

# Comparative Analysis of Translators' Style in Chinese Versions of Hamlet from the Perspective of Manipulation Theory

Leyun Mei\* and Hongmei Ruan

**Abstract**—Each translator's ideology will be formed differently due to his different time background and social environment, which will have an influence on their translation process. When translating the same work, the translator's understanding of the original text will be different. Based on Andre Lefevere's manipulation theory and taking Shakespeare's Hamlet translations in China as an example, this paper makes a comparative study of the translation styles of Zhu Shenghao and Sun Dayu. The translation styles of the two famous translators are different. The former is more prosaic, while the latter is more poetic. Starting from the translator's life experience and social background of translation creation, the paper discusses the different influence of ideology, poetics and patronage on the two translator's translation process through the analysis of specific examples.

**Index Terms**—Andre Lefevere's manipulation theory, translation of Hamlet, comparative study

## I. INTRODUCTION

*Hamlet* is one of the four tragedies of British drama master Shakespeare, it is not only popular among the masses in the West, but also in China. Since the 1920s, there have been dozens of translation of *Hamlet* in the history of literary translation in China, and the style of each version is different, which reflects the cultural differences in different periods. With the continuous development of the new era, people's pursuit of literary value has become higher, and the need of literary will change accordingly. The translation of *Hamlet* will also be constantly updated.

This paper mainly focuses on the translation of Zhu Shenghao and Sun Dayu. Zhu Shenghao's translation is mainly in prose style, which has a far-reaching influence on later scholars. Many readers think his translation is almost perfect. Sun Dayu's translation is based on the poetic style. He has made great contributions to the poetic style translation and provided high-quality research materials for later generations. This paper takes Lefevere's manipulation theory as the theoretical framework and takes *Hamlet* as the research object to systematically compare and analyze the influence of the three elements of the manipulation theory on two translators and their translations, hoping to bring some enlightenment to everyone.

Manuscript received November 30, 2022; revised January 15, 2023; accepted February 13, 2023.

The authors are with the School of Foreign Studies of Northwestern Polytechnical University (NPU), Xi'an, Shaanxi Province, China.

\*Correspondence: 875801757@qq.com

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Shakespeare's works have always been loved and concerned by scholars around the world. In China, there are countless translations and studies of Shakespeare's works, and there are many excellent translations of Shakespeare's work. Such as Liang Shiqiu, Zhu Shenghao, Sun Dayu, Bian Zhilin, etc. At the same time, there are also a considerable number of papers on the translation of Shakespeare's works. For example, Ren [1] wrote the paper starting from the original text of Shakespeare's works and studied the relationship between blank verse and Shakespeare. He briefly expounded on the process of the transition from prose translation to poetic translation, and led to the inherent defects in prose translation. Xie and Zhao [2] pointed out that for the same Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*, there were great differences in the translations of different translators, and the literary styles of the translations were also varied, from the early classical Chinese to the vernacular, to prose and poetry, and to the current research-based text. Huang Changyong [3] provided a comprehensive review of Sun Dayu's life, academic and translation achievements, as well as his political life. He gave an objective evaluation of Sun's creative achievements as a poet of the Crescent Moon Society, his exploration of new poetic metrical, and the originality of the translation of Shakespeare's plays. Li [4] pointed out that Zhu Shenghao's translations are well-loved by the world, he studied the translation of Zhu Shenghao's Shakespearean drama, analyzed his translations, explored its value, and gained new insights.

Lefevere's manipulation theory plays an important position in the history of translation studies, providing a new direction for translation studies. Many scholars have conducted translation analysis and research based on Lefevere's translation theory. For instance, Chen Meiwen and Jun [5] made a systematic analysis and understanding of Lefevere's translation theory and expounded on the development process of the theory in China. Zhu [6] wrote the paper based on Lefevere's manipulation theory, made a comparison study of Liang Shiqiu, Zhu Shenghao, and Bian Zhilin's translations of *King Lear*. He found that the three translators' translations have been impacted by the three elements of manipulation theory, and the three translations have their rationality and the inevitability of history, which are not good or bad.

