

A Comparative Analysis of the Translation Strategies of "Foreignization" and "Domestication" in the English Versions of *Lun Yu* by Ku Hungming and James Legge

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Abstract. *Lun Yu*, also known as *The Analects of Confucius*, has been a masterpiece of traditional Chinese culture and has been very influential in China, even in the world. As the influence of *The Analects of Confucius* grows, its different versions of translation has become a topic of interest and has been discussed by many people. In the process of translating *Lun Yu*, different famous writers have adopted different translation strategies. This paper takes the English versions of *Lun Yu* by Ku Hungming and James Legge as examples, aiming to find out the motivations for their respective translation strategies. Firstly, the application of specific translation strategies will be analyzed through specific examples. Secondly, this paper will analyze the reasons why the two translators adopted their respective translation strategies according to the context of different times. Meanwhile, this paper will discuss the role of the English versions of *Lun Yu* in the diffusion of Chinese culture to the West.

Keywords: *Lun Yu*; foreignization; domestication; Chinese cultural transmission; comparative analysis.

1. Introduction

Chinese culture has a long and profound history, with a very high research value. *Lun Yu*, as a masterpiece of Chinese culture, is a concentrated reflection of the thoughts of Confucius and his descendants. It occupies an important historical position in the history of Chinese culture, playing an important role in the process of spreading Chinese culture as well. The study of the translation of *The Analects of Confucius* has a guiding significance for the study of the spread of Chinese culture.

This paper takes the English versions of *Lun Yu* by Ku Hungming and James Legge as the objects of study. Taking foreignization and domestication as the theoretical guide, this paper will reflect the application of the two translation strategies through textual analysis. Meanwhile, this research will analyze the motivations of the two translators for choosing different translation strategies and finally reveal the role of these two English translations in the spread of Chinese culture to the outside world.

2. Introduction to Foreignization and Domestication and Two English Versions of *The Analects of Confucius*

China has a long history of translation, which has been around for nearly two thousand years. Apart from simple text conversion, translation has been regarded as an effective means of cultural communication. As a result, many translation strategies have emerged, and foreignization and domestication are two of the representative strategies. "The dispute between foreignization and domestication, which is an extension of the dispute between literal translation and free translation, can be said to have a long history." (Wang Dongfeng, 2002: 24) As the famous 18th- and 19th-century German translator Schleiermacher said: "There are only two. Either the translator leaves the author in peace, as much as possible, and moves the reader towards him; or he leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author towards him." (Schleiermacher, 1992: 42). This sentence mentions the different characteristics between foreignization and domestication. The main representative of foreignization is Venuti, who advocates retaining the characteristics of the original

and allowing for differences between cultures. That is, “translations that preserve the exoticism of the original and deliberately break the conventions of the target language.” (Shuttleworth&Cowie, 1997: 59). He also criticizes the approach of domestication that prevents readers from receiving the original textual and cultural connotations. He rejects "the narcissistic experience of the reader identifying with the native culture in the cultural other" (Venuti, 1995: 15). For domestication, the representative figure is Nida, who values the fluency and readability of the text and seeks the "closest natural equivalence" (Nida & Taber, 1969: 4).

Among the many translations of *The Analects of Confucius*, the two English translations of Ku and Legge are perhaps the two most famous. Both of them adopted completely different translation strategies in their translations of *Lun Yu*. Specifically, Ku Hungming mostly adopted the approach of convergence to the target language, that is, domestication. He translated most of the traditional Chinese vocabulary into Western-specific words, which are easier for Westerners to read and understand. Legge, on the contrary, insisted on the translation strategy of faithfulness to the original text, that is, so-called foreignization, which preserves the cultural characteristics of the original text and presents the original Chinese culture to Westerners to the greatest extent possible.

3. A Comparative Analysis of the English Versions of *Lun Yu* by Ku Hungming and James Legge

In *The Analects of Confucius*, Confucius' ideas have been largely preserved and disseminated. For example, the familiar concepts of "li (礼), xiao (孝), ti (悌), de (德), yi (义), tian (天), ming (命)" are all well documented in this book. This section will analyze the domestication and foreignization of these two English translations in three aspects.

3.1 Comparison of Special Words and Keywords in the Original Text

1) 子曰：“巧言令色，鲜矣仁！”(Book 1: Chapter 3)

L: The master said, “Fine words and an insinuating appearance are seldom associated with **true virtue**.”

