

## **Enhancing Literary Translation through the Interpretative Theory of Translation (ITT)**

**\*Onuko Theodora**

*Department of Modern European Languages, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria.*  
*Corresponding Author: Onuko Theodora*

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**ABSTRACT:** Translation comprises of specialized areas; technical translation which deals with the scientific, administrative fields and literary translation which concerns literary genres such as poetry, drama, the novel and short stories. These literary works are unique in the sense that they are often written in elegant and exquisite language where as technical and scientific texts are written in everyday or codified language. Language then distinguishes literature from other texts and it is the complexity of its nature that makes some linguists and theoreticians like Robert Frost (2002), George Mounin (1994), John Cartland (1965) to say that it is not translatable. However it has been translated over the ages and the objective of this paper is to examine how the Interpretive Theory of Translation (ITT) enhances the translation of such texts.

**Keywords:** *Enhancing, Literary, Interpretative Approach, Translation, Complexity*

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Translation is a vehicle through which ideas and pieces of information are disseminated from one culture to the audience of another culture. In this way it enables the exchange of ideas among a diversity of people from different cultures. It is therefore an intellectual exercise that aims at the transmitting diverse and necessary information to a multiplicity of people from different cultures. It involves detaching meaning from an original text, called the source text and transferring it into another text or the target text. Jean Delisle(1981:2) shows that:The increasing importance of international relations after the Second World War and the adoption of policies on official languages by bilingual nations such as Canada sparked a phenomenal growth in the volume of translation.

People have been translating for years, but linguists and theoreticians do not seem to agree on the date of its inception. However Albir Hurtado (1990) shows that the need for human communication is at its origin and that it started attracting attention as an international phenomenon from the 1970's. Of all the volumes of texts translated over the centuries literary works written in Greek, Latin, Hebrew and the Holy Bible have been most outstanding. Salomon Pierre(1993)reveals that humanist writers like Pierre de Ronsard, Joachim du Bellay and others made significant contributions in the educative and civilization processes in the French society of the Sixteenth Century during the Renaissance period. Also printing enhanced the propagation of literary works that form the basis of ideas and concepts of several nations in Europe. According to Sussan Bassnett-Mcguire(1992:52)As emerging literatures with little or no written tradition of their own to draw upon developed across Europe, works produced in other cultural contexts were translated, adapted and absorbed on a vast scale. Translation acquired an additional dimension, as writers used their translation abilities as means of increasing the statues of their vernacular.

This assertion supports the idea that translation was very significant during that period because writers also used it to enrich and standardize their languages and literatures. These thoughts and concepts contributed immensely to the spiritual formation and mental development of man during that period in such countries. Instructions drawn from these texts translated into vernacular languages helped to clarify the classical texts.

### **The Concept of Translation**

Given the nature of the term translation, there seems to be no general consensus on its definition by writers and linguists. However, this paper would like to examine the concept with definitions made of it by certain writers. Jean Delisle(1981:5) remarks that 'Translation can therefore be defined as the operation by which the relevant signification of linguistic signs is determined through the reference to a meaning as formulated in a message, which then is fully reconstructed in the signs of another language'.Jeremy Munday (2009:7) also shows that translation can refer to the process of transferring of the written text from the source

language to the target language, the written product which results from this process, and finally the cognitive and linguistic aspects which are all involved in it. From these definitions one can observe that translation, like interpretation refers to practices which enhance the dissemination of ideas and mutual understanding within the society. It is then necessary that the translator should primarily be a good reader and a careful observer in order to excel in his role of a mediator between the writer and his receptors. Translation has become very important in various areas of life. In fact, today it has become indispensable for communication and integration within international organizations such as the United Nations (UN), European Union (EU), African Union (AU) and others. In addition to all this, literary translation has also been quite relative in multilateral, social and cultural exchanges in the world.

