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## Translating a Literary Text: Enigma or Enterprise

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### ABSTRACT

Translation of any text into a second language is recognized as inter-cultural communication. Translated literary text is produced as a result of negotiations among different languages. In this respect, the paper aimed to evaluate major approaches associated with quality assessment of literary translation. The Qualitative approach has been applied to investigate the techniques and linguistic features, associated with the translation of literary text. The study analyzed and assessed the issue of literary translation and has emphasized on the maintenance of text originality during translation. The investigation of techniques and linguistic approach has been assessed by employing theoretical perspective. Different past researches have been analyzed, based on the literary text features to identify the associated factors. The translation of any text is observed as an act of parallel creation, where a translator acts as a bridge across different cultures. A creative literary translator is one, who possesses good language skills to render meaning, style, and feeling to the translated content without disturbing the originality of the text. Therefore, a literary translator is believed to have a significant contribution towards better understanding of diverse cultures. The translated text is termed as a hybrid to some extent on the basis of cultural environment as it involves the transplantation of source text into target language.

**Keywords:** *Translation, Literary Text, Culture, Language Skills, Target Language, Source Language*

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### 1. Introduction

The concept of culture provides a consistent basis for translation irrespective of the different alternative approaches to translation (Ginter, 2002). The word 'translation' has been defined as the representation of culture-specific communication. A translator is regarded as the "first reader", who is responsible for the production of specific meanings that are going to be perceived by the cultural community. Therefore, the translator is also expected to represent the primary process of translation. During the process of translation, the association between two or more cultures results in the production of hybrid text. The text appears by adapting few features of the translated text in the source culture (Loffredo & Perteghella, 2006).

The translation of any text into a foreign language provides an instance for inter-cultural communication. The existence of literary text between different

cultures is an outcome of negotiations between different languages that may include features, contradicting the target cultural norms and languages. The definition of translation has been revised over time as the particular culture plays a significant role in the process of translation. Wojtasiewicz (1992), the author of first Polish monograph and a Polish linguist, studied and investigated adequate cultural approaches to the process of translation. The phenomenon of translating text from language 'A' into language 'B' should provide the reader with similar association as the reader, who reads the text formulated in language 'A' (Wojtasiewicz, 1992). Therefore, translators are considered as those who can reduce the gap between two cultures. On the basis of proficiency, knowledge, and perception, culture has been known as a factor that may influence the social sense of an individual. These aspects can be associated with the advancement in intellectual development



that can be reflected through art.

The cultural identity of different individuals is depicted through the common factual language that involves the educational status, religion, customs, political institutions, and current affairs (Ginter, 2002). The translator, who is learning to translate a text is considered responsible to produce meanings, which can be perceivable for the readers' cultural community (Wolf, 1997). The compliance of text with cultural issues is a major problem for the translator. The term 'hybrid text' has been known as a feature of contemporary inter-cultural communication that extensively contributes to various studies related to translation. However, translation is regarded as a creative and intellectual task that is responsible for discovering and creating meanings that are hidden between the lines of the text.

Translation plays a significant part in filling the gap between different nations and cultures. Literary translations particularly assist different states to reach a universal culture on a mutual ground. A good translation is concerned normally with transferring the propositional content of the language text, and also its other pragmatic features. Literary translation is recognized as a critical procedure through which the texts are imagined, created, and read. It is known as a highly artistic and creative practice, which requires proper attention. Therefore, this study has mainly focused on the process of translation as "the making of text". Moreover, it has also explored the creativity in translation of a text and the multi-vocal association between the translated text and the writer.

The text produced after translation sometimes delivers no similar pattern and style between the original and translated texts, as the translation provides a new source of reading. The perception has been implied to be a major responsibility of the translator. For this purpose, the study has provided an inclusive view of the major strategies related to the quality assessment of literary translation and its current challenges.

## **2. Literature Review**

The word 'translation' was coined around the year 1340, and it has been known to be derived from either Old French or Latin. The Latin meaning of the word 'translation' is 'transporting' and this has been regarded as the basic meaning of the word for the purpose of rendering texts into another language. Translation is a process, where an originally written text, known as

the source language, is translated into different languages. It is translated in the form of a properly written text known as the target text (Munday, 2016).

