

The Translator's Visibility in Domestication and the *Sinhala* Translation of 'The Village in the Jungle'

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Abstract

Domestication as a translation strategy has been inevitable in translation either consciously or unconsciously, even though it has been questioned by the opposite regime; foreignization for years. This comparative analysis examined the strategies of domestication applied by A. P. Gunarathne in the Sinhala translation of 'The Village in the Jungle' and it has been found out that wide varied strategies within the theory of domestication have been employed in translating this novel into the Sinhala language. Some of them are usual strategies whereas some are unique for this work. The present study further concludes that some kind of a domestication involves in every translation and this translation strategy still remains as an effective and well-intentioned strategy for translators to do effective translations while finding out that the theory of domestication has also been expanded into some micro-level strategies by paying much attention for the local culture of the target language in this translation.

Keywords: domestication, translator's visibility, *Beddagama*, aculturalization, foreignization

1. Introduction

This study aims to unpack the translation strategies used when translating the novel “*The Village in the Jungle*” into the Sinhala language by paying special attention to domestication. The research is guided by three research questions;

What are the translation strategies used in this specific Sinhalese translation (*Beddagama*)?

Is domestication still a valid translation strategy with special reference to this translation?

How this translator has taken into account the local culture in this translation?

The Village in the Jungle is a novel which was written by Leonard Woolf in 1913, just after leaving the civil service commitment in colonial Sri Lanka. He is regarded as an English novelist, essayist, and even political theorist by taking into account his varied contributions. Though he has written over twenty books, this novel was the fiction that brought his caliber into the international literary convention by creating a literary celebrity like his wife, Virginia Woolf. *The Village in the Jungle* is recognized as an almost similar work to E. M. Foster’s *Passage to India* and George Orwell’s *Burmese Days*; not of course due to the content, but because of the captured readership popularity and the depth of the work (Gamage, 2017, p. 55). This novel was translated into the Sinhala language in the 1950s by A. P. Gunarathne, and this translation has been widely accepted by the readers and even this has been recommended for the Advanced Level Examination from 2017 in Sri Lanka. Importantly, the plot of this novel has been nourished by the rural culture of Sri Lanka during the British colonial period and the author of the original text was a civil servant in the colony. The novel brings out almost his authentic experiences as the main administrator and legal authority of the Hambantota district in Sri Lanka during that period. The story evolves around a village which gradually was deteriorating due to the poverty and the cruel taxation strategies of the governing authority under British rule. Ultimately, this depicted village captured by the forest and all the villagers passed away. In this work, the author critically sees the cruelty of imperialism while attempting to understand the partially civilized villages located in rural areas and also simple and extremely different lives of the people lived in this specific village.

Though this novel has been written in English, Woolf has used many terms directly from the Sinhala Language, but he also has given footnotes to explain most of them for English readers. This has eased the job of translation into Sinhala, but the translator has gone beyond the inherited domestication in the source text by further domesticating the original work. Therefore, this translation cannot be discussed in the conventional source text (hereafter will be used as ST) and target text (hereafter will be used as TT) jargon. This paper examines the translation strategy used by A. P. Gunarathne in translating *The Village in the Jungle* into the Sinhala language called *Beddagama*. Sinhala is a native language in Sri Lanka and this is the only country where the Sinhala language is used in the world which has become the target language of this translation.

2. Materials and Methods

This is a comparative study that compares the original source and the translated version of the

original book with the objective of exploring the way that the translator has domesticated *The Village in the Jungle* (an English novel) into Sri Lankan rural culture by using different techniques when translating it into Sinhala. In other words, the present work examines the different domestication strategies applied by the translator in Beddagama; The Sinhala translation of the *Village in the Jungle*. Simply, this is kind of a theoretical analysis that employed translation theory to the target translation to examine the translator's strategies. The English novel; *The Village in the Jungle* and the Sinhalese translation of it; Beddagama served as primary data sources for this study while previous literature on domestication served as secondary data to establish the theoretical foundation.

