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Translating the culturally foreign element: toward the notion of loyalty

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Title: Subtitle	**Translating the culturally foreign element: toward the notion of loyalty**
Keywords	**Cultural dimension in translation, domestication and foreignization, ethnocentric translation, loyalty, functional theory**

Abstract

One of the questions raised in translation studies is rendering the culturally foreign element in translation and, more generally, the close interaction between language and civilization. The present article attempts to shed light on certain approaches toward the cultural dimension in translation, by describing also the close interrelationship between the translation phenomenon and the concept of civilization. The research methodology that is employed is theoretical exploration focusing on the description and categorization of culture-bound words and concepts. It examines two main translation trends for transferring the cultural dimension of a text, namely Berman's and Venuti's approach as well as the critique that has been exercised on these theoretical models. What is proposed is a translation approach based on the moral concept of "loyalty" in translation, considering as principal factors that affect the translator's choices both the communicative and functional parametres of the translation phenomenon.

Titre	Traduire l' élément culturellement étranger: vers la notion de loyauté
Mots clés	Dimension culturelle dans la traduction, domestication et exotérisation, traduction ethnocentrique, loyauté, théorie fonctionnelle

Résumé

L'une des questions soulevées en traductologie est de rendre compte de l'élément culturellement étranger dans la traduction et, plus généralement, de l'interaction étroite entre langue et civilisation. Le présent article tente d'éclairer certaines approches de la dimension culturelle dans la traduction, en décrivant également l'interrelation étroite entre le phénomène de traduction et le concept de civilisation. La méthodologie de recherche utilisée est une exploration théorique axée sur la description et la catégorisation de mots et de concepts liés à la culture. Il examine deux principales tendances de traduction pour transférer la dimension culturelle d'un texte, à savoir l'approche de Berman et Venuti ainsi que la critique exercée sur ces modèles théoriques. Ce qui est proposé est une approche de traduction basée sur le concept moral de « loyauté » dans la traduction, considérant comme principaux facteurs qui affectent les choix du traducteur à la fois les paramètres communicatifs et fonctionnels du phénomène de traduction.

1. Introduction

Within a text the cultural element is depicted both in microstructural and macrostructural units (Schreiber, 2007). The microstructural units concern vocabulary and, more specifically, terms that describe the beyond language reality such as legal and political institutions, objects and activities of the everyday life like clothing and food items, while macrostructural units regard among others the writing conventions that impose various types of texts such as letters, literary texts or

scientific texts.

One of the main difficulties that are related to the translation process is how to transfer words and concepts that are met exclusively to a single civilization. The problem in translating the cultural element in a text is that, since it is closely related to the source civilization, the target civilization does not possess the corresponding objects and concepts and, consequently, the related lexical correspondence cannot be achieved.

Every organised social community is characterized by a series of specific habits, values, organizational structures and taxonomic systems that are depicted in the language production of its members. The cultural element appears in texts in the form of specific references to objects and concepts that show the features and specific characteristics of a civilization. These elements are met in various names such as culturemes (Vermeer, 1983), cultural words (Newmark, 1988), referents culturels (Wecksteen, 2005). These are lexical elements that are described in microstructural level and in order to understand them, apart from knowledge of the source language, knowledge of the target civilization is also required. Such lexical units appear in texts and both their function and their connotations are difficult to be transferred in another language because of the lack of equivalent elements in the target language and civilization. The fact that they cause problems in the translation process has led Pym (1998: 191) to define the concept of civilization in negative terms, as something that resists in the transference from one language into another.

The categorization of culturally loaded elements is made according to the semiotic field to which they belong. A typical categorization of cultural words has been described by Newmark's model according to which they are distinguished into: ecology (fauna, sauna, hills, winds), material civilization (clothes, food, towns, means of transport), social civilization (work and leisure time activities), activities, organizations, institutions and concepts related to politics, religion, administration and arts and, finally, gestures and habits (Newmark, 1988: 95). Ballard (2005: 126) also suggests their distinction into two main cultural categories: the cultural references that relate to common values to two or more civilizations and those that relate to a special reference and bear a unique symbolism within a specific cultural group. It is obvious that the cultural references that relate to common values do not cause translation problems. The question that is raised is how to handle cultural references that bear a cultural symbolism within a specific cultural community.

