Conceptualising the Issues of Translation Culture in China: The Roles of Domestication, and Foreignization

AN GANG\textsuperscript{a}, Tengku Sepora Tengku Mahadi\textsuperscript{b}, \textsuperscript{a,b}School of Languages, Literacies & Translation, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 11800 Minden, Pulau Pinang, Malaysia, Email: \textsuperscript{a}angangusm@gmail.com, \textsuperscript{b}tsepora@usm.my

Cultural differences while translating can be ensured using foreignization, and domestication strategies. Transparent, and fluent styles are usually adopted in a domestication translation to reduce the strange words for target readers. Foreignization strategies mostly focus on the target text, which is designed to break target conventions, and at the same time, it retains some of the foreign flavours. This paper aims to explore the relationship, and implications of foreignization, and domestication in translation. The paper outlines brief concepts of domestication, and foreignization, and their related issues. It further concludes that when translation culture is dominated by domestication, cultural peculiarity will be reduced significantly. On the other hand, the mechanical translation will enhance if it is travelling towards the direction of foreignization. It is further noted that legitimate obligations are not required for foreignization or domestication while translating, as long as the practicality of translation is present.

Key words: Translation, Culture, Domestication, Foreignization.

Introduction

Globalisation impacts upon every aspect of our lives. It makes the world smaller and enables people to reach one another in short timeframes. The ability to meet people from different places around the world is readily possible in this current era of globalisation. As a consequence, when people from different backgrounds meet, they communicate using a particular language, as a tool, which is known by the term ‘lingua franca’. Abdullah and
Chaudhary (2012) defined global lingua franca, in a sociolinguistic context, as the use of a language as a global language.

Translators need to keep the culture in mind when translating texts, as translation and culture are positively related to one another. Besides, source and target language are dissimilar, and the two most recommended, and well-known methods for this, are foreignization, and domestication (Chesterman, 2012). Translators should deal with the cultural context carefully because it represents the culture in front of the world, which is an element of the exchange and transmission between the source language, and the target language. While translating, translators must acquire enough knowledge about the cultures of the related countries, as language is a part of the culture. The efficiency of the translation must be accomplished with the consideration of cultural materials. The process of translation is considered the best method to exchange the knowledge of culture among several countries, regardless of the limitations which are posed by cultural elements (Baker, 2000). A mutual, and enhanced understanding among different cultures can be established through an ideal translation. Translators should know appropriate knowledge, such as linguistic knowledge, and the translating techniques of the involved culture, since cultural elements are very necessary for the source language reproduction method (Newmark, 2001).

The two primary approaches for translation, which provide guidance in both linguistic, and cultural aspects, are domestication, and foreignization, as termed by Venuti (quoted in Schaffner 1995: 4), an American translation theorist. According to Venuti, domestication refers to an ethnocentric reduction of foreign text to target-language, and cultural values, which bring the author back home. Furthermore, foreignization is a deviant ethnic pressure on those cultural values to register the difference from the cultural, and linguistic aspect, and send the reader abroad (Venuti, 1995: 20).

Debate surrounding these two strategies continued for an extended period. Jeremy (2001: 9) stated that after the appearance of a more efficient, and mostly linguistic-oriented method in the nineteen-fifties, and nineteen-sixties, the linguistic level had become the target of a translation. A different view of the social, cultural, and historical was explored after the emergence of the cultural turn in the nineteen-seventies. The difference between domestication, and foreignization occurs mainly because of various translation methods. These methods are considered political, and cultural, instead of a linguistic extension of the old argument over free, and literal translation (Wang Dongfeng, 2002: 24). Sometimes there is an overlap between the liberal, and literal translations, even though they are not like domestication, and foreignization. A strangeness in language or culture can be used as a symbol to find out if the translation is domesticated or foreignized. The literal, and liberal are two strategies of translation to uphold the linguistic form and convert language from one to another. On the other hand, domestication, and foreignization are mainly concerned with two
different cultures. The former means replacing the source culture with the target culture, and the latter means preserving the source cultural differences. When cultural meaning changes in linguistic appearance, domestication, and foreignization become exclusively apparent. Moreover, there is a lot of diversity in the way in which speakers or readers of different languages use language to manage their social relationships (Troy, 2008). When people from different backgrounds have to communicate in a second language or in a lingua franca, it can lead to communication breakdowns (Gerritsen & Verckens, 2006; Islam & Patwary, 2013). Thus, it can be claimed, to learn language well usually requires knowing something about the culture of the language (Chlopek, 2008; Patwary & Rashid, 2016). Although most of the teachers realise the importance of intercultural awareness in translation, there is no clear, and coherent framework for conceptualising translation culture, and cultural learning programs due to teachers’ perceptions of cultural awareness. Therefore, this study aims to demonstrate an overview of translation culture, and how it is related to domestication, and foreignization.

