Difficulties in Translating Texts from English to Tamil

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Abstract

Translation is the transfer of the meaning from one language to another. The translator may face many problems and difficulties in the process of translation. The main problems are syntactic, linguistics, cultural matters, and specific text. Discussing the difficulties of translation from English to Tamil and Tamil to English are important fields of translation because of the intensive need to this type of research. This study aims at detecting the problems of translating wordy sentences from English to Tamil. This work focuses its light on the syntactic problems. This study is based on the hypothesis that almost all the sentences contain redundancies or other unnecessary repetitions. Translators know the syntactic process of translation and use them correctly in their translations. The objective of this research is to identify type of syntactic errors in translation, student' difficulties in translating text, and factors influence students' error in translating English to Tamil. The research used descriptive and quantitative method. The results of this research showed the difficulties in translating from English to Tamil were elliptical errors, idioms, textual meaning, grammatical issues (tenses, word order, clauses,), structural ambiguity, and lack of strategy in syntactical errors.

Introduction

Translation Studies is an academic discipline related to the study of the theory, practice, and phenomena of Translation. This research is designed to serve as guidance for undergraduates and postgraduates in translation, translation studies and theory and as a solid theoretical introduction for students, researchers, instructors, and professional translators. The aim is to enable the readers to develop their understanding of the problems of syntax encountered in Translation process. This research is intended to professional studies and also for the linguist and translators.

Syntactic Problems in English to Tamil Translation

Every act of communication is an act of translation. Without translation, we would be living in provinces bordering on silence. Everyone has different opinion on translation. According to me translation means transferring the intended idea of the original author with

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the grammatical constrains and the culture of the target language. The modern age is the age of translation. The world has become a global village. Knowledge is just a click away.

Translation has established itself as a powerful tool for communication. It brings people closer to each other and develops a sense of appreciation for each other's language and culture. Therefore, translation fulfills the communication gap between two people or more nations. Translation involves many fields like legal, media, medical, literary, academic, and so on. Translation is not an easy task. Today many people think that anyone who knows more than one language can become a translator or an interpreter. Butit is not so, because a good translator must have fine background knowledge of both languages, subject knowledge, social& cultural competence and apart from it he /she need advanced language skills for the medium of communication.

Translation is basically a linguistic activity. Linguistic is the scientific study of the language. The scholar Basudeb Chakraborthy says that a good translation shows a spontaneous and creative process of journey of a theme from one linguistic framework to another. No two languages have equal or identical structure. Each language has a unique structure. To understand this structure, we need the help of linguistic.

As I have said above, the translator must know both background knowledge of the subject matter and the linguistic aspects also because linguistics and translation are interrelated. While doing a translation he/she faces a lot of problems like linguistic problems, cultural problems, contextual problems, and problems in translating terminologies or finding an appropriate equivalent. Therefore, when we considering linguistic problems, the translator should know the "micro-linguistics and its usages". Generally, linguistics can be divided into two categories such as micro-linguistics and macro-linguistics. Micro-linguistics further divided into four branches such as

- Phonology – The study of speech sound and their patterns.
- Morphology – The study of words, word formation and words variations.
- Syntax – The study of sentence structure.
- Semantics – The study of meaning.

The scholar Gopinathan (1985) categorized such problems under the heading of "**translinguistic problems**". Theseinclude:

Phonological level - it consists sound effects, figures of speech based on sound effects, adaptation of foreign phonemes grapho-phonological problems of transliteration.

Word level - it consists choice of words, functional styles and vocabulary range, echo words, compound words problems.

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Morphological level- it consists of number, gender, case, verb, tense problems.

Syntax level – it consists phrases, sentences, clauses, tone groups, and syntax in verse translation problems.

Therefore, under this topic let us discuss about the syntactic problems in English to Tamil translation. Before that we must understand about the syntax. Syntax refers to the vocabulary and the rules of sentence formation of a language. These rules are called the grammar of language and they guide the construction of complicated expressions from terms and sentences. So, while translating a text, if any sentence structural problems arise, we will call that 'syntactic problems.'

While translating a text, sentences should be in grammatically and semantically corrected.

E.g.: Dog bites Ram. (Syntactically& semantically correct)
நாய் இராமனைக் கடிக்கிறது.
In this sentence, both grammatical structure and meaning are correct.

Ram bites dog. (Syntacticallycorrect& semantically wrong)
இராமன் நாயைக் கடிக்கிறான்.

