

Study of Cross-Cultural Translation in *Genshin Impact* under the Strategy of Domestication and Foreignization

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Abstract: Translation is a bridge for information transfer between different languages and cultures. In cross-cultural communication, translation helps people understand and communicate information and opinions in different cultural contexts. This paper focuses on the presentation of Guilin landscapes and cultural resources which integrated in the translation of *Genshin Impact*. By analyzing the game name, the opera clips, the geographical names in the game and some other elements, this paper explores how to balance the relationship between preserving the original cultural characteristics and adapting to the needs of the target culture in the process of cross-cultural translation and puts forward the relevant revelations: naturalized translation can help foreign players understand the plot and elements of the game, while appropriate alienation translation can show the unique charm of Guilin's local scenic spots and traditional culture better, and It also attracts foreign players to explore the local culture and human charms behind the names of these characters.

Keywords: Domestication; Foreignization; Cross-cultural communication; *Genshin Impact*.

1. Introduction

1.1. Research background and significance

In recent years, China's self-developed game industry has gained significant development, and all kinds of original games continue to emerge. As a representative masterpiece of open-world ARPGs, *Genshin Impact* has won wide acclaim from players around the world due to its excellent graphic performance, rich gameplay system and plentiful Chinese cultural heritage. *Genshin Impact* is a game that combines fantasy elements and multicultural backgrounds, in which players take on the role of a traveler through a fictional world called Teyvat, interacting with various characters and unravelling the mysteries of the game world. A large number of Chinese local cultural elements have been incorporated into *Genshin Impact*, including the World Natural Heritage List: the landscape of Guilin (a city in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, China), which has become the source of the "Liyue" region in *Genshin Impact*. Guilin's scenery, with its unique karst landscapes mirroring its great beauty in the Li River. Specifically the Dihua Marsh, which is the first scene that players arrived in Liyue with its prototype comes from the Guilin Li River landscape. As we know, game translation with local elements is particularly important for telling stories, promoting cross-cultural communication, and enhancing foreign players' experience of game contents. Existing studies have shown that high-quality game translations can reduce the barriers brought by cross-cultural differences and enhance players' gaming experience. Based on this, this study chooses to focus on the translation presentation of Guilin's local cultural elements in *Genshin Impact*, and analyses the impact of domestication and foreignization translation strategies on game players' experience as well as cross-cultural communication. The results of the study can provide a reference for game translation practice, as well as cultural communication in related regions.

1.2. Research literature review

As an important carrier of cultural recognition and

communication, local culture has been gradually applied in game design. Scholars have discussed the important role of local culture in enriching the content of games and strengthening the sense of substitution. For example, Chen Li (2019) analyzed the integration of Chinese local culture into Red Dead Redemption 2, arguing that it enhances the sense of substitution. However, there is not enough research on the presentation strategy of local cultural elements in game translation.

2. Linkage between Guilin Tourism and Culture and *Genshin Impact*

The activity of "From Stop to Far travel" has announced the cooperation with many well-known scenic spots, including 5A scenic spot Huanglong and tourist city Zhangjiajie. The latest phase of the linkage is with Guilin. The beauty of Guilin existed in its rolling hills, the meandering waters, the fishing boats that pass through, the smoke and fishing songs rising from the green bricks and grey tiles. This kind of beauty is coalesced in Dihua Marsh, the iconic scene of the Liyue region. In addition, the game's scenes such as "Jueyun Karst" and "Luhua Pool" are also taken from the actual scenery of Guilin. The unique rocky mountains rising from the ground, the unique karst landscape, the clear water reflecting the blue sky, this is the Guilin landscape that people say is the best in the world, and this is also the Dihua Marsh that the travellers in *Genshin Impact* can encounter when they set foot in the Liyue region for the first time. In addition, The game's production team also conducted colorful offline activities in Guilin Xiangshan Scenic Spot and Guanyan Scenic Spot. In the two places, the production team restored Riyue's rock idols and teleportation anchors, allowing players to experience the game's scenarios in real life and also explore the humanistic charms of Guilin, the beauty from the Orient.

