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A Comparative Analysis of Proper Nouns and Linguistic Style in Two Chinese Translations of the Silmarillion Based on Defamiliarization Theory

Yunze He

School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, United Kingdom
18110025@bfsu.edu.cn

Abstract. J. R. R. Tolkien, the British author, created a second world named Middle-earth in his works. To explain the mythological system and ancient history of Middle-Earth, he finished The Silmarillion, which used defamiliarization to build a sense of distance from the real world. The book is particularly special for its proper nouns and linguistic style, which, in the translation process, play an important role in the preservation of the defamiliarizing atmosphere in the original texts. Thus, this study begins with a comparison between two Chinese translations of The Silmarillion: Li Yao's and Deng Jiawan's editions. Three examples, each of proper nouns and text segments, were selected from the original texts to proceed with comparative analysis of the two translations, respectively. During the analysis, Venuti's theory of domesticated and foreignized translation and Shklovsky's defamiliarization theory were used to analyze how the two translations affected the defamiliarizing expression in the original text. This study found that Li Yao's translation foreignized proper nouns while occasionally domesticating them phonetically, which helped to convey a sense of strangeness; however, the linguistic style tended to be domesticated, greatly weakening the defamiliarization effect. By contrast, Deng Jiawan also foreignized proper nouns but occasionally domesticated them semantically, which might dilute the unfamiliar atmosphere; yet the linguistic style remained foreignizing, effectively preserving the exotic epic style of the original text.

Keywords: The Silmarillion, Domestication, Foreignization, Defamiliarization, Chinese translation

1. Introduction

The Silmarillion is a fiction created by J. R. R. Tolkien, chronicling the ancient history and the mythology system of Middle-earth, the second world he constructed. Deeply attentive to his fantasy world, Tolkien even created many of his own languages for it, using them to carry exotic culture and ideas. As a result, his well-designed Middle-earth was covered with a veil of foreignization, which isolated it from the real world. This is what Shklovsky called defamiliarization, through which the author deliberately created a sense of detachment for the texts, so that the reader perceived them in a new light [1]. This, exactly, was how Tolkien constructed Middle-earth. He used defamiliarization to

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create his beloved epics and legends of heroes, to fill the void he realized in his own culture [2]. At the same time, he pointed out that all such legends must necessarily contain elements of reality, such as ideas and morals, but they must not be directly stated or told in forms that are already familiar in the real world [2]. That is another reason for him to defamiliarize his work. In the process of translating The Silmarillion into Chinese, translators were confronting the defamiliarization in their own ways. Tolkien's proper nouns were distinctive, yet the linguistic style was different from daily languages, which were the two main approaches he used to create the sense of defamiliarization. The translation of proper nouns and the choice of linguistic style in translated texts can reveal whether translators intentionally preserved the defamiliarization effect of the original work, and how successfully they maintained. Considering this as an entry point, this study will analyze through textual comparison how the two Chinese translations of The Silmarillion, Li Yao's of Yilin Press and Deng Jiawan's of Shanghai People's Publishing House, used domestication and foreignization strategies to reproduce the strangeness effect in the original work.

2. Literature review

2.1. Foreign studies

Worldwide, researchers argued that Tolkien was re-creating myths and tried to express his religious feelings, and as Stimson mentioned in his article, Tolkien was adept at blurring and marginalizing the familiar scenes to create an atmosphere of defamiliarization for the purpose of his writing [3]. As to the question of how to preserve the defamiliarization in translation, Tao argued that translators can turn to transliteration and free translation, or literal translation and free translation, to preserve exotic features, respect heterogeneous cultures, and provide readers with aesthetic experiences [4]. But the text Tao studied was The Moon Opera. Most studies on the Chinese translations of Tolkien's works focused on The Lord of the Rings trilogy. Hong-man, who compared the two translations, Ding Di's and Zhu Xueheng's edition, concluded that the former tended to localize yet sacrificed some of the original meanings, while the latter was more adept at dealing with phrases related to Western fantasy, and used transliteration to create a distance from traditional Chinese culture, so that effectively produced defamiliarization [5]. Iozzi, another researcher, also found Ding Di's translation was direct but somehow like a fairy tale, which did not quite match Tolkien's quaint style [6]. However, he pointed out that the transliterating nouns did convey a sense of unfamiliarity [6]. Reinders mentioned in his study that English syntax was completely different from Chinese, and complex syntax such as nested clauses, was also uncommon. When translating The Lord of the Rings, Zhu Xueheng localized these syntaxes for Chinese readers' comfortable reading; in terms of choosing words, Deng Jiayuan tried to avoid the use of four-word idioms with strong Chinese historical and cultural characteristics in order to preserve the original style, which was a foreignizing strategy [7].

