

Hybridity in Translation Revisited: Strategic Potentials for Intercultural Communication

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Abstract: The concept of hybridity in translation has drawn scholarly attention since 1960s, and later discussed and researched mainly from cultural perspective. Many researches regard it as a result of translation process, while in translated texts a rather dynamic strategy concerning hybridity can be traced. It goes a way that is in-between domestication and foreignization, which tries to complete the reconstruction of the original work in the third cultural space. Hybridity as both a kind of cultural practice and a strategic choice of the translator may offer a new strategy, the “two-way construction” strategy, which holds a much more open mind for intercultural communication and falls in with the Chinese cultural philosophy of “harmony in diversity”. Texts with various degrees of hybridity contribute to the introduction of heterogeneous culture, and usually inject new development impetus into the receiving culture. The strategic potentials of hybridity in translation may serve well as a driving force for the development of cultures around the world.

1. Hybridity and translation

The word “hybrid” is derived from the Latin word “hibrida” and is used to refer to the offspring of female domestic pigs and male wild boars. Later, its meaning was expanded to refer to the hybrid offspring of any two different animals or plants. [1] Today, the biological concept of “hybrid” has been extended through figurative semantics to the field of social science research to denote two or more individuals that are produced by the fusion of two or more individuals with partial characteristics of the original parties. In the field of translation, hybridity is also common, which has attracted the attention of scholars, and there have been some discussions on the hybridity in translation.

From 1960s till now, scholars have been doing research on concept of hybridity in the field of translation. Schäffner and Adab defines a hybrid text as: a text that results from a translation process. It shows features that somehow seem ‘out of place’/ ‘strange’/ ‘unusual’ for the receiving culture, i.e., the target culture. It is important, however, to differentiate between the true hybrid, which is the result of positive authorial and/or translatorial decisions, and the inadequate text which exhibits features of translationese, resulting from a lack of competence. [2]

They argue that a hybrid text shows some characteristics that are somewhat strange to the target

culture. However, these characteristics are not due to a lack in translator's competence or the translationese, but the decision made by translator after deliberation. "That in a sense, all translations are in hybridity". [3] Their understanding of the hybridity in translation reflects two basic interpretations of the phenomenon: first, hybridity universally exists in translation; second, it is highly influenced by the translator's initiative.

In China, Han Ziman was the first to explicitly introduce the concept of "hybridity" into the study of literary translation. In his book *Hybridity in Literary Translation*, he discussed the issues of hybridity of the source text, hybridity of the translated text, hybridity and translation theory, and cultural hybridity in translation, which is so far a most important effort on translation hybridity research in China.

The prevalence of hybridity in translation is an inevitable result of translation activities, which has been apparent in the history of Chinese and international translation practice, and has been demonstrated in the writings of many scholars. Coming to be aware of the universal existence of hybridity in translation, it is safe to say that we have a closer understanding of the nature of translation, which also provide us with a rare opportunity to test and regain an understanding of translation theory. However, at present, in the academia of translation there is still something to be desired for research on hybridity.

The previous researches of hybridity show that the following three aspects have drawn much attention: 1). A descriptive account of the phenomenon of hybridity in the original text and the translation, and expounding on the universality of hybridity [3]; adopting literary and cultural theories to demonstrate the universality of hybridity. 2). Combined with the study of postcolonial translation, hybridity is used as a means to decentralize the dominance of the Western culture, to dissolve colonial hegemony, and to encourage dialogues and exchange between cultures of different nations. 3). The connection between hybridity and foreignization strategies. Some scholars believe that the use of foreignization strategy in translation contributes to the hybridity of a translation text, and use hybridity to explain the translation strategy.

This paper argues that the hybridity offers potentials for a new strategy in intercultural communication through translation. As it is seen, hybridity is largely regarded as a description of the current situation of the translation, revealing a feature of it, yet it could be playing a more important role if exploited.

2. Domestication, foreignization and hybridity

When it comes to translation strategies, the two concepts: domestication and foreignization are most often adopted and discussed, which can be traced back to Schleiermacher, a German theologian, preacher, and classical philologist. He distinguished two paths open for the 'true' translator:

Either the translator leaves the writer in peace as much as possible and moves the reader toward him, or he leaves the reader in peace as much as possible and moves the writer toward him. [4]

There are then two choices lay before a translator. He/she can either adopts a more source text-oriented strategy or a more target text -oriented strategy. And it is found true for most cases of translation. Kittel and Polterman claim that "practically every modern translation theory – at least in the German-language area – responds, in one way or another, to Schleiermacher's hypotheses." [5] Even today, after more than 200 years later, we still find his ideas valid in a modern context.