Through reading relevant literature, it is found that there are few studies on the comparative analysis of Zhu Shenghao and Sun Dayu and their translations, they are very different in translation styles, both of which are representative and worth studying.

### III. THEORETICAL BASIS

In the 1990s, there was a “cultural turn” in the Western translation. Lefevere’s translation manipulation theory is an important theory under the “cultural turn”. This theory mainly discusses the cultural background in which translation occurs, and the impact of translation on the culture of the target language. This new research direction puts translation in a broad social and cultural background for research, breaks through the limitations of traditional research, and greatly expands the horizons of translation studies. Lefevere points out that translation is a process restricted by a variety of social and cultural conditions. It is manipulated by three factors: ideology, poetics, and patronage.

#### A. Ideology

As for the concept of ideology, some scholars believe that it is a false consciousness opposed to science, including religion and any other false forms. Lefevere believes that the emergence of ideology is not accidental, and it must be produced in the real society, and it is people’s response to the social and cultural environment in a certain state. He also points out that ideology mainly influences and manipulates the creation of translators through political, economic and social status. It can control the translation strategies and principles chosen by the translator, and also affect the methods used by the translator to solve some translation problems.

#### B. Poetics

Lefevere divides poetics into two parts: the first part is literary elements, including literary genre, prototypes, situation and so on; the second part is functional elements, which refers to the role that literature play in the social system. If a systematic poetics system is established, it will promote the development of literature. Poetics has an indispensable influence on translators’ translation. Different translators have different views on poetics due to their different social statuses and personal growth environment. Different poetics views affect the translator’s translation thoughts and strategies when rewriting works, and the content and style will also be different.

#### C. Patronage

The so-called patronage is the controller of the translator’s translation. Patrons can be individuals, religious groups, political parties, social classes, publishers or media, etc. The power and strength of these patrons can promote or hinder the reading, writing and rewriting of literature at any time. Patrons control translators mainly from the following two aspects: the first point is the economic aspect. Sponsors will give translators corresponding remuneration or provide a position to translators to ensure their living quality. The second point is the social status aspect. Sponsors will help translators obtain some fame and status, and translators’ reputation and social status are in the hands of sponsors. Translators and patrons influence each other. On the one hand, translators will be affected by the financial and social aspects of patrons when choosing works and translation strategies, and translators also meet their own needs. On the other hand, patrons use the opportunity of sponsoring translation to consolidate their position and expand their economic influence. Therefore, in the process of rewriting, patronage is a factor that cannot be ignored. It has a huge

influence on the direction of translation activities, the development of translation works, and the social status of translators.

### IV. THE INFLUENCE OF THE THREE ELEMENTS ON ZHU SHENGHAO AND SUN DAYU’S TRANSLATIONS

Zhu Shenghao and Sun Dayu were born at the same time. Both of them are very interested in western literature, especially Shakespeare’s plays. They have a deep personal understanding of Shakespeare’s plays. Although they live in the same era, there are huge differences in their living environment, educational and social background, which also leads to completely different translation styles and strategies in the translation of *Hamlet*. This part makes a comparative analysis of the two translators and their translations with the three elements of manipulation theory as the influencing factors.

#### A. The Influence of Ideology

##### 1) The influence of ideology on Zhu Shenghao’s translation

Zhu Shenghao was born in 1912. He majored in Chinese and English during his college life. He was interested in Chinese cultural traditions and Western culture. He had an indelible feeling for Shakespeare and spent most of his time studying and translating Shakespeare’s plays. It was in the mid-1930s that Zhu decided to start translating Shakespeare’s plays. At that time, the Chinese nation was suffering from Japanese aggression and the country was in danger. Many Japanese translators ridiculed Chinese culture and laughed at its backwardness. Zhu was worried about the fate of the country and felt indignant in his heart, which greatly stimulated his patriotic enthusiasm. For him, translating Shakespeare’s plays was his responsibility. He wanted to help China get out of darkness and embrace a bright future through his strength. It was in such a social and cultural background that Zhu began his translation of Shakespeare’s plays. His purpose of translation is to popularize Shakespeare among Chinese readers. During the translation process, he paid great attention to whether the translation could be accepted by the general public, and whether it could be read smoothly. Before translating, he would carefully study the meaning of the word and sentence, understand the meaning of the original text thoroughly, and then try his best to keep the meaning and charm of the original works.

