

Proverbs in Translation: A Study Based on Some Identified Proverbs

Srikandavel, Gayathree
Department of Translation Studies
Faculty of Arts
University of Jaffna
gayachan57@gmail.com

Introduction

Translation is indispensable towards the march of globalization. It is an art of reproducing the substance of the original in target language(s); first in terms of meaning then in terms of style. In a way translation is the replacement of textual material in one language by equivalent textual material in other language(s).

Many aspects ought to be taken into consideration with keen attention in the process of translation. The original should be viewed from word-level to pragmatic-level. Finding an appropriate equivalent or substituting with an apt parallel is the first and foremost process. Translation involves the studying of the Lexicon, grammatical structure and cultural context of the source language text, analyzing it in order to determine its meaning and then reconstructing the very substance to suit the structure and cultural context of the target language without any shortcomings. Finding the apt equivalence is the most important procedure in translation.

In order to do a translation a translator should be familiar with the cultural aspects of the source language as well as the target language. A language has strong influence on the traditions, norms and culture of the people who speak the language. As far as proverbs, idiomatic phrases and such cultural aspects are concerned they ought to be substituted with parallels.

Research Problem

Proverbs, idioms and phrases have been in vogue among the country folks for long. Their interpretations depend on the climate, culture, norms, traditions and the context in a particular language of a group of people. In translation proverbs, idioms, phrases and the likes are substituted with their respective parallels in the target language.

It is observed in this study regarding the awareness of this culture specific expression while doing translation. Some challenges have been encountered while transferring these culture specific expressions from the source language into the target language.

Objective

This study aims at analyzing possibilities of some such substitutions between English and Tamil languages. Through which awareness may be created in the translations of these traditional aspects. As translation is an ongoing process the knowledge of parallel

proverbs in different languages may be helpful to the budding translators to cope up the problems emerging in the modern context of globalization.

Limitation of the Study

Among all culture specific expressions such as proverbs, idioms and phrases, some proverbs of contemporary usages in Tamil language are identified and given to a group of Undergraduates of Translation Studies.

The substitutions are viewed through some classifications in order to give a clear explanation.

The proverbs are cited with their respective parallels in the suitable classification.

Methodology

A group of under graduates of Translation Studies of University of Jaffna is given a task of transferring the identified proverbs from the source language into the target language. Students encounter many issues regarding these culture specific references to search for the proper parallels.

Then the culture specified aspects, connotations and cultural terms are explained.

Their translations are analysed. So, attention should be paid while doing translation of these culture specific references as they ought to be substituted with the respective parallels.

Some classifications could be observed in the substitution of parallels of the identified proverbs.

It is felt that this classification may ease the study and give clarity.

1. Some parallels seem to be direct translation.

Technically they are known in translation as formal equivalence.

The face is the index of the mind

அகத்தின் அழகுமுகத்தில் தெரியும்

All that glitters is not gold

மின்னுவதெல்லாம் பொன்னல்ல

No smoke without fire

நெருப்பின்றிப் புகையாது

2. Some parallels differ as per the cultural elements of the languages.

Good wine needs no bush

உழுக்கிறாடெனில் உள்ளூரில் விலைபோகும்

Robbing Peter to pay Paul

வழித்தேங்காயைஎடுத்துத் தெருப்பிள்ளையாருக்கு அடித்தல்

Wolf in sheep's clothing

பசுத்தோல் போர்த்திய புலி

3. Some parallels give the same meaning with the rhetoric beauty of the languages.

Burnt child dreads fire

சூடு கண்டபூனைஅடுப்பங்கரைநாடாது

Birds of a feather flock together

இனம் இனத்தைநாடும்

Still water runs deep /

Empty vessels make loud noise

நிறைகுடம் தளம்பாது

4. There may be more parallels in the target language for a proverb in the source language.

In such cases appropriateness could be achieved by selecting as per the context.

Unity is strength

ஒற்றுமையேபலம்

அடம்பன் கொடியும் திரண்டால் மிடுக்கு

ஒன்றுபட்டால் உண்டுவாழ்வு

5. Some proverbs are provided with a rhythmic pattern in the language.

Health is wealth

நோயற்றவாழ்வேகுறைவற்றசெல்வம்

A hungry man is an angry man

பசிவந்தால் பத்தும் பறந்திடும்

Art is long and time is short

கல்விகரையிலகற்பவர் நாள் சில

6. Some proverbs may sound as the same. But they give entirely different meanings.

வலது கை செய்வதை இடது கை அறியாது

இது குறிப்பது, ஒருவருக்குஉதவிசெய்யும்போதுஅடுத்தவருக்குத் தெரியாமல் செய்வதாகும்

Right hand doesn't know what the left hand does.

It means that,

One member of a group does not have knowledge of the other member's actions or tasks.

Some proverbs in the source language may not have parallels in the source language.

“Action speaks louder than words”

Here a question arises, whether such proverbs can be translated directly into the target language or not.

Such proverbs can be substituted as per the need and context.

சொல்லிலும் செயல் வலிதே

During translation the parallels should be aptly chosen and employed with careful attention to the matters mentioned above.

Conclusion

With the enhancement of knowledge and evolution of language, Translation has become a powerful medium. Indeed Translation has a prominent role in a multi lingual society.

An accomplished translation should suit the milieu of the target language. Thus, in the art of translation, proverbs should be carefully considered and properly substituted with the respective parallels. Since each language has its own peculiar linguistic elements intertwined with literary and cultural connotations. Therefore, an awareness and knowledge of these traditional aspects may enrich the performance of translation and enhance the effect of translation.

Though the undergraduates are aware of substituting the parallels, at times they encounter some challenges especially in culture specific expression. So it is appreciable to have a close acquaintance with the source culture as well as target culture.

Keywords: Culture; Parallel; Proverb; Substitution

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