

ԼԵԶՎԱԲԱՆՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ

Anna KHACHATRYAN

Yerevan State University

ON SOME KEY ISSUES OF POETRY TRANSLATION

The paper aims to discuss some key issues of poetry translation, which is considered to be the most complicated variety of literary translation. Achieving equivalence in poetry translation is generally conditioned by the translator's ability to solve a number of problems, such as the conveyance of the metrical peculiarities of poetic texts, the preservation of their stylistic integrity and cultural specifications. Poetry translation, in general, has its own elaborated approaches and principles, which deserve special consideration and are of primary importance to those interested in both the theory and the practice of this variety of translation.

Key words: *translation studies, equivalence, literary translation, poetry translation, translation methods and approaches, a unit of translation, figurative language, stylistic device*

Translation is a kind of interlingual, cross-cultural and cross-social communication. As a kind of bilingual communication, the main purpose of translation is to establish equivalence between the source and target texts. Hence, equivalence is preserving the equal value of the SL and TL texts. In other words, as a recipient of the source message and a sender of the target message, the translator must do his best to convey fully the content of the source text into the target one. Otherwise, translation, as an act of communication, would end up in failure.

Literary translation implies the translation of all genres of literature, which include prose, drama and poetry. The notion of equivalence gains particular importance in literary translation, because it defines translation itself. This makes it somehow problematic, because the process of achieving equivalence in translation is circular – the quality of translation is appraised in terms of equivalence, and the concept of equivalence, at the same time, is used for assessing and describing actual translation acts. The concept of equivalence is also central in the study of translation, because it is closely connected to other important theoretical notions in translation studies; in fact, the assumption of its existence is a prerequisite for the discussion of most theoretical notions in the discipline. For example, it is central to

the notion of fidelity/faithfulness to an original, which clearly presupposes not only the possibility, but rather the desirability of equivalence. Faithfulness to the original means faithfulness not only at the level of words, the content, and the period, but also at the level of the author and the genesis of the meaning (sense) he is transmitting. To understand the sense of a text, therefore, the translator must grasp the intent of the author and convey it into the target text as completely as possible.

The notion of equivalence is undoubtedly one of the most controversial areas in the field of translation theory. The term has caused and still causes heated debates within the field of translation studies; it has been thoroughly analyzed, evaluated and discussed from different perspectives. The first discussions of the notion of equivalence in translation initiated in the mid-20th century and have led to the further elaboration of the term by contemporary theorists. Even the brief outline of the issue indicates its importance within the framework of the theoretical reflection on translation. The difficulty in defining equivalence seems to result in the impossibility of having a universal approach to this notion. Thus, equivalence is the central issue in translation, although its definition, relevance, and applicability within the field of translation theory have caused heated controversies, and many different theories on the concept of equivalence have been elaborated within this field in the past fifty years. According to Roman Jakobson, “no linguistic specimen may be interpreted by the science of language without the translation of its signs into other signs of the same system or into signs of another system. Any comparison of two languages implies an examination of their mutual translatability” /Jakobson, 1969: 104/.

From the historical perspective, the activity of poetry translation has always been there and practiced widely over centuries. In general, translating literary works, perhaps, is much more difficult than translating other types of texts, because literary works have some specific values, namely - the aesthetic and expressive values. The aesthetic function of the literary work emphasizes the beauty of the text wording, figurative language, etc., while the expressive function puts forwards the writer's intention, emotions and so on. And the translator should try to do his best to transfer these specific values into the target language. As a genre of literature, poetry has something special as compared to others. In a poem, the beauty is achieved not only through the choice of words and figurative language, as, for instance, in novels and short stories, but also through the creation of rhythm, rhyme, meter, and some specific expressive structures that may not conform to the ones of the daily language. In short, the translation of poetry needs “something more” than the translation of other genres of literature. The choices made by the translators, such as the decision whether to retain the stylistic features of the source text or whether to retain the metrical dimension of the original, become all the

more important in the case of poetry translation. Most scholars and translators, such as R. Jakobson, believe that when dealing with poetry the notion of translation is inapplicable, though, as in this case “only creative transposition is possible” /Jakobson, 1993: 151/. Thus, it is the creative dimension of translation that comes to the fore in the translation of poetry, though nobody seems to be sure what creativity exactly means.

