

# Domesticating and Foreignizing Strategies in Fiction Translation

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**Abstract:** This thesis is mainly concerned with the two translation strategies of domesticating translation and foreignizing translation. The former is to make readers understand original works easier; the latter is to make readers understand original works clearer. It is necessary to take into consideration the necessity of using these two kinds of strategies, the affecting factors of using these two strategies to translate fictions and the ways of using these two strategies.

**Key words:** domesticating translation; foreignizing translation; original works; target culture; target language

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## 1 Introduction

Domesticating method and foreignizing method are two different ways in translation, which have been dwelt on a lot by scholars and translators recently. The former scholars and translators always talked about the comparison between domesticating translation and foreignizing translation in their works. Nowadays more and more translators begin to attach the importance to "domesticating translation" and "foreignizing translation" in translating literary works, especially in translating novels, poems, etc. Then what's the definition of domesticating translation and foreignizing translation? The terms of domesticating translation and foreignizing translation are coined by L. Venuti (1995) to describe the two different translation strategies. Shuttleworth and Cowie defined domesticating translation and foreignizing translation in Dictionary of Translation Studies as follows:

Domesticating translation and foreignizing translation are two different translation strategies. The former refers to the translation strategy in which a transparent, fluent style is adopted in order to minimize the strangeness of the foreign text for target language readers, while the latter designates the type of translation in which a target text is produced which deliberately breaks target conventions by retaining something of the foreignness of the original. (Shuttleworth, 2004: 43; 59)

It is hard to tell which strategy is better from studying the definition of domesticating translation and foreignizing translation literally. And it is true that when translating fictions, learning how to use these two kinds of strategies is necessary while in order to better understand and translate fiction works, a good translator has to first understand the concept of fiction. Hornby defines fiction in his *Oxford Advanced Learner's English-Chinese Dictionary* as a "type of literature (eg novels, stories) describing imaginary events and people" (Hornby, 1999: 538). This thesis will mainly deal with type of literature like novels and short stories

Since domesticating method and foreignizing method have been proved necessary strategies in translating fictions, this thesis, therefore, is trying to focus on the study of "domesticating strategy"

and "foreignizing strategy" in fiction translation by looking into the necessity of using these two kinds of strategies, the affecting factors of using these two strategies to translate fictions and the ways of using these two strategies.

## 2 The necessity of using domesticating strategy and foreignizing strategy to translate fictions

### 2.1 The request of literary translation

From the angle of literary translation, it is quite necessary to use domesticating strategy and foreignizing strategy to translate fictions. Since a literary work is a reflection of a certain culture, these two strategies can help deal with those translation difficulties caused by different cultures.

### 2.2 The features of fiction writing

Fiction is a narrative literary style, which includes three factors (character, plot and environment). A fiction is full of rich and delicate character description, thorough but changeable plot and unique environment description. Using domesticating method and foreignizing method to translate fictions, it is necessary to know the nature and feature of the fiction. No matter which method is chosen, a translator has to bear in mind that he is translating fictions instead of other literary styles.

## 3 Affecting factors of choosing domesticating strategy and foreignizing strategy to translate fictions

What is the concept of fiction translation? It may well be defined as the translation of fiction literally. However, this definition seems a little general. Fiction translation means an activity of using one language to express the human thoughts and characteristics of a fiction written in another language faithfully and accurately. It is not an easy job to translate fiction. Then what factors are necessary to be paid attention to when using domesticating strategy and foreignizing strategy to translate fictions? A better understanding of these factors can help translators make choices between these two strategies.

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### 3.1 Factors of choosing foreignizing strategy to translate fictions

#### 3.1.1 The target culture and context

The translation should accord with the culture and customs of the target language. During the recent debate, the words 'culture' and 'translation' are being increasingly linked. Questions regarding whether or not translation can account for culture or to what extent culture is relevant are very much at the centre of the debate (Katan, 2004:7). Since literary works are expressed in languages, which are the carriers and important constituents of culture, it is impractical to isolate translation from culture. To translate a fiction successfully, a translator has to be familiar with foreign culture, thoughts, beliefs, customs and values as well as display his own cultural values and souls in order to make exchanges between two different cultures. It is by making a further study of the target culture that a translator can better understand the original works.

