



Literary Translation: Implantation vs Transference



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Abstract

The figurative language employed by authors, which reflects their styles of writing, is one main reason behind the challenges that most literary translators encounter when dealing with literary works. Usually employed for aesthetic and poetic purposes, figures of speech imply connotative meanings. In literary works, words are used only assigns to settle down the flying spirits of meanings and ideas so that the audience can have a thread that could lead them to intended meanings. I believe that literary translators should face the challenges of translating literary works through two main approaches. First, transferring the work of art as it is without trying to find any equivalent in the target language for any piece of text in the source language. The aim of such type of translation would be familiarizing the audience in the target language with the literature and culture of the source language. Second, translating the SL work of art creatively, i.e. using all possible strategies and procedures to find natural equivalents in the TL for any stylistic features in the SLT. This type of translation should aim at pleasing and entertaining the TL audience.

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1 Introduction

Newmark (2004), states that literary and non-literary translations are two different professions. The use of figures of speech in works of art is one main reason behind this distinction, as these figures of speech add a poetic and aesthetic flavor to the literary text. Another reason is the inseparable relationship between a work of art and its author as any work of art reflects its author's style of writing. These two reasons pose challenges for the translator of literary works. On the one hand, figures of speech imply the existence of connotative and associative indirect meanings. On the other hand, the relationship between a work of art and its creator implies the employment of a unique style of writing, which is a reflection of his culture as well.

It is axiomatic that every type of text or discourse has its features and characteristics that constitute its uniqueness. In the field of translation studies, this issue is very decisive. The whole method, approaches, procedures, and choices opted for by a translator largely dependent on the type of text to be translated (cf. Nord, 1996). Employing a supreme language loaded with cultural bound terms and using tropes indicate the difficulty encountered by literary translators.

Usually, when dealing with non-literary discourses (legal, documentary, scientific or academic) translators are not obsessed or concerned with the feelings and emotions of the writers in such fields of register. The reason behind this fact is that the relationship between the author and the reader or the translator in this case, compared to the literary discourse, is weaker, if any, as the audience in this type of discourse is usually concerned with the direct meaning involved in the text rather than the form or style of the text. What matters here is the content of the SLT rather than the style, accuracy rather than fluency. It is here where we can maintain that translation is a science rather than an art.

Every language draws its vocabulary, meanings, and styles from its environment, society, and culture. Therefore, translation problems that sometimes hinder communication between languages and cultures are in direct proportion with the ratio of reliance on the works of art on their specific cultures. In other words, the more words, concepts, ideas, styles, or texts are close, connected, and bound to a certain culture, the more challenges and problematic issues would be expected by the translator. For this reason, translation of literary works, sometimes, poses the question of untranslatability.

Newmark (1988, 94) states that "Frequently where there is the cultural focus, there is a translation problem due to the cultural 'gap' or 'distance' between the source and target languages." Accordingly, inappropriate literary translation misshapes the reality of other societies and cultures. Moreover, it prevents the readers in the target language (TL) from communicating properly with other cultures. The researcher is going to shed light on this important type of translation by investigating how resorting to specific approaches, methods, strategies, and techniques of translation when dealing with literary works may affect the final product of translation and change its message or deprive it of its creative power.

The challenges imposed by the use of figurative language in literary works have a cultural dimension, which makes the task of the translator more complicated. Every culture has its distinctive ways of perceiving and expressing the world, which is originally based on the accumulation of experiences and knowledge of its people (cf. Hermans, 2019). Accordingly, what seems natural, acceptable, and appreciable by the conventions of a specific society or culture might be considered awkward, taboo, and unacceptable in a different culture. Such differences among cultures imply that the process of decision making in the mind of the translator while trying to find equivalents in the TL becomes a more complicated one. Literary language is usually full of culture, i.e. it draws heavily on the specific features and constituents of its own culture. Literary works are usually full of traditions, cultural expressions, allegories, emotions, symbols, collocations, proverbs, and figures of speech...etc. The extensive use of these poetic and aesthetic devices in literary works demands that translators double their exerted efforts to accomplish the intended and implied meanings, ideas, or messages. To support his argument, the researcher is going to mention some examples to display the influence of the cultural dimension on literary works and translation.

