

Domestication in Translation

Pinchen Chen^{1,a,*†}, Jingchu Li^{2,†}, Yingyu Tang^{3,†}, Yifei Zhang^{4,†}, Xiaolin Zhou^{5,†}

¹English Department, Tongji University, Shanghai, 200092, China

²The International Division of The Affiliated High School to Hangzhou Normal University, Hangzhou, 310000, China

³English Department, Xiangnan University, Chenzhou, 423000, China

⁴English Department, Qingdao University, Qingdao, 266071, China

⁵English Department, Binhai School of Foreign Affairs of Tianjin Foreign Studies University, Tianjin, 300270, China

a.elodiecpz@tongji.edu.cn

*corresponding author

†Those authors contributed equally.

Abstract: People worldwide hold varied beliefs and mindsets due to different cultural backgrounds. Chinese culture is feathered with Confucianism emphasizing the harmony between man and nature. In contrast, Western culture has the tradition of objectively thinking about the world as a man separated from nature. With the development of globalization, translation is becoming more and more important. In this case, domestication perfectly fulfills gaps caused by civilization differences since the essence of it is to combine local cultures with foreign ones, thus eliminating misunderstandings. However, scholars like Lawrence Venuti strongly oppose this method for the reason that they believe domestication always misleads people by using dominant political opinions. In this paper, researchers mainly focus on the importance of balance in domestication and the possible consequences of excessive domestication. By analyzing several both successful and negative examples of domestication in literary and commercial aspects, researchers want to prove the effectiveness of appropriate domesticating translation. Through the analysis of specific examples, it is able for people to find out secrets of controlling the extends of the usage of domesticating translation by following effective examples and drawbacks and limitations of domestication itself.

Keywords: Moderate, Domestication, Excessive, Domestication, Translation

1. Introduction

In the past few decades, globalization has taken an important part in the world. In this case, everyone is facing a variety of new things in all aspects. For most people, connections with the world are presented in forms, from overseas-funded enterprises to normal books. Under this circumstance, translation seems to be a key to understanding since the languages people use vary from country to country. During the development of translation, two methods, which are foreignization and domestication, strongly opposed to each other since each of them has its unique advantages. For domesticating translation, the essence is to combine domesticate cultures with exotic parts to make

words and sentences more intelligible for local readers, which means difficulties in comprehending different concepts will be eliminated during translation.

In fact, scholars like Lawrence Venuti strongly support the utilization of the foreignization strategy since domesticating translation may include subjective opinions of translators, such as different political sides. One approach to solving this problem is to pay more attention to the balance of using domesticating translation. Therefore, it is of interest to investigate the actual application of domestication to prove whether it is possible for readers to save energy while understanding when viewing materials translated in a domesticated way.

2. The Necessity of Domestication

Due to different cultural backgrounds, people around the world hold varied beliefs and mindsets. Take Chinese and Western cultures as examples. Chinese culture featuring Confucianism emphasizes the harmony between man and nature. In contrast, Western culture has the tradition of objectively thinking about the world as a man separated from nature. China belongs to a high-context culture where indirect and reserved communication is advocated. At the same time, the West tends to be a low-context culture where direct and efficient communication is believed to be sincere. Apart from beliefs and mindsets, many concrete images and objects may also stand for opposite meanings in the two cultures. For instance, dogs and dragons extend the opposite cultural connotations in Chinese and Western idioms.

Furthermore, with the development of globalization, communication among different nations deepens as well, which contributes to the booming translation field. However, translators' lack of knowledge about the above-mentioned differences may cause confusion, misunderstandings, or even conflicts because the gap between two civilizations cannot be simply bridged by direct word-for-word translation. Thus, the domestication of translation is of great importance to bridge the gap and achieve better communication.

3. Examples of Domestication

The skill of domestication during translation enables readers to better understand the translated text. Proper and moderate domestication use can achieve the goal with loyalty to the source language. However, excessive or over-use of domestication may go to the extreme where the original purpose and meaning in the source language are distorted, thus leading to readers' misunderstanding. This paper analyzes several positive and negative examples to call for the moderate and positive use of domestication in translation.