2.2. Domestic studies

In China, studies on Tolkien's works began to increase after the introduction of the movie series The Lord of the Rings. According to Xu, Tolkien regarded defamiliarization and the otherworldly mythology as tools to remember the vision of old England in his heart [8]. As to translating defamiliarized text, Peng indicated it should include foreignization of words, pronunciations, and syntaxes, which could altogether be referred to as foreignism [9]. While the use of classical expressions in translation can be seen as domestication, it can also be used as a means of

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foreignization if these expressions have already belonged to a rather marginalized presence in the dominant discourse [9]. Regarding the Chinese translation of Tolkien's works, Chen combined the translation of The Lord of the Rings with receptive aesthetics and hermeneutics in the study, arguing that translation was an interpretive reading of the original work, but the closure of textual meaning required controlling the extent of reading, whereas Ding Di's translation possessed a holistic aesthetic structure, with both domestication and foreignization used [10]. After studying the translation of paratexts and proper nouns in The Lord of the Rings, Feng pointed out that compared with Ding Di's, Deng Jiawan's translation better presented the second world of Tolkien [11]. As for translator's subjectivity and translation's readability, Gao believed that Zhu Xueheng's edition gave full play of translator's subjectivity, presenting an artistic effect in translating culturally loaded terms, which greatly enhanced readability [12]. Lastly, Liu analyzed the two translations of The Lord of the Rings, Zhu Xueheng's and Deng Jiawan's, and suggested that terms, semantics and syntaxes in translation can preserve the effect of defamiliarization in original works [13].

For this study, the researcher will focus on translations of proper nouns and linguistic styles in The Silmarillion's two Chinese translation editions: Li Yao's and Deng Jiawan's, using Venuti's domestication and foreignization theory as while as Shklovsky's defamiliarization theory. Here linguistic style includes choices of words and syntax. Most of the existing studies about Chinese translations of Tolkien's works simply studied the translated texts with Venuti's theories, without mentioning defamiliarization. Even if mentioned, they focused on The Lord of the Rings, thus did not touch upon The Silmarillion, which has a more profound mythological and philosophical ambiance, making it particularly suitable for translation studies from the perspective of linguistic style. This constitutes the innovative contribution of this study, while also providing empirical insights for translating epic fantasies.

3. Research theories

3.1. Venuti's domestication and foreignization translation theory

Domestication referred to the translation strategy that localized the text using terms and syntaxes that were in line with the target language. Therefore, readers would find the text reading-friendly, which provides a fluent reading experience. However, it could also lead to the dilution or marginalization of the culture of the source language [14]. In contrary, foreignization meant deliberately retaining the cultural differences of the source language in the translated text, which retained the style of the source language but was more likely to make readers feel raw and difficult to understand [14].

3.2. Shklovsky's defamiliarization theory

This theory posited that the function of art was to de-automatize habitual perceptions through creative techniques, compelling readers to re-notice the world from fresher perspectives [1]. When writing The Silmarillion, Tolkien employed the defamiliarization strategy to construct the secondary world. In the process of creating exotic mythologiy, he also used epic diction. This study will conduct a comparative study of how two Chinese translations handled the defamiliarization.

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4. Translation strategies

4.1. Proper nouns

Table 1. Proper noun example 1

Original text: Eru [2]		
Edition	Li Yao's	Deng Jiawan's
Translation	埃如 [15]	一如 [16]
Strategies	Foreignization	Foreignization with partial semantic domestication

Eru was the One God in Tolkien's mythological system, with a position similar to that of Christian God. As shown in Table 1, when translating this noun, Li Yao conducted a transliteration, without blending additional meanings into it to maintain a sense of exoticism, hence the complete foreignization strategy. Although Deng also retained the original phonetics, she chose the character 一and 如, which in Chinese contained the meaning of One and Ever, thus incorporated the concept of this proper noun into her translation. This approach facilitated Chinese readers' comprehension through phonetic foreignization and partial semantic domestication.

