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Literary Translation and Rewriting – Challenges and Perspectives

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Abstract: The need for translation in a world of continuous change and exchange is unquestionable. Literary translation creates global communication and engages the readership's interest in raising cultural awareness. This cultural landscape provides new perspectives on literary translation which might be regarded as a model for all translation types and for conveying messages across cultures and language barriers. Literary translators become professional rewriters and mediating agents in an intricate process of mapping literatures and cultures. The paper equally envisages the literary translators' active and dynamic roles as well as the negative consequences of the digitalized era on translators' profession and professionalization.

Keywords: literary translation, rewriting, literary translator's competence, globalization

1. Introduction

The increasing interest in Translation Studies over the last few decades is due to the emergence of the complex phenomenon of globalization, which has created a friendly climate for developing social, cultural, political and economic networks. The complexity and plurality of cultures and languages on a par with preserving linguistic and cultural specificities make it impossible for each individual to cope with major literary and scientific works, within different languages.

Irrespective of the current changes and migratory movements, translation bridges the gap between countries and nations and it becomes a linguistic tool in raising cultural awareness and enhancing global communication. As Muñoz-Calvo (2010) states "Translation enables language to cross borders and helps intercultural exchange and understanding" (2010: 2) and this is due to the collaborative work of

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translators who become a boosting factor in an elaborated and complex process of mapping literature(s) and culture(s).

Under the big umbrella of global communication and digitalization (Dejica, Eugeni, Dejica-Cartis 2020), literary translation requires insightful approaches into specific terms *such as literature, literary style, language, genre* and *text-type*, with great emphasis on both literary translators' multi-layered competence and the effects of globalization on translators' work. Therefore the following research questions arise: To what extent is literary translation a form of rewriting? Could we envisage that the literary translator is a professional rewriter? What is the impact of globalization on translator's profession and professionalization?

1.1. Featuring literary translation in the 21st century

As an academic discipline, literary translation is part of the wide field of Translation Studies and it has been an essential preoccupation for many scholars (notably, Lefevere, 1992; Toury, 1995; Simon, 1996) who have discussed it in terms of *accuracy*, *equivalence* and *fidelity*. Literary translation is a complex and interesting phenomenon which takes place at the interface of two literatures and two cultures. It is associated with the translation of texts which are literary in the source culture or to translating in such a manner that the final product is considered literary to the target culture.

Other scholars (notably, Bal, 1980; Kristeva, 1980, 1984; Plett, 1991; Worton and Still, 1990) place literature at the interface of content, text, intertext and context since it genuinely describes cultural and historical aspects of certain communities in an attempt to shape human psychological behaviour and social mindsets through the artful use of metaphoric language or linguistic manipulation in a variety of socio-cultural contexts.

This produces contextualization in the source language and (re) contextualization in the target language through the help of literary translations. Literatures shapes the relationship between content and context and therefore, literary translation involves "transposition of the content of a source text within its own complex forms of contextualization in the source culture to a representation in another cultural context" (Boase- Beier, 2014: 17).

Literary translation encompasses a wide and comprehensive body of literary texts from ancient times to modern fiction and it involves translating prose, dramatic and creative poetry into other languages. The corpus of literary texts is complex and varied and literature best reflects every language and culture through the artistic use of literary and stylistic devices. One basic tenet is that literary works are rewritten in translation with a view to mapping current realities and ideologies, re-presenting a society and it is related to certain cultural and historical periods and this offers another perspective on literary translation which remains a perfect model for all types of translations.

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If we envisage literary translation as a product it means creative writing because it makes things happen in an artistic and genuine way and this gives value to the outcome of the process. If we envisage it as a process it can be considered a science because the translator's linguistic and cultural competence is far more important than just a mechanical reproduction.

