

The Strategy of Metaphor Translation: Domestication or Foreignization*

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Abstract—This paper studies the application of domestication and foreignization in translating metaphors. It introduces these two translating approaches, aiming to explore their uses in the metaphor translation. Following an overview of domestication and foreignization, this paper analyzes the guide lines of translating metaphors through a close study of many examples. This paper also explores the choices between the two strategies, trying to find the tendency in using the two approaches.

Index Terms—metaphor translation, domestication, foreignization

I. THEORETICAL REVIEW ON DOMESTICATION AND FOREIGNIZATION IN TRANSLATION HOME AND ABROAD

Two translation strategies, domestication and foreignization, have given various formulations both in the past and at present. In 1813, the German philosopher Friedrich Schleiermacher proposed . There are only two methods to make a perfect translation: either the translator makes the reader move toward the author who stays at his original place or makes the author move toward the reader who stays at his original place. (Venuti, 1995) In 1995 Venti first coined two terms to describe these two methods in his book *The Translator's Invisibility: domesticating and foreignizing translation*(Venuti, 1995).

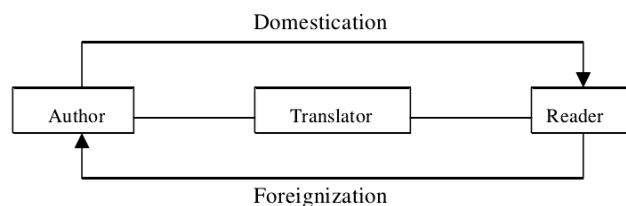


Fig.1: Schleiermacher's Dichotomy of Translating Methods

The famous representative of domestication translation is Eugene Nida, who points out the communicative function of translation, suggesting that the choice of word should adjust so that it could custom different kinds of readers. Nida lays great emphasis on reader response. He determines that it is the most essential standards to judge the quality of translation. Nida believes it necessary to make changes and adjustments to the translated text under certain conditions. Besides Nida, many other translations theorists in the west also favor domesticating strategy. Among them, Susan Bassnet proposes the equivalence of cultural functions and approves of employing domesticating to handle linguistic and cultural differences in translation. Generally speaking, Nida's Formal and Functional Equivalences: formal equivalence focuses on providing some perception in the lexical, grammatical or structure of original text. Functional equivalence is based on the principle of equivalent effect. Studied diachronically, domestication has enjoyed great popularity among translators and translation critics in the translation history. Domestication has grown a deep root in China too. In China, the prestigious translators such as Lin Shu and Liangshiqiu are the devoted advocates of domestication theory and applied it to their translation works which enjoyed tremendous popularity among the readers.

Lawrence became a central figure in the translation field since his *Translator's Invisibility* went to press in 1986 in the U.S. As a deconstructionist, Venti presents a set of innovative points of view, say, cultural colonization and translator's invisibility in his revolutionary book. According to him, the aim of work is to force both the translators and readers to know the linguistic and cultural differences of the alien articles by the violence of translation. (Venuti, 2005:41) In China, similar opinions emerged as early as the beginning of the 20th century though systematic study of translation lag behind the west. Translators such as Lin Shu and Liang Shiqiu were accused of having changed the original work brutally by many scholars, say, Lu Xun, who favored "rigid translation"----putting forward the translation prince of faithfulness over smoothness. In modern China, the prestigious scholar Liu Yingkai points out the

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prevalence of domestication in *The Wrong Track of Translation*. Liu argues that domestication translation misrepresents the original text. Sun Zhili thinks the main task of translation is to deliver the thought and style of the original text. Xu Jianping suggests that foreignization should be used in English-Chinese translation as much as possible.

II. INTRODUCTION TO METAPHORS

Figures of speech are the ways to make the language more colorful. So when we are using the non-literal words, we are in fact creating a imagery sense. (Richards, 2000)

The following are some definitions of the two terms:

A simile is a figure of speech in which two quite different things are compared because they appear to be similar in at least one characteristic. Similes are as a rule introduced by "like" or "as". (A New Book of Knowledge)

Simile: A figure of speech where A is likened to B so as to exchange the two images. (A Dictionary of Literary Terms)

Simile: An expression making a comparison in the imagination between two things, using the words "like" or "as". (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English)

Metaphor: A figure of speech during which A is described in the form of B. The two comparison is that simile is clear while metaphor is not clear. (A Dictionary of Literary Terms)

