expressions such as “back-translation, indirect translation, relay translation and repeated translation”. Nowadays, the concept of retranslation is more and more extensive, and its connotation has also changed from the original multi-directional “pragmatic expansion” to “pragmatic contraction”. In short, the current “*chong yi*” mainly refers to “retranslation” (Tu & Wang, 2014). For the motivation of retranslation, in addition to several aspects summarized in the paper, the author also agrees that “the purpose of retranslation is to seek the perfection of translation” (Luo, *ibid.*). Although there is no so-called perfect translation, the translator can try to complete the high-quality retranslation as much as possible by diligently studying the original words, sentences and styles. In addition, from the perspective of sociology, when people have a new understanding of the same Chinese classics, or the language in the previous version has become obsolete and does not conform to the aesthetic language of contemporary people, the retranslation of literary classics is necessary. In summary, the motivation for retranslation can be considered from five perspectives: the translator, the original, the pre-translation, social background, and actual requirements (economic, political, cultural, publishing, etc.). For the practice of retranslation, the Chinese and Western gradually have a tendency to learn mutually.

However, regarding the further development of retranslation, there are still some problems worthy of further exploration and discussion. On the one hand, reasonable research methods and strategies of retranslation are waiting to be excavated. On the other hand, more creative evaluations on Western Retranslation Hypothesis and its empirical studies need to be put forward. In the future development process, Chinese researchers may shift their focus from simple research on theoretical retranslation or a case study of the retranslation of literary books to a

comprehensive study on retranslation. Such as “synchronic retranslation” and “diachronic retranslation” put forward by Tian Chuanmao (2014) and Xu Mingwu (2017) from the historical dimension. The function of retranslation is studied from the perspectives of linguistics, hermeneutics, aesthetics and ideology (Tian, *ibid.*). Western researchers will deepen their research on “multi-retranslation” while continuing to conduct multilingual empirical research on retranslation hypothesis. Certainly, in addition to a series of comprehensive research, the research and practical application of re-translation text should be given enough attention to provide possibilities for the generation of works that can be passed on to future generations.

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