

Foreignizing Translation as a Strategy to Universalize Literary Texts

Younes Aich 

Associate Professor at Chouaib Eddoukkali University, Department of English, El Jadida, Morocco

✉ **Corresponding Author:** Younes Aich, **E-mail:** younesaich8888@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFORMATION

Received: August 14, 2021

Accepted: September 15, 2021

Volume: 4

Issue: 9

DOI: 10.32996/ijllt.2021.4.9.10

KEYWORDS

Literary translation,
foreignization, cross-cultural
communication

ABSTRACT

All literary works hold the traces of their authors at various levels. With this idea in mind, all literary translations should enable the target reader to have an insight into the kind of thinking patterns, tastes and choices that guide the daily life of people in foreign cultures. On this basis, it is of paramount importance to preserve the local flavour of the translated text so that the target reader knows him/herself better through contacting the cultural Other. To this end, I deem it crucial to opt for a translation method that is likely to preserve the local flavor of the home culture and trigger the target reader's enthusiasm to discover the Other along with his/her writings. Foreignization can be adopted as a translation strategy in this regard to facilitate an adequate encounter with the cultural Other via his/her literary production. It is worth noting that any investigation of the source text, including its cultural environment, gives a place for a deep and satisfactory understanding of it. Relatedly, when the home culture is sufficiently studied and comprehended, the target reader gets to know more about it and learns to be tolerant of differences.

1. Introduction

Translation authenticates intercultural communication through a systematic investigation of cultural differences. It is important to highlight the relevance of the source text when it comes to the role it plays in informing the reader about the environment that produced it. Therefore, the source text is the mirror on which the traits of the local culture are sculptured. This function of informing is fostered due to the debatable nature of the original idea that circulates within the textual structure. Therefore, the cultural aspects that are transposed through the source text may be approached and interpreted from different perspectives. The source text, in this sense, is a window on the local culture as it represents the most important ideas that define the community. Relatedly, translation is looked at as a cultural bridge whereby the target reader is able to see what happens in other parts of the world. This bridge enables the target reader to become part of a reciprocal process of exchange through which mutual understanding and tolerance of differences are promoted.

2. Domesticating translation fosters an ethnocentric attitude towards the Other

There is no doubt that translation is concerned chiefly with interpreting the original content and making it readable for the target reader. Thus, interpretation is a key component in the translation process, for every translation is nothing more than an interpretation of the original idea. The mother tongue itself sometimes necessitates interpretation to facilitate the understanding process for its users simply because people are not equally educated and their perception of social, academic or even philosophic matters differs according to their background knowledge and social class. Thus, translation may occur within the same language to foster the communicative function that language should serve. Venuti (1995:114), in this sense, claims:

People need a kind of mediation or translation to communicate and understand one another; they are different in terms of their languages or even their dialects if they are from the same country. They can be different even at the level of their level of education or class. Therefore, translation is crucial for their social intercourse.

In other words, people who are not highly educated expect their interlocutors to shape their discourses into suitable communicative patterns so that they conform to their level of education.

Hence, regarding the communicative function of translation, one can deduce that any translating process approaches the source text, searching for a possible way to grasp the text's intended meaning through an investigation of the different key components that make up the textual identity. This identity must be preserved and made known for the target reader.

Translation is an ongoing search for meaning because the target reader interprets the translator's perspective about the source text so as to form his/her own perspective. The source text, in this sense, enhances the idea of acculturation and triggers the emergence of intercultural communication. Therefore, the translator is invited to preserve the cultural originality of the source text so that the target reader can discover the richness and beauty of the local culture. This discovery is then attained through exploring all the transposed features and components that characterize the source text. Thus, intercultural communication begins when the target reader becomes independent and free to employ his/her own mechanisms to read, understand and discover what is culturally remote or unknown. Therefore, the target reader becomes responsible for discovering the constructing elements of the local culture and learns to accept what is different or unusual. The reading process is thus contextualized and utilized mainly to decipher the inner structure through which the source text reveals itself. On this basis, translation becomes a process that functions within the realm of interpretation. Simply put, the target reader ventures to contextualize what he/she reads in an attempt to come up with purely personal perspectives concerning the original content. Accordingly, this process enriches the source text and enables the target reader to become culturally and linguistically aware of the Other.

