

An Investigation of the Problems Affecting Literary Translation

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ABSTRACT:

This study aims to investigate difficulties affecting literary translation experienced by literary translators. The study adopts the analytical descriptive method, the researcher collected data by using a questionnaire which was given to (30) literary translators. To analyze the data the researcher has used the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The findings of the study revealed there are many factors affecting literary translation such as different structures of SL and TL, cultural and stylistic features, and accuracy and fidelity. In the light of the findings of the study, the researcher recommends that literary translators should have a good grasp of literary genres and sub-genres in both languages and they should consider both cultural and linguistic elements.

Key words: literary translation, accuracy and fidelity, cultural and stylistic features.

المستخلص:

تهدف هذه الورقة لتقصي الصعوبات التي تواجه المترجمين الأدبيين عند ترجمة النصوص الأدبية. استخدمت الباحثة طريقة الوصف التحليلي و جمعت البيانات بواسطة الاستبانة الذي اجريت لعدد (30) مترجما أدبيا. استخدمت الباحثة برنامج التحليل الاحصائي لتحليل البيانات. أظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن هناك بعض العوامل التي تؤثر علي ترجمة النصوص الأدبية كأختلاف تركيبه اللغة المصدر و اللغة الهدف , اختلاف الثقافه و الأسلوب بالأضافة الي الدقه و الأخلاص في الترجمة. بناء علي تلك النتائج فان الباحثة توصي بأن علي المترجمين الأدبيين الأمام التام بكل ضروب اللغة و فروعها لكلا اللغتين مع الأخذ في الاعتبار بعناصر اللغة و الثقافه.

INTRODUCTION:

Translating a literary text is a difficult task for the translator. To translate the text into the target language while preserving as much as possible of the quality, character and the "spirit" of the original text.

According to Haykobi (2014) translation takes an essential place as each genre requires certain kind of translation. He stated that one of the problems of literary translation is accuracy and fidelity especially in translating poetry. When translating prose, the translator faces the problem of mismatching in semantic meaning and stylistic

expressions of words and phrases of different languages.(p.54)

The main aim of this paper is to investigate problems affecting literary translation and suggesting ways to overcome them.

2. Statement of the problem:

The researcher has noticed that many literary translators face numerous serious deficiencies in translating literary texts as a result of variation in the structure of the source and target language, linguistic factors, different cultures, missing terms, words with several meanings, limited time and personal challenges .

3. Research Objectives:

The study is carried out to achieve the following objectives:

1. To shed light on the factors affecting literary translators.
2. To propose some suitable solutions to overcome these translation problems.

4. Questions of the Study:

1. What are the problems that affect literary translation?
2. How can literary translators overcome these translation difficulties?

5. Research Hypotheses:

The following hypotheses are postulated:

1. Literary translation is affected by many factors.
2. Literary translators can overcome translation difficulties by increasing their awareness of both cultural and linguistic elements.

6. Significance of the Study:

This study is significant for a number of reasons:

It contributes to the existing literature in the field of translation of literary texts.

Literary translators will benefit from the findings of this study and become aware of the cultural and stylistic features when translating into the TL.

Students of translation will be aware of the factors that contribute to translation difficulties.

The study shall also form a point of departure for translators, teachers of translation and educators in the field of their specializations.

7. Limits of the Study:

This study is limited to expert literary translators in order to investigate factors that affect literary translation and propose some suitable solutions to overcome them.

8. Methodology of the Study:

As has been mentioned, the purpose of this research is to investigate the problems affecting literary translation, to achieve this goal and in an attempt to answer the research questions, data has been collected through using a questionnaire which was administered to (30) translators who have long experience in translating literary texts. Then the data has been analyzed statistically by using Statistical Package for Social Science SPSS.

Review of Relevant Literature:

9. Literary Translation:

The term literary translation has often been used to refer to translation of literature from SL into TL.

According to Chahal (2018) literary translation is a type of translation which is different from translation in general; it is a mode of cross-cultural communication, it is not only a TL replica of a text in SL but it is also a creative process by which meaningful experience is transferred from one language to another. (p.42)

10. Factors Affecting Literal Translation:

According to Wong et.al. (1993) there are many factors that are crucial to the process of translation, they are:

1. Linguistic Factors:

Each of the linguistic factors, phonological, lexical, syntactic and textual factors can interfere with literary translation.

1.1 Phonological factors

Phonological factors exert a direct and crucial influence upon the process of literary translation, yet sometimes literary translators sometimes try to create a certain kind of equivalence when they encounter poetic or rhetoric phonological features.