2. Methodology

It would be interesting to examine the translation methods that allow bridging the gap between the civilization of the source language and the civilization of the target language so that the cultural distance is abolished and both the recipients and users of translation can acquaint themselves with the culturally different. The most

common dilemmas that regard the transference of the cultural element in translation can be summarised as follows:

• Do we have to maintain or keep the existing deviations between the source and the target civilization?

• Does the translator have to be "visible" or "invisible"?

• Does the civilization depicted within a text have to be adjusted to the target text civilization or maintain the element of exotism?

In other words, does translation ought to be source centered (sourcier) or target centered (cibiliste) emphasizing the message rather than the meaning of the source text (Ladmiral, 2000)? We will analyse two characteristic approaches, that of the French linguist, theorist and translator Antoine Berman (2005) as well as that of the American translatologist and translator Lawrence Venuti (1998).

3. Berman's approach

Berman makes the crucial distinction between ethnocentric translation and literary translation. Ethnocentric translation is based on the following principles:

• The foreign text must be translated in a way that we do not "feel" the translation

• The foreign text must be translated in a way that it creates the impression that the author has written it directly in the target-language

This translation practice has its roots back in the roman period, when translators, apart from deleting the cultural words, they also added references to roman civilization and they replaced the names of Greek poets with roman poets' names so that translation could be seen as original text written in Latin. During the specific period there has been a mass translation of all Greek texts into Latin which resulted in a systematic adaptation of all Greek texts, forms and terms leading to a deformation of works of the ancient era. Main theoreticians of the particular tendency are Cicero and Orace and a crucial point in the history of ethnocentric translation is Bible translation from Saint Jerome who promoted a prescriptive model of translation.

Ethnocentric translation is based on the importance of meaning; what is important is introducing the foreign meaning and its assimilation from the target-language. Everything revolves around the civilization of the language in which a text is translated and foreign elements must be in harmony with this language. This is actually a prescriptive approach to the act of translating which supports the subjection of the original text to the ideas and values of the target language and civilization. Consequently, it introduces indirectly the notion of language superiority and cultural domination while it rejects the particularities of natural languages and the differences among civilizations. According to this approach, the translator ought to adapt to the

target language every foreign element that appears in the text and absorb it in the target language so that the translated text does not contain any inconsistencies and it is read easily.

On the other hand, literal translation recognizes and accepts the culturally different instead of trying to change it. It allows the demonstration of the cultural element of the original text and it tries to make it acceptable in the target language without deforming it. Literal translation also depicts the ethical dimension of translation since it creates the appropriate conditions for the identification and the acceptance of the culturally foreign. However, we should not confuse literal translation with word for word translation (Berman, 2005: 15). Literal translation functions both on language and textual level, trying to reproduce the reasoning that characterizes the organization of the source-text by maintaining, where possible, the meaning of the original.

3.1 The terms domestication and foreignization

Venuti approaches translation in political, cultural and ideological terms. He believes that translation makes up a pratique that, although it brings into contradiction different elements, its final goal is to demonstrate the similarities among languages and cultures. According to his approach, the translated text must be the meeting point of different cultures where the target readership comes into contact with the "culturally Other" (Venuti, 1995: 306). He stresses that translation is not a simple communicative act of similar things since it is completely ethnocentric (Venuti, 1998: 11). He adds that this act is actually a violent rewriting of the foreign text given that the aim is to reform the foreign text according to the values, beliefs and representations that preexist of the text in the target-language.