Translating a literary text involves the reshaping of words from one language to another. The process of translation has been recognized as a subsidiary form of art. The derivative nature of the approach holds a significant character in determining the quality of the translated content. Along the years, the important nature of the work has been underestimated to an extent, where it resulted in the devaluing of the text and lowering of the perceived standards. Over the time, the incompetent translations have generated negative effects on the literature in practical terms. The text translation has always witnessed a substantial significance in the history of translation. According to the readers, the translation of Holy books like Bible, Quran and others, into local languages have been identified as big milestones in the course of time. Thus, it is recognized as an impactful conduct in terms of all the cultural, social, religious, and political approach (Bassnett, 2013).

The translator is known as an efficient personnel, who has the ability to produce text with the same impression as the original text. It has been, therefore, considered necessary for the literary translators to contemplate the aesthetic aspects of the translated text in order to maintain the style and laxity of the original content. Therefore, the translators are expected to have acquired extensive artistic skills along with efficient language abilities (Fowler & Hodges, 2011). The competence of a translator in the performance of translating a text from source to target language must be highly proficient. It is considered thus because of the obvious fact that the target text, which is finally shared with the target audience, is basically the perception and final resolutions of the translator towards the material. Thus, the translation is realized and regarded more as a product rather than the process (Zanettin, Bernardini & Stewart, 2014).

The transformation of a text from one language to another has been a challenging task, particularly when dealing with sensitive materials that may have strong impacts on society. The problems related to literary translation have been considered as factors involving a multi-lingual environment responsible for attracting maximum attention. The issues related to translation have been expanded to encompass various regional, national,

individual identities and power concerns. Within the constraints of an extremely diverse culture, it has been deemed that the translators must also work on the economic and technological unification (Trotter & DeCapua, 2007).

According to Haque (2012), there is a difference between the translation of a literary prose and that of a literary creative prose, because the translation of the latter relies on the existence of a work to be translated or on the object of translation. Although, it is not always possible to draw a separate boundary line in the procedure of rendering an actually creative translation and a simple prose-translation. In some instances, the work might not be judged as well translated, but again due consideration must be given to the fact that it might not be possible to translate a work of literary creativity in absolute terms.

Sapiro (2016) analysed the factors that hinder or trigger the literary work circulating beyond the cultural and geographic boundaries, which refers to the participation in the mechanism of production of literature. These factors can be further characterized into four categories, including economic, political, cultural, and social. The study concluded with the reflection on opposite propensities that categorize the transnational literary field.

The shaping of cultural issues, through literary translations has been known to play an important role. The task of literary translators has become complex after considering the variations regarding definition of culture in the international context. Eventually, the increase in globalization marks an effect on communication between the disparate peoples and the cultures (Robinson, 1977). Since quite a long time, separate domains of translation studies have been working in the institutions that concentrate on the language transformations. Recently, a concern has been put forward that these approaches have set limitations with the application and are a restraint in addressing many other fields. It has been encouraged to employ the approach in the fields of theatre and arts along with the contemporary studies of architecture, ethnography, memory studies, media studies, philosophy as well as psychology (Gentzler, 2014).

### *2.1 The Literary License*

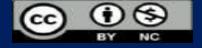
Literature has the ability to form its own language that may consist of a unique vocabulary. The main concerns, while translating any text are accuracy,

maintenance of relevance, and context of the idea (Gutt, 2014). For instance, the works of Shakespeare are thoroughly enjoyed while reading in other languages due to the parallel translations provided by the efficient translators. The translations of his works into other languages have become comparatively comfortable, and effective because all his works had already been transformed from Ancient English into Contemporary English, which has helped the translators a great deal in the understanding of the culture specific expressions and the poetic aspect of the language. Shakespeare's work is an example of intralingual translation that refers to the paraphrasing of source text. The approach has provided us with the time contained stories of plays, like Rome and Juliet, into narrations that are easily perceivable for the modern audience (Hoenselaars, 2014).

The researchers and translators of literature are amazed by the myriad and unique names that are specified to various characters in the literary works. However, the contemporary literature now fancies a literary license that consents the authors to use the fictional names and destinations in their works and present it to almost every culture across the world (Macaluso, 2015). The approach has led us to the origin of various fictional characters like Harry Potter, Sir Lancelot, and fictional places including Stephen King's Castle Rock or Smallville (native town) of Superman. The careful crafting of a particular character in particular time and setting is the biggest challenge for a literary translator (Munday, 2016).

