

A study on the Foreignization of Literary Translation in Cultural Context

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Abstract. In the context of the accelerating process of globalization, cultural exchanges are increasingly frequent. As a result, as an important cross-cultural literary carrier, literary translation plays an increasingly prominent position in cultural exchanges. Moreover, under the influence of cultural context, literary translation has more specific requirements for foreignizing translation in the contemporary cultural exchange and dissemination due to its unique text type. This paper first describes the basic concept of cultural context, and then expounds the particularity of literary texts in translation process compared with other texts. Additionally, it also discusses the epochal nature of foreignizing translation strategies in the contemporary translation process based on historical factors, and finally explores the specific application of foreignizing translation with examples.

1. Context and Cultural Context

In 1923, the concept of “context” was proposed by British anthropologist b. Malinowski. He divided the “context” into two types: “context of situation” and “context of culture”. From the 1960s, functional linguist Halliday introduced this concept to functional linguistics, making the concept of “context” widely used. [1]

“Cultural context” refers to the cultural background on which the text is generated. The text of different languages is usually generated in different cultural backgrounds, which is shared by the members of that culture. Therefore, it is inevitable to have the cultural stigma of its own. [2] According to the new cultural context research, each speech community has its own history, culture, customs, social conventions, thinking model, moral values and value orientation, which reflect the characteristics of specific speech community, constituting the whole content of cultural context.

2. Constraints on Literary Translation in Cultural Context

Literary translation involves many cultural factors, in which cultural context plays an extremely important role. In terms of this, literary translation is different from the translation of advertisements and etc., for their translation purposes are to integrate into the market. While, the requirement of literary translation does not emphasize so much on domestication translation, because the responsibility for cultural communication and exchange is more significant. Therefore, literary text is also one of the most culturally dependent texts. [2]

Translation is a communicative activity that spans time and space, cultures and languages. Furthermore, the process of translation is the process of the reproducing the source text in the target language based on the translator's understanding of the source text. The translator's choice of the target language, understanding of the source text and the adoption of translation methods are all subject to cultural context. In a sense, any translation, especially literary translation, cannot be separated from the cultural context, because they are influenced by the cultural context and are born under the cultural context. [3]

In literary translation, how to reflect the cultural context of the source text has always been one of the focal points of the translation dispute. In other words, it is the choice of domestication or foreignization in the process of translation. [2] At present, one of the main social functions of translation is to promote cultural exchange. So with the global acceleration of the integration process,

“preserving the beauty of the original” (Xun Lu, 2005b: 364-365), which means retaining the cultural characteristics of the source text or culture, can promote cultural exchanges as best as possible.

3. Epochal Nature of Foreignization Strategies in Cultural Context

3.1 Translation Strategies in History

Domestication and foreignization are the appellations of two translation strategies. In the field of translation studies, the two words were first used as terms by American translator Lawrence Venuti. According to the definition of Dictionary of Translation Studies written by Schuttleworth and Cowie, domestication refers to the translation strategy in which transparent, fluent style is adopted in order to minimize the strangeness of the foreign text for target language readers; while foreignization refers to the translation strategy that deliberately breaks target conventions by retaining something of the foreignness the original.[4] In short, domestication and foreignization are two opposing views on how to deal with cultural differences in translation. Domestication claims that the target language or target language readers should be the translation destination, but foreignization takes the source language or the author as the translation destination. Besides, the above translation destination is not only a linguistic concept, but also a cross-cultural one. To sum up, domestication and foreignization not only have always been the two major translation strategies in literary translation, but also a unity of contradiction.

In late Qing Dynasty (1840-1911), the translation methods were generally not confined to the source text. The strategy of domestication was used to deal with the language and form of the source text in the translation process. The characters represented by Yan Fu and Lin Shu set off the climax of translation and publication of Western literature. The Romantic Revolution in America, Uncle Tom's Cabin, and so on were introduced into China through translation by those people, contributing to the transmutation of Chinese modern translation literature.

During the May 4th Movement period, translators mainly adopted the strategy of foreignization. At that time, Chinese culture was in the marginal position of international culture. So the use of dissimilated language was helpful to introduce the unique spiritual connotation of western culture into China. Meanwhile, the main body consciousness of citizen modernization was also stimulated through this so as to transform literature and society.

In the Early Days of New China, the strategy of domestication was often chosen in the translation process, which was greatly influenced by ideological factors. In this period, translation served political construction, with the aim of "serving the revolution and serving for the creation". Among the translation works, *The Gadfly* is a representative of this period.

Throughout history, Chinese literary translators have been influenced by many factors. It is not only social or historical factors, political or economic environment, but also cultural values and so on that together influence translation strategy. Only when the ideology and literary concepts of target text conform to the trend of the times and keep pace with the times, can the target text be recognized by the society, and then spread widely all over the world.