3.1. Moderate Domestication

3.1.1. The Optimistic Application of Domestication in Commercial Advertising

With the brisk path of economic globalization and frequent international commercial trades after China's accession to the World Trade Organization, the application of domestication of translation plays a predominant role in cross-cultural commercial activities and product promotion. From the macro level to the micro level, it is accessible to see the upcoming flourishing in the industry format of commercial advertising through the extensive use of online social media. The intention-driven, innovative and compelling advertisements are always regarded as the stepping-stone to entering the Chinese market.

3.1.1.1. Audience Acceptance

The objective of advertising zeros in on barging one to the front from a multitude of its counterparts, which entails the appropriate domestication of the multinational corporation's original intention. Jin said that the functional equivalence theory put forward by Eugene A. Nida illustrates the primary two parts: the content over form and the receptors' response. In the domestication of commercial advertising, the pertinent theory can be referred to as the localization of source language and audience acceptance [1]. The outstanding and lucrative marketing advertising case of '7-up' translates it to 七喜(seven happy events), which demonstrates the target-culture-oriented translation. The '7-up' can be deconstructed into the number seven and the word 'up.' '7' is a sacred and auspicious number in western culture, so naturally, the number seven is associated with lucky and fabulous metaphors. Song confirms that, however, in Chinese traditional culture, it is a representative of a mixed blessing [2]. To some extent, the Chinese fear more than worship the '7'. The domestication of 'up' determines whether the slogan's artistic conception is inclined to optimistic or negative. If '7-up's translated into "七上" which is likely to remind the Chinese of the idioms "七上八下"(unsettled state of mind) bearing the capricious perception, the advertising is doomed to run counter to the audience acceptance. In order to reconcile the psychology of advocating luck, the word 'up' is eventually converted to "喜" which delineates the inwardness of bliss and luck in the Chinese cultural context.

3.1.1.2. Memory Point for the Audience

The domestication of advertising engenders the memory point that lets the warm emotion, resonance, and sense of identity linger around the audience. Laanes explains that translation serves as a contrivance of a method that conceptualizes the transnational travel of memories by operating through transcultural memorial forms [3]. Localizing vocabulary references and rhetoric, for instance, personification, parallelism, Oxymoron, and Antithesis, always conducts cultural identity and sympathy on the emotional level. For example, 'Good to the last drop.' is translated into "滴滴香浓, 意犹未尽," ('Good to the last drop.') which compromises the domestication of idiomatic expression and the Antithesis. The adoption of more orderly and more imposing four-character words, idioms, and allusions make the advent of such beneficial functions: the content is concentrated, the momentum is enhanced, the narrative is penetrating and detailed, and the rhythm is clear and lyrical, which answers for deepening the memory points of the commercial advertising. As an illustration, we may take 'It at Hilton.' in Chinese as "希尔顿酒店有求必应。" ('It at Hilton.') as an example, which also flexibly uses Chinese idioms. 'Apple thinks different.' refers to "苹果电脑, 非同凡'想'" ('Apple thinks different.') takes advantage of the combination of idioms and homonyms. The advertising of Toyota Motor: "车到山前必有路, 有路必有丰田车。" (Where there is a way, there is a Toyota) (anadiplosis, which means the repetition of the word which is used at the end of a sentence and then used again at the beginning of the next sentence.)

3.1.2. Domestication in Literature --Vanity Fair

Vanity Fair is a long novel written by the British critical realism writer William Makepeace Thackeray. It presents a picture of life in early 19th-century England's upper class, based on the lives of two young women, Rebecca Sharpe and Amelia Sedley.

Yang Bi's translation style is lively, she got rid of the form to reach the deeper meaning, and the translation was complete in content, and the deeper meaning was expressed to the fullest and won the praise of many translators.

While translating *Vanity Fair*, Yang Bi performed appropriate domestication to solve the problem of not finding an equivalent concept in the target language.

