

Cross-cultural Communication through Literary Translation

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Abstract

This research paper is intended to shed light on the theoretical grounds for literary translation. It provides definitions for basic terms and concepts of the major topics and issues related to and needed in literary translation. Among the terms and concepts essential to the readers / students' background knowledge in this connection are: Literature, literary translation, the literary translator and culture. The article also discusses how can literary translation be an appropriate field for cross-cultural communication.

ملخص

يحاول هذا المقال تسليط الضوء على أهم المفاهيم الخاصة بالترجمة الأدبية من قبيل (الأدب، الترجمة، الترجمة الأدبية، الثقافة)، وهي مفاهيم مهمة بالنسبة لكل مهتم بالترجمة الأدبية، كما يهدف المقال إلى إبراز دور الترجمة الأدبية في الاتصال الثقافي بين الأمم اعتباراً للعلاقة الوطيدة بين اللغة والثقافة.

Introduction :

The American novelist Mark Twain once said, “The man who does not read good books has no advantage over the man who can’t read them. » indeed Books are a man’s best friend. Books are the ultimate source of wisdom and knowledge. Books are the windows that allow their readers to get an access into different country’s cultures and people. Perhaps for this reason, translations of books from one language to another have always been an important activity. It is undeniable that translations of literary works plays a critical role in helping exchange ideas across different languages and cultures and enhance intercultural understanding ,says Glendon a translation professor Agnes Whitfield. It goes without saying that most people prefer reading in their own native language: «Not all Canadians feel comfortable enough in their second language to read a work of literature in its original language,» says Whitfield. «Translations fill the gap, and open up new worlds to explore.»

Translations of literary works, be it novels, poems, short stories and plays, open up completely new worlds to explore. It is not only novels which are translated in large numbers. Academic books, for example, are translated for students who wish to study and get an understanding of different cultures. Translation can play a number of different roles such as a ‘unifying’ or constructing new words but also, most crucially, as a source of knowledge about foreign, lesser known cultures. Thus, translation is not merely a linguistic process, but can also make a political and social impact and be a means of communication between different cultures.

1-Defining Literature :

The majority of people do not feel the necessity of defining literature, for everybody knows what literature is. By Literature it is generally meant , prose (novels and short stories), poetry and drama. Nobody mistakes them for something else .Men of letters and critics believe that defining literature is not just defining it in terms of its main genres. For this reason, various attempts have been made to define literature by writers and men of letters themselves.

Online Etymology Dictionary tates that the origin of the term literature goes back to) late 14c., from Latin literatura/ litteratura «learning, a writing, grammar,» originally «writing formed with letters,» from litera/littera «letter». Originally «book learning» (it replaced Old English boccræft), the meaning «literary production or work» is first attested 1779 in Johnson’s «Lives of the English Poets» (he didn’t include this definition in his dictionary, however); that of «body of writings from a period or people» is first recorded 1812. Great literature is simply language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree. [Ezra Pound, «ABC of Reading»] Meaning «the whole of the writing on a particular subject» is from 1860; sense of «printed matter generally» is from 1895. The Latin word also is the source of Spanish literatura, Italian letteratura, German Literatur. While The Macmillan Dictionary defines literature as any writings in which expression and form, in connection with ideas of permanent and universal interest, are characteristic or essential features, as poetry, novels, history, biography, and essays. It is then the

entire body of writings of a specific language, period, people, etc. : the literature of England. 3. the writings dealing with a particular subject: the literature of ornithology. 4. the profession of a writer or author. 5. Literary work or production. stories, poems, and plays, especially those that are considered to have value as art and not just entertainment great works of literature She is studying German language and literature 2 books or other printed information about a subject Police discovered racist literature in his home. academic books and articles published about a particular subject literature on: Recent literature on cancer emphasizes the importance of diet. Literature than is the art of composition either in a written or oral form and this composition often takes the form of either prose or poetry .

2-Defining Translation :

Before launching into discussion literary translation in specific details, a short purview of major definitions of translation might be needed .in fact , the term translation might refer to something that is translated, or the process of translating something, from one language to another: The children do one French translation a week. A literal translation of «euthanasia» would be «good death». The English version is boring - perhaps it has lost something in translation (= is not as good as the original).Using other languages in translation › changed into someone›s own language, not in the original language: She reads Proust in translation using other languages.

