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## DISSOLVING LINGUISTIC BORDERS: MULTILINGUAL LITERATURE TRANSLATION

Research article

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### Abstract

In the developing multilingual literary world, translators are faced with the problem of literary texts representing a symbiosis of two or more languages used by the author to express a bilingual reality. The study of approaches to the translation of multilingual/bilingual texts will allow developing a strategy that will help maintain the symmetry of an adequate translation of multicultural and multilingual units of the original. The article describes the main difficulties that a translator has to deal with when working on multilingual texts; an algorithm is proposed that sets the priorities for work on intercultural and interlingual adaptation of the original; it is determined that code switching (CS) in most translations ceases to exist due to case change or other strategies. It is concluded that the translator's observance of the original code structure/code-switching when transferring it to the target language is the main criterion for recreating the unity of the content and form of the original by means of other languages.

**Keywords:** multilingual literature, literary translation, code-switching, cultural, diversity, strategy, bias.

## СНИМАЯ ЯЗЫКОВЫЕ БАРЬЕРЫ: ПЕРЕВОД МНОГОЯЗЫЧНЫХ ПРОИЗВЕДЕНИЙ

Научная статья

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### Аннотация

В развивающемся многоязычном литературном мире переводчики сталкиваются с проблемой художественных текстов, представляющих симбиоз двух и более языков, используемых автором для выражения двуязычной реальности. Изучение подходов к переводу многоязычных/двуязычных текстов позволит выработать стратегию, которая поможет сохранить симметрию адекватного перевода разнокультурных и разноязычных единиц оригинала. В статье описаны основные трудности, с которыми имеет дело переводчик при работе над многоязычными текстами; предложен алгоритм, задающий приоритеты работы над межкультурной и межъязыковой адаптацией оригинала; определено, что переключение кода (CS) в большинстве переводов перестает существовать из-за изменения регистра или других стратегий. Сделан вывод, что соблюдение переводчиком исходной кодовой структуры при ее переносе на язык перевода является основным критерием при воссоздании единства содержания и формы подлинника средствами других языков.

**Ключевые слова:** многоязычная литература, художественный перевод, переключение кода, культурный, разнородность, стратегия, предпочтение.

### Introduction

Multilingual literature (ML) has been gaining popularity in recent years as readers seek out diverse and culturally rich stories. The increasing demand for multilingual literature is a reflection of the globalized nature of today's society and the desire to understand different perspectives. As Wen-chin Ouyang addressed, "If language is the stuff of literature, multilingualism is the stuff of world literature" [18, P. 113]. The ability to read literature in multiple languages has become more important as the world becomes more connected and diverse. This trend can be observed in both traditional and digital publishing [2]. As the world becomes more globalized, readers are looking for stories that reflect the multicultural nature of society. Moreover, the growing popularity of multilingual literature is also a result of the efforts of literary organizations and publishers to promote and preserve endangered languages. The demand for multilingual literature has also been on the rise as readers seek out stories that go beyond the traditional canon. All in all, it should be recapped that the popularity of multilingual literature is a positive development, as it allows readers to gain a deeper understanding of the world and its many cultures. Even though multilingual literature as such is no new phenomenon, we are apt to agree with D. Sommer, who states that "the great numbers and the visibility," the media attention for multilingual writers and their works is new [17, P. 27]. Thus, the fame of multilingual literature is driven by the changing demographics of many countries around the world and by the desire to understand and appreciate the diversity of human experience. Given today's global atmosphere, it should be recognized that still the majority of readers are not polyglot, but the advance of such type of literature requires having it in translation. This manuscript aims to shed light on the escalating intricacy in the execution of translating multilingual literature, while also offering viable solutions to ensure the success of such translations.

Our scholarly discourse will involve a meticulous examination and classification of the numerous contributing factors that have pushed the proliferation of literature in multiple languages. In addition, we will explore the advantages of both reading and translating such literature, specifically with regard to promoting linguo-cultural diversity. Our objective is to thoroughly enumerate the obstacles faced by the multilingual literary translation industry and present feasible strategies to overcome these barriers. Ultimately, this paper strives to give a comprehensive understanding of the present condition of multilingual literature, its increasing acceptance and the consequential challenges encountered in its translation.

