

Adapting Cultural Nuances: Analysing Domestication in the Urdu Translation of “Forty Rules of Love”

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Abstract

This study examines domestication in the Urdu translation of “Forty Rules of love” by Huma Anwar. Conventional translation methods are noted for masking cultural nuances and the natural flow of language. They are seen as rigid, often aiming for direct one-to-one language correspondence, limiting their adaptability. Presently, translation is viewed through a wider lens, acknowledging an expansive perspective. Using purposive sampling, this study selected specific sections from the Urdu translation of Forty Rules of Love to showcase instances of domestication. The qualitative analysis underscores the significant role of this strategy in bridging the gap between source and target cultures, fostering better connectivity. Eugene A. Nida's modal of functional equivalence has been used as theoretical framework. Domestication is integrated into Urdu literary translations to align the text culturally for readers, ensuring better understanding and relatability. By adapting cultural nuances, idiomatic expressions, and references, domestication aims to make the translated work more accessible while preserving the essence of the original text. On these grounds, it is concluded that domestication minimises foreignness and unpacks the cultural discourses.

Keywords: domestication, culture nuances, translation, equivalence

1. Introduction

Translation, as an intricate process of conveying meaning across languages and cultures, involves a myriad of strategies and approaches. One of the central and perennially debated strategies in the field of translation studies is the concept of "domestication." Rooted in the endeavour to bridge the gap between the foreign and the familiar, domestication represents a dynamic and multifaceted approach in the translator's toolkit. At its core, domestication epitomizes a methodology aiming to render foreign texts more palatable, relatable, and easily comprehensible for the target audience by aligning them with the norms and values of the target culture. Coined by renowned translation theorist Lawrence Venuti, this strategy often involves a deliberate adaptation of the source text, prioritizing the target language's cultural conventions, idiomatic expressions, and linguistic nuances.

The essence of domestication lies in the attempt to minimize the perceived 'otherness' or unfamiliarity of the original text, aiming for a seamless integration into the cultural fabric of the target audience. This method, while facilitating smoother readability and accessibility for the audience, raises complex and contentious questions regarding the preservation of the source text's authenticity, cultural uniqueness, and intended meanings. Munday (2001) also describes how the concept of domestication was initially employed by American translation theorist Eugene Nida to incorporate cultural elements in the process of translation. Nida is widely recognized as a prominent figure advocating for domestication within current translation trends.

Domestication, as posited by Venuti (1995), operates on a dual axis, encompassing linguistic adaptation intertwined with cultural assimilation. Linguistically, this strategy often entails lexical and syntactic adjustments to ensure the text flows seamlessly within the target language. Yet, it extends beyond mere linguistic transposition; domestication delves into the realm of cultural norms and values. Schäffner (1997) notes that this approach prioritizes the receptor culture's customs, norms, and expectations, often at the expense of the foreignness embedded in the source text. This act of 'domesticating' a text raises pertinent questions about the ethical responsibilities of translators,

pondering the balance between fidelity to the source and accommodation for the audience's preferences. In practical application, the implementation of domestication presents a spectrum of challenges and complexities. While this strategy ensures accessibility and familiarity for the target audience, it confronts translators with the dilemma of potentially diluting the original text's distinctiveness and cultural essence. Baker (2006) contends that the overemphasis on domestication risks erasing cultural markers and nuances vital to the author's intentions. Moreover, the decision-making process involved in domestication introduces subjectivity, influenced by the translator's perceptions, biases, and the prevailing socio-cultural context. These challenges warrant a nuanced examination of the implications and consequences of domestication in diverse translation scenarios.

This article seeks to delve deeper into the intricacies of domestication as a translation strategy, exploring its principles, implications, and the ongoing discourse surrounding its usage. Through an examination of its application in various translation contexts and its impact on the dynamics of cross-cultural communication, this article aims to offer a nuanced understanding of the role and significance of domestication in the realm of translation studies.

The present research work delves into Domestication using diverse textual examples and analysis its implications. Through this analysis, the study aims to elucidate the objectives behind employing these translation techniques and their influence on the quality of literary translations.