1.2 Lexical Factors

The most problematic and time-consuming aspect of translating is achieving an accurate lexical rendering; the difference in lexical context-dependence between SL and TL present a challenge for the translator. Common sense dictates that the more polysemous a word is, the more ambiguous, indeterminate, and hence context dependent its meaning. Therefore, the translator must attach great importance to context and try to make the polysemous words unambiguous with the help of the contextual clues since many mistranslations are the result of neglecting, ignoring or misjudging the context in which the word is used.

1.3 Syntactic Factors:

When translating SL into TL the translator has to take the trouble to interpret and reconstruct the SL structure on the basis of TL syntactic norms; the translator has to be aware of different language families, systems, inflections, word order..etc.

1.4 Textual Factors:

The textual difference between the SL and TL present an obstacle to the literary translator when translating as the text is structured on the basis of individual sentences; the translator faces the problem of thematic structure and cohesion.

2. Cultural Factors:

According to Catford (1965) instances of untranslatability can arise from two sources one is linguistic, and the other is cultural. A translator who fails to take the cultural context into account is likely to commit ridiculous errors.(p.49).

Nida(1982) pointed out that one of the problems a translator can face come from the fact that some words or phrases

expressing objects, facts..etc are so deeply rooted in their source culture and so specific to the culture that produced them that have no equivalent in the target language because they are not yet codified in the target language.

3. Personal Factors:

The translator's professional and psychological conditions may have a direct influence on the translated text.

Personal competence is one the factors that affect the translator as he has to have special knowledge and experience in the field concerned.

Personal factors can also affect translation; even with the same personal competence, two translators with different attitudinal orientations, whether aesthetic, communicative, strategic, political, ethical, or professional will produce different translations.

Huang (2001) stated that there are three specific challenges of literary translation as follows:

1. Literary Language (poetic language):

Literary translation has a different function from standard language as it possesses the function of foregrounding the utterance through breaking the norms of the standard language besides that the complexity of the poetic language and the subtleness of the effects raise a great challenge for the literal translator especially for the prose translator.

Steiner(1975) pointed out that translation has an interpretation nature and indicates the importance of understanding the source text when translating, claiming that the main task for the translator as "complete reader" is to "establish the full intentional quality" of the source text.(p.5).

Another problem of poetic language comes from being non-standard from the language as translation may be unfamiliar. Bassenett(2002) stated that " translators of novels take pains to create readable target language texts , avoiding the stilted effect than can follow from adhering too closely to source language syntactical structures , but fail to consider the way in which individual sentences form part of the total structure" p.115.

2. The dominant structures of literary texts:

The literary text has its own features that distinguish it from other types of texts.

Nida (1946) declared that the content and form mutually affect each other, he suggested that " the content of the message can never be completely abstracted from the form, and the form is nothing apart from content" (p.154).

Bassnet (2002) stated that " the failure of many translators to understand that a literary text is made up of a complex set of systems existing in a dialectical relationship with other set outside its boundaries has often led them to focus on particular aspects of a text at the expense of others" , she gives the example of the translator who does not acknowledge the dialectical materialist basis of the irony in Shakespear's Sonnet or who ignores the way in which the doctrine of the transubstantiation is used as making devices for the production of Vittorini's anti-Fascist in *Conversazioni in Sicilia* is upsetting the balance of power by treating the original as his own property.

3. Translation as an individual translation's selection of the target language words.

Translation is a communicative act between the author, the translator and the reader, the selection of the words when

translating is an important issue that should be considered by the translator, to achieve this the translator has to read, comprehend and interpret the source language text then to select the right words when translating it into the TL.

4. Target language culture and readers

Cultural differences can lead to a great challenge in literary translation as language is inseparable from culture.

Bassnett (2002) stated that "no language can exist unless it is steeped in the context of culture , and no culture can exist which does not have at its centre , the structure of natural language"p.65.

Literary translation has usually a readership which is likely to be quiet different from the one the writer originally had in mind so the target audience represent an important issue in literary translation and may well need to adapt the source text anew.

According to Hussain(2017) the translation of any text into a foreign language provides an instance for inter-cultural communication. The existence of literary text between different cultures is an outcome of negotiations between different languages that may include features, contradicting the target culture norms and languages.