Furthermore, we could not ignore that translation, as a well-organized and technical process, may be compared to a theatrical performance, which combines different elements such as actors, scenery, stage elements, costumes or objects, each having their own specific role but with the same goal, that of entertaining the audience, hence the target reader. "Translation, like theater, is a multi-vocal process, where multiple agencies combine to contrive the final product that goes out to readers and audiences" (Bassnett, 2002:119).

1.2. Translation- as an act of rewriting

The current paper aims at framing literary translation as rewriting, underpinning the need to derive insights into translation as a complex and laborious phenomenon which unfolds at many levels and requires translators' commitment and responsibility. Many scholars (notably, Leppihalme, 1997; Tymoczko, 2007; Corness, 2011) have been focused on describing the process – we also follow this line of approach, considering literary translation a genuine and productive activity, an art or craft, the translator having in mind the idea that the target readers have the freedom to give their own interpretations according to their cultural and social background or to their mood and feelings.

Indeed, as a multilayered and highly complex phenomenon, translation can be regarded as an interface between languages and cultural spaces, which triggers semantic, pragmatic and cultural negotiation as a two-stage process: reception and interpretation of the source text and rendering the message into the target text (reinterpretation). This approach gives the literary translator the possibility to manipulate the text and thus to rewrite it according to his/her own ideology and the readership's expectations. Seen in this light, "the translator enters a pragmatic meaning negotiation (decoding or interpretation) and renegotiation process (encoding or rendering)" (Vîlceanu, 2020: 247).

Therefore, as a craft, literary translation becomes a form of rewriting the initial text in an attempt to render the adequate semantic meaning and stylistic compliance, and it involves the translator's skills, creativity and innovation. A translated literary text is the product of one's individual reading and interpretation, infused with the personal style, and showing reflective work and critical thinking. Rewriting is also a scientific process based on solid linguistic and cultural knowledge. Without a shadow of doubt, literary translation is a form of art, activating the translators' aesthetic taste for creating original texts, complying with particular poetics.

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Translation is always context-embedded, therefore literary translation takes the form of rewriting because it is performed under certain social and cultural constraints and for specific purposes. In other words, rewriting presupposes conveying the meaning of the foreign text into the domestic culture observing the norms and exploring the resources that make up the system of that society.

Translation as a form of rewriting is associated to power and ideology because "rewriting is manipulation, undertaken in the service of power" (Bassnett and Lefevere, 1992: vii). Therefore, translation is likely to result in a new hybrid text, impacting on the intended readership, and opening new horizons for interpretations:

> Rewritings can introduce new concepts, new genres, new devices and the history of translation is the history of literary innovation, of the shaping power of one culture upon another. But rewriting can also repress innovation, distort and contain, and in an age of ever increasing manipulation of all kinds, the study of the manipulative processes of literature as exemplified by translation can help us towards a greater awareness of the world in which we live. (Lefevere, 1992: xi)

Literary translation involves manipulation of language rather than the mere semantic transfer of words, and if we go beyond the linguistic approach to translation, we note that words can be studied only in the cultural context in which they function, which is to be equated to (re)contextualization and cultural interference. However, the concept of *manipulation*, connected with that of *rewriting*, can be used to redefine *translation* from a cultural perspective, and this was a focal issue for the cultural turn in translation.

To put it in a nutshell, the process of literary translation as a form of rewriting needs to be understood in terms of re-creating a new perspective on the original text, without altering it while preserving the author's intention. New metaphors appear and others disappear as in a magic puzzle which amazes the target readers and determines new meanings of the target text. The more we read, the more interpretations a translation may achieve. Each time new connections will emerge and new interweaving relations will develop in a finely tuned and sophisticated process revealing the literary translator's expertise and creative work.

2. The literary translator-a professional rewriter

There have been numerous academic debates about the translator's competence and the way it impacts on translation as an end product. Many scholars (notably, Delisle, 1980; Roberts, 1984; Hewson and Martin, 1991; Nord 1988/1991; Albir, 1996; Hansen, 1997; Neubert, 2000) have discussed the translators' multilayered competence, and although their models overlap to a certain degree, we need to admit there is an open-ended classification and translators should be both target-oriented and market-oriented in order to be successful.