Table 2. Proper noun example 2

Original text: Maedhros [2]		
Edition	Li Yao's	Deng Jiawan's
Translation	迈斯罗斯 [15]	迈兹洛斯 [16]
Strategies	Foreignization with partial phonetic domestication	Foreignization

Maedhros was an Elvish name. According to the Elvish pronunciation instruction Tolkien provided in The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King's appendix, the syllabus ae could be pronounced as ai in English, and dh was similar with th [17]. As presented in Table 2, in translating the syllabus dh, Li blurred the difference between it and s, and chose the character 斯, which pronounces si. Consequently, this term became more fluently in Chinese, but at the expense of the original pronunciation, which was foreignization with partial phonetic domestication. As for Deng, she chose the character 兹for dh and 斯for s, pronounced respectively as zi and si. Her translation was more complete representation of Tolkien's Elvish, and complete foreignization, though sounded more awkward in Chinese.

Table 3. Proper noun example 3

Original text: Melkor [2]		
Edition	Li Yao's	Deng Jiawan's
Translation	梅尔克 [15]	米尔寇 [16]
Strategies	Foreignization	Foreignization with partial semantic domestication

Melkor was a name, that referred to the earliest-fallen and most powerful dark lord in Tolkien's mythological system. Table 3 showed Li's translation was complete transliteration, and the Chinese characters he chose were relatively neutral, without incorporating factors that could possibly arouse Chinese readers' emotions and moral judgments, which was a complete foreignization strategy.

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Although Deng's translation was also transliteration, she chose the character 寇, which meant foe, and was derogatory in Chinese, to directly echo Melkor's evil acts and make it easier for readers to remember, which was foreignization with partial semantic domestication. It is worth mentioning that Melkor was the name of the dark lord before he fell, and did not have a negative connotation in it, so that the direct use of derogatory character may be a bit redundant.

To sum up, in translating proper nouns, both translators chose the foreignization strategy overall while Li partially used phonetic domestication, and Deng partially used semantic domestication. However, the semantic domestication translation in a proper noun could weaken the exoticism and defamiliarization in the original text.

4.2. Linguistic style

Table 4. Linguistic style example 1

Original text	There was Eru, the One, who in Arda is called Ilúvatar; and he made first the Ainur, the Holy Ones, that were the offspring of his thought, and they were with him before aught else was made. And he spoke to them, propounding to them themes of music; and they sang before him, and he was glad [2].
Li Yao's translation	"惟一者"埃如，在阿尔达王国被叫做伊路瓦塔。他首先创造了"圣贤"阿伊诺。这些"圣贤"都因他心之所想而生。在别人被创造出来之前，只有他们和他在一起。伊路瓦塔和他们谈天说地，还给他们编出音乐的旋律；他们则给他唱歌，他很高兴 [15]。
Deng Jiawan's translation	始有一如，"独一之神"，其名在阿尔达称为伊露维塔。祂首先造了众爱努，"神圣者"，他们是祂意念的产物，在万物得造之前就与祂同在。祂对他们说话，提点乐曲的主题。于是他们在祂面前开声歌唱，祂就欢喜 [16]。

Linguistic style refers to the choice of words and syntaxes. Generally, as showed in Table 4, Li Yao used a domestication strategy. However, compared to Deng Jiawan, his translation of There was Eru, the One was more foreignizing, because he chose literal translation without adding any modifiers, which created an effect of cold bluntness to directly echo the linguistic defamiliarization of the exotic myths in the original text. Nevertheless, this effect was more like a choice made unconsciously for the sake of a strict literal translation; thus the defamiliarizing effect was produced passively. On the whole, his translation was still domesticating. Holy One was translated to 圣贤, which meant sage, and it was more familiar to Chinese readers. Terms like 心之所想，谈天说地 were also commonly used four-character phrases in modern Chinese, which were fluent and easy to understand for Chinese readers [7]. The sentence they were with him before aught else was made was translated to before others were made, only they were with him. As presented, Li broke down the English clause into two clauses with a comma, reversed the order to make them more in line with Chinese expressions as well as used the oral expression of 在一起 for with him. He chose to minimize the exotic mythological atmosphere of the original work and prioritize the message.

Deng was generally using the foreignization strategy. Though the translation of 始有一如，独一之神 (In the beginning there was Eru, the only god), adopted a mildly classical Chinese register the clarify Eru's attributes, it retained the characteristic of Tolkien's mythology without choosing more Chinese terminology. The domestication here produced by classical expressions was instrumental and was aimed to enhance the text's sacred authority rather than serving as cultural domestication. The linguistic style of this translated paragraph was still foreignization. Deng chose the literal translation for the term Holy Ones, while Eru's personal pronoun was 祂, the exclusively divine character for deities, and emphasized the unfamiliar sacredness in Chinese. As for the clause, she

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retained the syntactic logic of English and did not conform to the customary Chinese word order, creating a defamiliarizing effect [7].