The Cambridge Advanced Learner›s Dictionary defines translation as follows “spoken or written words that have been changed into a different language » Macmillan Dictionary defines it as the activity of changing spoken or written words into a different language a word or phrase that means the same thing as a word or phrase in a different language «Goodbye» is probably the best translation of «Au revoir.»

In fact there has been a vicious circle, as it were, in the various and different definitions of the term «translation». The point of departure among them is what translation means first, as the underlined words in the following definitions indicate:

- «The process of translation between two written languages involves the translator changing an original written text ... in the original verbal language (the SL) into a written text ... in a different verbal language (the TL)» (Munday, 2001:5, in Rojo, 2009: 25).

- «Translation consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style» (Nida and Taber, 1969: 12)

«Translation is an expression in another language (or target language) of what has been expressed in another (source language), preserving semantic and stylistic equivalences» (Dubois, 1973, in Bell, 1991: 5).

- «A good translation [is] that in which the merit of the original work is so completely transfused into another language...» (Tytler, in Bell: 1991: 11).

In fact, there are various types of translation: administrative translation, commercial translation, computer translation, economic translation, financial translation, general

translation, legal translation, and literary translation .Our focus in this research shall be on literary translation as one of the fundamental types of translation

3- Translation and Literary Translation :

Recent studies on translation revealed that translators usually do not spare any effort to achieve an ideal replica of the original text, but in practice they often have to accept that not everything can be translated exactly into a different language», the failure of translators, literary or other, to produce an identical version of the second language text in the target language can be attributed to the fact that the text is not a linguistic entity it is a very complicated piece of writing .Its understanding involves grasping the semantic, stylistic, syntactic, functional Sense of the text. The literary translator therefore should focus on all those components of the text in question in order to achieve equivalence in grammar, style, function, and intention. But achieving equivalence in literary translation is a hard task simply because literary texts and literature in general are tightly linked to the cultural context that led to their birth.

4-Literary Translation :

«Literary Translation» is a phrase often used to refer to the translation of literature. Perhaps «translating literature» or «the translation of literature» is more accurate than «literary translation» for the latter can be sometimes «unliterary» in the sense that the translation of an SL literary text may fail to be literary in the TL. That said, the term is used to be understood as a reference to the translation of literature that is hoped to be literary in the other language.

Some classic writers, poets and men of letters including Dryden, Saint Jerome, Humboldt Benjamin and others differing views about the possibility and the impossibility of translation (which is by implication literary translation) (see Schulte et al, 1992, for further details). Oddly enough, this controversy about a dichotomy of two extremes, the possibility and impossibility of literary translation is still going on these days.

Literary translation is the translation of texts within the field of literature. Translation of literary works (novels, short stories, plays, poems, etc.) is considered a literary pursuit in its own right. As literature is a culture-dependent subject field, the work of literary translation and its products are not necessarily linguistically transparent.. The translation of literary works is considered as one of the highest forms of translation as it involves so much more than simply translating a literary text. A literary translator must be capable of also translating feelings, cultural nuances, humour and other subtle elements of a piece of work. After studying and analysing the obstacles that might hinder the easy process of the action of literary translation, some thinkers went beyond that to declare that literary translations are not really possible to be achieved. In 1959 the Russian-born linguist Roman Jakobson went as far as to say that «poetry by definition [was] untranslatable».

Literary translation is every action that implies the translation of all genres of literature, which include prose, drama and poetry. Johnson (1999:1) describes literature

as (an apparently nebulous body of knowledge in oral or written form, an imitation of life, which reflects civilization and culture, and which covers every angle of human activities-culture, tradition, entertainment, information among others.) It is one of the great creative and universal means of communicating the emotional, spiritual and intellectual concerns of humankind.