For example, there is one plot in *A Dream of Red Mansions*:

Madam You ordered her maid to fetch the stewards' wives to find something to eat for her. When the maid saw the stewards' wives, she said like this, "那一位奶奶在这里? 东府奶奶立等一位奶奶, 有话吩咐。" (Yang Xianyi, 2001:2132). What the phrase "奶奶" means here is the key point to translate this sentence. Here, the meaning of "奶奶" is quite different from what we are using today. If the phrase is translated into "grandma", the result will be unimaginable.

Yang Xianyi's translation version goes like this:

"Are none of the stewards' wives here?" she asked. "My mistress from the East Mansion wants one of them immediately".

Yang's version fully studies how to call different people according to their different identities and social status which well reflects the culture of that time.

It is equally important to take into consideration the context of the original works. When a translator chooses a word to translate the original passages, he has to focus his particular attention on the context, or he can not explain the meanings of the original words correctly. Here is an example from one of the translation versions of *Journey to the West*. The original text is: 行者道: "你孙外公在此。" W.J.F. Jenner translated the sentence as "Monkey replied, 'Your grandfather, Monkey, is here.'" Here Jenner neglected the context of the conversation. This conversation took place when an old fiend asked the monkey whether he is Brother Monkey. The fiend meant to kill the monkey and the monkey was at that very moment a bit furious. Thus, the monkey in fact was calling the fiend's name and called himself the fiend's grandfather intending to give the fiend a lesson. The translation "grandfather", however, can not express such feelings of the monkey.

#### 3.1.2 Political and religious thoughts

As is known to all, political and religious thoughts always affect people's mind deeply. It can regulate people's ways of lives and behaviors. When translating fictions, a translator has to take into consideration political and religious thoughts expressed in original fictions. For instance, the word "God" has to be translated into "上帝" instead of "菩萨".

#### 3.1.3 The acceptance ability of readers

Mary Snell-hornby mentioned in her *Translation Studies—An Integrated Approach* that "...the problems do not depend on the source text itself, but on the significance of the translated text for its

readers as members of a certain culture, or of a sub-group within that culture, with the constellation of knowledge, judgment and perception they have developed from it". (Snell-hornby, 2004:42) Choosing domesticating method or foreignizing method or both to translate literary works also depends on readers' acceptance ability. Since the activity of translation always goes on in a certain social and cultural environment, different translation works of different eras made it impossible getting similar even same translation versions from different translators of different times.

For example, here is one sentence in *A Dream of Red Mansions* (Yang Xianyi, 2003: 656-657):

"巧媳妇做不出没米的粥来"

"Even the cleverest housewives can't cook a meal without rice."

"Even the cleverest housewives can't make bread without flour"

The former is Yang's translation; the latter is Hawkes's. Both translations are good translations. However, I prefer the first in that if the target readers know that rice and wheat are the main food of the Chinese people, the former translation can express the original cultural meanings better.

#### 3.1.4 The use of rhetoric devices and descriptive expressions

Jin Huikang mentioned in his "跨文化交际翻译续编" that using certain translation strategy (foreignizing strategy) under the source language culture is proper as long as no mistakes or misunderstanding will make up. (金惠康, 2004: 95)

Domesticating translation only expresses the general idea of the original, whereas lively rhetoric of the original may disappear.

Generally, rhetoric is often used in the passage to make the passage lively. Foreignizing translation keeps the rhetoric of the original, so it is lively as the original. When translating some sentences of human descriptions, it is more often than not using foreignizing method.

Here is an example from *Three Kingdoms* (Roberts, 2001:792):

"甄氏玉肌花貌, 有倾国之色。"

Moss Roberts translated this sentence as "With a face fair as jade, her skin flower-fresh, she was a beauty whose glance could topple kingdoms." In ancient Chinese tradition, when people praise a woman's appearance, he always said that her beauty can topple kingdoms or cities. Moss's translation not only showed Chinese culture but made his translation vivid and fresh. This is what the domesticating method can not do.

#### 3.1.5 Unique writing features of writers

The writing features of writers are one of the most indispensable factors affecting translation strategies. A fiction without unique features is just like a person without soul. As a translator, he has to exert his utmost to show the writer's writing features and the spirit of the original works. Otherwise, his translation will be worthless. When translating fictions, therefore, the writers' writing features are to be studied. Here is an example from Hardy's works. Hardy is a novelist famous for his delicate description of human feelings by using plain words.