Socio-cultural relevance of such literature is facilitated by the following factors: it reflects the reality of multilingual communities and individuals, challenges the dominant linguistic and cultural norms of a society, serves to preserve endangered languages and cultures as well as challenge the dominant linguistic and cultural hegemony of a society. Besides, it can also give voice to marginalized and minority groups who may not have a strong presence in the dominant culture, serving to question the concept of a monolingual and monocultural society while challenging the notion of a single 'standard' language. ML can also be used to promote a more inclusive and diverse society for the purpose of creation of a more inclusive and equitable one. For instance, Dr. Cecilia Montes-Alcalá speaks in favor of this phenomenon, stating that the increasing growth of literature in more than one language in the United States – especially in the Latino community – indicates that mixing languages in writing has obtained a certain level of legitimacy and is viewed as a “positively creative innovation in literature” [14, P. 68]. Notwithstanding all the positiveness in the acceptance of this literature J. Graham states the contradiction directly, and saying that “Multiculturalism is a relatively new addition to the lexicon of British publishing” and cultural differences have been promoted positively to British much more recently though as a literary subject matter itself, by contrast, multicultural society has a much longer heritage at least since the trend for colonial romance in the Victorian historical [8].

Analyzing various approaches to the strategy or method of translation of the literature under discussion we can cohere our opinion with the ideas of E. Jones stated in her book “Literature in Motion: Translating Multilingualism Across the Americas – Literature Now” (2022) in which the author offers a new framework for consideration of literary multilingualism, highlighting how writers and translators can use its defamiliarizing and disorderly potential. In her opinion, the role of translation for such literature is not to compete with its subversive potential but to be creatively intertwined with it [10, P. 123-150].

In our turn, following E. Jones assumptions concerning the concept of “literature in motion” we will admit that translation has no need – as is often assumed – to weaken or eliminate the diversity, complexity, and subversive potential of multilingualism. On the contrary, the two creative practices are strictly intertwined, to the extent that translation is always to some degree implied in multilingual writing.

### **Main results and their discussion**

Nowadays multilingual literature is studied by scholars and researchers in a variety of fields including literary studies, linguistics, sociology, anthropology, and cultural studies. These scholars may focus on the linguistic, cultural, and social aspects of multilingual literature, and may also study the ways in which multilingual literature reflects and shapes society. They also may focus on the literary and stylistic aspects of multilingual books, such as the use of multiple languages, idiomatic expressions, and literary devices. They may also study its translation and the challenges and opportunities presented by translating literature across languages and cultures. Additionally, many educators, teachers and students study multilingual literature as a way to learn about different cultures and perspectives. Notwithstanding all the mentioned above we would like to emphasize the idea that there is still much to be studied, as M. Sebba puts it – multilingual literature is generally “unexplored and under-researched” [16, P. 1].

Among the examples of multilingual works of literature, we can enumerate the following ones, which illustrate multilingualism of Russian, American and German writers:

“Doctor Zhivago” (1957) by Boris Pasternak, which is mostly in Russian but also includes frequent references to English and French literature and culture. “The Tin Drum” (1959) by Günter Grass, which is in German but also incorporates the use of Polish language and expressions throughout the novel. “The Joy Luck Club” (1989) by Amy Tan, which is written in English but also features dialogue and phrases in Mandarin Chinese. “The Emigrants” (1992) by W.G. Sebald, a German original, including English, French and Latin phrases and quotations. “The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao” (2007) by Junot Diaz, which is written in English but also includes Spanish and Spanglish phrases and dialogue.

Though, it should be noted that such literature is not always as welcomed as expected in certain national book markets where it is still very difficult to publish. For example, B. Lennon’s work “In Babel’s Shadow” examines the resistance that multilingual literature faces on the book publication market in the United States. He illustrates that there is an “editorial pressure to write “nondifficult English prose” [11, P. 4] and claims that writing in a language other than English “would be to violate the market mandate of transmission” [11, P. 10].

M. Maiden, Ch. Cappellaro, A. Lahiri examine multilingualism from the point of view of its impact on members of monoglot societies who might feel isolated and hostile towards speakers of those other languages. They suggest that alleviating of such feelings of alienation is possible if societies are aware that ‘foreign’ languages are not inaccessible barriers to comprehension, that many doors into other languages are already open, and that looks like what seems outlandish may be much closer than might at first appear [13, P. 71].

