Factors Affecting the Choice of Domestication and Foreignization

---Based on Two English Versions of Honglou Meng

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Abstract. When dealing with cultural elements in translation, domestication and foreignization are on the main stream. Domestication aims to minimize the strangeness of the foreign text, while foreignization strives to preserve the exotic flavor of the source language. Based on an analysis of two English versions of Honglou Meng, the thesis leads to the conclusion that translators' choices of the two are influenced by such factors as types of texts, the purpose of translation and the expectation of target readership. Both approaches may be justified in their own right if we take into consideration in differences in such factors.

Keywords: types of texts, purpose of translation, expectation of target readership, domestication, foreignization.

1. Introduction

With the development of science and mass media, people all over the world communicate with each other more frequently than before. Theoretically speaking, those expressed in one language can be conveyed in another language. However, cultural differences among different nations often result in barriers in translation. The problem for translation is how to comply with cultural norms. Translators have to decide which norms take priority, whether the cultural norms of the source language, the cultural norms of the target language, or perhaps a combination of the two (a compromise between two or more cultures). The choice of cultural strategy may result in source language culture-oriented translation (i.e.foreignization), target language culture-oriented translation (i.e.domestication) or a hybrid, where the translation is a product of a compromise of two or more cultures. As a Chinese classical novel, Honglou Meng is a highly ideological and artistic work which was enriched with imaginative metaphorical and cultural-loaded expressions. Two authoritative English versions of Honglou Meng provide us with plentiful examples on what influences translators' choices of the cultural strategy. Based on the analysis, factors likely to influence the choice of cultural strategy include types of text, the translation purpose and the expectation of target readership.

2. Factors Affecting the Choice of Domestication and Foreignization

2.1 Types of Texts

According to K. Buhler, a linguist, language has three main functions: the expressive, the informative (he calls it "representation") and the vocative ("appeal"). Accordingly, there appears different types of texts. However, few texts are purely expressive, informative and vocative: most include all three functions, with an emphasis on one of the three. [1] Different types of texts justify the use of different translation approaches.

In expressive texts-types, the speaker or writer uses the utterance to express his feelings irrespective of any response.[1] The personal components and alien cultural flavor constitute the "expressive" elements, which play a critical role in the source text. In translation, translators should not normalize them. More often than not, they resort to foreignization so as to retain those personal components and cultural flavor as much as possible. As we know, Honglou Meng is a classical

novel with an enrichment of cultural expressions. When dealing with culture-loaded metaphorical expressions, translators strive to reproduce the cultural elements in source text.

1.水溶见他语言清楚，谈吐有致，一面又向家政笑道，“令郎真乃龙驹凤雏，非小王在世翁前唐突，将来'雏凤清于老凤声'，未为量也”.

Yang's version: The clarity and fluency of Pao-yu's answers made the prince of Peiching turn to observe to Chia Cheng, "Your son is truly a dragon's colt or young phoenix. May I venture to predict that in time to come this young phoenix may even surpass the old one? [2]

Despite different appearances and cultural connotations of "龙凤" and "dragon and phoenix, Yang adopts foreignization so as to retain the Chinese culture. As a result, target readers could enjoy Chinese totem worship.

The core of informative texts is external situation, the facts of a topic, reality outside language, including reported ideas or theories. The purpose of informative texts is to transmit message to readers. The choice of domestication and foreignization depends on the significance of cultural flavor in the source text. Take "褡裢" for example. It is a cloth bag, widely used to take stationery in ancient China. Now even ordinary Chinese know little about it, not to speak of English readers. Thus, both Yang Xianyi and David Hawkes employ domestication to preserve its informative function by rendering it into "sack" and "satchel" respectively.[3] However, if the text aims to introduce source culture to target readers, translators may resort to foreignization so as to preserve cultural elements. In this example, transliteration plus annotation would be a better choice.

Vocative texts aim to call upon the readership to act, think or feel, in fact to "react" in the way intended by the text. An important factor is that these vocative texts must be written in a language that is immediately comprehensible to the readership.[1] Thus for translation, domestication is often employed so as to ensure target readers' reaction to it.

2.2 Expectations of Target Readership

Translation bridges the gap between the source text author and the target language readers. Whenever performing his/her jobs, a translator has to bear expectations of target readers in mind. In other words, he/she has to weigh carefully what's the purpose of their reading. They read either for exoticism of a foreign culture or merely for entertainment. With these in mind, he/she resorts to different translation strategies, either domestication or foreignization.

Generally speaking, Yang Xianyi carefully considers that target readers expect to learn more about traditional Chinese culture. Therefore, he makes full use of foreignizaiton so as to retain the cultural flavor of the original. In contrast, Hawkes figures out that ordinary English readers read mainly for pleasure and enjoyment. Therefore, he mainly resorts to domestication in order to make it more acceptable and natural to target readers.

