In the Name of Allah

University of Isfahan

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M.A. Thesis

Domestication and foreignization strategies in Persian translation of English idioms

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September 2009

ۤۤ۴۹۸٤٤

دانشگاه اصفهان

دانشکده زبان‌های خارجی

گروه زبان انگلیسی

پایان نامه کارشناسی ارشد رشته مترجمی زبان انگلیسی

بومی سازی و بیگانه سازی در ترجمه فارسی اصطلاحات انگلیسی

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شهریورماه ۱۳۸۸

Acknowledgement

My whole gratitude goes to the Almighty who paved the way for me to achieve my goal in getting this task done. It is a pleasant duty to show appreciation to my dear supervisor, Dr. Vahid for his incessant patience in keeping pace with me and his ceaseless contribution during all this laborious time. My indebted thanks are due to my informative advisor, Dr. Pirnajmuddin, for his unexampled assistance. Last but not least, comes the time to express my heartful wishes to my dearests in life, my parents for their giving me encouragement, support and peace.

To:

My Parents

Abstract

The present study investigates *domestication* and *foreignization*, two translation strategies proposed by Venuti (1995), and their different procedures in English translation of Persian idioms. By domestication, Venuti means removing cultural and linguistic differences of ST and imposing an 'ethnocentric violence' on it. It entails fluency, transparency and the translator's invisibility. Foreignization is preserving ST cultural and linguistic peculiarities as much as possible as well as challenging the dominant values in both selecting the source text and adopting a specific translation strategy. Focusing on these two translating methods, by studying and comparing four-hundred English idioms along with their translations into Persian, the researcher tried to see whether translations are dichotomous in terms of domestication and/or foreignization, and whether domestication is the dominant and desired translation strategy in translating English idioms into Persian or not. The findings of the study showed that there is a third in-between strategy in translation i.e. *neutralization* and that domestication was the dominant strategy applied by the translators.

Keywords: Domestication, foreignization, idiomatic translation, literal translation, neutralization, translation

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List of Abbreviations

SL: Source Language

ST: Source Text

TL: Target Language

TT: Target (Translated) Text

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1. Overview

Venuti (1995) in his book, *The Translator's Invisibility*, following Derrida (1982), defines translation as replacement of the chain of source language text's signifiers with the chain of signifiers of target language. As meaning is a reflection of the relationship between the signifiers in an unlimited chain, "both foreign text and translation are derivative." (p. 17) Therefore, translation is not a simple mathematical relation between source text and target text. It is produced under certain cultural, social and political conditions and in a specific time.

It is clear that in translating a text the translator applies some strategies, whether consciously or not, whether translating from his/her mother tongue into a foreign language or vice versa. Many scholars have proposed different categorizations for translation strategies. They have looked at this big ocean from different angles.

In the history of translation theory, there have always been debates over the age-old dichotomies of literal vs. free (Cicero, 46 BC), formal vs. dynamic (Nida, 1964), semantic vs. communicative (Newmark, 1988), anti-illusory vs. illusory (Levy, 1967), adequate vs. appropriate (Toury, 1980), overt vs. covert (House, 1977), documentary vs. instrumental (Nord, 1988), etc. As Snell Hornby (1990, p. 79) puts it:

> For 2000 years, translation theory … was primarily concerned with outstanding works of art. The focus was therefore on literary translation, and the centre of the debate was that age-old dichotomy of word and sense, of 'faithful' versus 'free' translation.

All these binaries and other similar translation strategies can, in some way, be encapsulated in a fundamental categorization proposed by the German Philosopher and Protestant theologian, Schleiermacher (1768-1834) who said in an 1813 lecture: (as cited in A. Lefevere, 1992, p. 149)

> In my opinion, there are only two [translation strategies]. 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.

He also maintains, the translator must follow one or the other as assiduously as possible, and any mixture of the two would produce a highly undesirable result.

One of the most influential and controversial approaches to translation studies has been proposed by Venuti (1995). Looking at translation from a cultural point of view, he takes up a line of argument that goes back to

Schleiemacher, proposing a binary distinction in this field. Being first introduced by Schleiemacher, The concepts of "domestication" and "foreignization" were later defined and exemplified by Venuti (1995) as means of providing general classification for translation strategies; on the one hand, foreignization, the translator's visibility and resistance that tends towards the author and the source text, and on the other hand, domestication, the translator's invisibility, fluency and transparency that relies on the target culture and readers. In domesticating translation, the translator tries to make the target text familiar and natural for the readers, so s/he effaces any cultural differences in his/her translation. Foreignization means preserving cultural or linguistic differences, protecting the ST from the "violent colonizing effect of the TT and TL". This latter strategy had been first adopted in Romanticism and Classicism era in Germany. As Bassnett and Lefevere (1990, p. 11) also say:

> Either the translator regards the task at hand as that of rising to the level of the source text and its author or, as happens so frequently today, particularly where the translator is dealing with texts distanced considerably in time and space, that translator regards the target culture as greater and effectively colonizes the source text.

Venuti (as cited in Munday, 2001, p. 148), in the introduction to the Italian translation of *The Translator's Invisibility*, treated domestication and foreignization as "heuristic concepts, designed to promote thinking and research rather than binary opposites".

1.2. Background of the Problem

Each linguistic or national linguistic community has a series of habits, values, classification systems, etc., which sometimes are clearly different and sometimes overlap. Any language has its own grammatical rules, its own vocabulary, idioms, metaphors and expressions with a unique cultural baggage.

