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Domestication and Foreignization in Translating Culture and Literature

Culture is a main factor in translation. Indeed, translating from language to language is, in fact, translating from culture to culture. Susan Bassnett believes that translation must take place within a framework of culture (1). Translation, as cross-cultural communication, must be made both on linguistic basis and on a cultural one, because language and culture are linked that one implies the other. Since translation and culture are closely linked, how should we deal with cultural factors in our translation, especially when there appear great discrepancies between the source culture and target culture?

The Cultural Turn in Translation Studies:

Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere were influential scholars who discussed the cultural approaches of translation. In their book *Translation, History and Culture* (1990), they argue that “Now the questions have changed, the object of study has been redefined, what is studied is the text, embedded within its network of both source and target cultural signs and in this way Translation Studies has been able to utilize the linguistic approach and move out beyond it” (12). According to them, the cultural turn is mainly defined as the shift from the whole focus on language to focus on the relation between culture and translation. For Bassnett and Lefevere, history and culture are products of nations which cannot be explained just with understanding the target language. The cultural turn represents the incorporation of culture in translation studies; in this sense, they confirm “neither the word, nor the text, but the culture becomes the operational ‘unit’ of translation” (Lefevere and Bassnett: 8).

Bassnett and Lefevere's cultural approach emphasized the idea that culture and translation cannot be studied as separated fields. They argue that translation is a tool of representing and serving the interaction between cultures. In fact, by providing this new approach to translation, Bassnett and Lefevere added what is known as the innovative thinking in translation studies. Subsequently, the role of the translator is then not just to produce a similar linguistic copy of the source language text, but to rewrite and reconstruct the meaning and culture of the source text. As a matter of fact, Bassnett and Lefevere view translation as a tool of interaction between cultures and the goal behind using literary translation is to transmit and construct different cultures.

Literary translation is more difficult and challenging than any other type of translation. This is because translators must consider the reality that translation and culture are intimately related to each other. To be precise, meaning exists in both source and target cultures but it is up to the translator to be familiar with the deep context of both source and target language cultures in order not to provide a harmful translation.

In 1993 the American theorists Eugene Nida points that "Translation is an exchange between two cultures. For a real successful translation, understanding two cultures is more important than knowing two languages, because words become meaningful only in their effective cultural background" (1993:248).

According to Baker, one major difficulty which may face the literary translator occurs when "the Source-language word may express a concept which is totally unknown in the target culture. The concept in question may be abstract or concrete; it may relate to a religious belief, a social custom, or 18 even a type of food" (1996: 21).

Literary vs non-Literary Translation:

In order to compare literary translation with non-literary translation, we should consider the idea that literary translation is exceptional and must not be treated like other types of translation. In his article "Non-Literary in the Light of Literary Translation" (2004), Newmark makes a comparison between literary and non-literary translations. The first thing to take into account is that literary translation involves both issues related to mind and imagination, whereas non-literary translation is strongly related to the work of reality and facts. In literary translation the function of words and content are very important since they serve concepts, actions, and traditions of the source culture. For this reason, the translator seeks to understand the deep meaning of the source text in

order to provide the real expression and destination of the author. Unlike literary translation, non-literary translation is concerned with facts and truth whereby the translator finds himself limited to particular vocabulary and language use. In addition, literary translation is vivid since it deals with persons, love, interrelations, and life. In its process of translation, using emotions, figurative, and flexible language is permitted. Non-literary translation deals basically with objects, for this it is often ignored and read quickly without gratification. In describing both literary and non-literary translations Newmark argues that “Literary and non-literary translation are two different professions, though one person may sometimes practice them both. They are complementary to each other and are noble, each seeking in the source text a valuable but different truth, the first allegorical and aesthetic, the second factual and traditionally functional” (Newmark 2004:11).

Domestication vs Foreignization:

Approaches to cultures involved in translation are generally divided into domestication (TL culture-orientation) and foreignization (SL culture-orientation). Domestication aims to minimize the strangeness of the foreign text, while foreignization aims to preserve the exotic flavor of the source language and culture.

The dichotomy of domestication and foreignization can be traced back to over 200 years ago. In a lecture *On the Different Methods of Translation*, Friedrich Schleiermacher, a German theologian and philosopher said, “there are only two methods of translating, either the translator leaves the author in peace, as much as possible, and moves the reader towards him; or he leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author towards him” [2]. Schleiermacher shows respect for the original work [3]. He holds that a translator should be faithful to the original and should not make it easier for the reader and faithfulness should be the most important factor in a translation. Lawrence Venuti (*The Translator's Invisibility*) has long been known as a supporter of Schleiermacher's theory of foreignization as opposed to domestication. He suggests that translation has the power to construct representations of foreign cultures and establish canons for the interpretation of these cultures and calls for the visibility of the translator and for the preservation of “foreignness” in opposition to “domestication” in the translated work [4]. The most well-known representative of domestication is Nida, an American translator and translation theorist, who puts forward dynamic equivalence and functional equivalence. In his opinion, the purpose of domestication is to make sure that the original receptors understood and appreciated the text the same way that target receptors understood and appreciated the translated text.

