# *Improving Conveying Implicit Artistic Conception in Translation*

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*Abstract:* This paper mainly discusses how to solve the problem that readers sometimes have difficulty in having an emotional connection with the translation version and help to polish the translation texts from both theoretical and practical perspectives. The paper includes five sections: domestication and foreignization theory, functional equivalence, application of readers' response theory in literacy translation, critical attitude towards faithfulness, expressiveness, elegance, and creative treason in film title translation and advertisement translation. In each section, this paper will talk about how to improve translation quality by applying theories appropriately and practically. When dealing with a new text, the translators may be inspired by some theories so that they can deliver better translation: first of all, the translator should have a precise preparation on background culture and a deep understanding of the authors' idea, then based on the target reader to balance between domestication and foreignization while following four principles of functional equivalence to translate. Creative treason helps to shorten the aesthetic distance, especially in the film title and advertisement translation.

*Keywords:* domestication and foreignization theory, functional equivalence, readers' response, Faithfulness, Expressiveness, Elegance, Creative treason

## 1. Introduction

These days, a sharp opinion raised in public speeches that Chinese literature appears to be marginalised in world literature has attracted great attention. This phenomenon is a result of a combination of various factors and it is undeniable that poor translation quality is one of the major objective factors. The cultural transmission and the soft power behind this phenomenon are hidden in every translated word. Just as a Nobel Price judge once mentioned: the reason for Chinese lack of Nobel Price for Literature can be attributed to the fact that there are many good Chinese writers but few good translators. However, despite the fact that the Chinese government has recognized this and invested in changing the dilemma by launching a series of projects, the measurements have had little effect. Therefore, improving the translation is an urgent mission.

The reason why the original and the translation version cannot correspond is that the culture, customs and living habits of people and the underlying logic behind the two languages are extremely different. In terms of subtitle translation and artistic and literary translation, there are loads of cultural allusions which may not be fully present in the target language. For instance, each idiom has its literary allusions, background, and special cultural connotation. The literary quotations in Tang

Poems are heavily loaded with cultural information, which makes them more difficult to translate. It is a common strategy for a translator to apply a literal translation, with additional annotations to explain the cultural allusions to help understand. This is why Chinese people cannot laugh when encountering British humor.

## 2. Domestication and Foreignization Theory

### 2.1. The Introduction and Conception of Domestication and Foreignization Theory

Lawrence Venuti, an American translation theorist, proposed the domestication and foreignization theory in 1995. According to his study, achieving invisibility is an ideal condition for translation tasks, which means the translated text, no matter poetry or prose, fiction or non-fiction, as long as read fluently without any obvious linguistic and stylistic exceptionality, can be considered acceptable by the majority of mainstream media and viewers[1]. In other words, translators' outcomes are not, in fact, the translation itself but the original text which should reflect the fundamental meaning in the target language as well as the foreign authors' personality and intention. To attach the translation text closely to the original text, it is the translator who should shape the linguistic taste of the multitude towards foreign text by giving up his nation's originality, more or less. This is the predecessor of domestication. In order to get close to and even achieve the perfect translation editions which can exactly show the implicit artistic conception between the lines, Venuti recommends translators to apply the domestication and foreignization theory.

As two separated systems, domestication and foreignization are opposites but mutually reinforcing strategies for literary and artistic translation. On one hand, following domesticating translation allows the readers to easily understand while pursuing complete conversion of basic meaning and implicit artistic images to the target language. On the other hand, foreignization seeks to preserve the sentence patterns and expression habits of the source language, conveying more foreign cultures and thinking pattern.