Ku: Confucius remarked, “With plausible speech and fine manners will seldom be found **moral character**.”

In this sentence, the phrase "to speak with skill" corresponds to *ren*, revealing that *ren* should be an endogenous trait, which refers to the love between people. However, since *ren* itself is a concept with a wide range of meanings, there are many related translations, such as "humanity," "compassion," "kindness," "benevolence," and so on. In the process of translating this phrase, Legge translated *ren* as "true virtue", which in a way defines the broad concept of "benevolence". This is because the meaning of "virtue" in the *Oxford Advanced Learner's English-Chinese Dictionary* is "moral goodness or excellence", which shows that this translation is more faithful to the meaning of "benevolence" in the original text. In contrast, Ku directly adopted a larger concept of "moral character", i.e., "moral quality". He adopted a translation method with a tendency to generalize, which actually does not show the meaning of *ren*. Moreover, in Confucius' thought, *ren* does not mean "virtue". But through domestication, the difference between Chinese and Western understanding is smoothed out. And the term "moral character" is directly used. It is more consistent with the Western understanding of good qualities. Although this expression greatly reduces the meaning of "benevolence" itself, it does not cause obstacles for Western readers to read it.

2) 子曰：“朝闻道，夕死可以。”(Book 4: Chapter 8)

L: The Master said, “If a man in the morning hear **the right way**, he may die in the evening without regret.”

Ku: Confucius remarked, “When a man has learnt **wisdom** in the morning, he may be content to die in the evening before the sun sets.”

Dao is a word with Chinese traditional characteristics. The definition of *dao* in *Ci Hai* is "law; the universe itself; world view, life view; political proposition; feudal ethics "(Xia Zhengnong, 1999:

1281). It can be seen that in fact *dao* has a very rich meaning in China and a guiding meaning for people's lives. Through foreignization, Legge directly translated *dao* as "the right way", which is a direct translation and retains the original expression. Unlike Legge, Ku Hungming, who knew the true meaning of the word *dao*, adopting the word "wisdom", which is familiar to Westerners. Because *dao* itself is too abstract to explain, so he adopted the word "wisdom" and reduced the meaning of *dao* and changed it to "wisdom" for Western readers to understand.

3) 子曰：“弟子，入则孝，出则悌。” (Book 1: Chapter 6)

L: The Master said, “A youth, when at home, should be **filial**, and, abroad, **respectful to the elders.**”

Ku: Confucius remarked, “A young man, when at home, should be **a good son**; when out in the world, **a good citizen.**”

Xiao and *ti* are natural meanings of filial piety and respect for one's elders and brothers, and do not need to be associated with outsiders or the outside world. However, Confucius extends it to the outside world, and believes that those who can do filial piety and fraternal duty at home will also be those who will not do anything wrong in the society. So, at this point, *xiao* and *ti* become a social virtue (Ma Xin, 2000: 2). The word "filial" in Legge's translation can be understood as "filial piety", referring to the care and support for parents and elders. This is more faithful to the original text. Moreover, his later phrase "respectful to the elders" is actually limited to the natural sense of filial piety and brotherhood. It does not extend to the outside world, which is a typical application of foreignization. On the other hand, Ku adopted the easier concept of "a good son" to explain to Westerners that in our mind, filial piety is to be a good son. It is undeniably easy for Westerners to understand. However, the meaning of filial piety itself has been reduced and limited. But, unlike Legge, he understood the role of filial piety and fraternal duty as a social virtue, and wrote the second half of the phrase as "a good citizen", extending filial piety and fraternal duty from within the family to the society. This is a clarification of the extended meaning of filial piety and fraternal duty. Westerners can better understand the meaning of filial piety and fraternal duty as a social virtue through this translation.

3.2 Comparison of Translations of Personal Names and Geographical Names

1) 有子曰：“礼之用，和为贵。” (Book 1: Chapter 12)

L: The **philosopher You** said, “In practising the rules of propriety, appropriateness is to be prized.”

Ku: **A disciple of Confucius** remarked, “In the practice of art, what is valuable is natural spontaneity.”

We all know that in *The Analects of Confucius*, apart from Confucius, the most famous people the disciples of Confucius. In Legge's translation, we can see that he translated the name "You" as "the philosopher You", which means that the original text of You is preserved through foreignization. But Ku Hungming is different, he directly omitted the name "You" and replaced it with "a disciple of Confucius". This translation is a typical domestication. Although there is no difference in the actual meaning, it greatly avoids the confusion that may arise when Westerners read the names of Confucius' disciples, making it easier for Western readers to read and understand.

