The Essence Of World Classics In Translation For Poetry

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Abstract

This paper attempts to study how the essence of World Classics and poetry can be translated applying various means of text to text, stanzaic and emotional translations, and finally it asserts that emotional translation is the appropriate translation. According to Oxford English Dictionary poetry is *"The art or work of poet"*. Another depiction of it is given by John Ruskin in his *"Lectures on Art"* (1870), *"What is poetry? The suggestion, by the imagination, of noble grounds for the noble emotions"*. According to T. S. Eliot *"Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality"*. Percy Bysshe Shelly describes poetry as the eternal truth. *"A poem is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth"*. And at last according to Robert Frost *"The figure a poem makes: it begins in delight and ends in wisdom"*. This must know any translator so as to acknowledge the real virtue of the work he deals with.

Translation is very often referred to be as an art. So the task of a translator is to make an art from art keeping the aesthetic value of the work. Robert Frost once described poetry as *"what gets lost in translation"*. He meant, of course, that it is impossible to carry over from one language into another the special qualities of a poem-its sound and rhythm, its meter syntax and connotations. Some critics have felt that in translating poems *"translators betray them, inevitably turning the translation into something which at best may approximate, but which invariably distorts, the original"*. This point of view, however, has not prevented translators from continuing their difficult, but important work. In poetry, rhythm, style, and word choice breathe life into the feelings and ideas of the writer. So how, then, can poems be translated? What happens when a poem is subject to a new set of sounds, a new alphabet, or a slight shift in word choice? What, if anything, is lost in translation?. The field of linguistics and comparative literature has long sought to answer these questions. Translating a text word for word may cause unnatural or hollow-sounding language, or could even leave readers in the dark with idioms or colloquialisms that don't translate well. Meanwhile, attempting to translate the essence or meaning of a poem without regard for meter, rhythm, and word choice may border on creating an entirely new poem with little basis in the original. While this certainly isn't against any laws, some may argue that it is not a true translation.

Key words: Translation; Meter; Rhyme; ideas of the writer; colloquialisms; literature; poetry

Introduction

Translation of poetry is one of the most difficult and challenging tasks for every translator. Returning to Robert Frost's definition, according to which *"Poetry is what gets lost in translation"*, we can say, that this statement could be considered as a truthful one to a certain extent because there is no one-to-one equivalent when comparing two languages. Even if the translators possess a profound knowledge in the source language they would not be able to create a replica of the original text.

In the theory of Translation Studies there are different approaches to the problems in this sphere of translation. Among the outstanding translators and translation theorists John Dryden in his article *"The Tree Types of Translation"* spoke about the verbal copier of a poem, who *"is encumbered with so many difficulties at once"*, that he cannot get out of it. Describing verbal translation of a poem as something impossible he mentions, that the translators are *"to consider, at the same type, the thought of his author, and his words, and to find out the counterpart to each in another language"* being confined to the compass of numbers, and the slavery of rhyme. He approaches the claim of the Armenian prominent writer and translator, Eghishe Charents who is sure that a

poem is to be translated by a poet. John Dryden writes about this *"No man is capable of translating poetry besides a genius to that art"*. He also adds, that the translator of poetry is to be the master of both of his author's language and of his own.

Another theorist in TS, Friedrich Schleiermacher, highlights the importance of the sound in poetry as one of the major problems in translation and defines poetry as a work, *"where a most excellent and indeed higher meaning resides in the musical elements of language as they are manifested in rhythm"*. According to him *"whatever seems to have an impact on sound qualities and the fine-tuning of feeling and thus on the mimetic and musical accompaniment of speech- all this will have to be rendered by our translator"*.

American poet, critic and translator Ezra Pound whose experience in poetry translations goes far beyond theory, believes that much depends on the translator. *"He can show where the treasure lies, he can guide the reader in choice of what tongue is to be studied…"*. He calls this as an "interpretive translator" of poetry. Parallel to it he offers "other sort" of translation, *"where the translator is definitely making a new poem"*. Thus there are two types of poetry translation, one which directly renders the thought of the author, and the second, which is based on the original, but transfuses some new spirit. Admittedly, if the translator succeeds in rendering both the form and the content, the translation is considered to be a successful one. This point of view has been sphere of investigation for Eugin Nida, professional linguist and Bible translator. He underlines the difference between prose and poetry highlighting the importance of form. *"Only rarely can one reproduce both content and form in a translation, and hence in general the form is usually sacrificed for the sake of the content"*. The translator of poetry aims at producing *"on his reader an impression similar or nearly similar to that produced by the original"*. In fact *"every poem is a poem within a poem; the poem of the idea and the poem of words"* (Wallance Stevens). Without idea words are empty, without words idea is empty. The translator is to avoid of the emptiness.

