Problems of Translating Postmodern Texts

Rusudan Khomeriki

Abstract

This paper focuses on examining the distinctive characteristics of postmodern texts from other texts, and, therefore, the problems that translators face in the process of translating postmodern texts, including the identification of intertextual links by the translator and methods of transferring them in translation text. Translation of postmodern texts is a difficult task because, firstly, it means that the translator must identify the texts with which the source text creates an "intertextual dialogue". On the other hand, the translator must find adequate techniques for transferring the dialogues in the translation in a proper way. The study attempts to define a translation strategy that preserves the vertical context of the source text in the translation.

Keywords: Intertext, translation strategy, game, quotations, death of the author, carnival, irony.

Introduction

It is obvious that the translation of any text, regardless of the literary directions, firstly, must comply with the requirements of the original text by the content and artistic values. In the case of a postmodern text, additionally, the translation should take into account the peculiarities of the translation forms, signs, and symbols that characterize postmodernism.

A postmodern novel is a metatext, repeating old and parodying familiar topics, creating collages, applications, collecting and gathering knowledge. A postmodern novel enables readers to be entertained and amused through the game provided in the text. The novel is dualized both in form and in content. Thus, it is at the same time: innovative and traditional, comic and tragic, old and new, deep and superficial, which marks its double coding.

The selection and use of linguistic means is based on the ideal-artistic position of the writer. While translating the artistic work, it is important to identify the position of the writer, which creates the general atmosphere of the product and determines the aesthetic value of the whole work. The artistic position of the writer is shaped by his own outlook on life, the writer's

native and world literary traditions, literary influences, current events in the modern world, the writer's homeland, the general level of culture, the writer's biography, and others. All these moments are significantly reflected in the work of the writer. Therefore, a qualified translator must be familiar and take into consideration the above factors, as well as their influence on the specific translated work (Panjikidze, 1999: 80-81).

The translator has the task to present the concept of the text in conditions of pluralism of ideas and also in the absence of any general ideas. The problem of pluralism in the postmodern gaming discourse is that the idea is not directly dependent on the interpretation of the subject, but it fluctuates in the text itself, and each interpreter perceives a variety of these gaming elements differently. Thus, the interpretation of the text goes through several stages: the author's interpretation of the text, interpreting the content of the text by the translator, and finally interpreting the translation by another subject.

Aims and Scope

The present study examined the distinctive characteristics of postmodern texts from other texts, and therefore takes into consideration the problems that translators face in the process of translating postmodern texts. This also includes the identification of intertextual links by the translator and methods of transferring them in translation text. The study approached the literature as a multi-dimensional phenomenon, which addressed both theoretical and applied research.

Methodology

This is a qualitative research study using a content analysis, and it is appropriate to the exploratory nature of the research.

Difficulties of Translation and their Solution Methods

Translation of postmodern work is a real challenge for translators. The reorganization of the linguistic space in the postmodern era has had a significant impact on the traditional translation system. To understand the result of these influences more specifically, it is necessary to analyze the problems faced by the translator in the translation process.

The first feeling while reading a postmodern work, which has the reader, is uncertainty. Hence, whether or not he/she finds the right way to escape from this uncertainty and chaos is dependent on the work done by the translator. A translator is, above all, a reader, but with greater obligations and responsibilities than other readers. Therefore, the translator must first identify and determine the correct solution and then provide readers with the accuracy of the task in order to be able to find precise answers in the context of postmodern pluralism. Most importantly, the translator must have the highest linguistic competence in any case.

The Main Features of Postmodern Texts

An important feature of postmodernism is the **game**. Postmodernism plays with forms, signs, discourses, various codes of epoch, styles, and trends. The author plays with both text and readers. Playing with the word gives more opportunity to search and find new meanings of the word, which it acquires, in this game process. The translator plays an important role in understanding and analyzing the postmodernist text. The author leaves the playing field and starts watching the development from the outside, as if he is excluded and does not even create a literary text. This appears in the form of a character and reminds the readers and other characters about himself/herself. Obviously, all of these are artificial and the author creates the text as the rules of the games. The translator, like the postmodernist writer, is absolutely free in the process of creativity and self-expression. Regardless of what strategy the translator chooses, the main task is to deliver the nature of the game to readers as it is in the original text. The strategy the translator chooses to achieve this goal depends on his personal decision.