Regarding the translation methodology, he refers to translation strategies by making the distinction between domestication and foreignization. It should be made clear that these strategies do not make up simple translation techniques but they cover the translation phenomenon as a whole and they are affected by several different social, economic and political factors. Translation strategies are related to the process of text selection for translation and the translation method adopted by the translator (Venuti 1998: 240).

The domestication process depicts the obvious tendence existing in western societies for as much clarity and acceptance by the target readership as possible, so that it is read just as the original is read by making both the translator and the circumstances under which the translation has been acted "invisible". The strategy of domestication imposes the obedience in the rules of the "good translator" whose task is to create a text that is accepted by the commissioner of the translation and those who are involved in the translation process as the persons who hold the power either to approve or to reject the translated product. Regarding the translator's role, by erasing the cultural distance, he takes the part of the dominating norms of the

source language and culture by manipulating the source text so that it can be read as a familiar product and delete all foreign elements. The elements of the original that are not recognizable by the target readership are replaced by others that are easily recognizable. Since the foreign element disappears, the particular method is characterized as an ethnocentric adaptation of the foreign text to the cultural values of the target-language (Venuti, 1995: 20). It presupposes clear and harmonic style and a discourse that restricts as much as possible the foreign to the target-language language forms and cultural concepts and it creates to the target readership the "illusion of clarity" (Venuti, 1995: 1).

On the contrary, the strategy of foreignization aims "at restricting the ethnocentric violence" (Venuti, 1995: 156). This is characterized as a political act that rejects the dominating tendencies and by supporting the marginal language and cultural values. It is also known as "minoritizing translation" (Venuti, 1998: 11) and, since it does not attempt to minimize the element of the differentiation of the foreign text, the specific strategy promotes the tolerance towards the "other". It also promotes cultural innovations in order to contribute to the understanding of the cultural other by ignoring the familiar cultural codes. It aims at maintaining the differences, both language and cultural, by avoiding to adopt the values that dominate in the target language and culture, thus, allowing the target reader to appreciate the "other" and the different. In this way, the foreign element of the text is made clear, the translator becomes visible and the translation non-transparent.

Foreignisation introduces new means of expression that deviate from the dominant language codes. This results in promoting a differentiated discourse, introducing the official language and literary norms toward the foreign and the marginal. It is about a translation strategy that resists to the elimination of the "other", the foreign element and to the cultural values that dominate in the source-language, it also promotes cultural variation by demonstrating the language and cultural differentiation of the text to be translated.

The strategy of foreignization makes up a political act by attempting to prevent the ethnocentric violence of translation. It makes up a prescheduled political intervention against the hegemonic tactic that demonstrate the english speaking nations. Since it allows the voice of economically weaker nations of the universe to be heard, foreignization is considered to be a means of balancing forces between the strong and the weak of the world. Venuti (1995: 20) sees foreignization as an act of resistance against ethnocentrism and racism, cultural narcissism and imperialism. The foreignization of a text questions the literary status quo by perpetuating the cultural codes of the source-language. As a translation method, it can take many different forms such as the strong adherence to the foreign text, the maintenance of the cultural references of the original text. The particular strategy depicts and stresses the cultural differences between the source and the target text and it does not attempt to neutralize them. In the case of foreignization, the role of the translator becomes

transparent because, as Schleiermacher (1985: 299) mentions, the translator leaves the author of the original text alone and leads the reader in order to meet him.

3.2 Critique of Venuti's approach

Venuti is in favor of foreignization by supporting the maintenance of the foreign element to translation since he believes that translation makes up both a cultural and language transposition. Thus, he rejects the ethnocentric practice that characterizes the western world. Despite the significance of Venuti's approach to the field of translation studies, it has also been the subject of strong critique of theoreticians of translation. The main points of the critique against Venuti's approach are summarised in the subsequent section as follows:

Shamma (2005: 64) locates two weak points; firstly, he states that the particular approach does not take into consideration basic parametres that every intercultural action ought to consider such as the political framework that regulates the passage from one language to another. Secondly, the translation strategy that concerns the textual level is confused to its sociopolitical and cultural consequences that concern the intertextual level. What is implied is that the issues of ethics and politics that are related to the process of translation cannot be limited to a single technique. On the contrary, they have to be regarded as the result of a series of parametres and circumstances such as the translator's interventions and choices, the general framework of the reception of the translated text as well as the relation of the translated text to other texts within a specific cultural environment.