In this sentence, grammatical structure is correct but meaning is wrong.So, the translator must be careful in this aspect.

Word order is a problem for the translator. Every language is distinct from another language. Even if the two languages belong to the same family, there would always be some difference between them. Each language has its own word order pattern. So, while translating, the translator should know both source language (SL) and target language (TL) sentence structure pattern.

E.g.: English has SVO pattern.
I(S) eat (V) bread (O).

But Tamil has SOV pattern.
நான்(S) பாண்(O) சாப்பிடுகிறேன்(V).

We know that Tamil is an agglutinative language. So, we can change the words in our sentence without altering the meaning.

E.g.: அவன் சீதையைக் கண்டான்.
அவன் கண்டான் சீதையை.
கண்டான் சீதையை அவன்.

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கண்டான் அவன் சீதையை.
சீதையை அவன் கண்டான்.
சீதையை கண்டான் அவன்.

AsTamil is a flexible language, we can create meaningful sentences in a number of ways. But in English we can't do that. We can only translate it as "He **saw Sita**."

Other problems are number, gender and case. It means that in English, verb doesn't show gender. But in Tamil, according to the noun, verbs also change.

E.g.: Mala **drinks** tea.   மாலா தேநீர் குடிக்கிறாள்.
Kamal **drinks** tea.   கமல் தேநீர் குடிக்கிறான்.
Dog **drinks** milk.   நாய் தேநீர் குடிக்கிறது.
I **drink** milk.   நான் தேநீர் குடிக்கிறேன்.

Subject-verb agreement is another syntactic problem in translation. Knowledge of subject-verb agreement is very important to the translators.

E.g.: In English, a singular subject takes the verb in the singular and a plural subject takes the verb in plural.

<u>It</u>**is** a pen.   <u>I</u> **am** a girl.
<u>They</u>**are** flowers.   <u>He</u> **plays** cricket.

If two or more singular subjects proceeded by "each" or "every" are connected by "and", the verb is usually singular.

- **Each** student and **each** teacher **comes** to the main hall.

ஒவ்வொரு மாணவரும் ஒவ்வொரு ஆசிரியரும் பிரதான மண்டபத்திற்கு **வருகை தருகின்றார்.**

Here, Tamil translation of the world should be as வருகை தருகின்றார்.

- **Every**plant and fruit of my garden **is** beautiful.

எனது தோட்டத்திலுள்ள ஒவ்வொரு தாவரமும் பழமும் **அழகானது.**(Correct)
எனது தோட்டத்திலுள்ள ஒவ்வொரு தாவரமும் பழமும் *அழகானவை.*(Wrong)
Here, Tamil translation of the world should be as **அழகானது.**

Like this, there are almost 30 types of subject-verb agreements available in English language. The translator should understand the differences between them. Then only he can overcome from these types of syntactic problems.

While translating a text, translator faces "hierarchical structural" problem. It means what modifies what.

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E.g.: 1.They need more **enthusiastic workers**.
        2. They need **more enthusiastic** workers.

When we glance those two sentences, we think that both are same. But actually not. Understanding the highlighted parts is important.

- In the first sentence, they want *more of enthusiastic workers* and
- In the second sentence, they want *workers who are more enthusiastic*.

So, when we translate such sentences, we had a prior knowledge about them. Tamil translation of those sentences like this:

அவர்களுக்கு **உற்சாகமான பணியாளர்கள்** அதிகமாகத் தேவைப்படுகிறார்கள்.
அவர்களுக்கு **உற்சாகம் நிறைந்த** பணியாளர்கள் தேவைப்படுகிறார்கள்.

Syntactic category commonly includes ***parts of speech*** and ***phrase structuregrammars***. This aspect is the greatest challenges for any translators. Words can be categorized into parts of speech based on their morphological, syntactic, and semantic properties. Generally, we can divide parts of speech into two classes such as open class and closed class.

Open class means new items are added to the class over the time. It includes nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs.

Closed class means new items are added very rarely and it contains small number of words. It includes determiners, pronouns, prepositions, and conjunctions.

Actually, in this topic we can understand the syntactical structures of the parts of speech and phrases. Knowing this matter really helps the translators to overcome from this barrier.

✓ Nouns

E.g.: doll-**s**: morphology = (noun + plural marker 's')   பொம்மைகள்

Usually, syntax has a determiner, and it can be modified by an adjective.

