Novel Translation

ترجمة الرواية

University of Mustansiriyah

College of Arts

Translation Department

Lecturer: Farah Abbas Abo Al-Timen

4th stage/ Morning & Evening classes

Texts Classification

 First of all, a translator should be able to distinguish between the two general classifications of a text, which are:

1- **Informational Texts**: the emphasis is on information (content) of a text. The main function is descriptive on which these texts aim at conveying information to the reader such as a historical, geographical texts, etc.

2- **Literary Texts**: these texts aim at achieving artistic or aesthetic effect rather than conveying information. The main emphasis is on the form of the text and it is as important as its information such as a poem, novel, story, etc.

 Also there is the **Religious Texts** which typically regarded as both informational and literary texts since the message or the content they bear and the shape of the content are at the same level of importance such as the biblical and Qur'anic texts.

Figurative Language

 Let us assume that your brother has come in out of a rainy day and you say to him, "Well, you are a **pretty sight**, got **slightly wet**", and he replies, "Wet? I'm **drowned**! **It's raining cats and dogs**."

 If you examine the conversation literally you will find that it is nonsense:

Pretty sight Slightly wet

Drowned Raining cats and dogs

 You didn't mean that your brother is a pretty sight but that he was a wretched sight. He is not slightly wet but very wet. Your brother did not mean that he is actually got drowned but he got drenched. It was not raining cats and dogs; it was raining water heavily.

 From this simple conversation we will all be surprised to know that we speak figuratively every day. Broadly defined, a figure of speech is any way of saying something other than the ordinary way. Figurative language uses figures of speech that cannot be taken literally only. Figures like metaphor and simile which both are used as a means of comparing things that are essentially unlike. The only distinction between them is that in simile the comparison is expressed by the use of "like", "as", "similar to", "resembles", or "seems"; in metaphor the comparison is implied – that is, the figurative term is substituted for or identified with the literal term.

Examples:

*‏1- King Arthur: God uses people like you, Lancelot. Because your heart is* ***open****. You hold nothing back. You give all of yourself.*

 *الرب يستخدم من هم مثلك لأن قلبك* ***مفتوح*** *لا يخفي شيء، و تعطي ذاتك كلها.*

 *2- I lived most of my life in the* ***open****.*

 *عشت معظم حياتي في* ***العراء****.*

Quotes from: The First Knight

اقتباسات من رواية: الفارس الأول

 *Her lashes are like the* ***feathery plumes of moths******on*** *her* ***colorless*** *cheeks.*

*و كأن رموشها* ***فراشات ليل ذات ريش زاهية******(تحط/ تغفى/تنام****) على خديها الذابلين.*

Quotes from: Possession

اقتباس من رواية التملك ل: أي أس بيات

**What is Novel Translation**

 Translation of novel or any literature work is fundamentally different from other categories. This is because the main principle of literary translation is the dominance of **poetic communicative function**. It means that in addition to rendering information to the reader, this translation also has **aesthetic** functions. The artistic image created in a particular novel work will certainly have an impact on the reader. For this reason the translator should take into account specific features of the text such as **equivalence**:

*A leopard never changes its spots*

Literal Translation: *الفهد لا يغير بقعه أبدا.*

Literary Translation (equivalence): من شب على شيء شاب عليه, الطبع غلب التطبع

 It is the poetic focus of the text that makes this type of translation different from texts of an informative type. When reading a novel translated from a foreign language, we observe the text itself with its meaning, emotions and characters. It is quite a challenging task to achieve the main goal of the translation - **creating a particular image for the reader as that found in the original text**. Therefore, novel translation might involve some deviations from the standard rules:

*Patience is virtue*

Literal Translation: الصبر فضيلة

Literary Translation: الصبر مفتاح الفرج

 In the example mentioned above, the translator seeks for a phrase or certain terms to achieve the same effect on the TL reader since a literal translation cannot reflect the depth and meaning of the SL literary work. The translator of a certain novel reproduces a non-literal rendition of the original text. It is all about how the translator perceives it. He/she rewrites the text from the beginning to the very end. This applies, for example, when an obvious expression is replaced by synonyms or the structure of sentences is changed.