The target reader should not depend solely on his/her background knowledge to approach and understand the source text. Hans-George Gadamer (1996:127) says that the target reader's background knowledge about the source text or the source culture may have a negative impact on the reading process. The target reader's background knowledge, for Gadamer, may control the target reader's search for the meaning and hinders his/her enthusiasm to know and interpret what he/she reads. Conversely, Gadamer admits that the target reader can resort to his/her background knowledge to select what can help him/her explore the source text. For example, one's knowledge about linguistic formation can be resorted to ensuring safe and deep contact with the textual structure.

Human thinking methods and ideologies have undoubtedly been developed and modified during several historical periods. More importantly, in the realm of the historical evolution of science, philosophy and literature, many civilizations and nations have become great and powerful, for they benefited from each other through the reciprocal interchange of ideas. From this perspective, translation has been crucial to facilitate the exchange of experiences among people and nations throughout history. The source text, in this sense, is a human product and believed to mirror the human experience during the most important phases of history. Translation, accordingly, reveals the different ideas, experiences, and values embodied within the text to send the target reader abroad and make the local experience universal.

However, the communicative function of translation confronts an ethnocentric view that marginalizes the cultural component of the source text. With this idea in mind, Nida (1986) claims that the translator should minimize the strangeness of the source text and strive to make it accessible for the target reader. Therefore, the translator should modify the original color of the source text to resemble the target reader's cultural features. Nida's "dynamic equivalence" is generally about producing a kind of translation marked by smoothness and accessibility because it is this translation, according to Nida, which lessens the complexity of the source text and therefore facilitates the target reader's task

Nida's approach to translation favors the target reader and urges translators to modify or even omit any peculiar or unusual cultural aspect of the source text and come up with an equivalent one from the target culture. From this perspective, Nida's approach to translation gives much importance to the translator's invisibility as he wants the target reader to face no difficulty while reading, interpreting or understanding the original content of the source text. The translator's invisibility means that the translating process disregards any unusual expression or cultural feature that may affect the fluency of the translation. After that, having experienced a very new cultural atmosphere, the source text loses its original colour.

According to Nida (1986), a successful translation is definitely the one that enables the target reader to experience the same kind of contact that the native speaker had with the source text. In this regard, Nida introduced a translation theory to display his perspective about domesticating translation. Nida's 'functional equivalence' aims to minimise the source text's foreignness through an introduction of the target reader's cultural components and values. Nida, in this sense, argues that "the readers of a translated text should be able to comprehend it to the point that they can conceive of how the original readers of the text must have understood and appreciated it." (Venuti 1995:118)

Domestication is, therefore, a translation strategy that makes the cultural aspects of the source text invisible. Such a strategy facilitates the target reader's reading process through an introduction of a fluent and smooth translation that employs familiar expressions. Venuti (1995:20), in this sense, points out that domesticating translation is "an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values, bring the author back home". To fully comprehend Venuti's words, Yang (2010:77) says that "domestication designates the type of translation in which a transparent, fluent style is adopted to minimize the strangeness of the foreign text for the target language readers".

Domestication was first introduced to preserve the national and cultural values that characterized certain nations. Yang (2010:77) claims:

According to Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies (Baker 1998:242), the domestication strategy has been implemented at least since ancient Rome, when, as Niethzsche remarked, "translation was a form of conquest.

Drawing on Niethzsche's remark, domestication was adopted in some nations and chiefly by dominant social classes to preserve the originality of their national values, for they regarded translation as a tool of cultural deformation. Accordingly, domesticating translation intends to respond to the transparency and fluency of language in order to foster the readability of the translated text. The domestication theory, in this regard, promotes the isolation of the target culture because it hinders any contact with the source culture and resists any possibility to discover new cultural elements from other regions.

