

FOREIGNIZATION AND DOMESTICATION IN MICHAEL ONDAATJE'S *RUNNING IN THE FAMILY*: TRANSLATING TITLES INTO FRENCH AND SINHALA

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Abstract

Michael Ondaatje's *Running in the Family* (1983) has been translated into several languages, including French and Sinhala. The present study focuses on the two translations aiming to examine the use of two main translation strategies: Foreignization and Domestication. The study is centered on the chapter titles as they play a key role. The titles and their translations are analyzed and compared to understand how the two strategies are adopted by the translators in their respective translations. Lawrence Venuti's theoretical framework of foreignization and domestication is applied to the analysis. The results reveal that both strategies are used in French and Sinhala and highlight certain limitations of their applications. Their application, particularly domestication, though makes the titles more comprehensive to each readership, offer at times, interpretations different from what is intended by the author, and may mislead the target reader.

Keywords: *Challenges, Strategies, Translation, Titles, Venuti*

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Introduction

Michael Ondaatje's *Running in the Family*, set in Sri Lanka in the early 1900s when it was called Ceylon, narrates his family history and anecdotes. The choice of the text is significant as it is published by a world-renowned Sri Lankan Diaspora writer. The success of Ondaatje's novels has led to the source text (ST) being translated into several languages including French and Sinhala. The availability of the translation in a foreign language and a local language makes it possible to analyze and compare various aspects of the two target texts (TT). The present study examines how foreignization and domestication are applied when translating the chapter titles.

Materials and Methods

The ST was translated into French by Marie-Odile Fortier-Masek and published as *Un air de famille* in 1991. In 2012, *Pavule uruva*, the Sinhala version was published, and translated by Sepala Wijesekara.

The study focuses on the translation of chapter titles found in the ST. A total of fifty titles are found, including the main title, all of which are translated into both languages. The chapter titles play a key role in taking the reader along a journey through time and space. They also reflect the content of each chapter playing upon the curiosity of the readers. It is important to make sure that the titles are translated accurately without misleading them. Further, titles being concise, the translation strategies can be effectively identified in them.

When translating, the translators face two main challenges: culture and syntax. Foreignization and domestication are often seen as binary opposites that allow translators to find solutions. Lawrence Venuti who advocates foreignization sees it as an "enthodiviant pressure" registering the cultural and lexical differences. It allows at the same time to highlight the role of the translator. On the other hand, domestication is called an "ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values" eliminating what is unfamiliar (2004).

Results and Discussion

All the translated titles are analysed and compared in order to understand how the two translators have adopted foreignization and domestication when translating the titles. Table 1 presents a sample of ten titles in which the two strategies are adopted to find translation solutions.

Table 1:*Examples of translated titles in the two TTs*

ST	TT French	TT Sinhala
April 11, 1932	11 avril 1932	1932 اپريل 11
Don't talk to me about Matisse	Ne me parlez pas de Matisse	Matisse gena ma samaga katha nokaranna
St. Thomas' Church	L'église Saint-Thomas	Santha Thomas dewu mendura
The Karapothas Aunts	Les Karapothas Les tantes	Karapoththo Nendala
High Flowers	Hautes fleurs	Pol mal
The Cinnamon Peeler	L'écorceur de cannelle	Kurundu thalanna
The Prodigal Tea country	Le fils prodigue Au pays du thé	Nasthikaraya The wewena rata
The Ceylon Cactus and Succulent society	La société cinghalaise des cactus et plantes grasses	Lanka pathok ha mangsala shaka sangamaya

The results reveal that both foreignization and domestication are adopted in the French and Sinhala titles. Borrowing of Sinhala terms is noted in the French TT. A case in point is Karapothas. The translator adds *Les* (The) *Karapothas* to complete the title in French. Borrowing which emphasizes foreignization, adds an exotic touch to the TT.

Orthographic adaptation which is considered a foreignization practice is inevitable when foreign names are written using the Sinhala alphabet. However, the French name Matisse is inaccurately presented as මැටිසේස් in Sinhala, which should have been avoided.

The translation of the date is an example of domestication in both the TTs. Necessary modifications such as lowercase letters for the month in French and the change of place of the year and the date in Sinhala are carried out to make it familiar to the respective reader. The translation of St. Thomas' Church also shows how it is domesticated in two different ways. Written in English as St.,

it is translated into French with a hyphen. Further, the apostrophe is eliminated. The Sinhala translation සාන්ත තෝමස් respects its language rules.

The translation of the several titles reveals how the Sinhala translation when domesticated becomes more specific. The term Aunts is literally translated into French as “tantes” but in Sinhala, the translator opts for *Nendala*. The Sinhala translator specifies the nature of the relationship which is not seen in the English title. The title, High Flowers, indirectly refers to the coconut flower. In the chapter, a vivid description of the toddy tapper collecting toddy from the coconut flowers is given. The French title is literally translated while in the Sinhala translation, the translator directly announces the name of the flower without arousing the curiosity of the readership. The title Cinnamon Peeler, though literally translated into French, is again changed in Sinhala. A more familiar verb (*thalanna*) is used instead of to peel.

The French translator too offers different interpretations favoring domesticating. The prodigal is defined as “a person who spends money in a reckless, extravagant way”¹. Though it is translated to give this meaning in Sinhala, in French, the translator changes it to “Le fils prodigue” or the prodigal son. It refers to “a son/daughter who leaves his or her parents to do things that they do not approve of but then feels sorry and returns home”². It is evident that the translator interprets the context differently. The translation of Tea Country shows more changes. In Sinhala, the verb *vevena* is added to make it more comprehensible. In French, the title is translated bringing to mind another translation, Lewis Carroll’s *Alice aux pays des merveilles*³. The French title gives the meaning “in the country of tea”. Another significant change is noted in the translation of the Ceylon Cactus and Succulent Society. In the French translation, Ceylon has been replaced by “cinghalais” which means Sinhala. The ethnic category is emphasized instead of the country.

Conclusions and Recommendations

It is evident that by adopting particular domestication the translators modify information provided by the author for the benefit of the targeted readership. These modifications in the titles, at times, may mislead the reader or by being more specific than the author, suppress the curiosity of the reader. Further,

¹ <https://www.lexico.com/definition/prodigal>

² <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/prodigal%20son%2Fdaughter>

³ <https://www.livredepoche.com/livre/alice-au-pays-des-merveilles-suivi-de-de-lautre-cote-du-miroir-9782253082446>

mistakes must be avoided especially in the titles, as they draw more attention and scrutiny.

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