Munday put forward some reasonable consideration about the approach of foreignizing and domesticating:

(1) If the translator is to seek to communicate the same impression which he or she received from the ST, this impression will also depend on the level of education and understanding among

the TT readership, and this is likely to differ from the translator's own understanding.

(2) A special language of translation may be necessary, for example compensating in one place with an imaginative word where elsewhere the translator has to make do with a hackneyed expression that cannot convey the impression of the foreign. [6]

In his analysis, two aspects are worth noticing, one is that the same response from the translator and the ST reader tends to be impossible due to individual differences in terms of educational background, personal experience and other socio-cultural elements. The other indicates a combination of both the domesticated translation and translation that reflects the "new" from the source text sometimes in a creative and foreignizing way.

Lawrence Venuti's further exploration of the concept in a context of translating in a European centric world apparently takes credits for the development of foreignizing and domesticating. Actually, Venuti viewed foreignizing as more of a resistant means than that of a pure translation strategy. He thinks that translation should be discussed in the sociocultural framework.

"Norms may be in the first instance linguistic or literary, but they will also include a diverse range of domestic values, beliefs, and social representations which carry ideological force in serving the interests of specific groups. And they are always housed in the social institutions where translations are produced and enlisted in cultural and political agendas. [7]

With this framework of understanding the translation, Venuti is an advocator of foreignizing, which is 'strategic cultural intervention' seeking to 'send the reader abroad' by making the receiving culture aware of the linguistic and cultural difference inherent in the foreign text. [8] His ideas didn't stay in theoretical discussion, he also ardently practiced it in his translation work. The translators themselves are part of their own culture, who participate in the evolvement of the target culture system. As is widely known, Venuti believes that "fluent" or "transparent" translation that makes the translator invisible is a collusion with European centered domination. A translator can either accept or rebel against it. For some translators, especially those from the less influential nations, foreignizing is adopted as a tool to rebel against the cultural hegemony of some countries. Therefore, foreignizing is not only a translation strategy, but poses as a strategy for being visible in a dominant target culture, namely the strategic cultural intervention.

The foreignness that hybridity carries may be a result both from the effort of a translator to accommodate some exotic features of the source text culture and from a strategic cultural intervention. So, it is safe to say that there are basically two understandings of hybridity in translation. One is that hybridity is a kind of translation phenomenon that is ubiquitous in translated texts, and the other is that hybridity is more often than not, an active choice of the translators, and these two understandings are intertwined, which further perplexed the research of hybridity in the field translation.

However, it is not always a matter of whether a translator will adopt foreignizing strategy or domesticating strategy. It also happens that a translator may go the third way, that is to find an intermediate expression, which is less foreign or say not totally strange to the target readers. This is where hybridity is a more suitable concept to describe the situation.

3. Hybridity in translated texts

Hybridity can, of course, be found literally in any translated texts, as it is highly difficult, if not impossible to be one hundred percent domestication or foreignization for translation to take place as a cross linguistic and cultural activity. Here is a case analysis of hybridity reflected in the English translation of *Kutadgu Bilig*, and the following analysis of the "two-way construction" strategy.

Kutadgu Bilig is the earliest monumental work in the history of Uyghur literature, and it is mainly composed in the form of dialogue, which is a long philosophical poem in the style of mirror

for princes. The American scholar Dankoff made many adaptations in translating this long poem, so that the English translation takes on the characteristics of the literary tradition of the source literary system and the target literary system. Compared with the original text, the major changes made by the translator are as follows:

(1) The most obvious difference between the English translation and the original text lies in the stylistic changes, which in turn focuses on the interpretation and adaptation of the system of poetics. The English translation converted the original work from poetry to prose, translating all the couplets into prose and only the quatrains in the original work remains its poetic form to distinguish it from the rest part of the text. Regarding the translation of the quatrains, Dankoff made the following explanation:

In rendering the quatrains into verse, I mainly aimed to distinguish them from the surrounding text, although in the original they are distinguished only by the rhyme scheme (uniformly aaba). I have necessarily taken rather greater liberties in the translation of these quatrains, though striving always to remain true to the original... Explanatory notes are kept to a minimum, consisting mainly of Quranic references and other points which would be familiar to every Muslim reader though possibly obscure to a Westerner. [9]

Dankoff also quotes Dr. Johnson: "A translator is to be like his author; it is not his business to excel him." And in the Introduction of the book, it is clearly stated that "I have mainly aimed at coherence and readability. The logic of prose is not the same as that of verse... Thus, while not omitting anything germane to the meaning that Yusuf was trying to convey, I have not hesitated to omit inconsequential line fillers... occasionally entire lines." [10] It can be seen that the translator chooses to translate it into prose based on the judgment of the value of the work. In the history of translation and dissemination of Kutadgu Bilig, prose and poetry have always coexisted, each accounting for half of them, among which famous prose translations include the 1959 prose translation by the Turkish scholar Arat and the modern Uighur prose translation in 1991.