The main task for the translator is to identify the elements of the **game**. Postmodernism offers a different textual structure, which, first of all, is connected with the deliberate violation of language norms by the author. For a translator, the source text language is usually not his/her native language. Therefore, it is difficult to recognize deliberate violations of language norms and transfer them into translation so as not to lose the concept and not use the linguistic adaptation method, which will lead to an "improvement" of the source text. This would be totally against postmodernism. It is noteworthy that the translator, in order to correctly interpret the game units, is required to get involved in the game itself. The German philosopher, Hans-Georg Gadamer, in his fundamental work "Truth and Method" indicates that the game considers the involvement of the participants and the audience in it. "For players, this means that they do not just perform their roles, as in any other game, but they

play this role for the audience. The form of their participation in the game is determined not by the fact that they are fully involved in it, but because they play their roles in unity with the audience watching the game" (Gadamer, 1988: 155).

The difference between the player and the viewer is that the player, unlike the viewer who watches from outside, does not know the rules of the game. The task of the translator is to play the role of the player and the spectator, and ultimately to take a middle position between these two subjects.

Among the critics of literature, remains the question of discussion whether an adequate and complete translation of the "game" texts is possible. Understanding the adequate and equivalent translation of a linguistic game is very conditional regarding a particular author and a specific text. Linguistic game always has a specific goal. To measure the quality of identity of the goal is almost impossible in the translated text and in extreme cases – it is subjective. Even experienced translators who are quite versed in the nuances of the foreign language find it difficult to feel the gaming text. This is because they have different associations and sense of humor, as the perception of the facts of violation of language norms are largely caused by the native language mechanisms. To find out how adequately linguistic games are transferred, one of the methods is to determine a translation strategy and systematize translational transformation. The translation strategy includes developing the essence of the plan and combining translation methods by the translator in the work process.

The translator should focus on the implementation of the author's individual style while translating, maintaining the number and sequence of "game units", as well as the quality of the linguistic game. The translator should also be able to make the most of the transformations of the source text and express the associative perception of the author. As a result, the reader becomes closer to the writer in the interpretation and perception of the translation text.

The postmodern text always represents an **intertext**. Text, directly or indirectly, indicates the connection between other texts with various intertextual methods. The term "intertextuality" was founded in literary theory by the French researcher, Julia Kristeva, in the 60s of the 20th century. She turned to the concept of "dialogism" of the Russian formalist Mikhail Bakhtin in her own theory. M. Bakhtin believes that in all sentences, we hear echoes of other words.

Since language is a social phenomenon, the words we use are fulfilled with the intentions and accents of others.

The chrestomathive interpretation of Intertext belongs to Roland Bart, who says that "each text represents a new tissue which is "knitted" from older quotations. Cultural symbols, formulas, excerpts of rhythmic structures, fragments of social idioms, etc. - are text that absorbs all these elements and everything is mixed in the texts. Intertextuality as a necessary preliminary condition for the existence of any text cannot be brought to the problems of sources and influences. It is the general field of the subconscious and automatic quotations and anonymous formulas (the origin of which rarely can be found) without quotation marks. Later, texts were considered as not only literary works but also human consciousness, culture, society, and even history (Gaprindashvili & Mireishvili, 2011: 266).

Intertextuality in the artistic work can be presented in different ways: quotations by the characters of other works, "borrowing" of artistic faces, analogy, allusions, reminiscences, and other types of hints. Therefore, when translating postmodern texts, one of the main tasks of translators is to recognize different types of Intertextual connections, decode them, and then transfer them into the language of translation.

The difficulty for the translator is, on the one hand, to identify works for which this text creates an "intertextual dialogue," and on the other hand, to find ways to deliver the dialogue to the readers. However, identifying postmodernist intertexts and sources does not necessarily mean that the author's key to his/her attitude or the core idea will be found. The text should be translated according to the nature of the intertexts in it.