##### 2) The influence of ideology on Sun Dayu’s translation

Sun Dayu was born in 1905. He is a well-known translator, an expert in Shakespeare studies and one of the representatives of new metrical poetry. He has made some achievements in translation, especially in the study of Shakespeare’s plays. Although his translations are few, they are of high quality. He studied at Tsinghua University with an undergraduate degree. After graduating from the university, he got the opportunity to study in the United States. After studying abroad, he went to Yale University for further studies, specializing in English literature. During his studies, he read a large number of original foreign literature, especially Shakespeare’s works, which laid a good foundation for his later English-Chinese translation. After coming back to China, Sun’s work and life were not always

all smooth sailing. In 1957, the anti-rightist struggle and the Cultural Revolution broke out in China. During this period, Sun experienced unfair treatment in the political campaign and two prison sentences. At this time, his translation career suffered a huge blow, but he did not give up. After he was released from prison, he returned to his career, regaining his youthful love and passion for Shakespeare's plays, devoted himself to the translation, rebuilding his spiritual homeland. He successively translated five of Shakespeare's plays with poetic style. After the Cultural Revolution broke out, Sun's translation journey was once again forced to be suspended, and he began a more cruel life experience. After his second release from prison, Sun was almost desperate. Sun regained his translation career in extreme grief, and he translated *Hamlet* under a special social background and difficult living environment. He has a deep self-understanding and knowledge of the plays. He insists on choosing the form of poetic style, strictly demanding himself, and making his translation as close to the original text as possible.

### 3) *The comparative analysis of the two translations*

The following three examples are selected from the two translations for a comparative analysis:

#### **Example 1 :**

Queen: Come, come, you answer with an idle tongue.

Ham: Go, go, you question with a wicked tongue. [7]

朱译:

王后: 来, 来, 不要用这种胡说八道的话回答我。

哈姆雷特: 去, 去, 不要用这种胡说八道的话问我。[8]

孙译:

王后: 去吧, 去吧, 你答话在东拉西扯。

哈姆雷特: 来吧, 来吧, 你发问满口是歹话。[9]

#### **Example 2 :**

Ham: And let me wring your heart; for so I shall

If it be made of penetrable stuff;

If damned custom have not braz'd it so,

That it is proof and bulwark against sense. [10]

朱译:

哈姆雷特: 让我扭你的心;

你的心倘不是铁石打成的,

万恶的习惯倘不曾把它硬化得透不进一点感

情,

那么我的话一定可以把它刺痛。[11]

孙译:

哈姆雷特: 让我来绞你的心肝; 我要这么做。

假使那不是穿刺不透的实心肝,

假使可恨的习惯没把它磨炼硬,

像森严的棱堡, 坚拒情理的宣扬。[12]

#### **Example 3 :**

Ham: Now whether it be

Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple

Of thinking too precisely on th'event.

A thought which quarter'd hath but one part wisdom,

And ever three parts coward, I do not know [13].

朱译:

哈姆雷特: 我不知道是因为鹿豕一般的健忘呢,

还是因为三分怯露一分智慧的过于审慎的顾

虑。[14]

孙译:

哈姆雷特: 却说, 是由于

禽兽似的健忘, 或什么怯露的畏葸,

把事情考虑得过于周详缜密——

这思想, 一分为四, 含一分智虑,

倒是有三分是胆小——我可不知道。[15]

