

The Implications of Foreignization and Domestication in “Moment in Peking”

Zhijun Wan^{1,a,*}

¹*Faculty of Languages and Translation, Macao Polytechnic University, R. de Luís Gonzaga Gomes, Macao, 999078, China*

a. p1907850@ipm.edu.mo

**corresponding author*

Abstract: This paper aims to review the strategies of Foreignization, and that of Domestication applied respectively in the creation and the back translation of *Moment in Peking*. This paper chooses the novel *Moment in Peking* as the research material for the original version of this work tells a Chinese story in English, being translated back into Chinese later. This uniqueness makes it worthy of studying the translation methods behind the two processes. The Chinese author, Yutang Lin, works as a writer and translator to complete this book. There are multiple examples of C-E translation regarding traditional Chinese culture. And the author adopts Foreignization most of the time. Transliteration is used together with extra explanations to convey the proper Chinese expressions to the greatest extent. For the Chinese version of *Moment in Peking*, the translator, Zhenyu Zhang, relies more on Domestication. The English version uses many free translations concerning proverbs, and the translator finds the corresponding Chinese. Also, in terms of the translation of the titles, the translator employs captions for each chapter, which is a stylish mark in traditional Chinese novels. The different approaches of Lin and Zhang have their own advantages. The former maintains the majority of pronunciations of Chinese culture-proper items, which are deciphered by following sentences. The latter meets with the expression habit of Chinese culture and the recognized format of traditional Chinese literature. Such cases may be helpful to the future translation-relating analysis of works that are written in the target language and translated back to source language.

Keywords: Foreignization, Domestication, *Moment in Peking*, Yutang Lin, Zhenyu Zhang

1. Introduction

Moment in Peking is one of the novels created by Yutang Lin (Chinese: 林语堂; October 10, 1895 – March 26, 1976). Lin was a Chinese novelist, translator, linguist and so on. He wrote the novel in 1938 during his stay in Paris. The novel was written in English because Lin intended to depict real Chinese life to Americans who knew little about China. Since the novel is rooted in Chinese literature and philosophy, it's challenging to convey expressions unique in Chinese properly. The difficulty behind the accomplishment of the novel adversely adds research value to it regarding the translation skills adopted in it. The Chinese version of *Moment in Peking* (simplified Chinese: 京华烟云) was completed by the translator Zhenyu Zhang in 1977. Zhang's version is the most wide read translation;

thus, this paper chooses it as the other research material. In his work, Zhang manages to make the Chinese version cater to the reading habit of Chinese readers and the writing language of Chinese literature. Similar to the original version of *Moment in Peking*, the translated version is also worth going through thoroughly, extracting the translation methods Zhang used. Up to now, there already exist papers looking respectively into the translation strategies of *Moment in Peking* and its Chinese version. However, there are not lots of review papers comparing the translation methods of the two versions. This paper reviews the translation measures of the two versions, list the advantages of both, and makes a comparison of both.

2. Implications of Foreignization and Domestication in *Moment in Peking*

2.1. *Moment in Peking*: An Overview

In the preface of the novel, Lin writes, “It is merely a story of how men and women in the contemporary era grow up and learn to live with one another ...in this earthly life where men strive, but the gods rule” [1]. In accordance with his claim, Lin provides a detailed description of the life of the Chinese from 1900 to 1938, covering aspects of clothes, food, and living habits. Before Lin started to work on the novel, he attempted to translate the classic Chinese *Dream of the Red Chamber* as a form of exercise. After he began his writing, he borrowed the characteristic settings from it. In the novel, stories happen around characters from three families, while other characters also play an important part in putting forward the storyline. The fact that the novel is set in the turbulent period of China credit it with historical meaning. From the perspective of literary translation, the novel serves as a good example of how to demonstrate Chinese culture in English. Lin tries to maintain the Chinese element in the novel, which can be seen in the names of the characters. Also, the whole novel has a philosophical foundation, which, according to Lin’s daughter, comes from Zhuang Zi upholding “life is but a dream” [2]. In 1987, Zhang’s translation version was available in mainland China. Now it is often used to study the Chinese culture in the novel. Concerning its influence on translation, it provides useful methods for handling the difference between two cultures.

2.2. Application of Foreignization in Yutang Lin’s Version

Reflecting on the development of literary translation in China, Sun says, “In the 21st century, literary translation in China will further incline to foreignization, the core of which is to keep the exotic elements as many as possible, such as the different culture, language format and foreign writers’ writing styles” [3]. This is in line with the translation strategies relating to culture-specific items, which proposed Foreignization and Domestication [4]. In the case of Lin's writing *Moment in Peking*, the source language is Chinese, and the target language is English. Based on the requirement of foreignization, Lin should let the readers catch the Chinese elements even though the stories are told in English.