It is worth to mention that in May 2023, with the world view of *Genshin Impact* as a reference, the travel adventure program: "Genshin Impact Adventure Group", co-starred by many famous UP masters of B station, was broadcast on the channel of Bilibili whole life. Up to now, the program's

main and blooper videos have been played more than 7 million times, and the heat is still on the rise. In the program, UP masters such as Guan Zeyuan, China BOY Super Gorilla, Lettuce, Zz and many other up masters, with their own entrusted tasks, start their "treasure hunt" in Guilin's famous attractions, including Qixing Rock, Sun and Moon Twin Towers, Elephant Trunk Hill, Ancient South Gate, Jingjiang Prince's Palace. Following the lens of the program group, the audience in front of the screen also enjoyed the scenery of Guilin, which can be described as "a boat travelling on a blue wave, people swimming in a painting", and marked a major breakthrough in exploring the dissemination of the new form of cultural tourism.

3. Translation Strategies of Domestication and Foreignization

3.1. Introduction to the concept

The theory of domestication and foreignization can be traced back to the German scholar Schleimach (Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher) in the 18th century. In this article, Schleiermaer proposed that the translator's task is to shorten the distance between the reader and the author, which can be divided into two ways: one is the translation of the reader to the author without disturbing the original author, namely "author-centered (author-centered)"; the other is the author to the reader, namely "reader-centered (reader-centered)" (Chen Dehong et al., 2002). This idea can be regarded as the theoretical prototype of naturalization and alienation.

The translation methods of domestication and foreignization were put forward by the famous American translation theorist Lawrence Venuti in 1995 in *The Translator's Invisibility*. Domestication: It means adopting a transparent and fluent style in the translation to minimize the differences between the translation and the source language. In the process of translation, the world reflected by the source language should be closer to the life of the translator as far as possible, and the "cultural equivalence" between the source language should be realized and the translation. Foreignization is a translation method based on the target language and its own characteristics. In the process of translation, the translator should focus on the reader of the translated language, and convey the information of the original text in the translated language that the reader of the translated language is familiar with (Zhao Guangting et al., 2017).

Foreignization: it refers to departing from the local mainstream values and maintaining the linguistic and cultural differences of the original text; or it refers to maintaining the exoticism of the original to some extent and intentionally breaking through the translator's habits. It advocates maintaining the cultural connotations of the source language in the translation process and enriching the culture of the target language and enriching the linguistic expressions of the target language (Wang Wei, 2013).

3.2. The differences and connection between "domestication", "foreignization", "literal translation" and "paraphrased translation"

Historically, domestication and foreignization can be regarded as conceptual extensions of literal translation and

paraphrased translation, but they are not completely equivalent to direct and paraphrased translation. Whereas the central concern of direct translation and paraphrase is how to deal with form and meaning at the linguistic level while domestication and foreignization break through the limitations of linguistic factors and extend their horizons to include linguistic, cultural and aesthetic factors. According to Venuti, domestication is "bringing the original author into the culture of the translated language", while foreignization is "accepting the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text and bringing the reader into the foreign situation". (Venuti, 1995:20) Thus, it can be seen that direct translation and paraphrase are mainly value orientations limited to the linguistic level, whereas domestication and foreignization are value orientations based on the cultural context, and the differences between the two are obvious and should not be mixed up.

3.3. Analytical comparison of domestication and foreignization

Domestication tends to use the cultural expressions of the readers' native language, so that the translated text is more in line with the reading habits of the target language readers, and has the characteristic of "localization". Differentiated translation tends to retain the cultural characteristics of the original text, so that the target language readers can experience different cultures. In the translation of literary works, heterogeneous translation can avoid cultural mixing and emphasize the originality of the original work, but sometimes it also faces the risk of being distorted or difficult to understand. The dispute between domestication and foreignization in translation studies has never been settled. As far as Western translation studies are concerned, Venuti himself is a supporter of the alienation school, while Eugene Nida is the representative of the naturalization school (Xu Jianping et al., 2002). Domestic scholars have also had many discussions about the advantages and disadvantages of the two. In general, however, it seems that translation scholars today have reached a consensus that the relationship between the two is not "either/or". An excellent translation should be good at using both domestication and foreignization methods. (Sun Zhili, 2001).

