
Study on Translated English Titles of *The Tale of Shangri-La*

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To cite this article:

Lyu Liangqiu, Xue Jiayi. Study on Translated English Titles of *The Tale of Shangri-La*. *English Language, Literature & Culture*. Vol. 5, No. 2, 2020, pp. 74-78. doi: 10.11648/j.ellc.20200502.14

Received: May 24, 2020; **Accepted:** June 16, 2020; **Published:** June 28, 2020

Abstract: A classical work of traditional Chinese literature, *The Tale of Shangri-La*, has received extensive attention among Chinese and Western translators, which is written by Tao Yuanming, an influential writer during the Eastern Jin Dynasty. In this work, Tao Yuanming depicted an ideal society where people's life is simple, quiet and harmonious, far away from hustle and bustle. A. R. Davis, Herbert A. Giles, James Robert Hightower, Rick Davis and David Steelman, Lin Yutang, Luo Jingguo, Roland C. Fang, Sun Dayu, Xie Baikui, Yang Xianyi, and other translators all show great interest in this work and are eager to push it into the English world, due to which, *The Tale of Shangri-La*, has entered the study of foreign researchers and writers. In order to discuss how to successfully translate the titles of Chinese classics into English, this paper selects ten translated English titles of *The Tale of Shangri-La*, and analyzes different strategies and methods used in them. It is concluded that translators should take cultural factors into consideration, and adopt the strategy of foreignization as much as possible in order to better carry forward Chinese traditional culture and promote cross-cultural communication in the process of translating the titles of Chinese classics into English.

Keywords: Translation Strategy, Foreignization, Cross-cultural Communication

1. Introduction

Culture, is a concept with broad implication. Edward Burnett Tylor (1871) proposed in *Primitive Culture* that culture is "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" [1]. China, a country with splendid culture, stands in the east of the world with its rich and colorful cultural elements. Lin Benchun (1999) once pointed out that in order to maintain and carry forward the national spirit of the Chinese nation and remain invincible in the fierce international competition, in addition to strengthening the cultural quality education of the people, the Chinese nation should also attach importance to external publicity and translation [2]. Therefore, it is obvious that translation is not simply to transform one language into another, but to realize cultural communication through language transformation.

Nowadays, due to cultural globalization, cross-cultural communication between different countries increases day by day, under which background, each country should strive to maintain its own cultural identity on the basis of accepting,

absorbing and embracing foreign cultures. As an important part of culture, excellent classics, always with its unique appeal and charisma, make people deeply shocked, becoming the torch to illuminate people's hearts and lead people forward. In recent years, Chinese classics have received more and more attention both home and abroad. As so, translating Chinese classics full of the essence of Chinese traditional culture into English is not only conducive to letting the world know about China, but also it can enhance communication between China and other countries. Pan Wenguo (2004), also pointed out that English translation of Chinese classics makes great contributions to carrying forward Chinese culture [3].

In terms of the importance of translating Chinese classics into English, the translation circle has reached a consensus. However, there are still many controversies on how to successfully translate Chinese classics into English. Guo Jianzhong (1998) believed that domestication and foreignization in translation are not only not contradictory, but also complementary to each other. His analysis leads to the conclusion that both methods may be justified in their own right if translators take into consideration the differences in the purpose of translation, the type of texts, the intention of the author and the readership [4]. Sun Zhili (2002)

