

A Prototype-Theoretical Approach to Domestication and Foreignization — A Case Study of Zhao Fa's Translations

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Abstract: Domestication and Foreignization are the main and much-debated translation strategies in the act of translation, a study of which is closely related to the whole field of translation theory and practice. This thesis will make a prototype-theoretical study of D & F through a prototype analysis of the source and target texts, aiming to break the traditional dualistic-opposition situation of D & F. Based on a corpus study of Zhao Fa's translation, the thesis will be devoted to the analysis of translation strategies of D & F about verbs in the corpus, the prototype of dialogues, and the prototype of scenes in translation. It hopes to conclude a typical translation strategy of the translator and prove that D & F are not in a dualistic position, but in a continuum, and can be mutual inclusive in certain conditions.

Keywords: Domestication; Foreignization; Prototype Theory; Continuum; Fuzziness

As the prototype theory was introduced into the translation study by the translation researchers abroad since the 1980s, many great academic achievements in this sphere have been appreciated and led the translation study to a new stage. They demonstrate that translation is a cognitive process as well as a prototype category. It is to analyze the original texts and the translated versions from the aspect of prototype, so as to find out the best versions. And translation criteria had better be understood as each attribute features of a prototype category rather than necessary and sufficient conditions. Moreover, researches on hybridity in postcolonial translation studies in a certain sense support the prototype-theoretical approach in translation. A prototypical perspective of translation can broaden our horizon, deepen our understanding of the object of enquiry, guide our research of translation, particularly the descriptive-explanatory study, and finally guide our translation practice.

Dualistic-antithesis is an unavoidable part in the translation theory, such as domestication and foreignization (D & F for short, and "Guihua" and "Yihua" in Chinese). The research on these subjects is likely to present a wrangling situation, in which each side sticks to its own position, and never reaches to an agreement. However, generativist Edward L. Keenan demonstrates in the research of the variation in universal grammar, "linguistic competence and linguistic performance are two ends of the continuum, not two mutually exclusive categories" (Keenan, 1987, p.58). So these dualistic-antithesis concepts in the translation theory are just used to simplify the problem, which are not mutually exclusive opposing category.

Although the discussion around translation strategy of D & F has lasted over two thousand years, it was after the late twentieth century, exactly 1980s, that the concept of prototype theory was introduced into the study of translation and got a surging development in western countries. It was a result of the rapid development of modern linguistics. The prototype theory is a concept of cognitive linguistics, besides it is a theory of linguistic categorization. In the perspective of cognitive linguistic, translation is a cognitive process as well as a prototype category.

1. Prototype Theory of Translation

The first person who adopts prototype theory in the studies of translation is Germany scholar Albrecht Neubert, who applies the prototypical approach to the classification of SL text. Then, Snell-Hornby's integrated approach of translation study takes the prototype theory and gestalt as the theoretical basis. She thinks that prototype theory is a dynamic, gestalt-like system of relationships, and firstly supports the concept of blurred edges and overlapping, compared with the traditional objectivist and reductionist typology which aims at sharp delimitation. Though those three translation strategies made a great contribution to the translation studies, the further analysis

about them and a clear definition and introduction about SL prototype and TL prototype are still in need. Sandra Louise Halverson gives the most and particular explanation about prototype theory. She demonstrates, from the perspective of philosophy of science and cognitive linguistics, the deficiencies of translation study under classical theory of categorization, and proves through case studies that translation is certainly a prototypical category and shows some prototype effects. She argues that good translation is quite close to an ideal cognitive model of a culture in a certain period. But after making a clear definition about translation with prototype theory, she doesn't give further demonstration about them. This thesis is based on her research achievements to study more on translation strategy.

2. A Prototype-Theoretical Approach to Domestication and Foreignization

Snell-Hornby's integrated approach of translation study takes the prototype theory and gestalt as his theoretical basis. She illustrates that prototype theory is a dynamic, gestalt-like system of relationships, and firstly supports the concept of blurred edges and overlapping. Later, it is demonstrated that the membership in a prototype category is a matter of gradience, which gives rise to the definition of fuzziness and similarity.

