

Bridging cultures: Tourism and the art of translation

Ali Alizadeh, Assistant professor of Linguistics
English Dept, Islamic Azad University (IAU)
Torbat Heidariyeh Branch, Iran
e-mail: a.alizadeh@iautorbat.ac.ir

Abstract—In this paper we deal with the linguistic and cultural elements of tourist texts and the techniques of translating them by giving some examples of texts introducing a number of tourist attractions in Iran . Domesticating and foreignising strategies are popular in translation studies and each of them has its own advantages and disadvantages in translating tourist texts. The advantages for domesticating include maintaining the terseness of the text, obtaining the reader's understanding of the translated text and gaining the interest of the reader. Its biggest weakness is that the cultural and historical elements of the original could be lost in translation. The advantages for foreignising are revealing the cultural and historical factors of the Source Text (ST), and disseminating the culture and customs of the original. Its disadvantages are neglecting the reader's understanding, and the function of attracting the tourists may be lost. This paper argues that neither of them can solve all the problems associated with preparing tourist texts and materials and even translating them from Persian (The language spoken in Iran) to English. The major focus of this paper is to find a new strategy for translating tourist texts that can highlight and introduce Iranian culture to the target audience and keep Iranian culture intact. To do so, a number of tourist attractions of Iran including some well-known historical places, natural sights , old and modern traditions, etc. is introduced and taken as model for our analysis.

Keywords- *tourism; culture; domestication; neutralising; foreignising*

I. INTRODUCTION

Different functions have been considered for language in different linguistic theories. NewMarks's classification [1] seems to be more applicable to translation as an art. He considers three functions for language: (1) Informative: language for exchanging information (2) Expressive: language for describing event and (3) Vocative: language for encouraging and persuading people for doing actions. Texts provided in language would also be informative, descriptive or vocative depending on the significance of each of the above functions. All these functions are reflected in tourist texts but they seem to be more vocative in nature just because their main purpose is to attract tourists for visiting the sights of the country described in the original text. Besides, they are also of cultural and even aesthetic value [2] . Consequently, tourist texts should be short in length, well organized, beautiful and attractive enough for deeply affecting the readers. Culturally speaking, these texts include: -the inherent values in natural views like rivers, lakes, mountains and so on.

-the traditional values long-established in heritage such as habits, traditions, practices, social structures, arts and crafts, etc.

-and the artificial values held in man-made sights like palaces and temples, imperial tombs and underground museums, architecture and gardens, and elsewhere.

As we know, the ideal tourist texts should maintain such qualities as being informative, intriguing, realistic, practical, cultural, educational, humorous and even poetic [3] As certain kinds of text are used repeatedly in certain situations with more or less the same function, these texts acquire conventional forms that are sometimes even raised to the status of social norms. In this context, the translation of a tourist text should attach importance to the equivalence of the informative contents and stylistic functions between the original and the translated texts, rather than the equivalence in linguistic forms. Cultural differences between the source and target language would require the following points to be taken to the translator's consideration when translating tourist texts: (1) the associative vs. connotative meanings; (2) the influence of different understandings and thoughts, (3) the effect of metaphors and expressions; (4) religions and myths; and (5) the values and lifestyle. Therefore translation of tourist texts should be tourist-oriented, culture-specific, and concept-based.

II. DOMESTICATION

Domestication in translation was firstly proposed by Schleimacher [4] and developed by Lawrence [5] It emphasizes on translating in a transparent, fluent, invisible style in order to minimize the foreignness of the target text [6]. When using domestication , the translator deletes all traces of the original text culture and replace them by the cultural aspects of the language to which the text is translated. For example, Ferdowsi , a very famous Iranian epic poet , is replaced by the expression “ The Homer of Iran “ when translating a tourist text whose main purpose is to attract the Western readers to visit his tomb in Toos , a village near Mashad which is a city in Iran .This replacement just because both Homer and Ferdowsi are two great epic writers ,one in West and the other in East, is an example of domestication for the western readers who are not familiar with this Iranian poet. The followings are examples of domestication used as a strategy for translating Persian texts to English. (Examples are mostly the name of cities, and geographical places in Iran which are examples of tourist attractions)

Tonekabon..... **Veniz of Iran** (for the rivers and plenty of water inside the city)
Millad tower.....**CN of Iran** (for the similarities between CN tower in Toronto and Millad tower in Tehran, Iran)
Isfahan..... **Rome of Iran** (for many different historical places located in these two cities)
Shahnameh **Iliad and Odessa of Iran** (both are epic works)
Shiraz..... **The Netherlands of Iran** (for the plenty of flowers in these two lands)
Jiroft..... **India of Iran** (for similar climate conditions)
Damavand **Alp of Iran** (for similarity in appearance of these two mountains)