3.2 Foreignization Strategies of Contemporary Literature

Today, the process of global integration is increasingly accelerating. And accordingly the exchanges between nations and cultures are becoming continuously frequent. Therefore, people need to break down the barriers of language and absorb the cultures of other nations. The foreignizing translation strategy could satisfy the expectation of target readers and help them appreciate the unique taste and extraordinary charm of foreign literature. Therefore, foreignization has become the development trend of contemporary literary translation. At the same time, foreignization requires translators to keep pace with the times and renew the concept of cultural exchange. Conveying the cultural connotation of the source text as truthfully as possible is essential in translation. In principle, there is no need to replace the unique cultural color of the source text. That is to say, maximizing cultural characteristics of source text is crucial to the translation strategy of foreignization. And the following is an example of application:

ST: 春风杨柳万千条,六亿神州尽尧舜。(毛泽东《七律·送瘟神》)

TT1: Spring winds move willow wands, in tens of million: Six hundred million we shall all be Sage-Kings.

TT2: Spring winds move willow wands, in tens of million: Six hundred million we shall all be Yao Shun (Chinese Sage-Kings) .

The difference between the two translation versions lies in the different treatments of “尧舜”. The former uses domestication strategy translating it freely, while the latter transliterates it by foreignization with further explanation behind. Actually, “尧舜” are two monarchs of keen intelligence and excellent judgment in ancient Chinese history, and the similar figures in foreign countries are Sage-Kings. However, if the translation is like TT1, the poems would lack the flavor of foreign culture. Moreover, foreign readers may think that China also have Sage-Kings, but not “尧舜”. As a consequence, the role of cultural communication would be diminished in the translation.

4. Probe into Methods of Foreignizing Translation

With the deepening of cultural exchanges between China and the West, readers have put forward higher requirements for literary reading. Target readers are increasingly eager for the unique charm and different literary sentiments of the source text. However, the tone of emotion depends on the content and form of the source text, so it is difficult to achieve the requirement if domesticating translation strategy is adopted. Consequently, the application of foreignization in literary translation is becoming more and more extensive. The application of foreignization needs to preserve linguistic and cultural differences of the source text. In other words, it often directly converts the words and sentences of the source language into the target language according to the meaning and language structure of the source text. Here is an example of this:

ST: 麻雀虽小,五脏俱全。(围城, 钱钟书,1980:321)

TT: The sparrow maybe small, but its five organs are complete. (Kelly & Mao, 2003:20)

The translation preserves the image of the Chinese “麻雀”, arousing target readers' interests in association and refinement through its symbolic meaning, and invisibly introduces a new expression to the target language, which enriches the target language. What's more, it also promotes the spread of Chinese culture to the west world. On the contrary, if domestication is adopted in the translation process, the poem would lose its original flavor, which is not conducive for the target readers to appreciate the image of Chinese culture and learn new expressions of another language.

However, foreignization strategy also has its own limitations. By using it improperly, it is easy to ignore the needs of target readers, the differences in context and etc. So, literary translation should not blindly adopt foreignization methods. There are many factors need to be consider, such as the specific cultural context, reader level and so on. Therefore, in case of inappropriate translation, translators should make supplementary explanation or adopt the strategy of "foreignization as the main factor, and domestication as the secondary factor" so as to conform to the culture of the source language. After all, the ultimate purpose of literary translation is to enable the target readers to accept the cultural characteristics of the source language to the maximum extent.

ST: 鸿渐指着那些土矮头问: “孙小姐,你相不相信有鬼!” (围城, 钱钟书, 1980:187)

TT: Pointing the coarse steamed bread, Hung-chien asked, “Miss Sun, do you believe in ghosts?” (Kelly & Mao, 2003:18)

In the source text, “土馒头” refers to the tomb, because the tomb looks like a huge bun. Hence the translation should be “coarse steamed bread” . Nevertheless, the target readers may not necessarily understand it thoroughly for the culture difference. Therefore, it is more appropriate to translate it into “grave” or annotate its figurative content behind.

Therefore, in cross-cultural context translation, the strategy of foreignization plays a dominant role in translation, because literary translation bears the responsibility of rich meaning expression and promoting cultural exchanges. However, the translator also should try his best to analyze and correctly understand the author's national and cultural background so as to facilitate the reasonable connection of information between the source language and the target language. Adapting to and

fully conveying the cultural context and meaning of the source language is a good strategy of foreignization. But when this cannot be understood or accepted by target readers, appropriate explanation should also be made, compensating for the span between cultural context and foreignizing translation, and at the same time making the target text conforms to the standard of “faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance”.

5. Summary

Translation is not only a language activity, but also a cross-cultural communicative activity. Therefore, in the process of translation, translators should not only accurately convey the content, intention, style of the original text, but also meet the needs of the target readers in the specific historical period and the specific social and cultural background. [6] With the deepening of globalization, the exchange of languages and cultures in the world is becoming more frequent. As a media of communication, literary translation is gaining increasingly significant status. The translation use of foreignization can preserve cultural specialization of the source language, and also make the target language more dynamic and accommodative, which conform to the trend of globalization. Therefore, the trend of foreignization in literary translation has become continuously popular. However, the strategy of foreignization inevitably still has its own limitations. As a result, in the translation process of literary works, translators should not only insist on foreignization, but also should comprehensively consider many factors like context and acceptance of readers. When foreignization cannot figure it out, domestication strategies and adding explanations behind are also excellent methods of translation. Only in this way can the target readers appreciate the most authentic and excellent literary works and translation better promote cultural exchange and integration.

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