A doll (ஒரு பொம்மை)
Many dolls (பல பொம்மைகள்)   syntax = (determiners + noun)
The beautiful doll (அழகான பொம்மை)

I think now we have got the clarification about the morphological structure of noun and the syntactic structure of noun. Hereafter I only give the examples of syntactic structure of rest of the part of speech.

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✓ Verbs

Here, auxiliaries and modals are included as syntax.

E.g.:   I **will** sing. (நான் **பாடுவேன்**.)
        I **have** done my work. (நான் எனது வேலையைச் **செய்திருக்கிறேன்**.)
        He **must** learn. (அவன் **கட்டாயம்** படிக்கவேண்டும்.)

✓ Adjectives

When determiners modify a noun, it becomes an adjective.

E.g.:   She is **a beautiful** girl. (அவள் மிகவும் **அழகான** பெண்.)
        It's **a fine** day. (**நல்லதொரு** நாள்.)

✓ Adverbs

Adverbs modify verbs and adjectives.

E.g.:   Rabbit runs **fast**. (முயல் **வேகமாக** ஓடுகிறது.)
        We write **quickly**. (நாங்கள் **விரைவாக** எழுதுகிறோம்)
        It's a **really** *beautiful* place (**உண்மையிலேயே** இது ஒரு அழகான இடமாகும்).
Closed classes.

✓ Determiners
        Articles (a, an, the), quantifiers (few, little, any), possessives (my, his, her), cardinals (one, two), ordinals (first, second, third) and demonstrative pronouns (this, that, those) come before a noun.

E.g.**:** **These two** kids are very beautiful.
        இந்த இரு பிள்ளைகள் மிகவும் அழகானவர்கள்.

✓ Pronoun

E.g.**:** **I** run. (**நான்** ஓடுகிறேன்.)
        It is **my** house. (**அது எனது** வீடாகும்.)

✓ Preposition

According to the syntax, prepositions stand before noun phrase.

E.g: Book is **on***the table*. (மேசையின் **மீது** புத்தகம் இருக்கிறது.)

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✓ Conjunctions

It connects two words or phrases on the same level.

E.g: I **and** my mother went to temple.
நா**னும்** அம்மா**வும்** கோயிலுக்குப் போனோம்.

So, these are the most important things in parts of speech. Now let's discuss about the phrases and its aspects in translation. Phrase is a sequence of words or a group of words arranged in a grammatical construction and functions as a unit in a sentence. These phrases are mainly divided into five types.

1. Noun phrase (NP)
    When determiners follow by noun or adjective it is called as 'noun phrase'.
    E.g.**:**   **The** (Det) boy (Noun) drives the car.
             These (Det) **big** (Adj) elephants eat banana.
2. Adjective phrase (AdjP)
    Adjective phrase is a phrase which modifies a noun. Adjective functions as a headword of the phrase.
    E.g.: They look **very happy.**
           அவர்கள் மகிழ்ச்சியாகக் காணப்படுகின்றனர்.
3. Verb phrase (VP)
    Verb phrase composed of at least one verb and the dependent of the verb. It's a headword of the phrase.
    E.g: I **met my friends**.
          நான் எனது நண்பர்களை சந்தித்தேன்.

4. Adverb phrase (AdvP)
    It is a phrase which often plays the role of telling when, where, why, or how an event occurred. It's a headword of the phrase.
    E.g: She eats **very fast**.
           அவள் வேகமாகச் சாப்பிட்டாள்.

5. Prepositional phrase (PP)
    Phrase which begins with a preposition. It is a headword of the phrase.
    E.g.:   I go **to the school**.
            நான் பாடசாலைக்குச் செல்கிறேன்.

These are the most important phrases that the translator considers while translating. Why I'm telling this, when translated complex sentences especially in legal works, the translator has an ability to identify the main verb of the sentence and also sort out the small

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sentences then he joins them in a full sentence. Therefore, this phrase structure knowledge will help his work much easier.

Tense is another problem in both languages. Tamil has three tenses and English has twelve sentences. It means both Tamil and English have past, present and future tense. But unlike in Tamil each English tense consists of four types.

In English, there is a difference between present perfect and present perfect continuous tense. But in Tamil, both tenses' meanings are probably same.

E.g.:   We **have studied** English for ten months. (Present perfect)
நாங்கள் பத்துமாதமாக ஆங்கிலம் படித்துள்ளோம்.

We **have been studying** English for six months. (Present perfect)
நாங்கள் பத்து மாதமாக ஆங்கிலம் படிக்கின்றோம்.

The present participle can be used as an **adjective** and a **gerund**.

