



Translating The Kiss By Anton Chekhov

Report

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Dedication

This work is conducted with a sense of appreciation to our parents who were the source of our inspiration. They were the source for permanent support throughout our Journey in the university. No words are enough to describe our thankful feelings. Our thanks are also due to the outstanding supervisor, Dr. Abdulkarim Daraghmeh, who has always been a source of guidance and inspiration for us- thank you professor.

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Introduction

A glimpse on literary translation

Literary translation is concerned with translating literary works for readers of target languages. It is very important for lovers of literature because this helps them to read various stories among different cultures, novels and other literary works. Literary translation is almost about translating life and the different meanings of life through naturalizing many works reallocating them to suit new cultures and life values. In literary translation, translators' focus is on exchanging not only words but mainly meanings among languages.

Literary translation: it is a genre of translation in which we deal with the difficulties inherent in translations of all fields; literary translators must consider the aesthetic aspects of the text, its beauty and style, as well as its marks (lexical, grammatical, or phonological), keeping in mind that one language's stylistic features can be drastically different from perhaps all other languages.

When we translate literature, we are writing literature, and the translated text must adhere to the highest standards of literary quality at all times. To translate literary works creatively and coherently, we should be aware of the linguistic and cultural aspects of both the source and the target language. Beauty of the text is very important and has to be maintained when translating literary works.

The main approaches in literary translation

There are many approaches that translators use in transmitting from one language to another but the most common approach is naturalization. Naturalization according to Sharifa Balhotis in his book

ما بين التجنيس والتغريب in the Mouloud Mammeri University -Tizi Ouzou – in Algeria is considered one of the basic approaches used in translation. It is mainly the production of a text in the target language as if the text originally was written in that language (target language).

Naturalization according to Sharifa Balhotis goes through 3 main stages:

- 1- Understanding: translation will not be 100% valid if the translator does not understand the literary work.
- 2- Translation: As translators embark on their work, they are required to:
 - A. Keep the same impression that the original text has.
 - B. Maintain the original words in the text and never removing a repeated word in the text as repetition might have significance.
 - C. Keep the same level of the original text as the translator's job is not to beautify the text.
- 3- Revision: Translators will finally compare between the original text and the translated one while concentrating mainly on the new one.

Naturalization helps in enriching the target language with terms that exist in the source language; the exchange and interaction between cultures and people helped in the spread of such terms.

Challenges in translating literary works

According to <http://translation-blog.multilizer.com>, one of the main problems that translators go through is they forget that the various elements are combined together by naturalizing the images and ideas to have multicultural translated texts they take cultural differences of literary works in consideration. This relationship needs to be kept, reproduced, or approximated in the target translation in order for the translated work to closely resemble the source text.

Translators encounter another key difficulty in the process of literary translation. “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”.

Literary translators often face very complicated problems in practice. Dealing with such problems leads us to follow naturalization strategy which is a systematic and dynamic approach that is helpful for readers to not feel unnaturalness while reading *The Kiss*.

The following section contains the seven challenges that the translators of Anton with the help of examples which were recorded in diary form during the translation process.

The Kiss is an English short story written by the Russian author *Anton Chekhov*. The story is mainly about disillusionment and delusion. The sequence of the events in the story reflects reality of life. It has a surprising end where the main character Ryabovitch is disappointed because of that unreal kiss. We felt it is important to translate such a story because of its thematic message that it embraces and because it is enjoyable to read.

