

Translating Literary Types

Koorosh Safavi

Abstract:

The present paper is a research into the process of translating literary types. To make this feasible, first, six, presuppositions widely accepted by translation scholars are discussed, together with the technique(s) of achieving adequate translation equivalent in translating automatic language. Then, with regard to the poetic function of language, as suggested by Jakobson, "foregrounding" is discussed as a process of creating the poetic function of language. Two types of foregrounding, i.e. linguistic deviation and extraregularities are discussed according to Haghshenas (1995) and a categorization of literary types are given. The next part of the paper focuses on the process of translating literary types, with regard to the Literary Standard Triangle, as suggested by Haghshenas.

Finally, the degree of translatability of literary texts is studied from a linguistic point of view.

Key Words:

1) Foregrounding:

Deviations from linguistic norms to invoke the analogy of a figure seen against a background.

2) Extra-regularities:

Foregrounded repetitions of expression.

3) Linguistic deviation:

Foregrounded irregularities of content.

The widely Accepted Presuppositions

I. There are no absolute synonyms in any given language and no two words in any language have exactly the same meaning (Palmer, 1976:60).

II. According to the theory of Linguistic Relativity, the language we use is to some degree dependent on the way we see the world (Miller 1968).

III. Sentential meaning is not necessarily the sum of the meanings of the lexical items appearing in the sentence (Palmer, 1976:98).

Based on the above three presuppositions, the process of translating from SL to TL is assumed to consist of the following:

IV. Identifying the meaning of the linguistic unit within the SL and selecting an equivalent linguistic unit in the TL.

V. Rendering the SL linguistic unit with minimum loss or gain in both form and meaning.

A translator finds a text translatable when s/he can successfully move from (IV) to (V). However, there are instances when translating an SL linguistic unit is not as simple as implied by the above assumptions. In translating automatic language, non-feasibility of adequate translation equivalent, can be studied at three levels:

- Phonological
- Lexical
- Syntactic

This non-feasibility applies when there exists no absolute equivalent (At) for an SL unit (As). If so, the relation $At=AS$ does not hold. If the translator cannot find an At, then s/he will have to use a Bt as an approximate to As which holds one of the two possible conditions in relation to As:

$$(1) Bt=As \pm \{I\}$$

In formula (1), Bt is an approximate to As and carries either more or less linguistic information (I) as compared to As. (I) comprises of the whole set of expressional and/or contentual

linguistic information which blocks access to the absolute equivalent in translating automatic language.

Language Functions

The classification of language functions suggested by scholars such as Martinet (1960), Halliday (1964) and Jakobson (1960), seem to have gained wide acceptance. What Jakobson suggested as the Poetic Function of language, is grounded in the theories presented by Shklovsky and Czech Formalists, in particular Mukarovsky (1932:19-35) and Havranek (1932:3-16).

Discussing the Poetic Function of language, Havranek distinguishes between automatization and foregrounding and Mukarovsky suggests that foregrounding is excessively used in poetry.

Foregrounding

"As a general rule, anyone who wishes to investigate the significance and value of a work of art must concentrate on the elements of interest and surprise, rather than on the automatic patterns. Deviations from linguistic or other socially accepted norms are known as "foregrounding", a technique to invoke the analogy of a figure seen against a background." (Leech, 1969:57). Elaborating on the process of foregrounding, Leech distinguishes

two types of foregrounding. Following Jakobson, he believes that there are two mechanisms of linguistic foregrounding: linguistic deviation and extra-regularities. The latter is in a sense the opposite of deviation, for it consists in the introduction of extra-regularities, and not irregularities into the language (Leech, 1969:62). Thus he considers extra-regularities as foregrounded repetitions of expression, and classifies figures such as alliteration, anaphora and chiasmus under this type of foregrounding. He believes that linguistic deviation, as the second type of foregrounding is in essence foregrounded irregularities of content and encompasses figures such as metaphor, irony and synecdoche.

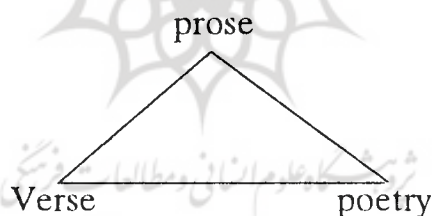
Based on Leech, Haghshenas (1995) makes a distinction between three literary types, i.e. poetry, verse, and prose. He suggests that poetry is created through the employment of one or more of the eight types of linguistic deviations (Leech, 1969:42-52) namely lexical deviation, semantic deviation, dialectal deviation, deviation of register, and deviation of historical period. These form the foregrounded irregularities of content.

Verse on the contrary, is created through foregrounded repetitions of expression, It is for this reason that automatic language, which serves no function but communication, can be used without any change in semantic structure, in verse. Haghshenas believes that what is identified as "prose" in

literature, is indeed the outcome of applying the techniques of poetry and verse to automatic language.

Considering the process of creating these three literary types, Haghshenas focuses on the possibility of combining these types and believes that mixing the mechanisms of creating poetry, verse and prose, results in the appearance of "mixed types", which can be used to identify the position any literary unit holds in relation to these three literary prototypes.

Thus, he considers these literary types, which are in fact a manifestation of the poetic function of language, as forming a triangle upon which every literary genre occupies a position.



