

PROBLEMS IN LITERARY TRANSLATION

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Abstract:

Translation studies is a relatively recent discipline. In the words of Susan Bassnett, "The relatively recent acceptance of the term Translation studies may perhaps surprise those who had always assumed that such a discipline existed already in view of the widespread use of the term Translation, particularly in the process of foreign languages. But in fact, systematic study of translation is still in swaddling bands".

Roman Jakobson, in his article "On linguistic Aspects of Translation," has distinguished translation into three types: 1. Intralingual .2. Interlingual and 3. Intersemiotic

In the same article, he highlighted a common issue with all three types: that is, the problem equivalence.

In today's world, where translation of all types has become a big industry and a requirement for all. We will consider some common problems or challenges in literary translation.

Literary translation is a complex and nuanced process which is much more than converting the source text to the target text.

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1. Cultural Context:

The understanding of cultural diversity and the rituals or festivals. Their cultural context plays a role, and you require a deep understanding of the source language as well as the target language

2. Maintaining the author's Voice and style

Maintaining the author's Voice and style is most complex as we need to convey the just without losing the tone, flavour or meaning.

You need to capture the exact sentiment or come very close to that.

3. Linguistic structures and differences :

My Tibetan friend and poet Tenzin Tsundue writes in English. But in his poetry, he carries the Tibetan history, ethos and now a sense of resistance and rebellion which cannot be understood until we know about its context. Sometimes he mentions a Tibetan festival or ritual, for which we don't find an exact equivalent word. It is not present in Hindi or other world languages. Similarly, there are problems in

terms of translating puns, wordplays and sometimes humour. What may be a funny expression for one language may not be received in another culture with the same meaning.

Literary and poetic devices are another big challenge, as we have to follow the rhyme and metre. So sometimes we have to be content with creative adaptation rather than literal word-for-word translations.

As you know, words carry connotations, and the emotional weight of a certain word may not carry the same impact for people from a different background.

So the translator needs to pay close attention to retain the impact. Another problem is that of inconsistent language. Once you get the familiarity and voice of the text, you have to keep the same spirit in the plot and names, places, etc.

In light of the above challenges, I have come across the literary translation of Tenzin Tsundue's poems done by

Mr Ashok Pandey and let us see if he encountered any challenges.

Here is a piece of poetry originally written in English but translated in Hindi.

The Losar Greeting

Tashi Delek!

Though in a borrowed garden

You grow, grow well, my sister

This Losar, when you attend the morning mass,

Say anything extra prayer

That the next Losar we can attend in Lhasa

When you attend your convent class

Learn an extra lesson that you can teach in Tibet ..

The poem ends with the same greeting, Tashi Delek

Mr Ashok Pandey has left these two key words, Losar and Tashi Delek, intact, as Losar is peculiar to Tibetan people as the new year, and Tashi Delek is the new year greetings specific to this part of the world. One can not translate these two into some other word.

Similarly, in one more instance in his poem Refugee, there is a mention of the word Rangzen

He ends this poem on a note

Rangzen

Freedom means Rangzen

In his literary translation, these words are kept intact in Hindi as there is no substitute for them, and if we use something similar, it may not quite mean the same thing for the Tibetan people.

To sum up, there are many words in the source language which can not be fully understood in the translated text. To understand When it rains in Dharmasala one has to imagine the same circumstances, or experience what longing for a home country means in the poem Refugee. It's not just the linguistic aptness but the sensitivity that one has to consider. As far as literary translations are concerned, AI is still far from catching or creating the same sentiment, so literary translation will require feeling, breathing, and understanding humans to transfer a text from one language to another.

Sources/Bibliography :

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Cite This Article:

Nore S.S. (2025). *Problems in Literary Translation.* In **Aarhat Multidisciplinary International Education Research Journal**: Vol. XIV (Number VI, pp. 52–53). Doi: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18058556>