Table 5. Linguistic style example 2

Original text	… and the Valar will fence Valinor against you, and shut you out, so that not even the echo of your lamentation shall pass over the mountains [2].
Li Yao's translation	梵拉将在瓦里诺筑起高高的围墙，把你们关在墙外，连你们恸哭的回声也越不过崇山峻岭[15]。
Deng Jiawan's translation	维拉将对你们关闭维林诺，将你们阻绝在外，就连你们哀悼的回音也无法越过阿门洲山脉[16]。

In the text, this was a curse of a Holy One to elves. As Table 5 presented, when translating it, Li was still turning to domestication strategy. He chose 关在墙外 (close behind the wall) for shut, which is more colloquial. For mountains, he translated it into a widely used Chinese four-character phrase, 崇山峻岭, which meant towering peaks and soaring ridges, so that it became more familiar and readable for Chinese audiences. In contrast, Deng used foreignization strategy. The term shut was translated to 阻绝 (obstruct), though still a common phrase, it was more formalized, and appeared serious as well as distanced. Mountains was translated to Mountains of Aman. Although there were no further explanations to those mountains, the translator insisted to directly point out this certain geographical name in the Tolkien mythological system, which could be considered a cater to the defamiliarizing atmosphere in the original work.

Table 6. Linguistic style example 3

Original text	The Dispossessed shall they be for ever [2].
Li Yao's translation	他们将被剥夺得一无所有 [15]。
Deng Jiawan's translation	他们将永远成为'被褫夺者' [16]。

This was an inverted sentence, in order to convey the classical solemnity. As Table 6 showed, Li was still employing domestication, strategy, focusing on expressing the semantics in a way that was familiar to Chinese readers. To translate his translation back into English would be: they will be stripped until there is nothing left. He emphasized the consequences of dispossessed explanatorily and used the style of daily written language, which was easy to read but the classical style of the original text was lost, even the meaning of for ever. Deng, on the other hand, employed the strategy of foreignization, and the structure of 被褫夺者 retained the structure of the verbal nominalization used as a propositional noun, which strengthened the identity label of the referring object being.

The Chinese phrase 褫夺was a classical Chinese term not commonly used in modern Chinese, which could be regarded as a domestication, but it retained the classicality and solemnity of the original style, and also reinforced the sense of unfamiliarity for modern Chinese readers, thus intensifying the literary effect of defamiliarization [9].

In the choosing of linguistic style, Li Yao tended to use a domestication strategy, and focused on presenting the meanings while conveying them to readers in fluent and simple Chinese, which enhanced readability at the expense of the defamiliarization in the original text. Deng Jiawan tended to employ a foreignization strategy, and retained more syntactic structures in the source language, which read more awkwardly in Chinese, but reinforced the atmosphere of defamiliarization. While she occasionally resorted to domestication, such as adopting classical Chinese dictions, this aligned

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with the antiquarian style deliberately crafted by Tolkien. However, modern readers' unfamiliarity with classical dictions inadvertently strengthened the defamiliarization.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, Li Yao made more use of the domestication strategy when choosing the linguistic style, while using the foreignization strategy in translating proper nouns with partial phonetic domestications. Although the foreignization of proper nouns conformed to the overall epic atmosphere of the original work, the extensive domestication of the linguistic style greatly weakened the defamiliarization crafted by Tolkien. As for Deng Jiawan, she tended to employ a foreignizing linguistic style with some domesticating expressions, for example, the application of classical Chinese phrases and expressions, but most of them served as a faithful adoption of the classicality of the original work. As a result, her translation reserved both the epic grandeur and defamiliarization effect of the source text. Regarding proper nouns, she generally implemented foreignization, though with occasional semantic domesticated trace. It should be noted that such semantic domestication of proper nouns may potentially compromise the transmission of the original defamiliarization effect.

The essence of fantasy literature lies in constructing a heterogenous secondary world, with linguistic defamiliarization serves as the fundamental approach to fulfill this aim. Through the comparative analysis of Li Yao's and Deng Jiawan's Chinese translations of The Silmarillion reveals that excessive domestication dilutes the original's defamiliarizing charm, while extreme foreignization may sacrifice readability. The ideal translation should seek a balance between these poles. This study intends to comparatively analyze how the translation strategies in two translations affect the original defamiliarization, yet several limitations should be acknowledged. Due to the limited space, there are not many examples to cited, so that there are still room for the analysis to go deeper. Moreover, Tolkien's linguistic defamiliarizing strategies should not only exist in proper nouns and linguistic style, but this study only examines these two dimensions. These research gaps will be left for further investigation by future researchers.

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