Lexical Gaps and Untranslatability in Translation

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1. Introduction

Linguists consider the word as a crucial unit in their description of language. While doing so they mostly focus on those words that are recognized as part of the vocabulary of a language. Sometimes it is relevant to consider the words that are not part of the vocabulary. They can be referred to as non-existing words. In lexical semantics, it is customary to talk about lexical gaps instead of referring to non-existing words. The non-existing words are indications of "gaps" or "holes" in the lexicon of the language that could be filled.

Lexical gaps are also known as lexical lacunae. The vocabulary of all the languages, including English and Tamil, shows lexical gaps. For example, the English noun *horse* as a hypernym incorporates its denotation both *stallion* (male horse) and *mare* (female horse). However, there is no such hypernym in the case of *cows* and *bulls*, which subsumes both *cow* and *bull* in denotation. The absence of such a hypernym is called a lexical gap. Lyons (1977, pp. 301-305) addresses lexical gaps from a structuralist perspective. He defines lexical gaps as slots in a patterning. Wang (1989) defines lexical gaps as empty linguistic symbols and Fan (1989) defines them as empty spaces in a lexeme cluster. Rajendran (2001) defines lexical gap as a vacuum in the vocabulary structure of a language.

We always encounter the lexical gaps when we try to translate one language into another or develop a bilingual or multilingual dictionary or lexical data bases like WordNet or Thesaurus or Ontology for the vocabulary of a language. The present work addresses how lexical gaps constitute a thorny area for translation between English and Tamil and the strategies adopted by the translators to encounter or overcome the problem of the lexical gap.

Untranslatability is a property of a text or of any utterance, in one language, for which no equivalent text or utterance can be found in another language when translated. Terms are, however, neither exclusively translatable nor exclusively untranslatable. Rather, the difficult level of translation depends on their nature, as well as on the translator's knowledge of the languages in question. Quite often, a text or utterance that is considered "untranslatable" is actually a lacuna or lexical gap. That is, there is no one-to-one equivalence between the word, expression or turn of phrase in the source language and another word, expression or turn of phrase in the target language. A translator can, however, resort to number of translation procedures to compensate lexical gap. Therefore, untranslatability or difficulty of translation does not always carry deep linguistic relativity implications; denotation can virtually always

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 20:5 May 2020**
Prof. Rajendran Sankaravelayuthan
Lexical Gaps and Untraslatability in Translation   56

be translated, given enough circumlocution, although connotation may be ineffable or inefficient to convey. (Wikipedia on "Untranslatability").

There is a school of thought identified with Walter Benjamin that identifies the concept of "sacred" in relation to translation and this pertains to the text that is untranslatable because its meaning and letter cannot be disassociated. It stems from the view that translation should realize the imagined perfect relationship with the original text. This theory highlights the paradoxical nature of translation wherein it—as a process—assumes the forms of necessity and impossibility at the same time. This is demonstrated in Jacques Derrida's analysis of the myth of Babel, a word which he described as a name that means confusion and also a proper name of God. Furthermore, Derrida noted that when God condemned the world to a multiplicity of tongues, he created a paradoxical need and impossibility of translation.

Derrida himself has put forward his own notion of the untranslatability of the text, arguing in his early works such as the Writing and Difference and Margins of Philosophy that there is an excess of untranslatable meaning in literature and these cannot be reduced to a closed system or a restricted economy "in which there is nothing that cannot be made to make sense."

Brian James Baer posits that nations sometimes see untranslatability as proof of its national genius. Literature that can be easily translated may be considered as lacking originality, while translated work themselves may be regarded merely as imitations. Baer quotes Jean-Jacques Rousseau defining true genius as "the kind that creates and makes everything out of nothing". Paraphrasing Robert Frost's remark about poetry ("Poetry is what gets lost in translation"), Baer suggests that "one could define national identity as that which is lost in translation". He further quotes Alexandra Jaffe: "When translators talk about untranslatable, they often reinforce the notion that each language has its own 'genius', an 'essence' that naturally sets it apart from all other languages and reflects something of the 'soul' of its culture or people".

Quite often, a text or utterance that is considered to be "untranslatable" is considered a lacuna, or lexical gap. That is, there is no one-to-one equivalence between the word, expression or turn of phrase in the source language and another word, expression or turn of phrase in the target language. A translator can, however, resort to number of translation procedures to compensate for lexical gap. From this perspective, untranslatability or difficulty of translation does not always carry deep linguistic relativity implications; denotation can virtually always be translated, given enough circumlocution, although connotation may be ineffable or inefficient to convey.

2. Lexical Idiosyncrasies

One will come across various types of idiosyncrasies or discrepancies if one makes a contrastive analysis of a source and a target language. Bentivogli & Pianta (2009) gives the following as a summary of the most common idiosyncrasies:

2.1. Syntactic Divergencies

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 20:5 May 2020
Prof. Rajendran Sankaravelayuthan
Lexical Gaps and Untraslatability in Translation   57

The syntactic discrepancy arises when the translation equivalent (TE) does not have the same syntactic ordering properties of the source language word.

e.g.