The model proposed by the *EMT Common Framework* (Competence Framework- 2017, please visit: https://ec.europa.eu) covers the translators'

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competence, irrespective of the type of translation. Accordingly, a large number of components and sub-components contribute to creating the image of a flawless translator: linguistic competence (necessary to produce a fluent and accurate text), textual competence (it is important to avoid misunderstandings, mediating between the two systems of stylistical conventions), thematic competence (possessing relevant and scientific knowledge), transfer competence (the ability to transfer messages), technological competence (mastery of IT tools and other high technology devices), interpersonal competence (involving cooperation and collaboration).

Obviously, this complex toolkit comprises interrelated sub-competences that interact at different stages in translation and may change or adapt according to the market's requirements. It is noteworthy that translators change hats during translation, as readers and writers, or as receivers and senders, but they should be fully aware of the huge responsibility for the integrity of both source and target language text and culture.

Considering these theoretical aspects related to the translator's multilayered competence, we shall further dwell on the literary translator's style and creativity in the process of reshaping and mapping translated literature, thus proving their dynamic and boosting role as skilful rewriters. We shall examine different theoretical statements while attempting to provide an answer to the question whether the literary translator should demonstrate an assortment of talents and abilities to be considered a professional rewriter of the original text, having the capacity of re-interpretation and re-creation.

Literary translators have been instrumental in transmitting messages across languages and cultures and since the focus is shifting towards translation as part of cultural exchange translators receive new roles in the process. They develop a more complex and active nature as bilingual professionals who master not only theoretical linguistic aspects, but also functional ones, i.e., as cultural mediators who strive to render the same cultural background of the original text and to (fully) meet the target readers' expectations. They play the role of mediating agents between two literatures and their associated cultures and thus "translators become experts in text production for its smooth insertion to the host culture, and the cultural intertraffic management raises the question of the degree of (a)symmetry of the two cultures involved" (Vîlceanu, 2017: 96).

To validate our the hypothesis that there has been a recast of the status of the literary translator's as a professional rewriter of the original, we have selected and compiled a bilingual corpus based on the translation of David Lodge's *Changing Places* (1975) (translated by Virgil Stanciu, 2015). There is need to mention that this is a revised edition - the first edition, also having Virgil Stanciu as a translator, was published by Editura Univers in 1995, and that these are the only translations in Romanian available on the literary translation market.

Therefore, we have adopted a comparative and contrastive research method in an attempt to demonstrate that the translation of *Changing Places* is a form of rewriting a literary text undertaken by a professional translator and scholar – it is

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worth mentioning that the Romanian translator, Virgil Stanciu, is a Professor Emeritus of the "Babeș-Bolyai" University of Cluj-Napoca, his research interests lying in pre-modern and modern English literature, the contemporary British and American novel, Irish film and theatre, and translation studies (please visit: https://lett.ubbcluj.ro/english/ccrbc/echipa.html#research_team).

The novel describes the academic world of two professors who change places and jobs and "they might even come to exchange wives as well as jobs" (Lodge, 1975: xi) in a creative employment of two varities of English and contrasting American and British academic life. Perhaps, translating humour is the most challenging as the literary translator needs to contextualize it and to make play on the aesthetic function. Other aspects which require equal attention, to our mind, derives from the usage of language varieties (a mixed-use of colloquial English and American slang), idioms and collocations, French and Latin words, style and register.

Going in depth, we observe the Romanian translator's concern with familiarising the reader with the author's intention, mindsets and ideology. Virgil Stanciu translated for a readership who had long been under the Communist regime and therefore with limited/restricted access to media, and information about the contemporary Western culture and civilization (the first translation was produced in 1993). Admittedly, the translator brought the European and American culture closer to the Romanian people. In the latest (revised) translation published in 2015, the translator deemed it necessary to provide the Romanian readership with glosses concerning the two educational systems (different from ours) and the Western lifestyle, sensitively anticipating the cultural gaps from a readership-oriented perspective.

