Chapter-2

Creativity, Interpretive Community and its discussion in relation to translation studies

Introduction

Tracing literature/research available so far on the topic, this chapter discusses various notions of creativity during the process of translation. Besides, it would try to examine the nature and function of reader response theory with its relation to interpretive community, if presented or vice-versa.

2.1 Creativity and Translation

From the very beginning translation has strong allies with creativity though it used to be considered as a secondary creativity, author’s creativity being the first one. Many attempts have been made to juxtapose how authors look at the language in literature i.e. as a means to create and how translators look at the language i.e. as means to translate. In doing so, a revealing factor comes into play: the complex process of how humans use/manipulate language for creative purposes.

The difference between authors’ way of dealing with language and that of the translators’ is that in the former language is the medium through which facts, fiction and philosophy of life can be narrated/sung whereas in the latter case language is the source using which (nearly) the same facts, fiction and philosophy can be narrated/sung but in a new language.
Any comparison between two creative processes is injustice to both; the author and the translator. Simply, their primary functions are different: an author writes a text and a translator translates it. However, there are some obvious overlapping aspects due to language being the common phenomenon. Translators have a readymade text as a source to create another text in another language which would be taken as a literary text undoubtedly. It clearly indicates two paradoxes; first is that the translator has to remain within the contours of the text on one hand and s/he has to go out of the same contours creatively. One is related to the contents of the text and other is corresponding to the manner in which the process is to be carried out. Readers approach a translated text as an original text as they do not have any option but to read the text in their language. Therefore, it is but obvious that translated text, from the perspective of translator, should cater to all the LITERARY/CREATIVE expectations. Even if we do not take it as a prescription or normative practice, it is an agreement amongst writers, translators and readers.

It is in this context, creativity is a prerequisite to literature and translation as well. In the following section, we are going to discuss how the aspects of creativity differ and overlap with the matrix of literature and translation.

2.1.1 Creativity and Art of Language: Literature

Literature is the only art form wherein the medium of creation and the medium of appreciation is the same: language. Language is a priori condition for human thinking, how do we think otherwise if not in language! Not only this, but language is the way we express our feelings and ideas: two most important aspects of human life represented profoundly in literature. Language operates at various levels:
thinking, interaction, social etc. In this sense, no study of literature can undermine
the role of language in making the ‘experience’ of writing and reading literature an
aesthetic one.

We have a number of poets, writers, critics and philosophers who have thought about
how art of language is the most important aspect in literature. Some have seen
literature as the “best words in the best orders” (Coleridge) whereas a theorist, like
Bhamah, in Indian tradition has a semantic view that “poetry is inseparable union of
words and meaning”. On the similar lines, we have R L Stevenson who espoused
that “difficulty in literature is not to write but to write what you mean”. Writers like
Oscar Wilde opined that “no literature is good literature or bad literature but well
written literature or badly written literature”. On the other hand we have critics and
poets who talked about how readers interpret language-literature (Roland Barthes,
Wolfgang Iser, Stanley Fish etc.)

For an author, then, it is vital to use language in such way that s/he enjoys while
composing the text, reader enjoys while reading it, critic enjoys criticising and
translator enjoys while translating. Language being the most flexible category for
human mind, there are all chances of multiple meanings and interpretations. Taking
this aspect in the most positive manner, it is expected from the authors to compose
the text in such a way (i.e. use language in such a way) that it allows multiple
interpretations. It is precisely in this respect we are considering literature as an art of
language and not as a science of it. Science believes in structural finality and
exhaustiveness of meanings which goes against the nature of language to some
extent and literature in all manners.
What is creativity? Or What is creative way of thinking? There are various views, opinions and experiments regarding how to define creative process. We have interesting observation by Rogers, he believes:

the ability to play spontaneously with ideas, colors, shapes, relationships - to juggle elements into impossible juxtapositions, to shape wild hypotheses, to make the given problematic, to express the ridiculous, to translate from one form to another, to transform into improbable equivalents. ... It is as though out of the wasteful spawning of thousands of possibilities there emerges one or two evolutionary forms with the qualities which give them a more permanent value. (Rogers 1976:301).