Literary translation has to do with translating texts written in a literary language, which is usually distinct from the language of economy or that of law. Literary language is often known to be extremely connotative and subjective because the writer is often lexically and stylistically idiosyncratic and through imagination, he usually uses some literary techniques such as figures of speech, proverbs and idioms through which he conveys his literary message according to his cultural ,social ,and even emotional inclinations .in a romantic poem for instance the reader should depend on biographical information in order to correctly interpret the poem .in his famous and outstanding poem , The Raven the American poet Edgar Allan Poe reproduces his own emotional experience and was extremely subjective in discussing the theme of the lost love and he uses symbols and figures of speech that serves his romantic text .

According to Peter Newmark, the literary translator is the person whose job is the translation of literary texts. A literary translator is obliged to respect good writing by taking into account the language, structures, and content, whatever the nature of the text. (Newmark 1988:1) The literary translator participates in the author's creative activity and then recreates structures and signs by adapting the target language text to the source language text as closely as intelligibility allows. He needs to assess not only the literary quality of the text but also its acceptability to the target reader, and this can never be done without having a deep knowledge of the cultural and literary history of both the source and the target Languages. for example if a literary translator wants to translate The Raven from English to Arabic,he needs to have enough knowledge about the original text, its author here it is meant enough biographical information ,and the literary and cultural history of both English and Arabic.

Those who concern themselves with literary translation often face peculiar problems. Problems in literary translation might include, linguistic, psychological, cultural, and style. Benamjn Lee Whorl believes that (the background linguistic system (...) of each language is itself the shaper of ideas....) This means that language often directs man's intellect and sometimes his sensory perception. Therefore we can say that linguistically, each language has its own metaphysics, which determines the soul of a community and its behavioural norms, and this is what is known as linguistic relativity according to the Whorfian hypothesis. Since words or images may vary considerably from one community to another, the translator must pay a specific attention to the style, language and vocabulary peculiar to the two languages in question in order to achieve an (exact) or at least a faithful translation of the original text.. Among the famous literary translations from Arabic to English Season of Migration to the North, by the celebrated, world-renowned Sudanese author Tayeb Salih and Memory in the Flesh, by the Algerian writer Ahlam Mostaghanmi, was published in 2003. The book was translated by Baria Ahmar

and revised by Peter Clark.

5-The Basics of Translating a Literary Work :

If literature is an art, literary translation is also an artistic action that involves the transposing and interpreting of creative works such as novels, short prose, poetry, drama, , and film scripts from one language and culture into another. It can also involve intellectual and academic works like psychology publications, philosophy and physics papers, art and literary criticism, and works of classical and ancient literature. It is thanks to literary translation that we could hear of Aristotle and Plato and human thought and art would be devoid of the ideas of great minds, spanning to Locke and Voltaire to Tayeb Selah and Edward Said. Writing a text needs a strategy through which the author can organize and then well express his ideas in an appropriate way; translating a text also needs a strategy and appropriate conditions since it is a productive and artistic activity.

The literary translator should become an avid and intimate reader in each of his language. Translating creative works requires the ability to read between the lines. The literary translator has to love reading in the genre(s) he is translating and be both intimate with the writer and the nuances of language, culture, thought, and message.

If, for instance, the literary translator translates prose poems from Arabic into English, he has to read as many published prose poems as possible, in Arabic and in English. This will help him to grasp the styles, the subtleties, the contexts, and soul of prose poetry in order to deconstruct Arabic and reconstruct the English. The literary translator has to keep on top of his languages. Language is a fluid entity that constantly changes and evolves. Dialects change, semantics change, new words are coined, and old words die and are reborn.

The literary translator must master his writing skills in his mother tongue. Most literary translators, with very few exceptions, translate exclusively into their mother tongue, the language within best they express themselves and are most at home in. To translate a book, the literary translator has to write a book; to translate a play, he needs to know how to write a play. The only way he can do this is writing as much as possible in his language. Perhaps this that led Most published translators to become

Academic education is required for every translator: the literary translator must get an education. Academic institutions are one of the strongest fountains and supporters of literary and academic translation. He should get at least one degree in comparative literature, linguistics, languages, or translation to give him a head start. Literary translation specifically is often offered through creative writing programs. Receiving academic training will also give the literary translator access to literary lectures, mentor ships with professors who translate, and libraries with well-established and worldly collections. The literary translator must make a Research about the writer and work he is translating. A writer's work is a piece of him/herself. In order to interpret what he is reading, he must know everything about the person behind the words. Ask questions like: When and where was the work written? Where was the writer from? What surrounded the writer at the time the work was written? Does the work draw references from other literary pieces? What

else has the writer written? And so forth.