3. Theoretical Foundation

Domestication is the theoretical base for this study which is the one part of dichotomy in the translation theory for years (The dichotomy is foreignization and domestication). This is one of the main translation strategies and this term is used to describe “the translation strategy in which a transparent, fluent style is adopted in order to minimize the strangeness of the foreign text for target readers” (Wang, 2013, p. 175). The history of domestication strategies can be traced back to ancient Rome. Truly, this strategy was born through a long lasted discussion using different other terms. The debate over free and literal translation could be regarded as a preliminary form of today's debate on domestication and foreignization (Wang, 2013, p. 77), but they are not synonymous to domestication and foreignization, nonetheless, they may overlap sometimes (Yang, 2010, p. 77). The discussion on free and literal translation is now older more than a hundred years. Eugene Nida is regarded as the representative of those who favoured domestication strategy of translation, but these two basic translation strategies were termed by the American translation theorist Lawrence Venuti. In 1964, Eugene A Nida formulated his concept of “dynamic” or “functional equivalence” in translation and later restated and developed them (Wang, 2013, p. 176). In the contemporary international translation field, the person who has initiated the controversy between domestication and foreignization is Eugene Nida (Yang, 2010, p. 78). What does actually domestication mean? It has been presented using some grammatical metaphors, as an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target language cultural values, bring the author home back (as quoted in Yang, 2010, p. 77). Venuti has deeply and critically discussed the saga of domestication including the whole history of its literature in his well-known study; *The Translator's Invisibility*, but he has not favoured domestication and the whole effort is to form and establish the opposite regime; foreignization.

In 1813, Freidrich Schleiermacher coined the term ‘foreignizing translation’ to describe the translators’ act of bringing the reader towards the author and Lawrence Venuti expands on this notion (Collins, 2008, p. 334). Domestication advocated against the regime of foreignization for a long time in the theory of translation studies, particularly in the western context. Domestication has deeply been criticized by the translation theorists who advocated foreignization, but still, they have not been able to erase the word from the vocabulary of translation theory and it remains with a certain legitimacy.

“There are only two methods to make a perfect translation: either the translator makes the

reader move towards the author who stays at his original place or makes the move towards the reader who stays at his original place” (as quoted in Shi, 2014, p. 766). Thus, domestication has been much favoured in the studies of Chinese translation researches in the recent past and some of them will be quoted in the upcoming discussions as required. As far as we concern, there is some domestication in all translations even though the theorists have introduced and advocated theoretical regimes against domestication. This study will examine how the translator under consideration has domesticated his work by taking into account the micro-level strategies of domestication by further expanding the theoretical feasibilities.

4. Discussion

4.1 Domestication through Target Language in Beddagama

When translating the source text into the target text, the translator has to make a decision in terms of his language usage, particularly the languages like Sinhala, as it has a diglossia. Also, this target language has a wide variety of dialects. As it has been researched, there are nine major dialects in Sinhala language (Dissanayaka, 1999), and the southern dialect is the one which has been employed in this work where the translator is truly visible. The southern dialect of Sinhala language also consists of three different areas viz, Galle, Matara, and Hambantota. The translator has used in this translation the specific dialect used in Hambantota by that time. As we have already mentioned, the original text is older than a century by now and it was almost a half-century passed when the translation was done. *Gunarathne* (the translator) had gone back to the history of language usage of the actual geographical area in the plot and tried to apply those original terms to depict some scenes of the story in this translation. In other words, this translation has not taken into account the standard dialect of Sinhala language. The effort of the translator can be understood as the contextual application of the language.

The southern province of Sri Lanka consists of three districts: Galle, Matara, and Hambantota. There are some dialectical differences among these districts as well and the translator has been very specific to choose the dialect used in the Hambantota district of Sri Lanka where the plot of the novel had been experienced by author of the source text. The livelihood of this area was Chena cultivation and in this particular culture, there had been very specific language terms such as ‘*van han deka*’ (sandals), ‘*kele butewa*’ (undergrowth), ‘*varichchi benda meti gasa*’ (mud-plastered upon rough jungle sticks) (Beddagama, P. 7). These are not in the standard dialect of Sinhala language and they are specific to this certain area and Chena context. Why the translator has used this kind of dialect? It is one of the strategies commonly used by translators all across the world to cater to the taste of the reader and this can be seen usually in Chinese translations. In order to cater to the taste of the readers, *Lin Shu* turned to typical Chinese language of that time and domesticated many foreign texts while his credit was more or less compromised by his arbitrary deletion, addition, and rework (Wang, 2013, p. 177). There are such arbitrary deletions, additions and reworks throughout this translation. The above-given examples witnessed how he has done arbitrary deletion and addition in order to cater to the reader. In the first couple of chapters, contain some language terms derived from Sinhalese folklore and the terms from paddy cultivation culture. Some of them