### *2.2 The Woes of Wordplay*

Various verbal acrobatics are used to produce beautiful write ups, which are another great challenge for the translators to overcome to preserve the original beauty of the text. The writings of Shakespeare are thoroughly enjoyed by the literary minds as well as the common readers down the ages. The reason among many others, is the employment of the verbal acrobatics in his plays. He is regarded as the Master of Wordplay in the world of literature (Keller, 2017). However, those who read just for entertainment might not enjoy reading his writings as much as those, who read for the craving of art, knowledge and wisdom. The wordplay has been known as a literary device, which can be shaped into many forms. For instance, wordplay can be used as a double entendre, simple pun,



fabrication, or even observed as spoonerism. However, each and every case of wordplay intends to formulate meanings. Inevitable problems have been involved during the transfer of text into the realm of translation (Munday, 2016). For instance, in Oscar Wilde's play 'The importance of Being Earnest', the word 'Earnest' in the title of the play has been used as a wordplay to represent the nickname of the protagonist, which has little to do with the lexical meaning of the word. This type of wordplay is lost during the process of translation due to the change of a specific word into a literal synonym. However, wordplay is capable of defying problems in literary translation that may include the narrowing of cultural gaps between two different languages. The translated wordplay extensively depends on the translation and transliteration of the text into the other language, depending on the presence of cultural parameters among the two languages (Hatim, 2014).

### *2.3 Poetry and the Roving Rhymes*

In the domain of translation of a literary text, poetry is regarded as a major problem, as it is difficult to maintain the essence of a poem after translating it into another language. It is indeed a difficult task to achieve the similar rhythmic pulse as of the original poetry (Macaluso, 2015). Rhymes have been associated with alliteration, which are known to defy and deceive the dexterous doyens of decoding. It would be of great benefit if a translator is able to work with alliterations. Therefore, this procedure has been known to bring the literature content close to the most devious devices among all the metaphors.

### *2.4 Analogous and Metaphorical Monstrosities*

A metaphor is defined as a phrase that completely depends on the cultural familiarity of the audience (Herzfeld, 2014). For instance, the metaphor 'as stubborn as a donkey' could only be understood by the listeners if they are familiar with the nature of donkeys and the background of the statement. Therefore, metaphor has been regarded as a unique design that completely relies on the cultural familiarity with a particular culture to take full effect. For instance, a metaphor is merely an illogical comparison between oranges and bananas without any cultural reference.

## **3. Methodology**

Qualitative research design has been opted to evaluate the techniques and linguistic features associated with the literary text. A theoretical perspective has been adopted and reviewed by other

scholars in respect of certain translated (literary) texts. Moreover, the style through which a translator translates any text on the basis of corpus linguistic analysis has been evaluated by reviewing previously conducted researches. Different challenges were faced by the translators, which were examined as an artistic choice, where certain decisions may get influenced by the cultural context. It was found important to focus on the linguistic approach to identify the choices concerning various translation strategies applied in the text. It is important to classify strategies that have been employed by the translator on the basis of functional and structural considerations. The possibility of different translation strategies used by the translators throughout the text, accompanied by representation of the instances, have been formally proposed in this research study.

## **4. Analysis and Discussion**

It has been extensively argued and established by the theorists of translation that the process of translating any text is an act of parallel creation. The translator is viewed as a bridge to carry the specific text and values across various cultures. Therefore, the role of a translator is regarded as perfunctory or passive (Eco & McEwen, 2008). It is evident that a creative literary translator acquires good language skills to render the style, meaning, and feeling of text translated into a second language. The literary translator must own a thorough and profound knowledge of the target language along with mastery of the source language. A successful literary translator is observed to be a master in the source and target languages as an absolute necessity and trait (Delabastita, 2011). The creativity in language has also been known as a characteristic of a good literary translator.

According to Boase-Beier and Holman (2016), the characteristics that define a good literary translator include the exceptional sensitivity to words, intuitive sixth sense, and highly receptive ear that awakens a creative mind from subconscious state. A literary translator is capable of hearing the voice of the source text after transcending the words on a page. Moreover, a translator who has the ability to recreate the rhythm, song-like quality, voice, and musicality of the original text is preferably known as an efficient literary translator. A literary translator is believed to make significant contribution towards better understanding of different cultures. According to Delabastita (2011), translation

should not be regarded as a chore, rather it should be enjoyed with a sense of dedication that is regarded as a distinguished characteristic of a good literary translator.