3.1.2.1. Examples in *Vanity Fair*

There are numerous references to allusions from Greek and Roman mythology in *Vanity Fair*. The title of chapter 20 is “In Which Captain Dobbin Acts as the Messenger of Hymen” [4]. The translation is “都宾上尉做月老 (Captain Dobbin Acts As a Matchmaker)” [5]. Here, “Hymen” refers to the god of marriage in Greek mythology, who was in charge of wedding affairs. However, there is no similar term in Chinese. Yang Bi found the word “月老(matchmaker)”, the matchmaker in Chinese, which made the title more concise and catchy.

Another example is “...wrote a manly and pathetic letter to Miss Pinkerton, recommending the orphan child to her protection [4].” Yang Bi’s translation is “...写了一封又豪放又动人的遗书向平克顿小姐托孤。 (...wrote a manly and pathetic letter to Miss Pinkerton, giving the orphan to her [5].)” The phrase “托孤 (giving orphans to others to raise after death)” is a literary expression in Chinese that strictly speaking means “giving orphans to others to raise after death.” It is something different from the original, but it does not cause a misunderstanding of the general meaning. It is easier for readers to understand and give a vivid image.

There are many four-character idioms in Chinese, which is a unique linguistic phenomenon in Chinese. For example, the translation of “He may go back and tell Miss Pinkerton that I hate her with all my soul [4].” is “他尽不妨回去告诉平克顿小姐，说我恨她恨得入骨。 (He may go back and tell Miss Pinkerton that I hate her into my bones [5].)” In China, people do not combine the word “soul” with hate, so Yang Bi renders it as “恨得入骨(hate her into my bones)” according to the Chinese expressions. “骨 (bone)” means “bone” in Chinese, and “入骨 (into bones)” means the feeling of a certain thing is very deep, even has been integrated into the marrow. “Soul” is far from “bone,” but the translation is more acceptable to Chinese readers.

“‘I have no taste for bread and butter.’ she would say when caricaturing Lady Jane and her ways to my Lord Steyne [4].”

“她对斯丹恩勋爵模仿吉恩夫人的举止，故意夸张她种种可笑的地方，而且每次总加上一句：‘有些人乏味的像白水煮豆腐，我可不喜欢。’ (‘I have no taste for tofu which is boiled with water.’ she would say when caricaturing Lady Jane and her ways to my Lord Steyne [5].)”

For English-speaking people, “bread and butter” is a common daily food. If the translator rendered it as “黄油面包 (bread and butter)”, it would not cause many difficulties in understanding, but literal translation obviously cannot express Becky’s disgust. Therefore, the translator chose “白水煮豆腐 (tofu which is boiled with water)”, which is a relatively light Chinese dish, as a metaphor for the “lack of goodness” in Becky’s eyes.

Yang Bi’s domestication through the similar characteristics of Chinese and Western food is clever and easy to understand.

3.2. Excessive Domestication

3.2.1. Excessive Domestication in Translation in the Film Industry

Since the 21st century, with the rapid development of China’s economy and the process of economic globalization, people’s consumption level has steadily increased, the demand for spiritual consumption has rapidly risen, and catering to this trend, a large number of international movies such as British and American movies have been introduced into China. The translation is a medium of cross-lingual communication, so the demand for translation of related movies has expanded in order

to meet domestic audiences. The phenomenon of over-domestication has gradually emerged to meet the entertainment needs of audiences. This phenomenon refers to the abuse of some popular words or even classical poems as the main expression elements in the film forming a translation phenomenon with localized characteristics, but negatively affecting the correct transmission of the film's main idea.

The essence of naturalization in the process of English-to-Chinese translation is originally for the readers of the translated language to better understand the meanings and feelings conveyed by the films, while the phenomenon of over-domestication, also regarded as English-Chinese over-localization translation, wrongly considers the commonalities and differences between the source and target language cultures, causing negative effects. The serious phenomenon of over-domestication hinders the translation audience's understanding of the source language creator's intention.

It has been observed that in recent years, the phenomenon of over-domestication in film and television works has appeared in the following ways:

Firstly, it is the excessive localization of translated texts. This phenomenon is mostly reflected in the excessive dialectalization and colloquialization of translated texts. For example, *You lack of femininity works to our advantage*, in *The Big Bang Theory*, which is translated in the translation as, Your temperament of “*chunyemen*” is good for us, but “*chunyemen*” this word, a typical word with local color, belongs to the northern dialect, but with China's vast territory, the cultural differences between the north and the south, for southerners there may be some cultural differences, can't get the meaning successfully [6].

