

Strategies Used in the Translation into Albanian of Allusions in Walt Whitman's Poetry

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Doi:10.5901/mjss.2012.v3n2.327

Abstract: A translator who examines a text with a view to translate it will have a number of concerns. Among them, allusions are likely to become puzzles when they cross a cultural divide. Translating allusions can be a demanding task due to the fact that they simultaneously activate two texts and have specific meanings in the culture and language in which they arise but not necessarily in others. However, the use of allusions by an author shows an expectation that the reader is familiar with the references made, otherwise the effect is lost. Taking this into account, the present study focuses on personal proper noun and key phrase allusions in the poems of the famous American poet Walt Whitman and their translations into Albanian. It aims to investigate how translation strategies would provide the translators, in particular the novice ones, with useful insights concerning intertextual references in general and allusions in particular in order that the translators might find it no more challenging a task. In order to achieve the above mentioned purpose, the personal proper noun and key-phrase allusions in *Leaves of Grass* and their equivalents in the Albanian translation were first identified. Then, Leppihalme's (1997) proposed strategies for the translation of allusions were analyzed. The analysis revealed that the most common strategy for the translation of personal proper nouns was that of 'retention without any guidance' and for key-phrase allusions was that 'literal translation with minimum change'. This is indicative of the translator's wish to be as faithful as possible to the source texts to demonstrate that the allusive language of the original texts and connotations conveyed by them were largely ignored by the translator.

Key words: Intertextuality, allusion, proper noun allusion, key phrase allusion, translation strategies.

1. Introduction

The translation of poetry is known as a very hard and somehow impossible task; it is probably the subject in translation studies that triggers the strongest polemics. Even those who are not specialized in translation often have an opinion on the subject. Keeping the form and stylistic features of a poem from one language into another without distorting the meaning is really difficult to accomplish; moreover, the translator must be able to get the real message and convey it to the TT, he has to be fully aware of the capacity of language to make his message highly effective. The words of the poem surpass their textual denotations; they take new shades of meaning dictated by the poetic context. So the translator has to understand not only the basic elements of a poem such as rhyme, meter and figurative language, but also the allusions which bear connotations, are culture dependent. Abrams (1999) define allusion "as a passing reference, without explicit identification, to a literary or historical person, place or event or to another literary work or passage." Allusion as a kind of intertextuality can be attributed as one of the most powerful figures of speech since it can refer to an external text. Therefore, it can be a rich source of meaning and connotation and can be added to the meaning wealth of a text. One term which is used to describe allusion is 'culture bump', which Leppihalme (1997) defines as follows: "Culture bump occurs when an individual finds himself or herself in different, strange, or uncomfortable situation when interacting with persons of a different culture".

She agrees that when one wants to recognize and translate something rooted strongly in another nation's culture, he/she needs to have much knowledge other than what is seen explicitly; in fact, the understanding of an allusion is prevented by culture unless the receivers are biculturalized, so this cultural barrier should be removed. Allusions are one type of cultural specific items. From this translators' point of view culture-bound or culture specific items are elements of the source text which refer to those elements in the source culture which are peculiar and pertinent to this community and not present in the culture of target community. As

culture specific elements, allusions resist translation rendering them successfully depends largely on the translator's familiarity with their references.

Snell-Hornby (1988) believes that in translation, a culture specific item does not exist of itself but due to nonexistence or the different values of an item in the target language culture; for example, the status of a CSI occurs as a translation problem when one wants to translate the image of "lamb" into a language in whose culture this animal is unknown or, if known, does not have connotations of innocence and helplessness. Snell-Hornby (1988) maintains that the translatability of a text depends on the extent to which the text is embedded in its own specific culture and also on how far apart, with regard to time and space, the ST and TT receivers are.

In the present study, the distance is great: the ST is a collection of American poems which allude to people and events specific to America only. Culturally, then, there is a great distance. Another term used to describe allusion is Intertextuality. Intertextuality is derived from the Latin „intertexto“, first introduced by French semiotician Julia Kristiva in 1966. It subverts the concept of the text as self-sufficient, highlighting the fact that all literary production takes place in the presence of other texts.

Every literary work consists of poetry is situated in the middle of a network of intertextual relations. For Barthes (1977, cited in Allen, 2000), who proclaimed the "death of the author", it is the fact of intertextuality that allows the text to come into being. He notes that any text is a new tissue of past citations which have passed into the text and are redistributed within it. In other words, a literary work is not simply the product of a single author, but of its relationship to other texts. However, based on Hatim and Mason (1997) one should be well aware of the fact that Intertextuality can operate at "any level of text organization" involving phonology, morphology, syntax or semantics and Hatim (1997a) believes that expressions ranges from single words or phrases that have special cultural significance in a given linguistic community at a certain time, to macro-textual conventions and constraints associated with genre, register and discourse.

