

Literary translation

Literary translation is a form of comparative literature, and practicing it requires a good knowledge in literary and critical studies as well as proficiency in both of the source and the target languages. In addition, the literary translator should take into consideration that there is no ideal target text in the translation or the so-called model translation because every translated work is in fact the result of the convergence of the author's creativity and the conception of the translator in the light of his or her expertise in both languages and within the framework of his own culture and the norms of the literature of both.

The concern of the literary translation is not limited to conveying the semantic meaning of words or their reference, i.e., referring the reader or listener to the same thing that the author intended in the original text. Rather, it goes beyond that to the significance (and to the effect), which it is assumed that the author intends to bring about in the reader or listener's mind and feel it. Therefore, he is not only equipped with linguistic knowledge in all its aspects, but also with literary and critical knowledge, in which the knowledge of culture and thought is indispensable, that is, human aspects that the scientific translator may not be interested in.

These human aspects include familiarity with the basic principles of the arts, such as the compatibility of colours and shapes or their disparity, the significance of the musical sense in general, the significance of repetition and its types, the connotations of metaphor, metonymy, proverbs, traditional sayings, myths and legends, religious values and social customs that affect the extent to which the listener or reader tastes a poem or story.

Culture, here, means the way of life, which is a group of inherited traditions, and the confluence of the ideas and knowledge of the past with the present, and their interaction and development over time, and the intellectual approaches generated from that, and all that affects the extent of the reader or listener's taste for the literary text.

Reference in literature should not be the translator's most important goal, as it cannot convey the literary meaning because the meaning in the literary text cannot be isolated from the artistic form of the work, or from the cultural patterns of this work, which in turn are linked to general human aspects and specific social aspects from which it is difficult to distance the artwork from. Therefore, semantics differentiate between meaning and significance, saying that the significance can be accessed by reference only, while the meaning requires other factors.

For example, the heightened sensitivity to nuance (slight difference or subtle distinction) that marks literary translation can be found in the translation of the following Arabic sentence:

هذا حدثٌ قَبْلَ أَحَدِ عَشَرَ عَامًا.

As:

- a. This happened eleven years ago.
- b. This occurred eleven years ago.
- c. This took place eleven years ago.
- d. Eleven years have passed/ gone by since this happened / occurred/ took place.

All these semantically interchangeable sentences convey the same information but differ significantly in aesthetic effect. Each is defensible, and each would have its defenders, but the literary translator must make a choice, and from a succession of such choices emerges the final product.

The translator, at every turn, is faced with choices – of words, fidelity, emphasis, punctuation, register, sometimes even spelling. This is very essential in literary translation compared with other types of translation as in some of them, the information is conveyed irrespective of consideration of style. As related to literature. Translation denotes the attempt to render faithfully into a target language (normally the translator's own) the meaning, feeling, and, so far as possible, the style of a piece written in another (source) language. This may seem ideal, but translation is an art of the possible where compromise is inevitable and universal.

What the literary translator attempt to achieve is to reproduce all facets of the literary work in such a manner as to create ideally in the TL reader the same emotional and psychological effect experienced by the original SL reader.

Steps of literary translation:

- 1- Read the entire work at least twice. No translation can succeed without a thorough grounding in the source text (ST). An unaware translation is a bad one, and unaware, here, means failing to have a firm grasp on the meaning of the work, both at the surface level (words, phrases, idioms, syntactic structures,) and the underlying level of deeper significance.
- 2- Determine the authorial voice. This will affect virtually every choice in thousands of words to be translated. Note any shift in tone from one part of text to another.
- 3- Do the first draft, marking troublesome areas in square brackets and/ or bold face for further attention. At this stage, there is relatively less emphasis on smoothness and fluency and more on capturing the semantic gist of the text.
- 4- Consult with an educated native speaker or any expert to clarify any points that still vague. For specially vexing items, consult the author if possible.

- 5- Revise the manuscript, with emphasis on phraseology, fluency, and naturalness. At this stage, it should come as close as possible to reading as if it had been written originally in the target language (TL).
- 6- Have a highly literate native speaker of TL, preferably one with no knowledge of SL, go over the manuscript and indicate any rough spots – i.e., parts that are awkward, stilted, **translationese**, or that make no sense. Make necessary changes. Translationese here refers to the style of language perceived as characteristic of (bad) translations; language in a translation which appears awkward, unnatural, or unidiomatic, especially as a result of the translator attempting to replicate closely the specific features of the source text.
- 7- Go over the manuscript line by line and read it aloud to some expert or, if no such listener is available, read it aloud to yourself. This catches mistranslations as well as inadvertent omissions - it is incredibly easy to skip words, sentences, even entire paragraphs without realizing it. Unwitting homonyms, undesirable connotations, puerile (immature or nonsensical) constructions, unintentional repetitions, and other infelicities are more likely to make their presence felt here than at any other stage of the process. This step though will be not possible for many translators, but it adds immeasurably to the final product.
- 8- Make the final changes, run it through a spell-check. Then after sometime, give it one last reading.