3-Foreignizing translation constructs a cross-cultural competency

The idea of a cross-cultural competency in translation can be achieved only if something of the foreignness of the source text is retained. The target reader becomes cross-culturally competent only when he discovers the Other through an experience of his/her cultural aspects. In this respect, Translation is to be considered as a sort of travel across cultures to visit new places and meet people from different nations and regions. Yang (2010:78), in this sense, says:

In his famous lecture *On the Different Ways of Translation*, Friedrich Schleiermacher demanded that translation from different languages into German should read and sound different: the reader should be able to guess the Spanish behind a translation from Spanish, and the Greek behind a translation from Greek. He argued that if all translations read and sound alike, the identity of the source text would be lost, leveled in the target culture.

According to Schleiermacher, the identity of the source text should be preserved, for it enables the target reader to form an idea about the region or the nation that produced the translated text and thereby discover new cultural aspects that characterize that region or nation. Yang (2010:78) points out that "Venuti (1995:20) considers the foreignizing method to be "an ethno-deviant pressure on target-language culture values to register the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad." Therefore, the foreignizing method is a window on the Other and mainly on what makes him/her different from the target reader. Translation, in this sense, empowers the target culture as it allows the target reader to know more his/her own culture through an experience of unusual ways of expression, different methods of thinking and new manners of living. In other words, foreignization gives a place for the Other to preserve his/her own identity and also to voice out his viewpoint about how his/her cultural features should be approached. Yang (2010:78) argues:

foreignization advocated by Venuti and his followers is a non-fluent or estranging translation style designed to make visible the presence of the translator by highlighting the foreign identity of the ST and protecting it from the ideological dominance of the target culture

As it is illustrated above, the dominant English elite resists any element coming from a foreign culture or language, for the cultural aspects of the source text are perceived as a sort of cultural deformation and accused of exerting a negative impact on the target culture. Such an ethnocentric view declares the inferiority of the Other and calls attention to the superiority of the ideology that circulates within certain dominant classes.

Translation, however, has to be defined and even approached as an interchange of ideas, perspectives and sentiments that preoccupy people and make up their illusions and enrich their imagination. Therefore, the communicative function of translation enhances a fruitful interaction between cultures and suppresses any ethnocentric view that aims to marginalize the cultural presence of the Other within the territory of the target reader. Schleiermacher (Venuti 1995:101) places much importance on translation as a communication facility simply because it allows the target language reader to travel abroad and go through new experiences.

For Schleiermacher, translation reveals particular linguistic differences that usually exist amongst languages and provides its receptors with more possibilities to communicate and interact effectively. Venuti (1995:115), relatedly, argues that Schleiermacher is convinced of the utility of preserving the originality of the source text since it promotes a high level of cultural

exchange between cultures. Schleiermacher's perspective about translation intends to resist the dominant cultural values that are prevalent in Germany and enable the target reader to experience new cultural and linguistic elements. From this perspective, the receptors of the translated text become aware of the cultural differences that exist between nations and learn to respect the Other and valorize his/her cultural features.

According to Schleiermacher's perspective, one can deduce that foreignization as a translation strategy comes to create a new cultural atmosphere through resisting the dominant discourses that penetrate particular nations like Germany, England and even Italy. For example, Italian fiction was characterized by realism, which enhances the reproduction of the same social structures and consolidates the dominant culture. In this respect, Venuti (1995:150) says that Trachetti's purpose was to develop a new trend for the Italian fiction; he wanted to introduce a fantastic fiction that gives the reader the chance to dream and discover new alternatives for his/her life. His translations were about fantastic fiction, mainly from Arabian or English literature. Venuti (1995:171), in this regard, claims, "Trachetti's translation of the English text written by "Shelly" strengthened the mimetic register of Shelly's fantastic discourse." Drawing on Venuti's words, foreignizing translation intends to introduce a new trend to oppose the dominant discourse. Therefore, Trachetti implements fantastic fiction to enrich the imagination of Italian readers. Trachetti's foreign discourse resists the bourgeois realism that dominated Italian fiction.

