

Original Paper

Study on the Translation of Culture-loaded Words from the Perspective of Domestication and Foreignization Theory: A Case Study of *Kong Yiji*

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Abstract

Culture-loaded words are also called culture-specific words. The translation of them is the difficult point of novel translation. Lu Xun's novel Kong Yiji contains a large number of culture-loaded words. Therefore, translators must adopt different translation strategies from the perspectives of content and context. Based on Lawrence Venuti's theory of "Domestication and Foreignization", this paper analyzes the culture-loaded words in Kong Yiji in order to resolve the obstacles in cross-cultural communication.

Keywords

Kong Yiji, culture-loaded words, domestication, foreignization

1. Culture-loaded Words

Susan Bassnett introduced the concept of "translation culture turn" and stated: "Translation is an important cultural carrier. It is necessary to break the shackles of language and enter into culture to study the flow and influence in the world" (Venuti, 2009). She pointed out that "Translation is not a mere linguistic content, but an intercultural activity; The goal of translation is cultural transplantation. The object of translation is not language, but culture" (Wang Haibo, 2005). Culture-loaded words are related to language. Language is not only a tool for human to communicate, but also an important component of culture. They are also called culture-specific words, which indicate the unique words of a certain region and cannot find a corresponding existence in another culture.

2. Introduction to the Translation

Kong Yiji is a short novel written by Lu Xun. It was first published in the sixth volume of *New Youth* in April 1919. The novel describes Kong Yiji, who was indifferent in spirit, lived his life in a world of

ridicule and jokes. It is not long but it deeply exposes the imperial examination system's poison to the talents, which has strong anti-feudal significance (Wang Haibo, 2005). This paper analyzes the translation of Lan Shiling (Julia Lovell), a famous translator from United Kingdom who graduated from the University of Cambridge. She has translated many literary works by Lu Xun. This translation faithfully embodies the translation ideas of domestication and foreignization, that is, the translator should restore the original information to ensure that the target language readers can obtain the same understanding as the source text readers.

3. Domestication and Foreignization

Since the 1970s, the international translation circle has ushered in the upsurge of "culture turn", in which translation was no longer limited to the traditional pure language translation, and various factors related to culture are gradually paid attention. Translation theory researchers began to explore the cultural significance of translation and found a balance between local culture and other cultures. While it is important to translate faithfully to the original text, it is unwise to ignore the cultural background of the target language and the feelings of the target language readers. In 1995, Lawrence Venuti, a well-known American translation theorist, proposed "domestication" and "foreignization" in his book *The Translator's Invisibility* (Bassnett Susan & Andre Lefevere, 1990).

3.1 Domestication

Domestication aims to localize the source language, adopt the expression method used by the target language reader to convey the original content. The translator must speak as the native author. In other words, if the author wants to talk directly to the reader, the translation must be translated into the original target language. Naturalization translation helps readers to understand the translation better and enhance the readability and literary quality of the translation.

3.2 Foreignization

Foreignization, requires the translator to draw the reader closer to the author. The purpose of using the alienation strategy is to consider the differences of national cultures and reflect the characteristics of foreign language styles. During the May Fourth Movement, foreign literature works and academic ideas were introduced mostly by foreignization (Bassnett Susan & Andre Lefevere, 1990).

Foreignization and domestication can be regarded as conceptual extensions of literal and free translation, but they are not completely equivalent to them. Literal translation and free translation focus on how to deal with form and meaning at the linguistic level, while foreignization and domestication break through the limitation of language. According to Venuti, the law of domestication "brings the author into the culture of the target language", while the law of foreignization "accepts the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign language text and brings the reader into the foreign context" (Bassnett Susan & Andre Lefevere, 1990).

4. Comparative Analysis of Culture-loaded Words in *Kong Yiji*

Culture-loaded words are the direct or indirect reflection of national culture in language vocabulary. Nida, a well-known translator, classifies cultures into ecology, material, society, religion and linguistic cultures. Based on the original text and translation of *Kong Yiji*, this paper selects material, social and linguistic culture-loaded words to make a comparative analysis.