The literary translator must be aware of the risks behind what he is translating. The translation of a particular work can cost both the writer and translator their lives depending on the statement of the work. The translation of books has sparked revolutions and wars.

The literary translator must always remember that no translation is perfect. The minute he begins to render his first sentence, the original is already lost in translation. It is his job not to find an equivalent but rather reconstruct the original as though it was written in the target language. Cultural concepts, shades of color, shades of meaning and even history can and will be lost. Don't be afraid of that but instead embrace it. You can always use footnotes / end notes if necessary. Who is your audience?

The literary translator should Join a professional translation organization.. Joining an organization is important for his professionalism, it enables him to network, and it opens his doors to professional training opportunities and translation prizes.

Practice is very necessary for any translation,. The literary translator should sit in a place and translate for at least fifteen minutes a day. A regular schedule is very helpful and might make translation a very amusing daily activity.

6-Literary Translation and the Concept of Culture

We said earlier that difficulty in translating a literary text lies in its implication of the cultural standards of the environment of its author since it is often said that literature is the mirror of society .first we should know what is meant exactly by the term culture and then we can demonstrate how the text can be linked to the author's culture and how the literary translator should translate the text so intelligently that he preserves the original cultural standards of the original text and feed the cultural needs of the target language reader .

6.1-Defining Culture :

In fact many scholars and intellectual men attempted to provide a definition to culture, and they all agreed that the origin and the first known use of the term "culture» goes back to the 15th century. In Middle English, cultivated land, cultivation, from Anglo-French, from Latin cultura, from cultus, past participle. It has been agreed among thinkers that the word "culture" is often used to describe "the quality in a person or society that arises from a concern for what is regarded as excellent in arts, letters, manners, scholarly pursuits, etc. it is. a particular form or stage of civilization, as that of a certain nation or period: Greek culture, as it can mean development or improvement of the mind by education or training. The term can be used to refer to the behaviours and beliefs characteristic of a particular social, ethnic, or age group: the youth culture; the drug culture. Merriam Webster defines culture as the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group; also : the characteristic features of everyday existence (as diversions or a way of life) shared by people in a place or time , popular culture southern culture,it can also refer to the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution or organization as it can mean the set of values,

conventions, or social practices associated with a particular field, activity, or societal characteristic.

In his definition of culture, Newmark claimed that by culture it is often meant «the way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression» (Newmark 1988: 94). According to this definition of culture each language group has its own culturally specific features. Therefore the concept of culture is of a drastic importance in translation in general and in literary translation in a more particular sense. Discussing the problems of correspondence in translation, Nida sheds light on both linguistic and cultural differences between the second language and the target language and believes that «differences between cultures may cause more severe complications for the translator than do differences in language structure» (Nida 1964: 130). Generally similarities in culture often lead to a common understanding despite significant formal shifts in the translation. The cultural implications for translation are thus as important as lexical concerns.

6.2-Cultural Communication through Literary Translation :

It is evident that literary translation paves the way to the subtle emotional connections between cultures and languages and furthers the understanding of human beings across national borders. In the act of literary translation the soul of another culture becomes transparent, and the translator recreates the refined sensibilities of foreign countries and their people through the linguistic, musical, rhythmic, and visual possibilities of the new language.

But in the 18th and 19th Centuries scholars like Humboldt and, Sapir and Whorf, the pioneers of the Relative Theory of Language in the 20th Century, had a firm belief that translation was impossible because they were convinced that language is culture-specific and an expression of culture. It is a part of culture with which it is impregnated. In this sense, the linguistic relativity has far-reaching implications for translation, rendering it impossible, especially literary translation which is imbued with culture. Translation of literary works (novels, short stories, plays, poems, etc.) is considered a literary pursuit in its own right.