At the same time, given *Moment in Peking* is a novel written in English by a Chinese writer, it can be categorized in Chinese American literature. Hu once stated, “A common feature of the new generation of Chinese American literature is that Chinese characters are literally translated or free translated into English, with explanations attached” [5].

To achieve the standards posted in the novel, Lin takes several methods to make sure his writing is understandable for American readers with noticeable Chinese marks. This includes three methods: transliteration, transliteration couplet, and literal translation.

2.2.1. Transliteration

According to the edited version of Zhang concerning Aixelá, Javier Franco's strategies for culture-specific items, transliteration be used in Chinese-English translation studies [6]. As the main practice Lin chose to implement foreignization, this paper will list several examples in which Lin uses Pinyin to translate certain unique Chinese terms. The expressions using transliteration include names, places and so on. For instance, names like Huaiyu, Lifu, and Kueichieh; places such as Taishan, Hangchow, and Sheshenai; titles like Kuomintang; literature work like Chiwulun and other items like mah-jong.

With transliteration, these words keep their Chinese pronunciation and can trigger the audience's curiosity to look up their deeper meaning of them.

2.2.2. Transliteration Couplet

Another method of translating Chinese culture-specific items is to combine transliteration and further explanations. For example, when Lin introduces one of the main characters, Mulan, he adds that it means "don't worry." In the case of quoting dialect meifatse, Lin explains that it is a common fatalistic phrase meaning, "there is no choice", or "one can do nothing about it". Similar attempts can be seen from the translation such as "kaitiao or receiving guests who came to pay respects to the deceased", "tsungtse. These were solid triangles made of glutinous rice stuffed with ham and pork or black sugar and bean flour, and wrapped in bamboo leaves and steamed.", "shanghan, or a type of fever that passed from one system to another.", and "Chihsiang Juyi, or "Good Luck and Heart's Desire." [7]. The novel covers a wide range of Chinese folk culture, such as wedding and funeral ceremonies, traditional Chinese medicine, poetry and seeking immortality [8].

By keeping the pronunciation and attaching explanations, Lin provides a detailed definition of these items, which conserves the traditional Chinese culture without encumbering the understanding of the context.

2.2.3. Literal Translation

Apart from the above two measures, Lin also uses literal translation. One of the typical sentences is "When the guests saw Cassia appear with Ailien, they immediately rose from their seats, and Cassia said ten thousand fortunes to greet them." [7]. For English readers, they may find it hard to understand it at first sight, which is reasonable for "thousand fortunes" is the literal translation of Chinese "万福" which means "wish you all the best".

Han once comments on such a situation, "In literature, some translations and the texts are hybrids" [9]. Such practice may leave an impression on readers, for they find this term new to them and carry exotic charm. But the amount of this practice should be controlled for more of it can cause reading frustration and confusion.

2.3. Application of Domestication in Zhenyu Zhang's Translation

Opposite to Foreignization, Domestication advocates translation should be target language oriented and easily understandable for readers [10]. Since the translation is about the switch between two different cultures from different languages, thus the translator should have competent cultural literacy [11]. Considering that the novel talks about Chinese life during a specific period, it's not difficult for Zhang to picture the overall background of it.

Also, Lin quotes from Zhuang Zi in the original version, which saves Zhang much work but captures the core meaning of the quotation and pastes the corresponding Chinese. The tricky part is to locate the right part of the sayings of Zhuang Zi that Lin wanted to use.

In addition, to ensure that the format of the novel meets the requirement of Chinese traditional literary, Zhang makes adjustment towards the titles in the novel.

Analyzing the Chinese version, it can be seen that Lin translates the work in the interest of Chinese readers in terms of text language, titles and format.

2.3.1. Cater to the Source Language Habits

In the paragraph where Mochow offers her earnest suggestion to Redjade, the English text puts focus on making the concepts like yin, yang clear for readers while lacks the description about Mochow's worries. However, Zhang's version successfully presenting Mochow's image as an elder, caring sister. Chinese people are already familiar with yin, yang, so "too much yang and deficiency of yin" can be translated simply into four-character phrase "阳盛阴衰". Additional, Chinese people have paid attention to living healthy since ancient times, thus keeping the idea "按平常吃饭, 想法叫血脉流通", "五谷杂粮" in mind. However, when in English, "use common sense about food and adjustment of the circulating fluids" and "a great deal of grain principle" may be confusing.

Comparing the English and the Chinese context, it's noticeable that the Chinese version uses more short sentences. This adjustment shows the literary competence of Zhang, for he takes the speaking habits of Chinese into consideration. When persuading someone, the Chinese tend to slow down their speaking speed and pause a lot to show their patience and care. On the polish of the word, Zhang's version makes Mochow's gentleness so vivid that readers can almost picture her comforting Redjade in their heads.