**Equivalence and Formal Correspondence**

 It has been said that **there can be no absolute correspondence between languages** (Nida, 1964). Since correspondence is "any TL category which may be said to occupy, as nearly as possible, the same place in the economy of the TL as the given SL category occupies in the SL" (Catford 1965). As it is mentioned earlier, novel translation is far from literal or word-for-word rendering. The translator's duty is not only to transfer the SL **author's ideas** but also to take into consideration the **style** and his **structural devices** (i.e., figures of speech).

 Let us consider the translation-equivalence-conceptnow. The idea strikes between "literal" and "free", "faithful" and "beautiful", "exact" and "natural" translation, depending on whether the preference was to be in favor of the "author" or the "reader", the SL or TL of the text (Newmark, 1988). However, the "dynamic equivalenttranslation" is very important and the translators (particularly Literary-translators) should have a lucid idea about this phenomenon. Eugene A. Nida (1964) argues that the dynamic equivalence in translation is far more than mere correct communication of information. Nida says that the definition of a dynamic equivalent translation is to describe it as “the closest natural equivalent to the source-language message”. This definition includes three essential terms, namely:

1. **Equivalent**, which refers to the source-language message,

2. **Natural**, which refers to the receptor language, and

3. **Closest**, which “binds the two orientations together on the basis of the highest degree of speculation”.

 Natural indicates three areas of the communication process: a natural description should fit the total **receptor language** (**TL**) and **culture**, the **context** of the specific message, and the receptor-language **audience**. Therefore, the translation should bear no clear trace of a foreign origin:

*Green leaves and brown leaves fall from the same tree.*

الأوراق الخضراء و البنية تقعان من نفس الشجرة : Literal

 إن مع العسر يسرا Literary (equivalence):

أو: فإن تصاريف الزمان عجيبة .. يوما ترى يسرا و يوما ترى عسرا

 In this example above, equivalence can render to the reader more understanding to the meaning of the sentence than being rendered literally. Since equivalence dose not convey grammar only; but also the semantic meaning hidden within grammar. Equivalence **substitutes words** with **senses** relatively matches the SL ones yet preserving the same atmosphere found in the original. This technique is frequently adopted when the **content** is related to a SL **cultural** or **lexical reference** and has no equivalent in the other language. When the translator comes across such a problem of not finding a corresponding TL equivalent, the best method to be followed is to resort to a non-corresponding equivalent function in the TL culture:

*He is as wise as an owl*

حكيم كالبومة

 It is noticed from this example that there is a gap between the two languages regarding the cultural aspect of the proverb. In English the word 'owl' stands for wisdom indicating a positive connotation while in Arabic culture it indicates a negative connotation referring to a 'bad omen'. In this case the translator seeks to substitute the word 'owl' with a symbol of wisdom that has the same impact in Arabic culture:

*حكيم كلقمان*

 Such rendering not only provides a complete transmission of the idea of the proverb, but also it functions the same effect on the TL receivers as it does on the SL ones.

Novel and Style

 In any language, the same idea can be expressed differently, thus creating various **linguistic forms**, i.e. **styles**. This is because each language has its own **linguistic system** (phonetics, graphology, semantics, morphology, syntax and pragmatics) that enables language users to choose for a particular linguistic form and exclude others (cf. McEnery & Wilson 2001; Murphy 2006). This goes in line with the definition of style provided by Crystal (1989):

|  |
| --- |
| Style is seen as the (conscious or unconscious) selection of a set of linguistic features from all the possibilities in a language. The effects these features convey can be understood only by naturally sensing the choices that have been made.  |

 However, style can be defined in this course as a **kind of deviation** either from the patterns of structures or from the **direct literal meanings** of words. Such a deviation occurs within any language system normally creates different sounds, ways of writing, meanings, structures, etc.

