

# A Comparison of Schleiermacher, Venuti and Lu Xun's Conception on Foreignizing Translation

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**Abstract:** The concept of foreignizing translation was first proposed by Venuti in 1995, but his concept of foreignization was developed on the basis of Schleiermacher's theory. On the other hand, Lu Xun put forward the concept of "foreign style" as early as 60 years ago, which is equivalent to foreignization. The three concepts of foreignization are related to each other, influence each other, and have their own differences. On the one hand, their conception of foreignizing translation all have a tendency of politicization, and their target are elite readers. On the other hand, the political purposes and the use of terms are different.

**Keywords:** Schleiermacher, Venuti, Lu Xun, Foreignization.

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## 1. Introduction

In 1813, Schleiermacher proposed the translation dichotomy in his famous lecture "On the Different Methods of Translating":

One is to bring the reader closer to the author, termed imitation. The second is to bring the author close to the reader. The term is paraphrase. These two approaches are the predecessors of the later theories of "domestication" and "foreignization", and Schleiermacher believes that the approach of "bringing the reader closer to the author" is the right way to translate. The reason is that, first of all, he believes that the writer's knowledge, thoughts and expressions are deeply influenced by his native language. If he leaves the native language environment and enters the translated language environment, the author's thinking and expression methods cannot be the same as those in the source language environment. Second, Schleiermacher believes that the vocabulary between the source language and the target language is not completely equivalent. If the method of "paraphrasing" is adopted, then the translation cannot be close to the original text, and thus cannot express the meaning that the author intended to express in the original text. Finally, he believes that if the translation strategy of "letting the author walk into the reader" is adopted, the translated work cannot maintain the rhythm of the original text, and thus will only damage the spirit of the original work to a greater extent [1].

Influenced by Schleiermacher's theory, Venuti formally proposed the concept of "foreignization" in his book *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* in 1995. Before that he used the term "resistance translation". He believes that a resistive translation strategy can preserve the language features and cultural differences of the original text to the greatest extent, thereby resisting the mainstream values in the target language culture and preventing it from hegemonic domestication of other cultures.

In contrast, in China, the famous writer and translator Lu Xun put forward the prototype of the theory of foreignizing translation in 1935, sixty years earlier than Venuti. Lu Xun advocated the translation of "faithful rather than smooth", and advocated the enrichment of local languages through foreignizing translation. He uses the expressions "foreign" and "exotic" instead of "foreignization" in his article.

Although Lu Xun's translation thought did not form a theoretical system and was only mentioned in several articles, his conception of foreignizing translation not only influenced Western foreignizing translation thought, but also had a profound impact on contemporary China's foreignizing translation thought. Comparing Schleiermacher's and Venuti's conceptions on foreignization, there are many similarities among the three.

## 2. Similarities Among the Three Foreignizing Translation Conceptions

### 2.1. Politicized Tendencies

Schleiermacher was a famous German philosopher and Protestant theologian. In the 17th century Europe, deeply influenced by French literature, the nobles and elites regarded French as the main language of daily life and communication. In contrast, the status of German is greatly weakened, and even regarded as a "vulgar" language. As a German with a strong national consciousness, Schleiermacher actively maintained the dignity of Germany's national culture and advocated the development of German native culture and political thought. He believes that one of the most effective methods is to translate foreign works. Enriching German and German cultures by preserving the exotic cultures in translation, thus breaking away from French cultural hegemony. Compared with translation itself, Schleiermacher emphasized the cultural and political function of translation. In his lecture, he explicitly mentioned "we Germans", "our nation", and by creating a unique expression, giving translation a clear social function, in order to develop the national language and promote the formation of national culture.

Venuti inherited and developed the tradition of foreignizing translation theory. He believes that Schleiermacher's foreignization in translation serves the cultural and political agenda of ethnocentrism, and "resistance in translation" strategy he advocates is to resist it, thus extending the connotation of foreignizing translation theory. Literary translation since the 17th century has been centered on the theory of domestication, which advocates fluent and transparent discourse. Venuti believes that this is the

embodiment of ethnocentrism, cultural hegemony and cultural narcissism, while foreignization translation can resist the cultural hegemony of Britain and the United States and the unequal cultural exchanges between countries, so as to maintain world democracy and geopolitical relations.