Another point of criticism is that the particular approach does not make up a new scientific paradigm that introduces new concepts but a redefinition of existing concepts. In other words, Venuti brings to the foreground once more the traditional contradiction in translation studies that concerns the dilemma 'form against content' or vice versa, a contradiction that entails dangers by leading to a dogmatic attitude that concerns the way of translating and the translation phenomenon, as a whole.

Other theoreticians (Pym, Robinson), disagree with Venuti's belief that the strategy of foreignization can be used as a means of resistance against bureaucracy and they also doubt the way he defines the two recommended translation strategies. Robinson (1997) doubts whether it is likely to make the distinction in practice between the two strategies since the two concepts are based on an ideal and even naif image of the world. Additionally, the approach to translation in terms of violence as well as the attitude that translation makes up a kind of resistance against ethnocentrism and racism has been criticized (Pym, 1995: 26).

Snell-Hornby (2006: 147), suggests that the recommended models are actually inadequate to cover the needs of intercultural communication. It is also believed that the concept of foreignization has been defined through a clearly British American perspective so that it is in accordance to the translational ethics as defined at the end of the 20th century. Consequently, it regards exclusively the strong countries of the

West, in general, and, more specifically, the United States. Although it is very important that the hegemonic role of the english language has been questioned as well as the translator's role and their working circumstances, however, the solution to all these problems related to the process of translation cannot be solved by adopting the strategy of foreignization. Pym (1995: 26) supports that, even though the strategy of foreignization is likely to promote the cultural change, this cultural change comes to the background because of negative values such as individualism, elitism, ethnocentrism and Catholicism.

It is thus made clear that Venuti's discourse is both prescriptive and abstract since he does not describe in detail the strategies that he suggests. His discourse is rather ideological than scientific by promoting the regulatory and dictating approaches of the past, which results in dynamiting rather than defending the culturally different. The role of the translators changes and instead of functioning as ideological mediators that promote the Other and cultural pluralism, they seem to be trapped into one of the two cultural systems from which they are not allowed to keep distances. The limitation of translation methods in two strategies, where adopting one of these presupposes the exclusion of the other leads eventually to a negative approach of the translation phenomenon. Such distinctions favor the autonomy of the text on the expanse of its communicative character. In other words, they consider text in its linguistic dimension in which translation is viewed as a process which involves the linguistic system as a simple transference of language signs or a replacement of structures and not as a process that involves language as a rewriting process.

This dual attitude regarding the translation phenomenon comes into contrast with the idea of culture itself since, as Lambert (1992) mentions, by recognizing the culturally different, it is hard to define in an absolute and definite manner the typological rules and special features that characterize translation. Consequently, although the emphasis is on sociopolitical contextual framework that is characteristic of translation, however, basic parametres of the translation process are degraded such as the text-type, the source author's intention, the target readership's individual traits such as its interpretational skills, general education, its relationship to the target civilization and its expectations from the translated product. In practice, the translator's choices and decisions are affected by a series of factors such as the type of text and its content, as well as the functional parametres that set limits to the translation process.

At the same time, the specific approach presupposes the clearance of civilizations and languages. However, a civilization is rarely uniformed since, according to Cordonnier (1995) clearance is nothing but a myth which stopped to exist the day that the first contacts started among different civilizations. Mounin (2002) states that within the same civilization coexist different material civilizations that are not completely identical, thus, it is difficult to be translated accurately. As a result, in most languages there are many foreign terms that denote foreign to their

civilization concepts. Thus, a civilization is never autonomous and it does not make up a monolithic being. (Lefevere, 1992).