2. Research Questions

In this study, the following research questions will be answered:

- i. What functions does domestication serve in the Urdu translation of "Forty Rules of Love"?
- ii. To what extent does the process of domestication affect the cultural integrity and nuances of "Forty Rules of Love" in the Urdu translations?

3. Literature Review

In the realm of translation, there has been ongoing debate concerning the most suitable strategies for translating cultural elements. A prominent strategy in this discourse is domestication, which has been a focal point in translation studies (Hu, Cui'e, 2000). Domestication stands as a fundamental translation approach offering both linguistic and cultural guidance. It is termed by American translation theorist L. Venuti (qtd. in Schaffner 1995:4). According to Venuti, it refers to an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values to bring the author back home. While Lefevere (1992) emphasizes the role of ideology in domesticating translations for cultural acceptability. In essence, domestication refers to a type of translation aiming for a clear and natural style to reduce the foreignness of the original text for readers of the target language (Shuttleworth & Cowie 1997:59).

Moreover, Baker and Nord (1992) also delve into the linguistic and cultural adjustments made in domesticating translations. These scholars examine how translators navigate linguistic nuances, idiomatic expressions, and culturally specific references to ensure the target audience's comprehension and cultural resonance. The debate surrounding domestication often revolves around its potential impact on preserving the integrity of the source text. Translation theorists like Berman and Even-Zohar (1978) argue for preserving foreignness to maintain the uniqueness and authenticity of the source culture, cautioning against over-domestication. Research by Toury and Chesterman (1995) focuses on the reception of domesticated translations, investigating reader preferences and expectations. These studies explore how domestication affects readers' perceptions of authenticity,

readability, and cultural proximity. Translation practitioners, such as Rabassa and Grossman (1970), have also provided insights through their translation works, applying domestication strategies in literary translations. Case studies of specific translated texts highlight the application of domestication techniques and their impact on the reception of the translated work.

By fostering deeper understanding of domestication's role in translation, we can contribute to a more nuanced and culturally aware practice of bringing diverse voices and perspectives across linguistic boundaries which is as follows, Venuti (1995) examines the translation of Balzac's novels into English, arguing that excessive domestication sanitizes his critique of French society. Similarly, Hurtado (2001) analyzes the translation of Spanish proverbs into English, highlighting the challenges of conveying cultural values across languages.

The literature on domestication in translation elucidates the complex interplay between fidelity to the source text and adaptation to the target culture. It underscores the challenges and considerations faced by translators in balancing linguistic accuracy, cultural specificity, and reader reception. The ongoing debate surrounding domestication continues to shape translation practices and theories, influencing decisions made by translators in bridging linguistic and cultural gaps between source and target texts.

4. Theoretical Framework

American translation theorist Eugene A. Nida (1993) introduces the model of functional equivalence, replacing dynamic equivalence, as a benchmark for evaluating textual material within the Urdu translation of "Forty Rules of Love.". In the context of domestication, Nida's model plays a crucial role in guiding the translator's approach. Nida's Model of Functional Equivalence posits that effective translation should prioritize conveying the dynamic equivalence of the message, intent, and effect of the source text within the cultural context of the target audience. Instead of preserving the exact linguistic structure or form of the original text, the focus is on ensuring the same impact or function is achieved in the translated text.

Nida (1975) views translation as a natural reproduction in the receptor language and, in Nida's (1964) comprehensive requirements for good translation, outlines four key parameters: (1) coherence in meaning, (2) preservation of the spirit and style of the original, (3) natural and fluid expression, and (4) evoking a similar response. Leveraging these theoretical foundations, the researcher aims to uncover the rationale behind the application of domestication in the Urdu literary translation of "Forty Rules of Love." The study might investigate how translators prioritize conveying meaning and effect while adapting the text culturally, aiming to achieve functional equivalence in the target language. This could include examining specific translation choices made in domestication to achieve the intended impact and resonance with the target audience while maintaining fidelity to the source text's purpose and effects.

