SHOULD WE ENCOURAGE NEW FICTION TRANSLATIONS?

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Have you ever thought why one book is so attractive and you want to read it thousand times, and at the same time, you can not read a single page from another book of the same author?

Translation is a delicate process for everybody. For a translator. For a reader.

On the one hand, it gives the possibility to read a foreign literature, if a reader does not know the source language. On the other hand, some translation can push a reader off forever, if literary translation is hard to understand. How can we determine if a translation is good or bad? We have good principles for creation an adequate translation. How can we explain the appearance of new translations? If we do not have a universal translation of the book, does it mean we should look for a better one?

No doubt, that translation profession is one of the most ancient in the world. Translators always help people to find common language. If a person is eager to become a translator, he undergoes a special training. Even if a physician knows the target language perfectly well, it does not mean he can translate some preclinical researches. If we put rigid framework for a technical translator to provide highly competent work, will it work for a fiction translator? What requirements should be applied for a literary translation?

A fiction translator has more responsibility than any other does. If a technical translator is not sure in the accuracy of his translation, he always can consult a technical engineer to check if he understands everything correctly, in order to prevent malfunctioning of the equipment. A fiction translator does not always have the possibility to consult the writer, whose book he translates (unless the writer orders translation himself). If a fiction translator makes a mistake, only reader can discover it, and only on condition if he reads the book in the original. Is there any chance that any reader can note the mistake? Perhaps no. Some generations will accept the translator mistake for granted. Does it characterize the translator who made this mistake? I think it is the matter of availability of another translation.
Each translator has his own perception of the book. Firstly, being a co-author, in some way, a translator should solve one main question: how would the author write his novel, if he knew the target language? Fiction translation is a presentation of the author, his style, and his views upon life. Each translator uses the words, which, in his opinion, will produce the necessary effect upon the reader. Words can give different characterizations of the situation in the book. No doubt, that any translation is unique in its own way. If we consider two translations: one of the native speaker of the source language and the second of the native speaker of the target language. Evidently, their translations will differ. Whose translation is better and correct? If you are a native speaker of the target language, does it guarantee you will translate everything correctly? You know your native language very well. Does it prevent you from misunderstanding in everyday life? No, All of us are misunderstood rather often in different situations. This is the simple reason why sometimes translations are not so good. Understanding. Do we understand everything correctly?

All languages are different in stylistic. We should consider it. The Russian stylistic should be translated with the understandable means of the English stylistic. While in the majority of translations, the stylistic is preserved without changes and it makes the translation in English rather clumsy. Therefore, it is rather problematic to show the true author’s style in translation. It creates a real problem for a translator to keep the meaning of the phrase the same in the source language and preserve the author’s style in the target language.

I believe that a native speaker should translate from the native language into a target one. Native speakers are born with the inner feeling of the language. They have more advantages in comparison to another translator, whose target language is native, though he knows the source language pretty well. They think differently, they use different words to define the same thing. Each word in each language has various meanings. Even if the word is used in its first meaning, you will never know if the author wants to tell us the very thing, which is shown in translation. The writer uses each word on the base on his life, his experience. Do we often know the life story of the writer, whose book we are reading now? If you know Spanish and read the literature in the original, do you suppose to know Miguel de Unamuno or Julio Cortazar life circumstances, which led them to creation their books? Being a translator requires extensive knowledge about author’s environment, conditions of his life, situation in the country. It is beyond simple understanding of the language. It is not only background knowledge about the history of the country; it is the understanding of the writer’s mentality. All factors influence the writer to create his own special style. It is much easier for a native speaker to translate literature of his source language, because he knows the history of the motherland better, he always can refer to the necessary resources or consult some specialists, or receive access to the archive records in the museums, in the libraries. The better the translator knows and understands the author, the better translation he is going to produce.

How can we solve the problem of cross-cultural concepts? We should admit that some of them could be unknown in the fiction translation. Some translators make some remarks and explain the meaning of the words of the source language. Does this explanation mean that we understand the phrase, the situation, or the phenomenon in target language completely? If a translator is not a native speaker of the target language, will he explain this element in the text? The translator’s function is to make reality of the source language understandable for the reader of the target language. In this way, translation “adapts” the source text and makes it universally understandable, no matter if you read the book in Japanese or Spanish. Explanation does not always mean adaptation. If another translator tries to find the analogous phrase, idiomatic expression in the context of the target language, the translation will be closer to author’s intentions. Whose translation will be closer to the original? Translation of the source language native speaker or the target language native speaker? Anyway,
we have different language means to express the same thought and translator should pay attention to it.

When we have a thorough approach to the translation, we understand that each translator comprehends the book in his own way. If there is a mistake in a target translation, only a native speaker of the source language will note it. If we have translations from native speakers and non-native speakers, we will see the differences between the texts and understand which translation is closer to the original. This is why we still need new translations. They will help us to solve the problem of translation adequacy.

The boom for fiction translation has come in XX century. Numerous literary works, officially recognized as “the classics”, were translated into different languages. Although a lot of work has been done, we should develop best translation traditions, and still, there is a lot of work to be done. There are some minuses in translation. Some of them are too loose. Some of them follow the rules of the source language to reflect the author’s style. We should correct them in new translations and present adequate books to the readers.

In XX century, we had many mistranslations. It just meant that the world was changing and needed new approaches to the translation understanding. In my article, I want to show that we should encourage new fiction translations, any translator should be welcomed with his work, no matter if he is a native speaker of the target language or not. You never know whose translation is the best. Only opening and comparing the books, you can make your own conclusion. Besides, translation comparison and translation analysis can lead to the formalization of new translith field of the quality assessment in fiction translation.

Now translation is more than a just a translation. It opens a new world for a reader. It is the history of the country, history of the time, the history of changes. It is a huge layer of authentic culture, which any translator should take into account before starting his translation. All generations differ from each other and use different words. Perhaps next generation will understand the previous translation in a different way, or, maybe even in a wrong way. This is one of the main reasons, why we should provide contemporaneous translations and retranslate the literature. A new translation will give us a new interpretation and understanding of the book. The better the translator understands the author, the easier for him to create a universal translation, which could be the adequate version of the original book.

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