By foreignizing translation, new perspectives are brought to light to challenge the prevalent ones and enable the target reader to strengthen his/her personal mechanisms to empower his/her values and rethink his/her attitudes towards life. This strategy cannot be fully applied in the field of translation unless translators are free to use language while transposing the original content of the source text. Venuti (1995:102) stresses the importance of freedom and openness in using language by translators since the ideal site for this method is "languages which are freer, in which innovations and deviations are tolerated to a great extent..." Similarly, Schleiermacher favors the empowerment of his national language through foreignizing translation, but he suggests that the educated elite supervises the contact of his national language with any foreign language through translation. In this regard, Schleiermacher "gives his privileged translation method a cultural, political agenda, an educated elite controls the formation of a national culture by refining its language through foreignizing translation." (Venuti, 1995:102)

There is no doubt that the German foreignizing translation allows the German language reader to experience every aspect that characterizes the source text through the words of the foreign author. In the realm of the translation process, foreignizing translation brings the foreign author's voice to the target reader without any mediation or interference on the part of dominant discourses. Venuti (1995:113), in this regard, points out:

In this case of the German foreignizing translation, then, the translator enables the German language reader to understand the individuality of the foreign author so as to identify with him, thereby concealing the trans-individual, German language ideologies- cultural (literary elitism), class (bourgeois minority), national ("German")- that mediate the foreignized representation of the foreign author

As it is shown above, translation can enhance an intercultural communication within the German nation as it favors direct contact with foreign writings through translation. The translation process, therefore, promotes an interaction between the German language reader and the translated text. The target reader thereby develops an awareness of the Other and forms an idea about his/her cultural and linguistic mechanisms.

Overall, the identity of individuals is culture-dependent and can never be constructed or fostered without interaction with others. No one can discover his/her own identity without exchanging ideas and perspectives with his/her community or even with foreign people from other communities. The translation process can make this social interaction possible if cultural differences are accepted in a way that the target reader knows him/herself more through the Other.

4. Conclusion

To conclude, the main purpose of any translation is to make the original content of the source text accessible for the target reader. However, fluent translation domesticates the foreign text by making it readable within the context of dominant discourses. In this regard, the fluent strategy disregards the translator's visibility as it values the illusion of authorial presence. The process of translation, in this sense, should not draw attention to itself, for the translator must create the illusion that the translation is not a translation. Conversely, the usage of such a translation strategy triggers ethnocentrism and blocks the communicative function of translation. Accordingly, the dominant class within certain nations resists any tendency of other cultural trends to exert a cultural interaction with it. Therefore, the elite prohibits any transposition of any cultural component via translation because it is seen as a major threat to the prevalent discourse.

References

- [1] Gadamer, H. (1996). *Problème de la conscience historique*. Seuil.
- [2] Nietzsche, F. (1967) *The Will to Power*, trans. W.Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale, Vintage.
- [3] Nida, E.A. and de Waard, J. (1986) *From One Language to Another: Functional Equivalence in Bible Translating*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson.
- [4] Schleiermacher, F. (1838) *Sämmtliche Werke*. Dritte abteilung: Zur Philosophie, Zweiter Band, Reimer. Tarchetti, I.U. (trans.) (1869a) Carlo Dickens, *L'amico comune*, Sonzogno.
- [5] Venuti, L. (1995). *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*. Routledge.
- [6] Wechsler, R. (1998). *Performing Without a Stage: The Art of Literary Translation*: Catbird Press.
- [7] Wenfen, Y. (2010). Brief study on Domestication and Foreignization in Translation. Finland: *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*. 1(1), 77-80.