

Selections on Literary Translation

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Table of Contents

Introduction	7
Defining the Course	9
Preface	11
Unit 1 Literary Translation	13
Unit 2 Methods of Literary Translation	33
Unit 3 Cultural and Linguistic Equivalence in Translation	47
Unit 4 Methods in Translating poetry	57
Unit 5 Problems in Translating Poetry	61
Unit 6 Steps in Translating Poetry	79
Unit 7 Translating Prose: Unveiling the Invisible	87
Unit 8 Translating Literary Prose: Problems and Solutions	95
Unit 9 Creativity in Translation of Literary Texts	113
Unit 10 Sense Transferring Through Literary Translation	125
Unit 11 Tips on Translating Poetry	135
Unit 12 Translation and Culture	153
Unit 13 Connotation and Cross-cultural Semantics	157
Unit 14 Translation and Cultural Globalization	185
References	193

Introduction

The basic terms and concepts provided at this book are the initial definitions and details necessary for the students and readers of literary translation to be aware of before embarking on more specific arguments and applications. Different definitions of literature are provided. Then the polarization between literary language and non-literary language in terms of style is recognized. The features which are found inevitable and useful to literary translators are represented; the features which make literature into literature, that is, features of literariness in literature like: semantic density, lexical and syntactic elaboration, medium dependence, re-registration, polyvalency, the possibility of reading literature at more than one level, the involvement of human feelings, etc. It has been argued that the pivotal importance of these features is immeasurable to literary translators. The third major point raised has been literary translation which has been defined in as a special type of translation that accounts for all features of literariness and style of the original, especially those pointed out above. Then the special capabilities and characteristics of the literary translator are discussed. They have been meant to demonstrate the tall order of becoming a literary translator. The penultimate point raised has tackled the major methods of translation in the field. The final point is the suggestion of a literary style-based method of translation for translating literature: 'a creative literary stylistic translation method'. It has been claimed that this method can respond to the demanding requirement of translating literature by singling out creativity and its source, style, to represent the

core of the literariness of literature. It is hoped that the items, features, procedures and methods represented through the book would be a new springboard for a more creative, truthful, scrupulous and impressive translation that may meet the necessary requirements for a good literary translation of literature.

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Preface

Translation and Rainfall

Consider an ocean, deep and blue. The sun shines bright. The water in the ocean evaporates up into the sky. Gradually, clouds are formed and winds take them away, far into another territory. Once the vapor is cold and dense, it falls down in the form of rain. Some of the droplets fall over the salty rocks. Some go deep into the earth. Some fall directly into the sea. Among those that flow on the ground, some-raindrops unite to form streams, streams unite to form rivers, and rivers finally join another ocean with different characteristics, but the same essence.

The first ocean is analogous to the whole knowledge of the source-text nation (or linguistic territory/language). The limited amount of water evaporated is the source text; the process of evaporation is the process of comprehension of the ST by the translator, the clouds are what the source text creates in the translator's mind; the geographical movement of the clouds is the shift from one linguistic territory into another (again, within the translator's mind); the rainfall is the process of putting abstract meaning into words of the target language.

So:

1. There is no "bad translation" if it is genuine. There can be, however, poor ones.
2. There can never be machine-translators in the sense that there are, for example, machine chess players.

3. There can be no definition of *good translation* unless the user and the total circumstance under which he/she is using the translated text are specified.

4. Instead of arguing over priority of form over content, etc. translator training courses should focus on developing comprehension skills in the source language and writing/speaking skills in the target one. These courses should be much more flexible and include flexibility as an intrinsic part of the course material. I dare say, a single method cannot be specified as the "best" not only for a single literary genre, but even for a single literary work or even a single page of that work! Didn't you see that every snowflake has its own unique shape, all of them beautiful?