The matters are further complicated if we also adopt a market-oriented approach. In this sense, Virgil Stanciu, in an interview given in 2018, points to the commercial interests and editorial policies: "I translated the first novel of the series, but even there I came across the same commercial thing, because, instead of *Changing places* "Schimb de locuri", the publishing house opted for *Schimb de dame*, a much more attractive title, which is true. Maybe " Schimb de locuri " would have made you think of a novel about football players." (https://www.fitralit.ro/28-12-2018-virgil-stanciu-traducatorul-cara-sensuri-dintr-o-cultura-in-alta/, our translation)

There are numerous interventions used to explain more or less opaque culture-specific items – in the form of footnotes, and Virgil Stanciu (the translator) employs various translation techniques such as calques, loans, adaptation, transposition, equivalence to convey the correct message and to create meaning in particular contexts. We shall categorise and exemplify these renderings according to Newmark's taxonomy (1988):

- ***material culture (food and drinks, transport, etc.):*** e.g. *bourbon* (p. 6) - *whisky american din secară* (p. 9), the translator explaining that this is a type of drink mostly offered during flights; *hovercrafts (p. 46) = vehicule amfibie* (p. 65)*; Boeing 707 (p. 5);*

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- **ecology**: *redwood* (p. 10) = *o specie de sequoia* (p. 15) – the sub-species is not encountered in Romania, therefore the translator uses the generic name of the tree species via a neutralisation procedure;
- **social organizations (hystorical terms or religious events, international terms, customs, activities, etc.)**: *Black Panthers* (p. 9) = *Panterele Negre* (p. 13), *organizație militară a oamenilor de culoare din Statele Unite* - the translator uses a calque and a paraphrase for explicitation; *Armaghedon* (p. 8) = *locul unde se va da bătălia decisivă între forțele Binelui și ale Răului* (p. 12), *Women's Liberation* (p. 27) = *Mișcarea femeilor* (p. 39) – calque + modulation; *PMLA* (p. 11) - *publicație academică americană de mare prestigiu în domeniul științelor filologice și literare* (p. 16) – calque + paraphrase; *Serviciul Național pentru Sănătate* (p. 22) = *National Health System* (p. 15), this term is highly transparent and has a direct equivalent in Romanian; *when crossing the road* (p. 31) = *când traversezi strada* (p. 44) - the translator explains traffic rules which are different in the UK, U.S.A. and Romania (i.e., you drive on the left), and which are also justified by the need for referential accuracy; *twelve feet* (p .45) = *douăsprezece picioare* (p. 63) – the unit of measure is transfered and then converted by cultural adaptation (e.g., *aproximativ 4 metri*).
- **anthroponyms***:* they are generally transferred - *Beowulf* (p. 13) = *mare poem epic anglo-saxon* (p. 19), *Gammer Gurton's Needle* (p. 13) = *an English comedy* (p. 19); *Radcliffe* (p. 15) = *celebru colegiu pentru fete, situat în apropierea Univerității Harvard, Cambridge = reședința Universității Harvard și a Colegiului Radcliffe* (p. 22), an important explanation for the Romanian readership who might not be fully aware of the status and ranking of such famous institutions; *F.R. Leavis* (p. 29) = cunoscut critic și profesor de literatură de la Downing College, Cambridge (p. 41), *Rumble* (p. 29) = *Zarva* (p. 41), the name of a student newspaper; *Ancient Mariner* (p. 39) = *Ancient Mariner* (p. 55)- poem de Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), corifeu al romantismului englez.
- **Educational system**: *școli publice* (p. 44) = *public school* (p. 31). The translator considers important to explain the difference between the British and American educational systems; *public schools* is best rendered by *școli particulare*, and it is important for the target readership to understand that, otherwise they might assume that they are dealing with a mistranslation case since the Romanian cultural equivalent translates back as *private schools*, thus creating confusion; *to apply for a Guggie or a Fullbright* (p. 35) = *termenul de înscriere la bursele Guggenheim și Fulbright* (p. 49) – the *Fulbright Visiting Scholar* scheme addresses postgraduate teachers who want to carry out further research in the American academia, also available for Romanians, therefore functioning as a transparent culture-specific item; the academic *Guggenheim Fellowship* has been offered to American citizens since 1925 for special artistic abilities, but the translator does not provide