2) 子曰：“吾与回言终日，不违，如愚。” (Book 2: Chapter 9)

L: The Master said, “I have talked with **Hui** for a whole day, and he has not made any objection to anything I said; -as if he were stupid.”

Ku: Confucius, speaking of a favorite disciple whose name was **Yen Hui**, remarked, “I have talked with him for one whole day, during which he has never once raised on single objection to what I have said, as if he were dull of understanding.”

Note: The st. John of the Confucian gospel---a pure, heroic, ideal character, the disciple whom the Master loved.

As we can see from Legge's translation, he still adopted a foreignization method that is faithful to the original text, and Yan Hui's name still appeared in his translation, preserving the information of

the original text. This time, however, Ku also retained Yen Hui's name in his translation. This is because Yen Hui was one of Confucius' favorite disciples, so he needed to make a special note of it and explained the name of Yen Hui in detail at the end of the translation. However, he did not use the explanation in a way that is familiar to the Chinese culture, but rather translated it in a way that is familiar to Western culture. He compared Yen Hui to John, the saint of Jesus, but in an analogous way to Confucian culture, i.e., "Confucian gospel". This approach is actually more controversial, as some scholars believe that his translation loses the traditional characteristics of Chinese culture. However, it must be said that Ku's translation provides Western readers with an almost unimpeded way to understand Chinese culture, minimizing cultural barriers, which is a good approach.

3) 季氏将伐颛臾。冉有，季路见与孔子曰：“季氏将有事与颛臾。” (Book 16: Chapter 1)

L: The head of the Ji family was going to attack **Zhuanyu**. Ran You and Ji Lu had an interview with Confucius, and said, “Our chief, Ji, is going to commence operations against Zhuanyu.”

Ku: The head of a powerful family of nobles in Confucius' native State was preparing to commence hostilities against **a small principality within that State**. Two of Confucius' disciples, who were in the noble's service, came to see Confucius and informed him of it.

This section focuses on the translation of names of places. Zhuan Yu was a principality, a vassal of the state of Lu, located in Pingyi, Linyi, Shandong, China. It is a mysterious and long-extinct ancient state, which has a relatively obscure place name. As usual, Legge used the translation strategy of foreignization to translate the place name Zhuan Yu in its original form, retaining a faithful translation of the original text. In contrast, Ku offered some explanations of the place, omitting the obscure name Zhuan Yu and instead explaining what Zhuan Yu is, i.e., "a small principality within that State". This is a practice of domestication strategy to avoid the obscure place name from the perspective of Western readers. In this way, they can understand the meaning of the word "Zhuan Yu" more smoothly.

3.3 Differences in Translation of Religion-related Words and Phrases

1) 死生有命，富贵在天。(Book 12: Chapter 5)

L: Death and life have their determined appointment; riches and honours depend upon **Heaven**.

Ku: Life and Death are pre-ordained, and riches and honours come from **God**.

This example is related to the different religious concepts of the East and the West. In China, the concept of *tian* is generally defined as "heaven". In this sense, Legge remained faithful to the original text and retained the meaning of "heaven" in the original text through foreignization, which is a reveal of the religious meaning of the original text. Ku, on the other hand, translated *tian* into a religious concept more familiar to Westerners, i.e., "God". In this process, Ku still adopted the translation strategy of domestication. This reduces the barriers to reading for Western readers, but may ignore the traditional Chinese religious concept of *tian*.

2) 子入太庙，每事问。(Book 3: Chapter 15)

L: The Master, when he entered **grand temple**, asked about everything.

Ku: When Confucius first attended the service at the **State Cathedral (Ancestral Temple of the reigning prince)**, he enquired as to what he should do every stage of the service.

The temple was a place of great ritual, and a shrine where the ancestors were worshiped on behalf of the emperor. In this sense, the translation of Legge is more faithful to the original text and retains the religious color of the original text by foreignization. Because "grand temple" can also be understood as a temple for worshipping ancient people. In contrast, Ku translated the temple as "State Cathedral". The word "cathedral" means "big church", which has a strong Christian color and is also closer to the Western concept of religion. He adopted a domestication approach to blur the barrier between Chinese and Western religious beliefs so that Western readers will not have a strong sense of unfamiliarity with the translation.