**Literature Review**

**Translation Culture in China**

Since the nineteen-eighties, domestication, and foreignization have been the topic of dispute in China. A paper entitled, “Domestication - The Wrong Track of Translation”, authored by Liu Yingkai, indicated the popularity of domestication in the Chinese translation field, in 1987. The author summarised the domestication in five different forms: 1) manipulating idioms; 2) manipulating classic elegance in words; 3) manipulating the concept; 4) manipulating replacement; and 5) manipulating images, and allusions. According to Liu (1994: 269), domestication-based translation misrepresents by assimilating the national feature, and it may destroy the national cultural tendency. Another supporter of domesticated translation is Xu Yuanchong. In order to clear out the cultural differences, he proposed the idea of cultural competition, which states that a translator should make full use of the strength which makes more attractive. For instance, Xu uses lots of four-character phrases while translating, since one of the strong elements of the Chinese language is four-character phrases. Moreover, while translating, he also preferred using ancient Chinese literary works.

In 2002, six articles about translation methods from the view of cross-cultural communication were solely released by the Chinese Translation Journal, and the voice for foreignization started to dominate. According to a representative of foreignization, Sun Zhili, conveying the concept, and characteristics of the original language completely, and accurately is the basic term of translating. He is of the opinion that foreignization will become the most favoured method of literary translation in China, in the twenty-first century (Sun Zhili, 2002: 40–44). Sun’s point of view faces several arguments. For example, Cai Ping supports prospective changes for domestication to become the main strategy of literary
translation. Cai also described that the aim of translation is to communicate and make the source text understandable for the readers. An extensively foreignized translation cannot be appreciated by readers because it might become too unfamiliar for them to understand. In retrospection of the history of translation, Cai concludes that foreignization gives way to domestication with the passage of time (Cai Ping, 2002: 39–41). The idea of negotiation was proposed by Xu Jianping, which categorised the source text in two forms: in English, and in Chinese. He recommended domestication to support foreignization during English-Chinese translation, and to increase the use of domestication in Chinese-English translation, so that the cross-cultural communication can be maintained. Xu Jianping (2002: 36–38) said that the purpose is served because foreign readers are not keen to adopt the foreign cultural element, in the manner which the Chinese do.

The Overview of Domestication, and Foreignization

The author of the book, “The Translator’s Invisibility: A History of Translation”, Venuti (1995), explained these two methods. He analysed translation in the Anglo-American culture, and established that domestication is the most preferred strategy because by this method, the translation becomes more straightforward and helpful for the readers (Venuti, 1995: 6–7). According to Venuti, domesticating the original text makes the translator ‘invisible’, and it subsequently implies “an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values” in another way. He said that domestication is used by the translators to put the importance of Anglo-American on the translated texts. Furthermore, Venuti advised using foreignization to avoid cultural issues, such as confliction in translation. However, it is worth mentioning here that domestication, and foreignization were first introduced by the German philosopher, and theologian, Friedrich Schleiermacher (Schjoldager, 2008; also discussed in Munday 2001/2008; Almanna 2014, amongst others). Schjoldager (2008: 141) stated that modern translation studies were developed by Schleiermacher, and his ideas affected several scholars in many ways. Verfremdung, and Entfremdung are the contrasting methods suggested by Schleiermacher during his famous lecture in 1813. In other words, the translator tries to move the reader towards the author by making his translation an import from another culture, and in the source-text oriented method referred by the former, whereas the translator tries the opposite by hiding the text’s foreign origin in the target-text oriented method, which is referred by the latter. However, Schleiermacher suggests using the text-oriented approach in literary translation. It is worth mentioning that Venuti calls Schleiermacher’s ‘Verfremdung’ a foreignization strategy, and ‘Entfremdung’ a domestication strategy. The diagram below shows Schleiermacher’s concept of the two cultural translation methods of domestication, and foreignization.
Lawrence Venuti gives some attention to Schleiermacher's thought when he builds the notion of domesticating, and foreignizing translation. He is of a view that domestication translation is oriented to the target culture, so that the translated text becomes acceptable by the target readers (Venuti, 1995: 20–24). Venuti contends that all the foreign elements turn into an understandable, and readable text in domestication. Furthermore, he (1995: 20) stated that the target text tries to maintain the exotic flavour of the source culture by contrast in foreignization.