Novel and Shifts

 In a translated novel text, such differences of sound, writing and structures are the translator's decisions and changes known as **translation shifts**. Consequently, shifts may occur in translation. In literary translation, these shifts are determined by the **translator's role** which has been referred to with such concepts as: the **translator's voice** (Herman, 1996), the **translator's thumbprint** (Baker, 2000), and the **translator's presence** (Bosseaux, 2001). All these metaphors reflect the underlying idea that translators contribute something of their own to the translation process, something that is not present in the ST, an **imprint of their own personality**. On the other hand, such concepts are linked with the choice that the translator makes; decisions in the process of translating a text to which translators have choices are connected to the use of certain strategies or shifts and sometimes some shifts are a **must**.

 Having accepted that the translation process from one language to another includes various changes in a text relative to the source text, scholars have sought to address these changes through such concepts as "equivalence" and "transference" as mentioned earlier. A third concept used in this context is 'shifting', i.e., translation shifts, with emphasis on change.

 This discussion comes to an inevitable outcome that formal correspondence is an instance of invariance. It is designed to reveal as much as possible of the form and content of the original message. In this respect, the translator should attempt to reproduce several formal elements, including:

|  |
| --- |
|   (1) grammatical units, (2) consistency in word usage, and (3) meaning in terms of the source context.  |

 But sometimes the reproduction of grammatical and lexical units may not be the answer since 'translation involves far more than replacement of lexical and grammatical items between languages. Once the translator moves away from close linguistic equivalence, the problem of determining the exact nature of the level of equivalence aimed for begin to merge' Bassnett (2002). Hence, the other answer is to adopt shifts. According to Catford (1965) there are two major types of shifts:

 **Level Shifts**:

|  |
| --- |
|   where an SL item at one linguistic level, for example "grammar", has a TL equivalent at a different level, for instance, "lexis". Cases of shifts from grammar to lexis are quite frequent in translation between languages.  |

 While **category Shifts**: are further subdivided into four categories:

|  |
| --- |
| (a) Structure Shifts: (a change in a sentence or clause structure: e.g. S V Obj into V S Obj) |
| (b) Unit Shifts: (occur when a ST unit at one rank has a different rank in the TL (translating a phrase with a clause or a word with a morpheme).  |
| (c) Class Shifts: (a change in word class. i.e. the change from one part of speech into another, e.g. from noun to verb).  |
| (d) Intra-system Shifts: (a change in grammatical system e.g., number, article..).  |

 Such shifts are a very vital weapon in the translator's hand to achieve equivalence. Baker (1992) states that, in establishing equivalence between languages, the process of translation may require the translator to make special shifts, i.e., to **add** or **delete** information of the ST in the TT or otherwise. As a result some lexical choices have to be 'sacrificed' in translation and some are said to be 'added'. Addition is an extension of ST units that are absent but must be restored in the TT. Addition can be made by using **lexical ties** or **linkages** that are considered being obligatory between sentences or even within the same sentence. Linkage as stated by Leech and Short (1981) is achieved with tools such as **coordinating conjunctions** (e.g. and, or, but, etc.) and **linking adverbials** (e.g. however, therefore, etc.). Omission, on the other hand, occurs because, some lexical elements in the ST cannot be reproduced in the TT, or to **avoid repetition**.

 On the other hand, a **semantic shift** occurs when a word loses its basic meaning and takes a new, but often related meaning since the lexical meaning of a word is 'the personality it acquires through usage within a particular linguistic system (Baker, 1992). This implies that a metaphor can be present and a concept can be transferred from its normal location to somewhere else where it is not usually used or found (Ghazala et al, 2011). One of the striking shifts in semantic meaning is **metaphor** which transfers the **conceptual meaning** of a word into more **abstract sense**. Sometimes the SL text may express a concept which is totally unknown in the target culture. It may relate to a religious belief or a social custom. Such concepts are often referred to as culture-specific (Baker, 1992).

 As proposed by both Catford and Baker, the following model summarizes the different types of shifts which are to be taken into account in the translation of novel texts.

Omission / Addition

Translation Shifts

Semantic Shifts

Grammatical Shifts

Level Shifts

Category Shifts

Intra-System Shift

Unit Shift

Class shift

Structural Shift

Diagram of the Model of

Catford and Baker's Translation Shifts