4. Motivations and Reasons for the Choices of Translation Strategies of Ku Hungming and James Legge

Through the above analysis, we can see that Ku Hungming adopted a domestication approach in his translation of *Lun Yu* with the aim of making the contents of this book accessible to Western readers. In this process, he smoothed out some of the differences between Chinese and Western cultures. In contrast, Legge used foreignization to preserve the cultural features of the original text to the greatest extent possible. Although some of his understandings differ from the intended meaning of *Lun Yu* itself, the principle of fidelity to the original text is greatly reflected in his translation. So, why did Ku and Legge choose different translation strategies? In fact, this question can be reflected in the context in which they each lived.

Legge was the first person to systematically study and translate the ancient Chinese classics. He "translated all three Chinese scriptures, Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, and was respected as an authority in Chinese studies in Europe and America" (Wang Hui, 2003: 37). In the course of his teaching in China, he saw the beauty of traditional Chinese culture and came into contact with *Lun Yu*, a classic book. So, he wanted to spread such ideas to his country and to promote cultural exchange between China and the West, introducing Western science and technology culture to China in the meantime. In a sense, he could be called a bridge between the Chinese and Western cultures. For this reason, he gave the utmost respect to the original text of *Lun Yu*, basically using word-for-word translation to ensure that the original text would not be changed because he wanted to convey the original meaning of the thoughts of *Lun Yu* to the West.

However, Ku is in the other direction." Ku belongs to the category of genius in the world of translation. And among the few masters of two-way translation, Ku is considered a sage of divine translation." (Fan Peixu, 1999: 50) In his time, Confucian classics and traditional books represented Chinese tradition were translated and disseminated by many Western missionaries and sinologists. Ku believed that such a status quo would distort the original meaning of the books. And he believed that Westerners interpreted Chinese traditional culture with their own cultural thoughts and ideas at will and spread them to the West, giving Westerners a prejudice against China. Ku believed that such a situation should be changed, so he wanted to explain *Lun Yu* for Europe and America himself. He believed that "*Lun Yu* is a book of traditional Chinese wisdom and morality. And we do not want to disagree here. We want educated English people to change their prejudices about China or about Chinese culture after reading this book." (Ku Hungming, 1996: 346-347) It is for this reason that he adopted the domestication approach. That is, he gave the most detailed exposition of Chinese culture in a language that Westerners could understand, but from a Chinese perspective and understanding. In this way, Westerners can read the translation of *Lun Yu* with the most accurate understanding of Chinese culture based on their theoretical system. This was Ku's motivation for the translation. And in fact, it was to faithfully convey traditional Chinese Confucianism, to eliminate the negative image and prejudice of China in the West, and to give the West an objective and realistic impression of traditional Chinese culture.

5. The Role of Two Versions of The Analects of Confucius by Ku and Legge in the Spread of Chinese Culture to the West

The English versions of *Lun Yu* by Ku and Legge are undoubtedly two very famous translations in translation studies that deserve to be studied and explored in depth. Although they adopt different translation strategies, their ultimate goal is the dissemination of culture. For Legge, his first purpose was to spread the ideas of *Lun Yu* to the West. So, he adopted the strategy of translating it faithfully to the original text. Although to a certain extent his translation is relatively rigid and may not be conducive to Western readers, it must be said that his translation is indeed the most faithful representation of the original text. Secondly, he also aimed to introduce his Western culture to China, thus promoting the exchange between Chinese and Western cultures. His English translation of this

book has certainly played a pivotal role in the process of spreading Chinese culture abroad, becoming a very authoritative English version of *Lun Yu*.

As for Ku, his aim was to spread Chinese culture to the West in an unbiased manner. In the process, he omitted some special words and phrases in traditional Chinese culture and translated them in a way familiar to Westerners. This is in order to dissipate prejudices and misunderstandings to the greatest extent, and of course to promote the spread of Chinese culture to the West.

6. Conclusion

To conclude, the two translation strategies of foreignization and domestication are well reflected in the English versions of *Lun Yu* by Ku Hungming and James Legge. Although they had different motives for translating, both of them promoted the spread of traditional Chinese culture to the West and the exchange between Chinese and Western cultures. On this level, we can see that although they chose different translation strategies, both translations are of high value. This tells people that although there have been some debates for a long time on how to choose between foreignization and domestication, there is no competition between the two translation strategies. In the case of *The Analects of Confucius*, for example, both translations are instructive for modern translation studies and both can really promote the spread of Chinese culture.

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