

Comparative Views of Problems in Translating Prose and Poetry

K. Pouna, M.A., M.Phil., B.Ed.
Assistant Professor of English
Noble College of Arts and Science for Women
Pouna85@gmail.com

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Translation is a tough job. It is difficult to translate a literary piece. Translation proves to be a challenging task because differences between one language and another loom large in the domain of lexis, in the field of grammar and in the sphere of culture. There are many language problems encountered by the translator. The writers use of many dialectical terms which refers to the usage of vocabulary i.e characteristic of a specific group or community of people. For such terms which belong to the Brahmia community were given the closet English equivalents. In some cases, the author had used unexplained acronyms and abbreviations. The author has also used many proper names for people, organization and places, etc.

For the classical words, the translator finds difficult to find the meaning of those classical words and the translator transliterated. These are certain certain expressions that untransposable from culture and another. Mainly, the words that pass effortlessly into everyday speech and some similies and metaphors in tamil and some sayings and proverbs would be impossible to render in English as well as in other Indian Languages. Cultural aspects can complicate translation. As these terms cannot be omitted, the translator, has given the most suitable English equivalent for cultural terms and colloquial expression.

Poetry is, in the first instance, carefully contrived to express exactly what the poet wants to say. Secondly, to achieve his end, the poet calls forth all the resources of the language in which he is writing, matching the choice of words, the order of the words, and grammatical constructions as well as phonological features peculiar to the language in metre, perhaps supplemented by rhyme, assonance and alliteration. The difficulty of translating poetry can be realized from Matthew Arnold's evaluation of the work of all the three translators of Homer's Illiad: "Homer is rapid in his movement. Homer is plain in his words and style. Homer is simple in his ideas. Pope renders him ill because he is fantastic in his ideas. Mr. Newman renders him ill because he is odd in his words and ignoble in his manner." (Qtd in Das 49).

Novels, Short stories, and Essay are written in prose. Prose is said to be a simple structure and therefore it is simpler and easier to translate. It proves to be a tough job, if the prose is in

classical style, descriptive in details, symbolic in its purport, satirical and ironic in its tone and colloquial in its flavour. But attempts can be made to achieve a readable translation, instead of closely following the SL Text. General rules of translation for poetry may also be followed wherever applicable.

Obstacles

There are obstacles and setbacks in rendering prose and poetry at various levels. At the Phonological level, there are hurdles posed by rhyme, rhythm, metre, assonance and onomatopoeia. The Sprung Rhythm in the nursery Rhyme cannot be reproduced in translation. Alliteration, assonance and Onomatopoeia cannot be preserved in rendition from one language into another. Sound and sense go together. Who can separate the smile from the lips? Theodore Savory quotes a line from Virgil which “has ever become famous because its rhythm and accents suggest the hudding of the hooves of a galloping horse but no translator can preserve and reproduce this.”(Savory 79).At the structural level, there are problems posed by the word-order, word-ending and the stanza and the stanzaic pattern and the sentence length.The form, the special arrangement of lines are the line-ending are important in a poem. It is of paramount importance in the case of the sonnet, the Limmerick, the Japanese Haiku, and the French Villanelle.

At the lexical level, allusions – historical, classical, Biblical, topical – pose problems. They cannot be translated. They can only be transliterated. Insurmountable difficulties occur in translating religious texts .To translate a poem, a translator should be a poet. To translate sacred texts, he should be both a scholar and a seer. He should be able to catch the nuances – the subtle, the suggestive, the symbolic, the mystical, the mysterious, the allusive and the unexpected.

In prose there are problems and difficulties in finding equivalence, and thus there are areas of untranslatability. Catford talks of Linguistic (lexical level) and cultural untranslatability. Linguistic untranslatability is due to the absence of lexical or syntactical substitutes in the TL. Lexical untranslatability is due to the absence of a lexical substitute in the TL. Eg. The word saral [ca: ral] = intermittent shower cannot be rendered into English; for there is no lexical substitute for ca: ral in English.

Nida talks of the problems encountered at the lexical level when terms and concepts in the SL do not exist in the TL. Some languages distinguish minute differences between one thing and another while some do not. English has a large number of words for ‘snow’ making minute differences ice, snow, fog, mist, dew etc. Tamil has only one word ‘pani’ to denote all these. Homonyms in Indian languages create problems for the translator: ‘Shiksha’ in Hindi is teaching or education and in Marathi ‘punishment’. ‘Razinama’ is used in Marathi , but in Hindi, it means ‘agreement’.

The distinction between the syntactical systems of the SL and TL pose problems. English has both Active voice and passive voice but Tamil has no passive voice. Indian languages have more kinship terms than in English language. Some of the kinship terms in Tamil are used as mark of respect or as a token of affection it is impossible to find an equivalent term for items if food and drink units of weights cup measures between languages that are not culturally linked.

Proverbs, idioms, figures of speech, metaphor, alliterations cannot be translated into another. The problem and difficulty generally faced in translating a Tamil version into English is giving the certain names in English. As the sound of the two Languages do not synchronized always, the difficulty arises there.

In translating a prose, the translator needs a depth of knowledge of the author, his background etc. In order to interpret what he has written. If the Translator does not understand the meaning of the particular word, one can only guess the meaning and translate, sometimes it may be dangerous. The Translations of the proper names are the example of the problems of trying to render a source language system in Target Language that does not have a comparable system.

Similarities in Poem and Prose

Untranslatability occurs both in poem and prose. Transliteration is employed by the translator in order to maintain their sense. Slang or informal language consisting of words and expressions that are not considered appropriate for formal accessions, often vulgar, also complicate the translation process. The distinction between syntactical systems of the SL and TL prose problems cultural aspects can complicate translation. As these terms cannot be omitted, the translator has given the most suitable English equivalent for cultural terms and colloquial expressions. The use of obscure jargons, a characteristic language of a particular group and obscure idiomatic expressions, whose meanings cannot be inferred from the meanings of the words that make it up also pose a problem to the translator. Transliteration only occurs in both poetry and prose when the translator find difficult in translating certain aspects.

Differences in Prose and Poetry

Geographical barriers in this is another obstacle in translation. The readers will not understand equal terms in English as it is mentioned in Tamil words. It will be unfamiliar to the English reader. In translating, the translator needs a depth knowledge of the author, his background etc in order to interpret what he has written. Whereas in poetry there is no such hardship.

Conclusion

This paper brings out the comparative views of problems in translating a prose and poetry and it also brings out the similarities and differences in translating a prose and poetry.

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