Sometimes, the readers' lack of experiences of the necessary background knowledge of the translated text prevents a sufficient understanding of the intertextual links and the postmodern text in general. Background knowledge includes specific sociocultural information which characterizes nationalities or nations. Also, it is assimilated by their representatives and is reflected in the language of the society. The task of the translator is to provide the reader of another culture with all the necessary knowledge that forms the background of the translated material and which is necessary to create a vertical context and access to the cultural space of the original text. Therefore, when translating postmodern texts, translator's **comments** are important for creating this vertical context. This helps the reader to see more clearly the realities and intertextual connections in the text, define the codes in the text, and the vertical

context itself. The translator's comments give an opportunity to the readers for a variety of interpretations of the text and at the same time is a continuation of the text. The translator's comments can be purely informative, dry, or vice versa. Additionally, the translator's attitude and reaction to a specific event can be easily read by the audience and can even give direction to the reader's opinion.

In order to adequately translate the intertext, the audience to which this intertext is directed must be well studied and defined by the translator. Proper audience assessment gives the translator the ability to accurately determine the translation tools. For example, well-known encyclopedic knowledge, in contrast to linguistic and ethnographic elements, does not require special approaches to translation. Intertextual elements that are represented by intercultural connections must first be found by a translator which requires not only lingua-cultural knowledge, but also concrete text analysis.

In postmodern texts which are full of intertextual references, quotations and allusions, intertextual type comments are also often found. Translation of such works often resembles serious philological or historical research. Indicating the sources of information mentioned in the comments is also a very important part of the translator's work.

Numerous studies on intertextual connections have demonstrated the significant impact, which the semantics of the text has on the **quotations** involved in the text. The quotation provides a new understanding of the text and it becomes a significant part of the semantic structure of the text. Therefore, when translating postmodern texts, the main task of the translator is the recognition of various types of intertextual links, decoding and accurately transferring them into the translation language.

It is also worthy to note that in some cases the purpose of the quotation is not related to any intentions of the author. Often the author does not even indicate the source and does not use quotation marks. A citation can simultaneously remind readers of several authors and find more links than the author could have imagined.

In postmodern texts, the border between reality and fiction is becoming increasingly unclear, everything — art, history, or reality — is just text. This led to ignoring the creator, which is known as the So-called "**Death of the author**."

The essence of the "death of the author" consists in the idea of autonomous existence of the text and independence from the author's personality. According to the French literary critic and philosopher, R. Bart, the author dies after the birth of the text, and the text continues to live in the minds of each reader. This means that the main focus has moved on the reader, which has granted freedom of text interpretation.

The concept proposed by R. Bart stems from the essence of modern art, which has acquired a game nature. He compares the author with the rewriter, who constantly imitates what was written earlier, and emphasizes that even this text does not represent the initial text. Therefore, the writer turns to the compilation, parody, and stylization of already written texts. "Disparate to the writer, the scripter does not carry the passions, feelings, or impressions, but only the endless vocabulary, by which he writes constantly and continually. Life is only an imitation of the book, and the book is kitted by signs and something that has already been forgotten and the process is endless" (Bart, 2002).

Regardless of intertextual connections, the translator must identify the author's **individual style,** his special approach to language games, and the perception of language games in a certain way. The linguistic game exceeds the frame of the linguistic phenomena and turns into a game text. It includes the entire game system, which defines the relationship between the reader and the text.

One of the characteristics of postmodern art is a **carnival**. This term belongs to Mikhail Bakhtin. He describes this event as follows: "A carnival is a show that does not divide participants into performers and spectators. All participants of the carnival are direct participants, they share the carnival action. People do not just watch the carnival and do not even play a role in it, but they do live there as long as the rules of the carnival exist, that means - their life in that period is the carnival itself. The carnival life is different from the whole way of ordinary life, a kind of life "inside out" and "world upside-down"("monde à l'envers"). During the carnival, the rules, prohibitions, and restrictions that determine the course and order of ordinary or non-carnival life are annulled; in the first place, the hierarchical formation and the associated fear, modesty, ideology, etiquette, etc., are abolished. This includes everything that is caused by social hierarchical and all other inequality (including aging). All distances between people are abolished, and a special carnival category takes effect - a delightful familiar contact between people. This is a very

important moment of the carnival viewpoint. People who are divided in life by strong hierarchical barriers in the carnival sphere freely communicate with each other.