In an attempt to capture both the meaning and form of a poem, translators must walk the line between being faithful to the text and transforming it. It's a careful art that takes a lot of research, practice, and awareness. This balancing act is well demonstrated in an episode of Radio Lab titled "100 Flowers." RadioLab hosts interview Douglas Hofstadter, Professor of Cognitive Science and Comparative Literature, as he discusses his attempts to translate the poem, "A Une Damoyselle Malade" (To a Sick Young Lady) by Clement Marot.

Simply put, the poem is a get-well-soon message to a young girl who has fallen ill. Hofstadter struggled to capture the kind, lighthearted tone of the poem while maintaining its form—which he believed was essential. He wanted to preserve the poems with three syllables per line, 28 lines, and its catchy AABBCCDD rhyme scheme. However, he must take certain liberties with the text to meet these constraints. In one place, Hofstadter replaces the French phrase "confitures" (jam) with the term "buttered bread." He says, "Jam and jelly, they are words, but the words represent concepts and the concepts have kind of a halo around them."Not yet satisfied with his own translation, the professor sent the poem and its constraints to about 60 more people to be translated, including colleagues, doctoral students, friends, and family members. The project became a 700-page book of translations of a single French poem

Objective:

This paper intends to explore and analyze true core of World Classics/Poetry, its intrinsic meaning and power. Also need for translations and translators to extend the reach of the poets and their subtext.

Translations of Poetry

There's a reason translators of poetry are usually also poets themselves—they are capturing something implicit in the poem. They look for a zeitgeist, a feeling, and they find equal and opposite meanings to bridge linguistic and cultural gaps. But this is no easy feat. "I learned how to be mindful of what it means to be translating from one culture to another, and the disparities between cultures," said Ramadan.

Roman Jacobson writes in his article "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation" about the possibility and impossibility of translation and defines poetry as *"by definition untranslatable. Only creative transposition is possible"*.

To sum up the theoretical approaches of the above mentioned people, it is admittedly clear, that poetry is the most difficult type of text and can be considered to be untranslatable. But if we have the vivid examples of successful translations of poetry, we can never claim that it is untranslatable. They also touched the problems like the freedom of the translator, which in our opinion is to be confronted. We can never refer to a rendering as a translation if it is just an original-based work. It must be close to the original as much as possible.

If $Y=X$, where X stands for the translation, Y for the quality of the translation. The line *a* stands for the translation process which shares the right angle into two equal parts *(45°)* denoting that during his translation process the translator pays equal attention to the quality of his work and the idea of the original, trying not to go beyond the author's words. The point O depicts the original work and the best and most successful translation. The two points coincide, because they are one and the same work in different languages. If the translation is far from O for *1* unit, then the quality of the translation reduces to *1* unit. Correspondingly if the translation goes far for *2* units, the quality reduces to *2*, etc. To put poetry translation and its quality in a rough way, we use this materialistic and vivid way to depict it. But this does not give the idea what a translator should do. In reality, what should be preserved when translating poetry are the emotions, the invisible message of the poet, the uniqueness of the style in order to be

reached the same effect in the target language as it is in the source. When talking about the translation of poetry we could not but mention some of the numerous problems encountered during this process.

Firstly, we would like to draw the attention to the form of a poem. This is probably the first thing that the reader notices before reading. The translator should try to be as closer to the original as he/she can. For example, if haiku has to be translated, the short meaningful and condensed form should be preserved, because an author chooses deliberately the form and the structure of the poem as an inseparable part of the overall message that should be transferred and sensed by the readers. Thus for instance sonnet (fourteen lines) cannot turn into a villanelle (five three-line tercets and a final four-line quatrain), or an elegy (a lament for the dead) into an ode (devoted to the praise or celebration). Types of poetry are also important. It is necessary for the translator to understand whether he/she deals with a narrative or a lyric poetry. Because the difference between them is huge. Narrative poems stress story and action, and lyric poems stress emotion and song.