As mentioned above, the two strategies offered by Venuti (1995) are domestication which means making the text recognizable and familiar, thus bringing the foreign culture closer to the reader in the target culture, and foreignization which means the opposite, taking the reader over to the foreign culture and making him or her feel the cultural and linguistic differences. This choice between domestication and foreignization is linked to questions of ethics, too: Should the translator be accountable for the source or for the target culture, and to what extent? If the target culture's conventions are followed in the translation process, the text will be readily acceptable there, but it will inevitably lose some of the characteristics that would have given it a foreign or even an exotic feeling. By adoption of a fluent strategy, the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text are affected and the foreign text is domesticated in a way that TL reader, being provided with a narcissistic experience, recognizes his cultural 'self' in a cultural 'other'. (Venuti, 1995, pp. 4-5)

According to Venuti (p. 43), who advocates foreignizing translation strategy, this does not minimize the differences of the foreign text, but advances tolerance of the "other" and helps to accept its beliefs and cultural values. He believes that the predominant strategy during the last three centuries in Anglo-American translation has been domestication. He defines "fluency" and "transparency" as two features related to "hegemonic classes" in Anglo- American culture.

Almost all publishers, critics and everyone who has a relation with literature and translation, in a way, judge a translated work acceptable when it seems fluent or natural in their language, when it has no linguistic and cultural obscurities and at last when it does not seem to be a translation at all. All would praise a translation if it is like an "original" and hence when the translator is invisible.

Gayatri Chakravorti Spivak, a postcolonial translation scholar, also believes Westerns expect that non-Western writings be translated into English, which is the language of power, so that they can read and understand them without any problem. According to her, the result is a "translationese" which disregards less powerful cultures and individuals' identity. These translations do not show differences between the worldviews of the source language society and those of the target language. The translator adapts the translation into the target language and culture so extremely that it would be understandable for the Western readers. (Farahzad, 2004, p. 20)

1.3. Statement of the Problem

Obviously, translation is a two-way process activity that inevitably involves two languages and two cultural traditions. Therefore, in the contact line of these two, there would be some problems. As the main and more visible agent of transfer between the two sides of this line is translation, the translator permanently faces the problem of rendering the equivalent cultural and linguistic differences between source and target texts. S/he finds him/herself between two different systems of communication with a lot of dissimilarities and mismatches. What does a translator do, or can do, in such situation?

In what extent should s/he be faithful to the ST linguistic and cultural peculiarities and in what extent to those of the TT? Is fluency or transparency of a translation an advantage which shows the ability of its translator or, according to Venuti, and if not an *Illusionary Effect* which makes the translator and his/her work invisible? How do the amounts of domestication and foreignization differ between different language-pairs? There are many similar questions on the issue of domestication and foreignization. The present study is to concentrate on these two concepts and their procedures in idiomatic translation from English into Persian in order to come to the answer of the mentioned questions.

1.4. Significance of the Study

Considering the fact that idioms are an essential part of every language including English and Persian, it sounds reasonable to find the best equivalents in their translations. In doing so, discovering the strategies of domestication and foreignization applied by translators helps us find and organize systematic ways of producing and categorizing the best idiomatic translations theoretically possible and practically available.

The better we categorize domestication and foreignization strategies a translator applies in his/her translation, the faster we will be able to move forward to suggesting more organized translations.

1.5. Purpose of the Study

The objective of the present study is to investigate foreignization and domestication and their application through different procedures to the translation of idiomatic expressions. While Venuti's conceptual framework seeks to differentiate some aspects of domesticating and foreignizing

translation strategies, they seem to be so abstract that not many researchers have worked in this area to come up with techniques to categorize them and the degree to which they are applied. Based on translation strategies or procedures proposed by other scholars and theorists rather than by Venuti himself, one of the aims of this study is to find these sub-strategies through reviewing the examples and cases given by Venuti.

This study proceeds with a review of related literature on the concepts of domestication and foreignization and some related concepts including fluency, naturalness and transparency. However, the main purpose is to identify the strategies applied in the Persian translations of English idioms.

1.6. Research Questions and Hypotheses

This study seeks to find the probable answers for the following questions:

1- What are the domestication and foreignization strategies applied in Persian translations of English idioms?
2- Which of the two strategies is dominant in Persian translation of English idioms?

The answer to the first question can be hypothesized at two levels: macro-level and micro-level. At macro-level, the assumption is that there is no absolute choice between domestication and foreignization by the translator in a translation. In other words, it cannot be said that a translation is completely domesticating and there is no sign of foreignization in it or vice versa. Rather there is a combination of both of them (of course not necessarily equal). As Mollanazar (2001, p. 98) puts it:

Naturalness is a matter of degree, rather than either-or polarity; here a continuum of naturalness exists: the least natural texts are said to indicate translations, and the totally natural ones cannot be distinguished from original composition. However, most real translations stand somewhere in between.

At micro-level there may be a third way between these two; generalization or neuturalization strategy by which the translator neuturalizes the peculiarities and differences of the source text, i.e. neither imposes a local or domestic feeling on them nor preserves them without any interference. This strategy is supposed to be more frequently used in translating figurative expressions.

The assumption of the researcher is that it is not just the work of Eestern or American translators to try to make their translations natural and acceptable to their readers. The tendency to use natural and fluent language is not exclusive to the powerful or hegemonic cultures. Eastern translators may also choose to do so to domesticate the foreign text and make it familiar for their readers. It seems politically and ideologically logical that every country filters translations made of foreign languages and cultures and pass them through a sieve. However, it cannot be denied that the more political, economic and scientific power a country has, the finer filters it may use.

As, criticizing Venuti, Anthony Pym (1969) asserts "the trend towards a translation policy of 'fluency' (domestication) occurs in translations into other languages as well. ... translation is, at the current time, typically domestication, irrespective of the relative power of source and target cultures." (as cited in Munday, 2001, p. 155)