In this sense, creativity is a complex process and that is why it is difficult to have nomenclature of creative ideas. Creative way of thinking, then, is the ability to play with elements and concepts and is associated with the openness and lack of rigidity.

How do we really understand ‘creative use of language’? Is it simply juxtaposition of two words/sentences having opposite connotations? Or is it, as Coleridge says, best order-arrangement- of the best words-diction? These questions have been interrogated by many critics without any final conclusion. If we try to understand properly literature written so far, we can deduce some features of language used creatively. Creative use of language aims at

- Surprising/amaze the readers
- Entertain them through surprise
- Giving fresh/new meaning to words
- Providing the most appropriate words and sentence pattern for the corresponding feelings/ideas which readers otherwise do not have
- Elevating readers to some kind of sublime experience (Longinus)
• Rendering emotional and aesthetic experience etc.

These features are observations. It is not that if someone wants to write a novel, s/he has these features in mind; these features would come automatically and inevitably in a genuinely creative work of art. The appreciation and interpretation of any kind is primarily based on these features. Moreover, each feature is independently creative but there is always an overlapping/connection among these features and that is something which cannot be taught. We have seen how few words and sentences have capacity to transform the way we think, the way world thinks. Creativity is the word to describe ‘how’ of these transformations.

2.1.2 Creativity and Art of Language: Translation

Translation is yet another form of art wherein language is used creatively. As it is quite clear that unlike a writer, translator deals with the language at three levels of language. First, translator interprets the language of the source text and, as we discussed in the previous section, literary text allows multiple interpretations. Secondly he takes along the most desired meaning to the target language and uses that language creatively so as to make it read like the original text. Thirdly, the translator struggles with equivalents in both the languages so it is her/his thinking of language that s/he has to deal with creatively. In fact in ancient times, translation and creative writing were not considered as separate processes in India. India being a multilingual country from ancient times was born and brought up with translation as an inherent process of development and transmission of knowledge as well as exhibition of creativity. With Colonial Rule, translation became an important tool for survival as well as rebellion against the British. With advanced technology,
translation has become a lucrative career option in spite of the fact that there are machine translators available. The fact that the machine translator does not suffice the need of translation is one of the ideas that stress the importance of creativity in the act of translation. Unless and until there is human intervention in the process of translation mere mechanical equivalence cannot give desired results.

There are two ways through which creativity is manifested: (1) when we approach the text from a source language perspective we tend to compare creativity and (2) when readers feel presence/absence of creative elements.

Time and again translators are burdened with ‘authenticity’ and ‘originality’. What are these terms if not representation of creativity? Because in any case contents remain the same but it is the manner in which these aspects are presented are supposed to be creative. There is a general tendency to approach translation with the idea of being ready for some loss in the process. None approaches translation with the expectation of some kind of addition/expansion through it.

Though being simplistic, to Wilss, translation is a re-creative linguistic activity. Language being a product of cultural reality, translation is not just a linguistic but cultural application. In this regard, translator has to be vibrant in terms of her/his exposure to both the cultures historically and otherwise. The possibility of translation taking place amongst different languages of different nations, major and minor, widely spoken and less used, shows that all the languages have a kind of universality in them that allows the translators to express every idea of one language into another but with an introduction of newness in the form of his/her creativity. The translator is
supposed to be well-versed not only with the languages but also with cultural concepts so that there is no misrepresentation of the SL to the target readers. Hence, the translator carries a huge responsibility, along with all the Post-colonial writers, of explaining to the international audience the new and the unknown.