Alexander Fraser Tytler, who was one of the early theoreticians to discuss the problem of poetry translation, takes a diametrically opposite stance to both the translation-into-prose school with an equally confident dogmatism. Tytler asserts: “to attempt, therefore, to do a translation of a lyric poem into prose, is the most absurd of all undertakings, for those very characters of the original which are essential to it, and which constitute its highest beauties, if transferred to a prose translation, become unpardonable blemishes” /Tytler, 1791: 87/.

One of the best known and interesting catalogues of methods employed by translators of poetry is Bassnet's list of the various possible approaches /Bassnett, 1994: 97/:

Phonemic translation (attempts to reproduce the sound of the original in the target language, producing an acceptable paraphrase of the sense);

Literal translation (word-for-word translation distorting the original sense and syntax);

Metrical translation (concentrates on reproducing the metre);

Poetry into prose (distorts the sense, communicative value and syntax of the original);

Rhymed translation (the translator enters into a "double bondage" of metre and rhyme, the product being a "caricature" of the original);

Blank verse translation (restrictions imposed upon the translator, but greater accuracy and higher degree of literalness);

Interpretation (the substance of the original is retained, but the form is destroyed).

The translator who renders a text of this kind should first and foremost ensure that the meaning of the text is preserved as closely as possible, and to that end the choice of the vocabulary and sentence structure should be based on the concepts conveyed, in order to allow this clear and univocal reading that will avoid misunderstanding and ensure the equivalence of the target text to the source text with respect to its performance from the standpoint of the communicative function.

The translator of a poem should pass on to his text the specific significance of the original poem, which is its identification card. For the translator of poetry, the translation starts with transposing visual legibility. A sonnet should be translated for a sonnet, a poem in free verses for a poem in free verses, and so on. Doing otherwise would mean straying from the translation towards a free recreation.

Faithfulness in poetic translation will consist in recovering in the target text the textual markers of significance, so that the target text can be not only a poem in the receiving language culture, but a poem that is homogeneous with the original poem in what constitutes its poetic identity.

In poetry, in addition to some cultural cases of untranslatability, a lot of cases of linguistic untranslatability can also be found. However, according to Nida, anything that can be said in one language can be said in another, unless the form is an essential element of the message /Nida, Taber, 1982: 78/. Generally speaking, it is not justifiable to refrain from poetry translation, since poetry is the means of expression of one nation's feelings and attitudes toward world affairs. In this case, translation can act as a bridging tool bringing closer different nations of the world.

Translation is the art of revelation. It makes the unknown public. The translator artist has the fever and craft to recognize, recreate, and reveal the work of the other artist. But even when famous at home, the work comes into an alien city as an orphan with no past to its readers. Translation of poetry is conceivable. A translation dwells in imperfection, using equivalents and shunning mechanical replicas - which is the dream of literalists who believe in truth. A translation is never an exact copy. It is different. In translation perfect mimesis is impossible. But a fake or counterfeit of the original is possible, and usually it lacks criminality, since it stays close and calls itself what it is: translation. The translated poem should be read as a poem written in the language of the adopted literature, even if it differs, because of its origin, from any poem ever written in its new tongue. Poetry, as a superior form of synonymy, is much more difficult to translate than usual messages. This difficulty resides in the skill that a translator needs in order to transfer all the values of the original, together with its musicality, style. One of the most important features of poetry is undoubtedly musicality. This is what makes a poem live within the minds and souls of the readers, and prevents its dissolution in time. Hence, musicality is the main element that keeps poems alive through centuries on the lips of generations.

The literary translator also faces the problem of style. Style is not an easy term to define, however, it can readily be said that style is how one says a thing. In other words, style is the way in which something is written or said as distinct from its subject matter. Naturally, each language poses its own problems of style, but the practical considerations that go into the making of translation do not seem to differ much from one translator to another. Thus, another problem in translating poetry relates to the translation of stylistic devices, especially metaphors. Metaphor is the concept of understanding one thing in terms of another. A metaphor is a figure of speech that constructs an analogy between two things or ideas, the analogy is conveyed by the use of a metaphorical word in place of some other word. Other stylistic figures are hyperbole or exaggeration, synecdoche or using part to signify

the whole, metonymy or substituting an attribute of a thing for the thing itself, personification or endowing inanimate objects or abstract concepts with animate characteristics or qualities, etc.