Therefore, intertextuality encompasses any element (macro- or micro-) that enables readers to identify and derive meaning from the surface features of the text in question by reference to other texts or text features they have previously come across.

Over the past two decades, the theoretical interest in intertextuality has generated a great deal of interesting discussion of the device of literary allusion. Translating allusions can be very challenging due to the fact that the use of allusions presupposes a particular kind of participation on the part of the receivers. Allusions enrich the texts in which used since they are used as literary devices make the texts ambiguous or exaggerated and at the same time they are used to create ambiguity especially when it is not possible to speak directly because of social or political considerations.

It can rightly be said that allusion plays the most important role in persuading its readers to accept what the author says especially when they quote some parts from religious texts or famous literary works.

2. Types of Allusions

Based on Leppihalme (1997) allusions are divided into four thematic groups based on their sources; religious allusion, mythological, literary, and historical allusion. However, the present study is based on the main classification of allusions by Leppihalme.

Leppihalme (1997) makes a distinction between proper noun (PN) allusion (the one with a name in it) and key phrase (KP) allusion (the one without the name).

3. Translating Allusions

Based on Leppihalme (1997) translating allusions is a challenging task since: the translator has to identify any intertextual references and then judge the likelihood that the target language readership will be able to recognize them and cue in to the intended references. Moreover, allusions are considered as Cultural

specific items (CSI), so they are heavily and exclusively grounded in one culture which seem impossible to translate into the terms of another. Leppihalme agrees that a cultural barrier can prevent the understanding of an allusion, unless the receivers are sufficiently biculturalized.

To cope with the aforementioned problems, a set of strategies are introduced by Leppihalme (1997); that a translator should decide what translation strategy will be appropriate for the allusion in question. Leppihalme (1997) proposes a set of strategies for translating the proper noun allusions:

i. Retention of the name:

a. using the name as such; b. using the name, adding some guidance; c. using the name, adding a detailed explanation, for instance, a footnote.

ii. Replacement of the name by another (beyond the changes required by convention), with two subcategories:

a. replacing the name by another SL name; b. replacing the name by a TL name.

iii. Omission of the name:

a. omitting the name, but transferring the sense by other means, for instance by a common noun; b. omitting the name and the allusion altogether.

Potential strategies for translating Key Phrase (KP) allusions=allusions containing no proper noun are as follows:

A. Use standard translation;

B. Literal translation (minimum change);

C. Add extra-allusive guidance to the text;

D. Provide additional information via footnotes, endnotes;

E. Introduce textual features that indicate the presence of borrowed words;

F. Replace with a performed TL item;

G. Rephrase the allusion with an overt expression of its meaning;

H. Re-create the allusion by creatively constructing a passage that reproduces its effects;

I. Omit the allusion completely.

3.1. Procedure

This study is a comparative-descriptive research and its aim is to carry out an analysis of particular strategies applied to cope with allusions (Key-phrase and personal proper nouns) and to find which strategies are more frequent. The personal proper noun and key phrase allusions in *Leaves of Grass* and their equivalents in Albanian translation are identified. After categorizing Personal proper noun and key-phrase allusions (Historically, religiously, mythologically, and literally), they are entered into the chart respectively and their frequencies are calculated.

3.2. Research questions

1. What are the strategies used in translating proper noun and key phrase allusions from English to Albanian in Whitman's poetry based on Leppihalme (1997)?

3.3. Corpus

The corpus of this study is a body of allusions which would be extracted from *Leaves of Grass* as translated by S. Luarasi. The collection covers a great deal of different proper noun and key phrase allusions which might prove challenging for the translator.

Luarasi has done the translation of a part of the book. His rendering has been described as accurate, erudite, accessible, faithful, and a much respected translation of Whitman into Albanian.