In Hardy's "The Marchioness of Stonehenge", there is a sentence like this:

"...the young man, being of a readily-kindling heart, was quick to notice the tenderness in her eyes and voice." (He Peng, 2000:46).

He Peng translated this sentence vividly:

那年轻人则是个易于动情的人, 他敏锐的注意到对方目光

和话音里透露出的柔情蜜意。

Here the translation of the word "tenderness" is properly rendered, making the translation as wonderful as the original works.

### 3.2 Factors of choosing domesticating strategy to translate fictions

The remark habit is the main factor affecting the process of choosing domesticating strategy to translate fictions. Since the activity of translation is finally going on on the base of target culture and languages, domesticating strategy appears indispensable. And from the linguistic level, a translator has to pay attention to different remark habit of different people.

Here is one example from *The True Story of Ah Q* (杨宪益, 2003:92-93):

“他只说没有没有,我说你自己当面说去,他还要说,我说……”邹七嫂气喘吁吁的走着说。

"He keeps saying he has nothing left," panted Mrs. Zou as she came in. "When I told him to come and tell you so himself he kept talking back. I told him..."

In original works, the word “说” was mentioned again and again while the translation made a few flexible changes which made the translation more fluent and readable.

## 4 Using domesticating strategy and foreignizing strategy to translate fictions properly

In the practice of translation, we may find that some words in their senses are very difficult to deal with because of the disparity between the English and the Chinese languages. A good fiction translation is usually a passage in which the domesticating strategy or foreignizing strategy is properly used. Li Yunxing, a famous translator, thinks that any translation passages must have used the strategies of domestication and foreignization both. At present, domesticating strategy is the main means to translate passages, and things will go on in the future (李运兴, 2003:225). Li has his own reasons to prove his view. He thinks that domestication is the foundation. Without the knowledge of domestication, one can not use foreignization freely. However, relatively speaking, when translating fictions, one has to use foreignizing method mainly as well as use domesticating method as an indispensable but complementary method.

### 4.1 Using foreignizing method mainly

A translation is an art of using languages. It refers to the relation between the source language and target language. In this way, translation may be easy to accept. Although there are many differences between the two languages, a translator may retain the idea and style of the source language by literal translation. When translating, it is quite important to be aware of the importance of being loyal to the original works. After all, translation is different from creation. The nature of translation demands that a translator should express the spirit and main idea of literary works accurately and faithfully. It is also equally important for a qualified translator to show the readers foreign cultural characteristics, foreign language forms and the original writer's unique writing features. To readers, the aim of reading translation works is to appreciate a foreign culture. However, the target culture has close relationship with the form of the target language. Using domesticating method excessively will lead to the missing of original meanings. Foreignizing translation is a good choice in translation. And maintaining the styles of the original works seems quite necessary. Foreignizing translation should be used as the chief way of translation.

Here is an example from Hardy's *The Fiddler of the Reels in Selected Stories of Thomas Hardy*:

"Thus, without any definite agreement to forgive her, he tacitly acquiesced in the fate that Heaven had sent him."

“这样,他默默地接受了上帝给他安排的命运,虽然没有明确答应原谅卡莱恩。”(He Peng, 2000:144). Here the first part of the sentence is always translated into“他便逆来顺受了”。“逆来顺受”is a concept exclusively used by Chinese people. It is a phrase with deep Chinese cultural meanings. In Hardy's novel, the character "he" is a Christian who believes in God. Improper translation will make Chinese readers believe that he can understand Chinese culture. That is undoubtedly ridiculous.

### 4.2 Using domesticating method as an indispensable but complementary method

It is obvious that foreignizing translation is a relative concept. Since the construction and regulation of two different languages are different, translating word by word is impractical. In such case, a translator has to make flexible changes in choosing words and re-creation is unavoidable. Domesticating method becomes an indispensable translating method. In fact, both domesticating translation and foreignizing translation are not absolutely "domesticating" or completely "foreignizing". Domesticating translation and foreignizing translation will always go side by side since the translation works are finally read and estimated in the environment of the culture of a foreign language. Domesticating translation is to lead the original writers to go into the culture of the translating language by taking the nation-oriented attitude and making the original works adapt to the cultural values of translating languages.

