
Abstract

Poetry is considered as a form of writing which is meant to entertain the readers and to express writer's thoughts and emotions through the use of the beauty of words. In comparison to the other literary works, poetry achieves its aesthetic values by combining the figurative language with other poetic devices such as the rhythm, meter, rhyme, structures and expressions. It is at this point where the translation of poetry is closely related to the concept of untranslatability. 'Poetry is what gets lost in translation' says Robert Frost. However, we believe that poetry is translatable if we accept that compensations should be made for some possible loss and that the translated poetry is not an exact duplicate of the original text. The present paper presents some considerations on how to solve the problems related to metaphorical expressions and sound effect in poetry translation.

Keywords

poetry, translatability, linguistic and cultural untranslatability, translation strategies.

1. Introduction

The word poetry comes from the old Greek word "poema" which means "to make" or "to compose". Poetry is a literary genre which depends heavily on language through which it expresses the poet's feelings in stanzas and lines. In comparison to prose it has a more rhythmic organization of the language which gives poetry the power to surprise readers with an insight and deep understanding of elemental truth and beauty of their awareness and a special sense of richness and uniqueness. An Albanian linguist A.Xhuvani compares poetry to music: "*poetry is a poetic harmony that shows a special enlightenment of the soul just like the music.*" Other researchers define poetry as music of words, which express our experience through an intense concentration of metaphors and words (Aiwei, 2005).

The understanding of poetry is a two-fold approach since it seeks to grasp not only its literal sense, but also the symbolic meaning or the implied meaning inferred within the lines. At its deepest level, poetry uses words in their fullest potential evoking in readers an intense emotion of love, passion, happiness, revolt, anger etc to which readers are familiar, but not capable of expressing them in the same way. According to Aristotle's ideas expressed in *Poetics*, poetry creates representations that are more complete and more meaningful than nature can give us. In other words, poetry employs language in unusual ways departing from the everyday usage. Through this unusual usage of language, it achieves an amalgam of formal beauty and emotive response. Poetry features are studied under the diction, meter, simile and metaphor, myth and symbol and arrangement (Aiwei, 2005).

Translation of poetry is perhaps the issue that has generated the strongest debates in the history of translation studies. Many researchers have engaged themselves in the studying of the problems encountered by translators in the act of translating poetry and have expressed their ideas on how to overcome most of them. The problems in poetry translation stems not only from the style which is very complex and difficult to transfer from one language to another, but also from the multiplicity of meaning. What is more important for some scholars style cannot be separated from meaning because *they are one like body and soul* (Flaubert). Therefore, absolute faithfulness to both style and meaning in the translation of poetry is not possible. Thus, the main dilemma remains whether to sacrifice the meaning to form or vice versa.

The purpose of this study is to explore the poetry translatability by considering the strategies which are used to compensate the untranslatable areas of it. In the next section the notion of linguistic and cultural untranslatability is discussed. The present paper studies the translation of Andrew Slattery poetry into Albanian. It considers the way some semantic and structural adjustments are done in translation to make untranslatable parts translatable in the receptive language. The study concludes that poetry can be translated if we accept that some compensations are necessary for the possible loss.

2. Translatability vs. untranslatability

There has been a lot of discussion carried out in the history of translation studies in regard to poetry translatability. Very often, poetry translation is considered as impossible due to the fact that contrary to non literary works poetry is characterized by certain specific aesthetic and expressive values which non literary works are missing. For example, a poem tends to achieve its beauty not only through the unique choice of the words and the amazing effect of the figures of speech, but also through other poetic devices such as rhythm, meter, sound, syntactic structures and specific expressions that does not conform to our everyday language.

Despite certain disagreement some scholars conclude that translating poetry is impossible. Given that translation of poetry represents an activity whose purpose is not only to express the same sense from one language into another, but also the a certain beauty which is destroyed if attempted to reproduce or touch they support the idea of untranslatability. For example, Catford (1965) distinguishes two kinds of untranslatability i.e., linguistic untranslatability and cultural untranslatability.