3.4. Words, proper nouns and key phrase allusions as translated into Albanian:

- **Alleghanies – Alliganëve (Albanian version, the allusion not explained)**
- The Alleghanies are the oldest mountain range in the United States. This is Whitman's own spelling of the word.
- **Banner and Pennant**
- A banner and pennant are flag shaped symbols of a nation, or army, often flown at patriotic occasions.
- **Bugle Trills – altered in meaning**
- A bugle trill is a short burst of notes from a bugle horn, often meant to signify military victory.
- **Calamus**
- In Greek mythology, Calamus is a figure who turned into a reed out of grief for the death of his young male lover. In *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman uses this imagery to describe the intense erotic love between men.
- **Camerado – shok (Albanian version, the allusion not explained)**
- A camerado is Whitman's own term for a friend, or comrade.
- **Canuck – not rendered**
- Canuck is a term for a person from Canada.
- **Centenarian - qindvjeçar**
- A centenarian is a person who is 100 years old.
- **Cuff – kufi (Albanian version, completely altered)**
- "Cuff" is an African day-name for a male born on a Friday.
- **Eidolons – hije, fantome, not exact**
- An eidolon is the perfect form of an idea. For Whitman, this is the ideal of spiritual and intellectual enlightenment for which all humanity must strive.
- **Jonathan – Xhonatan (Albanian version, the allusion not explained)**
- Jonathan is a common name for a New England Yankee. Whitman uses the name to collectively describe all New England patriots.
- **Mannahatta – Manahata (Albanian version, the allusion not explained)**
- Mannahatta is Whitman's term for New York City's island of Manhattan. This is the original Algonquian word meaning "large island," which Whitman uses to invoke a historical and natural spirit to the city.
- **Metaphysics - metafizike**
- Metaphysics is a branch of philosophy devoted to explaining the basic nature of being.
- **Paumanok – Paumanok (Albanian version, the allusion not explained)**
- Paumanok is the original Native American term for Long Island, New York. Whitman uses this term to name his boyhood experiences in Long Island's natural surroundings.
- **Wolverine – voverinasi**
- **It is the fourth of Seventh-month – eshte kater korriku**
- **Yankee – janki**

4. Results and Discussions

To make a summary of the results, the most common strategy for the translation of these allusions was that of 'retention without any guidance' (1a). Therefore in most of the cases the connotational meaning is lost in the Albanian translation, and therefore some footnotes or explanations are needed. (Examples: Alleghanies; En-Masse; Mannahatta etc.)

The second strategy, 'The use of guidance' (1b) has been used successfully in some instances to clarify the concept. (Examples: Oconee- lumi Okoni; Fourth- month – prilli; Christ Divine- Krishtin Birin e Perendise etc.)

The strategy 'Omission' (3b); omitting the name and the allusion altogether was employed by Luarasi in few instances. (Example: carol, camerado)

Obviously, full comprehension of an allusive line of poetry is inevitably limited to those who recognize the name and its connotations.

As Leppihalme (1997) argues, the appropriateness of a strategy depends at least partly on the familiarity of the name. However, in the translation of Leaves of Grass by Luarasi, the retention of PPN was applied not merely to transcultural names, but also to names very likely to be unfamiliar to TT readers. This tends to reduce a TT reader's chances of spotting such allusions, and comprehending the point the SL author intended to make.

4.1. Discussion of key phrase allusions

Results of Key Phrase allusions in "*As I pondered in silence*" are illustrated in the table:

Original Poem	Albanian translated version 1	Albanian translated version 2
Poems	Vjershat	Poemat
Considering, lingering long	Dhe rrihja ti shihja	Shqyrtoja, ndalja gjatë
With distressful aspect	Me ballin te vrenjtur	Me pamje të pabesë
Forever enduring bards	Për bardët që kërkojnë amshimin	Për bardët e përjetshëm
The making of perfect soldiers	Ëma e ushtarëve të përsosur	Bërje e ushtarëve të përkryer
Haughty Shade	Hije krenare	Hije mendjemadhe
Body and the eternal Soul	Trupin e Shpirtin e amshuar	Trupin e shpirtin e përjetshëm
Promote brave soldiers	Nxjerr ushtarë trima	Përkrah ushtarë guximtarë

1. Strategy B: Literal translation with minimum change

Luarasi by rendering word by word didn't convey the connotations and the alluding part, although, this verse may be unfamiliar to Albanian readers, too. In the earlier mentioned verse, the translator renders the allusion word by word without minimum change. But this strategy is not suggested by Leppihalm (1997), so strategy B is considered for the translations of such allusions.

2. Strategy C: Add extra-allusive guidance to the text: It seems the translator was aware of the alluding parts which he put in the quotation marks.

3. Strategy G: Rephrase the allusion with an overt expression of its meaning: The translator by explicating the meaning of tries to; somehow, conveys the meaning that brings the evoked text to the original text.

4. The last strategy applied is omission. By applying this strategy Luarasi changed the meaning of the alluding part, maybe, because he himself had been unfamiliar with that alluding part. Moreover, it is probable that the translator may omit elements s/he perceives as too difficult to translate which are to some extent culture bound and depend on translation norms in the target culture. Thus, the discussion of key-phrase allusions shows: Luarasi is faithful to the original text he preferred literal translation without having inclinations to change the structures to make a rhyming poems.