Here is an example in the *A Dream of Red Mansions*:

“司棋道:‘……我若死了时,变驴变马报答你。……’”

Yang xianyi translates this sentence as "...If I die, I'll become a donkey or a dog so as to repay your kindness". Here it is quite obvious that the domesticating method is used. (Yang Xianyi, 2001: 2162). In Chinese people's mind, horse is a diligent and allegiant animal without complaint no matter how badly his owner may treat it. Such concept is just like the dogs in European people's mind. If the original sentence is translated into "If I die, I'll become a donkey or a horse so as to repay your kindness", European readers can not understand better the real meaning of this sentence.

Here is also another example in Hardy's "The Marchioness of Stonehenge". The original sentence is: "Flesh and blood is nothing!" (He Peng, 2000:68). He Peng translated this sentence into“亲骨肉算什么?” Here the domesticating method is also used. This sentence can not be translated into“肉和血不算什么!” On the one hand, the readers may not understand the meaning of the sentence; on the other hand, such speech is not used properly in Chinese expressions.

Sometimes only the domesticating method can express the original text fluently. There is one sentence in *Selected Stories by Mao Dun*:“林先生倒酣睡了一夜,恶梦也没有半个”。One of the popular translations is: Mr. Lin slept soundly all night, without even the suggestion of a bad dream.”(茅盾, 1999: 152-153). Here the concept of“半个”in the original text does not exist in foreign cultures.

## 5 Conclusion

The proper use of domesticating translation and foreignizing translation can help achieve the success of fiction translation. The  
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### 3.5 图式结构触发式冗余

图式结构指“由储存在长期记忆中的信息组织所构的认知活动”(Widdowson, 1983:53),即读者平时积累的背景知识体系。通常,关键词或词组会刺激并激活人们的相关图式结构来理解概念。当某个概念可触发人们对信息的把握时,文中其他重复信息便被认为是多余的。

例5:中国工商银行于1984年成立,全面承担起原由中国人民银行办理的工商信贷和储蓄业务,担当起积聚社会财富、支援国家建设的重任。

英美人士通常是通过记忆银行的基本职能而习得“银行”概念的。一提到银行,他们头脑中与银行相关的图式结构便会被触发:银行的基本职能是存取款,积聚资金,支援国家基础设施建设,提供金融服务等。若逐字翻译,无法达到企业的宣传效度。“人民银行”触发人们相关的图式结构,使人们联想起银行的职能和作用,即“承担…的重任”,因此,原句中划线部分属于图式结构触发式冗余信息,根据经济简明原则,应予简略。

译为:Since its founding in 1984, ICBC has **taken over** the industrial and commercial credits and savings businesses from the People's Bank of China.

### 4 结束语

日益国际化的中国企业需要精炼的语言向世界传播其企业文化,树立良好形象。因此,译者在翻译企业外宣材料时,应贴近西方受众的信息需求、审美标准与思维习惯,依据经济简明原则,调整汉语原文冗余信息,突出重点。明确概念语义特征及其与文本中其他语句构成何种性质或类型的冗余结构有助于译者简化和突出企业外宣翻译中信息操作的理据,即不同民族的人通过对概念语义特征的掌握,对共同熟悉的事物都有相应的认知图式,能在由概念构成的认知结构中自动进行认知补缺,使之整体连贯,这是一种对相关信息进行组合、充实、完形的心理过程。这样才能使传输负载与信道容量达到平衡,使译文在表达方式、内容传递方面符合英语的习惯,帮助企业成功宣传其产品与服务,塑造良好的国际化形象。

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most important thing in translation is the way in which to deal with the complex problems of equivalence between the source and target articles in order to deal with such factors as the target culture and context, political and religious thoughts, the acceptance ability of readers, unique writing features of writers, the use of rhetoric devices and the remark habit. Foreignizing strategy is a good choice to translate original works lively and closely. It retains the idea, style and rhetoric of the original. However, not all the sentences can be translated literally. Considering the difference between different language forms, domesticating strategy should be used as an indispensable and complimentary method. The combination of using domesticating translation and foreignizing translation properly may make a wonderful translation.

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