### 2.2. The Dialectical Relationship between Domestication and Foreignization

In Venuti's book, he argued that fluent, naturalized translations not only hide the translator's efforts but also cover up cultural differences and the original text's sense of history, imposing the contemporary values of the current trends on the original since it is easy for readers to believe the translation text, which has been contaminated by the dominant culture and linguistic values of the target language, is the original work, thus giving readers 'a narcissistic experience' of identifying with the local culture in the 'cultural other.' He also noted that completely applying the foreignization is 'an ethnocentric reduction of the original text in accordance with the cultural values of the target language' and a kind of imperialist cultural plunder[2]. The more naturalized the translation, the more invisible the translator becomes, and the more invisible the fact of the insidious domestication of the original. Consequently, the more easily the readers of the translated edition will be deceived.

The disputes over the two have existed for quite a long time. According to Wang, in western countries, the conception of domestication and foreignization can be traced back to ancient Rome, when word-for-word translation and sense-for-sense translation remained the major current in translation study fields. However, it was until the 1970s when the 'cultural turn' appeared in this field, that the battle between domestication and foreignization was considered to contain profound cultural, poetic, and political connotations rather than a simple extension of conception between word-for-word translation and sense-for-sense translation[3].

As seen from this, domestication and foreignization are two ways of transcoding a language, involving two different cultures. The former uses target language to replace the original culture while the latter maintains cultural differences. Therefore, this paper argues that this theory does not demand

that translators should choose one extreme camp, by the contrary, translating itself is a tug-of-war between domestication and foreignization. A good translation text should strive to balance the two, which asks the translators to take a stand since 'biculturalism is even more crucial than bilingualism: words only have meanings in cultures where they function.'

## 3. The Functional Equivalence

### 3.1. The Major Content of Functional Equivalence

Eugene Nida first introduced and distinguished the concepts between 'dynamic equivalence' and 'formal equivalence' in 1964. 'Formal equivalence' means that translators should pay attention to the information itself, both in terms of its literary structure and its content. The message in the receptor language should match the different elements in the source language as much as possible[4]. However, he argues that such translation situations are rare, thus especially emphasizing the 'dynamic equivalence.' The latter is based on what Nida called 'the principle of equivalent effect', where 'the relationship between recipient and message should be substantially the same as that which existed between the original receptors and the message.' He defined the goal of dynamic equivalence as seeking the closest natural equivalent to the source-language message[4]. In other words, translation's goal is to make the expression completely natural. This naturalness includes, in addition to linguistic fluency, adaptation to the reader's culture and habits of thought, without requiring the reader to know the culture of the source language.

Later, he replaced the term 'dynamic equivalence' with 'functional equivalence' to avoid misunderstanding his translation principles by understanding dynamic equivalence as a free translation focusing only on meaning but not on form. For instance, an English proverb 'like a deer in headlights' describes a scene where deer stop suddenly in the middle of a road and stare into the lights of a vehicle coming toward them, used as a metaphor for being shocked or frightened into a dumbfounded state. There is a good Chinese equivalent for this slang term - '呆若木鸡'. Not only is this group equivalent in content and leaves the readers with exactly the same general idea and impression, but the English sentence uses a metaphor, and the translated sentence in Chinese also uses a metaphor. The original text is compared to an animal, the dear, and the Chinese version is also compared to an animal, the chicken. This is a perfect example of the functional equivalence theory.

### 3.2. The Practical Use of the Theory

Nida noted 'The most difficult task for the translator is to understand thoroughly the designative and associative meanings of the text to be translated. This involves not only knowing the meanings of the words and the syntactic relations but also being sensitive to all the nuances of the stylistic devices'[5]. He introduced four principles in translation in terms of equivalence theory to help convey the beauty of artistic conception and cultural difference in the original text to the information recipient of the target language： lexical equivalence, syntactic equivalence, textual equivalence and stylistic equivalence[6].

Due to the differences between the English and Chinese social backgrounds and living environments, there may be a lack of meaning or a mismatch of meaning in the translation process, so the translator needs to find the word that best matches the meaning expressed in the original language to achieve meaning equivalence. Under the guidance of lexical equivalence, to better convey the meaning and consider the feelings of the readers of the translated language, in English translation, four-character idioms that Chinese readers are accustomed to can be used to reproduce the style of the original.