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other details, leaving the reader the possibility to search for it. In the 1993 edition, we find no commentary about these two academic research opportunities – the reason is that The Romanian-U.S. Fulbright Commission was inaugurated in May 1993 (https://fulbright.ro/about/).

The second argument for proving the quality of the translated text in the process of rewriting the original lies in the mixed use of British and American English lexical units, pairs of synonyms, used in parallel, which allows the translator to employ them alternatively to avoid repetition: e.g. *airplanes* (p. 5) = *aeroplane* (p.7), *aircraft* (p. 6) = *aeronavă* (p. 9), *planes* (p. 7) = *avioane* (p. 9), *chartered aircraft* (p. 8) = *avion charter* (p. 12), *aircraft* (p. 23)= *avion* (p. 33), jet (p. 6) = *turbopropulsor* (p. 9); *stewardess* (p. 6) = *stewardesa* (p. 9), *airhostess* (p. 53) = *însoțitoare de zbor* (p. 74); *luggage* (p. 44) = *bagaje* (p. 61) and *baggage* (p. 7) = bagaje (p. 10); *flat* (p. 16) = *apartament* (p. 23) and *apartment* (p. 16) = *apartament* (p. 23); *storey* (p. 63) = *etaj* (p. 45) and *floor (p. 47) = etaj* (p. 66), *film* (p. 23) = *film* (p. 33) and *movie* (p. 28) = *film* (p. 39), *ads* (p. 88) = *reclame* (p. 120) and *commercials* (p. 59) = reclame (p. 82), etc. It is interesting to note that cultural adaptation applies intralingually, between British and American English.

Another linguistic aspect envisages the translation of French and Latin words or phrases marking the formal register and, in some cases, indicating scholarship and sophistication - Virgil Stanciu prefers to use extratextual glosses, i.e., footnotes. Thus, the original flavour is lost (due to domestication) while the cultural transfer is secured through the translator's intervention: e.g., *sang froid* (p.7) = *sânge rece* (p. 10), *amateur* (p. 7) = *amator* (p. 10), *élite body* (p. 11) = *corp de elită* (p. 16), *laboured* (p. 14) = *migălea* (p. 20), *environs* (p. 15) = *împrejurimi* (p. 22); *juvenellia* (p. 15) = *operă de tinerețe* (p. 21); this culturally neutral attitude is slightly counterbalanced by transfers / foreignisation: *solitary walks* (p. 15) = *plimbări solitare*; (p. 22), *joie de vivre* (p. 28) – *joie de vivre* (p. 39), for which *chef de viață* is provided in the footnote;

Based on the corpus analysis, we may conclude that the literary translator (Virgil Stanciu) is a well-documented, skilful and professional translator, and that the rewriting process is visible in the translator's management of the culture-specific items in an attempt to meet the Romanian readership's expectations while also being faithful to the original.

3. The impact of globalization on the literary translators' profession

An important and (re)current aspect that deserves our attention is the role that translators play in a globalized society (Dejica, D. & A. Dejica-Cartis 2020). Translation is a laborious activity, an intricate process which requires time, alongside competence.

