

An Analytical Study of Problems Faced in Poetry Translation

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Poetry is one of the most mellifluous linguistic devices that man has ever concocted to caress the ears of the listener. As a romantic medium, it is second to none; as a means of recording history, it has made a tremendous contribution; some form of it has been present in every civilised part of the world. This also includes the translation of song lyrics. When examining some of the potential problems that can be faced when translating poetry, we can categorise these into two main categories, linguistic problems and literary Aesthetic problems.

Linguistic Problems

Linguistic problems include collocation, which by definition means a familiar grouping of words, especially words that habitually appear together and thereby convey meaning by association. Care must be taken to carefully analyse the SL in order to accurately translate the deep underlying meaning of a phrase or clause into the TL. This often relies heavily on the context and the translator's knowledge of social or cultural factors or culture factors which may have been in effect at the time of writing.

Literary or Aesthetic Problems

We have a whole other category of problems when we consider factors such as poetic structure and the aesthetic values of a poem. There are and the aesthetic values of a poem. There are various factors to consider including but not limited to:

- Poetic Structure
- Metaphorical Expressions
- Sound
- Socio – Cultural influences

It is important when translating poetry to consider all these factors and how they come together to give meaning to the poem and convey the author's emotions or intentions in the SL. The challenge is for the translator to find appropriate equivalents in the TL which produce a finished translation which accomplishes the same aim it does in the original language.

“Poetry is the rhythmical

Creation of beauty in words”

-Edgar Allan Poe, “*The Philosophy of Composition*”

Above all, the skill required by a literary translator is the ability to grasp the author’s intention from the ST and accurately portray this in their own language in the TL.

Poetic Structure

The first factor is structure. It is important to note that structure here means the plan of the poem as a whole, the shape and the balance of individual sentence or of each line. So a translator does not have to relate directly to the sentimental structures or grammar of language. The fact is it very much affected by the sentential maintaining the original structure of each sentence in highly intellectualized poetry marked by bold and ingenious conceits, incongruous imagery, complexity and subtlety of thought, frequent use of paradox and often by deliberate harshness or rigidity of expression

Metaphorical Expression

Metaphorical expression as the second factor means any constructions evoking visual, sound, touch, and taste images, the traditional metaphors, direct comparison without the “Like” and “as if” and all figurative languages.

The second procedure is replacing images in the SL with a standard TL image within the constraints of TL cultures.

Sound

The last of literary aesthetic factor is sound. As started before, sound is anything connected with sound cultivation including rhyme, rhythm, assonance, onomatopoeia etc. A translator must try to maintain them in the translation (1981: 67). 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.

Socio Cultural Problems

Language is a social phenomenon. It is a part of the culture of a linguistic community. Culture here is to be taken in a broader spectrum. It covers almost everything under its wings, tradition, religion, customs, language, literature, media, myth, mores, folklores, etc. There may or may not be a common cultural background between two languages which may create problems. Genealogically, different languages may have alien cultures resulting in a wide gap in comprehending the meaning. Even the languages of the same family may have the problems of meaning. Though the main umbrella culture is the same, the sub-culture is different, and hence the meaning also differs. Any transfer from one language into another is difficult. Robins (1975) clarifies thus, ‘The more diverse the cultures, the harder becomes translation, and significantly, the more deeply embedded in the culture of a word or phrase is, to say the more revealing it is of that culture, the greater the difficulty of rendering it in a language from outside the culture area’.

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