As shown in the above examples , domestication has been used to replace some Iranian proper names by the terms which are closer to the western culture . This is based on a number of physical, historical geographical and natural similarities to make understanding their references possible by the western readers. Owing to the many voids and differences between Persian and English, cultural factors are often lost when translating tourist texts from Persian into English in this way. To understand Persian culture, the translator needs to focus on the many untranslatable words and phrases. These untranslatable words and phrases sometimes can be seen as small signs of what is lost in translation This paper maintains that such terms should be translated according to their annotations or connotations, and the tourist-oriented approach should be followed. We may also query the difference between the domesticating and the tourist-oriented approach. In fact, they are only slightly different in meaning. The former refers to a translation that has exactly the same effect as the effect of the original version; the latter is a strategy that is fully considerate of the reader, and we may employ such methods as addition or deletion and others to satisfy and comply with the reader's needs.

In short, the domesticating strategy is an essential way of translating tourist texts, but it cannot solve all the problems existing in culture-specific tourist texts. We need to find the similarities in culture when translating between languages from the East and the West. The advantages of domesticating include maintaining the terseness of the TL text, obtaining an understanding of the SL text, and gaining the interest of the TL reader. The biggest weakness is that the cultural and historical elements of the original text could be lost in translation [2]

III. FOREIGNISING

Foreignising entails choosing a foreign text and developing a translation method along lines which are excluded by dominant cultural values in the target language [7]. As far as the foreignising strategy is concerned, I believe that it should focus on the cultural and historical factors underlying the tourist text. One should stick to culture-specific strategies when translating such texts. In principle, faithfulness is the top priority when translating tourist texts.

This is because such translations should be faithful to the central text, such as cultural background, historical facts, geographical settings, aesthetic values, fabricated attractions and natural landscapes [2] As far as Persian texts are concerned, it is primarily a foreignising strategy that is employed in order to maintain faithfulness, According to Venuti [7] strategies in producing translations inevitably emerge in response to domestic cultural situations. But some are deliberately domesticating in their handling of the foreign text, while others can be described as foreignising, motivated by an impulse to preserve linguistic and cultural differences by deviating from prevailing domestic values. Below are examples (as tourist attractions) which are specific to the Iranian culture having no equivalents all over the world. It goes without saying that in such cases only foreignisation can be of help for their translation if used in a tourist text:

Yalda night (The first night of Winter which is the longest night of the year and celebrated by Iranians)

Haft Sin table(The table on which seven things whose name start with the letter S are put showing the first day of the year)

Sizdebedar day or the day of nature (the thirteenth day of the year which is considered to be of bad luck to Iranians .They prefer to go out to the nature and spend all day there instead of standing at home)

Wednesday night celebration (the last Wednesday night of the year at which Iranians light fires and jump over it)

As another example , **Halva** is a kind of sweet which is of religious significance for Iranians. When someone dies, his relatives cook and give it to the people taking part in the funeral ceremony .If used in tourist text ,it would be useless to simply translate it into **Iranian pudding** as a matter of domestication for the sake of making it understood by the western readers. Pudding in English and Halva in Persian are not synonymous. They are of different cultural values. It may be concluded that unique items in the source text can be translated by means of a foreignising strategy. For Iranian unique musical instruments, some dish names and other culture-specific items, transcription or transliteration are preferable . If domesticated, their cultural meanings will be lost. This paper argues that tourist texts should be translated primarily by means of foreignising to retain the original cultural resonances. Only in a situation that we cannot deal with do we use a domesticating strategy, in other words, allowing the alien to be seen, or as Schleiermacher famously put it, by bringing the reader to the text rather than the other way round [4] The problem is that if a translation is successful, in the sense of reading as if it were written in the target language, then its creator and its original culture become invisible. For this reason, it is believed that the domesticating strategy should be applied as little as possible when translating tourist texts. This is because the purpose of tourist texts is to spread the foreign or different cultures to the reader, and the translator is responsible for disseminating the original culture to the TL reader.

To sum up, the foreignising strategy is a preferable approach to translating tourist texts. The advantages include revealing the cultural and historical factors of the ST,

disseminating the culture and customs of the original, and showing the equality between languages and between cultures. The disadvantages include neglecting the reader's emotion and understanding. In other words, the functions of disseminating the ST cultures are found, but the effects of attracting the tourists are most likely lost when employing such a strategy [2].