Toumanian's poetry presents special challenges to translators. These challenges are culture, figurative language, invented words, etc. As Kamenicka states, the cultural environment of Toumanian's poems is decidedly Armenian and many of the cultural nuances will be unfamiliar to readers in translation /Kamenicka, 2006: 32/.

The analysis of the translation of Toumanian's "The Armenian Grief" shows how it creates the beauty of the poems and a vivid picture in the reader's mind. The poem has been translated into many languages. The English translation below was done by Mischa Kudian, an English citizen born of Armenian parents. His translations of Toumanian's poems are an outstanding literary success.

The analysis shows the implication of the poetry translation from the stylistic point of view.

The Armenian Grief	Հայոց վիշտը
Armenian grief is a sea,	Հայոց վիշտը անհուն մի ծով,
A fathomless, boundless main.	Խավար մի ծով ահագին,
In that dark expanse drifts my soul,	Էն սև ծովում տառապելով
Mournful, in mortal pain.	Լող է տալիս իմ հոգին:
Now furiously it rears	Մերթ զայրացկոտ ծառս է լինում
And the azure coastline seeks,	Մինչև երկինք կապուտակ,
Now weary it disappears,	Ու մերթ հոգնած սուզվում, իջնում
Seeking peace in the deeps.	Դեպի խորքերն անհատակ:
But neither can it find the bottom,	Ոչ հատակն է գտնում անվերջ
Nor can it reach the shore...	Ու ոչ հասնում երկնքին...
In the sea of Armenian sorrows	Հայոց վշտի մեծ ծովի մեջ
My soul languishes evermore.	Տառապում է իմ հոգին:

Seeing the real circumstances his country faced during the national struggle moved Toumanian to envelope his impressions in the Armenian Grief. This poem is another example of his enduring bond with his people and nation. Here is the case where the artist's life and work balance and reflect each other. An artist in whose works and life the contradictions of the age, its light and shade, are concentrated, it is as though his very life were a monument to the age, as sublime and tragically beautiful as the poetic world of his creation.

Toumanian demonstrates the importance of setting in The Armenian Grief through the use of vivid descriptions. Writing metaphorically he emphasizes his nation's suffering in the poem: Էն սև ծովում տառապելով Լող է տալիս իմ

հոգին (In that dark expanse drifts my soul, Mournful, in mortal pain). These lines manifest a touch of suffer. To accomplish the same effect, the translator, as he makes his transformation, searched for proper equivalents to ensure that the translation is equivalent to the original making the effect of the original be adequate to the target readers' eye and ear. His effective equivalents, that keep the sorrowful and miserable overtones of the source text, ensure that the poem is self-sustaining and does not sound like translation.

There are two images passing through this poem – the image of an endless, bottomless sea, which embodies the immeasurability of the nation's suffering, and the image of the poet, who grieves for his nation and feels the weight of the sorrow with his entire heart. The poet is an inseparable part of this sea of grief, the center of national suffering, expectations and hopes. In this poem the author uses antithesis: Մերթ զայրացկոտ ծառս է լինում...Ու մերթ հոգնած սուզվում իջնում (Now furiously it rears...Now weary it disappears) based on pairing contrasting ideas in parallel grammatical structures. Here we see an emotional tension, which is preserved in the English version as well. This stylistic device helps to achieve rhythm, mainly by introducing parallel images of rising and falling. Through preserving this stylistic device the translator also kept the whole pictorial effect in the target text. This rhetorical technique captivates the reader's interest. It contributes to holding the passage together as one, hence keeping the reader threaded to the idea.

In the same passage of the source text we also see hyperbole: Մերթ զայրացկոտ ծառս է լինում դեպի երկինք կապուտակ (Now furiously it rears, And the azure coastline seeks). While analyzing the underlined sentences above, both in English and Armenian we feel that it is impossible for the sea to seek the azure coastline. It is clear that Toumanian is exaggerating the situation. This hyperbolic statement is an extravagant statement used for laying an extra-stress. He adds a dramatic effect to the imagery employed to express the strong emotions of the suffering people.