are additions whereas, some are restates. He has used doublets to translate some single words in the original text and ‘*ralu-paralu*’ (Beddagama, p. 34) is one such example. Some lexical choices he has made such as ‘*Kedeththuwa*’, ‘*gomaskada*’ are even not in the current use of this language, but why they have been applied? The famous representative of domestication translation is Eugene Nida, who points out the communicative function of translation, suggesting that the choice of the word should adjust so that it could custom different kinds of readers (Shi, 2014, p. 766). As the Target Text witnesses, this is what he has done in several ways in *Beddagama*. ‘*kadulla*’, ‘*mawara*’, ‘*adikoda*’, ‘*godella*’ are some more such usages just to name out of hundreds. In a way, this is a protective action which has been discussed by language purists and protectionists. It is apparent that this is kind of a domestication. Domestication is often used as a way of control, or even censorship, when authorities feel the language need to protect target readers from foreign ideas and language use (Janis, 2012, p. 125). The text of the original author itself a protective action as he has used some Sinhalese terms as well in the English version, but it has further been nourished by the translator.

The translator has become very particular to adopt sexual morality in his language. This is another way of domestication. For instance, the word ‘*vesi!*’ (The Village in the Jungle, p. 15) is a Sinhalese word which is used to mean the prostitute. Even though this is originally a Sinhalese word, it has been replaced by ‘*paratti*’ to melt down its nature of sexual taboo into general parlance. Freres may appear to be democratic in its appeal to what is ‘common to mankind’ to a timeless and universal human essence, but it actually involved insidious domestication that allowed him to imprint the foreign text with his conservative sexual morality (Venuti, 1995, p. 80). These discussed examples are a few to name just to understand the domestication made through language usage in this translation and there are many more such examples over the whole work.

4.2 Micro-level Strategies of Domestication and Visibility of the Translator in Beddagama

One of the main variables of our research puzzle is the ‘visibility of translator’. The principle work in translation theory by Lawrence Venuti has been named using the opposite term ‘invisibility’ (The translator’s invisibility). Therefore, this work remains in the opposite direction when compared with the mainstream discourse of translation studies. Even though theoretically, it is in the opposite direction, we must admit that this is the leading study that has been done in the history of translation theory so far. Venuti has not been able to fully leave out the impact of domestication at all in this study. That is why he has happened to write that the fluent translation enacts thoroughgoing domestication (1995, p. 43). Venuti further admits into the role of translator, or in other words, the visibility of the translator in his study; the translator’s invisibility intervenes against the translator’s situation and activity in contemporary Anglo-American culture by offering a series of genealogies that write the history of present (Venuti, 1995, p. 40). In the translation which is under consideration, the translator appears everywhere. As was pointed out in the previous discussion too, this appearance has realized in several ways in the translation which we have taken into account in this article. ‘*I knew such a man once*’ (The Village in the Jungle, p. 2) is an utterance in the source text that this further can be illustrated. Simply, this could have been translated into Sinhala by using very common terms, but this has totally been colloquialized by using the

spoken colloquial terms of Sinhala language in *Beddagama*. Thus, he has aculturalized the TT more than ST. The term that is used for ‘such a man’ is “*me walle minihek*” is immediately recognizable, and very familiar to those who have had such contextual experiences.

The translator has understood the cultural aspect of his work based on domestication in translating such utterances and it is impossible to leave out some of the theoretical claims by Venuti which exactly match with this type of cases; “a fluent translation is immediately recognizable and intelligible ‘familiarized’, domesticated, not disconcerting (ly) foreign capable of giving the reader unobstructed ‘access to great thought’ to what is present in the original” (as quoted in Venuti, 1995, p. 5). In fact, these kinds of translation strategies have been used by the translator to make close the depicted character to the readers and it has further been strengthened in the same chapter by colloquializing the TT to build up the character under discussion in this translation. One such example is the translation of this utterance: ‘*He would boast that he could see a buck downwind before it could scent him*’ (The Village in the Jungle, p. 5). Importantly, the word ‘scent’ has been put into TT as ‘*iwa weteema*’ which is directly derived from the jargon of hunters. This is an additional research work conducted by the translator to make his job easy by learning that certain jargon to communicate properly while placing the work in the actual context. The general purpose of the translation is to communicate. Domestication is preferred because it is easy for the readers to understand while foreignization should make it hard for them to read (Wang, 2013, p. 179).

