

The Construction of Cultural Identity of the Minority : The Domestication and the Foreignization of Chinese Image in The Woman Warrior

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Abstract: Chinese Americans are a group which shows the feature of cultural hybridity, and *The Woman Warrior* describes the life experience of a Chinese girl in a foreign land and her imagination of her distant homeland. From the perspective of post-colonialism, cultural identity is gradually constructed and changed. *The Woman Warrior* translates some Chinese images into English shows the construction of cultural identity which is different from the mainstream culture. The translation strategies adopted by the novel can be divided into domesticating translation and foreignizing translation. The two translation methods have different characteristics and play different roles in the construction of cultural identity. This article adopts post-colonial theory, cultural identity theory and translation strategy theory to analyze the characteristics of domesticating translation and foreignizing translation in *The Woman Warrior*, and explores translation strategies that are more conducive to the construction of cultural identity through comparison. Finally, it is concluded that foreignizing translation is a more effective translation strategy under the premise of constructing cultural identity.

Keywords: cultural identity, cultural hybridity, translation strategies, *The Woman Warrior*

1. Introduction

The Woman Warrior is the representative work of the Chinese-American writer Maxine Hong Kingston. It is composed of five novels, including *No Name Woman*, *White Tigers*, *Shaman*, *At the Western Palace* and *A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe*. *The Woman Warrior* describes the life experience of a Chinese girl in a foreign land and her imagination of her distant homeland [1].

Chinese Americans are a group which shows the feature of cultural hybridity. On the one hand, they are not accepted by the mainstream culture, and on the other hand, they do not really recognize the culture of their home country. Therefore, *The Woman Warrior* shows the identification and construction of the cultural identity of a minority group in America. Kingston herself has repeatedly stressed on different occasions that she is an American, and *The Woman Warrior* is not a biography of her own experience, but an American novel. The Chinese stories are retold and transferred to the stories of Chinese Americans by her. On the basis of the Chinese characteristics of the novel's theme, *The Woman Warrior* uses a large number of Chinese images to seek the identity of the ethnic minority group and oppose discrimination due to cultural differences. However, the other side of traditional

Chinese culture is the bondage of women, which is also the novel aims to oppose from the western perspective [2]. Therefore, the use of Chinese imagery in *The Woman Warrior* has abundant implications, such as At Hua Mulan's wedding, she wearing "my black embroidered wedding coat", in the chapter of *White Tiger* [1]. It shows the integration of Eastern and Western cultures and the opposition to the patriarchal traditions [3]. Among them, the translation of Chinese imagery reinforces its uniqueness, such as the use of literal translation or pidgin English, as well as native English expressions that suitable for the Western readers [4]. In the process of translation, the two strategies of domestication and foreignization played different roles: Domestication is more in line with their previous understanding and is conducive to the influence of the work; The result of foreignizing translation is closer to the original meaning of Chinese expression, which contains certain characteristics of Chinese culture [5].

The study of cultural identity is usually related to post-colonialism. In the afterword of *Orientalism*, Edward W. Said presents a view of the construction of identity as "The construction of identity—for identity..... is finally a construction in my opinion—involves the construction of opposites and 'others' whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their differences from 'us'" [6]; Homi Bhabha further expresses his view of cultural identity in *Nation and Narration* and *The Location of Culture*, focusing specifically on the Third Space between two cultural groups whose cultural identities are characterized by Cultural Hybridity [7]. He mentioned the expression of identity in cross-cultural contexts, "This is not simply a matter of language; it is the question of culture's representation of difference - manners, words, rituals, customs, time - inscribed without a transcendent subject that knows, outside of a mimetic social memory, and across the - ouboum - kernel of non-sense." [8]; Stuart Hall focus on the cultural identity of hybrid groups and proposed that apart from the historical common position, there is also the differential fracture position, and attention should be paid to the new characteristics except the historical fracture [9]. Paul Ricoeur believes that in addition to fixed identity, there is also narrative identity, that is, identity formed through cultural construction, narrative and time accumulation, which must often reproduce itself through the narration of the subject and is in the process of constant flow of construction and mediation [10]. Cultural identity is connected with the author's acquired construction. For Kingston, cultural identity is linked to the Chinese language and its translation. In the book *The Translator's Invisibility*, Lawrence Venuti puts forward two kinds of translation: domesticating translation and foreignizing translation. The former is characterized by smooth translation of the target language, while the differences of different cultures are covered up, and the translator enters the state of "invisibility". The latter is characterized by the display of cultural differences in the translation as a place where different cultures emerge [11]. Contemporary researchers have also conducted some studies in this regard, suggesting that the translation of the Chinese images in *The Woman Warrior* can be divided into domestication and foreignization these two kinds of strategies [12].