The percentage of strategy B indicates that this strategy is applied more with the Albanian translation which suggests that he is faithful to the original text. Luarasi preferred literal translation without having inclination to change the structures to make a rhyming poem (Strategy B). Although, the fact of not being restricted by rhyming patterns and music provided the translator with more freedom to be faithful to the source text and to give precise equivalents at word level. This limitation of the translation unit to word and turning a blind eye to factors beyond the text like intertextuality and potential purposes of application of a word or structure by text producer led to refusing to search the text for the existence of any allusion and; consequently, to removing potential connotations carried by those allusions. Moreover, some allusions are rendered word by word with no change. The second prevalent strategy used is the strategy C.

In the case of strategies like marking the alluding texts by the translator, demonstrates that he is aware of the connotations the text embodies. Strategy G was found in 7 instances: Although using strategy G tells nothing about the translator's attention to allusive language, it certainly asserts that, in such cases, the translator has reached a realization of the existence of connotative language and has seriously pursued ways of making those connotations and senses overt in the TT at the expense of radically changing the ST. Using this strategy also has the message that preserves just the sense and connotation, but deprives TT readers of the aesthetic aspect of alluding or referring to other texts, since they are left unaware of the author's application of the allusions. Moreover, the strategy I occurred when the translator didn't understand the meaning of the alluding part and has removed the allusion completely; maybe unintentionally.

5. Conclusion

This article is concerned with the notion of intertextuality and embarks upon an analysis of allusions in *Leaves of Grass*. Intertextuality is a wide-ranging, omni-present textual phenomenon that is crucial to text processing both within and between languages. The problem for translators is to render intertextual references into the target language and culture such that the meanings invoked in the ST are preserved and made accessible to the maximum extent possible. However intertextuality eclipsed allusion as an object of literary study.

It is obvious that most of the proper nouns and phrases have allusions which refer to other texts. It seems necessary for an acceptable translation to produce the same (or at least similar) effects on the TT readers as those created by the original work on its readers. But most translators do not appear to be successful in their challenging tasks of efficiently rendering the allusions when they sacrifice, or at least minimize, the effect of allusions in favor of preserving graphical or lexical forms of source language allusions. In other words, a competent translator is well-advised not to deprive the TL reader of enjoying, or even recognizing, the allusions either in the name of fidelity or brevity. Hence, the translator carefully searches for strategies to cope with these problems. Consequently, the translator's choice of strategy for the translation of allusive elements may subtly result in preventing the TT readers from spotting and enjoying allusions and in failure to transfer the connotation the original author intended to evoke in his/her readers. Beyond a shadow of doubt the choice of strategy is related to the translator's fidelity or lack of fidelity to the ST author. The findings of this study suggest that a translator can be more faithful to the ST author when he uses 'retention' (1a) (95%) for PPN allusions and literal translation (68%) for key-phrase allusions. However, in many cases the translator failed to elaborate at length upon the allusions as well as the stories behind references. In other words, he could employ more extensive translation strategies so that the target text readers might understand the implied references. It is pertinent to mention that native speakers and readers who live in the same linguistic and cultural community as the author may fail to recognize the allusive nature of an element in a text. This difficulty is intensified when the receptor is not the native speaker of the source language and is from a culture different from that of the source one and; consequently, has more limitations in accessing to the source of allusions. However, it is necessary not only for competent readers (poets, authors) in SL but also for translators to grasp these allusions so that they can convey the connotations to competent TL readers. As to implications, translation teachers and student translators who are considered as competent ones, are expected to learn about the intertextual elements of the ST, that allusions are one type of them. Moreover, translation students and practicing translators need to consider the difficulty of translating allusions, recognizing the responsibility of the translators to TT readers.

The examples of various strategies discussed in this study can provide them with solutions to tackle these problems. Through discussing and evaluating these strategies, novice translators will learn that if they translate a text without spotting and understanding its allusions, the meanings of allusive terms and passages will be lost for most TT readers.

Although, some translators consider translation together with footnotes undesirable, in fact their uses can assist the TT readers to make better judgment of the ST contents. In general, it seems that the 'notes' would have a higher potential for conveying the concepts. It can be claimed that the best translation method seems to be the one which allows translator to utilize 'notes.' Furthermore, employing 'notes' in the translation, both as a translation strategy and a translation procedure, seems to be indispensable so that the foreign language readership could benefit from the text as much as the ST readers do.

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