By linguistic untranslatability it is meant the absence of a lexical or syntactic substitute in the target language for a source language item. No matter how simple it sounds, it is in this area where all the difficulties in translation arise. Let's consider for example the title of the poem *The Slake* (Slattery, 2010), which in Albanian language means "shfrej," "fik" or "shuaj." If translated this way the sense of the English word is of course not expressed. The literary context in which the word is used makes this simple word, a big challenge for the translator.

On the other hand, cultural untranslatability is caused due to the absence in the target language of a relevant situational feature for the source text. It is the cultural context which makes word, phrases and sentences difficult to translate. Some words and expressions are rooted in a culture and their translation cannot be satisfactory since they do not have a perfect equivalent in the target culture. For instance, the word 'basement' has a different meaning for Albanian and American users, simply because the place is constructed differently and used for different purposes in both cultures. In many cases such situations are solved by borrowing words from the other language and sometimes adapting their spelling and pronunciation.

Among the scholars who believe that translation is impossible we can mention: Darbelnet and Veney who studied and analyzed in their book *A comparative French and English Stylistics* the specific areas of language which make translation impossible; Bassnett-McGuire (1980); Von Humboldt who claims that all translations are attempts at finding a solution to some insoluble problem (quoted in Ke, 1991); Popovic (quoted in Wilss, 2001); Virginia Woolf; Nida (1984) who gives lots of information on the problems of loss in translation; Croce who supports the idea that poets cannot be compared since each of them is unique (quoted in Carravetta, 1997); Newmark (1982) etc.

In general, the poetic untranslatability is related mainly to the transference of the beauty of original sound which is followed by the untranslatability of form and style (Chen, 2000). This is due to the fact that poetry is the most complex form of the literary expression where the poet expresses a meaning, feeling or idea in a very unique way by manipulating the position and the meaning of the words which make poetry suffer from the same inevitable loss of meaning as any other text types.

However, the practice of poetry translation has showed that poetry can be transferred from one language into another. Although poetry translation is more demanding than other types of texts, this does not mean that it is not possible to translate. Some researchers believe that translators of poetry should possess some degrees of artistic skills. Dryden emphasizes that poetry is translatable and that the translator should be a poet (quoted in Miremedi, 1995). In other words, if we accept that compensation should be made for some possible loss in poetry translation and that not all aesthetic aspect of the original poem can be transferred into the target language version than poetry translation is possible.

3. Translation of poetry

A poem is structured in such a way that it can stand as a whole only if its individual sentences and lines are taken together. The components which constitute the aesthetic values of a poem: the metaphors, the figurative language, the choice of words, sounds etc have a meaning only when they are correlated with other types of meaning in the text. For this reason, the translator must try to preserve such features otherwise they run the risk of destroying the aesthetic values of the poem in the target language. The destruction of such elements will result in a distortion and alienation of the beauty of the original poem. Therefore, it is such

richness that generates so many difficulties in the process of translation since translating poetry means not only to do the best in order to precisely transfer into the target language of the poet's thoughts and emotions but also the specific values of poetry.

On the other hand, translation of poetry requires that translator is sensitive to the source language at the same extend s/he is sensitive to the source language's culture, syntax, grammar and poetic tradition (Rose, 1981). It is due to such knowledge that poetic structure which makes poetry's sentences and its lines stand as a whole is maintained in both cultures. In addition, it is important to remember that the components which constitute the aesthetic values of a poem have a meaning only when they are correlated with other types of meaning in the text. It is at this point where the concept of poetry untranslatability begins. However, despite the fact that poetry requires specific translation techniques and lots of efforts to maintain both meaning and the beauty the excellent translations of masterpieces of the world poetry support the claim that translation of poetry is possible.