The style of writers can be understood by the words selected by them or the way they use to construct the sentences (Bahaa-eddin, 2011). According to Savory (1968), the translation of a literary work does not restructure the influence of the original one. This is because of the literature, which permits several interpretation. There must be freedom in literary translation to reflect a broad range of implicatures. Therefore, translating the equivalent influence of the original text needs freedom to identify different interpretations. This approach has advantages, which are meant to have relevance in translation (Boase-Beier & Holman, 2016).

Many people believed that the translation of a literary text is the highest rendition of form because it is more than merely the translation of the text. In order to translate the cultural nuances, feelings, humour, and other sophisticated elements of the work, the literary translator must be talented enough to perform the task. Although, the translator translates the real messages, not the meanings (Haque, 2012).

The translation of literary text encourages the initiation and exploration of new forms that create new spaces (Scott, 2012). A study revealed that despite every text being unique, no text can be termed as completely original because the language in its own essence is already translated (Paz, 1992). Yet, every translation can be termed as a unique text, as at a certain point, the translated text is received as a totally new invention of the translator. Therefore, all the texts are said to be original because of the particular distinctions. The fact of untranslatability is a distinguishable feature of any language depicting that the translator is most likely to fall in the trap of impulsivity. During the translation of a literary document, the concept of formal equivalence is subsequently imperfect. At times, a word can mislead to imply meaning of another word in the source language because of the shift in the ecological exclusivity of words. For instance, the Urdu word 'basti' should not be confused with English words 'city' or 'town'. *Basti* can also mean a kind of not-so-developed surrounding, a township or locality inhabited by not-so advanced people.

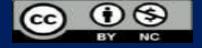
The translator acts as a bridge for

carrying cultural values; whereas, the mechanism of translating the text is responsible for creating parallel creation. A translated text is known as either 'transparent' or 'faithful', whereas the presence of both of these results in the emergence of a good translated text, which is a challenging approach. If the translated text conveys the meaning of the original work, it is regarded as faithful. On the other hand, it is termed as transparent if it is capable of making native speakers believe that the text is originally written in the native language. However, state of the art technology has brought into existence different machines, unlike humans, that are not able to understand languages and cannot involve with the ambiguities and complexities defining literary discourses.

The process of translation is significant as increased globalization needs effective communication among different people and cultures (Robinson, 1997). The translators need to understand the linguistic differences between different languages. Moreover, they should be capable of conveying cultural similarities and differences between the target and source language (Trotter & DeCapua, 2007). However, few studies have emphasized on the process of translation as a cultural transfer regardless of being a linguistic operation (Gentzler, 2001; Venuti, 2012). Translators mainly focus on the function of translation within the context of the target language and culture, along with maintaining the surface structure of the source text. According to Ruuskanen (1996), it is extremely important for the translators to keep targeting and concentrating on, and never diverting from, the source text as they play the role of communicators and mediators of the content. According to Macey (2000), the translator works as a model of a mediator of specific language and culture that is engaged during every step of translation.

## 5. Conclusion

The study concludes that the translated literary text are known as hybrids to some extent because they can be observed as transplantation of the source text into another language on the basis of the cultural environment. The uniform content and unity of the source text are disrupted during the process of translation. Therefore, some inevitable pressure is applied on the target language as it is impossible to transfer foreign elements without certain 'violence'. The translator is supposed to play a role of an inter-cultural



mediator. The inter-cultural transfer of text needs to be considered on the basis of the choice of cultural strategy. Therefore, a creative translator is expected to be mindful of the best available solution. The literary translators are known as interpreters, readers, mediators, writers, and communicators by the integrity of their translation endeavors. In today's globalized world, translation has been regarded as a means of preserving different cultures. It also acts as a valuable channel for dissemination of different cultural values. The linguistic differences ensure use of foreign strategies by preserving identity, culture, and language through the process of translation. Translation not only safeguards the integrity of a language, but is also responsible for transmitting cultural values across different regions.

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