

On Zhang Peiji's Translation of *Mr. About-the-Same* from the Perspective of Domestication and Foreignization

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Abstract

Translation involves exchanges between the culture of the source language and the culture of the target language, and "domestication" and "foreignization" are two common translation strategies. After considering various factors, the translator chooses either to domesticate the text to fit the readers' familiar language habits and cultural background, or to foreignize and retain the language and cultural characteristics of the original text, allowing the readers to get close to the charm of exoticism. What the translator should do is to find a balance between the two, so that the reader can feel the linguistic beauty and cultural aroma of the source language to the greatest extent while successfully understanding the original meaning. Therefore, this article takes domestication and foreignization as the theoretical entry point to analyze the famous Chinese translator Mr. Zhang Peiji's translation of *Mr. About-the-Same*, one of the most well-known modern Chinese essays. This article will explore how did he apply domestication and foreignization strategies in translating *Mr. About-the-Same*, so as to further deepen the essential understanding of the act of translation.

Keywords

Foreignization; Domestication; Mr. About-the-Same; Chinese and Western culture; Translation strategy.

1. Introduction

Translation is a way of information exchange and a bridge of cultural communication, a process of pulling back and forth between two cultures, which requires the translator to maintain a balance between the cultural connotations carried by the source language and the target language. To produce an excellent translation of a literary work, the translator needs to promote the culture of the source language to the greatest extent possible and also to resonate with the culture of the target language to the greatest extent possible, which is a forever topic that all literary translators and scholars have to explore continuously. "Domestication" and "foreignization" are two common translation strategies that are welcomed by most translators and have received the attention of many scholars. Nowadays, many countries want to export their cultures to foreign countries, and it has become a trend in the field of literary translation to preserve the culture of the source language as much as possible.

Chinese literature has a long history and reveals the unique cultural heritage of China, but the modern era is an important period of change for Chinese literature, and with the continuous influx of Western literature, Chinese literature has begun to "westernize". Especially influenced by British essays, modern Chinese essays changed in both form and content, and a number of outstanding essay writers emerged, such as Lu Xun, Zhu Ziqing, Guo Moruo, Xu Zhimo, Hu Shih, etc. Modern essays combine Chinese and Western literary cultures, which makes it more difficult to translate such literary works because translators need to find a balance of exporting the culture of the source language while arousing the cultural identity of target readers. The *Selected Modern Chinese Essays* rendered into English by Zhang Peiji, a famous Chinese

translator and distinguished professor, not only provides Chinese scholars with abundant example articles for further research on translation theories and techniques, but also provides foreign scholars with plenty of materials for studying the intellectual development of Chinese intellectuals since the May 4th Movement of 1919[1]. This article intends to start from the perspective of literary translation and take the translation of *Mr. About-the-Same* as an example, analyzing the choice and application of the domestication and foreignization strategies in this translation, so as to reveal the positive or negative effects of the translation strategies of domestication and foreignization on literary translation.

2. Domestication and Foreignization

The terms of "domestication" and "foreignization" were first originated from a lecture *On the Different Ways of Translation* given by German philosopher Friedrich Schleiermacher in 1813, in which he argued that translation is to bring readers and writers closer to each other. Based on the previous research, Lawrence Venuti, a famous American translation theorist, proposed the concepts of domestication and foreignization of translation in *The Invisibility of the Translator: A History of Translation*, 1995. In this book, Venuti explained that a foreignized translation adopts an ethno-deviationist attitude to accept the cultural values of the original language and bring the reader into the cultural context of the original language, and a domesticated translation adopts an ethnocentric attitude to conform the original text to the cultural values of the target language[2]. Domestication and foreignization have been repeatedly debated since they were proposed. Venuti believes that translators should faithfully transmit the culture of the source language, clearly indicating his attitude of promoting foreignized translation, which has aroused heated debates in translation circles. American linguist Eugene Nida, one of the representative figures who disagree with Venuti and advocate the theory of domestication, focuses on the influence of the world culture (Anglo-American culture), and believes that translators should find ways to integrate the source language culture into the target language culture, that is, to complete the "localized" rewriting of the translation.