Analyzing the numerous benefits of globalization, i.e., the rapid circulation of people and information, the development of worldwide social networks and also the increasing use of Google translate applications which facilitate communication

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between different speech groups, we need to emphasize the multidimensional role of translators in the new political and economic context which promotes tolerance, mutual respect and human rights policies. The easy access to technology has created facilities for volunteer groups who are more concerned with their target interlocutor than with the source text, and thus they are rewriting the rules of translation.

Translators' work has been considered an important and vocational activity for many years but nowadays, we are facing a new social and global phenomenon that places the translators' profession in the shadow, considering it an obsolete activity. Indeed, the use of the Computer-Aided Translation (CAT) tools in many types of translation and the vast range of technological devices may be of great help for translators in general, but we also notice negative consequences on the translators' profession and professionalization. It is even estimated that by the year 2025 (Berthelot, 2013) translation will be mainly automated and translators will be reduced to "proofreaders", checking the quality of machine translated material (Biau and Pym, 2006). We are not sure about this prophecy, but it is undeniable that proficiency in CAT tools is required in professional work.

Also, we should bear in mind that the new global phenomenon has begun to assimilate other cultures and languages. This means losing cultural identity and assuming a new cultural one, which predicts the extinction of certain languages and cultures. Cronin argues that English faces a new age, of deterritorialization, which means that the relation of culture to geographical and social territories is gradually fading.

> The English language as the specific cultural expression of an island people shaped by geography and history has now become "deterritorialized" as a global language and though it still bears the multiple traces of its territorial origins, its evolution is no longer beholden to the accidents of British geography. (Cronin, 2006: 49)

Literary translation tends to be considered an obscure and less important activity, and translatorship seem to become ever weaker. People communicate and interact in a global language, English viewed as *lingua franca*, which is invented and reinvented for their own purposes. They directly engage in a communicative process in which the message is more important than the form. A linguistic code is therefore adopted by language speaking communities and there appears a mixed-form of universal English. However, quality is to be questioned as there are no clear guidelines in such processes.

Seen in this light, translation becomes an ordinary activity that interconnects people from the entire world who do not use the same linguistic system but share the same interests, views or hobbies. Hence, we question ourselves whether literary translation is beginning to lose ground as compared to the use of social networks and digitalized communication in a global language. Literature does no longer enjoy a prepotent status in such a context and teenagers do not show too much interest in studying foreign languages or reading translated literature in a globalized world where communication is far more important than cultural enlightenment.

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Cronin (2006:121) advocates the translators' role in global communication as promoters of language diversity and cultural identity. If translation is still a bridge-builder activity which tries to connect two separate languages and cultures, then translators must take new responsibilities:

> Translation scholars must be to the forefront in campaigns to protect and promote the teaching of diverse languages as there is little point in being in the business of connection if nothing is left to connect. It is the existence of separate languages and cultures and skilled practitioners in these languages that makes bridge-building a feasible and worthwhile exercise. (Cronin, 2006: 121)

Irrespective of these clear and visible effects of globalization on the translator's profession, on human communication and interaction, literary translation has been re-assessed in the context of preserving the national and cultural identity, and it will remain a valid solution for language and nation survival. Thus, literary translation, be it art, craft or science, should enjoy a well-deserved place in the field of translation as an integrative discipline, due to the translator's reinterpreted and boosting roles.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, we aimed at describing the complex phenomenon of literary translation within the vast field of *Translation Studies*, focusing on aspects related to grammar, stylistic or pragmatic compliance and equally creating semantic meaning in different cultural contexts. We envisaged literary translation as a form of rewriting the original and in validating this hypothesis we relied on the translation of David Lodge's novel *Changing Places* into Romanian, with great emphasis on the literary translator's function as a professional rewriter and cultural mediator. Also, the strong impact of globalization and digitalization on translatorship has reassessed literary translation, which continues to be the privilege of the human translator, offering a viable model for all types of translation and opening up new horizons for further challenges.

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