Metaphor, perhaps the most important figure of speech, points out resemblance but with no acknowledging word. (Britannica Book of English Usage)

Metaphor: the use of a phrase which describes one thing by stating another thing with which it can be compared without using the words "as" or "like". (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English)

Metaphor is very similar to a simile because it also makes a comparison between two different things. But metaphor is making the comparison in an unclear way rather than a clear way. It is in a sense a condensed simile, differing from the latter only in form and artistry. It requires greater ability on the part of the reader to perceive the hidden association, the insight into the person and things that are applied. Peter Newmark defines metaphor as a figurative expression and it is a single or extended text in the form of a collocation or sentence and so on. (Newmark, 2001). However, Snell-Hornby rejects Newmark's concept of the "one-word metaphor" in favor of Weinrich's definition that "metaphor is text" (Snell-Hornby, 2001). Snell-Hornby holds that the metaphor is a three dimensional text in the form of object, image and sense. (Snell-Hornby, 2001). We are going to discuss the metaphor in the text which includes an idiom, a sentence, a proverb and an allegory

It is not always possible to assume correctly, especially when writer and reader come from the different cultural backgrounds and there is a gap between the writer's range of knowledge and experience and reader's. For instance, in the sentence "Money is a lens in a camera", it is not clear what the implied association is. What is the point of the resemblance between money and a lens in a camera? Our knowledge of photography tells us that a lens in a camera can reflect and record images of persons or things sharply and objectively. This leads us to the thought that money can also cause people to reveal their true feelings or characters. But the question is that just in translation, how we convey the meaning of the SL (Source Language) to TL (Target Language) correctly and vividly?

Before we talk about the translation methods, we can investigate the main uses of the metaphors:

Descriptive: The hallway was zebra-striped with darkness and moonlight. (A description of the bands of light and shade in the hall, like a zebra's stripes.)

Illuminative: the bubble reputation (bubble used here to imply that the pursuit of reputation is visionary)

Illustrative: In the ebb and flow of the struggle it was inevitable that one of them would go under. (the comparison of a man's vicissitudes to the ebb and flow is to illustrate the ups and downs of the man and waves.)

III. ANALYSIS OF THE METAPHOR TRANSLATION STRATEGIES

Generally speaking, as we have discussed above, the translator has two main strategies of translating the metaphors: Domestication or foreignization. The former refers the translation method in which a clear and idiomatic way is used in order to shorten the strangeness of the original text for the aim language readers, while the latter method refers to the translation method in which the flavor of the original text or the foreignness is retained because of the keeping originality. Different from the different perspectives in semantics, culture and function, Newmark takes a more pragmatic approach. Because of his practical experience before, Peter Newmark gives some suggestions for translating metaphor: (1) in the TL remaking the same picture, provided it has comparable frequency and currency in the appropriate TL register; (2) Remaking the SL image with known another TL image, given it exists within the register; (3) Remaking the metaphor by simile; (4) keeping the metaphor and adding something else (5) changing the metaphor to sense; (6) giving up the metaphor if it is too often used. (Newmark, 2002).

The methods of metaphor translation proposed by Shan Qichang offers five in *A Coursebook in Translation Between English and Chinese* (1) Literal translation and explanation; (2) Literal translation and meaning; (3) taking the metaphor; (4) Using the counterparts in Chinese to translate the English metaphor; (5) changing the source language pictures with a target language picture. (Shan Qichang, 1992). Just according these two strategies of metaphor translation proposed by Newmark and Shan, the common strategies of metaphor translation from English to Chinese are: 1) Literal

translation (keeping the same picture in the aim language); (2) changing the source language pictures with standard target language pictures; (3) Literal translation and explaining; (4) changing the metaphor to meaning; (5) Using Chinese counterparts to change the English metaphors

Besides that, culture plays an important role in the translation of simile/ metaphor in two languages. Readers may have different understandings to the use of simile/metaphor in different cultures. Therefore, translators should realize the differences of two languages and select the best words to translate the original text into the target text, and make readers understand the meaning of simile/metaphor in the original text vividly and correctly. It is also the gist of this paper to compare the translation of simile/metaphor in two languages.