English shows SVO word order whereas Tamil shows SOV word order.

English is prepositional language whereas Tamil is a postpositional language.

The phrase *king of England* in English needs to be translated as *ingkilaant-in arasan* ('England-possessive case marker king') in Tamil.

2.2. Lexicalization Differences

Lexicalization differences come to fore when the source and target languages lexicalize the same concept with a different kind of lexical units (word, compound or collocation) or one of the two languages has no lexicalization for the concept (lexical unit vs. free combination of words). The latter case is called lexical gap. Take for example, *bicycle*; bicycle has been introduced to Tamil culture from outside. Tamil has borrowed the word *caikiL* along with the vehicle, *cycle*. Later, Tamil tried to coin its own indigenous name from its own units of meaning. Thus many names are coined for *bicycle*: *miti vaNTi* which literally means 'vehicle which need to be peddled', *untu vaNTi* 'vehicle which need to be pushed', etc. Similarly, *car* is taken with its foreign name *kaar* 'car'. Later *ciRRuntu* is coined. *Bus* is taken into Tamil culture with its foreign name *pas* 'bus'. Later *peerundtu* is coined. But Tamil shows vacuum or gaps in representing the certain parts of these vehicles. Kinship terms have full of these examples. For the English kinship *uncle*, there are many equivalents in Tamil, each denoting different kinship concepts. So, if you go from Tamil to English, you will realize that there are many lexical gaps in English.

2.3. Divergences in Connotation

The TE fails to reproduce all the nuances expressed by the source language word. For example, *knowledge* in English cannot express all the nuances expressed by *aRivu* in Tamil. *Philanthropy* cannot express all the nuances expressed by the Tamil word *tarmam.* Similarly *paavam* and *puNNiyam* in Tamil cannot be equated respectively with 'sin' and 'blessing' in English.

2.4. Denotation Differences

The denotation difference appears when the denotation of the source language word only partially overlaps the denotation of the TE. For example, English *finger* only partially overlaps with Tamil as *finger* denotes only the terminal part of the hand and not the terminal part of a leg; English makes use of *toe* to denote the terminal part of the leg, whereas Tamil makes of *viral* to denote both the terminal part of the hand and the terminal a part of the leg.

Only the first two idiosyncrasies are relevant to us as they imply lack of cross linguistic synonymy. They are represented as:

• Lexical gaps: Lexical gap denotes an instance where a language expresses a concept as a lexical unit or word while the other language expresses it with a free combination of words.

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 20:5 May 2020**
Prof. Rajendran Sankaravelayuthan
Lexical Gaps and Untraslatability in Translation   58

For example, the word *borrower* is referred in Tamil by the phrase *kaTan vaangkupavar* 'one who gets loan'.

• Denotation differences: Denotation difference arises when the TE of a source language exists, but it is more general (generalization) or more specific (specification). In the former case, the TE is a sort of cross-linguistic hypernym of the source language word (ex. Tamil *viral* = English *finger* or *toe*) and in the latter case it is a cross linguistic hyponym (for example, English word *lion*, which functions as a general term for lion and male of lion is equaled by *cingkam* in Tamil which is only a general term for *lion*; 'male lion' is denoted by the phrase *aaN cingkam*).

3. Defining a Lexical Gap

A competing term for 'lexical gap' is 'lexical hole'. The two terms are alternatively used in the literature available on the topic. However, 'lexical gap' as a term is widely used than 'lexical hole'. The definition of lexical gap depends upon whether we talk about lexical gap within a language or across the languages. As far as translation is concerned, the lexical gaps across language are crucial ones. Of course, the lexical gaps within the language too help us to understand the lexical gaps across the languages in clear terms.

There is a unanimous agreement between linguists and translation specialists of what a lexical gap means. Trask (1993:157) defines lexical gap as "the absence of a hypothetical word which would seem to fit naturally into the pattern exhibited by existing words". The pioneer in field semantics, Lehrer (1974:95) states that the term 'lexical gap' is ambiguous as it has been applied to all sorts of instances where a word, in one way or another, is missing. A lexical gap means the absence of lexicalization of a certain concept. A concept is lexicalized when a language has a lexical item to express the concept. The lexical item could be a single word, a complex word or an idiom or a collocation. The existence of a lexical gap will be noted only when a concept lacks lexicalization and is expressed by a free word combination or any other transformation (e.g. omission, translation by different parts of speech, etc.). Thus the multiword expression X is not a lexical gap, because it is a fixed expression in a language, while Y is a lexical gap, because it is a free-word combination.