(2) Kutadgu Bilig was composed in the form of dialogue, the text progresses through questions and answers, and there are arguments and counterarguments, which is to some extent similar to that of the Analects in Chinese Han tradition. The way of presenting direct questions can drive readers to think together with the characters in the work, and are conducive to expounding ideas, which is in line with the exhortation theme of the work. At the same time, it also adds a dramatic color to the work and enriches the artistic effect of the work, which is a very important stylistic feature of the original work. The translator has a clear understanding and evaluation of this feature:

Yusuf's originality did not consist merely in adapting Turkish language and Turkish royal traditions to the genre of Islamic mirrors for princes. He also made a highly original contribution to that genre. He dramatized the issue in the form of dialogues set within a frame story. [11]

In contrast to the conversion of poetry into prose, the translator thinks highly of its form of dialogues and has this style of source text included in the English version. As dialogic text can be easily found in western tradition, or more specifically in Greek tradition, which poses no difficulty for the target readers.

(3) Cultural factors are an important issue in the translation of Kutadgu Bilig, and it is also a complex problem. As the book has rather diversified components in terms of culture, it is quite a task to discern their sources. Cultural elements in Kutadgu Bilig may have a source of Persian legend, a teaching from some native religion, or from culture of Han nationality. The translator needs to make judgments about the various cultural components and their interrelationships before deciding whether to and how to reproduce them. The handling of the intricate cultural phenomena of the original work in the English translation is first based on relevant research, for example, in the translation of philosophical thought, the English translation shows a clear secularization tendency, which is a direct expression of the translator's positioning of the book. In translating the cultural

elements in the book, Dankoff's translation strategy as a whole has the following characteristics: First, try to reflect the rich and diverse national and historical characteristics of the original culture. Second, take the target language cultural system as a reference to naturalize some cultural phenomena (sometimes it is inevitable that there will be excessive domestication). Third, the two-way construction as a strategy is carried out, and the translation is neither completely in line with the culture of the original work nor the culture of the target language, but it seems to be very close to both. Therefore, in the translation of cultural factors, the English translation can still reflect the characteristics of the original work, and the target language culture. For instance, Christian religious figures and concepts, Greek mythology, etc. have infiltrated into the English translation. In this way, the English translation is highly faithful to the original work as well as in line with the target culture system.

In general, the English translation of Kutadgu Bilig presents the characteristics of a fusion of the cultural characteristics of the source language and that of the target language, and occasionally goes to a third cultural space to facilitate cultural dissemination and communication. The hybridity of his translation shows us that the translator does not only have the two paths, as Schleiermacher suggests, either move the reader to the author or the author to the reader, nor need he follow through the path that he has chosen. The proportion of domestication and foreignization varies according to the purpose of translation. In the English translation of Kutadgu Bilig, Dankoff's translation appears to choose to go to the third space or the "in-between space" put forward by Bhabha [12]. This third space is not an unfounded point, but a point close to both the source language culture and the target language culture.

4. Hybridity as a two-way construction strategy in intercultural communication

The basic translational facts of the English version of Kutadgu Bilig have led us to further theoretical reflection. How can the English translation of it not only cater for the academic expectations of experts and scholars, but also cater for the reading habits of ordinary readers, which manage to be close to the cultural system of the original work and avoid hard conflicts with the target cultural system? Did the translator follow a potential overarching strategy?

Since Dankoff was a scholar rather than a translator, he did not have a clearly formed sense of translation theory. As a serious Turkic literature researcher and a cross-cultural interaction agent, he made his choices. Although the Introduction to the translation does not discuss the translation strategy, with all the translational facts we can still trace the strategy hidden in the translator's mind. From the perspective of the translation of the work, the translation does not show obvious domestication or foreignization tendencies, but carries out a two-way construction in the translation process, using the method of dilution and mild infiltration, trying to complete the reconstruction of the work in the third cultural space. The final translation product is presented as a two-way construct of culture (where culture is broadly defined to include all aspects of literature, art and intellectual culture).

