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**College of Arts**

**Department of Translation**

**Subject: Literary Translation**

ترجمة النص المسرحي/المرحلة الرابعة/مادة الترجمة الادبية

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Literary translation represents one of the most intricate and imaginative forms of literary translation. It demands not only an accurate conveyance of meaning but also the recreation of the text's essence for a live performance in a different language. The challenge lies in maintaining the original spirit, rhythm, and cultural nuances while ensuring the work resonates on stage.

### **Theatrical Translation: Melding Text with Performance**

Among literary pursuits, stage translation stands as a uniquely demanding discipline. It transcends mere word-for-word interpretation, requiring the translator to breathe life into a script so it can resonate with a new audience in a new language. This process requires more than linguistic expertise—stage translators must capture the emotional undercurrent, the flow, and the energy of the source material. They translate not just words but the heartbeat and soul of the performance.

#### **First: The Unique Nature of Theatrical Texts**

Theatrical texts are not merely written to be read silently; they are crafted to come alive through speech and performance. As such, translating them demands a nuanced understanding of dialogue, rhythm, dramatic tension, and the text's physicality. The words of a play are not delivered in isolation but exist within a multidimensional framework that includes scenic design, physical gestures, vocal expression, and timing.

#### **Second: The Obstacles for Theatrical Translators**

##### **1. Authentic Dialogue**

Dialogue in theater must feel natural and spontaneous, not like a direct translation. Actors rely on lines that are easy to articulate, flow smoothly, and align with their character's personality. This highlights the necessity for creative translation, where sentences are adapted to suit the stage's demands while staying faithful to the original meaning.

## **2. Preserving Rhythm and Tone**

Each theatrical piece carries its own rhythm—be it swift, suspenseful, sarcastic, or lyrical. Translators must strive to retain this rhythm in the target language, even if it means reworking sentence structures or selecting different words to convey the same tone effectively.

## **Symbolism and Intertextuality**

Many theatrical works establish intertextual connections with religious, philosophical, or literary texts. These texts often incorporate cultural symbols that are not easily translatable in a literal sense. This raises an important question: Should we clarify these symbols for the audience, or should we maintain their inherent ambiguity? Preserving the original complexity might allow for a more layered interpretation, while simplification makes the play more accessible.

## **Dialect and Time**

Should the translation lean toward classical Arabic or opt for colloquial Arabic? Should the historical context of the text be preserved, or should it be updated to reflect modern sensibilities? These are pivotal considerations in theatrical translation, as they shape the audience's experience and open up possibilities for cultural reinterpretation.

## **Theatrical Translation Strategies**

There is no universal method that applies to translating all theatrical works. Instead, various strategies may be employed based on the specific requirements of the text:

- **Literal Translation:** Often used for philosophical or symbolic texts, but this approach can struggle to accommodate the demands of performance.
- **Communicative Translation:** Emphasizes clarity and ease of articulation, making it ideal for modern or comedic plays.

- **Cultural Translation:** Adjusts the text to align with the cultural framework of the target audience, often employed in traditional or popular plays.
- **Creative Translation:** Involves reimagining and rewriting the text to capture its essence, especially when literal translation fails to convey the intended meaning effectively.

#### **Fourth: The Theatrical Translator as Creator and Silent Partner to the Author**

A theatrical translator goes beyond the role of a mere conduit for words; they become a co-author, reimagining the text within the framework of their own language and cultural nuances. This act of adaptation preserves the essence of the original work while crafting a new narrative that resonates on stage. Their efforts result in a text that actors perform, audiences experience, and the theater brings to life. As one theorist aptly describes, theatrical translation transcends linguistics to encompass the physical, vocal, and scenic dimensions of performance.

#### **Fifth: Applied Approaches to Theatrical Translation**

##### **Example 1: Rendering Shakespeare's "Hamlet"**

The iconic line, "To be or not to be, that is the question," presents various translation possibilities:

- "To be or not to be, that is the question."
- "Shall we live or die? That is the question."

Each version carries its own distinct tone and interpretation, offering an alternate perspective on Shakespeare's existential query.

##### **Example 2: Translating Emotional Nuances in an Arabic Play**

Consider an Arabic play that uses the expression "Oh woe." How should this visceral emotion be translated into English? Options might range from "Oh my God" to "Woe is me," or perhaps even a more contemporary phrase that suits the setting and audience familiarity. Every choice subtly shifts the emotional impact and the cultural resonance of the line.

#### **Sixth: Theatrical Translation as a Cultural Gateway**

At its heart, theatrical translation becomes a form of cultural dialogue, breathing new life into a text as it enters a foreign context. It's not simply about transferring meaning but about fostering communication. It enables audiences to hear another culture's voice in their own language while remaining true to their sense of identity.

## **Conclusion**

Theatrical translation stands as an art form in itself, demanding sensitivity to linguistic subtleties, cultural dynamics, and aesthetic elements. It calls upon translators to engage their creativity rather than adhere blindly to the original text. The result is a piece meant to be performed, not just read—a living, breathing work that evokes emotion and connection on stage. This process transforms translation into an immersive experience, one that bridges cultures and creates meaningful moments for performers and audiences alike.