2.1. Domestication and Foreignization under Cultural Differences

As we all know, English and Chinese languages belong to different language families, and there are great cultural differences between the East and the West, so the two sides have different understanding of many things. Therefore, in order to achieve the purpose of cultural exchange, the first task of English-Chinese translation is to remove the obstacles in the way of understanding of the original text, and then translate the text to adapt to the familiar language habits and cultural characteristics of the target language, which is a more effective method. The ideal situation is to find equivalent expressions in the source and target language cultures, meaning that the lexical and cultural meanings of both are nearly the same. For example, the English proverbs "Practice makes perfect" and "Kill two birds with one stone" can be translated into the familiar Chinese idioms "Shunengshengqiao" and "Yishierniao", achieving equivalence on both the lexical and connotative level. However, this more desirable situation is relatively rare to be seen, which makes domesticated and foreignized translation strategies more useful. In the case where the reader is relatively unfamiliar with the cultural background and cultural imagery of the source language, the domesticated translation strategy will facilitate the reader's understanding of the original meaning conveyed by the text. For example, in Western culture, "Jack" stands for the general name for men, so the English phrase "Jack-of-all trades" is confusing if it is foreignized as "Jie Ke". It can be domesticated as "Wanshitong", which can help eliminate cultural barriers and make the translation smooth and meaningful. Another example, "Castle in Spain" is a western cultural image, meaning fantasy and illusion, so it cannot be translated as "A Spanish Castle", but should be domesticated as "Castle in the Air" in Chinese idioms. This not only enables Chinese readers understand it at once, but also shows the Chinese

cultural connotation so as to realize the equivalence of cultural frameworks. Although the Chinese and English languages and cultures are so distinctive, nowadays information channels are broadened and cultural exchanges are frequent, which deepens the cultural awareness of both sides. After the readers of the source language and the readers of the target language are more familiar with each other's cultural background and regional customs, the chance of misunderstanding the original language is greatly reduced. Then the strategy of foreignized translation is more suitable for readers to experience the exotic customs and broaden their cognitive horizons, which is conducive to the penetration of rich foreign cultural phenomena into the culture of the target language and compensates the regret of the lack of foreign culture brought by domesticated translation.

To consider it from a different perspective, foreignized translation can also enhance the cultural inclusiveness of the target language and bring cultural innovation[3]. For example, "To meet Waterloo" is translated into "Suffer Huatielu", and "Pandora's box" as well as "Adam and Eve" is phonetically translated into "Pandula's box" and "Yadang and Xiawa", which adds to the "stock" of cultural imagery in the target language. Gradually, readers of the target language will spontaneously associate Waterloo with the meaning of devastating blow and bad luck, and when they see Pandora, they will associate it with the root of disaster, and aware that Adam and Eve are the first man and woman created by God in the Bible. In this way, foreignized translation will promote cultural innovation of the target language.

2.2. Relationship of Domestication and Foreignization

Dialectically, domestication is centered on local culture, while foreignization serves foreign culture, seemingly to be contradictory but complementary and mutually reinforcing. Due to the distinctiveness of Chinese and English languages, it is necessary to ensure that readers can at least understand the original meaning of the text. So the domestication strategy is particularly crucial to eliminate the barriers to understanding by adapting the translated text to the readers' familiar expressing habits and cultural backgrounds. Pitifully, the translation after domestication will also lose the linguistic style and cultural characteristics of the original text. At this time, the strategy of foreignization can be considered as an extension and supplement of the strategy of domestication, preserving the style of the original text, allowing readers to feel the flavor and charm of the foreign culture, while introducing new words and expressions, bringing linguistic and cultural innovations to the target language. Therefore, pursuing domestication or foreignization too much is doomed to failure. Both cultural preservation and cultural introduction are the goals that translators strive to achieve, and only a reasonable combination of the two can promote English-Chinese language and cultural exchange.

3. The Role of the Translator

The translator is a messenger between different languages and a bridge between different cultures. Regardless of whether domestication or foreignization strategies are adopted, they all need to be realized through the translator, who, as the implementer of all translation strategies, is both the reader of the original text and the author of the translation, and is both the "decoder" and the "coder" in the translation activity, connecting the source language at the front end and the target language at the back end[4]. Therefore, the translator is both bound by the source language and responsible for the target language, and the influence of his or her dual identities is self-evident.

When translating a literary work, the translator always interprets a foreign language, either spontaneously or unconsciously, in the context of his or her own linguistic environment and history. Translators, like other ordinary readers, have different attitudes toward foreign cultures, and have their own set of criteria for how to reproduce the content and form of the original work and how to choose the focus of reading, which will have an impact on the whole