In the novel, the main characters, such as Mulan, takes creating poems and short lyrics as their hobbies. As a result, Zhang faces the task of translating these back into Chinese. Translating poems is relatively easy because English letters don't convey messages like Chinese characters until they form words that have fixed meanings. Translation lyrics, on the other hand, requires Zhang to put more effort into them. Onomatopoeia alone can make up part of lyrics like "Ter-r-r-r-la-ta piao piao". Here Lin uses transliteration. If Zhang uses literal translation, the version will be meaningless. To cope with this, Zhang puts forwards his version, "得而——拉他飘一飘". The former part still carries no meaning. However, in addition, Zhang makes this lyric suitable for the scene.

2.3.2. Reproduction of Original Text

Ahead of the first part of the novel, Lin quotes a passage from "The Master" as the theme of this part. The title of this part is "The Daughters of A Taoist," and the stories happen around the two daughters of the Yao family, mainly Yao Mulan. The content also promotes the idea of conforming to the Tao of Heaven. The title, leads the development of the stories in the first volume of the novel. What has happened until Mulan's marriage is over seems to indicate a fatalism, predicting Mulan's marriage. The original text says, "To Tao, the zenith is not high, nor the nadir low; ...has it grown old" [1]. The Zhang finds the corresponding Chinese in 《庄子·大宗师》. Given Moment in Peking is an English novel talking about Chinese culture, the Zhang's translation version is not theatrical back translation, but leaner to reproduction of original text [12].

2.3.3. Adjustment on the Format

Moment in Peking have three parts, each of which has a title. In Lin's version, The Content page contains only three titles. But in Zhang's version, he adds titles to every chapter, which takes after the Dream of the Red Chamber [13]. Zhang's translation divides the original text into three volumes, and then refines the content of each chapter in each volume and writes the couplets as the title of the chapter.

There are several possible reasons why Zhang chooses to add titles to chapters. Firstly, Lin himself is a fan of Chinese classics, especially the *Dream of the Red Chamber*. He even borrows the writing idea into the creation of *Moment in Peking*, which be seen from the ways that Lin tells the stories, sets the plots and describes characters. It's possible that Zhang is inspired by Lin's appreciation towards the *Dream of the Red Chamber*, and then thinks titles will be suitable. The titles can also benefit readers by summarizing stories. Secondly, because *Moment in Peking* is about national turbulence, the translator comprises and adopts the type of traditional Chinese novels with captions for each chapter.

2.4. Comparison of Lin's and Zhang's Translation Strategies

Lin's close friend, Pearl S. Buck, thought highly of *Moment in Peking*, saying, "It seeks truth from facts and is proud of telling the truth. This writing is excellent, telling the serious stories in the light tongue. It offers a correct understanding and evaluation of ancient and modern China" [14]. In the creation of *Moment of Peking*, Lin put the spreading of Chinese culture in the first place. He handles excellently the balance between maintaining the Chinese elements and ensuring the English content readable to an American audience. This paper focuses on the foreignization adopted by Lin when translating Chinese culture-specific items. Transliteration contributes a lot to this process since it helps keep the Chinese pronunciation.

In the work of Zhang, this paper focus on the domestication used by the translator who retells the whole stories in Chinese in an appealing way. Using his outstanding culture literacy, Zhang reproduces the novel in an attritive way which highlights the charm of each character. Also, the titles he helps the novels cater to Chinese writing and further earn popularity in the mainland China. There is no doubt that Zhang has a clear and full understanding of the original work. He is able to use of various translation techniques and rhetorical devices. From content to format, Zhang perfectly reproduces the essence and charm of the original work, so that Chinese readers can also read and appreciate the world-famous works. Zhang proves his excellent cultural literacy in both English and Chinese. Otherwise, he wouldn't have translated the work in a such divine and wonderful way [15].

When putting their work together, there is no standard for deciding whose achievement is greater. They both manage to use translation strategies to achieve the goals.

3. Conclusions

For literary works that tell stories under the source culture in the target language, Foreignization is recommended. Transliteration to some degree, can help the author convey culture-specific items. However, too much transliteration may put reading burdens on readers, which both the author and the translator should avoid. Meanwhile, Domestication can be helpful when works are translated back to their root languages, which refer to the languages used by the cultures in which the stories are set in.

However, no matter which strategy is adopted, scholars in literary translation should always enhance culture literacy so that they can comprehensively understand the works they encounter. Both Lin and Zhang have reached high-level cultural literacy, thus, one of them accomplishes the epic Chinese novel in English and the other one completes the most popular translation.

Last but not least, the translation strategies in Chinese and English versions of *Moment in Peking* can be adopted in the future and similar approaches can be helpful in analyzing works.

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