Challenges:

1- Length and Format:

Translators face problems related to style as they translate literary works among different cultures. We present her the stylistic challenges that we encountered through translating the story. One of the encounters is that the size of the content of the pages of the translated story became less than the size of the original content. One of the reasons behind this is that the equivalences between the two languages are not the same with reference to their size, number of words they contain and the length of the words themselves. For example, in relation to size, we were forced to leave two spaces on page 3 because the Arabic equivalences we used were shorter than the English ones, despite the fact that the size of our typing was bigger than the original one, this was repeated on other pages. On page 9, after translating the expression "don't stand on ceremony", the number of its words and size became smaller. Translating the word "respectfully" at the beginning of the last paragraph on page 15, its length decreased as it was translated into "احتراماً". This was a challenge because the original pages were filled from the top to the bottom whereas the translated pages have more spaces on the top and bottom margins. We overcame this challenge by leaving equal spaces between paragraphs and so, this is suitable for Arabic writing style.

Another encounter we faced was that the conversations in the original text were stylistically different from the Arabic conversation style, as we know that in Arabic literature there is a tendency to shape conversations by giving a line for each quotation said by one speaker. In the original text, the writer uses multiple quotations in paragraph format. An example on that is located on page 10, this also causes differences in size as we already mentioned previously.

"Who was she?" Ryabovitch wondered, looking at the smoky ceiling.

- "من تكون هي؟"

- تسائل ريبوفيتش مع نفسه "، مركزا نظراته على سقف الغرفة الكثيف بالدخان.

2- Stylistic Challenges:

Challenges related to form are common and more complicated than style challenges. First, the original text contains brackets in some paragraphs which are used by the writer to describe a certain action or to tell readers about an exclusive point or most importantly to elaborate on certain occasions in the story. This stylistic option does not exist in Arabic literary works; Arab writers always describe and elaborate using commas as we did in our translation. This stylistic change was applied in the last paragraph of page 9, **(that was how his appearance had been described by some ladies whose conversation he had accidentally overheard)** and this sentence was translated using commas not brackets.

Secondly, the use of dots in many places by Chekhov is common as well, in Arabic literary works, it is not natural to use dots in between sentences so we had to delete them like in the third line of the last paragraph of page 8 "was his unknown. . . . But she laughed", this sentence was translated without dots. However, it is sometimes necessary to keep the dots as the original text because they have some sort of a meaning especially in quotations, as we did in the first paragraph of page 9 " "It's difficult to guess," he thought, musing. "If one takes the shoulders and arms of the lilac one only, adds the brow of the fair one and the eyes of the one on the left of Lobytko, then . . ." this quotation was translated into:

فكر بعمق قائلاً: " انه من الصعب ان اخمن " واطاف الى نفسه قائلاً: " اذا ما اخذنا اكتاف
وذراعين الفتاه الارجوانية، بالاضافة الى جبين الفتاه الحسناء وعيون تلك الفتاه على يسار
لوبيتكو، اذن....."

The speaker of this quotation was thinking silently after saying the word 'then' as the dots are used to show further contemplation.

Thirdly, the use of the dashes at the very beginning of the story by Chekhov is mysterious; he might have used the dashes to imply a certain

meaning that we as readers cannot figure out, he might have wanted to excite readers or to let them predict and fire their imagination, or they may indicate that much was happening before the story opens. We kept dashes as they are to keep the purpose of Chekhov behind the use of dashes.

Literary translators often tend to change the style of the source language the way that suits readers of the translated text. However, sometimes translators are forced to keep certain stylistic aspects of the source language because they cannot be changed because through style authors have a specific idea to transcend to readers.

3- Semantics:

Semantics is the study of the explicit meanings of words whereas sometimes sentences have different meanings in certain contexts. Meanings of words differ among languages and cultures. We came across some semantic difficulties through the process of translating the story, one of these difficulties is that Chekhov used some English words that suit English but cannot be translated with the same equivalences in Arabic, for example the word 'dance' in the second paragraph of page one. According to its context, the word cannot be translated into 'رقص',

"The horse turned, danced, and retired sideways; the messenger raised his hat once more, and in an instant disappeared with his strange horse behind the church".

'رقص' does not fit the context as animals' dance is different from humans' so instead, we had to look for another meaning of this word and we found a suitable meaning which is 'قفز'. The reason behind the choice of that word is related to the context of the scene in the story.