In terms of syntax, English emphasizes long sentences and Chinese emphasizes short sentences. In syntactic equivalence, the translator should retain the original syntactic structure as much as possible to deliver the meaning of the original text. However, sentence structure differs between languages, and retaining the original structure may cause ambiguity. The translator may change the sentence structure and add conjunctions to make it smooth and more in line with the idiom of the translated language so that the reader of the translated language gets the same information and reading experience as the reader of the original.

From a chapter perspective, a coherent chapter is the only way to express the semantic meaning accurately. In the process of translation, it is necessary to carefully analyze the internal logical relationship between the paragraphs, and pay attention to making the translation text conform to the thinking pattern of the target language readers, as well as achieve textual equivalence.

Translations of different genres have their unique linguistic characteristics. A translator cannot produce a translation that accurately captures the style of the source language unless they are proficient in both the source language and the target language and have mastered both languages' characters.

Additionally, there are some new ideas about translation methods based on the equivalence theory. Abridgement and 'adaptation' have traditionally been regarded as the main enemies of literary translation, at least in theory[7]. In practice, however, we can often see examples where this view is contradicted or reversed, with very successful results. Although the idea is that a translation cannot be abridged, an adjustment is not a translation, and only works that meet certain criteria (e.g.,faithfulness and fluency) can be qualified for translations. Several practical examples confirmed that as long as such adjustments (including deletions and adaptation) are based on an analysis of the original text and a rational choice made to achieve the intended function of the translation and that they are properly applied, they can sometimes have a positive effect which is difficult to achieve for ordinary translation methods. Examples of this are not rare in translations of both literary and non-literary texts. The Ivanho, for example, is often recognized as a typical cultural exchange carried out through adaptation translations. Instead of taking '艾凡赫', the literal translation as the book's title, the translator translated it into 'The Saxon Post-Holocaust," which is undoubtedly the result of the purpose and intended function of translation. This treatment aimed at a better appeal to Chinese readers and give them a general idea of the content of the text as soon as they see the title[8].

## 4. Application Readers' Response Theory in Literacy Translation

Jauss's analysis of anticipatory horizons and aesthetic distance offers the possibility of expanding the explanation of Nida's reader-response theory, which focused on the important influence of reader-response on the translation process and translation methods.[9]

Nida's reader-response theory is reliable and can have more persuasive explanation through integration with aesthetic of reception. Qin Wuhong combined Nida and Jauss's ideas and extend the conclusion 1) the readership of translated texts is selective, and translators can choose their readers purposefully; 2) the use of translation methods is related to the chosen readers' horizon of expectations; 3) readers' reflection is constantly changing. The history of translation and translation methods and the evolution of translated texts imply the evolution of readers' horizons of expectations. 4) The successes and failures of translation and translation techniques should be defined by readers' reactions[10]. The shorter the aesthetic distance, which does not require the receptive consciousness to go back to the known range of experience, the closer the work is to popular art[11]. Over-biased opinions can affect the acceptability of translated text. Thus, it is a normal and objective phenomenon that the different understanding of the culture towards the original country decides the various methods and requirements of the translations. That is to say, the translation version can choose the readers based on their receptivity and the literary nature of the text.

Nida believed that readers' tolerance is constantly changing. Thus a particular translation method cannot be accepted eternally. Plus, 'The differences between the source language and the translated language are inevitable. The translated text is unstable[10].', which makes it easy to understand why Fu Donghua, when he translated *Gone with the Wind* in 1940, was determined to sinicize characters' names and toponyms and to delete large lines of description and psychological analysis in work: serious translators have tried to guide readers with new literary forms, but readers have not yet shown the expected interest in these new forms.