advocated that the translation of Chinese literature should tend to the strategy of foreignization, and try to convey the foreign cultural characteristics of the original texts. However, at the same time, it was pointed out that foreignization should be limited and measured. When it is not feasible, domestication should be used [5]. In his another article, he provided, from the angles of the general trend in the international situation, China's domestic situation and its basic policy, and the chief tasks of literary translation, a further analysis of the advisability and feasibility of the "Foreignization first, Domestication second" strategy [6]. According to Cai Ping (2002), he believed that translation methods, especially in literary translation, can only focus on domestication, either from the perspective of the essential purpose of translation or from the perspective of translation practice. Otherwise, translation has no value. Thus, domestication plays a leading role in literature translation [7]. Xu Jianping and Zhang Rongxi (2002) proposed that in order to achieve cross-cultural communication in English-Chinese translation, foreignization should be used, where appropriate, to supplement domestication, while in Chinese-English translation, domestication should be used as much as possible [8]. Ge Xiaoqin (2002) believed that the discussion on domestication and foreignization should be focused on from a broader perspective, which is not a simple question of language or the transformation of culture contained in language. The selection of either as a translation strategy should take into careful consideration the particularities of specific social situations rather than blindly follow the trend without analysis [9]. Wang Renqiang (2004) held that foreignization and domestication are different only in terms of degree, and the boundary between the two is fuzzy. From extreme foreignization to extreme domestication, a continuum is formed, so foreignization and domestication can be transformed under certain conditions [10]. Zhang Xiaoman and Hu Zuoyou (2009) believed that the debate on domestication and foreignization in China can be divided into four groups: domestication, foreignization, integration and transformation. The result of the debate is that it can promote the awakening of theoretical consciousness in Chinese translation circle, the generation of dialogue consciousness, the reflection on traditional translation theories and the diversification of research paradigms, but at the same time, it also has some negative effects [11]. Qiu Nengsheng and Qiu Xiaoqin (2019) stressed that when expressions containing cultural factors are translated, such as idioms, emphasis should be placed on the use of foreignization, but also pointed out that the selection mechanism of foreignization and domestication should be dynamic and should change with the changes of corresponding influencing factors [12]. This paper puts forward that during the process of translating Chinese classics into English, taking the dissemination of Chinese traditional culture as the goal, it is a good choice to adopt the strategy of foreignization as much as possible to show the cultural connotation within Chinese classics.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents the strategy of foreignization and domestication,

especially the importance of foreignization. Section 3 analyzes ten translated English titles of *The Tale of Shangri-La* and different translation strategies and methods used in them. And the last part is conclusion.

2. Foreignization and Domestication

Now that translation has become a way to achieve cultural communication among countries, translators should pay attention to the choice of translation strategies when translating classics, that is, the choice of "foreignization" and "domestication". Since the 21st century, cultural communication around the world has become more and more frequent. There is no denying that spreading traditional Chinese culture and enhancing the cultural competitiveness of China is our constant goal, which requires translators to adopt the strategy of foreignization as much as possible when translating classics.

There have been much discussions from former scholars about "foreignization" and "domestication". In 1893, Schleiermacher, a German linguist and translation theorist, put forward that there are only two ways of translation in *On the Different Methods of Translating*. One is that the translator leaves the author in peace, as much as possible, and moves the reader towards him; and the other is that the translator leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author towards him. Venuti, an American translation theorist, gave further explanation on it. In 1995, in *The Translator's Invisibility*, he proposed "foreignizing method" and "domesticating method" [13]. Generally speaking, foreignization requires the translator to approach the author and adopt the expression method similar to that of the source language in order to convey the content of the original text while domestication requires the translator to approach the readers and adopt the expression method similar to that of the target language.

Due to globalization of the world, cultures of all countries are developing vigorously and blending with each other, so it is significant to maintain our own cultural characteristics. As an indispensable part of Chinese traditional culture, Chinese classics shoulder the responsibility of carrying forward excellent national culture. Sun Zhili (2003) pointed out that diversity comes from differences. To respect diversity, we must respect differences, and in this condition, translation by the means of foreignization reflects differences [6]. As so, it is of great significance to use the strategy of foreignization as much as possible to translate Chinese classics.

Firstly, the strategy of foreignization is good for promoting cultural communication. It goes without saying that foreignization preserves the language style and cultural connotation of the original texts, and to a certain extent, maintains the foreign style of the original text. Sun Zhili (2003) pointed out that the current trend of international development as well as China's national conditions and policies has created good conditions for foreignization. From another point of view, the advantages of the strategy of foreignization itself can promote human beings to communicate with each other, learn

from each other, and promote the prosperity of Chinese culture [6].

Secondly, the strategy of foreignization is good for enhancing the cultural persuasion of Chinese. To some extent, foreignization retains the original Chinese image and culture. Now, some “China English” is widely spread. Pan Wenguo (2004) expressed his views on “China English”: he believed that such a way of translation is advisable when Chinese classics are translated [3]. It is apparent that when some phrases are translated into English, such as “人山人海” (people mountain, people sea), “好久不见” (long time no see) and so on, Chinese expressions are used. Xu Jun and Guo Yuehong (2008) said that the basis of China English is standard English, on which to express the unique content of Chinese culture [14]. With the wide use of these “China words and sentences”, the cultural persuasion of Chinese in the world has been enhanced, which is conducive to the enrichment and development of Chinese.