From the above three examples, we can clearly see that the two translators have different styles, the former is more prosaic, while the latter is more poetic. And these examples also reflect the different translation principles of the two translators. The phrases "idle tongue" and "wicked tongue" in the first example reflect the difference in the choice of words by the two translators. Zhu's translation of "胡说八道" has a literary color, and it is very colloquial, while Sun chose a literal translation, and translated them into "东拉西扯" and "满口是歹话", which is very faithful to the original meaning. In example 2 and example 3, the two versions are quite different in sentence pattern. Zhu chooses to link up the sentence contents and translate them most fluently and colloquially, and the third example is the most obvious. Sun keeps faithful to the original text, translating word for word and sentence by sentence. Every sentence can be compared with the original text, and the sentence structure is neat. It is not difficult to find that Sun's translation in the above three examples is based on the sentence pattern of the original text. In general, Sun attaches great importance to the faithfulness of the translation. It maintains the meaning and sentence style of the original works to the greatest extent. The purpose is to let people deeply feel the Western culture and understand the thoughts and innovations of Western culture. On the other hand, Zhu pays attention to the smoothness of the translation on the basis of being faithful to the original text. Trying to figure out what it means, he wants to make the translation more vivid and cohesive, so as to arouse readers' interest in reading and make it easy to read.

### *B. The Influence of Poetics*

#### *1) The influence of poetics on Zhu Shenghao's translation*

The influence of the poetic view on Zhu Shenghao needs to be analyzed from two aspects, the first aspect is the literary element. Zhu was in the era of the new culture movement. As a new language form, vernacular Chinese has stepped onto the stage of history and culture. Zhu's translation of Shakespeare in vernacular was in line with the trend of historical and cultural development as well as the expectation of readers. At the same time, 19th-century China had already begun to be influenced by the European Romantic literary trend. Zhu has received western education, and he has unique understanding and feelings about Shakespeare's plays. In the process of translating Shakespeare's plays, Zhu advocated "similarity in spirit" and devoted himself to making the translations as well as possible without losing the charm. He did not pursue the translation method word by word and did not stick to the sentence pattern of the original work. This reflects a distinctive feature of prose style: "scattered in form but not in spirit", so the overall style of Zhu's translations is prose-oriented. The second aspect is the function element, that is, what role this work should play in society, or what role it should play. Zhu clearly realized that for Shakespeare's plays to be accepted by the public, it is necessary to properly conform to the mainstream culture of the country and to properly filter the foreign culture. Therefore, in the process of translation, it is inevitable to be subject to the constraints of mainstream literature and

poetics. The genre of Shakespeare's plays is blank verse, which is not applicable in Chinese literature at that time. So Zhu chose prose style for translation, which was in line with the trend of cultural development in the country. In the process of translation, on the basis of retaining the original meaning of Shakespeare's plays, he tried to integrate Chinese history and culture into the translation as much as possible to enhance the readability of the translation. Zhu reshaped Shakespeare with the poetics of his own culture, catering to the needs of Chinese readers and stimulating their interest in reading. His translations advanced the development of Shakespeare's plays in China, while let Western people understand Chinese culture, thus promoting cultural exchange between Chinese and Western cultures.

### 2) *The influence of poetics on Sun Dayu's translation*

The influence of poetics on Sun Dayu needs to be analyzed in two parts. The first part is literary elements. Sun was not only a poet and essayist, but also a literary theorist and translator in the May 4th New Literature movement. He, together with Zhu Xiang, Rao mengkan and Yang Shien, is known as the "Four Sons of the Crescent" and one of the representatives of the Crescent Moon Society. He is proficient in poetry. Since 1925, he has begun to study new poetic meter and has successively released his new poems. His profound attainments in poetry laid the foundation for his later translation of Shakespeare's plays. He conducted research on Shakespeare's plays and put forward the phonological group theory. It refers to a neat rhythm in the language, which is mainly displayed in the form of poetry. The main linguistic form of Shakespeare's plays is blank verse, also known as the iambic pentameter, which means that a foot is made up of two syllables, the second syllable is pronounced more heavily than the first. Sun used his phonological theory to translate Shakespeare's plays. So the overall style of Sun's translation is poetic style. The second part is functional elements. Sun's translation shows the readers *Hamlet* in a straightforward way, which can make readers feel the "original" *Hamlet*. In addition, there are a lot of annotations in his translation, which is not an easy task and requires a lot of energy. Sun's translation promoted the development of the poetic translation of Shakespeare's plays, which is a valuable material worthy of our study and plays a vital role for future generations to study Shakespeare's plays.

