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THE THEORY OF LITERARY TRANSLATION IN CONTEMPORARY COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

R. Ismailova, senior teacher,

National university of Uzbekistan, Tashkent

Тел: +998909375744 ismailovaR72@mail.ru

Abstract.

This article examines the relationship between translation studies and comparative literary studies, emphasizing translation as a means of establishing and developing interliterary and intercultural communication. Drawing on the ideas of prominent translation and comparative literature scholars, it considers the cultural role of translation, its place within comparative literary studies, and the importance of comparative analysis between translated works and their originals. The article argues that translated literature is not merely an object of linguistic inquiry but an integral part of the world literary process and a significant form of interaction among national cultures.

Keywords: literary translation, translation theory, comparative literature, translation studies, intercultural communication, interliterary relations.

Аннотация.

В данной статье рассматривается взаимосвязь переводоведения и сравнительного литературоведения, особое внимание уделяется переводу как средству установления и развития межлитературных и межкультурных связей. Опираясь на идеи известных исследователей в области теории перевода и сравнительного литературоведения, автор анализирует культурную роль перевода, его место в системе сравнительного литературоведения, а также значимость сопоставительного анализа переводных произведений и их оригиналов. В статье обосновывается положение о том, что переводная литература является не просто объектом лингвистического исследования, но и неотъемлемой частью мирового литературного процесса, а также важной формой взаимодействия национальных культур.

Ключевые слова: художественный перевод, теория перевода, сравнительное литературоведение, переводоведение, межкультурная коммуникация, межлитературные связи.

Literary translation has its own theory and practice as an independent discipline. However, the problems of literary translation also provide an extensive field of research for comparative literature. The main task of translation is to establish and develop communication between literatures and cultures. The active participation of both disciplines—comparative literary studies and translation studies—in the interaction of literatures represents their principal area of convergence.

Many researchers trace a close relationship between translation studies, linguistics, and semiotics. Contemporary scholars, however, maintain that translation involves not only interaction between two languages but also contact between two cultures. Moreover, different cultures have always influenced, and continue to influence, one another. A similar view is expressed by the Bulgarian translation theorist A. Lilova: “Translation is a powerful and constantly active factor through which a broad exchange of spiritual values takes place and creative interaction emerges between national cultures. The development of world culture is inconceivable without translated literature.”

The well-known Slovak translation theorist A. Popovič argues that “translation theory originated and, in its initial phase, developed as an empirical comparative method on the basis of traditional comparative literary studies”[10]. In the scholar’s view, “the debate over the status of translation theory—whether it is comparative in nature or not—has proved entirely fruitless, since translation practice itself already incorporates translation theory into comparative literature”[11].

One of the most widely recognised international authorities on literary translation theory, György Rado, notes in his work “Translation Theory from the Translator’s Point of View” that the numerous studies produced by translation theorists are undoubtedly “good, important, and useful for linguistics and comparative literature”[12].

The Romanian literary scholar A. Dima also considers translation, often referred to as one of the “messengers of comparativism,” to be a direct object of study in comparative literature[14].

An analysis of the history of literary translation and the history of comparative literary studies in different countries leads to interesting conclusions about the clear coincidence of periods of intensive development in both fields of philological scholarship.

D. F. Markov rightly maintains that the general concept of the “comparative study of literatures” encompasses “literary influence, translation, the function of traditions, historical and typological convergences, and so forth”[18]. He further argues that “just as direct contacts between literatures and literary influences cannot be ignored when studying typological phenomena themselves, it is all the more inappropriate to examine these contacts and influences in isolation from the historical and typological trends of the literatures being compared”[19].

The common ground between comparative literary studies and translation theory also lies in the fact that “the principal specific method widely used in translation studies is the comparative analysis of a translation or translations against the original, as well as of translations in relation to one another”[20].

The significance of literary translation becomes especially clear when a work enters a new cultural and historical environment. A translated text is read by an audience whose literary conventions, social experiences, and expectations may differ considerably from those of the original readership. Consequently, the translator must make decisions not only about vocabulary and grammar but also about style, imagery, historical references, humour, and culturally specific meanings. These decisions

influence how the source work is understood and received in the target culture. Translation therefore participates in the interpretation and re-evaluation of literary works, rather than simply reproducing their verbal form.

From the perspective of comparative literature, this process raises several important questions. Researchers may investigate which elements of the original are preserved, transformed, clarified, or omitted in translation, and how these changes affect the work's artistic structure and ideological meaning. They may also compare different translations of the same literary text in order to identify the translators' individual approaches and the influence of the historical period in which each version was produced. Such analysis makes it possible to study the movement of literary ideas across linguistic borders and to understand why certain authors, genres, and themes become influential in particular national traditions.

The translator's role is therefore both linguistic and creative. A successful literary translation requires a thorough understanding of the source text, sensitivity to the expressive resources of the target language, and knowledge of the cultural contexts involved. At the same time, the translator works within specific historical conditions, publishing practices, and expectations of the receiving audience. These factors may shape the selection of works for translation and the strategies adopted in presenting them. For comparative literary studies, attention to these circumstances helps explain not only textual differences but also broader patterns of cultural reception and literary exchange.

Thus, translation is an object of study in comparative literary research not only because every translation must be compared with the original work at all levels (and comparison is impossible without comparative analysis), but also because translated works, as one form of literary relations among different peoples, constitute an integral part of the world literary process.

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