Indeed, it is undeniable that Language and culture are closely and intimately linked and one is indispensable to the other. In fact, language directly acquires its meaning from the country's culture. A single language may cross several culture borders. For instance, English and French are Indo-European languages but belong to different cultures. There are generally problems in the translation of cultural words in a literary text unless there is a cultural overlap between the source language and the target language. It is not enough for a translator to know what words are used in the target language; he must also make the reader understand the messages of the translated text as it is understood by the reader of the original. For instance, in a text which is culturally oriented and that implies cultural themes, the literary translator's task would be difficult because of the cultural differences between the source language and the target one. The translator is expected to creatively exploit the altered cultural, linguistic and literary context in order to realize the different potentials of the target language in an act or literary creation and this that makes

translation an intercultural activity.

When translating any piece of writing , the literary translator needs to pay attention not only to the lexical impact on the target language reader, but also the way in which cultural aspects may be perceived and then adopt translating strategy accordingly. Language and culture are aspects that must be considered for translation because they are closely related « the translator must tackle the second language text in such a way that the target language version will correspond to the second language version... To attempt to impose the value system of the second language culture onto the target language culture is dangerous ground» Bassnett once wrote, (Bassnett 1991: 23).. When considering the translation of cultural words and notions, Newmark proposes two opposing methods: transference and componential analysis (Newmark 1988: 96). As Newmark mentions, transference gives «local colour», keeping cultural names and concepts..

A faithfully translated text should fulfil the same purpose in the new language as the original did in the source language. It should have the spirit of the original. But Nida also focuses to the needs of the reader, noting that the translation as a Means of Cross-Cultural Communication should be characterized by «naturalness of expression» and that it should be close to the culture of the «receptor». For this reason, he supported what became known as the «domestication» of translation. according to Nida', the translation must make sense and convey the spirit and manner of the original, being sensitive to the style of the original, and should have the same effect upon the receiving audience as the original had on its audience (Nida 1964: 134). The solution, for him, is the achievement of a dynamic equivalence that balances both concerns.

The equivalence must conform to and be comprehensible in the receptor's language and culture. In his researches on translation, Nida paid special attention to the problems that the literary translator might encounter when attempting to translate the emotional content of the original, and to convey the sarcasm, irony, whimsy, and emotive elements of meaning of the original (Nida 1964: 139–40). He then suggests the methods the translator should use to achieve he closest approximation of the second language , one of those methods is using footnotes to illuminate cultural differences when the translator feel unable to achieve close approximations..

Nida claims that «since no two languages are identical either in meanings given to corresponding symbols, or in ways in which such symbols are arranged in phrases and sentences, it stands to reason that there can be no absolute correspondence between languages . . . no fully exact translation . . . the impact may be reasonably close to the original but no identity in detail»(Nida 1964: 126).

According to Nida, the process of translation must involve a certain degree of interpretation on the part of the translator., the message in target language should match as closely as possible the different elements of the source language; in order to determine accuracy and correspondence of his translation, the literary translator should regularly compare the two texts the source language text and the target language text despite the fact that achieving adequacy in translation seems impossible because of the versatile gaps

and differences not only between languages and cultures, but within them as well. Nida's theories put the theoretical foundation for a very specific concept of humanity which can be described as transcendental because humanity in Nida's eyes is an essence that can not be altered neither by time nor by space, since «that which unites mankind is greater than that which divides them, hence even in cases of very disparate languages and cultures there is a basis for communication» (Nida1964: 24).

Conclusion :

The research was an attempt to discuss some basic definitions and details necessary for the students and readers of literary translation. The research paper has an ultimate purpose the attempt to demonstrate the role of literary translation in excluding the cultural boundaries between people. The translator's main goal from translating a literary text from one language to an other should be to intelligently exploit the altered cultural, linguistic and literary context in order to realize the different potentials of the target language in an act or literary creation since translation is an intercultural activity by doing so he is going to bridge the emotional connections between cultures and languages and strengthen communication between human beings across national borders. In fact, literary translation often renders the culture of the other transparent, and it is the translator's role to recreate the refine sensibilities of foreign countries and their people through his creative translation.

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