translation process. For example, Japan has been nurtured by Chinese culture since ancient times, especially during the Tang Dynasty when many envoys were sent to China, and Japan has long held an admiring attitude toward Chinese culture, leaving most aspects of Japanese society influenced by Chinese culture to varying degrees. In the aspect of language, the pronunciation and writing of the Japanese language are permeated with the impact of Chinese characters. Hiragana evolved from Chinese cursive script, katakana evolved from Chinese radicals, many Japanese words are pronounced according to Chinese characters, and the writing still follows Chinese characters until today, etc. For example, in Japanese, there are two expressions for the same meaning of "newcomer", the first one is しんじん, which is written as "新人" and pronounced as shinjin, and this word is introduced into Japanese not only retains the Chinese writing style, but also has the pronunciation obviously similar to the Chinese characters. This is evidently a practice of foreignization. However, there is also the other expression あたらしいひと, which is written as "新しい人" and pronounced as atarashihito, and is composed of the Japanese words "あたらしい"(meaning new) and "ひと"(meaning person). Clearly, the strategy of domestication is adopted in this practice where foreign words are modified with authentic Japanese expressions. This example indicates that the culture, society, and history of the country in which the translator lives, as well as the translator's personal thinking, education, character, experience, and aesthetic tendency, can directly or indirectly affect the domestication or foreignization tendency of the whole translation activity.

4. Introduction of *Mr. About-the-Same*

Before translating a literary work, a translator must be well versed in the outline of the text and the main idea of the text; otherwise, the translated work will often carry personal subjective assumptions or misunderstand the original author's intention, which will cause the readers to misunderstand the literary work. For this reason, this article considers it necessary to give a general introduction to *Mr. About-the-Same*. In the seventh year of the Republic of China (1918), in response to the call of the New Culture Movement, Hu Shih initiated the column *What Words* in the famous magazine *LA JEUNESSE*, which collected thought-provoking materials of the time, accompanied by the author's thought-provoking comments or direct criticism of "what words". This type of essay reflects the literary critical nature of the New Culture Movement at that time, and is good at exposing some fallacies in a straightforward and sharp manner, poking at the sore spots of that era.

Mr. About-the-Same is a person whose surname is Cha and given name is Buduo, altogether meaning "About the Same". The image of *Mr. About-the-Same* can be said to be a household name, and the characters are vividly and richly portrayed in this biographical fable through his famous quote "Everything is fine as long as it is about the same, why take it too seriously?" This biography is short and concise, seemingly light-hearted and witty, but in fact Mr. Hu Shih wanted to use the story of Mr. Cha Buduo to satirize people who only made perfunctory effort in Chinese society at that time, who just wanted to be "Cha Buduo" in everything, from not taking things seriously to not taking the world seriously, muddling through their lives in a confused manner. In that period of history, it was because there were countless men like Mr. Cha Buduo wandering in the Chinese society that the future of this country was in a mist.

5. Domestication and Foreignization in Mr. Zhang Peiji's Translation of *Mr. About-the-Same*

Appropriate domesticated translation can help remove reading barriers and make the translation conform to the language habits and cultural background of the target language, while appropriate foreignized translation can help readers experience foreign cultures and

broaden their cognitive horizons, and how to obtain an appropriate degree of combining the two is a topic that translators need to explore for a long time. Mr. Zhang Peiji's domestication and foreignization techniques used in his *Selected Modern Chinese Essays in English Translation* [5], *Mr. About-the-Same* in this case, are exemplary, and here are a few examples for learning purposes.

Example 1

One day in school, the teacher asked him, "which province borders Hebei on the west?" He answered, "Shaanxi." The teacher corrected him, "You are wrong. It's Shanxi, not Shaanxi." He retorted, "Shaanxi or Shanxi, aren't they about the same?"

"Zhili", or "Zhi" for short, is the old name of a Chinese province, and the so-called "Zhili" region often referred to the heartland under the nose of the emperor in ancient times. It was first mentioned in the Song Dynasty, and was renamed in 1928 to the present-day "Hebei" province. Even Chinese readers do not necessarily know the historical origin of "Zhili Province", or which region of China it refers to, and need to rely on commentaries to understand it, let alone English readers who are not familiar with the division of Chinese provinces. If it is directly translated as "Zhili", it will cause difficulties for the target readers to catch on, so Mr. Zhang Peiji adopted the domestication strategy here and translated "Zhili" as "Hebei". The target readers will understand at a glance that the author is talking about today's Hebei Province, thus avoiding unnecessary troubles. However, after this domestication, the historical information contained in the original "Zhili" is also lost, and the reader cannot get to know the names of the provinces in old China. It is a pity that Mr. Hu Shih's diction in writing this article, which is characteristic of that historical period, cannot be shown in the translation.

Example 2

Later Mr. Cha Budo served as an assistant at a money shop. He could write and calculate all right, but his mathematics were often faulty. He would mistake the Chinese character 十 (meaning 10) for 千 (meaning 1,000) or vice versa. The shop owner was infuriated and often took him to task. But he would only explain apologetically with a grin. "The character 千 differs from 十 in merely having one additional short stroke. Aren't they about the same?"