Current studies on the Chinese image of *The Woman Warrior* mainly focus on the phenomenon of Cultural Hybridity in the Chinese American group or focus on the Chinese translation of the novel; The study of its language focuses on the use of Chinglish or pidgin English to explain the phenomenon of language hybridity. There is a wealth of research on *The Woman Warrior*, mainly involving post-colonial studies and linguistic studies. However, there is few articles in the field of analyzing Chinese imagery from the perspective of translation strategies, but the translation strategies actually reveal the cultural identity under the perspective of post-colonialism. Therefore, the article aims to illustrate the role of different translation strategies in the construction of cultural identity by taking *The Woman Warrior* as an example.

Focusing on the particularity of Kingston's identity as a Chinese-American, the Cultural Hybridity of this identity affects the post-colonial expression of the novel's creation. Starting with the Chinese image of *The Woman Warrior*, it can be close to the author's own perspective, that is, the Chinese

story for Western readers. On the one hand, translation can arouse the mainstream society's cognition of ethnic minorities; on the other hand, it can convey cultural differences through translation. Different translation strategies play different roles in the construction of cultural identity.

2. Methods

The Occidental perspective regards itself as the speaker and other cultures as the "other" to be expressed for a long time, "..... treated the Orient as something to be restored not only because of but also despite the modern Orient's disorderly an elusive presence..... Orientalism belonged therefore to European scholarship, but its material had to be re-created by the Orientalist..... [6]" Although not geographically "the orient", Chinese Americans also exist as "the other" culturally, and the Chinese community in the United States is a minority group excluded from the mainstream society and has a unique cultural identity. The Chinese community is in the "third space" where Chinese and Western cultures blend, with the characteristics of Cultural Hybridity. To get rid of the perspective of the "other", Whether it is from the traditional Chinese perspective or the mainstream western perspective, Chinese Americans need to build an independent cultural identity, and the way represented by *The Woman Warrior* is narrative identification. In other words, they reproduces themselves through the narration of the subject and completes the Asian American narrative in the constant flow of construction and mediation [10]. As the author said, *The Woman Warrior* is an American novel, so it is important to target English readers, and the Chinese images in the novel are translated into English in different ways. In the process of cultural communication, the domestication tends to lead to the elimination of cultural differences and the psychology of national arrogance, while the foreignization can resist the ethnocentrism of the target language culture. They play different roles in the process of translation. From the perspective of cultural identity construction, foreignizing the image in the context of the home country helps to preserve its own cultural uniqueness, while domesticating translation can expand its influence and conform to the expectations of mainstream culture. They create the identity narrative belonging to the cultural hybrid group together.

Therefore, the English translation of Chinese image is the key to the analysis of cultural identity. This article classifies the Chinese images in *The Woman Warrior*, differentiates domesticating translation from foreignizing translation, and selects certain cases to analyze how translation strategies are reflected in different situation, and then summarizes the characteristics of the two translation strategies and their different roles in cultural identity construction on the basis of analysis. This article mainly uses post-colonial theory, translation strategy theory and identity theory. *The Woman Warrior* is a work that embodies the conflict and integration between the ethnic Chinese and the mainstream American society as a minority group, and has the characteristics of post-colonialism. Post-colonial theory involves the hybridity of cultural identity, including the hybridity of language using and the cultural practices. The cultural identity studied in this article refers to the cultural identity under the background of post-colonial theory. The translation strategy theory is applied to the analysis of concrete Chinese image translation. This theory shows how the construction of cultural identity, as an activity from literature to society, spreads and resonates among readers, and finally reaches the result of equal dialogue with mainstream American culture.

The research methods of this study include text analysis, theoretical analysis and literature review. The literature review is used to assist in the interpretation of *The Woman Warrior*, and to find the research gaps in the current research as the basis for determining the research content. Text analysis is used to propose the research object: the Chinese images in *The Woman Warrior*. Theoretical analysis is used to analyze the research object and study the cultural identity construction through the interpretation from the perspective of post-colonialism and the analysis of translation theory.

3. The Analysis of Translation Strategies in *The Woman Warrior*

Many Chinese images and idioms are used in *The Woman Warrior*, and the author needs to adopt different translation strategies to complete the translation of Chinese images. So this chapter divides the English translation of Chinese images in *The Woman Warrior* into domesticating translation and foreignizing translation, and selects several cases to analyze how translation strategies are reflected in specific words, and then summarizes the characteristics of the two translation strategies and their different roles in the construction of cultural identity on the basis of analysis.

