

COMO LIDIAR CON LA LITERALIDAD EN LA TRADUCCION LITERARIA

DEALING WITH LITERALNESS IN LITERARY TRANSLATION

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RESUMEN

La traducción es en sí misma una materia muy compleja. Para muchos es un arte; para otros es un trabajo, una actividad, una técnica e incluso una habilidad. La traducción literaria, sin embargo, es mucho más que solo traducir palabras o ideas de la lengua de partida hacia la lengua de llegada. Es traducir de una cultura a la otra; es traducir propósito e intención; es capturar el color, la emoción y el estilo del autor para asegurarnos de que el verdadero espíritu de la obra quede perfectamente expresado en la lengua de llegada escogida. Existe un problema que el traductor literario enfrenta al realizar su trabajo el cual se conoce como *literalidad*. Las traducciones literales le brindan al lector una versión precisa del texto pero estas raras veces encierran la riqueza y la esencia del texto original. El propósito de este artículo es definir y describir este problema, además de brindar posibles soluciones para el mismo que pueden ser usadas por los estudiantes y profesores en las clases de Traducción en la carrera de Lengua Inglesa de la Universidad de Holguín.

Palabras clave: traducción literaria; literalidad; estudiantes; profesor.

ABSTRACT

Translation is in itself a very complex matter. For many it is an art; for others it is a science; a job, an activity, a technique, and even a skill. Literary translation, however, is so much more than just translating words or ideas from the source language to the target language; it is translating a culture into another; it is translating purpose and intention; it is capturing the color, emotion and style of the author to ensure the true spirit of the work travels seamlessly through the chosen target language. There is a problem the literary translator faces when doing his job, which is known as *literalness*. Word-for-word translations provide the reader with an accurate account of the text but these rarely embody the richness and soul of the original text. The purpose of this article is to define and describe this problem and provide possible solutions to it, which can be used by the professor and students in the translation classroom of the English Language major at the University of Holguin.

Keywords: literary translation; literalness; students; professor.

Literary translation consists of the translation of poetry, plays, literary books, literary texts, as well as songs, rhymes, literary articles, fiction novels, novels, short stories, poems, etc. In literary translation, we translate messages, not meanings. The text must be seen as an integral and coherent piece of work. It is of huge importance since it helps to shape our understanding of the world around us in many ways. Reading literary works helps to build an understanding of history, politics, philosophy and so much more.

Providing a literary translation of the highest quality requires the most talented and creative linguists. Works of literature are written in an eloquent and vivid prose, which makes translating them both a meticulous and an artistic task. The key to any high quality translation is not slavish accuracy to the precise words and phrases being used, but a slavish dedication to conveying meaning and the original message of the author.

The literary translator has to take into account the beauty of the text, its style, and the lexical, grammatical and phonological features. Some of these may not be the same in the target language. The aim of the translator is that the quality of the translation be the same as the original text without leaving out any of the content. One must be aware that his role is, above all, that of co-authorship. He, with his life experiences, with his worldly knowledge, with his command of the topic, will reveal, in a language different from the original text, the content of the original. That is why a good translator should have a thorough knowledge of the source and target languages, be able to identify with the author of the book or poem, understand his culture and country, and employ a good method for translating literary texts. The literary translator captures the color, emotion and style of the author to ensure the true spirit of the work travels seamlessly through the chosen language.

When the translator is faced with this difficult task, he has to deal with different problems. According to Ziaul Haque of Sylhet International University, one of the main problems affecting literary translators is that they forget that the various elements work together in a dialectical relationship within a literary work. That relationship needs to be kept, reproduced, or approximated in the target translation in order for the translated work to closely resemble the source text. The translator needs to be familiar not only with the two

languages involved, but also with the cultures of the people who speak them. Therefore, he has to deal with the complexities of differences between cultures; Walter Benjamin (1968) has described it as “the irresolution of translation, the element of resistance in the process of transformation, that element in a translation that does not lend itself to translation”.

A further complication is the assumed knowledge of the reader. References to customs, practices and traditions may be easy to understand when reading a novel in one’s own language, but the translator has to deliver that level of built-in knowledge to a reader in another country who may be unfamiliar with the original language’s cultural quirks. When the source and target languages are spoken by people from different cultural groups and backgrounds, then meanings, feelings, and reactions to literary texts can sometimes be entirely different from those created within the source audience. American anthropologist and linguist Edward Sapir, who developed the theory of linguistic relativism, believed that no two languages could ever represent the same social reality, as each language creates its own world and worldview. In this way, the task of recreating the effect or the feelings emanating from the original readings in a target audience becomes an infinitely complex task.

Another problem literary translators face is the translation of aphorisms and idioms. This issue is not as complicated as it might seem at first glance, but it requires a large vocabulary and the availability of a specialized dictionary.

In addition, the translators have to play on words and humor. One of the most interesting moments in literary translation is when the translated text has humorous or ironic implications. Humor, irony, plays on words and plotlines revealed by implication rather than explanation all serve to make this even harder.

However, the greatest challenge of literary translation is dealing with all this problems while avoiding literalness. It is the need to balance staying faithful to the original work with the need to create something unique and distinctive that will evoke the same feelings and responses as the original. Literary translation is an art; it is creativity, which

is incompatible with literalism. It suddenly turns out that the translator of literary works is actually a writer who practically rewrites the book and recreates it for the reader. That is why this kind of translation is not intended to be done literally. It is about recreating the atmosphere of the original text without translating it word for word. Since, word-for-word translations provide the reader with an accurate account of the text but these rarely embody the richness and soul that the creative linguist introduces.

With all that being said, we can only ask ourselves one question: How can the literary translator face this challenge in order to render a faithful translation that is not literal and captures the essence, the true colors and the intention of the original work?

Here are some tips provided by the author to help answer this question:

First, the translator of literary texts should be in some way a researcher. In literary translation, there must be a compliance of styles, cultures and epochs. It is difficult to translate the text of a different era, a different culture, if you are not familiar with its features. Culture-specific references could be translated literally with providing footnotes or other explanations for readers not familiar with the source culture, or try to find equivalents specific to the target culture. Sometimes you must read behind the words or read about the author so you can translate his "thoughts" rather than words only.

Secondly, it is often impossible to bring constructions and idioms literally from one language into another. Instead of trying, with convoluted grammar and obscure vocabulary that is technically correct while being functionally incorrect, the better approach is to recast the words into something that a local speaker of the target language will easily understand.

Literary Translation is in itself a very complex matter. For many it is an art; for others it is a science; a job, an activity, a technique, and even a skill. For that reason, it is the opinion of this author that there should be a follow up on this topic because of the growing relevance of Literary Translation in today's world.

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