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AESTHETIC EFFECT IN LITERARY TRANSLATION
- GENERAL VIEWS -

الأثر الجمالي في الترجمة الأدبية
آراء عامة

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Abstract:

The sense of delight and enjoyment that literary texts creates among audience is obtained through the fine choice of words the literary writer makes, the excellent arrangement of words to build sentences, and the wide range of figurative tools the author employs. These features compose the aesthetic effect of literature on the audience and therefore must be given much consideration in the literary translation process in order to provide as much as possible the target audience with the same aesthetic effect experienced by the audience of the original. In this paper, we are going to see the most important theories of literary translation and the relationship of the latter with text typology, cope the challenges that literary translation poses and discuss some general point of views on aesthetic effect in literary translation.

Keywords: literary translation – enjoyment – challenges - aesthetic effect - text typology.

الملخص:

يُكتسب حس البهجة والمتعة الذي تولّده النصوص الأدبية في المتلقي من خلال اختيار الكاتب للكلمات بدقة، ونظمه لها لبناء الجمل بامتياز واستخدامه للأدوات المجازية على نطاق واسع. تشكّل هذه الخصائص الأثر الجمالي للأدب عند المتلقي لذلك وجب أخذه في الاعتبار في عملية الترجمة الأدبية من أجل تزويد المتلقي الهدف قدر الإمكان بنفس الأثر الجمالي الذي اختبره المتلقي الأصلي. نتناول في هذا المقال بعض أهم نظريات الترجمة الأدبية وعلاقتها بتصنيف النصوص، ونتطرق إلى التحديات التي يواجهها هذا النوع من الترجمة، ثم نناقش الآراء المختلفة حول أثر الجمالية في الترجمة الأدبية.

الكلمات المفتاحية:– الترجمة الأدبية – المتعة – التحديات – تصنيف النص – الأثر الجمالي.

INTRODUCTION

Literary translation is profoundly different from other types of translation. This is because the core principle of literary translation is the dominance of poetic communicative function. It means that in addition to rendering information to the audience, literary translation has also aesthetic functions and effects.

The artistic image made in the literary work will have an influence on the audience. Accordingly, the literary translator should consider specific features of the literary text.

When reading a story, poem or any other sort of translated literary work, we notice the text itself with its meaning, emotions and characters. It is to a certain extent a challenging task to achieve the main goal of

the translation - creating a particular image for the target audience.

Consequently, literary translation might involve some deviations from the standard rules. A literal translation cannot reflect the depth and meaning of the literary work. A literary translator reproduces a non-literal rendition of the original text. It is all about how the translator perceives it. He/she rewrites the text from the beginning to the very end.

In this paper, we are going to see the most important theories of literary translation, the relationship between literary translation and text typology, challenges literary translation poses, and discuss some general point of views on aesthetic effect in literary translation.

1. On literary translation theories

Literary translation witnessed and still witness several theories throughout the history. Lefever states that "For a long time the only translation deemed worthy of study has been translation of literature" (Rose, 1981). Cicero, St, Jerome, Luther, Dolet, Dryden and Tytler have contributed to the history of translation theory and research (Bassnett, 2004).

All of them see translation literature not only as a process, but also as a product reflecting the sense, style and the aesthetic criteria of the target text. Hence, they claim that sense for sense rendering, not word for word one, which is capable to produce an aesthetic, stylistic, meaningful and acceptable translation.

Bassnett claims that both Horace and Cicero focus on the importance of aesthetic dimension of literary translated work and they distinguish between word for word translation and sense for sense translation (Bassnett, 2004).

The first attempt to promote a systematic translation theory has been developed by Dryden, Dolet, and Tyler (Munday, 2008). Despite the fact that Dryden and others have produced beneficial notions to translation, some see that their approach is prescriptive rather than descriptive.

In the 20th century, the theory of translation knew, according to Emery, a shift from old dichotomies of “word for word” vs. “sense for sense” to the contemporary dichotomies of Static vs. Dynamic (As-Safi), Formal vs. functional (Nida); Semantic vs. communicative (Newark).

The above-mentioned translation theorists have played an important role in the development of translation theory, mainly As-Safi who created the “Aesthetic communication Theory” for translating literary text (As-Safi, 2011). This theory added a significant phase that is 'transcoding’ which is a phase that helps translators produce an aesthetic, dynamic and communicative translation.