It is not only one kind of creative process but there are various types of creativity at work. For example, Neubert (1997) describes translational creativity as derived creativity, in that all translations are derivable from a source text: “A translation is not created from nothing; it is woven from a semantic pattern taken from another text, but the threads - the TL [target language] linguistic forms, structures, syntactic sequences - are new” (1997:17). Hence, there is writer’s creativity which cannot be overlooked under the pretext of creative translation or trans-creation. On the other hand, translator has to weave her/his creativity along with the creativity of the author and the kind of creativity which is followed by the target language culture readership. Sometimes it might happen that the translator, for the sake of sustaining the original meaning and style of the author, translates within nearly the same framework of creativity but because such kind of creativity is not followed by the target language readership, translated text might not be successful or readers are conscious of the translator’s efforts.

If a translator fails to translate the text creatively, readers are likely to read the translation for the contents only. For example, when certain Prize winning texts are translated for the sake of its wider circulation and without much creative concerns, readers read the text because they do not have access to the source language. This establishes that translation as an activity should be, like literature, by choice or
voluntary activity. As writer wants her/his text to be read as an experience in itself, translations too should be read in the similar manner. Therefore, no two processes of translation by the same translator, like writer, are identical because s/he has to find out multiple methods to bring about the creativity. As Neubert says

In the course of achieving something new, mediators [translators and interpreters] have to resort to novel ways of encoding an old message. They are forced to creativity because the means of the TL are not identical with those of the SL [source language]. ... To arrive at an adequate TL version, new resources have to be tapped. In these efforts, creativity plays a prominent role. Creative uses of the target language are the result of the various problem-solving strategies applied to any piece of SL text. (Neubert 1997:19)

These multiple modalities help to arrive at the creative process and production of good translation. Nida (1996), in discussing the notion of a “fully adequate” translation, suggests that translation is neither a science nor an independent discipline. It is a creative technology with perceptions from different disciplines. The beauty is that in order to make translation a creative process, translators amalgamate and distort the apparent linguistic norms, as these language norms seem to be flexible for all creative purposes.

2.2. Interpreting the Meaning: Literature and Translation

Why do we read literature? All the reasons are preceded by interpretation and finding meaning in the text. Even if that is not the goal, it happens while reading a literary text, at superficial level for instance. Literary critics and translators have developed various approaches and methods of interpreting literature. A critic interprets in order to criticise and appreciate the text whereas a translator interprets in order to translate the text. Some kind of “final meaning” is common in both the cases.
In literature, it is believed that meaning is encoded and translator has to decode it and recode it in another language-code system. The process of ‘decoding’ is called interpretation and the process of ‘translating’ is called ‘recoding’. It is during this process some assumptions are constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed. For example, one of the most obvious assumptions is that there is a final meaning! Another similar assumption is that the final meaning can(not) be recoded successfully in another language!

Good translation is said to be one that decodes the meaning successfully and recodes it creatively, so interpretation plays an important role in the final translation and its reception in the wider readership. Translation is a two-way activity that involves the translator as a reader with the text first and then as the translator who re-writes the text. Another important issue worth considering here is the idea of transference of meaning and translation of meaning. Transference occurs when a TL text has a TL word in its regular TL form, but derives meaning from the SL context and in translation there is replacement of TL meaning for SL meaning. So any theory of translation should differentiate these two processes (Catford 1978: 48).

2.2.1. Interpretive Community and Translation

An attempt is made in this research to usher an interesting area of exploration i.e. interpretive community and its role in translation. The very idea of interpretation brings in the role of psychology, neurology, linguistics, literary theory and criticism,
as these disciplines have rigorously studied the process of interpretation of various forms of language including literature.

The question is **how do we interpret?** Is it drawing conclusions? Interestingly, Chernov finds a strong connection between language comprehension and the human ability to *draw conclusions*, i.e. our ability to predict the implications of a message after having heard part of it, through linguistic, cognitive, situational, and pragmatic *inferences*. According to Chernov, in order for this process to succeed in the highly complex simultaneous interpreting situation, the message must contain redundancy. He seems to believe that while interpreting we keep on comparing the possible equivalents. The struggle is then an internal one in that translator is surrounded by the multiple choices.