Out of reflection and resistance to the use of domestication in translation by Lin Shu and Yan Fu in the late Qing Dynasty, Lu Xun changed from the earlier domestication conception to the foreignizing translation conception that mainly maintained the accuracy and language characteristics of the original text. Lu Xun believed that the disease of the body comes from the disease of the mind, and the disease of the mind comes from the malnutrition of the language [2]. In Lu Xun's conception, Chinese characters and grammar are imprecise, and even the vernacular has serious flaws that need to be remedied with the help of Western vocabulary and grammar. Lu Xun recognized the connection between language and thought and advocated the transformation of Chinese people's thinking through the transformation of language. It is undoubtedly an effective way to improve the national language by absorbing the advantages of foreign languages. It is hoped that through translation, new ideas and new grammars of foreign countries will be introduced, and the language of the country will be transformed, so as to transfer the temperament of the Chinese people and transform their national character. It can be seen that Lu Xun's conception of foreignizing translation also has a politicized tendency.

## 2.2. Target Readers Are Elite Readers

Schleiermacher's foreignizing translation strategy is applicable to elites with relatively high levels of education. They improve the national language and promote the evolution of national culture through foreignization. As a university professor and Protestant pastor, Schleiermacher could appreciate the "flexibility" that German can support foreign translation. He mentioned in his lecture that Germans rarely use German due to the inertia of the Germanic nation, but only through and Only through full contact with foreign countries can fresh blood be injected into it, thereby promoting the development of German language and culture. It should be noted, however, that in Schleiermacher's conception, only cultural elites can define the so-called "alienation" category.

Venuti believes that "well-educated elites can regulate the cultural composition of their peoples through foreignization "[3]. He called foreignization as minority translation, and he believed that translation was an elite culture, and both translators and readers belonged to the elites of the society. For the aesthetic taste of the public, Venuti believes that the translation they like is simple and easy to understand, and it is not a real translation. Elites should have a sense of responsibility to society, and translators must make careful choices based on their political demands for translated texts.

Lu Xun divided readers into three categories: A, those who were well educated; B, those who were slightly literate; and C, those who were not very literate. It is believed that for Class A readers, translators should adhere to literal translation, that is, foreignizing translation strategy. Even for Class B readers, some new grammar and words should be appropriately added to the translation, so as to enrich the language of the masses and improve and perfect the national language.

## 3. Differences between the Three Concepts of Foreignizing Translation

### 3.1. Different Political Goals

From a political point of view, the foreignizing translation conceptions of the three have a political tendency, but because the three are in different political contexts and have different starting points, there will be differences in their political goals. Schleiermacher was in a weak cultural position in Germany, and the literary translation at that time was also under the control of French and French culture, which made the German aristocratic class have always been dominated by the domestication translation method. Schleiermacher's conception of foreignization aims to challenge French hegemony, enrich German culture, and then promote the development of national culture. The society that Lu Xun lived in at that time was in the semi-feudal and semi-colonial period. The purpose of the foreignization advocated by him is to overthrow the mainstream values of the society at that time, to resist the domestication strategy prevailing in the society, to enlighten the mind and awaken the revolutionary consciousness of the people. Therefore, Schleiermacher and Lu Xun advocated that the political goal of foreignization is "self-improvement". However, although Venuti is in a strong cultural position in the United States, the purpose of his foreignization concept is to resist British and American cultural hegemony, to curb cultural narcissism and ethnocentrism, and to display the target language by retaining the language and culture in the original text and to prevent the imperialist domestication of the other culture. Different from Schleiermacher and Lu Xun, Venuti advocates the political purpose of foreignization is "self-suppression". Translators from countries with different cultural statuses adopt the balanced consciousness of "the weak should strengthen themselves and the strong should restrain themselves", which is also the embodiment of the elites seeking relatively democratic geopolitical relations.

### 3.2. Terminology Is Used Differently

Regarding the terminology of foreignization, the three use different terms to explain. Venuti, who first formally proposed the term foreignization, also used a variety of terms to express the meaning of foreignization, such as alternative translation, minority translation, etc. Schleiermacher initially used the terms "interpretation" and "imitation" to express the meaning of domestication and foreignization. However, although Lu Xun first proposed the concept of "foreign translation", he used "foreign" and "exotic" to describe it. Wang Dongfeng(2008) believed that Lu Xun, as a thinker who had thoroughly read and studied the works of German philosophers such as Marx and Engel, could not have used the word "foreignization" to replace "foreign" and "exotic"[4]. The word "foreignization" has a specific meaning in philosophical terms, which is a completely different concept from "foreignization" in translation studies, and its corresponding English is not foreignization, but alienation.

## 4. Conclusion

From the above comparison and analysis, it can be seen that Schleiermacher, Venuti and Lu Xun's conceptions on foreignization are related to each other and influence each other, but they are different because of their respective

political and social environments. The foreignizing translation concepts of the three have risen to the level of cultural and political agendas, and the readers they serve are all elite readers, but the specific political purposes and terminology used by the three are different. Whether it is literal translation or paraphrase translation, domestication or foreignization, there is no difference in the method itself. The translator's translation ideas are often closely related to the society and the background of the times. Therefore, dialectical treatment and rational thinking are required.

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