2. Definition of Literary Translation

Literary translation, as its name reveals, is concerned with translating texts written in a literary language that is distinct from any other kind of language. It can be also defined as the translation of literary work or other artistic works which include literary values.

According to Adewuni (2004, p. 1), every literary writer has his own lexical and stylistic peculiarities that constitute the highly connotative and subjective character of literary language. This means that one literary work has many different translations since every translator employs his/her own words, expressions, styles, etc…

By means of his powerful imagination, any literary writer makes use of various literary skills such as figures of speech in order to draw literary structures. Literary language is also different and capable to communicate intellectual, emotional, and spiritual interests of individuals.

Literary translation is also about transmitting the artistic values from the original text into the target text. Its main goal is to enlighten the audience and conveying the aesthetic emotions. In this context, Mao Dun cites that "Literary translation is to use another language to convey the original artistic conception so that the target text reader could be enlightened, moved, and receive the aesthetic feeling as that of the source text reader…" (Mao, 1984, p.508).

Literary translation is the most challenging form of translation. It is described by Wechsler (1998, p. 9) as an "odd art" because "it consists of a person sitting at a desk, writing a fiction or poetry that has already been written, that has someone else's name on it..." . This fact makes the task of the translation harder.

That means it is the strange nature of literary translation that orders its complexity, since it includes the literary translator in the burden of rewriting the same literary work written in the original. This makes the literary translator becomes the second author the fact, which increases the literary translation's difficulty.

3. Challenges of Literary Translation

Like all the other types of translation, literary translation also poses challenges. In order to make a translation more acceptable, the translator endeavors to solve these challenges. Nevertheless, challenges of literary translation are rather different from other types of translation. For instance, while a technical text typically deals with the lexical or structural ambiguity, literary translation has to deal with content, culture and stylistic features.

Literary language is conveyed indirectly since words are not employed for their primary meaning; they can contain a secondary or contextual meaning. Literature is a multilayered phenomenon. Hence, translating literature involves many challenges as well.

One of the main challenges of literary translation is to be faithful to the original work with the need to create something unique and distinctive that will evoke the same feelings and responses as the original. This can be particularly challenging when it comes to translating poetry.

Rene Wellek cites that "literary language is full of homonyms, arbitrary or irrational categories such as grammatical gender; it is permeated with historical accidents, memories, and associations... moreover, literary language is far from merely referential. It has its expressive side..." (1985:

23). This expressive side represents in itself a great challenge for the literary translator because it involves several particularities.

The challenges of literary translation can include cultural differences, metaphors, figurative use of language, allusions, wordplays, dialects and so on. As there can never be a parallelism between two languages, translating these challenges become a hard task for the translator.

4. Literary Translation and Text Typology

Notwithstanding the fact that many different text types such as legal, literary and business have informative, expressive, argumentation, emotive features, we can say it may be important to have such typology in translation, especially in literary translation.

Therefore, literary texts should be distinguished from no-literary texts. We can say that translation literary text is not a process that involves only the transference of lexical meaning or linguistic units, but also the transmitting of the aesthetic and artistic values of source text to target text, which needs creativity in translation.

Literary texts are composed or translated is completely different from that of other text types. Therefore, Reiss's classification of texts in accordance with their functional characteristics should be taken in consideration when translating literary texts (Reiss, 1977).

There are so many reasons that make us take in consideration typology in literary translation. Some of these reasons are:

- The complicated, hybrid and artistic nature of literary translation.
- The function of literary translated text is different from that of other text types, (expressive and emotive rather than informative).
- Literary translation is creativity-oriented process, in which the translator should reflect his/her language competence and performance.
- Literary translation is also target–oriented process, in which the translator should produce an equivalent effect among target text audience.
- Literary translation needs to apply methods and strategies which comply with dynamic, communicative, aesthetic translation, such as the dynamic translation approach.

5. Aesthetic Effect in Literary Translation

Any translation has linguistic, semantic, and communicative effects on the target audience especially literary translation. Since literary texts are best known for the joy that they create within the audience, they engender a further dimension in literary translation effects: the aesthetic effect.