The second matter to discuss is the shape of a poem. A pictogram is visually concrete and has special shape. For example Lewis Carrol's "The mouse's tale" taken from Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" is translated into Armenian with a shape of a tale of a mouse. And here the choice of the translator is commendable. The shape of poetry is also in its stanzas. The translator can invert the stanzaic form of a poem during the translation if it is not compulsory to keep. But it is better to translate from the couplet (a pair of linked verses) into a couplet, from a tercet (three successive lines bound by rhyme) into a tercet, from quatrain (a stanza of four lines) into a quatrain, from a quintain (a five line stanza) into a quintain, and from sestets (a six-line stanza) into a sestets, etc. (septet, octet, Spenserian, seven-, eight- and nin-line stanzas respectively).

The third range of problems that occur while translating poetry are the nuances of word's meaning. The translator can be confused in two ways. On the one hand he/she can find difficulties in understanding which from the numerous meanings of the word the author has used. On the other hand, he/she can be puzzled which equivalent from the target language to use. Emily Dickinson writes;

A word is dead
When it is said,
Some day.
I say it just
Begins to live
That day.

So the words must be under close examination of a translator. It is important to find out whether the word is used in its denotative, dictionary meaning or its connotative meaning, *"which is the associated meanings that have built up around the word, or what the word connotes"*. Through the effects of the words the authors use in their poems they make imagery. Poems include such details which trigger our memories, stimulate our feelings, and command our response. The ideas in poetry are important, but the real value of a poem consists in the words that work their magic by allowing us to approach a poem is similar to Francis's "*Catch*" implies: *expect to be surprised; stay on our toes; and concentrate on the delivery*. This all is done by the words. Sometimes their meaning goes even far and reaches to the creation of some stylistic effects. Among them the most typical for poetry is metaphor. *"It is metaphor, saying one thing and meaning another, saying one thing in terms of another, the pleasure of ulteriority. Poetry is simply made of metaphor"*(Robert Frost, *"The Constant Symbol"*). Other stylistic figures include hyperbole or exaggeration, synecdoche or using part to signify the whole, metonymy or substituting an attribute of a thing for the thing itself, personification, endowing inanimate objects or abstract concepts with animate characteristics or qualities, etc.

Process of Translation

The problems occurring in the process of translation may be concerned with the different elements of poetry. We can learn to interpret, appreciate and translate poems by understanding their basic elements. The elements of a poem include a speaker whose voice we hear in it; its diction or selection of words, its syntax or order of those words; its imagery or details of sight, sound, taste, smell, and touch; its figurative language or non-literal ways of expressing one thing in terms of another, such as symbol and metaphor; its sound effects, especially rhyme, assonance, and alliteration; its rhythm and meter or the pattern of accents we hear in the poem's words, phrases, lines, and sentences, and its structure or formal pattern of organization.

We would like to discuss another matter causing a lot of problems in translating poetry, which is the grammatical difference between the languages. The grammatical rules compulsory for the prose are not obligatory for the poems or we could just say that the poets do not follow them strictly wherefore the translators are usually puzzled over such very creative works. Sometimes, the poets in their imaginativeness offer really unusual, striking, new and surprising works, which are difficult for translation. The translator should be combinative in order to transfer this novelty, hidden sense or specific grammatical structure. So as to clarify the situation we can pay attention to the second person pronoun and its usage. This transition in styles should be preserved in the target language because it carries the whole emotional and psychological world of a poet. For instance, the word "you" is sometimes difficult to translate. It can either be "¹áõ" or",áõù". In this case the translator must catch the intension of the author. Of course the grammatical shifts are possible in poetry translation, because here the translator aims at transmitting more the content. So any choice of the translator to change the grammatical form can be justified until it spoils the meaning.

Poetry has always been closely related to music. It *"is an art of rhythm but is not primarily an effective means of communication like music"*. It, as well as being something that we see, is also something that we hear. "*There remains even now a vibrant tradition of poetry being delivered orally or "recited"; and even the silent reading of poetry, if properly performed, should allow the lines to register on the mind's ear."*

When speaking about the sound the first thing to mention is rhyme, which can be defined as the matching of final vowel or consonant sounds in two or more words. Though there are unrhymed poems, they give in the point of view of their sound value. Robert Frost, who wrote traditional rhymed styles, growled that writing without rhyme is like *"playing tennis with the net down"*. It is a little strict, because many rhymed lines look and sound better in an unrhymed shape. In fact, sound is anything connected with sound cultivation including rhyme, rhythm, which refers the regular recurrence of the accent or stress in a poem, assonance or the repetition of vowel sounds, onomatopoeia, which implies that the word is made up to describe the sound, alliteration or the repetition of the same sounding letters, etc. A translator must try to maintain them in the translation. As Newmark (1981: 67) states, *"In a significant text, semantic truth is cardinal* , whilst of the three aesthetic factors, sound (e.g. alliteration or rhyme) is likely to recede in importance -- rhyme is perhaps the most likely factor to "give" -- rhyming is difficult and artificial enough in one language, reproducing line is sometimes doubly so." In short, if the translation is faced with the condition where he should sacrifice one of the three factors, structure, metaphor, and sound, he should sacrifice the sound.