### **The Functions and characteristics of the literary works**

Literature, being an imaginative and creative work often helps the individual to project ideas from his immediate vicinity and transcend to other realms outside his environment. It often mirrors the socio-economic and cultural realities of the writer. It is written in connotative and symbolical language like metaphors and similes. Jean Delisle (1988:14) succinctly puts it this way: In a literary work, the writer communicates his vision of the world, his personal perception of the reality that he has chosen to describe. Speaking always for himself, he describes his feelings, his reactions, and his emotions. In a literary work, then the expressive function of the language is predominant... Language is not merely a means of communication, as it is pragmatic texts, it is also an end in itself. He goes further to show that since literature is an imaginative and creative work, it has the ability to evoke more ideas than the ones illustrated in it. This is because of its connotative language which contributes to the fact that some of the message is not explicit and openly expressed. The arrangement of the words, the rhythm of the sentences and the pattern of the sounds are all important, especially if it is poetry. Literature not only communicates pleasure, it is didactic because it educates the mind of the reader. Although, it can be ambiguous because of its symbolical language, it evokes timeless and universal themes like love, beauty, death, culture and other realities of nature. And Peter Newmark (1981:16) supports these ideas when he says that:

The basic difference between the artistic and the non-literary is that the first is symbolical or allegorical and the second representational in intention: the difference in translation is that more attention is paid to connotation and emotion in imaginative literature. All these imply that the translator has to be very careful and meticulous with language in literary translation because there are implicit information which constitute contextual aspects of the text. He has to consider the notional and emotional contents of the words which can hardly be perceived when they are translated literary. These aspects of the literary work can only be revealed if the translator is sensitive to the form. Rhythm and style are taken into consideration also especially in poetry, drama and even the novel if the translator aims at communicating the message of the work. Writing in the preface of *The Translator's Invisibility* by Lawrence Venuti (1999), Susan Bassnett and Andre Lefevère remark that 'Translation, of course, is a rewriting of an original text. All rewritings whatever their intention, reflect a certain ideology and a poetic and as such manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way'

Translated literary works are capable of crossing their original boundaries to create an impact on a much larger population than countries where they are produced. Through their literary works, Homer, Aristotle, Shakespeare, Racine, as well as writers from West Africa such as Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Buchi Emecheta, Camara Laye, Mongo Beti, Ousmane Sembene, Mariama Ba and Aminata Sow Fall and others have shared their visions of the world and the socio-cultural realities of their people. African writers express themselves, especially through English, French and other international languages, to reach wider audiences in other parts of the world. Moreover, they are widely known and appreciated, not only because of the quality of their works, but mainly through the dissemination of the ideas in their texts translated into different languages. A translator who undertakes to translate the works of African writers like Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka and others which are written in English but interspersed with their own vernacular has to pay careful attention to the roles of these languages in these works. Therefore, the translation of these works becomes even more complex because the vernacular languages of these writers which express and accommodate these literary works more comfortably do not share the same linguistic features with those of Indo-European Languages by which they are expressed.

According to Ike Ewelu(2010:276) 'Many African literary writers have been accused of transliterating into the European Language their local and cultural beliefs'. Any translator who depends solely on his linguistic competence may find it very difficult to detach meaning from the information that is expressed in those texts. In addition to linguistic competence, such a translator needs a good knowledge of the two cultures that is the source culture and the receiving culture. In order to be able render a good understanding of the work the translator has to go the root of the work. And this is perhaps the reason Jean Delisle (1988:8) shows that: The intellectual process of extracting meaning and reformulating it in another language is the same whatever language are involved, because the process is no different from the functioning of language itself.

### **The Interpretative Theory of Translation**

In consideration of the complex nature of the literary translation, this paper wishes to evaluate literary translation using the tenets of the Interpretative Theory of Translation (ITT) or Theory of sense in literary translation as proposed by Danica Seleskovitch and Marianne Lederer the leading researchers of the theory. Contrary to the views of some writers from the Linguistic Approach who feel that translation is not always possible the theoreticians of the Interpretative Approach believe that it is always possible if the aim of the translator is to communicate the message of the author. According to John Catland (1965:94) who belongs to the Linguistic Approach, Translation fails-or untranslatability occurs-when it is impossible to build functionally relevant features of the situation into the contextual meaning of the TL text. Broadly speaking, the cases where this happens fall into two categories. Those where the difficulty is linguistic, and those where it is cultural. He also feels that polysemy and ambiguities can further create difficulties for the translator. But Danica Seleskovitch and Marianne Lederer (1986) argue that translators and interpreters have the same objective of communicating the message of the individual. The theory which has its origin in the oral genre advocates that the translator should play the role of an interpreter. Speech is primary because it starts in an individual before writing and the translator has the task of understanding the intended message of the author which he transmits to his target audience. The theory identifies three interrelated phases of the translation and the interpreting processes which are understanding, deverbalization and re-expression .

