



"DOMESTICATION VS. FOREIGNIZATION IN LITERARY TRANSLATION"

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the theoretical and practical aspects of domestication and foreignization strategies in literary translation. Drawing on the works of Schleiermacher and Venuti, it analyzes how translators navigate the tension between adapting a text to the target culture and preserving its foreign characteristics. Examples from world literature highlight the implications of each strategy on reader reception and cultural representation.

Introduction

Translation is more than a linguistic transformation—it is a cultural and ideological act. In literary translation, where meaning, tone, and cultural nuances intertwine, translators face the dilemma of preserving the foreignness of the source or adapting it to the target culture. This dichotomy is captured in the concepts of *domestication* and *foreignization*, as introduced by Friedrich Schleiermacher in the 19th century and revived by Lawrence Venuti in the 1990s. Domestication refers to adapting the source text to the norms of the target culture to ensure accessibility, while foreignization retains the foreign elements, challenging the reader but preserving the original's cultural integrity. This article explores both strategies, examines their historical roots and theoretical foundations, analyzes real-world literary examples, and discusses their implications in modern translation practice.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The debate on domestication and foreignization can be traced back to Friedrich Schleiermacher's 1813 lecture, *On the Different Methods of Translating*, in which he stated: "Either the translator leaves the writer 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 writer towards him"[1]. This foundational dichotomy resurfaced in Lawrence Venuti's *The Translator's Invisibility* (1995), where he critiques the Anglo-American translation industry's preference for fluent, natural-sounding translations that often erase the original's foreignness[2].

Venuti defines domestication as a strategy that "reduces the foreign text to target-language cultural values," making the translator "invisible"[3]. In contrast, foreignization "entails choosing a foreign text and developing a translation method along lines which are excluded by dominant cultural values in the target language"[4].

While Venuti advocates for foreignization as an ethical resistance to cultural imperialism, scholars such as Eugene Nida and Peter Newmark support a more balanced approach. Nida's dynamic equivalence favors comprehension and natural expression in the target language[5],

while Newmark emphasizes communicative versus semantic translation, which can roughly align with domestication and foreignization respectively[6].

DISCUSSION

Domestication is particularly useful when the target audience's familiarity with the source culture is limited. It involves modifying idioms, references, names, and even character attributes to suit the expectations of the new readership. This approach increases the accessibility and marketability of translated works, particularly in popular fiction and children's literature.

For example, in the U.S. edition of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, the title was changed to *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. The term "jumper" was replaced by "sweater," and cultural foods like "treacle tart" were simplified or substituted. These changes reflect editorial decisions aimed at cultural adaptation.

However, domestication is criticized for erasing cultural specificity, homogenizing diverse voices, and promoting linguistic imperialism. Readers are not exposed to the original culture's worldview, which defeats one of translation's central purposes: fostering intercultural understanding.

Foreignization intentionally retains cultural markers, even at the cost of fluency. This strategy challenges readers, encouraging them to engage with unfamiliar concepts and values. It often involves keeping original names, cultural references, syntax, and even untranslatable idioms.

Dostoevsky's novels, for instance, often retain honorifics like "Rodion Romanovich," and references to Orthodox customs or Russian social structures. These foreignized elements serve as entry points into the Russian worldview and maintain the narrative's authenticity.

Japanese haiku translations frequently opt for literal renderings to retain poetic structure and seasonal themes, which are deeply rooted in Japanese aesthetics. Bashō's well-known haiku, "An old pond— / A frog jumps in, / The sound of water," captures the essence of minimalism and stillness in Zen tradition. Foreignization preserves such subtleties.

Foreignization, however, may be viewed as elitist or impractical for mass audiences. Some readers might find culturally unfamiliar texts difficult or alienating, resulting in limited engagement or rejection.

RESULTS

A comparative analysis of translated works shows that neither strategy is inherently superior. Each serves a distinct purpose based on the translator's goals, the text's genre, the target audience, and cultural context.

In children's literature and mainstream novels, domestication tends to dominate. The commercial imperative and the need to ensure readability often guide editorial and translational decisions.

Conversely, in academic, historical, and poetic texts, foreignization is more prevalent. It offers educational value and preserves textual authenticity, even if it sacrifices ease of reading.

Recent trends also suggest a hybrid approach. Translators selectively domesticate or foreignize different elements within the same work. For example, names and culturally significant metaphors may be foreignized, while dialogues or idioms may be domesticated to ensure clarity.

Additionally, translation paratexts—such as prefaces, footnotes, or glossaries—can mediate between the two strategies by offering cultural explanations without altering the original text.

CONCLUSION

The choice between domestication and foreignization is not merely technical—it reflects deeper ideological and ethical considerations. Domestication prioritizes readability and cultural alignment, often at the cost of erasing cultural diversity. Foreignization emphasizes cultural preservation and translator visibility but risks alienating readers.

Rather than advocating a rigid allegiance to either strategy, translators should consider the function of the translation, the nature of the text, and the target audience's expectations. A flexible, context-sensitive approach often yields the most successful and respectful results. The interplay between these strategies enriches the field of literary translation, encouraging translators to act as cultural negotiators, not just language converters.

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