Differences in cultural and lexico-syntactic patterns pose a formidable challenge in translation. Faced with such complexities, translators often employ strategies, such as domestication, to adapt the message to the target culture's context. The linguistic and cultural divergence necessitates the bridging of gaps between source and target readerships. The primary objective of this research is to delve into profound cultural aspects within the Urdu literary translation, capturing their nuances and proposing viable solutions.

5. Methodology

The researcher has chosen a qualitative approach to examine selected lines from "Forty Rules of Love" authored by Elif Shafak, along with their Urdu translation. The Urdu translation of "Forty Rules of Love" by Elif Shafak was published by Jamhuri Publications in January 1, 2020. All the chapters of the novel have been studied in order to explore concept of domestication, using purposive sampling technique. The research thoroughly analyzed the translation of individual sentences from English to Urdu and vice versa, utilizing Nida's model of functional equivalence as a guiding framework. Each phrase in the data has been examined according to the underlying translation strategy. The study highlighted both the limitations and freedoms experienced by the translator, drawing attention to these aspects within the contextual material.

6. Textual Data and its Analysis

In this section, the text offers instances of domestication, providing an in-depth understanding of this particular strategy.

Domestication in translation serves as a mirror reflecting cultural nuances while bringing the essence of the author back to their native context. Nida is notably linked to the contemporary adoption of domestication in translation practices. The upcoming section will spotlight instances demonstrating domestication's presence and its consequential impact on the translated content. This analysis aims to examine that how the deliberate cultural adaptation inherent in domestication influences the translated text, shaping its tone, style, and overall resonance.

6.1. It took God only 6 days to create the entire universe.

خدا کو یہ کائنات تخلیق کرنے میں صرف چھ روز لگے تھے

The word خدا refers to God, it's a common word in Urdu speaking cultures that hold deep religious significance. This term is deeply rooted in the language and culture, serving as a way to address the divine in their prayers and daily conversations. Hence this term is used to reduce cultural differences and for better understanding of readers.

6.2. I hope you will have the time to read SWEET BLASPHEMY, a historical and mystical novel.

مجھے اُمید ہے کہ آپ کو تاریخی، صوفیانہ ناول "دلکش کُفر" پڑھنے کا وقت میسر ہوگا۔

Here the word "blasphemy" is rendered with کُفر. In Urdu it is a term that refers to disbelief or the act of rejecting faith or belief in God. Urdu-speaking Muslims may use the term "کُفر" in theological or religious discussions to denote the concept of disbelief or rejecting the tenets of Islam. The involvement of cultural aspect in the translation of target text decreases the foreignness from the text.

6.3. Dear Sir/Madam. Greetings from Amsterdam.

محترم/محترمہ۔ ایمسٹرڈیم سے سلام۔

In the context of Urdu-speaking cultures, "محترم" (Muhtaram), "محترمہ" (Muhtarma), and "سلام" (Salaam) can be considered domesticated terms. They are commonly used expressions deeply rooted in the Urdu language and culture. These terms have been adapted to convey respect, honor, and greetings within the local linguistic and social context. In translations or cultural adaptations, maintaining these terms preserves their cultural significance and familiarity, aligning with the principles of domestication by making the text more relatable and understandable for the target audience.

6.4. With the money, I could finally afford the price of a bride and get married and stop fretting over how to make end needs.

اتنی رقم کے ساتھ میں آخر کار آسانی سے اپنے لئے زوجہ حاصل کر کے شادی کر سکتا تھا ، اور گزر بسر کیسے ہو اس پر فکر مند ہونا چھوڑ سکتا تھا۔

In urdu speaking cultures “شادی (Shaadi) is commonly used to refer to marriage or the wedding ceremony while زوجہ is a term used to refer to a wife or spouse.

Both “شادی” and “زوجہ” are domesticated terms as they are deeply embedded in the Urdu language and culture, conveying specific meanings related to marriage and the marital relationship within the local context. They are often retained in translations or adaptations to maintain cultural authenticity and to ensure comprehension among Urdu-speaking audiences.