One of the main ways to express postmodernist carnavalization is **irony**. It is readied between lines and sometimes it is scattered throughout the entire text. Therefore, while translating irony, the translator faces some difficulties. It is not easy to transfer the irony from one culture to another and be sure that it will be adequately perceived by representatives of another culture. In addition, expressions of irony in different cultures often do not coincide with each other. They differ from each other in form, content, and functions; therefore, they are difficult to convey by other language means. Finally, the irony can go unnoticed by the translator, which often occurs due to the lack of the necessary basic knowledge and erudition of the translator. When the translator cannot give relevant attention to the irony, which carries important information on cultural grounds, functional-semantic "emptiness" arises in the language of the translation. The postmodernist worldview has twisted and is correlated closely with each other's irony and carnavalization. This has formed into a "total irony", which means mocking everything. There is also no boundary between the purity and the sin, the beauty and the ugliness. This mockery does not serve to form new idea or renew old one. It destroys everything that has seemed to be solid, true, truthful, and unadulterated.

Postmodern art - both fiction and other spheres of art - is imbued with the will to reflect other texts in its own space. Above all, intertextuality supports reflecting art in a mirror, which is visible, easily identifiable, and sometimes hidden. Therefore, it is hard to guess.

Postmodernism Mirror

Fiction is a mirror where a thousand metamorphosis of reality, political, social, economic, and cultural context are reflected. The mirror depicting the postmodern reality is broken and its pieces fragmentally appears as familiar and unfamiliar reflected faces to the viewer or reader through the game. "**Mirror** is the main weapon of postmodernism, but this mirror is not directed to the outside world, as it is in artistic realism, but directed to other mirrors, to "catch" reflected reality from mirror to mirror" (Karumidze, 2010: 2).

Postmodernism mirror and reflection in the mirror is different from each other, not because the mirror reflects poorly, but because there is no object of reflection - the objective reality. The writer by mirrors reflected in one another points to the reflected texts, most of which

differs from traditional narrative and are a parody of a history or a story. Mirrors reflected in each other form a simulacrum. The mirror, which should cause the reader a natural feeling that he or she will see objective reality, acts contrary to the reader - emerges disappointment and creates a puzzle - looking for answers in familiar or unfamiliar texts and stories. The same problem is faced by the translator, who must discover random symbols that do not reflect reality. The translator should study the text deeply; the importance of the individual sections in the context and find out what the author meant to prevent the translated text from the polysemy of the original text. The correct understanding of a literary work by a translator requires knowledge, as well as the search and discovery of artistic codes. Adequate translation of allusive special names is another important issue. In the postmodern texts, allusive special names have three basic expressions. These are: "**Talk Names**", "**Literary Names**," and **"Name-Symbols".** The translator must determine the method of transferring special names to the translation in accordance with the number and function of their connotative connections (transliteration and transcription, transposition, translation by tracing and semi-tracing, equivalent).

While translating postmodern literature, the importance of maintaining the basic concept of special names is very high. How allusive special names will be fully deciphered depends firstly on the translator, who is the intermediary between the author and the reader and then on the reader's knowledge and literary sensitivity.

In translating **"talk names"**, translators often make mistakes, using a transliteration and a transcription that interferes with contents expression. In certain cases the translator applies the comment, and this method is more appropriate.

However, translating **"literary names"** is easier**.** These types of names are used when an object resembles another literal character. Nonetheless, there are other types of problems that are associated with the reader's knowledge and recognition of the author or the work, which indicates allusion. While translating more familiar names, it is advisable to use the transliteration method. In the case of lesser known names, the translation should choose between the commenting method, the tracing, and the equivalent translation.