4. Application of Domestication and Foreignization Strategies in *Genshin Impact*

4.1. Application of domestication

4.1.1. Name of the Game

Example 1: 《原神》

Translation: *Genshin Impact*.

The English translation of "Genshin" in Example 1 does not use Chinese Pinyin, but adopts the method of domestication. The word "Genshin" is oriented from the Japanese word "幻の神", which is similar to the Chinese word "The original god", and refers to the deities of the elements in the game. The word "Impact" means "influence" or "effect" and signifies the game's new experience as an open-world ARPGs and its potential impact on the gaming industry. The Japanese name echoes the Japanese culture and style of miHoYo as a game development team, while the English name takes into account the needs of the international market. The translation "Genshin Impact" makes the English

name more concise and fluent, making it easier to promote globally. It is also consistent with the naming style of other mainstream open-world ARPGs. miHoYo Tour has consciously made "*Genshin Impact*" an internationalized brand. The translation "*Genshin Impact*" helps players come across language and cultural barriers and attract a wider global player base. This translation strategy makes the name both powerful and easily to remember, it also helping to promote the game in the international market. Since its launch in September 2020, the game has proved to be very popular and has gained a large number of international players.

4.1.2. Geographical names

Example 2: 蒙德、明冠山地、风啸山坡、苍风高地（位于蒙德地区）

Translation: Mond, Brightcrown Mountains, Galesong Hill, Windwail Highland (located in Mond area)

For the names of the Mond and Luna regions, the translators have adopted a combination of both domestication and integrated with some creative translation. First of all, "Mond" is the first station for travelers on the continent of Teyvat, and the name Mond is taken from the German word Mondstadt, which means "Moon City". "Stadt" is a suffix for the German word for "city, town", which can also be found in today's Rhineland-Palatinate, such as Darmstadt, home of the excellent Technical University and former president of Tongji University, Prof. Li Guohao. Darmstadt, has the name "Guardian City" as one of the explanations for its name. Here, Mond's place names are naturalized to reproduce the meanings of the original German's place names in the English translation, while the translator also adopts the translation method of creative translation to make the target language more concise and fluent. Creative translation is a second creative processing of the translated text according to the cultural background of the target language, to improve the acceptability of the target market, to give it the corresponding connotation in the culture to which the language belongs and to present the information of the translated text to the people in a natural and fluent way (Zhang Zhenhua). For example, in Windwail Highlands, the translator did not directly translate "Windwail Highlands" into "Gale Heights", but cleverly created the English word "Windwail", which did not exist. Instead, the translator cleverly created Windwail, a non-existent English word, to express the meaning of the original text. "wail" means wailing, and wind, together with "w", both begin with "w", which has a poetic effect of alliteration, and is very charming to read, and the target-language players can also quickly understand the meaning. Although the creating words is not in line with English lexicon, the translation here serves the purpose of cross-cultural communication well.

4.1.3. Elements of the game

The elemental system refers to the skills and reaction mechanics of the game involving multiple elements. In *Genshin Impact*, there are seven elements including Fire, Water, Thunder, Ice, Wind, Rock, Grass and Void, and each element has its corresponding skills and reaction effects. One of the main functions of the Rock Attribute is the crystallization effect, which means that when a rock element comes into contact with an enemy that has the elements of Fire, Water, Thunder and Ice attached to it, it will react to it, increasing its defense and being able to counteract a certain amount of damage from the attribute. In addition, the Rock Attribute also features attribute transformation, rock creation, bludgeoning enhancement, energy recovery, skill extension and cool down reduction.

Example 3: 岩、火、水、雷、冰、风、草

Translation: Geo, Pyro, Hydro, Electro, Cryo, Anemo, Dendro

There are seven elements in the world of *Genshin Impact*,

each of which corresponds to a kingdom. The translation shows that the nomenclature is reduced to a Greek root word ending in "o" plus a Latin word beginning with "o" meaning "eye". "oculus". The "o" in the conjunction of the morphemes resembles an eye, alluding to the meaning of the word. The translator's creation not only conveys the meaning of the original text perfectly, but also adopts the root word ending in the same letter plus "oculus" to form a new word, which is in line with the cultural habits and the language of the target language gamers, and there is no obstacle to comprehension.