6.5. You dervishes are as crazy as rats in a pantry. All day long you fast and pray and walk under the scorching sun.

تم درویش باورچی خانے کے چوبوں جیسے دیوانے ہوتے ہو۔ سارا دن تم روزہ رکھتے اور نماز پڑھتے اور جھلساتے سورج تلے چلتے ہو۔

Both "نماز" (Namaaz), signifying prayers, and "روزہ" (Roza), denoting fasting during Ramadan, are integral domesticated terms within Urdu-speaking Muslim communities. These words encapsulate specific religious practices and hold deep cultural significance. Widely used and understood, "نماز" represents the ritual of prayer performed several times a day, while "روزہ" refers to the observance of fasting from dawn till sunset during the Islamic month of Ramadan. These terms are retained in translations or adaptations to preserve their cultural authenticity and religious importance for Urdu-speaking audiences.

6.6. I was hunting a harlot who had escaped the brothel to find God.

میں اک طوائف کی تلاش میں تھا جو خدا کی تلاش وجستجو میں فحشہ خانہ سے فرار ہو گئی تھی۔

Here again the word God is rendered with خدا, as this domestication has reduced the foreign impact in Urdu translation. In translations aiming for domestication, maintaining “خدا” in place of “God” preserves the cultural essence and familiarity for the target audience, aligning with the principles of domestication in translation studies.

6.7. You have been blaming yourself for not giving her a proper funeral.

تم اُس کی مناسب تدفین نہ کرنے پر خود کو الزام دیتے رہے ہو۔

The Urdu translation of the extract gives use projection of domestication. The use of تدفین is the projection of domestication and this word is the frequent use in the Urdu speaking Muslim societies on the death of someone.

6.8. Glory be to God; an ocean is walking behind a lake.

سبحان اللہ ، ایک بحر ایک جھیل کے پیچھے چل رہا ہے۔

Here the phrase ‘Glory to be God’ is rendered with سبحان اللہ . As a domesticated term, “سبحان اللہ” is deeply integrated into the religious and linguistic fabric of Urdu-speaking Muslim communities. It serves as a familiar and revered phrase, reflecting the cultural and religious practices of expressing devotion and reverence towards Allah.

6.9. You prayed for a companion, and a companion you will be given.

تم نے ایک رفیق کے لئے دعا کی تھی، اور ایک رفیق تمہیں عطا کیا جائے گا۔

The word “pray” is not used in Muslim societies rather the domesticated word “دعا” is used. Retained in translations or adaptations, “دعا” maintains its cultural authenticity and serves as a familiar term that conveys the act of supplication or prayer within the context of seeking blessings, guidance, or divine assistance, catering to the spiritual needs of Urdu-speaking audiences.

6.10. Islamic Scholar, known as Jalal ad Din Rumi Nicknamed mawlana - Our Master - by many was regarded as a beacon to all Muslims.

مُسلماں عالم جنہے سب جلال الدین کے نام سے جانتے تھے۔ اُن کی عرفیت تھی۔ مولانا میرے اُستاد۔ جو انہیں بہت سے لوگ کہتے ہیں۔ اُنہیں سب مسلمانوں کے لئے مینارہ نور سمجھا جاتا تھا۔

The use of مینارہ نور in the Urdu translation is the beautiful use of domestication. This term's usage in Urdu reflects its cultural embedding as a symbol of guidance, illumination, or a source of direction, whether it's in a physical or metaphorical sense, resonating within the linguistic and cultural framework of Urdu-speaking societies.

7. Conclusion

The multifaceted nature of translation, revealed through data analysis, highlights the challenge of harmonizing linguistic intricacies and socio-cultural nuances in target texts. Balancing domestication with contemporary language standards proves demanding, requiring a strategy of reducing foreignness. However, a translated text devoid of supplementary elements risks passive discourse, undermining the essence of translation. Utilizing domestication techniques in literary translation enriches stylistic elements and enhances audience comprehension. This approach, acknowledging socio-cultural and linguistic factors, addresses the complexities of translation, glorifying its stature in the modern era by reducing foreignness and making this easier for the readership.

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