
Original Research Article

The effect of English translation strategies on the international acceptance of ethnic cultural narratives

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Abstract: This paper delves into the intricate relationship between English translation strategies and the international acceptance of ethnic cultural narratives. By analyzing a range of translation cases, it explores how different translation approaches influence the dissemination and reception of ethnic cultural stories on the global stage. The study aims to provide insights into optimizing translation strategies to enhance the international visibility and appreciation of ethnic cultures.

Keywords: English translation strategies; ethnic cultural narratives; international acceptance

1. Introduction

In the era of globalization, the international dissemination of ethnic cultures has become increasingly important. Ethnic cultural narratives, as carriers of unique cultural values and traditions, hold great potential for cross-cultural communication. However, the language barrier poses a significant challenge to their international acceptance. English, as a global lingua franca, plays a crucial role in facilitating the cross-border transmission of these narratives. Therefore, the choice of English translation strategies has a profound impact on how ethnic cultural stories are perceived and received by international audiences.

2. Literature review

2.1. Previous studies on translation strategies

Numerous scholars have explored various translation strategies in different contexts. For example, some have focused on the domesticating and foreignizing strategies proposed by Lawrence Venuti. Domesticating strategies aim to make the translated text conform to the target language culture, while foreignizing strategies retain the exotic elements of the source language culture. These strategies have been widely discussed in general translation studies, but their specific application to ethnic cultural narratives requires further investigation.

2.2. Research on the international dissemination of ethnic cultures

Studies on the international dissemination of ethnic cultures have emphasized the importance of effective communication. Language is a key factor in this process. Some researchers have pointed out that inaccurate or inappropriate translations can lead to misunderstandings and distortions of ethnic cultural connotations. However, there is a lack of in-depth analysis on how different translation strategies directly affect the international acceptance of ethnic cultural narratives.

3. The significance of English translation for ethnic cultural narratives

3.1. Cultural bridge function

English translation serves as a bridge between different cultures. It enables international audiences to access and understand ethnic cultural narratives that would otherwise remain inaccessible due to language barriers. Through accurate and culturally appropriate translations, the unique features and values of ethnic cultures can be conveyed to a wider global audience.

3.2. Enhancing cultural visibility

Effective English translations can enhance the visibility of ethnic cultures on the international stage. When

ethnic cultural narratives are well-translated, they are more likely to be included in international literary and cultural exchanges, leading to greater recognition and appreciation. This, in turn, can promote cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue.

4. Analysis of translation strategies and their impact on international acceptance

4.1. Domesticating strategies

4.1.1. Adaptation of cultural references

Domesticating strategies often involve adapting cultural references in ethnic cultural narratives to make them more familiar to the target language audience. For example, in translating a Chinese ethnic folk tale, a translator might replace a traditional Chinese festival name with a similar Western festival that international readers are more familiar with. This can help readers better understand the context and plot of the story. However, over-domestication may lead to the loss of the original cultural flavor and uniqueness of the ethnic narrative.

4.1.2. Simplification of language

Simplifying complex language structures and expressions in ethnic cultural narratives is another aspect of domesticating strategies. By using more straightforward and common English phrases, translators can make the text more accessible to a general international audience. Yet, this may also result in a reduction of the literary and cultural richness of the original text.

4.2. Foreignizing strategies

4.2.1. Preservation of cultural originality

Foreignizing strategies emphasize the preservation of the cultural originality of ethnic cultural narratives. Translators retain unique cultural terms, expressions, and narrative styles from the source language. For instance, when translating an African ethnic myth, the translator may keep the original African names and cultural concepts without providing detailed explanations. This approach can introduce international audiences to the exotic and distinct aspects of ethnic cultures, but it may also pose challenges in terms of comprehension.

4.2.2. Use of footnotes and annotations

To compensate for the potential difficulties in understanding foreignized translations, translators often use footnotes and annotations. These additional explanations can provide background information on cultural references, historical contexts, and linguistic nuances. While footnotes and annotations are helpful, excessive use may disrupt the reading flow and make the text less engaging for some readers.

4.3. Case studies

4.3.1. Case 1: Translation of a tibetan folk story

In translating a Tibetan folk story, one translator adopted a domesticating strategy. The story contained many Tibetan Buddhist terms and concepts. The translator replaced some of these terms with more general religious terms in English, such as using "spiritual leader" instead of "lama." This made the story more understandable for English-speaking readers who were not familiar with Tibetan Buddhism. However, some Tibetan cultural scholars argued that this approach diluted the unique religious and cultural significance of the original story.

4.3.2. Case 2: Translation of a maori legend

Another translator chose a foreignizing strategy when translating a Maori legend. The translator kept the original Maori names of characters and places and used Maori words for traditional concepts. To help readers understand, the translator added detailed footnotes explaining the cultural meanings of these terms. This translation approach preserved the cultural authenticity of the Maori legend and introduced international readers to the rich Maori culture. However, some readers found the frequent footnotes distracting.

5. Factors influencing the choice of translation strategies

5.1. Target audience

The characteristics of the target audience play a crucial role in determining the choice of translation strategies. If the target audience consists of general readers with little knowledge of the source culture, domesticating strategies may be more appropriate to ensure comprehensibility. On the other hand, if the target

audience is scholars or cultural enthusiasts interested in the original cultural context, foreignizing strategies can be employed to preserve cultural authenticity.

5.2. Purpose of translation

The purpose of translation also influences the selection of strategies. If the goal is to promote cultural exchange and introduce ethnic cultures to a wide international audience, a balanced approach that combines domesticating and foreignizing elements may be ideal. However, if the translation is for academic research, a more foreignizing strategy may be preferred to maintain the integrity of the original text.

5.3. Cultural distance

The cultural distance between the source and target cultures is another important factor. When the cultural distance is large, domesticating strategies can help bridge the gap and make the ethnic cultural narrative more relatable. In cases where the cultural distance is relatively small, foreignizing strategies can be more effective in highlighting the unique cultural features.

6. Conclusion

This paper has examined the impact of English translation strategies on the international acceptance of ethnic cultural narratives. Both domesticating and foreignizing strategies have their advantages and disadvantages. The choice of translation strategies should be based on a careful consideration of factors such as the target audience, the purpose of translation, and the cultural distance. A well-balanced approach that combines elements of both strategies can optimize the international dissemination and acceptance of ethnic cultural narratives. Future research can further explore the long-term effects of different translation strategies on the cultural image and identity of ethnic groups in the international context.

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