Chinese is a language rich in hieroglyphs, and there are many similarities in the appearance of numerous characters. In most cases, the words "千" and "十" here should be translated into English as "thousand" and "ten", but if we only focus on semantic translation, the "about-the-same" spirit hidden in the original characters won't make sense to the English readers. And it is because of the subtle differences between these characters that Mr. Cha Budo often gets them mixed up but smilingly pays no attention. Mr. Zhang Peiji's translation here is very well foreignized by remaining the Chinese characters "千" and "十" and adding a commentary afterwards. This can not only show readers the characteristics of Chinese characters, but also arouse readers' curiosity about Chinese characters, and satisfy readers' longing for eastern culture and the need for foreign communication.

Example 3

Thereupon the veterinarian walked up to his bed to work on him as if he were a cow. Consequently, Mr. Cha Budo kicked the bucket before an hour was out.

Both Chinese and Western cultures coincidentally adopt euphemistic expressions for death. In Chinese culture, similar set expressions include "One Life is Lost", "Guixi", "Qushi", etc. Generally speaking, the meaning is simple and clear, and the corresponding translation into foreign languages should be "die" or "pass away", but Mr. Zhang Peiji chose the English slang word "Kick the Bucket" to signify the death of Mr. Cha Buduo in the text, compared to the straightforward expressions of "die" and "pass away" which are more oriented to oral speech, adopting the domestication strategy. *Mr. About-the-Same* is a biographical fable, targeting a wide age range of readers, the use of authentic expressions from the readers' native culture can shorten the aesthetic distance caused by the cultural difference, reduce the barriers to reading, and not only allow the readers to read the original meaning of the text here, but also stimulate the readers' sense of closeness, without losing the artistic talent that a literary work should have. This is where the advantage of domesticated translation lies, using words with cultural color of the target language, and the expression is more in line with the language norms of the target language, which makes the translation authentic and natural to read and easy to be accepted and loved by readers.

Example 4

After Mr. Cha Buduo's death, people all praised him for his way of seeing through things and his philosophical approach to life. They say that he refused to take things seriously all his life and that he was never calculating or particular about personal gains or losses. So they called him a virtuous man and honored him with the posthumous reverent title Master of Easy-Going.

It is obvious that "see through, think through" is a typical Chinese cultural thinking, how things can be "seen through" and "thought through". What the author really wanted to express was the attitude of "being optimistic" and "taking things as they come", which is why Mr. Cha Buduo was given the title of Master Easy-Going to praise and commemorate his spirit of remaining indifferent whether granted favors or subjected to humiliation. As we all know, "Da Shi" is the title of a Buddhist clergyman in the old Chinese society, but the Western world is predominantly Christian, which involves the difference between Chinese and Western religious cultures. When translating, the translator must be familiar with the religious history and peculiar names of both Chinese and Western religions in order to translate successfully with as much cultural equivalence as possible. Mr. Zhang Peiji chose "Master" instead of "Da Shi", so that foreign readers can quickly understand that "Da Shi" means a designation or a title. And "Yuan Tong" is translated as "Easy-Going", so as to avoid searching around for the interpretation of "Yuan Tong Da Shi", which is time-consuming and probably not very fruitful. Because Chinese, as a typical analytic language, generally has more meanings expressed by a Chinese character than by a word, so word-by-word searches often do not reach the actual meaning. Therefore, such a domesticated translation into an expression that conforms to the translated language obviously helps readers to efficiently acquire information and improve the readability and fluency of the text.

6. Conclusion

After reading Mr. Zhang Peiji's translation of *Mr. About-the-Same*, the greatest reward is the deepened understanding of translation strategies and a sense of identity as a translator. Translation involves cross-cultural communication, and the translation strategies of both domestication and foreignization aim to create a translation that is both in tune with the customs of the target language and the flavor of the original culture, so domestication and foreignization cannot be treated separately and losing one is doomed to failure. What translators need to do is not to achieve the maximum degree of domestication or foreignization,

but to find a balance between the two, so that readers can experience the beauty and cultural charm of the original language to the greatest extent possible while successfully getting to know the original meaning. To achieve this goal, the translator should have profound and unbiased cultural awareness that the cultural exchange channels of countries and nationalities in the world tend to be diversified, and there is no such high and low cultures. The cultures of different countries and nationalities have their own rationality and necessity, and we need to observe and accept others' cultures with an open rather than a closed mind. Therefore, in translation practice, it is necessary to break down the barriers between different cultures, select appropriate translation strategies from the actual situation of the text context, and present a popular translation for the target language readers.

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