

A Comparative Analysis of Challenges in Literary Translation

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Abstract: *This article examines a comprehensive examination of literal and literary translation, detailing the various types of literal translation and providing clear examples for each. It also explains the concept of literary translation, exploring its classifications and analyzing Cholpon's poem "Beauty". The study highlights the challenges and parallels encountered during the translation process. Furthermore, it identifies and discusses the three primary challenges in translation: linguistic, cultural, and human challenges. The concept of literary translation is also explored, including its classifications and an analysis of Cholpon's poem "Beauty" as a case study. This investigation highlights the inherent challenges and potential parallels encountered in achieving a successful and meaningful transfer of ideas across languages. The study further identifies and discusses the three primary challenges in translation: linguistic, cultural, and human challenges, emphasizing the importance of understanding nuances and context. Ultimately, it argues that navigating these complexities is crucial for effective and accurate communication.*

Key words: *literary, semantic level, syntactic level, cultural challenges, linguistic challenges.*

Introduction. Literal translation is the translation that reproduces communicatively irrelevant elements of the source text, this usually happens when the translator copies the source language form on this or that level of the language. Translation, the art and science of conveying meaning across languages, is a complex endeavor that underpins global communication and cultural exchange. At its core, the process involves deciphering a source text and re-expressing its content in a target language. This process, however, is rarely straightforward; it is a delicate dance between words, structures, and cultural contexts. One fundamental approach to translation is literal translation, which, while sometimes serving a specific purpose, presents its own unique set of challenges. Literal translation aims to reproduce elements of the source text as directly as possible. This approach is frequently employed when the translator attempts to mirror elements of the source language form, often at a specific level of language. This article delves into a detailed exploration of literal translation, examining its various types based on language level and providing examples of the potential issues that can arise. In contrast, literary translation represents a more nuanced and artistic undertaking. This study will also explore literary translation, analyzing its classifications and the challenges presented by the goal of conveying the source text's meaning, style, and artistry.

Methodology.

According to the language level, there exist various types of literal translation:

1. On the **sound level**, literal translation results in “translator’s false friends.” These are words that sound similar in two languages but have different meanings. A translator may mistakenly assume that the meanings are the same because of the similarity in sounds, leading to incorrect translations. For example: *artist – not mashhur estrada ijrochisi, but rassom (painter); magazine – not do’kon, but jurnal; fabric – not fabrika, but gazlama (cloth, material)*. Such errors occur because the translator relies too heavily on the similarity of sounds, without considering the actual meaning in context.

2. On the **syntactic level**: copying the structure of the source language.

Sometimes an inexperienced translator is hypnotized by the source language, and, to translate “accurately”, he tries to render the meaning word for word, thus breaking combination rules of his/her own language. Let’s see in example: *We often heard his name mentioned.* – Incorrect translation: *Biz uning ismini tilga olingan holda eshitardik*. Correct translation: *Biz uning ismini tez-tez eshitardik*.

3. On the **semantic level**: giving the primary meaning of the word or its part,

whereas a semantic transformation is required: *But outside it kept on raining.* – *Ammo taqshqarida yomg’ir davom etardi*, which is incorrect. Correct translation: *Ammo tashqarida yomg’ir tinmay yog’ardi*.

4. **Etymological errors**: disregarding language changes. Words acquire new

meanings over time and use: *Break a leg! – Omad!* (this reflect the idiomatic meaning of wishing someone good luck).

5. Following **the style of the source text**: different registers require different language means. Thus, to use the example by V. Komissarov who got accustomed to brief and abrupt structures in the weather forecast, an English weatherman’s sentence can sound like a poem line: *A strong cold front is expected to move across the region tomorrow, bringing heavy rain and strong winds to coastal areas, followed by a sharp drop in temperatures.* — *Kuchli sovuq front ertaga mintaqa bo’ylab harakatlanadi, qirg’oq hududlariga kuchli yomg’ir va shamol olib keladi, so’ngra harorat keskin pasayadi*. Therefore, to produce the same impact upon the receptor as does the original, the translator has to partition the English sentence and make it more adaptable to Uzbek: *Ertaga kuchli shamol va yomg’ir kutilmoqda. Harorat keskin pasayadi*.

We can see that very often literal translation is not necessarily a word-for-word translation, although it is often associated with a rather negative evaluation of the translation. Literal translation is sometimes referred to as formal, or grammar translation, though it is not the same. The present excessive emphasis in linguistics on discourse analysis is resulting in the corresponding idea in translation theory that the only unit of translation is the text, and that almost any deviation from literal translation can be justified in any place by appealing to the text as an overriding authority. The prevailing orthodoxy is leading to the rejection of literal translation as a legitimate translation procedure. Thus Neubert (1983) states that one word of an SL text and a TL word in the translation rarely correspond semantically, and grammatically hardly ever.

Literary translators translate **literary texts** (prose or verse). This is a **tricky type of translation** because, although it is not always technical, it must faithfully convey the source text’s meaning, figures of speech, rhythm, and style.

In our modern times literary translation faces various challenges. These challenges can be divided into three main categories: Linguistic, cultural, and human challenges.