On the other hand, the translator should balance where the beauty of a poem really lies. If the beauty lies more on the sounds rather than on the meaning (semantic), the translator cannot ignore the sound factor.

The fourth thing that can cause problems in translation is the cultural differences. I would like again to refer to Osers's article *"Some Aspects of the Translation of Poetry"*. A profound knowledge is necessary for the translation of idioms and phrases too, which are a product of the specific traditions and mentality in one's country. Words or expressions that contain culturally-bound word(s) create certain problems. The socio-cultural problems exist in the phrases, clauses, or sentences containing word(s) related to the four major cultural categories, namely: ideas, behavior, product, and ecology (Said, 1994: 39). The "ideas" includes belief, values, and institution; "behavior" includes customs or habits, "products" includes art, music, and artifacts, and "ecology" includes flora, fauna, plains, winds, and weather.

In translating culturally-bound expressions, like in other expressions, a translator may apply one or some of the procedures: Literal translation, transference, naturalization, cultural equivalent, functional equivalent, description equivalent, classifier, componential analysis, deletion, couplets, note, addition, glosses, reduction, and synonymy. In literal translation, a translator does unit-to-unit translation. The translation unit may range from word to larger units such as phrase or clause. He applies 'transference procedure' if he converts the SL word directly into TL word by adjusting the alphabets (writing system) only. The result is 'loan word'. When he does not only adjust the alphabets, but also adjust it into the normal pronunciation of TL word, he applies naturalization.

Componential analysis procedure

In addition, the translator may find the cultural equivalent word of the SL or, if he cannot find one, neutralize or generalize the SL word to result 'functional equivalents'. When he modifies the SL word with description of form in the TL, the result is description equivalent. Sometimes a translator provides a generic or general or super ordinate term for a TL word and the result in the TL is called classifier. And when he just supplies the near TL equivalent for the SL word, he uses synonymy.

In componential analysis procedure, the translator splits up a lexical unit into its sense components, often one-to-two, one-to-three, or -more translation. Moreover, a translator sometimes adds some information, whether he puts it in a bracket or in other clause or even footnote, or even deletes unimportant SL words in the translation to smooth the result for the reader.

These different procedures may be used at the same time. Such a procedure is called couplets. (For further discussion and examples of the procedures, Said (1994: 25 - 28) and compare it with Newmark (1981: 30-32)). The writer does not assert that one procedure is superior to the others. It depends on the situation. Considering the aesthetic and expressive functions a poem is carrying, a translator should try to find the cultural equivalent or the nearest equivalent (synonym) first before trying the other procedures.

The global context is also important. It includes the system of conditions under which the author has written, to whom the poem is directed or dedicated, and makes the author's psychological situation explicit for the translator. If the poem contains a hidden irony towards somebody, than a translation must have it as well. Buy this of course depends on the content of its value.

Conclusion

Great poems are open for interpretation, which means their translations will be, too. Many works have been translated by different people from different backgrounds, time periods, and schools of thought, rendering new meanings with each translation. While there's no one way to translate a poem, there are thousands of ways to breathe new life into a poem by translating it for a new audience. Summarizing all these points which are just a small part from the obstacles that the translators should overcome we realize how hard and difficult is the process of translation and how gifted, creative and knowledgeable should the translator be. And he should have the same inspiration as the author has had when writing. As Plato states *"the poet is the light and whinged holy thing, and there is no invention in him until he has been inspired and is out of his senses, and reason is no longer in him…"*. The translator of a poem must equate the author, the artist and be inspirited from the poem. There are lots of translations of poetry

which are not successful. The reason is: *"nobody else can alive for you; nor can you be alive for anybody else. There is the artist's responsibility and the most awful responsibility on earth. If you can take it, take it- and be. If you can't, cheer up and go about other people's business…"*

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