There are different strategies which translators adopt for translating poetry. Among the most known methods used on poetry translation we can mention literal translation, metrical translation, verse to prose translation, rhymed translation and interpretation as defined by Andre Lefevere (in Bassnett-McGuire, 1980: 81-82). However, two are the main strategies that all translators are familiar to: the free and literal translation where poetry is transferred either as prose or in verse. The difference rests in the fact that while literal prose translation considers meaning as superior to form, verse translation of poetry considers both form and content as equally important. Frost (1969:19) claims that prose translation of poetry does not have the same effect as verse translation. In our opinion, verse literal translation is more preferable since the aesthetic features and the content of the original poem are both important.

3.1. Sound

Sound is an aesthetic element of poetry through which the rhyme, rhythm, assonance, alliteration, onomatopoeia etc are created. However, in expressive texts the semantic meaning very often comes first, making the sound effects recede in importance. Newmark (1981:67) advocate the idea that sound is secondary in comparison to meaning. He sayst: "in a significant text, semantic truth is cardinal, whilst of the three aesthetic factors, sound is likely to recede in importance." In other words, when the beauty of poetry depends on the sound rather than on the semantic meaning, the translator must find the appropriate translation procedures to reproduce the same sound effect. However, if translators are faced with the condition where one of the aesthetic values of the poem must be sacrificed in order to preserve the meaning than sound is the one that suffers.

Slattery's poetry collection is written in blank verse; hence, there is no rhythm either in English or in its Albanian translation. Sound is not of much importance so no attempts are made in translation to maintain it at the expense of the meaning. However, there are some cases of alliteration which are preserved in translation without affecting the meaning.

Consonance: /s/ Rake your fingers through/ the sand for the silver debris/ of whole galaxies. The Albanian translation of the stanza has produced the same consonance via the sound /sh/ *shtriji gishtërinjtë e tu brenda rërës për copëza të argjenda galaksish*.

Assonance: /i/ feel the tubefeet, miniature hydraulics and whisper your intent. The same effect created by the repetition of the same sound is found in the Albanian translation of the line: /e/ and /ë/ *gjeje yllin e detit-ngrije me kujdes nga pellgu vendose mbi pëllëmbën e dorës*.

As mentioned above, in Slattery's poetry sound effect is not very important. That is the reason why the translator has decided to keep the beauty of the sound in the target language only when it is necessary. Andrew Slattery uses blank verse which make his poetry benefit from sound effects when he does not carry them too far. In the following example, the translator puts the meaning of the poem in first consideration, compensating the alliteration created by the sound [s] in the source language "when I sleep, the sea licks my dry skulls so I dream of the moon" for the preservation of personification through the use of assonance [ë] in the target language "*deti më lëpin kafkën e thatë dhe unë endërroj hënën*."

3.2 Tropes

Another serious problem in poetry translation is the transfer of tropes in particular that of metaphors. A metaphor, which traditionally represents a direct comparison between two or more objects without involving the use of words such as 'like', 'as if', is defined by Newmark (1988:104) as "any figurative expression: the transferred sense of a physical word; the personification of an abstraction; the application of a word or collocation to what it does not literally denote." To transfer a metaphor, the translator must first start with the understanding of the relation between *object*, *sense* and *image* and then decide on the proper translation procedure. According to Newmark, *object* represents the topic, the item, which is described by the metaphor, whereas *sense* represents the semantic area where the object and image overlap leading readers to the literal meaning of the metaphor. Finally, *image* otherwise known as vehicle, refers to item in terms of which the object is described.

Newmark considers translation of metaphors as a communicative event which is both intercultural and interlingual. Based on his practical experience, he proposed six kinds of metaphors and seven translation procedures (1988:88) according to metaphor's peculiarities. For example, dead metaphors are not difficult to translate for the simple fact that they "often relate to universal terms of time and space, general ecological features and main human activities" (1988b:106). Literal translation is generally used for them because the users do not recognize them as metaphors and their images are lost. While translators tend to get rid of cliché metaphors since they are "used as a substitute for clear thought" (Newmark, 1988b:107), stock metaphors are translated by replacing the source

language image with another image established in the target language which must be equally frequent within its register what makes translation process even more difficult. Original metaphors are more problematic since they contain the most important message and very often have a double meaning.