IV. NEUTRALISING AS A NEW STRATEGY

When translating tourist texts both cultural uniqueness and readability need to be ensured. When some lexical or semantic voids are encountered in the Persian text, the neutralising strategy can be used to render them into English and prevent viewers from misunderstanding the original, so that a uniquely cultural factor becomes a common phenomenon all over the world. How we preserve those culture-specific elements and at the same time ensure the greatest possible readability in the translation, is a headache for many translators [2]. Based on the previous discussion, I am of the opinion that, because of the special nature of tourist texts and the functions of their special text type, the translation of tourist texts should serve the purpose of arousing the interest of the TL (Target Language) readers and motivate them to visit the tourist destination described in the text. The translator here has more freedom in translation compared with other types of translation [2]

Some theorists and scholars have held that domesticating and foreignising strategies cannot be accommodated together in one text. Andre Lefevere [8] argues that the domesticating and foreignising strategies are completely different translation strategies which cannot be combined in the same translation. However, it is believed that this is not feasible in practice. This is because the purpose in translating tourist texts is not only to translate the source language into the target language, but also to translate the exotic elements of the SL (Source Language) into the target text. Either one of domesticating and foreignising strategies alone cannot provide the complete solution for the tourist text. It is clear that the domesticating or the foreignising strategies cannot solve all the problems in translating tourist texts. A new strategy, namely neutralising, may be able to be put forward as the criterion for the translation of tourist texts and can help promote cultural exchange, because the translator should try his best to transfer the cultural message from the original text to the target text, while retaining readability and acceptability of the translation. Here the neutralising strategy does not simply mean a mixture of the domesticating and foreignising strategies. It refers to the act and process of constantly modulating the translator's own awareness of what is being translated to satisfy the reader's needs and to achieve correlative equivalents between the ST and the TT (Target Text) In other words, the translation of tourist texts does not rely on either strategy and the translator fully takes into account all the cultural elements existing in the text whenever necessary[2]. Depending on the qualities of tourist texts, transferring information is one of the most important functions in translation. In order to perform such a function, the translator has to follow the information-oriented principle, supply the reader with enough information from the original

text and help them understand the culture and history of the ST. As we know, names of places and persons frequently appear in tourist texts. In Persian tourist texts, most Iranians would know them but foreign readers would not. For example using the noun phrase " Iranian physician " for **Avicina** will not suffice for introducing this great Iranian figure in philosophy, geography, medicine etc. because most foreign readers would not know who he is. Here we may take advantage of the neutralising strategy to translate the name as:

Avicina (980-1073) philosopher of the Samanid dynasty (819-999) in Iran.

The underlined part gives the reader some extra background information about him to the Western reader. What is more important is to give reader enough information even if it is not mentioned in the original text. Consider the following sentences as another example of translation in which neutralizing is used to give extra information to the reader and change a unique Persian cultural fact to a general phenomenon understandable to all readers no matter they belong to that culture or not:

The construction of Si va Se pol (33 bridges) in Isfahan lasted for 14 years and ended in 1600, thirty three years after Shakespeare died.....

or

The construction of Si va Se pol (33 bridges) in Isfahan lasted for 14 years and ended in 1600, one hundred years after Columbus discovered America.....

Either of the two versions could be used in tourist texts. The first half in each version takes into account the culture-specific architecture and accurately provides the basic information of the original. The second half is for the sake of the target reader and it gives additional information for further understanding. This is to say that the target reader may be impressed when reading such additional information. Meanwhile, the vocative function is already accomplished. The above-mentioned examples are used to illustrate a translation associated with the informative function when translating tourist texts. The suggestion is that the translator should always think of what the target reader may be thinking, ascertain as much as possible what the readers may wish to find in the tourist text, and supply them with enough information to supplement what they already have. The purpose is to reach an equivalent in information.

V. CONCLUSION

Any text has informative, expressive and vocative functions. Tourist texts seem to be more vocative since its main purpose is to attract readers for visiting the tourist attractions of the country introduced. However, other functions of tourist texts should not be neglected in translation. It is important for the translator to decide which function dominates in a particular text and then find the suitable method to translate it. In short, loss in tourist text translation is inevitable. Our task is to find the translation strategies that will transmit and highlight Persian culture, and make it understandable to the target readers. A translator is a messenger of culture who makes unremitting efforts to

search for equivalence in information, concepts and aesthetics. It was shown in this paper that only neutralizing strategy as a substitution for domesticating and foreignising can satisfy these approaches.

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