

# When Vaginas Speak Chinese: Mobilizing Feminism Through Translation

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During the last two decades, there have been multiple discussions about the intersection of feminism and translation, from the early gender-conscious model reflected in feminist translation studies to recent scholarship that reconceptualizes translation as a form of “intersectional feminist activism” (Castro and Ergun 2). Feminist translation praxis in the Global South, which was once a peripheral topic, is now a growing vogue. Over the past few years, the Sinophone women/translation interdiscipline has attracted a considerable amount of scholarly attention. Yet, most of the existing research—Zhongli Yu’s 2015 monograph on translating feminism in China, for instance—either fails to contextualize the circulation of feminist texts in Chinese-speaking countries or tends to homogenize regional diversity. In this paper, I recapture the development of two Taiwanese feminist waves and investigate two Mandarin Chinese translations of *The Vagina Monologues* published in Taiwan. In the first part, I compare the contexts in which two different Mandarin translations were produced, discuss how Eve Ensler’s 1998 play was first introduced in Taiwan by Ch’en Ts’ang-to in 2000 and contributed to the second-wave Taiwanese feminist movements, and explore why it was retranslated by Ting Fan and Ch’iao Se-fen in 2014. In the second part, I draw on a few examples from these two translations to analyze how the two groups of translators reconfigure female bodies and sexualities. By analyzing these two different sociohistorical contexts, I argue that translation facilitates the dissemination and circulation of feminist discourses in cross-cultural encounters, challenging the patriarchal codes in Taiwan and raising awareness of gender equality. The comparative contextual and (para-)textual analyses of the two Mandarin translations of *The Vagina Monologues* also reveal that the various forms of feminist intervention effectuated in the target (para-)texts should not be simply equated with the “simple alteration of a source text in blind allegiance to [a translator’s] ‘agenda’” (Eshelman 17). Feminist translation praxis, as it turns out, entails a complex mechanism through which translational agents encounter and negotiate with each other.

## **Works Cited**

Castro, Olga and Emek Ergun. “Re-Envisioning Feminist Translation Studies: Feminisms in Translation, Translations in Feminism.” *Feminist Translation Studies: Local and Transnational Perspectives*, edited by Olga Castro and Emek Ergun, Routledge, 2017, pp. 1-11.

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