The results of the research being reported here, are based on numerous examples form Persian, English, German and French. The translated versions of the literary units randomly selected for this research prove that in translating literature, the translator actually deals with a text which, compared to automatic language, is marked, and contains foregrounded repetitions of expression

and/or foregrounded irregularities of content.

The Process of Translating Literary Texts

Based on the above, we may conclude that in addition to linguistic information (I), literary units contain other types of information as well, which may be classified under the two types of foregrounding. If this literary information be labeled "foregrounding information" (F), then the following rule (2) maybe extracted for the literary unit (As).

$$(2)As \in \{I, F\}$$

Based on rule (2), the process of translating literature may be considered as comprising of the following seven steps:

- (a) Identifying the meaning of the literary unit in the SL with respect to the linguistic information (I) contained in it;
- (b) Identifying the effect of the literary unit on the reader of the SL;
- (c) Identifying the foregrounded irregularities of content in the literary unit;
- (d) Identifying the foregrounded repetitions of expression in the literary unit;
- (e) Identifying the position of the literary unit on the literary Standard Triangle;
- (f) Selecting adequate equivalent linguistic units in the TL from

among the series of possible equivalents which exist on the paradigmatic axis, in such a manner as to convey the information listed under (c) and/or (d) in the TL;

(g) Presenting in the TL the equivalent literary unit which contains the (I) and (F) in the SL unit.

In case of no linguistic deviations in the SL literary unit, the text occupies a position on the prose-verse line in the Triangle; and the absence of extra-regularities in the SL literary unit indicates that unit lacks versification and will therefore occupy a position on the prose-poetry line. Thus, in the absence of any linguistic deviation and extra-regularities, the SL text occupies the position of absolute non-literary prose. The absence of (c) and/or (d) in the above-mentioned process, turns literary translation into translation of automatic language, the only problem of which is to cover (I). Reducing the seven steps into six by excluding (c) or (d), increases the possibility of arriving at an adequate translation. The results of this research indicate that a translator is most successful when rendering simple prose. As the SL literary unit moves from the position of prose down the prose-poetry or the prose-verse line, the possibility of arriving at an exact TL equivalent is reduced. However, since only one of these steps - (c) or (d) - shall be excluded, it will still be possible to produce an acceptable translation. the statistical information gained in this

research indicate that when the SL literary text and its TL translation falls to literary unit is placed on the poetry-vers line, the degree of correspondence between SL minimum. This is because there is no possibility whatsoever for rule (3) to hold:

$$(3) Bt \cong As \in \{I, F\}$$

Based on the present argument, this occurs when the translator has employed three unfavorable conditions. First, s/he has disregarded extra-regularities in order to account for linguistic deviations, so that s/he may convey the content of the SL literary unit as much as possible. Second, s/he has given priority to extra-regularities. In this case, conveying the SL concepts through linguistic deviations inevitably results in loss or gain. Third, s/he has attached significance to the effect of the SL literary unit. In this case, the translator is obliged to transfer both types of foregrounding information from the SL into the TL. Since in practice this is impossible, s/he transfers the content of the SL literary unit in the form of prose, and then, by selecting versification units on the TL paradigmatic axis, versifies the resulting prose. Thus, under the first condition the translated version lies somewhere on the prose-poetry line. Under the second condition the translated version lies somewhere on the prose-verse line. In both cases the position occupied by the SL on the Triangle, differs from that of the TL on the Triangle, and

therefore there shall be no possibility of producing equivalent effect translation.

Under the third condition, the output will be a free translation, since by maintaining the content of the SL literary unit which is, to some degree, comparable to the SL literary unit only in terms of its effect.

Conclusion

Translatability/Untranslatability has always been a subjective issue. However, the results of the present research prove that there is a chance of treating this question more objectively. Extracting foregrounding mechanisms of the SL literary unit, corresponding to the frequency of the occurrence of repetitions of expression in the SL literary unit and its equivalent (TL) literary unit can explicitly clarify both the conditions/possibilities the translator has employed and the degree of his/her success in maintaining the artistic and aesthetic aspects of the SL literary unit in translation.

Bibliography

- Haghshenas, A.M. (1995) "she'r, nazm, nasr; se gooneye adabi (poetry, verse, prose; three literary types) in
- Mir 'Emadi, A. (ed.). *Proceedings of the 2nd Conference on Linguistics*, Tehran: Allameh Tabataba'i University.
- Halliday, M.A.K. (1973) *Explorations in the Functions of Language*, London: Arnold.
- Havranek, B. (1932) "The functional differentiation of standard language" in Garvin, P. (ed.) *Prague School Reader in Esthetics, Literary Structure and Style*, Georgetown: Georgetown University press.
- Jakobson, R. (1960) "linguistics and Poetics" in Sebeok, T.A. *Style in Language*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Leech, G.N. (1969) *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry*, New York: Longman.
- Martinet, A. (1960) *Eléments de Linguistique Générale*, Paris: Colin.
- Miller, R.L. (1968) *The Linguistic Relativity Principle*, Mouton & Co.
- Mukarovsky, J. (1932) "Standard language and poetic language" in Garvin P. (ed.) *Prague School Reader in Esthetics, Literary Structure and Style*, Georgetown: Georgetown University Press.

- Palmer, F.R. (1976) *Semantics; A New Outline*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



پروشکاه علوم انسانی و مطالعات فرہنگی
رتال جامع علوم انسانی