The **"name-symbols"** may be used for imitation or vice versa to express irony. The transliteration method is usually used in translating the "name-symbols" in historical and

cultural aspects, whereas the "name-symbols" expressed in the abbreviations should be interpreted by comments.

In addition, the factor of the genre is one of the decisive for the translation of the original work. The author of postmodernism mixes different genres and seeks to create new genres in this way. Postmodern artistic texts are a like **collage** in which integrity is broken and the story is fragmented. In the postmodern text, we find a synthesis of works of completely different genres, characters, and content. Traditionally, the translator tries to re-create the original genre and stylistic features while translating; although there are examples of deliberate transformation of the original architextural links. It is about changing style and discourse of genre of the work (Nesterova, 2005: 202). The task of the translator is to reveal various genres, styles, and discourses in the work and transfer them into translation language in such a way as to ensure the preservation of compositional and stylistic features and corresponding language means.

Findings

The translator may encounter intertextual links in the original text, which are widely known in the language and culture of translation. If the translation of indicating text in the original text already exists in the target language, the translator can use the translation of the previous text. However, if there are several versions of the translation, he can choose the best-rated translation that will help the reader to identify intertextual connections.

The task is more difficult when translating lesser known national texts. In this case, the translator can be helped by evaluating criticisms and literature on the material, where he may encounter information about these types of links, and then find them and share by comments with readers.

Conclusion

Thus, in the process of translating postmodern texts, the main task of the translator is to help the reader to see the intertextual links and restore the vertical context. Therefore, the original text and the translation, how close or distant they are to each other, depend on a number of factors such as: the text genre, the translation method and strategy, background knowledge of

the translator and, most importantly, the recognition and understanding of the accuracy of the intertextual connections and the meanings between the lines.

Based on the above, it can be concluded that the translation of postmodern works, in contrast to the translation of other types of texts, other than literary and creative activities, requires serious historical, linguistic, and cultural research. According to found materials, the translator must fill the readers' background knowledge. This will help them to solve the author's intentions and maintain his view on the vertical context of the text.

While translating postmodern texts in order to achieve absolute equivalence, translators can give themselves the freedom to choose the language. This means that, in their opinion, they can choose the best language, which describes the author's concept and idea. In general, postmodernist authors apply to diversity of interpretation and accordingly, while working on postmodern texts, translators are also allowed to be relatively independent in the creative process.

In conclusion, we turn to the words of the Italian writer, semiotics and philosopher Umberto Eco: "The perfect translation means translation language should be neither more nor less than is indicated in the source text" (Eco, 2006: 269).

References

Panjikidze, D. (1999). *The issues of the history of Georgian translation.* Tbilisi.

Gadamer, H. (1988). *Truth and method / translation from German society.* Ed. and entry Art. B.N. Bessonov: MoscowProgress (Russian version).

Bakhtin, M. (1975). *Questions of literature and aesthetics.* Moscow (Russian version).

Gaprindashvili, N. & Mireishvili, M. (2011). *The basis of literary studies.* Tbilisi.

Bart, R. (2002). *The death of the author.* Translated by Malkhaz Kharbedia. Sjani, III, Tbilisi.

Bakhtin, M. (2008). *Carnivalized literature.* Translated by Tamar Nutsubidze. Sjani,9, Tbilisi.

Karumidze, Z. (2010). *Post-soviet Georgia and postmodernism.* Arili, Tbilisi.

Nesterova, N. (2005). *Text and translation in the mirror of modern philosophical paradigms.* Perm: Perm State Technical University (Russian version).

Eco, W. (2006). *Say almost the same: translation experience.* St. Petersburg (Russian version).

HOW TO CITE THIS PAPER

Khomeriki, R. (2019). Problems of Translating Postmodern Texts. International Humanities Studies, 6(1), 27-38.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rusudan Khomeriki, PhD. Candidate, School of Humanities of St. Andrew, The First-Called Georgian University, Georgia. rusohom@yahoo.com