**Language and Translation Culture**

Culture is a crucial concept in language teaching (Swatevacharkul, 2009; Azim, Tarannum, & Patwary, 2017). People who can use a foreign language correctly, and fluently, but do not have knowledge about the social or cultural values of that society, have the potential to encounter humorous incidents or misunderstandings. Moreover, these people may have negative attitudes towards the native speakers of the target language due to a lack of understanding about the culture of the native speakers. Furthermore, it can be said, that if we do not understand other people’s culture well enough, communication may be unsuccessful.

In classes, students are usually situated in monolingual settings, and the learners take their language courses while they are living in their motherland. Therefore, they do not have many opportunities to access the culture in the country of the target language. For this reason, it is hard to extend their intercultural competence. However, what is important, is that their aims of studying a new language are for international communication, which includes both native,
and non-native speakers of that language. Most learners learn a new language as an optional language. Chlopek (2008) has stated that communication which lacks appropriate cultural content often leads to misunderstandings, and sometimes, ends with miscommunications. This can be seen in many countries where there is prejudice, and intolerance against others who come from different cultures, and countries. Intercultural communication appears to be a good mechanism to plant the seeds of tolerance, acceptance, understanding, and respect. Culture interacts with language on different levels, and as Liddicoat, Papademetre, Scarino, and Kohler (2003) have stated, some levels show a close relationship to the culture, while other levels are closer to the language.

Liddicoat et al. (2003) describes each level of the correlation between translation culture, and language. The level which is called, ‘world knowledge’, shows the least relationship to language. World knowledge refers to the knowledge about culture in context. The level which is called, ‘spoken/written genres’, relates to the perceptions of culture. On this level, the focus is on the appropriateness of the written or spoken texts. The appropriateness or elegance in one cultural context might be evaluated in different ways in another culture. The level called, ‘pragmatic norms’, focusses on the concept of politeness in a particular culture, the language use, and utterance evaluation in a certain culture. The ‘norms of interaction’ cover the appropriateness in conversations. In other words, what should be said, and what is expected to be said at a particular point in a conversation. The last level deals with interpreting the concepts or ideas of culture in the language, including the register, non-verbal context or personal space. Language, and translation culture have an inextricable and interdependent relationship (Ho, 2009), and each level in the points of articulation between culture, and language is dependent. Understanding how culture works is essential for the language teaching process.

**Origin of Translation Theories**

The concept of translation initiated from Cicero (106–43 B.C.) in the twentieth century focussed on the repeated and sterilised argument about translation's literal ‘word-for-word’ or free ‘sense-for-sense’, a dyad which is mentioned in the Latin translation of the Bible by Saint Jerome. An argument about the religious text’s translation was one of the main focusses of the translation concept for many years (Jeremy 2001: 33). Nonetheless, as stated in the Routledge Encyclopaedia, and basically themed on translation related works (Baker 1998: 242), the domestication method was applied no earlier than ancient Rome, when, as Nietzsche stated, translation was one kind of conquest. For example, two Latin poets, Horace and Propertius, made the translation of their works into two other languages, which were Greek text, and finally, in Roman text. In the German culture, the foreignizing strategy originated in the period of the classical, and romantic ages by the philosophers, and theologians.
Methodology