Domestication has been underestimated and given simple care by some theorists and also the process of whole translation has been posteriorized. *Shi, Liu* argues that domestication translation misrepresents the original text (2014, p. 767) and as *Tymoczko* quotes, “Toury points to the nature of translation as a cluster concept in defining translation as a culturally bound practice that has a posteriori nature” (2013, p. 5). The present translator has proved how the translation job is serious: the domestication is not such simple and even the whole translation process is not such simple. Particularly, in the effort of translation and domestication through language usage, the translator has to familiarize himself with both languages by knowing its idioms, proverbs, doublets, traditional usages and many more. This familiarization helps him to favour either domestication or foreignization. The present translator’s familiarization with these is not average and it has helped him to domesticate the work to a greater extent. Domestication can also be done by omitting some utterances from the ST. This has been practiced in this work to a greater extent.

“*Why should I fear the jungle? He would say ‘I know it better than my own compound. A few trees and bushes and leaves and some more foolish beasts*” (The Village in the Jungle, p. 2). This is a piece of utterance in the ST, and in the TT one part of this utterance is missing, that is “*He would say*”. But, it has not hindered the TT at all as this has been done consciously by the translator to avoid the unnecessary length of his work. This omission is also a way of domestication, but this sort of strategies must be applied with great care as some translators purposely avoid translating unknown and difficult parts, whereas some are mistakenly omitting out which is hindering to the TT. The dominant theorist who favoured foreignization,

Venuti also points out that it is important not to view such instances of domestication as simply inaccurate translation (2008, p. 211). In the piece of utterance quoted from the ST above, there is a term called ‘*trees and bushes*’. He simply could have translated these two words into TT as ‘*gas ha panduru*’ instead; it has been translated as ‘*gas-kolan*’. This is a very familiar doublet for Sinhalese readers and the translator has understood the applied language rather than just word to word translation in this instance. Such doublets can be seen all across the work where applicable. Sometimes, the single words in ST have been put into doublets in TT very appropriately. One such example is the word ‘scattered’ has been translated as ‘*athana-methana*’. These are micro-level strategies of domestication used by the present translator. Such strategies can be applied in a cultural sense as well. But, one of the major criticisms against domestication is that it avoids cultural fact. This criticism has focused on the source language culture but not of the Target language culture. This cultural fact of domestication has been discussed beyond the mainstream theorists. Other translation theorists in the west also favoured domesticating strategy, among them, Susan Bassnet proposes the equivalence of cultural functions and approves of employing domestication to handle the linguistic and cultural difference in translation (Shi, 2014, p. 766). Such culturally involved domestication strategies have also appeared in this translation. For instance, when translating the piece of utterance; ‘*The villagers all belong to goiya caste, which is the caste of cultivators*’ (The Village in the Jungle, p. 9); the latter part of this utterance has been omitted out for some logical cultural reasons. This latter part explains what *goiya* caste is in Sri Lanka for English readers, but it is an obvious fact that this should not be explained for Sinhalese in Sri Lanka and they know very well what *goiya* caste is. By understanding this cultural reality, the translator has left out this unnecessary part. This is a cultural decision with reference to translation and also a sort of domesticating strategy. We frequently come across *addition* in this translation, but they are not at all unnecessary additions as the translator has consciously done them. See the below piece of utterance from the ST:

“*In November, the ground is sown broadcast with miller or ‘kurakkan’ or maize, with pumpkins, chilies, and a few vegetables*” (The Village in the Jungle, pp. 10-11). Here, there are three serials, one vegetable (pumpkin), chilies and other vegetables which are not specified, but in the translated text, we find two vegetable items and some more without specifying. The translator has added one more typical vegetable grown in Chena apart from the pumpkin. That is kind of a cucumber called ‘*thiyambara*’ in Sinhala. This addition is very appropriate for this Chena cultivation. The addition is not new at all for domestication as we have already quoted above through the studies of *Lili Wang* (2013). Including such a new term into TT is not easy and simple as the translator has to have a sound knowledge about this specific Chena culture and Sri Lankan folk culture which reasonably has been mastered by this translator. Another important strategy can be noticed here when translating the word ‘November’ into Sinhala. The common usage in standard Sinhala dialect is the same English word with a slight pronunciation difference, but in the Chena culture and even in some other such specific situations, Sinhalese use their own calendar names without using this English borrowing. This has been translated as ‘*il masa*’ by using Sinhalese calendar names.

