

## ERRORS IN LITERARY TRANSLATION

*Tashkent Academic Lyceum No.2 of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan.*

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### INTRODUCTION

Challenges and Consequences Literary translation is a nuanced art that involves much more than converting words from one language to another. A translator must capture the essence, style, cultural context, and emotional resonance of the original work. However, this complexity often leads to errors that can affect the story, its characters, or even the meaning of the text.

**Key words:** *Errors, Translation, Literary, Misinterpretations, complexity, idiomatic expressions, cultural references*

Here's an exploration of the common errors in literary translation and their impact. --- 1. Types of Errors in Literary a. Linguistic Errors These occur when a translator misinterprets or mistranslates words, phrases, or idioms. Example: In Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, some translations failed to convey the magical realism tone of certain metaphors, reducing their impact. Cause: Differences in idiomatic expressions or cultural references that don't have direct equivalents in the target language. b. Cultural Misinterpretations Cultural context is often integral to literature, but translations can distort or oversimplify these nuances.

Example: In Japanese literature, honorifics and hierarchical nuances are often lost in English translations, altering character relationships or tone. Cause: Lack of equivalent cultural constructs in the target language. c. Stylistic Errors Translators may fail to preserve the author's unique style, such as their use of syntax, rhythm, or voice. Example: Poetry translations often face challenges in maintaining rhyme, meter, and the emotional tone simultaneously. Cause: The structural differences between languages (e.g., English vs. French) make it difficult to replicate exact styles. d. Loss of Subtext or Symbolism Authors often embed subtext or symbolic meanings that may not translate easily.

Example: In Fyodor Dostoevsky's works, the religious and philosophical undertones are sometimes simplified or omitted in translations, weakening their depth. Cause: Ambiguity or multilayered

meanings in the source text. e. Over-Domestication or Foreignization Over-domestication makes the text overly familiar to the target audience, losing its original cultural essence. Foreignization, on the other hand, can render the text inaccessible or awkward.

Example: Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* often suffers from over-domestication when translated, diluting its Southern dialects and historical setting. --- 2. Impact of Translation Errors a. Altered Themes or Messages Errors can distort the original intent of the author. For instance, mistranslating key phrases can misrepresent the underlying themes of a work. b. Misrepresentation of Cultures Poor translations can perpetuate stereotypes or misrepresent cultural nuances, affecting how readers perceive the source culture. c. Reader Alienation Inconsistent tone or awkward phrasing can disengage readers, reducing their ability to connect with the text. d. Historical and Social Consequences Inaccurate translations of historical or political works can lead to misunderstandings or misinterpretations of important events or ideologies. ---

3. Famous Examples of Literary Translation Challenges a. The Bible Over centuries, the Bible has been translated into numerous languages, but slight differences in word choices have led to theological debates. For example, the Hebrew word "alma" was translated as "virgin" in some versions, while others interpret it as "young woman." b. The Little Prince by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry Early English translations of *The Little Prince* were criticized for losing the poetic and whimsical tone of the original French text. c. *War and Peace* by Leo Tolstoy Various translations have either streamlined or preserved Tolstoy's original Russian text. Some translators focused on making it more readable, while others aimed for a more faithful, albeit complex, version. --- 4. Solutions and Best Practices in Literary Translation a. Collaboration with Cultural Experts

Working with native speakers or cultural scholars can ensure cultural nuances are accurately conveyed. b. Contextual Understanding A translator should immerse themselves in the author's world, understanding not only the text but also its historical, cultural, and personal contexts. c. Balancing Fidelity and Creativity A translator must strike a balance between being faithful to the original text and adapting it creatively for the target audience. d. Iterative Editing and Feedback Engaging with editors, beta readers, or literary critics can help refine the translation to ensure quality. ---

Conclusion Errors in literary translation can fundamentally alter a work's meaning, tone, and cultural essence, sometimes diminishing its

impact. Translators must navigate linguistic, cultural, and stylistic challenges with care and creativity. When done well, literary translation opens doors to new worlds and fosters global understanding; when done poorly, it risks obscuring the beauty and depth of the original work.

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