

CHALLENGES AND ADVANTAGES OF LITERARY TRANSLATIONS: AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract

There has been a rise in the literary translations that has enabled access to literary sources across the globe. Since English is the global language, translation studies have enhanced and added to a rich pool of knowledge and resources since translations are done not only from regional languages in India to English but also from different languages in the world to English. In fact, it has made the multicultural and multilingual world come closer. It has enriched our knowledge and increased our understanding of different cultures, religions, beliefs and psyche of people.

Translating literary texts involves expertise on the part of translators but there are many issues faced by the translators. To overcome the issues a lot of concerted efforts, creativity, knowledge and personal vocabulary is needed by the translator. Certain errors have to be taken care of to avoid blunders while translating the literary texts. Translations also require a lot of dedicated time to be devoted by the translator.

This paper deals with the challenges faced by the translators, pitfalls that need to be avoided and advantages that accrue from it.

Keywords: Translation, Translators, Multicultural, Multilingual

INTRODUCTION

Translation of literary texts is in vogue these days and there has been a rise in the literary translations which has enabled access to literary sources across the globe. Especially translation of texts written in different languages to English has shown an upward trend, since English is the new global language. Translation studies have helped and added to a rich pool of knowledge and resources. In fact, it has enabled the world come closer and unified. It has enriched our knowledge of understanding cultures of the world, different religions, beliefs and psyche of people.

Translation of literary works has opened up new employment opportunities for people who have an expertise in this field. More resources are generated in terms of knowledge, making it enriched with diversity. Translation of literary texts helps in inter-disciplinary studies like comparative literature, philosophy, history, gender studies, cultural studies etc. Ali opines that, "we need translation to communicate with other civilizations to get great knowledge from other cultures." (pg139) Therefore, literary works translation is the need of the hour for the spread of knowledge, ideas and information.

DISCUSSION

Translations have varied merits but many issues are faced by the translator. To overcome the issues, a lot of efforts, creativity, knowledge and personal vocabulary are needed on the part of the translator. Certain specific errors have to be avoided to elude blunders. Efficiency and effectiveness is the key in translating process. The translator while translating literary texts, doesn't have to focus on word to word literal translation but has to understand the viewpoint of the author, be well versed with the era and times the author has talked about, thus, the cultural makeup of the society depicted needs to be understood. According to Robinson, "The process of translation is significant as increased globalization needs effective communication among different people and cultures."

It's not that we only include the great literary texts written by Shakespeare, W B Yeats, Jane Austen, William Blake, John Milton and Samuel Taylor Coleridge to name a few, when we talk about the stalwarts of English Literature, but translations of great works written by Geoffrey Chaucer, Miguel de Cervantes, Plato, Aristotle, Ruskin Bond, Homer, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, are an integral part and back bone of our great English Literature.

Without these great writers, our study of English literature would definitely have been incomplete.

We can also take the example of Indian Literature in English, wherein we don't only include the works of authors writing in English but many others whose works are translated from different Indian regional languages to English. It thus opens up the Pandora's box of new ideology, vision, mindset and better understanding of the geographical barriers. Bhisham Sahni, Munshi Premchand, Ismat Chughtai, Om Prakash Valmiki are a few names whose works are translated to English and they stand tall along with Indian writers writing in English like, R K Narayan, Amitav Ghosh, Anita Desai, Mulk Raj Anand etc. to name a few.

While translating literary texts, it is pertinent to note that as compared to prose, translating poetry is a more complicated process, since imagery, symbolism, figurative language used like metaphors, similes, etc. is drawn heavily from the authors' culture. Verbatim translation does not fulfill the purpose as each and every word needs to be carefully understood and deciphered as per the meaning required to be understood by the reader. Stressing on this, Ilyas quotes that, "There is rhythm, metrical rhythm; there is emotion, sensuous emotion, there is an increased use of figures of speech and a degree of disregard for conventional word-order; there is imagination, and, above all, there is an ability to see features in an object or a situation another, not a poet, might miss." Extra care and focus has to be given to avoid any distortion to the poetic style used by the author. For drama, Judith A. Inggs says, "The translator of a dramatic text is generally also obliged to disambiguate not only the words of the play, but the actions, the gestures, and even the attitudes of the characters" (pg.34) It's not that the translator's job becomes easy while translating drama, but emotions, body language is to be taken care of, which are very important in drama.

There are many other important points to be kept in mind while translating literary texts. For example translating word by word without understanding the context may alter the meaning of the words used. Nowadays certain translating softwares are available and used that may give a different meaning to the word from the one used in context. So, such softwares have to be used judiciously. While translating literary texts, cultural differences and tone used should be duly taken care of. It's not only the words but also passion, feelings and emotions that also need to be conveyed effectively to the reader.

Among many issues, translators also at times face the issue of the bulkiness of the text to be translated. Most literary texts run in hundreds of pages and can take enormous amount of time to be translated. However, the translated work may differ in length from the original text.

