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**SELF-CENSORSHIP IN TRANSLATION: SOCIOCULTURAL
CONSTRAINTS AND THE ETHICS OF DOMESTICATION AND
FOREIGNIZATION**

This paper explores the phenomenon of self-censorship in translation as a response to sociocultural constraints and ideological pressures. Drawing on the theoretical framework of Lawrence Venuti, the study examines how the strategies of domestication and foreignization function as ethical choices within constrained environments. The analysis highlights the role of translators as active agents negotiating cultural norms, institutional expectations, and audience sensitivities. Particular attention is given to contemporary European translation practices in audiovisual media and publishing, alongside Ukrainian scholarly perspectives. The paper argues that self-censorship should be understood not only as limitation but also as a complex ethical positioning within sociocultural systems.

Keywords: *self-censorship in translation, sociocultural constraints, domestication, foreignization, ideology, ethics, translation studies.*

Problem Statement. Translation is not a neutral or purely linguistic act but a socially embedded practice shaped by ideological, cultural, and institutional forces [4, p. 1]. In contemporary global communication, translators frequently operate under explicit and implicit constraints that influence their decision-making processes. These constraints include political regulations, cultural sensitivities, editorial policies, and market-driven expectations, particularly visible in audiovisual and media translation.

A crucial yet often underexplored dimension of these constraints is self-censorship. Unlike overt censorship imposed by external authorities, self-censorship emerges as an internalized mechanism whereby translators anticipate potential reactions and adjust the source text accordingly [2, p. 45]. This anticipatory adaptation raises critical questions about the boundaries of translator agency and the ethical implications of such interventions.

The opposition between domestication and foreignization becomes particularly relevant in this context. These strategies are not merely technical but reflect broader ideological orientations toward cultural difference [4, p. 20]. Thus, self-censorship can be interpreted as a site where ethical responsibility, cultural mediation, and ideological positioning intersect.

Analysis of Recent Research. The sociological turn in translation studies has foregrounded the role of power, norms, and ideology in shaping translation practices. The work of Lawrence Venuti remains central, particularly his critique of translator invisibility and his conceptualization of domestication and foreignization as ethically charged strategies [4, p. 16]. Venuti's framework enables the understanding of translation as an intervention rather than a transparent transfer of meaning.

Further developments in the field are represented by Mona Baker, who emphasizes translation as a form of narrative construction and ideological framing [2, p. 5]. In addition, Gideon Toury introduces the concept of norms, demonstrating how translators internalize socially accepted practices and expectations [3, p. 63]. Complementing these approaches, Chesterman conceptualizes translation strategies as culturally transmitted "memes" that influence translator behavior and decision-making [5, p. 1].

In Ukrainian translation studies, similar issues are addressed through the lens of cultural identity and the social role of translation. Roksolana Zorivchak emphasizes that translation plays a crucial role in shaping and preserving national identity, particularly through the handling of culturally specific elements [8, c. 10]. Olha Rebrii focuses on the translator's creative agency and interpretative responsibility, highlighting the active role

of the translator in meaning-making processes [7, c. 54]. Recent Ukrainian research also examines translation as a socially embedded emotional and communicative practice, further expanding the scope of sociocultural analysis [6].

These approaches collectively demonstrate that translation is deeply embedded in social structures and ideological frameworks, making self-censorship an important object of study.

Research Aim. The aim of this study is to examine self-censorship in translation as a socioculturally conditioned practice and to analyze how domestication and foreignization operate as ethical and ideological strategies within this process.

Research Results. The findings indicate that self-censorship functions as a dynamic mechanism shaped by the interaction of external constraints and internalized norms. Translators do not merely react to restrictions but actively anticipate them, adjusting their strategies accordingly. This anticipatory behavior reflects the internalization of sociocultural expectations and professional norms [3, p. 70].

In audiovisual translation, self-censorship is particularly evident in the handling of culturally sensitive content. References to sexuality, religion, and political conflict are often mitigated, reformulated, or omitted. These interventions are rarely explicitly mandated but arise from the translator's awareness of audience expectations and institutional frameworks. For instance, in subtitling for global streaming platforms, swear words or culturally offensive expressions are frequently softened or neutralized in order to ensure acceptability across diverse audiences. Such modifications illustrate how self-censorship operates through domestication strategies, prioritizing fluency and cultural comfort over the preservation of the source text's expressive intensity.

The strategic choice between domestication and foreignization becomes a key site of ethical negotiation. Domestication allows translators to adapt the source text to the target culture, ensuring accessibility and minimizing potential conflict [4, p. 21]. However, this strategy may also reinforce dominant cultural narratives and contribute to the erasure of cultural difference, thus functioning as a form of implicit self-censorship.

For example, references to politically sensitive institutions or historical events may be generalized or replaced with neutral equivalents in translation, thereby reducing potential controversy but also limiting the ideological specificity of the original message.

Foreignization, in contrast, preserves cultural specificity and resists assimilation into the target culture. By maintaining elements of the source culture, foreignization highlights linguistic and cultural diversity and challenges the reader's expectations [4, p. 24]. For example, culture-specific items such as food names, forms of address, or institutional references may be deliberately retained in their original form rather than replaced with target-culture equivalents. This strategy resists domestication and reduces the degree of self-censorship by allowing cultural difference to remain visible, even at the cost of partial incomprehensibility.

Ukrainian scholars emphasize that translation is closely linked to cultural representation and identity formation, particularly in contexts shaped by historical and political pressures [8, c. 15]. The translator's role as a cultural mediator involves balancing fidelity to the source text with sensitivity to the target audience, often leading to hybrid strategies that combine elements of domestication and foreignization.

Thus, self-censorship should be understood not as a binary phenomenon but as a continuum of strategic choices shaped by sociocultural conditions.

Conclusion. Self-censorship in translation represents a complex interplay of sociocultural constraints, ethical considerations, and ideological positioning. By examining this phenomenon through the framework of domestication and foreignization, the study highlights the active role of the translator in negotiating meaning under constraint.

The analysis demonstrates that translation is not a neutral process but a socially situated practice influenced by norms, expectations, and power structures. While self-censorship may limit certain aspects of the source text, it also reflects the translator's agency and responsibility within a given sociocultural context.

Incorporating Ukrainian scholarly perspectives further emphasizes the importance of cultural identity and local traditions in shaping translation practices. Future research may explore how digital media and global communication continue to transform the ethical landscape of translation.

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