D & F are not two mutually exclusive categories, from the perspective of prototype theory. There is no clear definite boundary between them. Rather, they form a continuum. There are those entities with the higher closeness to the source language and culture at one pole. These are what we call foreignization. Domestication, on the other hand, refers to attributes with highest closeness to the target language and culture. Besides, as a continuum of translation strategy, D & F can be inclusive and transferred in the certain conditions. A corpus study of some translations below will illustrate a prototype-theoretical approach to D & F.

3. A Corpus Study of Zhao Fa's Translation

In the following corpus study of D & F, the target language here is Chinese, and the condition is to translate the English texts into Chinese. The corpus of this study is selected from Zhao Fa's translated novels (the translator is more familiar with Chinese culture), including *The Tin Flute* by Canadian writer Gabrielle Roy and *Such a Long Journey* by Rohinton Misty, the size and composition of the corpora are summarized below.

Table 3.1 Corpus Composition

English Corpus		Chinese Corpus	
Sub-corpus	Size	Sub-corpus	Size
<i>The Tin Flute</i>	105,632	The Tin Flute	208,796
<i>Such A Long Journey</i>	128,796	<i>Such A Long Journey</i>	256,452
Total	234,428	Total	465,248

We can conclude that the frequency of verbs in the Chinese text is higher than the English one, though the verbs are mostly similar in meaning. Thus, Zhao Fa's Chinese translation paid more attention to the application of verbs, which represents a feature of domestication, that is to say, the translated text has closeness to the target language. As it is, Chinese is a language that tends to use verbs. In the process of E-C translation, the translator, whether consciously or unconsciously, applied more verbs, which means that lots of nouns, adjectives, adverbs, prepositional phrases etc. in the source text must have been translated into verbs in the target text. This is a translation strategy of domestication, specifically in the study of parts of speech. The following examples of prototype analysis will suffice to show its application.

In *Advanced Learner's English-Chinese Dictionary*, the basic meaning of 'see' is to become aware of sb/sth by using one's eyes. It can be translated into Chinese as "kandao,jiandao,kanchu". If the translation keeps the basic meaning of the word, is it a strategy of foreignization or domestication? As we noticed, the boundary of D & F has no clear and definite demarcation, which constitutes a continuum. At one pole are those entities with the highest closeness to the source language and culture, these are what we called foreignization, and the entities are the typical prototype or the best exemplar of foreignization. Domestication, on the other hand, refers to attributes with the highest closeness to the target language and culture. As a continuum of translation strategy, D & F can be mutually inclusive in certain conditions, resulting in certain degrees of overlap. (Midpoint is in the continuum, overlaps are exactly the area of fuzziness.)

The property of a word was changed from a noun to a verb, in the continuum of the domestication and foreignization categories, which gives rise to the transformation in the language forms. Thus, the translation in this case minimized the strangeness to the target reader at least in the language form. The basic meaning of "glimpse" is a quick look, or a brief/ incomplete view. The word "yan qian fu xian" increases a visual effect or the feeling of picture in readers' mind, meanwhile, "fu xian" is a word with some Chinese element. The translation "had a sudden glimpse of" satisfies two entities of the prototype of domestication, but the degree of the closeness is

a bit low, so in the continuum of D & F, its position should be placed slightly close to the domestication. About the phrase “had a intuition” which just had a change in the language form, the word itself has little cultural connotation, so it is remoter toward the D pole than the former.

The study on the verbs in the corpus demonstrates that the frequency of applying verbs in the TT (target text) is quite higher than that in the ST (source text); meanwhile, the repetition of a verb is higher in the target text. In the continuum of translation strategies, the translator’s choice of his strategy tends to the prototype of domestication in different degrees, or if the word presents its basic meaning in the sentence, the translation is at the midpoint of the continuum. Certainly, there are two aspects in translation, one is language form, and the other is culture. In some special cases of this study, the translation strategies applied tend to be the foreignization in the language form and domestication in the culture, which has been proved effective.

Conclusion:

Above all, we can find that there is no clear-cut demarcation line between D & F. Rather, the two strategies constitute a continuum, and are mutual inclusive in certain conditions. At one pole there are the entities with the highest closeness to the source language and culture, at the other there are the entities with the highest closeness to the target language and culture, which presents a concept of prototype. Most of translations are in the positions of the area of fuzziness, merely with different degrees.

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