3.1. The Analysis of the Domesticating Translation

In order to conform to readers' reading habits, domesticating translation strategies are often used to find similar words in their own language and replace them, which can help readers understand the general idea. However, if the signifiers given by the similar words in two languages differ greatly and the readers get different signified, the domesticating translation will inevitably fail to convey the exact original meaning and can only achieve semantic approximation substitution.

For example, the Chinese concept of "martial arts" has no corresponding vocabulary in English to represent the corresponding category:

(1) *It was a woman who invented white crane boxing only two hundred years ago.*

Later the bird returned as an old man, and he guided her boxing for many years. Thus she gave the world a new martial art [1].

In the novel, the martial arts style "white crane boxing" is not a specific boxing technique but rather a series of moves. However, the original text uses the word "boxing". The term "boxing" has the different meaning in martial arts moves. At the end of this sentence, it would be more appropriate to use "martial art" to refer to the "white crane boxing" style, which only indicates that it is a set of boxing techniques. "White crane boxing" can refer to both a martial arts style and a specific boxing technique, but the original word was split into two for the convenience of English readers, capturing the common point of Chinese martial arts using fist and using "boxing" as an alternative vocabulary accepted by Western readers.

However, in some cases of Chinese imagery translation, the replaced words used in domesticating translation carry strong emotional connotations, which can lead to a misinterpretation of the original meaning. In *The Woman Warrior*, where the narrative is centered on Chinese Americans and aims to tell a Chinese story to American readers, there may be deviations in understanding due to limited audience knowledge, which may instead conform to Western readers' stereotypes.

For example, the translation of terms related to "dragon":

(2) *"These mountains are also like the tops of other dragons heads."*

I could listen to its voice in the thunder and feel its breathing in the winds, see its breathing in the clouds. Its tongue is the lightning [1].

The novel translates the Chinese dragon as "dragon." This imagery has a destructive characteristic in Western tradition and is seen as a representation of disaster. In this chapter, the protagonist learns "the dragon lessons" precisely to experience the power of the dragon in nature, and the original text can be seen as a combination of the dragon and natural disasters. However, in the Chinese context, the manipulation of clouds and rain is a symbol of the dragon's power and does not imply destruction. During the era when the "Yellow Peril" theory was prevalent, the Chinese symbolism of the "dragon" was often seen as a threatening characteristic. Therefore, the domesticating translation here did not handle the different emotional connotations between the words well, resulting in a negative connotation in the translated imagery of the "dragon."

3.2. The Analysis of the Foreignizing Translation

Foreignizing translation can highlight its uniqueness in the construction of cultural identity, distinguishing it from mainstream American culture. For Chinese images, both common proverbs and colloquial habits are involved, which undoubtedly appear unfamiliar to non-Chinese readers, showcasing cultural differences and guiding a multicultural perspective. For Chinese readers, it can reveal cultural characteristics hidden beneath daily behavior, enhancing their identification with their own cultural identity. Examples were selected respectively as subjects for analysis: colloquial habits and common sayings:

(3)*I walked putting heel down first, toes pointing outward thirty to forty degrees, making the ideograph 'eight', making the ideograph 'human'. Knees bent, I would swing into the slow, measured 'square step' [1].*

It describes the posture while practicing martial arts, preserving the use of Chinese characters to describe it. On one hand, it allows foreign readers to understand the differences in character structures between languages, as Chinese characters can borrow forms during usage. On the other hand, Chinese people are accustomed to using Chinese characters to refer to actions, facilitating the description of movements. Such foreignizing translation reflects the colloquial habits of Chinese language users.

Each ethnic language has its own unique idiomatic expressions. While there may be similar expressions in different languages, the selected imagery differs, and retaining this characteristic is a typical case of foreignizing translation. Different metaphors reflect the cognitive differences of various ethnic groups towards things. However, non-Chinese readers may find it difficult to understand the emotional nuances or specific meanings conveyed in Chinese. Therefore, the author provides supplementary explanations of meaning in the translation.

(4)*Marry a rooster, follow a rooster. Marry a dog, follow a dog. Married to a cudgel, married to a pestle. Be faithful to it. Follow it [1].*

For native English speakers, “rooster” and “dog” are not used as proverbs with similar meanings, and may be difficult for non-Chinese readers to understand. Therefore, the author adds “Be faithful to it. Follow it.” as a supplement and explanation to the idiom. The meaning of obedience in the colloquial language is expressed to the reader in a supplementary way, which makes up for the deficiency of foreignizing translation.