Thirdly, the strategy of foreignization is good for enriching the aesthetic connotation of the target language. Obviously, Chinese classics contain beauty of classics, poetry and rhythm, which are anchored in Chinese traditional culture. The use of foreignization during the process of translating Chinese classics enriches the aesthetic connotation of the target language and satisfies the readers’ aesthetic expectation for the translated literature.

3. Analysis on Translated English Titles of *The Tale of Shangri-La*

From the above discussion, it is obvious that translators should adopt the strategy of foreignization as much as possible when translating Chinese classics. Then, this paper compares and analyzes different translated English titles of one of the representative works of Chinese classics, whose Chinese title is “桃花源记”, to explore the advantages of the implementation of foreignization.

3.1. Brief Introduction to “桃花源记”

Tao Yuanming, the writer of “桃花源记”, is a famous figure in the Eastern Jin Dynasty. When he was in the very prime of life, he cared for the country and people, but he had great anguish for failing to fulfil his ambition, and later he was back to nature and enjoyed the pastoral life.

Although Tao Yuanming was in the countryside, he still showed solicitude for affairs of state. With the aid of literary creation, he expressed himself and created a beautiful society opposite to the dark reality, in order to place his political ideals and feelings.

“桃花源记” was written in such a background. In this paper, ten selected versions of translated English titles of it are as follows: Peach-Blossom Source (A. R. Davis), The Peach Blossom Source (Xie Baikui), The Peach-Blossom Fountain (Herbert A. Giles), The Peach Blossom Spring (James Robert Hightower), A Tale of the Fountain of the Peach Blossom Spring (Luo Jingguo), Peach Blossom

Springs (Yang Xianyi), Peach-Blossom Springs (Roland C. Fang), The Peach Blossom Visionary Land (Sun Dayu), The Peach Colony (Lin Yutang), and Peach Blossom Shangri-La (Rick Davis with help from David Steelman).

3.2. Different Translations of “记” in the Title

In ancient China, “记” was a literary genre, which can narrate events, depict scenery and describe things in order to express feelings and aspirations, and expound some viewpoints.

As narrated in the original text, the fisherman came into a new place of flat land, fertile fields, beautiful ponds and mulberry forests by chance, and people here were all comfortable and happy. This work, depicting the peaceful, happy, free and equal life, shows Tao Yuanming's pursuit for the harmonious and better life and his dissatisfaction with the real society at that time.

It is obvious that among the ten translated English titles, only “A Tale of the Fountain of the Peach Blossom Spring” translated by Luo Jingguo echoed “记” in the Chinese title, while the other nine escaped the translation of it.

As far as “记” is concerned, Luo Jingguo explains its meaning in a way that is familiar to the readers of the target language. In the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, one of meanings of “tale” is “a report or description, perhaps not completely true, of an event or situation” [15], similar to what “记” means in Chinese. Therefore, from the point of view that Luo Jingguo kept “记” as a literary genre in ancient China, his translation of it is also a kind of foreignization to some extent.

3.3. Different Translations of “桃花源” in the Title

In the original text, Tao Yuanming describes a harmonious society which is cut off from the outside world. And this is what Chinese people call “桃花源”. Now, it always stands for an ideal place for seclusion.

Among the above ten translated English titles, translators all divide “桃花源” into two parts for translating: “桃花” and “源”. What is known to us is that peach blossom (桃花), beautiful and colorful, originated in the middle and north of China. It has a long history, and is a traditional flower in China. As so, Chinese people believe that peach blossom can represent sweet love and happy life. Also, it is often used to praise women or describe teachers who have pupils all over the world. Except Lin Yutang, other nine translators all literally translate it into “peach blossom”.

As to “源”, there are three kinds of understanding of it among ten translated English titles. On the one hand, both A. R. Davis and Xie Baikui adopted the strategy of domestication to translate “源” word for word into “source”. On the other hand, Herbert A. Giles, James Robert Hightower, Luo Jingguo, Yang Xianyi and Roland C. Fang assumed that “源” was related to water, among which Herbert A. Giles translated it into “fountain” while James Robert Hightower, Luo Jingguo, Yang Xianyi and Roland C. Fang translated it into “spring”. What’s more, Sun Dayu, Lin Yutang, Rick

Davis and David Steelman translated it into “place”.