This study highly depends on the literature reviews to explore the importance of domestication, and foreignization in translation culture, and more specifically, in China. While searching for existing literature, the researchers started with translation culture, domestication, and foreignization. They narrowed down to their implications, importance, and related issues. The literary information was gathered from several online resource databases, namely Science Direct, google scholar, emerald, the web of science, Scopus, and EBSCO HOST. During the search, the researchers tried to review the most relevant researches related to the study, in order to form a conclusion for the current study, and to provide constructive suggestions for future study. The previous studies also followed the same guidelines for extensive review papers (Patwary, Omar, & Tahir, 2020; Patwary & Omar, 2016; Ashraf, Asif, Talib, Ashraf, Nadeem, & Warraich, 2019). In the process of the review, the researchers considered the concurrent issues highlighted in the study, the methodological standpoint, and the findings of the study.

Discussion and Conclusion

Currently, the world is changing rapidly because of the effects of globalisation. Globalisation seems to be a process that has been changing continuously. Globalisation allows us to make contact easily with people from other sides of the world, and makes our life more international (McDaniel, Samovar, & Porter, 2007; Alom, Patwary, Khan, 2019). As members of the global community, it is necessary for us to learn about dealing with people from other cultures. In order to derive success in our work, and live in a multicultural community, we should be aware of international cultures, and learn to be successful communicators in intercultural settings. In order to respond to the effects of globalisation, in recent years many scholars have tried to complete various studies to deal with people around the world who have different attitudes, values, cultures, ethnicities, social practices, ways of life, beliefs, and religions (Knutson, Komolsevin, Chatiketu, & Smith, 2003; Fantini, 2005; Gannon, 2008; Patwary, Roy, Hoque, & Khandakar, 2019; Patwary, Mohammed, Hazbar, & Kamal, 2018; Komolsevin, Knutson & Datthuyawat, 2010; Gitimu, 2010).

From a contextual viewpoint, neither domestication or foreignization are perfect, but they are related to one another. They cannot go to extremes. The translation cultural characteristics will be removed due to the extreme use of domestication. On the other hand, the extreme use of foreignization will make the translation mechanical, with the connotative meaning carried in the translation to neither be understood or be able to impress the reader, as strong as it should do. Both strategies are disadvantageous for cultural communication between different nations. The translator should have enough knowledge of the two cultures. In some degree, a good translation text must be both domesticated, and foreignized.
The debate over whether the translation should be source or target-oriented has been heated in Chinese translation circles for several decades. The debate generally concluded that translation works ought to be source-oriented rather than merely being based on context. Moreover, it is well described that foreignization has more characteristics of being source-oriented, and domestication is based on the target language. Venuti is designed as a symbol and form of translation for foreignization among western countries, and Nida is being recognised as prominent domesticating translation. The terms ‘foreignization’, and ‘domestication’ could be new to the Chinese, but the perceptions they carry have existed for at least a century at the heart of most translation controversies. Lu Xun once stated that the translator has to choose between adapting the original text or retaining a lot of the foreign characteristics of the original text. Many Chinese scholars in the translation circle support domesticated translation. When ‘keeping smoothness’ contradicts ‘keeping foreignness’, the latter will be cast away.

Even though domestication, and foreignization are conflicted, both are used alternatively while translating. In language forms, the source text becomes easier for the target readers to understand by applying domestication, but while promoting the cultural communication and transmission, foreignization should be used.

Besides, translation through the domestication method mostly emphasises upon fluency, and elegance, and makes it easier for the readers. Domestication is also applied for historical, and cultural information on the language targeted for readers. However, domestication results in losing some of the cultural context from the original source. The foreignization translation method is more prone to be based upon the cultural context, where the source language, and its cultural implications are given the same importance to keep the best version of the source.

**Limitations and Future Study Recommendation**

This research has contributed to the body of the knowledge by exploring in-depth upon domestication, and foreignization related issues, however, this study is also restricted by several limitations. Firstly, this study relied entirely on a literature review rather than focussing on an empirical investigation, which lacks a methodological standpoint. Therefore, future studies should include more findings by analysing the related factors from collected data. Secondly, the literature review of this study mostly highlighted, and was based on Chinese translation culture, which lacks the generalisation of genuine ideas, and thoughts.
REFERENCES