The translation of another proverb also adopts the method of supplementary translation to make up for the deficiency of foreignizing translation:

(5).....*advertises “Honest Scales”..... Many sellers displayed the sign ‘Children and Old Men Not Cheated’ [1].*

For the translation of this proverb, the literal meaning can be simply understood as: do not deceive the old and children. However, the literal translation context is different from the original Chinese meaning. Chinese proverbs refer to that even vulnerable groups such as the elderly and children do not cheat, which shows the honesty of the merchants; According to the English literal interpretation can be interpreted as, do not deceive vulnerable groups such as the elderly and children, indicating the protection of vulnerable groups by businesses. The two contexts are different, the former means honesty and the latter means compassion, and the understanding of the text is also different. Therefore, the author adds “Honest Scales” in front of the sentence as a supplement to the context to avoid misunderstanding.

3.3. The Comparison of the Two Translation Strategies

Domesticating translation completes the separation and replacement of meaning in order to facilitate the understanding of a wider group of readers. Or choose similar words to directly cover the original meaning, the former can make up for the lack of understanding, but the latter may lead to

misinterpretation of the original meaning. For the construction of cultural identity, domesticating translation is conducive to expanding the readership and enhancing the influence of Asian narrative on mainstream American society. However, the reason behind lowering the threshold of understanding is that the original meaning of Chinese cannot be accurately expressed, which is easy to cause misunderstandings for non-Chinese readers, so that they cannot correctly understand other cultures. There is also a centrist perspective on cultural contrast, with Said arguing that “It is perfectly natural for the human mind to resist the assault on it of untreated strangeness; therefore cultures have always been inclined to impose complete transformations on other cultures [6].” This point of view is also applicable to the individual as a reader. To interpret other cultures by using the concept of their own national culture, the result is to regard themselves as the subject in the cross-cultural context. Therefore, the domesticating translation strategy is not conducive to highlighting cultural differences in the construction of cultural identity, and it is easy to cause the lack of cultural characteristics. Domesticating translation close to Western readers also shows the author’s recognition of Western mainstream culture, but in the construction of cultural identity, it leads to the dilution of the uniqueness of the narrator. Behind the fact that domesticating translation can enhance the influence of works, it cannot get rid of the limitation of controlling weak cultures.

Although foreignizing translation has its limitations, but for the purpose of shaping cultural identity, the emphasis on the uniqueness of its own narrative should be put in the first place. Moreover, the disadvantage that foreignizing translation is difficult to be accepted by the target language users can also be solved by annotating or providing context. Even if this approach is not taken, a qualified translation can achieve the goal of allowing the reader to imagine how the original text will be understood, like the example of the translation of Chinese characters, both of the methods are still sufficient for reader acceptance. Thanks to the efforts of Chinese writers and writers of Chinese origin, some words adopted in foreignizing translation (mostly literal translation) have been recognized by the English-speaking world, which is undoubtedly a symbol of the recognition of cultural diversity for Chinese Americans. The foreignizing translation of *The Woman Warrior* enhances the cultural identity within the Chinese group, and highlights the cultural differences in the face of non-Chinese readers, and helps to build a cultural identity outside the mainstream on the premise of showing cultural diversity. Therefore, from the perspective of constructing cultural identity, foreignizing translation should be adopted as the main strategy.

4. Conclusion

This article focuses on the classification of the Chinese intention in *The Woman Warrior* into two strategies: domesticating translation and foreignizing translation. It finds that some cases can help English readers understand the original meaning of Chinese images, but some cases fail to deal with the emotional connotations of words in the process of domesticating translation. Foreignizing translation retains the characteristics of other cultures, and the difficulties it causes can also be solved by means of supplementary explanations. In the process of comparison, this article points out that foreignizing translation can better adapt to the requirements of cultural identity construction than domesticating translation.

The Woman Warrior is a novel with post-colonial cultural hybridity characteristics, which has very important research value, and there are a lot of research contents about it. Through the analysis of translation strategies, we can get closer to the author’s Chinese identity and the background of writing American novels, and analyze the cultural hybridity behind the Chinese group. In the post-colonial context, translation studies become a way to interpret the construction of cultural identity, which can show the way of cultural communication. Therefore, the analysis of translation strategies can provide a new perspective for the interpretation of the post-colonial nature of *The Woman Warrior* and the construction of cultural identity: the analysis of how the author expresses the cultural survival

predicament of Chinese Americans through *The Woman Warrior*, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of the Chinese-English translation of the novel.

This article has some shortcomings. First, the selected text is too simple, and there are many existing studies. The second is that there are fewer cases to be found in the novel, so there are fewer features to explain the two translation methods. The third is the failure to apply more advanced postcolonial theories. Therefore, the subsequent research can select more research objects and cases, enhance the validity of explanation, and adopt more contemporary texts and theories.

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