3.3.1. Translated into “Source”

Both A. R. Davis and Xie Baikui adopted the strategy of domestication, literally translating “源” into “source”, which seems relatively rigid and deviates from the meaning of “an ideal place cut off from the outside world”, and cannot completely convey the poetic beauty of the original text.

3.3.2. Translated into Words Related to Water

“Where the stream starts” is one of the meanings of “源” in Chinese, and also, in the first paragraph, the fisherman rowed forward by boat, so Herbert A. Giles, James Robert Hightower, Luo Jingguo, Yang Xianyi and Roland C. Fang translated “源” into the word related to water, such as “fountain” and “spring”. However, both “fountain” and “spring” cannot express the real meaning of “源” accurately. Furthermore, in Luo Jingguo's translation, “A Tale of the Fountain of the Peach Blossom Spring”, there are both “fountain” and “spring” with repeated meanings.

3.3.3. Translated into “Place”

In the original text, “桃花源”, existing as the whole, is an ideal place isolated from the world. Sun Dayu, Lin Yutang, Rick Davis and David Steelman's translations are related to place names, and they are all translated by means of free translation.

It seems that the meaning of “Visionary Land” which was translated by Sun Dayu is similar to that of “桃花源”. However, this kind of translation only shows the beauty and illusion of this place, without the meaning of isolation, and the word “visionary” is, to some degree, related to religion.

As for Lin Yutang, he translated “桃花源” into “Peach Colony”. In the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, one of meanings of “colony” is “a country or area under the political control of a distant country” [15]. As so, even if this domesticated translation approaches the readers of the target language, it is relatively rigid, disagreeing with the calm and peaceful life atmosphere in the original text.

“Shangri-La”, which is interpreted in Tibetan as “the sun and moon in the heart” [16], has always been thought as “the last pure land”. Moreover, “Shangri-La” also appeared in the novel *Lost Horizon* by James Hilton in 1933 [17]. In this book, “Shangri-La” is a mysterious country in the East, isolated from the world, and people here live a happy and comfortable life. So, this version of translation is not only consistent with the meaning of the original Chinese title, but also accessible for Western readers. At the same time, taking Tibetan “Shangri-La” as the English translation of “桃花源” is the embodiment of foreignization, which is conducive to spreading Chinese culture.

3.4. Author's Translation of “桃花源记”

The Chinese title “桃花源记”, refers to such an ideal place cut off from the world, with beautiful scenery and self-sufficient life. But contrary to the ideal world, the society was in turmoil at that time. Obviously, such a place entrusted Tao Yuanming's yearning for the peaceful life and expressed

his dissatisfaction with the reality.

Therefore, combined with the above analysis and the rich cultural connotation contained in the original text, the author translates “桃花源记” into “The Tale of Shangri-La”. One reason is that “Tale” echoes “记” in the Chinese title, retaining this literary genre in ancient China so that it is beneficial to promote cultural communication. The other is that “Shangri-La” is a phrase in Tibetan with good implied meaning, and also, the legendary Shangri-La originated in China. Therefore, this kind of foreignization not only depicts beautiful life in such a utopia, but also arouses the interest of Western readers, which is of great importance to enrich the aesthetic connotation of the target language and satisfy the readers' aesthetic expectation for the translated literature.

4. Conclusion

The Tale of Shangri-La, one of the most famous Chinese classics, as a shining pearl in Chinese history and culture, has been handed down for thousands of years. Based on the above comparative analysis of ten translated English titles of *The Tale of Shangri-La*, it can be concluded that in the process of translating the titles of Chinese classics into English, the translators should grasp the cultural factors in the ancient books and records to better translate the poetic beauty and classical beauty contained in them, and make full use of the strategy of foreignization as much as possible to carry forward the Chinese traditional culture and promote cross-cultural communication.

Acknowledgements

This research was supported by the NCEPU “Double First-Class” Graduate Talent Cultivation Program.

The authors would like to extend sincere thanks to the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments and suggestions, and also thank NCEPU for giving us such an opportunity to better conduct research.

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