I can assume that William Shakespeare, for example, would have never started his (Sonnet 18) with the following lines:

'Shall I compare thee to a summer's day;
thou art more lovely and more temperate',

had he ever lived within the culture of the Arab Gulf area, for example, where summer is the season of dryness, very high temperatures, haze, and length of extremely hot daytimes? According to Shakespeare's cultural point of view

when he wrote his sonnet, 'summer' is accompanied by images of beauty and a short length of time; Shakespeare would have probably chosen to compare his beloved to Spring or Winter instead of Summer if he had the chance to live in Saudi Arabia, as spring is the season which carries these images.

On the other hand, Al-Mutanabi, the greatest well-known Arab poet, would have never recited this line of verse,

‘الخيال والليل والبيداء تعرفني والسيف والرمح والفرطاس والقلم’

[Al-khaylu wal-lylu wal-bayda?u t^rrifuni wassayfu warrumhu walqirtasu walqhalamu]

which means: 'the horses, the night and the desert know me well and also do the sword, the spear, the book and the pencil' had he ever lived in Britain, or any other country with a different culture, he would probably use other items that reflect the culture of the society and place where he lived.

The users of figures of speech in works of art employ these devices to create images through skillful and purposeful manipulation of words. The images created in works of art by the use of figurative language may have three main aims. First, they make the language more powerful as they address the emotions and feelings they aim to evoke in the readers. Second, though sometimes not directly, images make the messages of the literary work rhetorically clearer. The figurative language which creates these images is rhetorical, i.e. it uses the least number of words and concepts to express eloquently the highest number of ideas and images; sometimes connotatively and with a great deal of emotiveness; it is better to show somebody a painting than to talk about its details for hours. Third, figurative language is a means of embellishing and beautifying the discourse of literary works. Usually, authors of literary works use figures of speech to endorse their products with the flavor of their unique eloquence and style.

The abovementioned effective and purposeful employment of figurative language in works of arts, in addition to other criteria relevant to the form and identity of the literary work in its own culture, helps in drawing a clear-cut line that emphasizes the distinction between literary or nonliterary discourse. The employment of figurative language constitutes the essence and the condiments of the works of art, i.e. it creates its literariness.

The translators of literary works might find it useful to approach literary translation within a binary translation framework to deal with the extensive usage of figures of speech in the literature on the one hand and to make the process of Translation Quality Assessment (TQA) more realistic. Accordingly, depending on the aim of the prospective translation in the world of the TL culture, a translator has the choice to **implant** or **transfer** the original work of art. The first approach aims at implanting the work of art in the structure of the TL culture, i.e. depriving the work of art created in the source language (SL) of most of its original cultural features and stamping it with a new quality and flavor in the TL. On the other hand stands the other approach which considers the source language text (SLT) as an alien that will never become a part of the TL structure or culture, i.e. transferring the work of art with all its cultural features.

2 Implantation

Implantation refers to a target language focused approach of translation. By resorting to this approach, translators choose to implant the SL work of art in the culture and structure of the TL literature for a secondary aim that takes into consideration a specific type of audience, who usually appreciates literature and looks for pleasure through tasting the flavor of literature. In other words, this approach aims at implanting an SL work of art in the TL culture that is going to, through the process of implantation, make it a new work of art in the TL culture, actually without referring back to the original culture of the literary work. This type of translation may not be accomplished but by native and creative artists from the TL society who can recreate the work of art; otherwise, the product will be a translation failure. This process, in a way or another, implies grafting the SL work of art onto the TL literary system. Accordingly, this type of translation should be assessed, evaluated and criticized according to the conventions of the TL culture and under the umbrella of the infrastructure of the literature of the TL rather than within a comparison process with the SLT.

If a translator of a literary work opts for implanting the work of art he is dealing with, his product should be a work of art in itself, a new masterpiece in which the translator is a new author, a sweet melody of a creative composer. Accordingly, translation proper is considered here as an art rather than a craft. The translators of literary works, in this case, should enjoy a sense of literary taste. Literary translators are like poets, born not made. By following this approach, however, the translator seems to be freer than the translator who opts for the other method, i.e. transference, as the pressure imposed by the necessity of translating the form of the SLT does not obsess him/her in this case. The translator can use artistic creativity, skill, and fluency in his mother tongue to represent the soul of

the SLT by a new body. The best translation product of this approach is the one that seems as if written in the TL by a native artist.