Of course, an ideal reader of the books written in several languages is the one who can read and understand the original without any problems, the one who knows the languages employed and their coherent cultures well enough not to use any dictionaries or other reference material. But mostly an ordinary reader is very far from the ideal. He cannot productively follow diverse linguistic and cultural trajectories. He is the one who desperately needs a literary translation of multilingual works as it allows him to access and appreciate the literature while gaining a deeper understanding of different cultures and perspectives. Besides it helps to promote and preserve endangered languages which are key elements of many examples of multilingual works. Such translation can also help to expand the readership of an author and increase his international recognition. Thus, breaking down language barriers and fostering cultural exchange, helping to promote mutual understanding and empathy

among different cultures are essential and vital contributions that literary translation can make for the status of multilingual practice in literature.

However, the process of translating multilingual literature poses several challenges. Rendering such works into another language requires a profound comprehension of the source (SL) and target languages (TL), along with familiarity with the cultural context. This can prove difficult, particularly if the translator lacks fluency in one of the languages or has limited cultural knowledge. Additionally, the translation process may alter the original text's meaning and tone, and it may lose critical nuances and literary components. This is particularly true when translating idiomatic expressions and colloquial language.

Furthermore, literary translation within this context can be costly, and some publishers may not be willing to invest in works that they deem unlikely to sell well. This can make it difficult for multilingual literature to reach a wide audience. Furthermore, literary translation can also be biased, as it can reflect the translator's own personal and cultural biases, and can also be influenced by the politics and ideologies of the target culture. It should be added that literary translation of multilingual works is important for promoting cultural exchange and understanding, however it's also a complex process that requires deep understanding of both source and target languages, cultures, and the potential for bias. Recapping all the aforementioned, it is crucial for translators to be aware of these challenges and to work to overcome them in order to ensure that the translated multilingual works retain their integrity and meaning.

The first to answer the question about translating a multilingual text was J. Derrida when asked the question "How is a text written at a time in several languages to be translated?" Derrida mentioned that translation "can do everything except mark [the] linguistic difference inscribed in the language .... at best, it can get everything across except this: the fact that there are, in one linguistic system, perhaps several languages or tongues" [6, P. 100]. For the researcher, there is no language which can be an intact, unified system unchanged by other languages [6, P. 122].

The most difficult tasks when working on such texts are the followings:

1. Retaining the meaning and tone of the original work: maintaining the intended significance and emotional quality of the source material can be demanding for translators, as they must effectively convey these aspects in a language that differs from the original;
2. Preserving literary elements and stylistic devices: retaining the literary aspects and stylistic features can be a challenge since these aspects are often unique to the source language;
3. Reconstructing idiosyncrasms and colloquialisms: idiomatic expressions and colloquial language are often specific to a particular linguo-cultural environment, and can be difficult to translate effectively. This can lead to a loss of meaning and tone in a foreign language version of the original;
4. Conveying cultural context: multilingual literature is often steeped in the culture and history of the original language. This cultural context can be difficult to convey in the translated work, as it may not be familiar to the readers of the target language;
5. Controlling translators' own biases: translators are not immune to their own personal and cultivated biases, and these can influence their translation choices. This can lead to a biased or inaccurate representation of the original work.

Taking into consideration all these factors hampering translator's mission we can work out and comment on the scheme or algorithm of translator's work on multilingual text. It can be introduced in the following succession of activities or stages, though some of them in various cases can be optional:

- Understand the source text: the translator begins by reading and understanding the source text, taking note of its meaning, tone, and literary elements
- Identify the difficulties: the translator then identifies any difficulties in the text, such as idiomatic expressions, colloquial language, or cultural references that may be difficult to translate
- Research: the translator conducts research to gain a deeper understanding of the source text, in order to better understand any difficulties and make informed translation choices
- Choose the right words: the translator then selects the appropriate words and phrases in the target language to convey the meaning and tone of the source text
- Revise and proofread: the translator then revises and proofreads the translation to ensure that it is accurate, fluent and idiomatic [5]
- Compare with the original: after completing the translation, the translator evaluates it against the source text to confirm that the intended message, tone, and literary components are maintained to the greatest extent feasible
- Consider the target audience: the translator must keep in mind the target audience, cultural context, and purpose of the translation
- Consult with experts: the translator may consult with experts in the source language, culture, or field of study in order to gain a deeper understanding of the text and make informed translation choices
- Collaborate with other translators: the translator may also collaborate with other translators or editors to ensure that the translation is accurate and idiomatic
- Review the feedback: the translator will review feedback received from beta-readers, editors and other experts to make any final adjustments.