A translator of poetry who lacks any poetic gifts is not likely to produce great poetry translations even if the translator may be a great philologist. Poetry is neither just words, nor just meter. Translators and theoreticians characterize it as music of words, as a way of seeing and interpreting the world. When speaking about the sound, the first thing to mention is rhyme, which can be defined as the matching of final vowel or consonant sounds in two or more words. In fact, sound is anything connected with sound cultivation including rhyme, rhythm, which refers to the regular recurrence of the accent or stress in a poem, assonance or the repetition of vowel sounds, onomatopoeia, which implies that the word is made up to describe the sound, alliteration or the repetition of the same consonant letters,

etc. By no means, the translator should always seek to maintain them in the translation.

The translator, bearing in mind the fact that translation is, after all, rewriting, recreation of a certain poem, analyses all the structures and patterns that are to be found in the original and tries to transfer them into the product of his work, the translated poem. Nothing is supposed to be added and nothing is supposed to be lost.

The literary translator is therefore the person who concerns himself with reproduction of literary texts rather than their translation. The literary translator participates in the author's creative activity and then recreates structures and signs by adapting the target language text to the source text as closely as intelligibility allows. He needs to assess not only the literary quality of the text, but also its acceptability to the target reader, and this should be done by having a deep knowledge of the cultural and literary history of both the source and the target languages.

Miram and Dayneko state that translators of poetry, as a rule, employ the denotative approach to translation, which is based on the idea of denotatum and has a definite relevance to the idea of concept /Мирам, Дайнеко, 2006: 41/. According to the denotative approach, the process of translation is not just mere substitution but consists of the following mental operations:

the translator reads a message in the source language;

the translator finds the denotatum and concept that correspond to this message;

the translator formulates a message in the target language relevant to the above denotatum and concept.

In the denotative approach the relationship between the source and target word forms is occasional, rather than regular, as opposed to the transformational approach. To illustrate this difference, let us consider the following examples:

The sea is warm tonight. – Այսօր երեկոյան ծովը տաք է:

She is incurably ill. – Նրան քիչ է մնացել ապրելու:

In the first instance the equivalents are regular and the concepts may be divided into those relating to the individual components of the sentence: sea - ծովը, tonight – այսօր երեկոյան, is warm – տաք է.

In the second instance, however, equivalence between the original sentence and its translation is occasional, i.e. only for this case, and the concept of the whole sentence cannot be divided into individual components.

The use of the denotative approach in translation is conditioned by the notion of translation units in poetic texts. In general, the major task of the translator is to be able to find in the original text a minimum language unit (this does not mean the simplest one), which must be translated. In translation theory, this unit is called a

unit of translation. It is such a unit in SL, which has an adequate equivalent in TL. Such a unit may have a complicated form, that is- it may be composed of simpler language units in the original text, but its parts, if taken separately, are not translated and in the target text one cannot find equivalents to them, even if they have their own, relatively independent meanings in the original language. In poetry translation texts themselves become units of translation, and the correlation between the source and target languages is established at the level of the whole text. In other words, the translator see the text as a whole unit in which any loss in any place or device can be compensated for either in another place or by means of another device to preserve the overall aesthetic value of the text.

Holmes proposes several approaches to the translation of poetry with relation to form and content. One of them is the form-derivative approach, in which the translated poem retains the form of the original /Holmes, 1970: 94/. The translator does his best to imitate the form of the original aiming at the utmost preservation of the style and rhythm of the original. This approach assumes a high degree of dynamic equivalence. Dynamic equivalence is defined as a translation principle according to which the translator seeks to convey the meaning of the original in such a way that the target language wording will trigger the same impact on the target text reader as the original wording did upon the source text reader /Nida, 1964: 159/.

Another approach proposed by Holmes is content-derivative and refers to the so-called “organic form”, in which the translator starts from the semantic material and allows it to take on its own unique poetic shape along with the development of the translation. In this form the target text, the translated poem, has two inseparable aspects: form and content /Holmes, 1970: 96/.

In the process of rendering a poem into the target language, the primary aim of the translation must be to make the same impact on the target language receivers as the source text had on the source language receivers. Linguistically, each language has its own metaphysics, which determines the spirit of a nation and its behavioral norms, and this is known as linguistic relativity. This means that language directs our intellect and even our sensory perception. Since words or images may vary considerably from one group to another, the translator needs to pay attention to the style, language and vocabulary peculiar to the two languages in question in order to produce an equivalent translation of the source language text.

Culturally oriented translation studies focus on the communicative nature of translation, and this is especially true in the case of poetry reproduced in translation. All nuances should be preserved in the translation in order to preserve the spirit of the original and not to destroy the overall impact.