Aesthetic effect is one of the most notable characteristics of literary writing as Stecker (2003, p. 65) cites: "...literature is the body of works of art produced in linguistic media, and that this body is to be defined in terms of the possession of certain artistic values...a range of values for which works of literature have characteristically been appreciated."

Literature is to be perceived as the variety of literary writings, which involves a good deal of artistic values. These values are the reason behind the readers' admiration for literature. That is to say, all literary pieces are valuable for their attractively presented themes that are given in entertaining and attractive forms.

Goodarzi (2003, p. 9) states that literary texts are typically known for the pleasure they create on the readers, for they are more complexly and elegantly organized than their non-literary equivalents. The special patterning of their lexical, structural and stylistic choices produces the unique core of pleasure that is absent in any other type of writing. This latter is known as the "aesthetic effect". He cites that "Aesthetic effect is a sense of enjoyment experienced by the reader."

To be precise, every literary piece is distinct from ordinary writing and capable of generating the aesthetic effect on the audience. The aesthetic effect is an agreeable feeling of enjoyment typical to such an exceptional type of writing and is the result of particular selection of words and structures as well as style design.

Since literary translation involves the rendering of the original meaning together with form, style and effect into the target language, the aesthetic effect should also be maintained so that the translation will be adequate, equivalent and effective.

To be exact, literary texts should be wholly dealt with in the literary translation practice; this means that all aspects of the literary language used in a given piece of literature have to be rendered in the target product.

Aesthetic effect, as a significant aspect in literary language, is to be maintained in the literary translation process to amuse the target audience as much as the source material amuses the native audience.

Stecker (op.cit. p. 67) points out why Goodarzi claims his view regarding aesthetic effect. He states that: "Literary value is often identified as aesthetic value, the value of the experience of a literary work…I take the aesthetic value of a piece of writing to consist in the pleasure it is capable of giving to those who imaginatively experience or contemplate the world of the work." This clarifies the leading feature for which literary works are so highly appreciated: the aesthetic value.

It is the agreeable perception of a given literary piece experienced by the audience. This implicates that since literary works are valuable for their artistic nature; there must be certain preservation regarding the aesthetic character of literary pieces when translated from source language to target language.

Xiaoshu and Dongming (op.cit. p. 3) state "Literary translation is to reproduce the original artistic images in another language, so that the reader of the translation may be inspired, moved and aesthetically entertained in the same way as the native reader is by the original."

We can understand that literary translation is then not only a simple process of rendering the linguistic and

communicative functions of the source text into the target text, but also a way to show faithfulness to the aesthetic aspects in the original work. Accordingly, literary translation should offer the target audience the identical feelings of enjoyment and pleasure to those experienced by the native audience.

In the same context, literary translation is, according to Shi (2004, p.2), not simply linguistic conversion between languages, but it also requires accommodation in many other factors such as cultural and aesthetic aspects of the original literary text.

To put it still differently, no matter how faithful is the linguistic rendering in literary translation, it is incomplete and inadequate until an adjustment covers a variety of aspects of the source literary piece, essentially cultural and artistic.

CONCLUSION

Literary translation is not only the satisfaction in the transfer of meanings, but also the reproduction, in the target text, of the blanks and indeterminacy in tasting the aesthetic value of source text.

Literary texts should be distinguished from no-literary texts. This is why literary translation is not only rendering a text from one language into another. It is not a process that involves only the transference of lexical meaning or linguistic units, but also the transmitting of the aesthetic and artistic values of source text to target text, which needs creativity in translation.

It is necessary to point out that literary translation is a very challenging activity principally because creative writing is itself characterized by a very sophisticated, symbolic and figurative language.

This kind of translation involves three types of faithfulness: faithfulness to the original meaning, faithfulness to the original form, and faithfulness to the original effect. Since literary texts are generally known for the enjoyment and pleasure which they create on the audience, it is one of the major goals of literary translators to maintain the aesthetic values of the original literary texts.

To sum up, literary translation is viewed as the most challenging type of translation. In addition to all the difficulties that exist in all types of translation especially at the lexical, grammatical, cultural and semantic levels, literary translation has to deal also with the aesthetic effect of the literary text, a task that requires special competence, high skills and a great effort of the translator.

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