Another characteristic element of Venuti's approach is that it is elitist by focusing mainly on literary translation while it does not make any references to other text-types. Within this framework, an indirect distinction is made between privileged translators of literary texts and non-privileged translators of technical texts.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Christiane Nord (1991) introduces the concept of "loyalty" as a moral principle in translation theory that is defined as the translator's responsibility toward the author of the original, the inspirer of the translator and its recipient. According to her approach, loyalty makes up a moral principle that is necessary component in the relationship among people who are involved in a communicative act. In particular, it is used to characterize and describe the translator's relation on the one hand to the author of the original and the source-text itself and on the other hand to the target readership of the translated text. It should be stressed at this point that the concept of loyalty should not be confused with the traditional principles of "fidelity" and "accuracy" that refer to the relationship of similarity between the two texts or to the literal reproduction of superficial structures of the source text to the target text. On the contrary, Nord describes "loyalty" as an interpersonal category that refers to the social relation among individuals.

Nord (1991: 8-28) considers that the act of translation makes up the production of a functional text that maintains a kind of relation with the original text. The nature of this relation is defined by the criterion of the targeted function of the target-text, that is, the purpose of the translation that makes up the basis upon which he decides on the elements of the source-text that will remain unchangeable and those that will be adapted to the conditions of the translated product.

Additionally, Nord (1991: 8-28) identifies translation with cultural communication by considering that the target-text makes up a specific communicative instrument whose function does not result from the analysis of the source-text but from the goal of the cultural communication. She also believes that the reception of the translation depends on the recipient's specific expectations his social background as well as his level of knowledge of the world and, finally, his communicative needs.

Within this framework, the concept of functionality makes up an important criterion for translation but not the unique one: the translation method should combine functionality with loyalty (Nord: 28). In other words, it should aim at producing a functionally adequate translation product that will be able to cover the demands of the translation purpose that the commissioner has predefined. At the same time, it should respect both the expectations of the author of the original and the expectations of the authorship of the translation. given that such expectations vary

depending on the target civilization, the translator should take into account the way that translation is received by each civilization. According to the dominating tendency, readers expect from a translation to transfer with accuracy the source author's attitudes and intentions and not those of the translator. Pym (1995: 166) adds that translators should above all be loyal toward their profession aiming at improving intercultural relations.

More specifically, the combination of the model "functionality and loyalty" is of practical value since it encourages the translator to evaluate the following factors in the act of translating:

- The type of text to be translated
- The parameters involved in its production
- The communicative intentions of the source text and the view of its creator
- The intended function of the text
- The translation norms and the translation tradition in the target society
- The specific features of the languages and civilizations involved
- The interpretational skills and expectations of the readership regarding a translation

It is more than obvious that language and civilization make up two interrelated concepts given that language is defined as both the expression of a civilization and the means of maintaining its values. Translation is one of the most important forms of cultural communication, it plays crucial role in transmitting new ides in a society and it is also a means of enriching a language and reviving of a cultural entity. Civilization makes up a tool of studying translation and an integral part of the act of translating.

Transferring the cultural element does not presuppose a method trapped into a dual dilemma and consideration of the translation phenomenon. The selection criteria for introducing readers and the recipients of translation into a different world make up a subject of negotiations based on the communicative conditions that characterize the translation act. In order to translate the cultural element what is suggested is adopting methods and strategies that promote the translator's professional responsibilities, which are judged on the communicative success of the translation product and show mutual respect toward the protagonists of the translation event.

More particularly, what is clearly shown is the need for a new approach of translation that is based on the concept of loyalty considering certain parameters of the translation process such as the instruction provided to the translator, the type of text to be translated, its communicative intentions, the specific features of the language and civilizations involved and, finally, the interpretational skills and

expectations of the target readership. Although respecting the culturally foreign element makes up a necessary requisite for every act of communication, this cultural variation is always defined in accordance to each language and civilization and, above all, in relation to the target readership to which it addresses.

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