E.g.: He **is swimming**. அவன் நீந்துகிறான்.(Verb + ing)
He loves **swimming**. அவன் நீந்துவதை விரும்புகிறான். (gerund)
Swimming is a good exercise. நீச்சல் சிறந்ததொரு உடற்பயிற்சியாகும். (Gerund)
He is a **swimming man**. அவர் ஒருநீச்சல் வீரராவார்.(adjective)

Like this, past participles also used to indicate the **perfecttense**, **passive voice** as well as an **adjective** too.

E.g: I **have broken** the chair. நான் கதிரையை உடைத்துள்ளேன். (Present perfect)
The palace **has been broken**. அரண்மனை உடைக்கப்பட்டிருக்கிறது. (Passive)
Broken chair is in the room. அறையில் உடைந்த கதிரையொன்று உள்ளது. (Adjective)

Sometimes exceptional modal verbs will be the greatest challenge for the translators.

E.g.:   The modal verb "**can**" indicate **low possibility / ability**. If the translator doesn't know the differences between them, it will lead mistranslation.
- It's a wild dog. It **can** bite you. **(Possibility)**
இது ஒரு காட்டு நாய். உங்களைக் **கடிக்கும்.**
- It is a pet dog, it could bite you. **(Impossible)**
இது ஒரு வீட்டு நாய். உங்களைக் **கடிக்காது.**

Through this we can understand that '*can' indicates possibility. 'Could' indicatesimpossibility.* So,
   ✓ I'm very hungry, I **could** eat a horse. (Correct, possibility)

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o   I'm very hungry, I **can** eat a horse. (Wrong, impossible)

Hence translator must have the knowledge about exceptional modal verbs.

When we are talking about the tenses, we cannot leave the passive topic. Both are interrelated. Generally passive forms enhance the writing. That is why passive forms are mostly used in academic works. So, the translator must have a thorough knowledge about passive forms. In English, there are eight passive forms. All the perfect continuous tenses and the future continuous tense do not have passive forms.

E.g.:   Project **will have been completed** before the deadline.

This sentence must be translated as செயற்றிட்டம் முடிவுத் திகதிக்கு முன்னதாக நிறைவு செய்யப்பட்டு விடும்.

These are the most important syntactic features in any language. So, the translator must have thorough knowledge of these features. If the translator doesnot have an ability to differentiate those matters, the translation will be a problematic one.

I have already mentioned some solutions for the syntactic problems in translation. Here are some ways to overcome from the syntactic barriers.

Translator can use cultural substitution in his or her translation.

E.g.: If the author used the sentence "he had pudding" in his original work, the translator may translate it as "அவன் பாயாசம் குடித்தான்."
He also uses transposition techniques.

If the original sentence is in possessive adjective form, he can tell it in a definite article form without altering the meaning.
▪   **Your hair** is too long. (possessive adjective)
▪   You have **the hair** too long. (definite article)
Verb into noun.
▪   I **intended** to tell you the whole truth. (Verb)
▪   My **intention** was to tell you the whole truth.(Noun)
The translator also uses reformulation techniques to overcome the problem.

E.g.:   The sentence "He always works enthusiastically" can be translated as "அவன் ஓய்வின்றி வேலை செய்கிறான்"

Like this, he can use any types of translation techniques and strategies to overcome the syntactic problems in translation.

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Conclusion

Any two languages are not identical in its nature. In the process of translation, there are some barriers to overcome the translation. They are linguistic, contextual, and grammatical problems. For us, translation is considered as bilingually mediated communication process or activity, which involves a large number of interacting factors. The finding suggests that the predominant strategy of individuals with little experience in translation consists in replacing words of one language with those of another without more complex text analysis.

Most of the translators whether they are beginners or experienced people tend to adopt literal translation as practice. The structure of sentences in English and other languages may be different. The culture practiced by the speakers in each language may also be vastly different. In many languages,certain terms may be completely absent. They are some of the most common translation problems and solutions that translators face on their translation. Students make use of grammar checkers,translation memory tools and other techniques to ensure that you have maintained the structure in the target language without changing the meaning or sense of the source document. Translators must familiarize themselves with the commonly used idioms and grammatical knowledge.Most errors were observed in grammar, omission, addition, anddeviationrespectively. There are other problems which have not been ignored, but not investigated properly. It is believed that the insights gained from the study of errors in syntax connected with translation for developing appropriate materials and effective teaching techniques. It is expected that this study can help students in Translation studies and researchers to deal with such issues and the method to handle other problems.

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