Techniques of Literary Translation

Decisions

Even before beginning to tackle a text, the translator faces several crucial decisions of great importance to the final product. Awareness of these pivot points is fundamental to the adopting a strategy for the project, and each translation requires an approach that takes into account the specific challenges of the SL text. What works for one writer may not function well for another. Some texts will call for adaptation rather than straightforward translation.

Fluency and transparency

A literary translation should produce in the TL reader the same emotional and psychological reaction produced in the original SL reader. Thus, if the SL reader felt horror or curiosity or amusement, so should the TL reader. This approach is not without hazards, for the question

arises as to whether a translator is obliged to reproduce boredom, incoherence, unintentional grammatical lapses, factual errors, etc.

Most translators judge the success of a translation largely on the degree to which it does not read like a translation. The aim, though sometimes seems a hard task, is to render a ST in language A into a TT in language B in a way that leaves as little evidence as possible of the process. In this view, the TL reader might be unaware s/he was reading a translation unless altered of the fact. However, the majority of readers hold transparency to be perhaps the single most important aspect of a good translation.

SL author ————— Translator ————— TL reader

The translator is placed realistically in an intermediate position between SL AUTHOR and TL READER, for without the intervention of the translator the author would be unable to reach the TL audience. A source-oriented translation must do everything possible to make the TL reader understand what the author has thought or said in the ST.

However, another opposing perspective which is called resistance theory holds the view that a translation should patently demonstrate that it is a translation. The argument here is based on the resistance of the SL culture and SL to being fitted into dissimilar cultural-linguistic frame. Translators who follow resistance theory deliberately avoid excluding any elements that betray the SL originality and may seek them out. Smoothness and transparency are therefore undesirable and even marks of colonizing mentality. The reduced readability of the final product is an indication of its fidelity to the source language and the culture in which it is originated. Advocates of resistance might be termed the radical fringe (margin) of literary translation. As Murat Nemet Nejat has put this way: “A successful translation must sound somewhat alien, strange, not because it is awkward or unaware of resources of the TL, but because it expresses something new in it.”

Authors’ interest in being translated is related to their desire to achieve exposure in a foreign culture by appearing in another language. For writers from languages of limited diffusion, breaking into print in for example, English or Arabic or French can mean the difference between being known in their native land and becoming widely or internationally known.

Adaptation in Literary Translation

Normally, in adaptation the SL is less sacrosanct (treated as holy or inflexible) than in traditional translation. An adaptation, while taking as its point of departure the information content of the original, is less faithful than translation. One obvious case is drama, in which dialogue must be not only intelligible but also speakable. Many lines that look good on paper sound forced, or worse, when uttered on stage. Another occasion for adaptation rather than translation on stage

comes about in frothy (light or superficial) works like farce (satirical comedy). Often, current references are added to the translated play to enhance appeal and topicality for a local audience. While one would never do this when translating Shakespeare, for instance, it is normally considered no violation of property to inject such new material into lesser works like insubstantial comedies. Note that even Shakespeare is frequently adapted by changing not the dialogue but the setting, as in some film versions of his plays.

Another motive for adaptation often occurs when a language self-referential- that is, discusses its own grammatical structure or involves puns or other word-play. To convey the situation- rather than the meaning of the specific phrase itself- to a target reader an adaptation would be necessary. Some genres call for adaptation more than others, for instance, comedy may demand adaptation more than any other feature in a text.

One of the first decisions the translator must make: does the text call for a more or less normal translation or is an adaptation in order? Only perusal (attentive reading) of the entire work can answer this question. However, most of the task is customarily straightforward but some points may require adaptation.

Adaptation is not inferior to translation. It merely applies a different set of methods to selfsame problem of recreating as closely as possible for TL reader the effect experienced by SL reader. In some ways, adaptation is even more challenging than more conventional translation, for it demands even greater flexibility and unfailing sense for what the TL audience will find humorous, scary, or persuasive.

Beginning translators can stick to more straightforward translation until they acquire the experience and confidence to take on adaptation, which is certain to test their mettle (the courage to carry on).



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