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Translation: An Inevitable Creative Transformation

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Some Aspects of Translation

Translation is the act of rendering a text from the source language as a text of the target language. Good translation is a creative transformation. Translation is a continuing process of approximation and will never be a completed project. That is why we always get a good number of translations of many classics.

People have various needs, interests and attractions in this world. So their interest and their knowledge have impacted all fields like literature, music, painting, science, technologies, history, economics, politics, philosophy, mathematics, computer, etc. New ideas and discoveries spring up, and people search for these ideas in works that are translated.

Importance of Translation

The importance of translation lies in the fact that it brings the readers, writers and critics of one nation into contact with those of others not only in the field of literature alone but also in

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all areas of development such as science, medicine, philosophy, religion, political science, medicine and law, and so on. The translator helps in the cause of nation building. As the translators have to make their translation readable and convey appropriate meaning from the original texts, many translators say that translation is not reproduction but recreation.

Translation as Literary Mode of Communication

Translation is an important mode of literary communication. But translation is not merely an imitation of a text. It is a creative process in itself. Though creativity is an essential criterion of translation, it is necessary to follow certain general rules to convey knowledge.

Some Celebrated Definitions

As Mohit K. Ray points out in *Studies in Translation* (edited by Mohit K Ray, Atlantic Publishers, 2008, Second Revised and Enlarged Edition), ISBN : 8126909223), Theodore Savory (1968) in his celebrated book *Art of Translation* defines translation as an art. Eric Jacobson (*Translation a Traditional Craft* 1958) defines it as a craft. Eugene Nida (*The Theory and Practice of Translation* - Brill, 1969, with C.R. Taber) defines it as science. Horst Frenz goes a step ahead declares that translation is neither a creative art nor an imitative art but it stands somewhere between the two (Horst Frenz, “The Art of Translation” in N.P. Stallknecht and H. Frenz (eds.) *Comparative Literature: Method and Perspective*, Carbondale: South Illinois University Press, 1961).

Literary versus Non-Literary Translation

Some translation theorists divide translation into two types: literary and non-literary. In literary translation (i.e., translation of literature), the rhetoric of the source language (SL) should be faithfully carried over to the Target language (TL).

Translation is transfer of meaning from the source language to the Target language. But what matters is not a translation of words from the source language into the target language, but

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conveying the spirit of the meaning in the original becomes more important. Exact equivalence of words is hard to achieve.

Translation is both linguistic and cultural and it is concerned with communication of meaning. A translator faces many problems while rendering a text from the source language into the target language. The problem of translating poetry from one language into another is not easy to overcome. Lyrical quality is difficult to transfer. Likewise other elements of poetry such as metaphor and simile are also difficult to transfer from one language to the other.

Translation of Poetry

Translation of poetry is the most difficult work of translation. This is because it abounds in figures of speech such as similes, metaphors, irony, paradox etc. Poetry also employs specific language-derived features, which are hard to translate. Finding equivalence for the phonological, syntactic and semantic patterns such as rhyming alliteration, versification, morphological parallelism, syntactic parallelism and above all systematic and paradigmatic relations between words is very difficult. It is doubtful whether a translator of poetry will ever be able to translate a piece of poetry satisfactorily. Kamban, celebrated author of Ramayanam in Tamil, provides us excellent examples of modification and re-interpretation.

The translation of poetry comes under literary translation. More problems arise while translating poetry. English translators employed various methods. The first method is Phonemic translation. In this style the translator tries to reproduce the source language (SL) sound into the Target language (TL) keeping in mind the acceptable paraphrase sense. The second type is literal translation (translation word by word). In this type of translation affects the Syntax (word order). The third type is metrical translation where the dominant criteria are the reproduction of the source languages meter. In this type of translation the meter in source language is given importance. The next type of translation is rhymed translation this type of translation enters into a double bondage of meter and rhyme. Therefore this type of translation is defective. Blank Verse is the next type. This type is also defective because restrictions are imposed on the

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translation. The last type is interpretation. This type of translation gives importance to subject quality, which cannot be accepted by all. Therefore translating poetry is an exercise in deficiency (Sugeng Hariyanto, <http://www.translationdirectory.com/article638.htm>). Therefore one is tempted to say that translating poetry is a difficult task and that poetry is untranslatable.

Etienne Dolet (1509-1546), the French Humanist, published a short outline of the principles of translation and how to translate well from one language to another. The following are the principles he laid down (Jeremy Munday, 2001, *Introducing Translation Studies: Theories and Applications*, Routledge).

Dolet's Recommendations

1. The translator must fully understand the sense and meaning of the original author, although he is at liberty to clarify obscurities.
2. The translator should have a perfect knowledge of both Source language (SL) and Target language (TL).
3. The translator should avoid word-for-word renderings.
4. The translator should use the form of speech in common use.
5. The translator should choose and order words appropriately to produce the correct tone.

These are excellent guidelines and we will benefit by Dolet's insights if we follow his guidelines.

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