Therefore, it is necessary for us to see the culture element involved in the process of translation. The in-formation theory tells us that when a language, as the channel, transmits information, the decoding process must be carried out on encoders and decoders' agreed understanding of codes. If the encoders and decoders born in different cultures have different understandings about some codes, the decoding process will meet with troubles and mistakes will appear, which sometimes may lead to the stop of decoding process. Due to different cultural background, cultural tradition, cultural customs, or cultural originality, people in different cultures will have different reactions and expressions to the same meaning. For instance, the color of red has different meanings in English and Chinese. In the West the color of red is not only the color of life, but the color of fire and blood. In the East, people think the color of red stands for happiness and auspice. In the ancient times, besides the color of yellow, the color of red also means high status or position. In addition, Chinese boys and girls will wear the red clothes in their wedding. The color of red can get rid of the bad thing and bring the good luck.

Considering the elements we have mentioned above, we are going to have some examples to show what methods are domestic and what are foreignization.

Example 1 Life is a yo-yo. It is a series of ups and downs. (He, 2003: 340)

example 2 Police work on inner-city streets is a domestic Vietnam, a dangerous no-win struggle fought by confused ,misdirected and unappreciated troops. (Fan, 1998)

Example 3 There is no rose without thorn (Guo, 1988: 211)

Example 4 cast the pearls before swine. (Chen, 1989: 156)

Example 5It was packed like sardines. (Deng, 1989: 164)

Example 6 As poor as a church mouse.. (Zheng, 1994: 628)

Example 7 “the skeleton in the cupboard” (Alexander & He, 1999: 118)

Example 8 as cool as a cucumber (Feng, 1998: 163)

Example 9 He himself was at once noble, romantic and Machiavellian. (Chen, 1989: 156)

Example 10.If a window freeze on your screen, press Ctrl+Alt+Del (all three at the same time)

Now we face the question as to whether our function is to record the words of the original or to report on their meaning. Metaphors in examples 1,2and 3 can be translated literally. The purpose of literal translation is to make the TL readers see the original meaning, characteristics and imagination, which are so helpful to understand the underlined meaning of SL. Though it is not concise enough, it is the mirror the SL. To be more specific, the purpose of literal translation is to keep the native color or flavor, the native images as well as the foreign texts so as to add color to the target language.

In the example 1, Yo-yo is a kind of toy which goes ups and downs that is very similar to the uncertain life .It is crystal to the Chinese readers to master the original meaning of the metaphor . In the example 2, perhaps the public are not so familiar with the conditions of the police but they are so deeply influenced by the Vietnam War. By translating the metaphor literally, the translator can convey the real meaning of the original sentence to the Chinese readers. The proverb in example 3, the translator just translates it as the original ones, which are so vivid and picturesque to Chinese readers and effective. The reason is that both the SL readers and the TL readers share the same personal experience of the roses.

Example 4 and 5 are adapted into Chinese version, replacing the SL image with TL image which is familiar to the Chinese readers. For example 3, the native speakers are so familiar with the tale from the Bible and get the idea of the metaphor. On the contrary, the Chinese readers can picture it by another house-hold proverb in Chinese *dui niu tan qian* (play the piano to the oxes). In the example 4, the westerners know the meaning of sardines so they have no difficulty to picture the crowded situation .On the contrary, the Chinese are so confused about them so the translator put that as sesame sauce and Chinese dumplings. Then it becomes so easy to understand .On the whole, the translators have used the different images in TL to take the place of the images in SL. In other words, a commonly-used method to translate metaphors is to change the source language pictures with another existed target language pictures, if one appears equally within the same situation. (Newmark, 1988). Susan Bassnett's cultural equality theory emphasize that if the different cultures share the equality and there is obstacle to understand the transplanted cultural imagination, the metaphor should be translated literally .On the other hand, if there is a conflict between the SL culture and TL culture, to be more specific, they have the different cultural imaginations, the translator should do put the TL readers' acceptance at the first place to achieve the functional equality. In this point, Sussan Bassnett,Nida and Newmark are holding the same opinion.