### 3) *The comparative analysis of the two translations*

The following three examples are selected from the two translations for a comparative analysis:

#### **Example 1 :**

Oph: He is gone, he is gone,

And we cast away moan. [16]

朱译:

奥菲利娅: 人死不能活,

且把悲声歇。 [17]

孙译:

莪斐丽亚: 他已走, 他已走,

不用苦, 不用愁。 [18]

#### **Example 2 :**

Player Queen: To desperation turn my trust and hope,

An anchor's cheer in prison be my scope [19].

朱译:

伶后: 毁灭了我的希望和信心,

铁锁囚门把我监禁终身! [20]

孙译:

伶后: 叫我的希冀和信任变成绝望!

限我死守在坐关修士的椅上! [21]

#### **Example 3:**

To be, or not to be, that is the question:

Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer

The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,

Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,

And by opposing end them: to die to sleep; [21]

朱译:

生存还是毁灭, 这是一个值得考虑的问题;

默默忍受命运的暴虐的毒箭,

或是挺身反抗人世的无涯的苦难,

通过斗争把他们扫清,

这两种行为, 哪一种是更勇敢的?

死了, 睡着了; [22]

孙译:

是存在还消亡, 问题的所在;

要不要衷心去挨受猖狂的命运

横施矢石, 更显得心情高贵呢,

还是面向汹涌的困扰去搏斗,

用对抗把它们了结? 死掉; 睡去; [23]

The above two examples both reflect the differences in the poetics of the two translators. The "gone" and "moan" in the example 1 are end rhymes. Zhu does not limit himself to the frame of the original text, he chooses prose form to express the meaning, which makes the reading more smooth and accurate. Sun follows the original sentence structure, and retains the form of poetry and the rhyme of the original text translated as "走" and "愁". The sentence patterns are neatly aligned and faithful to the original. The "hope" and "scope" in the example 2 also end rhymes. Zhu is still not limited to the original text frame. He retains its charm on the basis of understanding the meaning of the original sentence. He is exquisite in terms of words and chooses prose style. Sun keeps the sentence structure of the original text, translating the rhyme of the original text into "绝" and "上", and performing the translation strictly in accordance with his translation strategy. In example 3, the careful reading of Zhu's translation has a deeper meaning. Influenced by the mainstream poetics of the society at that time, he broke the limitations of the original text and language. His translation contains his original intention of trying to awaken the people by translating western works with a political purpose. Sun's translation is based on his sound group theory. The original text is a ten-syllable five-syllable step in each line. In his translation, three words or two words form a group to form a five-syllable step. Generally speaking, the two versions are quite different in poetic concepts, which deserves our repeated consideration.

### *C. The Influence of Patronage*

#### *1) The influence of patronage on Zhu Shenghao's translation*

Zhu Shenghao's translation of Shakespeare's plays is indispensable from the support of Zhan Wenxu and the influence that Lu Xun brought to him. Zhan Wenxu and Zhu Shenghao worked together at the World Book Company for many years. They got along well with each other. Zhan Wenxu appreciated and trusted Zhu's literary talent and

translation ability. Later, he was appointed as the editor-in-chief of the World Book Company, and then he encouraged Zhu to systematically translate Shakespeare's plays and integrated them into a complete translation. Zhu was interested in Shakespeare's plays and had been studying and researching them. In 1935, Zhu signed a contract with the World Book Company and began the journey of translating Shakespeare's plays. Lu Xun's influence on Zhu is on the spiritual level. In order to promote cultural exchanges and break the barriers of Eastern and Western cultures, Lu Xun was committed to advocating people to learn from the advanced Western culture and communicate with Western culture. He hoped to improve the cultural literacy and ideological realm of the people, and help the country stand up. Zhu was deeply influenced by Lu Xun and chose to use his strength to help the country get out of its predicament and save the motherland through the cultural exchanges during a time of national crisis. Zhan Wenxu manipulated Zhu's translation activities, because of his encouragement and support, Zhu strengthened his translation style and strategy, and finally completed the translation of *Hamlet*. And Lu Xun influenced Zhu's ideological realm, making him full of conviction. Both of them played a protective and supportive role in the style of Zhu's translation.