The choices are governed by our innate ability to make predictions. These predictions depend on linguistic competence and interpretations ability. Chernov has developed a model for predicting probability in simultaneous interpreting, based on an increased redundancy from the i) syllabic level to the ii) word level and on the levels of iii) clause, iv) sentence, v) message, and vi) situation (communication). Final translation is sum total of these levels and predications about them. There is constant feedback and interaction among the various levels which will correspond to the expected creativity in translation.

There are two kinds of interpretations according to Chernov: objective and subjective. Objective or external interpretation refers to the language, i.e. to linguistic factors, while subjective interpretation is developed from the inferences
made by the interpreter on the basis of her/his knowledge of the source language culture, various situations, the person/people for whom s/he is interpreting, the subject (discipline), the time (when the text is read and translated), the speaker’s target group, intentions etc. Objective interpretations can be taken as dry materials whereas subjective interpretations deal with the psychological and cultural aspects of the translator. Eugene Nida was the first to introduce the idea of readership in translation, which was earlier identified with the translator or with an invented person (Nida 1964: 160).

In his article “Translation as a decision process” (1967:1171), Jirí Levý writes:

> From the point of view of the working situation of the translator at any moment of his work, translating is a decision process - a series of consecutive situations - moves, as in a game - situations imposing on the translator the necessity of choosing among a certain (and very often exactly definable) number of alternatives.

The dialogue on the process of translation has moved from just literary and linguistic aspects to rigorously complex psychological phenomenon. Critiquing the view Bistra Alexieva (1998) argues that Levý’s approach to translating as a decision process is valid for all types of translating and interpreting, and she develops a model for augmentation of decision making in consecutive interpreting. The decision making process is a higher order work than actual translation or let us say translation is a product of the process called decision making. (Alexieva 1998:186-187). This decision making process, during translation, affects the interpretations and the conclusions that are drawn. Interpretation is a lively process on a static entity called a text in certain sense. Interpretation and translation explore the various levels of text and make it dynamic in the target language culture. In this context, we need to see
this entire process as one: **decision making-interpretation-translation**. There are
two interpreters, a translator-reader and the reader of the translated text.

We have Alessandra Riccardi (1998) asking a more interesting question: **Is the
interpreter creative?** She contemplates

If the interpreting process is considered a problem-solving activity where the source text is
the problem and the target-text the solution, then it follows that it is the interpreting mode,
the fact that that interpreting is “on-line”, that leads to a creative process. From a limited set
of cues or elements continuously unfolding, with no interruption or thinking longer than a
few seconds, the interpreter has to come to a correct conclusion or be able to anticipate the
message in such a way that he can organise his language output correctly. In doing so, s/he
is not simply repeating something said by somebody else, but also engaging in a creative or

When the source language is seen as a problem and translation as solution of the
problem, interpretation is taken as creative task. Creativity operates between chaos
and order of various choices (linguistic and otherwise) that the translator faces. Some
of its features are: avoiding concluding sentences and instead transforming the
following source text sentences to subordinate clauses, thereby making it easier to
make corrections; using various sentence restructuring strategies. (Riccardi
1998:178). It is only when translators start discussing the problematic terms; the
need for the theorization arises. “[Translation] is not an isolated act; it is a part of an
ongoing process of intercultural transfer” (Bassnet & Trivedi 1999: 02). Translation
being a complex activity that involves two cultures is not a simple task. It involves a
lot of management and handling which is not innocent, and due to this the TT is
coloured by some amount of subjectivity in the form of creativity, bias, prejudice,
creative gain or betterment etc. The structural linguist Roman Jakobson talks about
three different types of translations from the interpretation point of view:
intralingual, an interpretation of verbal signs with the help of other signs, interlingual is an interpretation of verbal signs with the help of other language and intersemiotic is an interpretation of verbal signs with the help of signs of non-verbal sign system (Jakobson 1959/2004: 139).