Domestication

Domestication is a translation strategy in which a transparent, fluent style is adopted in order to minimize the strangeness of the foreign text for target language readers [6]. It tends to bring out the “communicative” aspect of language and translation. The viewpoint is that since translation is for the purpose of communication between the SL author and the TL reader, the greatest possible effort is to be made for the benefit of the reader, who is believed to be put off by a text perceived in any way as “foreign”. The result is a greater or lesser degree of “normalization” and “localization”. The “foreignness” should be removed by means of substitution with domestic cultural equivalents so that the target text is made more familiar to the reader. If we simply put it, domesticating translation is a kind of communicative translation, attempting to render the exact contextual meaning of the original in such a way that both the content and language are readily acceptable and comprehensible to the readership. In the west, Eugene A. Nida, a famous American translator and translation theorist, is generally regarded as the most influential representative of domestication. In his long practice of Bible translation, he introduced linguistics into translation studies and put forward “the closest natural equivalent”. By “closest” he means that the target language text should be faithful to the source language text. By “natural” he holds that the language in TT should be fluent and idiomatic in TL. By “equivalent” he maintains that the TT readers’ response to TT should be equal to the SL readers’ response to ST. He emphasizes the important status of target readers to such an extent that he even considers “Reader’s Equal Response” as an evaluation criterion for translation.

According to Venuti, Domestication is a form of violence to the source language culture. Also, it is a sort of destruction of the identity and otherness of the source language culture. He claims that: The violence of translation resides in its very purpose and activity: the reconstruction of the foreign text in accordance with values, beliefs, and representations that pre-exist in the target language, always configured in hierarchies of dominance and marginality, always determining the production, circulation, and reception of texts. . . Whatever difference the translation conveys is now imprinted by the target-language culture, assimilated to its positions of intelligibility, its canons and taboos, its codes and ideologies. The aim of translation is to bring back a cultural other as the same, the recognizable, even the familiar; and this aim always risks a wholesale domestication of the foreign text, often in highly self-conscious projects, where translation serves an imperialist appropriation of foreign cultures for domestic agendas, cultural, economic, political. (1996: 196)

Foreignization:

Foreignization designates the type of translation which tends to lay the stress on certain SL-related elements which are seen as fundamental to the essential message being conveyed by a text. Thus, translation works should reflect the alien things in a

strange land that are expressed in the original. In his famous lecture “On the Different Ways of Translation”, Friedrich Schleiermacher demands, among other things, that translation from different languages into German should read and sound different: the reader should be able to guess the Spanish behind a translation from Spanish, and the Greek behind a translation from Greek. If all translations read and sound alike, the identity of the source text has been lost, leveled in the target text. The Schleiermacher model emphasizes the importance of “foreignizing” translation. The privileged position of the receiving language or culture is denied. Lawrence Venuti is commonly acknowledged as the representative of foreignizing translation. It is he who gave the classical definition of foreignization [6]. In his opinion, translation aims to present foreignness or otherness of the original. He even publicly maintained that he strived to resist the dominant status of the target culture and to demonstrate cultural differences. William von Humboldt, like Schleiermacher, is for the movement toward the original. In his opinion, “A translator should have a foreign flavor to it, but only to a certain degree...as long as one does not feel the foreignness yet does feel the foreign, a translation has reached its highest goal ” [3].

The theoretical bases of foreignization may be summarized as follows. Firstly, translation is an intercultural communication activity, the purpose of which is to promote the communication of cultures of different nations. Therefore, it is necessary to display the foreignness of the SL culture to the readers of the TL culture. Foreignization aims to admit and display cultural differences in TL. Secondly, by means of foreignization, the ST culture will be transplanted into the TL culture, which will benefit the enrichment of the target language and target culture.