After we have described the algorithm, we can try to give an outline of some strategies used by translators in their attempts of creating an aesthetic parallelism between the source text (ST) and the target text (TT). For this purpose, it is time to address the notion of code switching (CS) in literature. This feature allows authors to capture the complexity and fluidity of multilingual experiences. Code-switching refers to the practice of alternately using two or more languages or language varieties in a single conversation or text. In multilingual literature, it is often used to reflect the reality of multilingual communities and individuals, and it can also be used to challenge the dominant linguistic and cultural norms of a society. By using code-switching, authors can convey the multilingual experiences of characters and provide insight into the complexities

of multilingualism. Additionally, code-switching can also be used to create a sense of authenticity and realism in literature, as it reflects the way people actually use language in multilingual settings.

But code-switching is a very complex notion, divided by some researchers into easy-access and hard-access categories. In this regard we agree with Sh. Poplack, that code switching is grammatically constrained: bilinguals tend to switch “at certain syntactic boundaries and not at others” [15, P. 2062]. Besides grammaticality within the scope of this field of research, such issues as variability vs. uniformity and CS vs. borrowing should also be taken into consideration [7].

S. Hervey, I. Higgins and L. M. Haywood in their turn also consider the challenge for the translation of CS. These authors recognize the value of the latter by identifying it as a “strategic device” used by the author and also by distinguishing the variety of languages used by code switchers – “dialects, sociolects, [and] even distinct languages.” [9, P. 115].

Researches give some practical recommendations for performing the act of multilingual literary translation so that CS is retained in the target text. For instance, M. Cincotta presents four possible strategies for translating CS into the target text:

1. Convert the target text into a single language;
2. Maintain the transfer in the source language;
3. Incorporate informal language or a dialectal variant of the primary target language;
4. Introduce the examples of CS in an alternative language or vernacular that is distinct from the source and target text languages.

She also advocates the fourth solution for translating CS, concluding that: “It is the most satisfying in that it keeps the code-switch and it is not limited to a particular linguistic register or geographical manifestation of the target language itself, but most importantly because it can respect the intention of the author himself when he chose to make a use of a linguistic transfer.” [3, P. 3-4]. Thus, M. Cincotta suggests a viable solution for preserving code-switching (CS) in the translated text (TT). However, her own views on language transfer limits her proposed solution to a matter of fidelity, which in turn brings back the constraining idea of language equality that was previously presented by Lewis [12, P. 412-415].

S. Hervey, I. Higgins, and L. M. Haywood in their turn suggest that the translator should accept the idea of “losses” in the target text (TT) and recognize that this may be a challenge for them. However, they stress that it is important for the translator to understand that these “detrimental effects” will not negatively impact the quality of the TT. They propose that “When faced with apparently inevitable, yet unacceptable, compromises” translators should choose the strategy of Compensation, which will make up for the losses of important features in the ST “by replicating [these] effects approximately in the TT by means other than those used in the ST.” [9, P. 28]. C. Coates explains that for the translator, the goal is to convince the reader “to step beyond the basic story toward an awareness of the complex play of cultures” [4].

Returning to the aforementioned two strategies of CS – easy-access and hard-access we can conclude that they are crucial while pursuing the task of representing the unique practice of multilingualism in the original. M. A. H. Ahmed states that “a consistent translation can be achieved only when each type of the CS structure is understood and maintained in the TT” [1, P. 505].

### Conclusion

Studies of various aspects of multilingual interpretation are relevant in modern times because of the increasing need for communication and rapport between people from different cultures and backgrounds. As the world becomes more interconnected, there is a growing need for accurate and culturally sensitive translations. Furthermore, rendition of such type plays an important role in preserving and promoting linguistic and other types of heritage, mutual respect, understanding and encourage cultural exchange, fostering a more inclusive and cohesive society. Main difficulties for the translator of this literature are: retaining the meaning and tone of the original work, preserving literary elements and stylistic devices, reconstructing idiomatic expressions and colloquial language, conveying cultural context, controlling translators' own biases. Following the suggested in the article, algorithm of working on a multilingual text and reiteration of code-switching strategy employed by the author of the original will allow to achieve a consistent translation.

### Конфликт интересов

Не указан.

### Рецензия

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### Conflict of Interest

None declared.

### Review

All articles are peer-reviewed. But the reviewer or the author of the article chose not to publish a review of this article in the public domain. The review can be provided to the competent authorities upon request.

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