Linguistic challenges. Of all types of translation, literary translation is perhaps the most demanding and the most difficult. The reason behind this is that the language of literature is different from ordinary language and involves a variety of challenges on the phonological, syntactic, lexical,

semantic, stylistic and pragmatic levels. In literary translation, formal and stylistic features become of great significance. The meaning of a literary text, as formalist critics have shown, is affected by the special organic relationship between the constituent parts, and the parts and the whole. These features are most apparent in the translation of poetic texts and, to some extent, of dramatic texts and even of a wide variety of prose literary texts. Poetry presents a strong challenge for translators, given the complexity of its formal aspects in addition to its cultural content. Speaking of poetry, T. Savory (1969) writes: There is rhythm, metrical rhythm; there is emotion, sensuous emotion, there is an increased use of figures of speech and a degree of disregard for conventional word-order; there is imagination, and, above all, there is an ability to see features in an object or a situation another, not a poet, might miss. Normally, a poet composes his poem while paying attention to word sounds, rhythms, rhymes, stanzaic patterns, visual layout (graphology) and word choice. This selection has great effects on the meaning of the text. Such characteristic literary and linguistic features often defy translation due to the basic differences between different languages. Translation theorists and practitioners have differed about the best method and strategy to use in the translation of poetry. For example, In Uzbek poetry Abdulkhamid Chulpan is known as talented poet, writer, translator. Now, let's analyze his "Beauty" poem, translated by Azam Obidov:

*Qorong'u kechada ko'kka ko'z tikib,
Eng yorug' yulduzdan seni so'raymen,
Ul yulduz uyalib, boshini bukub,
Aytadir: men uni tushda ko'ramen.
Tushimda ko'ramen - shunchalar go'zal,
Bizdan-da go'zaldir, oydan-da go'zal!*

Translation:

*I look at sky at night in darks,
And ask you from the brightest star.
That star inclining head remarks:
"I always dream of her afar.
In my dream she pretty thus —
Finer than the Moon and us!"*

The original Uzbek poem follows a Subject-Object-Verb structure, typical of Turkic languages. For example, the line "*Qorong'u kechada ko'kka ko'z tikib*" translates literally as, "In the dark night, looking at the sky." However, Azam Obidov's translation adapts this to "*I look at sky at night in darks*" to conform to the Subject-Verb-Object structure of English. This change makes the poem more fluid and accessible to an English-speaking audience. The Uzbek poem relies heavily on vivid imagery and repetition, such as "*Bizdan-da go'zaldir, oydan-da go'zal!*" ("*Finer than the Moon and us!*"). Obidov's translation retains this sentiment but simplifies the phrasing to ensure clarity and readability in English. Some emotional nuances might be slightly diluted in this process.

The original poem incorporates metaphors and imagery deeply rooted in Uzbek culture, such as the star being "*shy*" and bowing its head ("*Ul yulduz uyalib, boshini bukub*"). While Obidov retains these metaphors ("*That star inclining head remarks*"), their full emotional resonance might not fully translate for readers unfamiliar with such imagery.

Azam Obidov successfully conveys the poem's core themes of admiration, beauty, and longing in a way that resonates with English readers. While some cultural and linguistic subtleties are inevitably lost or adapted, the translation retains the spirit and emotional weight of the original. By employing dynamic equivalence and adapting imagery for the target audience, Obidov strikes a balance between fidelity to the source and accessibility for a global readership.

Cultural challenges. Though traditional literary translation theorists centered their translation criticism and evaluation on the basis of a direct and faithful correspondence between the source text and the target text, recent developments in this area indicate a further movement from the traditional emphasis on rendering the formal aspects of the original to a concentration on the translated text in the target language. As Suh points out, “Before the mid-1970s translation criticism proceeded from the assumption that the target text should reproduce the source text, and deviations from the original were inexcusable”. In the traditional linguistically-oriented approach, scholars considered literary translation as a process of textual transfer that should grasp the syntactic, lexical, stylistic and pragmatic aspects of the texts in question and on the comparison between the source text and the target text. In the new trend, however, there is a movement away from comparative textual analysis and evaluative criticism towards the acceptance of the target text as a product in its own right. Consequently, translations are set within the context of their receiving cultures and the focus therefore is on cultural interchange. This shift of emphasis has resulted in a shift in the challenges that literary translators face. Instead of being constrained with linguistic and stylistic problems, now translators are faced with new, sometimes additional, challenges emanating from the ideological and cultural values and norms of the target culture/s.

Human challenges. The third source of challenges facing literary translation and translators stems from what can be called the human factor, including such matters as publication problems, lack of financial support on the part of governments for the translation and publication of literary works, low payments for literary translators, lack of professional translator training, refrain of some countries to introduce translations of foreign literatures into their own language and the reluctance of some publishers to publish literature translations. Naturally, these problems occur on both the local and the international levels.

Conclusion: This article has provided a detailed examination of both literal and literary translation, outlining the different types of literal translation based on language level and offering concrete examples for each. It also explored the concept of literary translation, its classifications, and provided an analysis of Cholpon’s poem “Beauty.” This analysis highlights the inherent challenges and potential parallels that arise during the translation process. Crucially, the study identifies and discusses the three primary challenges encountered in translation: linguistic, cultural, and human challenges. Literal translation, while sometimes necessary, can often lead to inaccuracies and awkward phrasing due to “translator’s false friends” at the sound level and a tendency to copy the syntactic structure of the source language. This ultimately breaks the combination rules and natural flow of the target language. In contrast, literary translation, aims to convey the spirit and artistic merit of the original work, navigating the complexities of meaning and cultural nuances. Overcoming these challenges requires not only linguistic competence but also cultural sensitivity, creativity, and a deep understanding of both the source and target languages. By understanding these key challenges, translators can strive to achieve a more accurate and nuanced rendering of the source text, whether it be a literal or literary translation.

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