

Relay Translation of Feminism in China: An Intralingual Case

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Abstract

Relay translation is generally understood as the translation of a translated text, spoken or written, into a third language (St. André 2009, 230). It has been widely used in intercultural exchange in history. However, due to worries about greater distortion of or deviation from the ultimate source text, there has been widespread aversion to its practice. This partly explains why “very few dispassionate studies” on it have been carried out (Washbourne 2013, 609). Moreover, the existing studies pay more attention to problems in relay translation and tend to be very restrictive in defining the concept, either wittingly or unwittingly, excluding intralingual and intersemiotic translation. This paper investigates an intralingual case of relay translation through examining the Chinese productions at Fudan University of the radical feminist play *The Vagina Monologues* (Enslar 1998). However, this paper is not so much about relay translation as it is commonly understood. It explores the translation of a translated text into different translations of the text in the source language, focusing on the translators’ behavior in the specific social context, particularly the strategies for dealing with the constraints from the social context and cultural differences. The constraints resulted in remarkable manipulations in the Fudan productions for more effective communication with the audience and for better reception in the target context. The manipulations discussed under the rubric of relevance will demonstrate both differences and interconnections among the Fudan productions, the mediating texts, and the source text, revealing the complexity of translating Western feminism in China as well as the complexity of relay translation.

Keywords

relay translation, feminism, China, intralingual case, relevance