Newmark noted the following translation procedures for metaphors: (1) Reproducing the same image in both target and source languages as far as it is comparable in frequency and in register. This procedure is mainly used for one word metaphors. (2) Replacing the image in the source language with a standard image in the target language. Euphemisms are often replaced by a cultural equivalent. (3) Translation of metaphors as simile, while retaining the same image. This procedure can be used for any type of metaphors including the original ones. (4) Deletion of metaphors together with its sense component. This procedure is justified when the metaphor's function is fulfilled elsewhere in the text. (5) Modification of metaphor is considered appropriate when the translator does not trust the metaphor's power and clarity or when the metaphor is repeated in the text. (6) Translation of metaphor by simile plus sense. This procedure combines both the communicative and semantic translations. (7) Conversion of metaphor to sense which is mostly preferred when the replacement of the source language image to target language image is broader in terms of sense and register.

A close examination of Slaterry's poetry reveals an abundance of metaphors, similes and personifications which are novel and original. In order to faithfully transfer the poet's message with simple and fluent diction the translator has applied various techniques and devices. The metaphors impress the readers in several ways and make the book worth reading. The poem *Sea Body* is abundant in metaphors and other figures of speech. In the original poem the poet may intend that the hero of the poem lives near the sea and that his existence cannot be understood without the nature: the sea, the moon, the waves, the daystars, sun etc.

The same powerful image is preserved in translation through the reproduction of the same image in the target language without any loss of meaning, only a loss of style. Consider the translation of the following metaphors: "rivers are old snakes" *lunjenjtë u ngjajnë gjarpërinjve të plakur*; "a thumping spitting sun" *pas një dielli të madh shpërthyes*; "the sea pushes under the earth" *deti futet nën tokë*; "it squeezes out of yesterday's navel" *e nxjerrë me lehtësi nga kërthiza e të djeshmes* etc which are transferred in the target language through modification and reproduction of the same image. In addition, other tropes like similes: "bumpy like a bone coin" *me gungat si kockë*; "rivers as maps" *lumenjtë si hartë*; personifications: "waves can pummel alloy beaches" *dallgët mund të grushtojnë plazhet*; "the sea licks my dry skull" *deti më lëpin kafkën e thatë*; "rivers try to escape the sea" *përpiqen t'i arratisen detit*; "the sea runs over them" *ai vrapon mbi ta* etc have managed to reproduce in the target language the same sense and image intended by the poet.

However, there are times when the meaning of the poem does not stand on the surface as the result the translator should try to dig it up, using all his knowledge and skills. At times it might be necessary to get in touch with the poet himself or just in case that this is not possible to study carefully other poetic

publications from the same poet. This way the translator uncovers the meaning of metaphors and neologisms used in the original without destroying the poetry beauty and meaning.

Among the other poems, *Triptych* is distinguished as a great poem, but not an easy one to understand and translate. The ambiguity among its lines makes it an impressive piece, a sort of thing a great poet take delight in. The three stages of execution by lethal injection are entwined with beach imaginary in a successful extended metaphor. To understand what Slattery sees in *Triptych*, it is necessary to arrive at an understanding of the images depicted by the eyes, the ear and the mind of someone who is waiting for his execution. The verses in the original poem are short but for the sake of clarity the translation is somewhat longer. The translator has extended the original by using the modification procedure which provides more information at expense of the metrical fluidity of the original.

Only the fated know when
There are minutes left. Tied to a plank
At sea, rising over troughs of swell
The land disappears with each drop.