According to Venuti using foreignization in translation represents a kind of preservation of the original culture identity and a resistance against the target culture usually when the original text is translated into the language of the ex-colonizer of the country. In this context, Venuti claims that:

Foreignizing translation seeks to restrain the ethnocentric violence of translation, it is highly desirable today, a strategic cultural intervention in the current state of world affairs, pitched against the hegemonic English-language nations and the unequal cultural exchanges in which they engage their global others. Foreignizing translation in English can be a form of resistance against ethnocentrism and racism, cultural narcissism and imperialism, in the interests of democratic geopolitical relations. (1995:20)

Foreignization Procedures:

Literal translation, transliteration, borrowing, and transference are the four main strategies used in foreignization:

First, **literal translation** or word for word translation is the strategy used in order to maintain the basic characteristics of the of the source language culture; translators use literal translation to keep the same meaning, style, form, content, and structure of the original culture without making any changes. Peter Newmark believes that it is important to use literal translation in translating literary works. He argues that “The SL grammatical constructions are converted to their nearest TL equivalents but the lexical words are again translated singly, out of context. As a pre-translation process, this indicates the problems to be solved” (2001:153)

Literal translation is a direct strategy of transmitting the source text expressions into the target

text ones; these expressions should contain the same dictionary meaning as the source expressions. Here the translator ought to respect the grammar and the order of the words in their original appearance.

يوم لك ويوم عليك

A day for you, a day against you.

Second, **transliteration** refers to the process of replacing unknown words and elements of the source language culture with their transcription with words of the target culture. Transliteration is “the replacement of Source language letters (i.e. graphological units) by non-equivalent Target language letters, on the basis of a set of conventionally established rules” (Ilyas1989, 24). In other words, transliteration is the strategy used by the translator, whereby the translated word, sentence, or expression is transferred as it is but written with the TL alphabet.

Examples:

إن شاء الله

In shaa' allah

بسم الله ما شاء الله

Bismillaahi maa shaa' allah

Third, **borrowing** is a foreignizing strategy used by the translator in a form of taking words or expression from the source language culture without making their translation; this strategy is used when there is no equivalence in the target culture or when the translator wants to raise some aspects of the source language culture. Borrowing is sometimes referred to by foreignism, Germanism, and Anglicism. It is a direct strategy of translation which is used in order to preserve the source language aspects. It is regarded as the simplest translation procedure.

Examples:

كمبيوتر Computer

Forth, **transference** is described as the direct strategy of transferring words from the source language culture to the target language. Here, the translator chooses to render the source language text to the target unchanged text without adding any extra explanation

or clarification. The aim behind using transference in translating literary texts is to give the source language culture the sense of uniqueness. Newmark (1988) states that using transference in literary translation gives the translator the ability to “attract the reader, to give a sense of intimacy between the text and the reader- sometimes the sound or the evoked image appears attractive” (: 82).

كلاسيكي

Classic

الاخوة جونسون. Johnson brother.

Domestication techniques/procedures :

Domesticating techniques include those procedures used by the translator to minimize the strangeness of the source text. They include mainly adaptation, reduction and expansion, transposition, and modulation.

Adaptation: According to Vinay and Darbelnet, adaptation is a translation procedure which can be discussed under the strategy of oblique translation. It “involves changing the cultural reference when a situation in the source culture does not exist in the target culture” (qtd in Munday 2001:58). That is to say, adaptation is commonly used whenever the translated concept does not exist in the target culture at all so the translator finds himself replacing this concept by another which has a similar meaning in the target language culture. In fact, the aim behind choosing this procedure is to avoid any misunderstanding by the target language readers. Some scholars consider adaptation as a kind of betrayal and cheating about the content of the source language text or culture.

إذا تم العقل نقص الكلام

The smarter you are, the less you speak.

Transposition: implies the replacement of word class of the source text by another in the target text without affecting the meaning of the original message. It occurs when the translator changes the order of the words, the grammar, position of adjectives, word class, a change from singular to plural, or a change from phrasal clause to a verbal one. Transposition represents the creativity of the translator and how he can play with words without changing the general meaning. Vinay and Darbelnet distinguished two types of transposition which are obligatory and optimal. Obligatory transposition occurs when there is a must for changing some grammatical rules or structure of the source text. Whereas, optimal transposition is not imposed by rules(qtd in Munday 2001:57)
Examples:

كتاب مهم **an interesting book.**

Modulation: is translation procedure that is used to convey the same meaning in a different manner. Vinay and Darbelnet define it as “This changes the semantics and point of view of the SL” (qtd in Munday 2001: 57). It involves changing the semantics and the view point of the source text.

لم يكن هناك منزل مضيء واحد
The houses were all dark.
لا تخبر أحدا
Keep this for yourself.

According to Venuti's contribution to translation, foreignization and domestication are primarily used in translating literature, but it is up to the translator to choose the most appropriate one to his text. Foreignization is generally used when the translator wants raise the reader's awareness about the foreign origins of the text and try to maintain the cultural aspects of the source language. While, domestication is used to develop a translating method which does not allow the reader of the target text to perceive the foreignness of the source culture.