4.1.4. Role names

Each of the seven main cities in the continent of Teyvat has a corresponding archon, collectively known as the "Seven Earthly Rulers", the word archon is of Greek origin, but it is still used after Latinization, meaning "the ruler of city-state". The word Archon originated from Greek and was still used after Latinization, meaning "the ruler of city-state". Much like the original God's Continent setting, there are no unified kingdoms, but rather divided city-states.

Example 4: 芭芭拉、温迪、阿贝多、诺艾尔、罗莎莉亚（位于蒙德地区）

Translation: Barbara, Venti, Albedo, Noelle, Rosaria (located in Mond area)

Most of the translations of the Monde region adopted the domestication translation strategy, notably the wind god in the guise of a troubadour was translated as Wendy, and the translators did not directly translate "温迪" as Wendy, this is because Venti is the abbreviation of the English ventilation, and the word Ventilation is written as "ventilatus" in Latin. Ventilation is an abbreviation of the English word ventilatus, which is written in Latin as wē-nt-o, which has the same Indo-European form as the Latin word for wind, Ventus, which is wē- meaning "wē- means "to blow". So Venti's name is indeed "Lord God of the winds".

4.1.5. Opera clips

The opera clips in the Liyue region of *Genshin Impact* contains a large number of linguistic expressions of traditional Chinese culture, especially the translation of Chinese opera such as "神女劈观" (The Divine Damsel of Devastation), which should not only retain Chinese cultural characteristics but also be easy for foreign players to understand and feel the charm of Chinese culture when the game is localized. The video of the original Chinese opera segment of "The Divine Damsel of Devastation" has been played more than 10 million times on overseas video platforms, and the word "Beijing opera" has been on the hot list of overseas social media platforms, which to a certain extent enhances the Chinese culture's journey to the world, and shows that the strategy of the translation in Beijing opera is correct and valuable.

Example 5: 秋鸿折单复难双

Translation: Two loving souls by death cruelly parted

The beginning of the Chinese character uses "Geese in Autumn" as an image, "鸿" in Chinese originally means geese, geese are groups of birds, female geese and male geese are matched, always from one to the end. Whether the female geese die or the male geese die, if leaving a single lonely goose, until death it will not find another partner. So, it is a symbol of unswerving love. In Yuan Haowen's "Fishing catching - the Goose Grave", "I ask this world, what is love on earth, that binds the lovers up in life and death", the words sung for thousands of years, the geese portrayed the image of

loyalty to love, life and death. According to the plot of the game, we know that Shen He's parents are very much in love with each other, but due to the death of his wife, the grieving husband, like the geese, "cannot become double again in the rest of his life". In the translation, if the translator directly translates "geese in autumn", this expression can't not only express the imagery of the geese in Chinese poetry, but also will cause the target language readers to understand this sentence difficultly. so, the naturalized translation is translated as "two loving souls", which emphasizes the high degree of compatibility between the two souls. At the same time, the adverb "cruelly" and the classic passive voice of the English narrative poem make this sense of sad atmosphere leap out on the page. It is worth noting that the English translation of The Divine Damsel of Devastation is very neat in terms of rhythm and rhyme for each line, even it presses the middle special scene and the last concluding line to rhyme, two loving souls by death cruelly parted. " In madness and grieve, a dark path started. Calamity was drawn, ritual subverted. But by her cod steel was death averted." All rhyme with "ert-ed. "As we can see, this translation is one of the best game translations today.

Example 6: 朱丝缚绝烂柯樵 雪泥鸿迹遥

Translation: To her red strings of binding, they sent and they dwelt long together, content

The original Chinese character "烂柯" is derived from Ren Fang's *SHU YI JI*, which says that Wang Zhi went to a mountain to fetch firewood and watched a game played by an immortal, and that the world had changed dramatically after a few moments of his stay in the mountain. Later on, the word "烂柯" was used to refer to the vicissitudes of the world. The second line uses the imagery of a bird leaving its own scratches on the snow, which is also a sigh of regret for the time that has passed. Based on the plot of *Genshin Impact*, we can deduce that it was the immortal who tied the red rope for Shen He to suppress the demonic energy in her body. From then on, they are practiced together, unaware of the vicissitudes of the world. The translation adopts the naturalized translation of "朱丝" as "red strings of binding", that's so good. But on the other hand, the emotional color of the word "content" in the second sentence is different from the original words, which want to express the sadness environment that lamenting the passage of time and the vicissitudes of the world. So the translation of this point is debatable.