3 Transference

Transference indicates leaving the infrastructure of the TL literature untouched. Although, generally speaking, works of art have something to say and messages to communicate, their main objectives lie within the area of aesthetics as they usually look for entertaining and pleasing the readership. Authors of works of art usually aim at fulfilling the thirst of their audience's souls for pleasure and satisfaction through the pure use of language. However, the translation strategy of transference is not concerned with this issue. Its main concern is intensifying the identity of the original work of art. This indicates preserving every single feature of style in the SLT. This approach implies the intended ignorance of TL conventions and cultural values. Accordingly, unnatural or awkward expressions shall be expected in the TLT.

If a translator opts for transference, his work of translation should consider every subtlety in the work of art he/she is tackling. The product of this process shall not be considered a new work of art on its own; rather it should be clear for the TL audience that they are dealing with a translation of a work of art that is alien to their culture. The translator, in this case, is an imitator; to be more precise a translator, in this case, is expected to transfer the SL literary work with all its stylistic features, images, and connotations with all its original cultural flavors into his/her culture and to his/her audience. Literary translation, in this case, can be described as a skill rather than an art.

However, for the translator who opts for transferring the work of art, the use of figurative language and cultural loaded expressions seem to be less challenging as he/she is not going to tackle the problem of finding cultural equivalents in the TL. The translator, in this case, will transfer the same stylistic features of the original work of art regardless of the cultural oddity and unnaturalness the translation product will have in the TL conventional system. The translator, in this case, is more concerned with transferring the form and the style of the SL and author. This does indicate ignoring the message and the intention of the original work; rather it indicates giving priority to the form and style of the SLT and bestowing a new soul upon the same body.

Accordingly, when it comes to evaluating the translation of a literary work under the umbrella of this strategy, the evaluation should take into consideration the principles and features of such a translation method. In other words, if a translator opts to transfer the SL work of art, then, his/her work of translation should be assessed and evaluated according to the extent to which it complies with the conventions of SL and culture, i.e. to the extent it is considered foreign to the audience and the literary system of the TL. Hence, the criteria appropriate for evaluating a plantation-based translation do not apply here.

4 Style of Writing in Terms of Implantation and Transference

Nida (1982, 12) states that “translating consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source-language message, first in terms of meaning, and second in terms of style.” Although Nida's main concern was the translation of the bible when he stated this definition of translation, he provides a significant definition of translation in general; this is because Nida concentrates in his definition on three main components of what a good translation should involve, i.e. ‘equivalent’, ‘closest natural meaning’ and ‘style’.

However, the researcher wonders whether the way Nida has made such integration of these three keywords together in a single comprehensive definition of translation is sufficient to cover such a multidimensional process. In other words, how could Nida combine ‘the closest natural equivalent of the source language message’ and ‘in terms of style’ in a definition of translation? The researcher believes that if the term ‘equivalent’ appears in such a definition of translation, we should think insightfully before adding the term ‘style’ to the formula. The reason is that the writing style of a text or the writing style of an author in a specific culture is unlikely to have equivalents in other cultures, let alone natural ones. A translator can transfer a writing style but cannot translate it. By *transference*, the researcher means moving the style from the SL to the TL regardless of equivalency or naturalness in the TL. Accordingly, Nida's definition of translation seems to be controversial.

The writing style of an author of a literary work derives its features from its specific culture and draws upon his/her personal experiences. Choosing a specific style of writing by an author implies the fact that he/she consciously, and sometimes subconsciously, decided on a certain choice(s) among other various possibilities. Men of

letters are the most competent and eloquent users of language, as they can skillfully employ their language and aspects of their culture to produce a unique discourse that reflects their emotions, perspectives, and their rhetoric as well. This unique discourse may become a sign of their distinctive identities in the future. The writing styles of authors develop following the personal experiences their creators went through consciously or subconsciously under the umbrella of the framework of their specific cultures.

Styles of writing include elements such as word choices, ways of description, length of sentences and paragraphs, usage of figures of speech, point of view and development of events and characters...etc. Usually, authors of literary works use rhetorical devices and figures of speech such as metaphor, simile, symbolism, and irony...etc. as a mirror that reflects their styles of writing and expresses their ideas and feelings in a work of art. However, the employment of these elements implies the close, inseparable, and unique relationship between the author and his work of art.

5 Discussion and Results

Following the above mentioned illustration, we can say that the translator can decide on the best method of conveying the SLT relying on the nature of his audience in the TL and the aim of his translation. If they are after implanting their translation works, translators should exert their efforts towards the conveyance of the ideas and message of the SL rather the formal features of the text; however, this approach to translation indicates employing creativity and imagination in translating literary texts instead of being a slave for the SLT. This means ignoring the structure and the style of the SLT or at least giving it the least priority. Implanted works of art should seem as if they had been written in the language of the TL audience, which indicates the invisibility of the translator.