For the proposal of two-way construction strategy, it can be seen at two levels. First, in practice, the translational facts of the English version of Kutadgu Bilig are a good showcase of two-way construction. Second, in theory, Wang Hongyin's discussion on translation of Chinese classics has indicated a possibility of a third strategy.

In translating Chinese classics... It is not what is commonly known as linguistic conversion, or limited to linguistic conversion, but an attempt to find something valuable through translation. The basic practice is to inject the translator's own ideas and pursuits into the translation, and to carry out a certain degree of integration and creation with reference to the typical models of related literary genres in the East and the West. The general tendency of thought and art of classical texts to shift

from antiquity to modernity... that is, to deviate from the original text to a limited extent, to do a little “creative betrayal.” [13]

It is very often the case that the translator integrates and creates with reference to the model of related literary genres in the target language, as well as the thoughts and cognitive mode, and finally completes the translation. Of course, in addition to the artistic value and content of the original text, which needs to be emphasized in the translation of classic texts, from ancient to modern, there will also be a transfer from one national or regional cultural tradition to another, and the transfer of time and space will occur at the same time.

For translation studies, when interpreting cultural classics, it is worth discussing how to maintain the original theoretical framework and expression (foreignizing strategy) on the one hand, and at the same time to add content and comment (domesticating tendency) with a foreign perspective. In this way, it is hoped that the opposing mode of domesticating and foreignizing will be transcended in understanding and practice, and constitute two wings of creative transformation in translation studies, and promote the cause of intercultural communication among human beings. [14]

Hybridity as both a kind of cultural practice and a strategic choice of the translator offers a new strategy, the “two-way construction” strategy, which holds a much more open mind for cultural exchange. That falls in with the Chinese cultural philosophy of “harmony in diversity”.

The “two-way construction” is understood and defined from the following aspects:

(1) The cultural position of the translator, and the attitude that the translator holds towards the ST author and target readers, the SL culture and that of the TL culture, are in no sense, close to cultural chauvinism, or being nationalist, racial or colonial. By adopting this strategy, the translator plays a constructive and mediating role in intercultural communication.

(2) The way of construction is moderate rather than radical, flexible rather than strict. The purpose for the construction is to promote cultural exchange rather than political agendas, aiming to achieve “harmony in diversity.”

(3) The translator takes initiatives to construct in a third space, and occasionally deviates from the original work when it is necessary. The final product is a text constructed under the norms of both sides, yet it can be something new to both the original and the target culture.

With this perception, the translator respects the heterogeneity of the original culture, and at the same time, hopes to bring the work to a readership as large as possible in TL culture through translation. During the construction process, the translator took a very moderate approach. Compared with the foreignizing strategy advocated by Venuti, the two-way construction is less political and more communicative.

5. Implications

As its name indicates, the two-way construction tends to accommodate the strangeness from SL culture and the norms of TL system. It means that the original culture and target culture can be both deviated from and brought closer. Translators “must define themselves in terms of the poetics dominant in the target literature at the time the translation is made, and also in terms of the tension between the source literature and that of the target literature.” [15] The translator chooses to stand between the original culture and the target culture, rather than standing solely on the side of the original work and foreignizing everything, or standing on the side of the target culture and naturalizing everything, which is practically impossible. The idea of hybridity is different from the binary opposition of domestication and foreignization strategies in traditional translation thinking. It is a description of the current state of the translation practice, revealing an essential feature of the translation. The revelation of this characteristic makes us re-examine the existent strategies, and seek common ground while reserving differences and create a new two-way cultural construct—

something more universal yet still remains to be national.

Naturally, two-way construction may cause a certain degree of cultural anxiety: due to the accommodation of the differences of foreign cultures and the emergence of something new, questions may rise: Will it lead to heavy foreignization of the target language, causing it to lose its own identity, and eventually lead to a global cultural calamity, which threatens cultural diversity.

Historically, “the foreign” enters into a culture in two ways: for the purpose of introduction on part of SL culture and for the purpose of exporting on the part of the TL culture. Many have not led to the decline of a national culture, and more often, the introduction of heterogeneous culture has injected new development impetus into the receiving culture. The new serves as a driving force for the development of cultures around the world. The need to communicate reflects the tension of a culture. As a cultural translation strategy, the significance of two-way construction is to promote the harmonious integration of source culture and target culture, reducing the conflict between the two, and allow readers to obtain as much of the foreign as possible in a way that is as acceptable as possible to achieve intercultural communication. It reflects the Chinese thinking of “harmony in diversity”, which has never been more needed than it is in today’s international communication.

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