4.2. Application of foreignization

4.2.1. Role names

Example 7: 云堇、北斗、钟离、申鹤、(来自璃月地区)

Translation: Yun Jin, Beidou, Zhongli, Shenhe (came from Liyue area)

According to Wang Zuoliang, "the greatest difficulty in translation lies in the difference between two cultures. What is self-evident in one culture has to be explained with great effort in the other, and what is not necessary for the native speaker has to be explained to the foreign reader" (Wang Zuoliang, 1997).

In *Genshin Impact*, each character's name either comes from allusion or contains deep meaning. The names of the characters related to the Liyue region adopt a heterogeneous translation strategy, and there is a rich and colorful Chinese culture behind the character's name, and the translation can show the identity of the character while at the same time attracting foreign players to explore the humanistic charms of

oriental culture that lie behind the names of these characters.

4.2.2. Names of the locations

Example 8: 荻花洲、璃月港、天恒山、望舒客栈、青草村、归离原 (位于璃月地区)

Translation: Dihua Marsh, Liyue Harbor, Mt. Tianheng, Wangshu Inn, Qingcao Village, Guili Plains (located in Liyue area)

In *Genshin Impact*, Liyue is located in the east of the game world, and the terrain is mainly mountainous, which is very similar to the geographical location and topographical features of Guilin in China, and the first stop in the Liyue region is Dihua Marsh. The first stop in the Li Yue area is Dihua Marsh. Dihua Marsh is famous for its forested peaks and clear streams, which is very similar to the landscape of Guilin. The visual interaction design of Dihua Marsh has fully absorbed the humanistic qualities of Guilin, such as fishing boats, fishing songs, reeds and so on, to build a more delicate and vibrant world. "Song of the Lute Player" says: "By the Xunyang River a guest is seen off one night; Chill the autumn, red the maple leaves and in flower the reeds." The style of Dihua Marsh in the Liyue area is controlled by the unique oriental fantasy aesthetics, which is unique in its solitude and coolness, and elegant and magnificent in its group, and at the same time possesses the beauty of fantasy and nature, which is exactly where the oriental fantasy atmosphere lies. In addition, the entrance to Dihua Marsh, "Jingjian Mountain", is reminiscent of the Yangshuo landscape, a representative of Guilin's landscapes, both of which are renowned for their beautiful scenery. It can be said that in terms of natural scenery, Dihua Marsh is to a great extent a tribute and simulation of the Guilin landscape by the *Genshin Impact* design team, allowing players to feel the unique charm of southern China's landscapes in the game. Most of the geographical names in the Liyue region are rich in meaning and are difficult to describe briefly, so the translators have largely adopted the Chinese pinyin in translation, which not only preserves the phonetic beauty of the Chinese geographical names, but also makes the translation complement the beauty of the game, leaving overseas players with more space to imagine and explore the beauty of the Chinese landscape and its culture.

5. Conclusion

In the process of translation, the game flexibly uses both domestication and foreignization translation strategies to achieve effective cross-cultural communication. On one hand, *Genshin Impact* adopts the naturalization strategy in the translation of names, characters and some cultural connotations. For example, it localizes names of people and places and simplifies some difficult-to-understand cultural connotations, which is conducive to quick recognition and acceptance by foreign players. On the other hand, the *Genshin Impact* also pays attention to retaining the unique cultural characteristics of the original work, and adopts the alienation strategy in some settings and storylines, retaining the original Chinese elements, such as the role names, the names of the locations, etc. This provides foreign players with a window into Chinese culture. By flexibly combining the two strategies of domestication and foreignization, *Genshin Impact* respects different cultures while at the same time spreading and promoting its own cultural connotations well. This balanced use is conducive to enhancing foreign players' sense of identity and acceptance of the original culture, and promotes

the exchange and integration of Chinese and foreign cultures.

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