2.晴雯那蹄子是块爆炭，要告诉了他，他是忍不住的。

Yang's Version: I haven't told Ching-wen because she's as hot-tempered as crackling char-coal.[2]

Hawkes version: That Skybright of yours is such a fire-brand that if I told her this, I'm sure she'd never be able to keep quiet about it.[4]

Here, Yang renders "爆炭" into "crackling char-coal", which may confuse target readers at the first sight. With the help of "hot-tempered", readers could understand its meaning and finally associate "爆炭" with hot temper. Obviously, Yang's version helps display Chinese cultural flavor and satisfy the expectation of target readers. In Hawkes' version, he substitutes "爆炭" with fire-brand (a person who always causes trouble to others) in order to meet the need of readers' smooth reading, but at the cost of the vivid image.

3.凤姐悄悄的道：“放尊重些，别叫丫头们看到了。”贾瑞如听佛音论语一般，忙往后退。

Yang's version: "Take care," she whispered, "what will the maids think?" He drew back instantly as if obeying an imperial decree or mandate from Buddha.[2]

Hawkes' version: "Take care!" said Xi-feng in a low tone. "The servants might see you!" Obedient to his goddess's command, Jia Rui quickly drew back again.[4]

In this example, different strategies are employed to reproduce Jia Rui's complete obedience to Xifeng. Despite different religions, Yang maintains that targets readers expect to enjoy otherness of the source culture and therefore, he renders "佛" into "Buddha". From his version, target readers could be fully aware that Chinese have different religion---Buddhism. In contrast, Hawkes figures out that target readers expect natural and smooth version. Thus, he substitutes "佛" with "god" so as to meet target readers' expectation.

In terms of target readers, Lu Xun has ever divided them into three groups. The first group is the illiterate. The second group is those who can barely read and write. The last group is the literary men. Different readers have different reading expectations. Thus, different strategies are preferred. For the first two groups, he maintains that what they expect should not be translation but a kind of adaptation. As regards to the last group, they expect translation to be colored with otherness or foreignness of another culture. He once stated, "if it is a translation,...it must possess exotic flavor, namely foreignness. Actually, there exists no complete domesticated translation in the world. If it does exist, the translation and its source text are apparently alike but spiritually apart. Strictly speaking, it can not be regarded as translation[5]. According to a research by Xu Jun, target language readers prefer to read translation with well-preserved exotic flavor. This is a natural desire arising from the reader's aesthetic appreciation.[6]

On the other hand, domestication emphasizes heavily the smoothness and fluency of the translated text and neglects the uniqueness and peculiarities of the source language culture. As a result, cultural-specific expressions in SL have to be replaced by those specific in TL so as to meet target readers' expectation. As a strong advocate of domestication, Nida even maintains that the quality of translation should be evaluated by "Reader's Equal Response" of both the source text and the translated text. In addition to the faithfulness to the ST, target readers expect that TT should read smooth, sound natural and meet the linguistic rules of the target language.

In a word, either domestication or foreignization serves to meet target reader's different expectation.

2.3 The Purpose of Translation

To a large extent, translation purpose determines which strategy is preferable, either domestication or foreignization. As a translator, Yang Xianyi aims to introduce Chinese culture to English readers as much as possible. Thus, in his translation, he mainly adopts foreignization (SL culture-oriented). In contrast, David Hawkes intends to please target readers and benefit their smooth reading. Therefore, he mainly employs domestication (TL culture-oriented). Obviously, Yang's version will benefit those English readers who want to know more about traditional Chinese culture, while Hawkes' version is attractive to target readers who read only for pleasure. Of course, those foreign learners of Chinese can taste more otherness or foreignness of Chinese culture from Yang's version than Hawkes'. Let's take some examples.

4.真是"天有不测风云，人有旦夕祸福。"

Yang's version: "Storm gather without warning in nature, and bad luck befalls men over night."[2]

Hawkes: I know "the weather and human life are both unpredictable."[4]

In Yang's version, "风云" and "祸福" are reproduced so that target readers could finally understand the close relation between the weather and the fortune in Chinese culture. Yang adopts foreignization so as to preserve the image of the proverb. However, Hawkes chooses to delete the image and convey its pragmatic meaning so that his version is more comprehensible to target readers. Natural as it is, his version is of course far from Chinese culture.

5.癞蛤蟆想吃天鹅肉。

Hawkes: A case of "the toad on the ground wanting to eat the goose in the sky". [4]

Due to different associations aroused by "goose" and "swan" in English culture, Hawkes substitutes "goose" for "swan" in order to appeal to target readers' aesthetic taste. In doing so, his version is more understandable and acceptable to target readers.

3. Conclusion

In a sense, it is cultural discrepancies that have posed numerous troubles and barriers in translation. In dealing with cultural elements, domestication and foreignization are on the main stream. Which approach is preferable in translation largely depends on types of texts, the purpose of translation and expectation of target readership. Based on two English versions of Honglou Meng, both approaches are justified in their own right if we take these factors into account.

Acknowledgments

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