Transference, on the other hand, implies adhering to the form of the SL, i.e. being faithful to the form of the SL, which may produce awkward expressions in the TL. It also indicates being a slave to the style of the author and guided by the conventions of the culture of the SL. The researcher believes that the works of art which are translated under the umbrella of *transference* are more likely to achieve their optimum aim via the loyal transference of the style of the author and the original text, i.e. the style of the SL culture, into the TL.

The following two Arabic translations of the first four lines of Shakespeare's sonnet (18) are examples of both the abovementioned approaches of literary translation, i.e. implantation and transference.

The original text:

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate;
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May
And summer's lease hath all too short a date.

Arabic possible translation according to Implantation Method:

أعدل أن أقارن حسنك بالربيع؟
'Is it fair to compare your beauty to Spring?'
فأنت في عيني أحلى وأسمى
'In my opinion you more lovely and more supreme'
فزهـر الربيع في يوم سيذبل
'The blossoms of spring will shrivel one day'
ويديع سحر حسنك أزلي سيبقى،
'And the splendor of your magical beauty is immortal and will stay'

Arabic possible translation according to Transference Method:

هل أشبهك بيوم صيفي'
'Shall I compare you to a Summer's day'
انت اجمل واكثر اعتدالا
'You are more lovely and temperate'
الرياح تهز البراعم بقوة في أيار
'The wind shakes the blossoms in May'
وعقد شهر الصيف مدته قصيرة،
'And Summer is short'

A native speaker of Arabic would receive the first Arabic translation as a poem of an Arab poet without any shadow of a doubt; on the other hand, the second Arabic translation would be easily realized as a translation, as it does not belong to the conventions of Arabic language and culture. However, each Arabic translation is purposeful and addresses a specific readership. The first translation is likely to achieve the aim of entertaining and pleasing its audience; the second Arabic translation has also its readership who believes in the sacredness of literary works' originality. This second transferred work of art could be helpful for those who are involved in comparative literary studies.

The process of translation, especially when literary works are involved, is a matter of priorities. The context of the discourse in the SL, the significance of the style of the SLT, the intentions of the author, the aesthetic value in both the SLT and TLT and the type of leadership are the main factors that usually encourage the translator to opt for an approach or a method at the expense of the others. For example, a translator can opt for the style at the expense of the content, i.e. he can transfer the original work of art into the TL; or he/she can choose to favor the meaning and function at the expense of form and style, i.e. he can implant the SL text in the TL. Actually, in the two approaches, implantation or transference, there would be always a degree of intended sacrifice.

6 Conclusion

It should be clear now that the main concern of translators of literary works is not the meanings of the words on the surface; rather, it is the encoded language and the messages between lines, the associations and shades of meanings in the original work of art and the stylistic features of the author and the SL culture. When it comes to two languages that are far from each other in terms of cultural differences, the issue of literary translation becomes more complicated. Translating from Arabic into English and vice versa is a case in point. Denotative meaning for such type of translation is just the first step for the translator of literary works.

The overuse of supreme figurative language, cultural bound expressions, and culture-loaded discourse, in addition to the various writing styles used by authors of literary works, constitute the main challenges that translators of works of art usually have to tackle. More often than not, meanings, messages, and ideas in works of art cannot be concluded easily. The reason is that authors of such a genre of writing tend to imply their intentions and messages between the lines. They usually use their styles and distinctive abilities in manipulating the words of their discourse eloquently; let alone implanting their feelings, perspectives, and emotions inside their masterpieces.

The researcher believes that the most influential factor that may affect the choices of translators about the various approaches, techniques, and procedures of translating when literary works are at issue is the stylistic features of the author of a work of art, which draw upon culture. Culture is the framework where these stylistic features are born, shaped, and polished. The society where an author is born is, in fact, the catalyst that shapes his style and identity.

Opting for a specific strategy or method for translating literary discourses may add or remove some parts of the intended meaning of the author, or the associations and shades of meanings that could be essential parts of the original meaning in the SL. However, resorting to one clear method of translation, either implantation or transference, could reduce the undesirable side effects of any literary translation.

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The author declared that he has no competing interests.

Statement of authorship

The author has a responsibility for the conception and design of the study. The author has approved the final article.

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