Amparo Hurtado Albir and Fabio Alves 'in Jeremy Munday (2009:54) reveal that, Understanding is conceived of as an interpretive process to the generation of the sense'... Additionally, ITT highlights the process of understanding and distinguishes between immediate memory, which stores words for a short time, and cognitive memory, which stores the whole range of knowledge possessed by an individual. The theory also shows that linguistic knowledge is not enough for the translator to actually understand and reformulate the words in a text, so the translator has to acquire other cognitive inputs (Complements cognitifs): encyclopedic knowledge (baggage cognitive) and contextual knowledge (context cognitive), a type of storage which grows from the beginning of the process of understanding. It goes without saying that the translator should study and internalize the text in order for the ideas expressed in his translation to be understood by those for whom it is intended. The role of the translator as a reader becomes very relevant in this phase of understanding because he has to understand the background of the story in order to reformulate the ideas of the author which contains his message. Sussan Bassnett-Mcguire (1992:79) posits that: One of the greatest advances in twentieth-century literary study has been the re-evaluation of the reader. So Barthes sees the place of the literary work as that of making the reader not so much a consumer as a producer of the text... Eagleton supports this point when he insists that 'Literary texts do not exist on book shelves, they are processes of signification materialized only in the practice of reading. For literature to happen, the reader is quite as vital as the author'. (cited in Barry Peter(1990: 120).And in a symposium of theorists of language and translation in Paris, Danica, Seleskovitch (1968) from the Ecole Supérieure d'interpretes et de Traducteurs (ESIT) explains that the interpreter understands the speech he hears, forgetting the exact words, retains the sense which he reformulates in a spontaneous way as a regular speaker would do .The theory adopts the ideas of Ferdinand de Saussure on language. According to Ferdinand Saussure (1966:67-68) the linguistic sign designates two entities the signified (value/meaning) and the signifier (sound-image/ a word) which constitutes the sentence. It is then the signified that is very important in translation because it helps to capture a synthesis of all the ideas contained in the text and it is what is re-expressed or re-formulated in the target language. Ferdinand de Saussure shows that the term "sheep" in French can have the same meaning as the English "sheep", but not the same value. A slice of meat on the table is represented in English as "mutton" and not "sheep". In French, the term "sheep", represents two things while in English two different terms are used to designate them.

## **II. UNDERSTANDING**

Understanding is relevant to the restitution of successive statements of a given text. It requires some facts and knowledge to take place in an individual. Competence in both languages is necessary for obtaining the message of the text and re-creating it with mastery in the target language. Understanding phase therefore requires proficiency and an encyclopedic knowledge that work simultaneously to complement each other to give an overall sense of the text. Seleskovitch and Lederer (1984) insist that the translator needs a good knowledge of the two languages, as well as non-linguistic knowledge of the author, his surroundings and those of his recipients in order to capture the exact meaning of the text. According to the theory of sense communicating meaning of the sentence in translation should be the fundamental objective of the translator. And this will eliminate some problems in translation such as exact equivalent of the words in the text, untranslatability, false friends, ambiguity and polysemy in the work. Further on this, they argue that polysemy and ambiguity are all characteristics of words out of context, but disappear when the words are placed in the context of the discourse. Only the intention of communicating the message frees the words and sentences of polysemy and ambiguity and fills them with meaning in the sentence.