4.1 Material Culture-loaded Words

The word with material culture is the original word created by various nationalities to refer to the objects in life. In *Kong Yiji*, the historical environment and cultural context of narration are set, so there are many chronological objects. For example, “短衣帮”, “长衫”, each of which has its the corresponding translated vocabulary. Professor Lan translates these words into "short-coated class" and "long gowns". In order to make them clear, the translators have made auxiliary explanations of the appearance and functions of the objects (Zhang Jianzhuang, 2019).

Example 1: The original text: 他便连人和书籍, 纸张笔砚, 一起失踪。

Translation 1: He would simply vanish – along with the books, paper, brush and ink.

Translation 2: He would invariably disappear, taking books, paper, brushes and ink stone with him.

Analysis: Although the West also has pens and paper, but “纸张笔砚” are very typical Chinese characteristics of things. “笔” cannot be translated into “pen”. It's called brushes, which keeps the Chinese style. The treatment of “foreignization” retains the target readers' reading habits and cultural background. In addition, there is a unique Chinese thing called “描红”, which is a tool for ancient Chinese children to learn to write. There is no corresponding content in the West. The translator adopts the strategy of foreignization and translates it as “copybook”. It can not only let readers know the meaning, but also retain the color of Chinese culture.

4.2 Social Culture-loaded Words

Social culture-loaded words are words related to various social activities. Social culture is the most complex cultural form, which includes almost all non-material contents, such as interpersonal communication. Many contents carry era elements. *Kong Yiji* has a unique social and cultural content, both in its creation background and in its novel. The story takes place in the early years of the Republic of China. Although the feudal monarchy has been overthrown, the remnants of feudalism are still strong. Many words with the characteristics of the times appear in large numbers in the novels, and become social cultural-load words, such as “举人” and “掌柜”.

Example 2: The original text: 竟偷到丁举人家里去了。

Translation 1: But he must have been out of his mind to try it on with Mr Ding, the magistrate.'

Translation 2: Went and stole from Ding the Selectman's house!"

Analysis: “举人” refers to the ancient Chinese local imperial examination candidates, the original meaning of the person who was raised. It was the special name of the candidates in the rural examination, commonly known as filial piety, and once the candidates were successful, they could enter the official career. Such cultural words can only be understood by the readers after the translator

has provided the historical background and allusions (Zhang Yan, 2021). Therefore, translators should consider using explanatory method. Here, both Professor Lan and the translator have adopted the method of domestication. The translator has translated “举人” into "selectman", which means “市政委员” in English, and is similar to the official position that “举人” can hold.

4.3 Linguistic Culture-loaded Words

Language is the carrier of culture, and culture-loaded words are specific expressions formed by phonetic and structural factors, such as classical Chinese and dialects. Different vocabulary collocations are also form different language cultures, such as idioms, reiterative words, allusions, poems, operas. In addition, different characters also have their own unique ways of speaking and expression, which become the main source of linguistic culture-loaded words.

Example 3: The original text: 君子固穷，之乎者也。

Translation 1: Poverty and learning, incomprehensibly classical splutter.

Translation 2: A gentleman keeps his integrity even in poverty, unintelligible classical expressions.

Analysis: Kong Yiji was full of words that “之乎者也” and “君子固穷”. These words are ancient Chinese terms, which foreign readers find it difficult to understand. “君子固穷” is a Chinese traditional cultural allusion, from *the Analects of Confucius*, which refers to the need to be poor and happy when a gentleman is not determined. “君子” has similar meanings to the Western "gentleman" and can be replaced. “穷” can be translated as "poor", so finally it is translated as “A gentleman keeps his integrity even in poverty”. The phrase “之乎者也” is an ancient modal auxiliary in our country, which is usually placed at the end of a sentence to express the meaning of completion. Professor Lan and the translator did not translate it directly. Instead, they used domestication strategy and took the hidden meaning of "unintelligible expression forms".

5. Conclusion

In the era of globalization, the mutual influence of cultures is inevitable. In order to achieve the effect of different styles of translation, translators should adopt the strategies of domestication and foreignization in the process of translation. Since English-speaking countries and China have few cultural common points, it may be possible to adopt this translation strategy. Venuti's "domestication and foreignization" provides a new way of thinking for the spread of Chinese culture. The translation of novels has positive practical significance. This paper studies the translation of culture-loaded words in *Kong Yiji* and its translated texts, and analyzes different translation strategies on the basis of classifying culture-loaded words. Both domestication and foreignization strategies can bring more ideas and cases for cultural dissemination in China.

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