The Problem of Untranslatability in Translating Electronic Poetry

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Abstract- Electronic Literature is a post-modern genre. The reader's involvement plays a key role in creating the meaning of the e-literature. The role of the translator had encountered a paradigm shift in the digital age. The translator in the digital age needs to translate images, movements, games, quizzes, etc. along with translating words and ideas. Unlike the normal translator who needs mastery over source and target languages, the translator of digital literature needs technical competency and electronic sources. The main difficulty that arises in translation is the problem of untranslatability. This paper focuses on the problems of untranslatability in translating electronic poetry. Electronic literature has an inclusive reader where the reader plays a crucial role in understanding the meaning intended by the writer. This paper looks into the position of the translator and tries to find out the role of the translator in conveying the meaning to the reader. Since creating and reading electronic literature is a continuous process, the role of the translator is one of more responsibility and untranslatable electronic codes and movements offer a great threat.

Indexed Terms- Electronic Literature, Untranslatability, Translator, Technical Competency

I. INTRODUCTION

Electronic literature is the body of literature that emerged in the last half of the twentieth century. The advent of computers prompted the early beginning of the genre. It was later triggered by the globalisation and the use of the internet. Technological advancements and the world wide net served as the third industrial revolution. As literature became the leisure-time activity of the elite after the industrial revolution, electronic literature is the newly emerging leisure time activity of the digital natives as well as the digital immigrants who found a safe place in the new digital heaven. Electronic literature is more engaging to the readers as the readers are engaged with the behaviour of the text than the thought process of the writer. Electronic Literature is a post-modern genre with the ability of impermanence as per the audience response. As a post-modern genre, it blurs the boundaries between the author and the reader. There arises a question of the role of translator. It may seem that the translator's task is comparatively easy in the digital world as the use of the internet can solve the problems of translation. But in reality, the role of the translator is more challenging in the hyper-real world.

The role of the translator had encountered a paradigm shift in the digital age. He is expected to have high compatibility. The new digital citizens or "netizens" demand more from the translator. The translator in the digital age needs to translate images, movements, games, quizzes, etc. along with translating words and ideas. Electronic literature is multi-disciplinary in nature and is infused with other forms of art than the simple text. It uses different interfaces like sight, sound, touch, gesture and even breathing. Unlike the normal translator who needs mastery over source and target languages, the translator of digital literature needs technical competency and electronic sources.

The problem of untranslatability in translating e-poetry Translation is a complex process where both the forms and the content must be taken into account. Specifically, when it comes to poetry translation the translator must be aware of all the literary devices not in the source language but the equivalent in the target language to avoid misinterpretation. Since translation is described as the conveyance of meaning from language to language. In poetry layers of meaning are created by the use of literary devices. These literary devices in poetry are employed to convey sense and form and different layers of meaning and to enhance the charm of the text. However, these techniques introduce the idea of meaning loss and gain while translating poetry. There are numerous factors accountable for it such as grammatical, literary, aesthetic, and socio-cultural equivalence

Untranslatability is the quality of a text or speech that has no equivalent when translated into another language. A text that is considered untranslatable is called a lacuna, or lexical gap.

The two major characteristics of the electronic literature that cause a threat to the translator is interactivity and transience. Electronic literature is non-linear and fluidic in nature. It creates a flux of images and ideas and the reader gets along with it. The translator of electronic

literature should be a good reader and should stay intact in the high currents of the multimedia behaviour of the text. The meaning changes as per the reader's response. The translator thus needs to inspect all possible meanings that are evolved in the interaction. He should choose the best choice of words otherwise the whole interaction may lead to a meaningless conclusion.

There are different layers like music, images. videos, artificial intelligence, virtual reality, algorithm, coding, etc.to the electronic literature. The different layers of the e-literature should be translated separately and arranged later in a previous manner in the target language.

According to Piotr Marecki (2017) "With every aspect, there is something to be lost, in terms of context (that of early computer magazines with their variety of programs and articles, for instance), language, platform, and the different literary/theoretical aspects of the works. No translation can be lossless, so it is more productive for the researchers to ask about what can be carried across" (p.2). Untranslatability is such a loss in translation.

Electronic poetry is the most challenging genre to the translator. The interactive e-poetry allows the reader to navigate the verse in a never-ceasing wave of words and ideas and arrive at the shore he decides. In translating a verse, the translator needs to keep in par with the tone of the poem. Electronic poetry uses algorithms to generate poems like "Birds Singing Other Birds' Songs" and "The Poem that Crossed the Atlantic", by María Mencía, linguistic and cultural untranslatability arises. In the poem, an English interpretation (translation) of birds' songs is deciphered and sung by a gathering of individuals. The human voices are recorded and altered by the creator utilizing sound creating software. The sounds that developed from this process are afterwards connected to the enlivened 'text birds'. The letters, which make their diagrams, compared to the deciphered sound made by each of the winged creatures, hence making the birds to sing their newly rendered visual-textual compositions. They sing their sound specific content while flying within the sky. In any case, the sound doesn't associate to the visual representation of the genuine bird, which clarifies the title of this work. The e-writer uses the tones which are intensified by the music of the multimedia text. Translating the mood of the e-poem is thus an impossible task.

The main difficulty that arises in translation is the problem of untranslatability. Untranslatability may occur mainly in three ways. The first and the most common instance is the lack of relevant corresponding word in the target language. In the case of electronic poetry, this is more frequent. The translation of the natural languages like the bird cries in the poem, "Birds Singing Other Birds' Songs" creates the problem of untranslatability whereas the multimodal form of the poem creates linguistic and cultural untranslatability in poems like "The Poem that Crossed the Atlantic", The second problem of untranslatability arises when the relevant word is present in both the source and target language but the word has a different function in the target language. The third case is the most difficult one where there is no apt word or function in the target language. In the case of electronic poetry, this is more severe as the poetry creates virtual reality and the target language may find it difficult to translate it.

CONCLUSION

Electronic literature has an inclusive reader where the reader plays a crucial role in understanding the meaning intended by the writer. The translator should envision the vibrant reader in his mind while translating and also should be attentive of the algorithm that is reader-friendly/challenging. Here the translator's task is manifold. Since creating and reading electronic literature is a continuous process, the role of the translator is one of more responsibility and untranslatable electronic codes and movements offer a great threat. To meet the problem of untranslatability and to give a meaningful rendering of the text, the translator can collaborate with the writer/programmer and the reader. A Collaborative translation should be adopted for more clarity in translating electronic literature. It is tough to separate the author and the translator because of the entanglement between these two roles in the creation of the meaning of a work. Thus, translation is transcreation in electronic literature.

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