Secondly, it is the translations that meet the hot topics. While *Pacific Rim* entered the Chinese market in 2013 and earned viewing rates, the over-domestication of some subtitles also affected the main idea that the creators of the movie wanted to express, such as the translation of “*ELBOW ROCKET*” into “*TianMaLiuxingchui*.” The translator thinks that it is to pay tribute to Japanese anime, and to meet the general public's love for *Saints Row*, the word “*TianMaLiuxingchui*” is quoted, but it lacks the knowledge of the creative team, which is against the original intention of the creative team and also disrespectful to the director [6].

Thirdly it is the misuse of names. In the movie *Madagascar 3: Europe's Most Wanted*, “*I don't want you to think of me as some sort of authority figure*.” It translates to Jay Chou not only going against the original meaning of the movie but also, for fans who love Jay Chou, there will be some baffling [6].

Admittedly, with the rapid development of pan-entertainment, there are indeed some movies that cater to the ideology instantly and ignore the connotation of the work in order to attract eyeballs and win the box office, but as a qualified translator, we should not just make up some jokes to cater to the audience but should convey the correct idea of the work on the basis of understanding the work to please the audience, although the translation of film and television subtitles does not have to be as strict as word by word, the translator should also balance alienation and naturalization as far as possible, instead of playing freely without any bottom line and taking vulgarity as funny in order to attract the audience's eyeballs, also should take the responsibility as a translator.

3.2.2. Excessive Domestication in the Translation of “I”

The translation of “I” into Chinese can vary in different contexts. In some unofficial translations of interviews, TV plays, and movies, the simple “I” is translated into “老子(I)” or “老娘(I)” which also means “I” but contains a meaning of superiority in contempt and rude way. If the translation is consistent with the characters of the interviewees or roles, it successfully stresses the tones and wins smiles from the audience. But whether or not this translation is based on the loyalty to the original tone of characters or the subjective judgment of translators is hard to define, thus leaving a lot of controversies.

There is another example of the translation of “I” that is controversial, namely that in Queen Elizabeth I’s Tilbury speech in 1588. In the speech, Elizabeth I changed the subject from “we” to “I” but many Chinese translation versions seem to omit the difference and use consistent subjects like “朕(I)” which has been an exclusive subject for the emperors to call themselves ever since China’s first emperor Qin Shi Huang. However, “朕(I)” arouses a feeling of authority and despotism among Chinese people, which does not conform with the actual attitude and status of the British Queen, who was trying to unit her soldiers and call for support by appealing to her people that she was firmly on the same side with them. Other Chinese translations of “I” like “本座(I)” as mentioned by some scholars are also inappropriate because “本座(I)” usually appears in mysterious novels to describe gods or people with superpowers [9]. In that sense, the literal translation of “I” into “我(I)” may best convey the information the Queen wanted to express and enable Chinese readers to immerse themselves in the foreign context.

The main reason for excessive domestication is the over-reprocessing of translation, which means there are too many adjustments from translators. Translators’ efforts to transfer source language into the target language may be disloyal to the original source if they use too much process of domestication, which can be regarded as disrespect for the source language.

In essence, excessive domestication can be seen as inequality between two cultures. The culture from the source language is diminished, while that of the target language is given priority. Translators, as the mediators between the two languages, to some extent, manipulate and reshape the text with their nation’s ideas, which is against the principle of translation.

Domestication of translation can, to a larger extent, convey clear information and reduce misunderstandings. However, excessive domestication could lead to disloyalty to the source language. Thus, good translators should strike a balance.

4. Conclusions

To sum up, though excessive domesticating translation can somewhat distort the original meaning of materials by paying too much effort to justifications for the target language, with enough care, people can catch the point well for the reason that translations become more familiar to them with the combination of native cultures and various expressions of words, such as the use of dialects, proverbs, and literary techniques. With the help of domestication, translations have become more attractive and profound to readers in fact, which suits the situation in China very well, since the Chinese language has developed for so long that each simple character can convey plenty of meanings at the same time.

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