#### 2) *The influence of patronage on Sun Dayu's translation*

Sun Dayu's translation path was relatively tortuous. His middle age did not go smoothly. The translation process was interrupted by two imprisonment disasters. During this period, Hu Shi and Sun Jiajin sponsored his translation career. In 1935, Sun translated Shakespeare's play *King Lear* with the help of the Chinese Culture and Education Foundation hosted by Hu Shi. Later, Sun Jiajin, one of Sun's students in the Foreign Languages Department of Jinan University, contacted Sun and expressed his willingness to help him publish the translation of Shakespeare's plays. Sun Jiajin was the president of the Shanghai Translation Publishing House at that time, and Sun decided to submit eight translations of Shakespeare's plays to the Shanghai Translation Publishing House for publication. It is undeniable that Hu Shi and Sun Jiajin were Sun's nobles on the way of Shakespeare's translation. It is precise because of them that Sun's translation style and translations can survive and continue to this day. In fact, for Sun, his most important "patron" is himself. He has taken a very difficult path of translating Shakespeare's plays. His life had a great turning point in middle age, whether spiritual or material was hit. Relying on his love for Shakespeare's translation and the constantly rebuilding of the spiritual world, he completed eight high-quality Shakespeare's plays translation.

#### V. CONCLUSIONS

By analyzing the translations of the two translators, we can find that ideology, poetics, and patronage have an influence on the translator's translation, manipulating the translators' choice of strategies and styles. Every translation has something worth learning, all of which have been

carefully considered by the translator. The two translators discussed in this paper have a supreme status in the translation field. These two versions have their own features. Zhu Shenghao's translation is suitable for readers to read, which is conducive to the popularization of Shakespeare's plays in China, while Sun Dayu's translation is suitable for scholars to study. Two translations have contributed to the spread of Shakespeare's play. No matter which translation it is, it is worthy of our study and analysis, we must treat each translation fairly. Each translation should be judged after careful study in many aspects. For translators, every translation is the result of their efforts. They have shown the charm of the original text to the greatest extent, and this is the greatest success. The times are constantly advancing, and our translation history is constantly updated. But no matter how we update, we must not forget these translators who have laid the foundation for our translation field.

#### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

#### AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Leyun Mei conducted the research, analyzed the data and wrote this paper; Hongmei Ruan, professor at the School of Foreign Studies, Northwestern Polytechnical University and supervisor of Leyun Mei, has contributed a lot to writing and improving this paper; all authors had approved the final version.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Z. Ren. "Translation of Shakespeare: From prose to poetic translation — The complete works of Shakespeare edited by Fang Ping," *Chinese Translators Journal*, vol. 3, pp. 41–44, May 2003.
- [2] S. J. Xie and J. Zhao. "A study of Chinese translations of Hamlet based on poly system theory: A comparative study of four versions of Hamlet in historical and cultural context," *Journal of Yichun University*, vol. 10, pp. 67–71, Oct 2018.
- [3] C. Y. Huang, "Sun Dayu and Shakespeare's drama translation," *Theatre Arts*, vol. 2, pp. 46–54, Apr 2013.
- [4] W. M. Li, "Permanent Shakespeare, permanent Zhu Shenghao: The specific value of Zhu Shenghao's translation of Shakespeare's plays," *Shandong Foreign Language Teaching Journal*, vol. 4, pp. 13–18, Aug 2013.
- [5] M. Chen, J. Wen, and Y. Zhang, "The study of Lefevere's translation theory in China," *Foreign Language Research*, vol. 5, pp. 116–119, Sep 2011.
- [6] M. Zhu, "A comparative study of the three Chinese versions of King Lear from the perspective of manipulation theory," *Huazhong Normal University*, Apr. 2012.
- [7] S. H. Zhu, *Hamlet*, Beijing: China Water & Power Press, 2019.
- [8] D. Y. Sun, *Hamlet*, Beijing: China Huaqiao Publishing House, 2018.
- [9] A. Lefevere, *Translation/History/Culture A Sourcebook*, Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, 2010.
- [10] A. Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*, Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, 2004.

Copyright © 2023 by the authors. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited ([CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)).