There is a lot of literature within translation studies about strategies for the translation of problematic terms and concepts. On the basis of, for example, a collection by Williams (1990) few strategies have been identified for the translation of source language terms:

- equivalence;
- explanation;
- borrowing of new terms,
- neologism
- amalgamation

At various stages, translators use one of these or more of these strategies depending on the nature of the source language text and demand/possibility of the target language culture. How does a translator decide which strategy is to be employed depends solely on the subjective interpretation. The general experience that all translators reveal is that the interpreter who is in the middle of an on-going communicative act does not have time for long analyses and processes. Such interpretative faculty has an important role to play in translation and if this interpretive community can be decoded and some kind of generalized theory is developed, the process of translation can be made more creative and charming.
“Translation can never be a neutral act of repetition: mediation involves transmission but also displacement” (Simon 1999: 66). With the addition of more creativity and charm to the ST, the TT will lose some of its originality and hence the end-product is a new text. The end-product is also influenced by the purpose it is going to serve in the target audience and hence the readership also influences the process of interpretation and creativity. Translation and interpretation are viewed as a conversation between different cultures, where all the different aspects of culture influence the process of communication, and hence the translator is not just an interpreter of languages but also of cultures and value systems.

2.2.2 Interpretive Community and Comparative Translation

Any translation theory deals with the process that takes place between the two languages, viz SL and TL, hence according to Catford, translation theory has always been a part of Comparative Linguistics. (Catford 1978:20). Translation can only happen within two languages and therefore it is a process of interpretation and comparison. The understanding, interpretation, decision making and final product involved in the process of translation use comparison as a tool in order to reach their goal.

What is comparative translation? Milton M. Azevedo’s definition of Comparative Translation states it as something like a sustainable interdisciplinary field that combines elements from literary criticism, translation theory, stylistics, and cognitive linguistics. The discipline of comparative translation is still in its budding stage.
However, its potential has attracted serious scholars, translation theorists, critics, psychologist and even philosophers to venture in the same. Rooted in the idea that any comparison involves assessment, and any assessment is based on comparison, the study aspires to authenticate that the results obtained by certain qualitative (judgmental) and quantitative (formal) translation assessment methods of literary texts are not only comparable but in fact congregating. This finding may be interpreted as an implication of the complementary nature of both approaches to comparative assessment. The process of practical comparative translation can be described as a simple, flexible, genre- and text-type independent formal means of comparative translation so that formal features of the source text are preserved in its translations.

According to James S. Holmes, **Comparative Translation** belongs to “descriptive translation studies” (or DTS), a “branch of the discipline which constantly maintains the closest contact with the empirical phenomena under study.” There are three major types of research in DTS, which may be distinguished by their focus as product-oriented, function-oriented, and process-oriented. Product-oriented is that area of research which describes existing translations and is traditionally been an important area of academic research in translation studies. The initiation for this type of study is the description of individual translations, or text-focused translation description. A second phase is that of comparative translation description, in which comparative analyses are made of various translations of the same text, either in a single language or in various languages. Such individual and comparative descriptions provide the materials for surveys of larger quantities of translations, for
instance those made within a specific period, language, and/or text or discourse type. But such descriptive surveys can also be larger in scope, diachronic as well as (approximately) synchronic, and one of the eventual goals of product-oriented DTS might possibly be a general history of translation - however ambitious such a goal may sound at this time.

Comparative translation attempts to deal with a variety of comparisons:

- translation to original (same text)
- translation to translation (same text)
- translation to translation (same original author)
- translation to translation (same translator)

In the present research, we would like to compare two translation of the same text by keeping in mind the role of interpretive community.

**Conclusion**

Translation is, without any doubt, a creative process. Interesting issue is to see the impact of interpretive community on the translator and translation. Interpretive community is the decisive factor in bringing about the literary qualities in totally another language. In the successive chapters, we would try to compare various translations of the same text.
Chapter References and notes