### **III. DEVERBALIZATION**

Seleskovitch and Lederer (1984) show that the translator should do his best to render the message of the text in a way that it is clear, legible and intelligible to those for whom it is intended. It is not a case of literal translation or comparing the words in the two languages. They believe that words translated literally or that the replacement of the word from the original text with their corresponding equivalents in the target language, may give a result which cannot produce the meaning of the original text. Understanding always requires a contextual competence of the translator that will help his language proficiency. From the moment the meaning of the text is understood and appropriated by the deverbaling process, the translator goes on to the phase of re-expression. Thus the same message received or captured from the original text is re-expressed in another language. Leila Vennenez (1993:87) supports this idea when she remarked that 'many processes in translation are not different from those that go on in the daily speech of a monolingual person'. This confirms the fact that the act of translation is more of a mental and intelligent process than a mechanical process. The deverbaling and re-expression processes continue in the individual even when he is not actually conscious of it. It is quite natural to communicate the thoughts of others in the way of understanding. But it is difficult and almost impossible to have a successful translation of a text by analyzing and comparing two languages, for example, when there is no corresponding equivalents of the clichés, the idioms, proverbs, and certain socio-cultural values that are peculiar to a given culture. Leila Vennenez (1993:87) further illustrates that: When communication occurs between two people of similar age and background, every sentence uttered has to be filtered through layers of received ideas, of prejudice, preference and conditioning. Normally this filtering process goes on automatically; we do it all the time without a thought. The sense of what is being said is our first concern, but we bring our sensibility to bear on the interpretation of that sense. The word, by its very nature can have several meanings, but if it is placed in its context, we can come to understand its true value. A word written out of context can have a different meaning than the meaning of the word of the original text. Similarly, a sentence could mean many things in another language. This is why the analysis and comparison of words and phrases in both languages may not give the message of the text. Seleskovitch and Lederer consider meaning as the main objective of translation, the product of a mental process which is re-created from what is understood and stored up in the cognitive memory of the translator. Translating words out of their context deprives translation of its essence. According to Seleskovitch and Lederer (1984) the study of translation remains attached to the message for translation to fulfill its purpose. The translator should not just analyze words superficially but the speech contained in the text. This is why analysis and comparison of words and phrases in both languages may not give the message of the text.

#### **Re-expression**

As in the previous, this phase is composed of two successive and intertwined processes in the association of ideas and logical reasoning (inferences). Analogical reasoning predisposes the translator to associate the author's ideas in the language of departure to generate the same ideas in the translator. The phase of re-expression equally involves some cognitive process in the translator because he has to apply his linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge about the author and the target culture relevant to help him to accomplish his task. Through analogical process and imagination, the translator grasps the message of the author. The next step is to reframe and recreate these ideas in the target language using words that are adequate to reproduce the same ideas in his translation. He is actually involved in another cognitive process whereby he applies the linguistic and encyclopedic information he has gathered in his brain in order to re-express the message of the author. Onuko Theodora (2014) agrees that this is an intellectual operation and involves some complexities because it takes place in the translator, sometimes, unconsciously and tends to isolate the ideas intelligently analyzed by the translator. It is a continual process in the mind of the translator as he searches for the appropriate terms which can recreate and externalize the ideas of the original text in the target language. Albir Amparo Hurtado and Fabio (2009:56) reveal that Delisle Jean (1980) adds a final phase of the translation process of justified analysis to the interpretative approach whose objective is to verify if the solutions proffered by the translator corresponds with the message of the original text. This is to enable the translator ensure that he expresses the meaning of the source text to the target audience.

### **IV. CONCLUSION**

This paper has so far shown the role of translation over the ages. Translation originated from the need of communication between diversity of peoples in the world. It involves the technical and literary texts. Literary works distinguish themselves from other texts through the connotative and symbolical nature of its language. This is why a number of linguists and theoreticians brand them as untranslatable. This paper has therefore examined the literary translation using the Interpretative Theory of Translation (ITT) with the aim of enhancing and facilitating it through the three (3) interdependent phases of the theory, the writer argues that some of the problems of translation such as false friends, polysemy, ambiguity and connotation are eliminated. This is because the main objective of the theory is sense or meaning of the author to his target audience. A careful

reading of the text, which involves the whole cognitive process linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge leads to the deverbalization stage which eventually results in the re-creation or re-expression of the text.

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