Translation plays a significant part in filling the gap between different nations and cultures. Literary translations particularly assist different states to reach a universal culture on a mutual ground. Hassain(2017)

11. The literary translator:

According to Ghazala (2015) the literary translator has to be master the following qualifications and capabilities:

1. Creativity or inventiveness.
2. Special liking of literature " sense of dedication" to literature.

3. Psychological aptitude to live the TL literary translator with respect to events, characters, plot, syntactic structure and prominent sound features.
 4. Command of conventions of reading and interpreting literature.
 5. Good knowledge of literary genres and subgenres in both languages.
 6. Considerable competence in figures of rhetoric (metaphors) , allegory, similes ,puns, metonymy , symbolism , irony...etc) and special fixed phrases e.g. (idioms, proverbs...etc.) in both languages.
 7. Awareness of the basis of sounds / prosodic features in both languages, especially alliteration, rhyme, meter, foot, beat, scansion and other essentials of prosody.
 8. Flexibility and open-mindedness.
 9. Background knowledge of some famous words of literature in both languages.
 10. Working with a back of the neck idea that literature is symbolic, representing something else in human life.
 11. Humility: since even best efforts will never succeed in capturing the richness of the original (Landers 2001)(p.8).
 12. Specialism or vast knowledge of the crucial role of style in the understanding, interpretation and translation of literature.
- The literary translator is the one who can reduce the gap between two cultures , he is

responsible to produce meanings , which can be perceived for the readers' cultural community(Wolf,1997).

According to Hussain(2017) the translator is known as an efficient personnel , who has the ability to reduce text with the same impression as the original text ; it is necessary for the literary translator to contemplate the aesthetic aspects of the translated text in order to maintain style and laxity of the original content.

12.Data Analysis and Discussion:

The researcher has collected data by using a questionnaire which consists of ten statements in order to investigate the causes and solutions of the difficulties that literary translators face when translating literary texts. The questionnaire was given to 30 respondents who represent the teachers' community at Sudanese Universities.

The following table shows the mean and standard deviation and chi-square values for the following study Hypotheses: The following hypotheses are postulated:

1. Literary translation is affected by many factors.
2. Literary translators can overcome translation difficulties by increasing their awareness of both cultural and linguistic elements.

Nom.	Statement	mean	SD	Chi square	p-value
1	One of the biggest challenges in translating literary texts is the balance to remain true to the original work while creating an entirely unique piece that evokes the same responses as the original piece.	2.4	1.9	12	0.00
2	Cultural differences can lead to a great challenge in literary translation as language is inseparable from culture.	2.5	2.6	17	0.00
3	Phonological ,lexical, syntactic and textual factors can interfere with literary translation.	2.4	2.4	13	0.00

4	Accuracy and fidelity represents a noticeable problem in poetry because the literary translator faces the problem of a mismatch in semantic meaning and stylistic expressions of words and phrases of different languages.	3	0.8	25	0.03
5	When translating , it is important for the translator to capture the feelings and emotions as well as the meaning of the piece of work.	2.9	1.6	20	0.00
6	Awareness of the basis of sounds / prosodic features in both languages, especially alliteration, rhyme, meter, foot, beat, scansion and other essentials of prosody.	2.4	1.9	12	0.00
7	Considerable competence in figures of rhetoric (metaphors) , allegory, similes ,puns, metonymy , symbolism , irony..etc) and special fixed phrases e.g. (idioms, proverbs...etc.) in both languages.	2.5	1.4	17	0.00
8	Literary translation possesses the function of foregrounding the utterance through breaking the norms of the standard language besides that the complexity of the poetic language and the subtleness of the effects raise a great challenge for the literal translator especially for the prose translator	2.7	2.6	15	0.00
9	The most problematic and time-consuming aspect of translating is achieving an accurate lexical rendering; the difference in lexical context-dependence between SL and TL present a challenge for the translators.	2.8	0.8	20	0.001
10	The translator's professional and psychological conditions may have a direct influence on the translated text.	2.5	0.7	21	0.008

Source: The researcher from applied study, SPSS 24

From the above table, it is obvious that the calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' answers in the (10) statements is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the answers of the respondents which indicates that the hypotheses of the study are confirmed.

13. Conclusion and Recommendations:

According to the findings of the questionnaire which conveys the views of literary translators about the problem of the study, literary translation is affected by the following factors:

- Cultural differences can lead to a great challenge in literary translation as language is inseparable from culture.
- Phonological , lexical, syntactic and textual factors can interfere with literary translation.



-The translator's professional and psychological conditions may have a direct influence on the translated text.

-Literary translation possesses the function of foregrounding the utterance through breaking the norms of the standard language besides that the complexity of the poetic language and the subtleness of the effects raise a great challenge for the literal translator especially for the prose translator

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommends the following points for the students:

-When translating, it is important for the translator to capture the feelings and emotions as well as the meaning of the piece of work.

-Awareness of the basis of sounds / prosodic features in both languages, especially alliteration, rhyme, meter, foot, beat, scansion and other essentials of prosody is essential when translating literary texts.

- The translator must possess considerable competence in figures of rhetoric (metaphors) , allegory, similes ,puns, metonymy , symbolism , irony...etc) and

special fixed phrases e.g. (idioms, proverbs...etc.) in both language.

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