Metaphors in examples 6, 7 and 8 are converting the metaphor to sense. In example 6, the point is that in the church

there is cupboard where so little a mouse could find a crumb. So, a church mouse presumably came to be taken symbolically for extreme poverty because it makes its home where there is no food. However, the Chinese readers are not as interested in church as the native speakers of English are. Understandably, the translation the Chinese idiom *yi pin ru xi* (very poor) is smooth and faithful. To the Chinese reader, the image of "a skeleton in the cupboard", may mean ugly, horrible and frightening; at the same time, the cucumber is just a kind of vegetable. They may not be able to understand the referential meanings these images carry in the metaphors. We had better translate the two metaphors as the more general meanings as *zhen jing* (be calm) and *jia chou* (dirty skeleton) which are the universal abstract concepts or an abstract concept. To example 8, the SL compares the calmed people as a cucumber which is just a kind of vegetable in the TL Chinese. So the translator has to tell the meaning of the real meaning of the metaphor.

To example 9, the native Chinese readers will be at a loss to understand the meaning of Machiavellian, simply because we do not know who is Machiavellian. Still the translator assumes that it can not be understood completely, so he is making a note to identify this Italian statesman's main characteristics. However, I have to point that too many footnotes will change the main point of the SL and be boring to read for the TL readers. To the last example, the word "freeze" is so confusing in Chinese, so the translator puts the explanation there.

Then, what are the initial motivation of the translator to adapt the two different strategies?

When the basic metaphorical concepts of SL and TL communities correspond, as in "Yo-yo", "Vietnam war", and "thorn rose", the original image or the flavor is most likely to be retained and to provide the colorful comparisons between the SL and TL. The method can also makes the TL readers understand the SL with no difficulty. However, we are not expected to use the typical or local Chinese idioms to take the place of the English ones. For instance, "Two heads are better than one" can be translated as "three cobblers are not as clever as Zhu Geliang, (the symbol of wisdom in China), while the latter one is a idiom holding the Chinese culture, our preference is the former.

When they come cross SL historical, geographical or folk heritage in cultural-specific metaphors as such "Machiavellian", "freeze", "cucumber" and "a skeleton in the cupboard", the Chinese translator would try his/her best to find a proper method for him/her. The best way so far is to keep the original picture or the cultural-specific characteristics within the help of translations so that the meaning of the story generally accepted by the people of the culture finally gets across to the Target Language readers. Or it will make the TL readers feel confused about the SL. The Target Language reader's reaction is a very important standard and the main concern in metaphor translation. When the connection of a picture is the source language is lacking in the Target Language, for example, "as poor as a church mouse", the translator tends to adapt the metaphor into idiomatic target language expressions. When the translator feel the TL readers will fail to get the SL meaning by just literal translation, he may add something.

When translating the English metaphor, particularly those embedded in proverbs, such as, "cast the pearls before swine", the Chinese translator, most of the time, looks for an equal counterpart (e.g. a Chinese couplet) to take the place of the original, although the counterpart is sometimes accurate completely.

The translator "deliberately breaks target conventions by retaining something of the foreignness of the original" (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 1997:59). It is practiced by method 1 (retaining the same image in the target language) and 3 (Literal translation plus sense and explanation) which are using the foreignizing translation strategies while method 2 (taking the place of the SL image with a typical target picture), 4 (Converting the metaphor to meaning) and 5 (Using Chinese counterparts to take the place of English metaphor) are using the domesticating translation methods.

Therefore, we get three principles for metaphor translation. First, try to find the equivalent conceptual metaphors in the target language. Second, the cultural factors involve in the metaphors shall be reserved as possible as we can Third, when we translate metaphors with unique cultural features, we had better employ translation method in accordance with the purpose of the metaphors.

IV. CONCLUSION

Translation is a risky business; the translation of metaphors is even riskier. On studying the method of metaphor translation and the problems involved in it, we come to the conclusion that the changeable methods should be employed instead of using the fixed and contingent ones. The way in which a metaphor or can be depended on many factors. It is not only a question of whether a metaphor is available in the target language. Other factors include the significance of the specific lexical items which constitute the metaphors.

Different elements such as the contextual factors of the SL text, the consideration of referential accuracy, the reader's acceptability and the pragmatic economy can decide the way whether to use foreignizing or domesticating strategy. (Newmark, 1988). There are some obstacles in the translation of metaphor, but the method of the translation of metaphor is reasonable within the common theory of translation. Domestication translation and foreignization translation have a relationship of dialectical unity and the use of them depends on the need of translation practice. Under those two translation strategies, the English metaphor translation would be more felicitous and promote communication between western culture and eastern culture, especially in China. To sum up, in translation practice, foreignization cannot exist without using some domestication; similarly, domestication cannot exist without using some foreignization.

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