In certain places, ‘elaboration’ has been used as a strategy of domestication. This has been

criticized by the advocates of foreignization in several ways and some believed that “translation is, of course, a rewriting of an original text” (Bassnett & Lefevere, in Venuti’s book preface 1995, p. VII). To elaborate on the original text, the translator has to acquire the TT culture to a greater extent which has reasonably been done in the present work. The piece of utterance “*The ground is sown broadcast*” which was in the original text has been elaborated by including several truly appropriate lexical items belong to Chena culture. While he elaborates some utterances by expanding their meanings and number of lexical items, some additional explanations appeared in the ST, have been left out as they are immaterial parts for the TT. This can be considered as a strategy of further domestication. Almost all footnotes included in the original text are not in the TT. This has been done as they are not required for the readers of TT culture and it is a conscious effort of the translator. This kind of domestication is very popular in Asian countries, for instance in China, the prestigious translators such as Lin Shu and Liangshiqiu are the devoted advocates of domestication theory and applied it to their translation works which enjoyed tremendous popularity among readers (Shi, 2014, p. 766). Thus, it is very clear that the translation of ‘*The Village in the Jungle*’ into the Sinhala language has used domestication as a successful strategy while expanding its capacities into several other micro-level strategies.

5. Results

A.P.Gunarathne as the translator of this English novel (*The Village in the Jungle* written by Leonard Woolf) into Sinhala, has applied domestication strategy over the whole work of his translation: ‘*Beddagama*’. They have not become unsuccessful efforts as most of them have been done with a specific purpose to make his work meaningful. As Venuti has pointed out Schleiermacher allowed the translator to choose between a domesticating method, an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values, bringing the author back home, and a foreignizing method, an ethnodeviant pressure on those values to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad (2008, p. 210). Out of these two, the present translator has taken the first alternative and it has been used with different micro-level strategies that were explored above. Even though there are criticisms, domestication dominated the theory and practice of English language translation in every genre; prose as well as poetry (2008, p. 211). Apparently, domestication involves some issues, but based on those, this cannot be totally refused by considering it as an inappropriate method. As Venuti himself quoted in his study, Cohen also noticed the domestication involved here the risk of reducing individual authors’ style and national tricks of speech to a plain prose uniformity but he felt that this danger was avoided by the best translations (1995, p. 06). This is what the present translator has also done in his work as witnessed by the given examples in the discussion.

The efforts that have been made by this translator in *Beddagama* can be put into a philosophical framework that safeguarded the domestication; that is modernism. *T. S. Eliot* assumed the modernist view that translation is fundamental domestication resulting in an autonomous text: the work of translation is to make something foreign or something remote in time live with our own life (1928, p. 98). The modernist view was popular and very supportive in the place (Anglo-American literary culture) where the domestication was in its

peak. The cultural autonomy of the translated text which was advocated by the modernists is an apparent fact in *Beddagama*, and the domestication strategies used by the translator have supported a lot to achieve this cultural autonomy. Even though those who advocate foreignization believe that the translation should stay with the original sense of the book, Nida believes it is necessary to make changes and adjustments to the translated text under certain conditions (Shi, 2014, p. 766). It is mandatory to mention that the original text itself is a good framework for this cultural autonomy as it has not supported at all for the policy of British colonization (Even though the author is an agent of this empire). Through all these explanations, it is very clear that the translator is not invisible at all, but he is obviously visible in accordance with the present work. Thus, it can be concluded that the translator of this book has used domestication as his theoretical approach consciously or unconsciously to this translation while applying some new micro-level strategies within the main framework of domestication. Through his strategical approach of translation, the work has reached a vast local readership as it deals a lot with some local cultural affairs.

6. Conclusion

Finally, it can be concluded that this translated novel has very clearly illustrated the theoretical approach of the translator as domestication and the translator has produced several innovations within domestication as micro-level strategies by proving that the domestication is still a valid and useful way to do successful translations. Further, the knowledge of target language culture is used very consciously in order to aculturalize the target text to the local culture with the aims of achieving a vast local readership by picturing the translator's visibility over the target text; *Beddagama*.

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