Therefore, readers' reflections can affect the translation methods and translation text to a large extent. However, the real-time focus on the readers' responses is often seen as pandering to public taste. This bias often polarizes the literal translation while leading to a one-sided understanding of the basic nature and standards of translation. Pandering to the readers means appealing to the vulgar taste of certain readers, which is different from caring for readers' reactions. The latter should mean that the translator pays attention to the reader's horizon of expectation and determines the appropriate aesthetic distance accordingly. Even the translators need to carefully examine the current horizons of readers' expectations and shorten the aesthetic distance by repairing or re-translating as appropriate. In this way, readers' preference, whether the reader of the translated language will receive a similar emotional response in the translation, will stimulate the progress of translation quality.

However, such emotional resonance is due to implicit emotion on the one hand and the writing style of the original text on the other. Therefore, a good literary translation should not only faithfully reflect the content of the original text but also reproduce its style. This requires the translator to reproduce the artistic style of the original work in another form of literary language, based on a deep understanding of the emotions embodied in the original text, consequently achieving readability and finally creating resonance.

## 5.    Critical Attitude towards Faithfulness, Expressiveness, Elegance

Yanfu proposed the idea of faithfulness, expressiveness, and elegance in terms of translation methods in the book 'Evolution and Ethics and other Essays' in 1896 [12], which has been a hot topic as a standard for translation in the theoretical circle later. Although the mainstream in the Chinese translation field stood for his idea, more and more scholars hold a doubtful attitude towards it nowadays. Some fierce words even suggested that "the drawbacks of this 'principle' itself with the fanatical support for it, have already brought obvious harm to the cause of literary translation in China.", arguing that blindly pursuing is "a dead end for Chinese translation theory community"[13].

In fact, instead of being derived from a complete theory, the conception of 'faithfulness, expressiveness, elegance' is merely a personal discoveries. Whether it can be taken as a criterion is worth debate. Also, Yanfu fails to expound on the definition of each word in detail[14]. Consequently, the bifurcation in the definition of three words resulted in direct rejection and criticism of the principle as a translation standard. Last but not least, Chen Fukang believed that elegance should not be a translator's priority while Yan's achieving elegance is in the sacrifice of faithfulness, which is not an example to be followed "[15]. If the original is vulgar, the translation text should not be attached elegance to it. If 'elegance' refers to the lexical beauty of the original text, then, when one is faithful to the original meaning and has fully expressed out, the 'elegance' can also be conveyed more or less spontaneously. Therefore, the translators should attach more importance to the rest sentences in Yan's book other than faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance "Faithfulness is difficult enough to attain, but a translation that is faithful but not comprehensible is no translation at all [12]."

From a practical perspective, individuals who are currently involved in the translation field but without a deep understanding may regard the three words as the only truth for translation. In fact, it is a quite common phenomenon that when it comes to poetry translation and lyrics translation, the idea of presenting a perfect translation version with inherent figurative aesthetics in the language is

very likely to entice beginners to patch the words together regardless and see if the meaning of the original text is included. Not to mention the fact that some translations are actually elegant but fail in faithfulness, expressiveness, and readers with poor judgement are always dumbfounded by fuzzy literary beauty at first glance. It seems as if the transformation from one strong prosodic text into another strong prosodic text is a rare victory for translating. In reality, translating poetry texts and other literary compositions is far more complex than the translation process mentioned above. There are not only lexical differences between Chinese and English: for example, English has more function words and emphasizes tense and subject, whereas Chinese poetry can discard them all and yet still retain the meaning, but there are also cultural differences: while English works often contemplate the relative relationship between the individuals, the divinities and the society, Chinese ancient poems and Songs tend to presuppose theory that Heaven and Man Are United as One.

Nowadays, the idea of faithfulness, expressiveness, and elegance is widely used in the translation criticism field, conveying a basic principle that the three words are an ideal condition, which is aimed at stimulating tireless pursuit in improving translation quality. Therefore, the belief in the three words should not be a blind one but a supporting point for practical exercise. In other words, as long as they are approached scientifically and rationally, they can serve as a bridge between theoretical knowledge and practice [14].