Some words were somehow wrong to translate using the exact equivalence; their immediate equivalences seem to be inappropriate semantically for Arab readers, as in page one the third paragraph, we cannot say: "بحيث كان هذا الشخص النبيل متقاعداً", instead, we kept the word arabicized: "بحيث كان هذا الكونت متقاعداً".

Some English phrases cannot be translated literally because the words they contain are not related semantically to the Arabic context. These phrases have to be translated ideationally with explaining their meanings. This what we considered through our translation, like in the last paragraph of page two, the phrase is "**there was no sign of hair on his round, well-fed face**", translating this phrase literally is meaningless as it is 'لم تَبْدُ علامات الشعر على وجهه المليء والمستدير', instead, we translated it as 'فلم ينمو الشعر على وجهه المستدير بعد'.

Another semantic challenge we came across is word collocation, word collocations are pairs of words that come together and they differ from one language to another; some English collocations have a direct meaning in Arabic while others don't. One of those collocations that we

encountered is “**stronger and stronger**” in the second paragraph of page seven, translating it directly does not imply the intended meaning because the translation becomes false “أقوى فأقوى”, however, we conveyed the meaning by giving an equivalent Arabic sensible word collocation and that is “واشتدّ شيئاً فشيئاً”, concerning the strength of the collocation, we added the word “اشتدّ”. Similar example is in the last paragraph of page seven which is “**from head to foot**” as it was translated into “من رأسه حتى اخمص قدميه”.

Sometimes we faced an English word that has several meanings in Arabic, in this case we as literary translators need to concentrate on the context of that English word so that we selected the most appropriate meaning that gives some sense to the reader of the translated work. An example on that is on the first paragraph of page twelve “**your high nobility**” which has a lot of Arabic equivalences, so we selected the most appropriate one as well which is “سيدي”.

4- Structures:

Arabic and English have totally opposite structures and this means translators must take this into consideration to keep the structure of the target language as correct as possible as it should never affect negatively on the intended meaning.

As we translated the text, it was mandatory to focus very much on the differences between the two structures in order to avoid committing syntactic and structural errors. We made sure that all the statements of the translated work start with a verb according to Arabic structure which means there were a lot of changes and this applies to the whole story, for example, translating a sentence like **“The officers of all the six batteries remembered...”**; the last paragraph of page one was translated by shifting the verb to the beginning like this **“تذكر الضباط والست ”** **“مجموعات التي يرافقهم Ryabovitch stood still in hesitation”** was turned into **“وقف ريبوفيتش ساكنا مترددا”**.

Another difference concerning syntax is that Arabic sometimes does not accept the passive voice form so instead we had to turn it into the active voice form to naturalize it; for example, in the last paragraph of page four, the sentence **“At the entrance to the drawing-room the officers were met by a tall, graceful old lady”**, was translated as **“قابل الضباط في ”** **“في السن مدخل غرفة الرسم سيدة كبيرة**.

Overcoming structural problems is very important for delivering a meaningful Arabic text that is structurally correct according to Arabic grammatical rules. So, literary translators should be aware of the differences of the source and target languages.

5- Idioms:

Each language has idioms. Some idioms are mutual among languages like the English idiom “**out of sight, out of mind**” which means in Arabic “بعيد عن العقل بعيد عن الذهن”. An example on that from the story is “**for God’s sake**” on the first paragraph of page two; its equivalence in Arabic is “استحلفكم بالله” on the first paragraph of page two and the idiom “**Lord have mercy upon us**” which was translated into “الله يرحمنا برحمته” on the second paragraph of page eleven. However, there are some idioms that occur only in one language, those represent the kind of idioms we encountered in the translation.

