

CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES IN TRANSLATING SHAKESPEARE'S WORKS

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Annotation: In this article, the translation of Shakespeare's works is a complex task, which poses a number of difficulties due to the linguistic, cultural and literary subtleties of his dramaturgy. The main difficulty lies in Shakespeare's use of early modern English, characterized by archaic modern vocabulary, complex syntax, and rich vocabulary. Translators often report difficulties in finding equivalents in other languages that reflect the wordplay, double meanings, and poetic nuances of the original.

Key words: Shakespeare, poetry, Shakespearean period, literary traditions, barriers, challenges.

William Shakespeare is widely regarded as one of the greatest writers in the English language. His works have been translated into numerous languages and adapted for the stage and screen more than those of any other playwright. His plays, written more than 400 years ago, are set in the distant past, in war-torn countries ruled by powerful kings, and feature characters from a wide variety of social classes. In his lifetime, Shakespeare's works were performed in public theaters and royal courts by all-male casts. The language of Shakespeare includes many words, phrases, idiomatic expressions, and rhetorical devices that are no longer in common use. Shakespeare also frequently manipulated syntax for poetic or dramatic effect. His poetry covers a wide range of topics, including love, death, time, and beauty, and employs thematically cohesive metaphors, motifs, and poetic forms.

Shakespeare's language is a particularly difficult language to translate because it is a language "overloaded with the sunrise of time, a timescape neglected by all save a few transcendent poets" and "rich in suggestiveness" and "beyond belief" (Leonard, 2012). There is a fresh awareness in twentieth-century criticism and scholarship regarding the linguistic texture or nature of Shakespeare's language and its particular import (Bistué, 2017). There exists a predominant model or notion of how such a

language as “contemporary English” may be imitated in translation, which must be construed by taking its full relevance vis-a-vis the original Shakespearean texts. There must unfold a complicated set of discernible linguistic, stylistic, rhetorical and poetic effects and devices responsible for giving rise to such a peculiarity in Shakespearean language. It is the proposal to approach the following exploration on how Shakespeare’s language, regarded as a “stylistically-orientated” or “exclusively-structured” rhetoric and poetics of linguistic devices in terms of tropic formations, figures of speech, modality and styles, may lend itself to questions of translation difficulties especially in the light of multilingual translations. A general, albeit brief, textual survey of the three well-known Shakespearean works in Arabic translation, of the translation equivalents in Arabic of the linguistic texture of the say-the-same-nothingness stylistic or poetics paradigm in its multiple heterogenous formations, amplification-metamorphoses, derivational transformations, mirrored transmogrification shifts and built-up-unsupported fictitious narrational creativity formations and poetics, and of the methodological translative working strategy adopted in partially constraining such a peculiarity of Shakespearean language in translation to question or language shifts so as to account for such a particular form of language as time-language in translation, are hoped to serve as a worthwhile contribution.

Translation is usually not only a linguistic transfer of a text from a source language into a target language, but it involves a transfer of culture, values, format, and even thoughts (Bistué, 2017). This is especially the case when translating Shakespeare’s works. Shakespeare’s works are viewed as a world heritage; hence, special attention needs to be paid to rendering them into other languages. However, this responsibility is not easy, for several factors interact to create a challenging environment for the translator. No one would deny that there are certain characteristics that make Shakespeare’s works unique and sometimes even untranslatable. These characteristics can loosely be grouped under three headings, namely linguistic, cultural, and stylistic. The language Shakespeare used is considered one of the obstacles to appreciating his works (for Translation & Literary Studies & Ismail Omar, 2020). Firstly, Shakespeare wrote with a special variety of English known as Early Modern English, or the English Renaissance, which is different from the English of today. This variety of English contains special features such as a fixed word order, the non-use of auxiliary verbs in negative sentences, and the use of some words that are now obsolete. Secondly, there are several linguistic devices that add a special

dimension to Shakespeare's work; for example, puns, which are highly complex plays on words that rely on the different senses of words. Shakespeare's works contain many puns which are sometimes difficult, if not impossible, to render into the target language. Translators engaged in translating poetry must be competent in two linguistic systems (the source language and the target language) but also have detailed knowledge about poetic forms and devices used in both. They need to find equivalent words within the semantic, morpho-syntactic, and prosodic structures of the translated languages. In addition to finding equivalent words, following the structure at the metrical level, or more simply called prose translation, would have severe consequences such as breaking a metrical scheme or changing the length of the verses in a way that the musicality will be destroyed and which will be highly perceived. In other words, such technical and rigorously followed translations of poetry would normally manipulate the structure to the less poetic means of expression, i.e. prose translation. On the other hand, strict compliance to form would restrict the translator severely and might equally have some unintended consequences such as a completed translation that is barely comprehensible. Although it can be concluded that it is very difficult if not impossible to find a perfect translation of Shakespeare, it is important to try. Todorov (1999) gives four forms of encounter in seeking to capture the essence of the original text: direct translation, which does not really occur; 'creative' translation, which is based on interpretation and not on prior text; co-creation together with the original creator; and transposition into another medium. This last is of course something to which Shakespeare's theatre has been subjected, but translation from one linguistic system to another is similar in that the creation of the new work is made from a prior one. Frequently Umberto Eco's (2003) concept of 'translation' has been understood in its broadest sense, one that includes adaptations, renditions and 'versions', while rejection of a rendering may lead to dismissal in many instances of one discipline or the other. Nevertheless, such a broad concept of a 'translation' excludes clearly edited renditions of translation classics with a stylometric analysis based on the notion that a text written in the same style must have been preserved in translation, however capacious a notion of 'translation' may be taken.

Cosmetico-historico portraits of translators and their widely ranging works often appear in the last volumes of encyclopedias and history of literature. All sorts of facts more or less directly connected with the actual translations of particular texts have been collected in such encyclopedic 'translations', reviews of reviews, and catalogues de luxe (Bistué, 2017). Moreover, the more broadly a text is defined, the more

gradations it must possess. Literary ‘illegitimate’ translations, as institutionalized social constructs, were partly motivated by the supposed inauthenticity of perceived low culture in the Renaissance or even in the classical period. The modern scholarly translations represent the highest degree of authenticity as opposed to the incremental translations of different periods. However, strict definitions are frequently followed by very unfitting classifications. Quite radically opposite reasons for excluding scholarly works from the universe of translations in vernaculars have been put forward: either unambiguously and gratuitously dismissing them as translations of ‘translations’ or regarding them as text translations in their own right from a different diachronic perspective quite different from the previous one. Nonetheless, institutional intermediaries are given the utmost care and attention.

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