## 6.    Creative Treason in Film Title Translation and Advertisement Translation

Speaking of creative treason in translation, we cannot leave out the American imagist poet Ezra Pound (1885-1972). He did not know Chinese at all, but in 1915 he published Cathay, a collection of 18 poems in English translation version, most of which were created by Li Bai. His translation of Chinese poetry can be described as typical creative treason, and has been a subject of much controversy. The following part is a concrete analysis of the positive role of creative treason in literary, film title, and even advertisement translation. He drew extensively on the world's outstanding cultural heritage, especially the achievement of Chinese culture. However, he was capable of developing a series of imagistic poetic theories based on the development of indigenous American poetry, and thus American poetry got rid of the influence of British orthodoxy and embarked on the path of modernization and Americanization. And it is known to all that the theory and composition of imagistic poetry in Britain and America have been profoundly influenced by classical Chinese poetry. In this way, Pound's translations of Chinese poetry were, to a large extent, motivated by the need to create imagist poetry. Pound's main propositions of translation innovation are 1) the discard of the Victorian pretentious, outlandish and archaic translations. 2) a good translated text of poetry can be seen as a new poetry composition with its own independent meaning 3) each translation version needs to be regarded as a commentary on the original texts to some extent[16]. In other words, Pound's notion of translation can be summarized as a sentence: a translation is a new work. This is the typical reflection on creative treason.

In XieTianzhen's view, creative treason takes place in the process of "acceptation and dissemination" of the original work. He argued that a more significant aspect of creative treason is also its role in the acceptation and dissemination of literary works and culture behind the composition[17]."  He emphasized that the creative treason is inevitable, as the recipients differ in their comprehension and acceptance of the original work and culture. This is the same for film title translation. Similarly, the advertisement translation is affected by the aesthetic standards in language, cultural paradigms, laws and regulations of different countries. However, the common characteristic between the translation of film titles and advertisements is that the translation texts require to be comprehensive and attractive enough for information recipients--the customers. Therefore, creative treason is inevitable in order to ultimately realize the intended function of advertisements and film titles-- increase sales figures. The movie Avatar is a perfect example.

According to XuJun, in translation subjectivity, the author and reader obviously should be taken into consideration, but what is at the center of cultural transmission is the translator[18].

However, maintaining pure objectivity and faithful hinders translators from the translator's subjectivity, which means, bringing readers and customers into a broader social and cultural perspective, and thus, customers may no longer be attracted. The creative treason is a significant strategy for commercialization in terms of advertisement translation and related cultural transmission. Chinese translators should pursue changes while based on Chinese reality, consciously and actively borrowing and transplanting the modern consciousness, poetic concepts and techniques of Western modernism, and form an internal correspondence between the spirit of classical Chinese poetics and Western modernist poetics to 'beautify the inherent characteristics of Chinese language with the benefit of foreign influences. This was to enhance the development of literature, film, and advertising translation.

## 7.    Conclusion

To conclude, in real translation tasks, what senior translators encounter is not easier than creative work itself and translators are expected to recover a new text that is functionally equivalent or purposefully consistent under the shackles of the original. In terms of overall translation strategy, considering that cultural gaps between two text editions have always been a hard nut to crack, the translators need to take a stand in advance and then achieve an appropriate balance, taking it everywhere in the specific sentences. Before translating work, it is necessary to obtain a better understanding of background information and related culture. Moreover, according to different translation purposes and information recipients, translators should skillfully use the four principles of functional equivalence and differences in attention to each part of faithfulness, expressiveness, and elegance, depending on text types.

Additionally, creative treason deserves more attention and support as an 'eastern wind' of cultural transmission, especially regarding film titles and advertisements translation. If translators and scholars can bravely add more creative treason in their translations, we will see more and better commercial performances in culture-related products' exports and imports. Also, China's long-standing culture can be further affirmed and spread around the world.

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