On page five, paragraph three, the idiom “**made itself felt**” said by the author describing how Ryabovitch behaved. Searching its meaning, none of its meanings fits the context, so we had to recover the context to find the most suitable meaning for that idiom; we eventually were able to come up with it and that is “فأفت ربابوفيتش الأنظار الى نفسه” as he was drunk and drunken people stagger.

Another example is the idiom “**don’t stand on ceremony**” that exists in the fourth paragraph, page nine; this idiom has no equivalent in Arabic and as we read it, it made nonsense to us. So it was important to study the context very carefully in order to know what the speaker of this idiom intended to say. According to its context, this idiom means “فلا داعي للحرص”.

As translators of this story, we dealt with two kinds of idioms. The first kind of idioms which we found Arabic equivalences for was easy to translate. However, the second one was a bit harder as we had to recover the context to find a suitable meaning for such idioms.

6- Naturalization:

Naturalization is a method of translating target cultural concepts embedded in the source text by encoding them in their original target language forms. Naturalization also is a smooth production of translating a literary work in the target language. Literary translators naturalize images for example to suit the readers of the target language. Translators try their best to meet the cultural expectations in the target environment in addition to changing the way of narrating the literary work. Literary translators must be fully aware of the distinguished linguistic mother tongue details like vocabulary, structure and images.

Naturalization was the most serious challenge that we went through while translating The Kiss. We had to make sure that the Arabic readers are going to fully understand the translated story without feeling frustrated by reading a literary work that is not valid or immediate to their own world. We changed some words totally because they violate this principle of naturalness.

An example is at the beginning of the second paragraph on page three, translating the statement “**The General shook hands with every one, made his apologies**”, this statement was translated into “صافح الجنرال “الجميع ثم اعتذر”, and two words of this statement were naturalized by changing the equivalences.

Another example is ‘**Shook hands**’ whose Arabic equivalence is “صافح الايادي” was naturalized according to what suits Arabic readers and translated into "صافح الجميع", in addition to naturalizing the sentence ‘**made his apologies**’ whose Arabic equivalence is “قدم اعتذاره” and it was translated into “ثم اعتذر”.

The statement “**there were about a dozen people**” is a good example on that as when we translate, it is wrong to refer to the meaning of the word dozen in Arabic to people, so instead we had to look for a better suitable meaning to fit the context, instead of saying “كان هناك دزينة من الناس”, it became “كان هناك عدداً- مجموعة من الناس”.

We made sure that our Arabic translation be as much naturalized as possible so readers do not feel that they are reading an unfamiliar language as the main purpose of literary translation is to share feelings and ideas which are more important than the text itself. So, several changes were made to naturalize the story. The challenges of naturalization required us to search in the field of Arabic literary works and linguistics.

7- Cultural domestication:

Lotman's theory states that "no language can exist unless it is steeped in the context of culture" (Lotman, 1978:211-32). Cultural differences force translators especially those of literature to change some of their strategies of translating a text from a culture into another totally different culture. Some expressions in a certain culture cannot be acceptable in another one which means translators should avoid such unacceptable expressions while at the same time ensuring that the meaning of those expressions is never changed.

The strategy of managing is very important and useful here because literary translators must make it easy for the readers of the target culture to be able to comprehend the text reasonably according to their social norms and principles.

It is surely known that literature differs among cultures and this was a big challenge that we encountered, for example, we needed to change some terms and descriptions in the story to suit the Arabic readers' cultural perspectives.

Arabic is more closely attached with religion which means conveying religious expression should be linked to an Islamic point of view. The Arab literature is more localized and spread around by the Arab religion-Islam (differencebetween.net).

An example on that is on page two, the idiom that we talked about previously which is "**for God's sake**", and it was translated into "استحلفكم بالله" instead of "استحلفكم بالرب", this is done by referring to the Islamic belief that it totally related to our culture.

Another example is on page eleven which says "**Lord have mercy upon us**", this term was translated into "الله يرحمنا برحمته" as this term is commonly used by a lot of Arabs and it is familiar with their perceptions.

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