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Paper: Diversity

Challenges in translating humor

Throughout history, language has been playing a prominent role in the progress of human civilization and social development. There are nearly 6000 to 7000 languages in the world which differ from each other in their structure. Thus translations have become popular among people in order to make communication more effective.

Translations can be simply explained as translating a text from the source languages to the target language. Translations can be categorized into various categories such as literary, legal, scientific, technical and religious translations. This research focuses its attention on the challenges in translating humor in literary translations.

Translating a text consisting of humor is a challenging task. To transfer a joke from one language to another calls on the ability to “think outside the box”. Humor is a sense which is naturally generated in the mind of the reader. It is a natural outcome which no one can artificially force. A writer creates humor using words, symbols, characters, puns and concepts unique to his own culture and language. But it is a challenging task to translate the same set of emotions and meaning into another language and make them appear in the same way in the target language in a translation. Thus opportunities to translate comic or humorous verse or prose constitute an unusually provocative challenge.

The researcher has analyzed many problems encountered by literary translators in translating humor from the source language to the target language. Data has been gathered through personal experience, practice, secondary sources, observations and interviews. Mastering the source language and the target language is not sufficient for translators to overcome these problems. Translators need to have common sense about the culture, society and the language in order to translate humor. Hence this research would provide an insight into recognizing and overcoming problems in translating humor enabling one to produce a successful outcome.

Keywords: - Literary translations, Puns, Source language, Target language