The translator of poetry is the one who becomes the voice of the original poet and is thus able to produce a poem that sounds as if it were written by that

particular author directly in the target language, and he should have the same inspiration as the author had when writing it. As Plato states, “The poet is a winged holy thing, and there is no invention in him until he has been inspired and is out of his senses, and the reason is no longer in him...” /Plato, 2002: 112/. So, the translator of a poem must equate the author, the artist, and be inspired from the poem.

REFERENCE

1. Bassnett S. Translation Studies (revised edition). London and New York: Routledge, 1994.
2. Holmes J. S. Forms of Verse Translation and the Translation of Verse Forms. Bratislava: Publishing House of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, 1970.
3. Jakobson R. Linguistics and Poetics // Sebeok T. (ed.) *Style in Language*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1969.
4. Jakobson R. On Linguistic Aspects of Translation. New York, 1993.
5. Kamenicka R. Translation of Proper Nouns and Neologisms. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd, 2006.
6. Newmark P. Approaches to Translation. Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1981.
7. Nida E., Taber C. The Theory and Practice of Translation. Leiden, Holland: Brill, 1982.
8. Nida E. Towards a Science of Translating. Leiden, 1964.
9. Plato Poetry and inspiration (translated by Benjamin Jowett) // Robert D. Yanni (ed.) *Literature: Reading Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*, 2002.
10. Selected Armenian Poets /ed. by S. Mkrtychian/. Yerevan: SamSon Publishers, 1998.
11. Tytler A. F. Essay on the Principles of Translation. London: Dent, 1791.
12. Мирам Г., Дайнеко В. Основы перевода. Киев: Изд. «Ника-Центр», 2006.

Ա. ԽԱԶԱՏՐՅԱՆ – Բանաստեղծական խոսքի թարգմանության առանցքային խնդիրները. – Սույն հոդվածի նպատակն է քննարկել բանաստեղծական խոսքի թարգմանության որոշ առանցքային խնդիրներ: Բանաստեղծական խոսքի թարգմանությունը համարվում է գեղարվեստական թարգմանության տարատեսակներից ամենաբարդը, քանի որ այստեղ համարժեքության հասնելը պայմանավորված է թարգմանչի կողմից մի շարք այնպիսի խնդիրներ լուծելու կարողությամբ, ինչպիսիք են բանաստեղծական տեքստերի ձևաչափային առանձնահատկությունների փոխանցումը, ոճական ամբողջականության և մշակութային յուրահատկությունների պահպանումը: Ընդհանուր առմամբ, բանաստեղծական թարգմանությունն ունի մշակված մոտեցումներ և սկզբունքներ, որոնք հատուկ ուշադրության են

արժանի և առաջնային կարևորություն ունեն բոլոր նրանց համար, ովքեր զբաղվում են գեղարվեստական թարգմանության այս տարատեսակի տեսական և գործնական ուսումնասիրությամբ:

Բանալի բաներ. թարգմանաբանություն, համարժեքություն, գեղարվեստական թարգմանություն, բանաստեղծական խոսքի թարգմանություն, թարգմանական մեթոդներ և մոտեցումներ, թարգմանության միավոր, փոխաբերական լեզու, ոճական հնար

А. ХАЧАТРЯН – Ключевые вопросы стихотворного перевода. – Данная статья посвящена изучению некоторых ключевых вопросов одного из самых сложных видов литературного перевода – перевода поэзии. В этой разновидности перевода достижение эквивалентности требует от переводчика решения ряда таких задач, как, например, воспроизведение метрических особенностей стихотворных текстов, сохранение стилистической целостности и культурных особенностей оригинала. В целом, стихотворный перевод предусматривает специально разработанные подходы и принципы, которые заслуживают особого внимания и чрезвычайно важны для всех тех, кто занимается теоретическим и практическим изучением этого вида литературного перевода.

Ключевые слова: переводоведение, эквивалентность, литературный перевод, стихотворный перевод, переводческие методы и подходы, единица перевода, образный язык, стилистический прием

Ներկայացվել է՝ 16.10.2020
Երաշխավորվել է ԵՊՀ Թարգմանության տեսության և
պրակտիկայի ամբիոնի կողմից
Ընդունվել է տպագրության՝ 20.11.2020