Exaggerating or over-emphasizing on the meaning of words is another mistake to be avoided by the translators because the intended meaning might get lost and the significance of the context in which it is used may get lost. Similarly, if the context in which a word is used is not understood, will pose a major problem while translating. Another thing to watch out is the tone of the text, which may be changing throughout. Translator has to understand the intended tone and do justice with the translated one. It has happened many times that translated works are more acclaimed than the original texts. The credit goes to the creative skill and understanding of the translator that is able to lend life to the translated text. Thus, the translator should have good analytical skills, research skills, writing skills and language skills. By using tools like monolingual and bilingual dictionaries and encyclopedias he can check for the correct usage and meaning of the word to be used in the right context. A translator must check that his own interpretation and ideas don't get mixed or interspersed with the original text. Patience is the key to do full justice to the work of translation. It has to be proof read many times to check for right usage of vocabulary, expressions, tone, context, style etc.

The merits of translations are manifold and issues can't stop the trend of translating texts, which has caught up globally. It enables the readers to understand the culture of other countries which they are not aware of. According to Benjamin, "True translation is transparent, it does not obscure the original, does not stand in its light, but rather allows pure language, as if strengthened by its own medium, to shine even more fully on the original." (pg.162) Translated texts bring them closer to sharing their thoughts and beliefs, leading to better understanding and acceptability of other cultures. This further leads to more knowledge sharing and enhancement.

This acts as a boon for students of literature to take up Comparative Study. They can very easily understand and compare the issues, thought process and human rights, injustice and subjugation of people and religious and social practices followed in different cultures. The translated works also give an opportunity to people in creative field and many movies and television series are made on the translated literary texts. This increases the reach of translated works to masses very effectively.

Here are a few of the translated works that became bestsellers due to universal appeal and connect with the audience:

"*The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, is one of the most-translated, best-selling books ever published. It has been translated into 300 languages and dialects and had sold over 140 million copies as of 2014, with nearly two million copies being sold across the globe every year. It has been adapted for radio, the stage, the screen, the opera house, and more across the world." (Online ulatus)

"*The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* by Steig Larsson: Originally written in Swedish, this psychological thriller novel was published posthumously in 2005, and became an international bestseller after its translation to other languages. It debuted on the New York Times Bestseller List at #4, several sequels have been published (some

written by Larsson before his death, and some written by Swedish author and crime journalist David Lagercrantz), and two film adaptations have been released to date. The series (known as the *Millennium* series) has sold more than 80 million copies worldwide.”(Online ulatus)

“*The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho: This modern retelling of an old classic was written in Portuguese by Brazilian author Paulo Coelho and first published in 1988. As of 2016, it has been translated into 70 languages and has sold over 65 million copies worldwide. A film adaptation is reportedly in progress.”(Online ulatus)

“*The Name of the Rose* by Umberto Eco: This historical mystery novel was originally written in the author’s native Italian. It debuted in 1980, and as of Eco’s death in 2016, it had sold tens of millions of copies in 40 different languages. It was adapted to the screen in 1986, and the film grossed \$77 million worldwide.”(Online ulatus)

“*The Shadow of the Wind* by Carlos Ruiz Zafón: This novel, set in Barcelona during the Spanish Civil War, topped the Spanish-language bestseller lists in mainland Europe before it was translated into English by Lucia Graves and became a sensation in the UK. It is believed to have sold 15 million copies worldwide.”(Online ulatus)

“*1Q84* by Haruki Murakami: This dystopian novel was published in three volumes in the original Japanese in 2009 – 2010. Its first printing sold out on the day of its release, and it sold more than one million copies in its first month! Its success was just as astonishing in other languages, with 70,000 copies of the French edition selling out in just one week. It was translated into 42 languages and has appeared in the bestselling lists across the globe, from South Korea to Australia, Italy, Germany, and China.”(Online ulatus)

“The above books achieved success in their local markets before breaking out to the international market, and that is most common. Some books, however, have actually done better in another language than in their original language.”(Online ulatus) Those two are:

“*Mind of Winter* by Laura Kasischke: Kasischke is known for her poetry in the USA, and her novels were not as well-received. In France, however, they became a sensation. *L’Esprit d’hiver* won Elle magazine’s Grand prix les lectrices, and Kasischke was astonished to find herself quite a celebrity when visiting France.”(Online ulatus)

“*The Inspector Brunetti Series* by Donna Leon: After publishing four novels in this series, Leon’s publisher refused to publish any more of them. When a Swiss publisher picked them up and published them in German, the books become very popular in that market, and it was only when the ninth book in the series was published in both English and German in 2000 that she found success back home.” (Online ulatus)

CONCLUSION

Translated literary texts act as a food for brain, by adding new ideas, enhancing vocabulary and adding new terminology to the already existing database. Cronin is of the opinion that it “reveals our multiple dependencies and the connectedness underlying the consoling fictions of absolute autonomy. It may be the sum of our debts that constitutes our true wealth as peoples.”(pg. 40)It makes people think outside the box. These texts also provide a podium to voices that have never been heard. Or are suppressed and have no platform to bring out their plight in front of the world or put forth their views.

Literary translations, thus, act as a blessing for bilinguals, leading to their economic growth. Thus, translations may have many issues to deal with but have far greater benefits and have led to overall growth of human population at different levels. It has indeed become a very powerful and necessary aspect. Importance of translations of literary texts is now fully realized and it will definitely continue to grow in the coming years, leading to an enriched knowledgeable multicultural and multilingual society.

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