

WHO OWNS THE MEANING? AUTHORIAL INTENT VS. TRANSLATOR INTERPRETATION

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Annotation: *The piece questions the dark question of ownership of meaning within the field of translation. Does the text translator simply transmit an author's intended meaning, or is the very act of translation itself an interpretive, culturally reconstructive, productively autonomous phenomenon? In line with primary ideas of translation, the essay embarks co-construction of meaning across linguistic boundaries. The research, grounded on textual, philosophical, as well as audiovisual sources, highlights the fact that meaning is never an essentialist construction but a negotiated construction, as much of the voice of the author as it is a product of the prism of the translator.*

Keywords: *Translator agency, authorial voice, ownership of meaning, interpretation in translation, ethical translation, reader reception, cultural translation, co-authorship, fidelity vs. freedom.*

INTRODUCTION

The ancient aphorism that translators have to be “faithful” towards the original author is that meaning is created only at the authorial end and is to be transmitted as an entity in the receptor language. But it is always suspected. The flow of words is always an exercise of interpretation. The words never are deposits of asymptomatic meaning; they co-exist within the frame of socio-cultural as well as emotional backgrounds. Thus, every. Translation is an exercise of recreation rather than copying.

Here, the problem of authorial intention—the intended primary meaning of the author, and translator interpretation—the individual process of conveying that meaning into the distant language and culture—is discussed. It leads to the question of whether, if the structure of language, connotation, and worldview differ, then what determines the definition of the meaning of a piece of writing?

Methodology

The study assumes the task of comparative textual and cultural research. It is a comparison of some translations of basic sources of diverse ages, genres, and cultural origins. It adopts the work of descriptive translation studies (DTS) and hermeneutic methods along with scholars such as Schleiermacher, Venuti, Eco, and Berman. A reception study (reviews, reader response, criticism) is adopted as part of the study, as much as it dwells on the perception of meaning by the receptor community.

Results

Authorial Intent: An Ideal or an Illusion?

Example: “Madame Bovary” by Gustave Flaubert

Flaubert is renowned for having been fixated on the *mot juste* (the ultimate word). But highly crafted prose has resulted in highly inconsistent translations—theirs with his economy of language and pacing, and those more focused on fluency or voice.

Analysis: Literal fidelity more frequently warps the readability of the target language. The ironic story of Flaubert, for instance, can be defused through over-domesticating it or hidden through being too foreignized. Faithfulness on purpose might as well lose its effect.

Example 2. Holy texts (e.g., the Quran, Bible, Torah)

Translators may be under stress not only to retain the denotative meaning but spiritual connotation. Yet, most of those Arabic words used in the Quran cannot be translated without using very long exegesis.

Analysis: There, the meaning is more theological than linguistic, with no literal transfer. The interpreter's options become exercises in theological positioning.

Translator as Co-Creator: Reconstructing Meaning

Borges, as author and translator, had maintained that a good translation might be superior to the original. The translations he had rendered of Kafka and Poe into Spanish had added more insight or philosophical depth.

Analysis: Translation for Borges is a work of “re-writing.” It is indicative of the belief that once the work leaves the author’s hands, it enters the domain of interpretations and may even be supplemented.

Example: Haruki Murakami in English. Murakami’s translators into English (Jay Rubin, Philip Gabriel) typically simplify multileveled prose for Western eyes, omitting certain cultural or surrealistic references.

Analysis: Although Rubin’s book involves consulting with Murakami, end-term English translations yield target-market as much as literal comprehension. The end result is a more readable—but perhaps less genuine—“domesticated” Murakami.

Ethical Dilemmas: Whose Voice Matters?

Example: “A Thousand and One Nights”.

He published Burton's nineteenth-century version, comprising the eroticized parts and the Orientalist stereotypes not present in the Arabic sources.

Analysis: Burton's book betrays the way that the ideology of the translator can dominate the Voice of the author and change cultural representation. Here, the translator is acting as a colonial rather than a responsible mediator.

Example: Gayatri Spivak translating Mahas

Spivak explained retaining the cultural and linguistic “otherness” of Devi, maintaining the idiomatic and syntax of Bengali.

Analysis: Spivak’s ethical stance refuses erasure of the subject of the subaltern. Following authorial intention at all costs, as she argues, is following the form and struggle of the first voice as well, not despite facile readability.

Reader’s Role: Does Meaning Reside in Reception?

Examples: Different English versions of “The Stranger” by Camus

The earliest version of Stuart Gilbert changes the tone of the famous opening sentence: “Mother died today” becomes “Mother died today. Or perhaps yesterday.” All later translators, like Matthew Ward, preserve Camus’s remoteness.

Analysis: The reader reception was quite diverse. The former would mean emotional indeterminacy; the latter, existential lethargy. All the translators re-shaped the character of Meursault as well as the book's philosophy.

Example: Fan translations (e.g., anime subtitles, fiction)

Fans typically possess more culturally familiar variants than official variants. These can, however, be accompanied by deliberate re-interpretations or meme-speak.

Analysis: These community translations imply that meaning is socially constructed rather than written singly by the author/article commissioned translator. Centers of ownership have more than one dimension.

Discussion

The premise that meaning resides in the author’s mind, rich with the promise of being translated with real fidelity, is growing suspicious. Language isn’t endowed with intrinsic messages—it’s interpretable. Translation, as it were, is negotiation. The translator plays off intention, context, ideology, receiver’s expectations. Playing off, they can’t help but build new meanings. Instead of thinking of translator intervention as betrayal, maybe it can be understood as co-authorship. The translator is co-author—not of those original ideas, of course, but of their re-presentation elsewhere. Translator interpretation is not deviation, but the very vehicle through which the original is reborn. --- 5. Conclusion Sense in translation is nobody’s—it is common, negotiated, reborn. The translator is not an empty vessel but an essential witness of the life of the text. Translator interpretation adheres not to the chart of the text but to the chart of authorial intention. Translator interpretation fills white pages, colors sketches, stretches thinking’s contours on linguistic and cultural topographies. Here is mutual authorship, and the original is made honored not through imitation but through being made live and relevant in another world.

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