*Vetëm i desnituari e di se kur i kanë mbetur
Ende disa minuta. I lidhur pas një dërrase
Në det, duke u ngritur mes dallgëve,
toka i zhduket nga sytë pas rënies të çdo kreshte.*

4. Conclusion

Poetry is a branch of literature and as such it is aesthetic in essence. From this perspective poetry is considered as delicate to translate. Shelly's statement that "*it is as wise to cast a violet into a crucible that you might discover the formal principle of its color and odor, as to seek to transfuse from one language into another the creations of a poet. The plant must spring again from its seed, or it will bear no flower- and this is the burthen of the curse of Babel*" (cited in Bassnett & Lefevere, 2001: 58) favors the idea of poetry untranslatability. However, the functioning of translation as a bridge across which poetry is made available and reachable from one culture to another makes the concept of maintaining untouched the beauty of poetry from one language to another nothing but an idealistic and unnecessary perspective. We believe in poetry translatability as far as the message of the original work is transferred and the translated version plays the same functions as the original.

The weakness of the translation procedures used in poetry rests on the fact that they emphasize different poetic components. For example, literal translation, metrical translation and rhymed translation seem to emphasize the form or the poetic structure of the poem; thus, resulting in an inappropriate translation in terms of meaning and structure, because each language has its own specific stressing and pronunciation system. Other methods, such as free verse translation put an emphasis on the transferring of the precise meaning of the original poem in the target language. This method tends to ignore the rhyme and meter of the poem at

the expense of its content. So, physically the result is different from the original, but semantically it is the same.

In the present study, the Australian blank verse "Canyon" by Andrew Slattery and its Albanian translation was analyzed. Andrew Slattery is without question an exceptionally talented new voice in Australian poetry. His, Canyon, a sophisticated collection of poems, is an impressive and worthy contribution to the literature. Slattery's beautiful poems reflect a deep and emotional engagement on the part of the poet to remove and uncover the truth of our lives from the earth and sea and bring it into the surface of the page. The results of the study show that the poetry collection is full of metaphors, neologisms and other cultural bound terms. The tone of the poem is realistic and to some degree mystical. In general, the translated version manages to keep alive the subtle spirit of poetry and creates the same effect as the one evoked by the original text. Like the original the translated collection is without rhyme and rhythm.

In conclusion, the role of translation throughout the history of the humanity is indispensable. As L.G. Kelly puts it "*without translation, there is no history of the world.*" However, despite the importance of translation, no one but the translator knows the linguistic, cultural, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic challenges encountered in the process. Even though translation is considered a problem-solving activity still some problems remain unsolved. For example, the exact preservation of poetry's beauty and a thorough faithfulness to meaning is impossible. However, if we accept that some accommodations and compensations are made in cases of unavoidable loss then poetry is translatable as long as the beauty of poetry is preserved at its best.

References

- Catford, J. C. (1965). *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Ke, P. (1996). A Socio-semiotic Approach to Meaning in Translation. *Babel*, 42 (2), 74-83.
- Garraivitta, P. (1997). *Italian Theory and Criticism-Twentieth Century*. Johns Hopkin's University Press.
- Nida, E.A. (1984). *On Translation*. Translation Publishing Corp. Beijing, China.
- Wilss, W. (2001). *The Science of Translation- Problems and Methods*. Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- Aiwei, Sh. (2005). Translatability and Poetic Translation. *Translatum Journal*, 5. URL: <http://www.translatum.gr/journal/5/literary-translation.htm>
- Newmark, P. (1988). *A Textbook of Translation*. London: Prentice Hall.
- Newmark, P. (1981). *Approaches to Translation*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Miremadi, A. (1995). *Theories of Translation and Interpretation*. Tehran: SAMT.
- Slattery, A. (2009). *Canyon*. Sindy: Australian Poetry Centre.
- Bassnett-McGuire. (1980). *Translation Studies*. New York: Mathuen & Co.Ltd.