In the case of lexical gaps across languages, lexical gaps are considered as instances of lack of lexicalization identified in a language while comparing two languages or in a target language during translation. The problem seems to be minor and clear. But, after going through the linguistic literature on lexical gap one gets rather an opposite impression. The problem is on lexicalization which is explained from linguistic perspective. The definition of lexical gaps is based on linguists' practical requirement as well as their understanding of the process of lexicalization. Thus, lexical gaps are realized across the languages in the following three instances: one is when a source-language word does not have a direct equivalent without going into details about the notion of a direct equivalent itself (Janssen 2004); the second is when a source-language word rendered by a target-language word is rendered by a target-language phrase without distinguishing it from idioms and collocations (Arnold et al 1994, Santos 1993); and the third is when a concept is not encoded by a lexical item, i.e. by a word, a complex word, an idiom and a collocation (Bentivogli and Pianta 2000, Bentivogli et

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 20:5 May 2020**
Prof. Rajendran Sankaravelayuthan
Lexical Gaps and Untraslatability in Translation   59

al 2000). The main difference between these definitions can easily be noticed: the specificity of a lexical item.

A lexical gap is identified on the level of one meaning. It is not identified on the level of a lexeme, which is usually polysemous. In translation, we deal with one meaning with reference to contexts specific only to a specific meaning. A translator is interested in individual meanings. He is not bothered about the semantic structure of a word. Therefore the lexical gaps are identified on the level of individual meaning. In general, we can say that a lexical gap is a concept that is not lexicalized by a lexical item (single word, complex word, an idiom, and collocation) in a language due to its uniqueness. Lexical gap is identified while comparing or translating individual meanings of lexical items in two languages. One of the reasons to study lexical gap is that it is difficult to identify them in advance. Only during translation, one understands that the target-language lacks a certain word. A dictionary in such cases provides a mere explanation of the concept encoded by the source language. Unfortunately, such meaning explanations usually are not good in natural language use.

4. Typology of Lexical Gaps

The study of lexical gaps starts with the work by Chomsky (1965) and Chomsky & Halle (1965). They distinguish between accidental gaps and systematic gaps. Accidental gaps are words that do not exist but could be reasonably expected to exist; on the other hand systematic gaps are words that are not even expected to exist since they violate the rules of what a "good" word is. However, the term lexical gap is reserved only for the accidental gaps in much of the subsequent works.

The accidental gaps in the work of Chomsky and Halle are segments or strings of letters that could possibly form words. Such gaps are called formal gaps, sometimes also referred to as morpheme gaps. DAY TRANSLATIONS (2018) opines that lexical gaps occur in several types. They are realized at phonological (e.g.*pkly/pkli/), morphological (e.g.*ungood), syntactic (e.g.*informations) or semantic (e.g. *male dog) levels. A significant part of the more recent work on lexical gaps, however, deals with semantic gaps. A semantic gap is, in the words of Lehrer (1974), "the lack of a convenient word to express what (the speaker) wants to speak about.", although also words that are possible but not (yet) convenient are considered semantic gaps. A semantic gap is a notion for which there is no word, whereas formal gaps are "words" that do not refer (to any notion). As with formal gaps, we can in principle distinguish between semantic gaps that are accidental, and semantic notion for which no word can exist because they violate the rules of what a "good" notion (for lexicalization) is.

The coarse taxonomy of non-existing words given by Janssen (2004) is given below.

	Accidental	Systematic
Formal	Formal gap	Impossible lexical entry
Semantic	Semantic gap	Non-lexicalizable notion

An overview of the types of lexical gaps given by Janssen (2004) is shown below:

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 20:5 May 2020**
Prof. Rajendran Sankaravelayuthan
Lexical Gaps and Untraslatability in Translation   60

Morpheme gap	A sequence of segments that is permitted by phonological rules but not found. Fillers: possible words
Morphological gap	A word that can be generated from an existing word by productive morphological rules. Mostly understood as derivational rules, and therefore also called derivational gaps. Fillers: potential words
Paradigm gap	A morphological gap in the inflectional morphology.
Semantic/functional gap	A lack of a word to express what a speaker might want to talk about.
Taxonomic gap	A gap in the taxonomic structure. Fillers: pseudo-words
Translational gap	A word in one language for which no lexical unit exists in another that expresses that same meaning. Fillers3: untraslatable words

5. Lexical Gaps and Semantic Fields

The principles of semantic field contribute to the proper understanding of lexical gaps. The proponents of the semantic field theory (Lehrer 1974a, 1974b; Lyons 1977) declare empty spaces in a structure which is also related to the absence of lexicalization as the essential feature of a lexical gap. In this approach, different fields such as taxonomies, hierarchies, clusters, grids, linear structures, and matrixes help to organize the lexicon into conceptual structures where the missing structural part is then best observed and studied in relation to the other units in the field. Different approaches, for example, Bentivogli and Pianta favour contrastive lexicological studies where a lexical gap is identified as a missing translational equivalent in a target language to a lexical item in a source language. The study of lexical gaps has received increased attention in recent times. This is due to the present-day demand for the translation of all kinds of documents, statutes, provisions, regulations, licenses, contracts, and others.

In the light semantic field or lexical field, we can investigate clearly about the lexical vacuums or lexical gaps. The theory of semantic fields emerged heavily influenced by de Saussure's structuralism and German idealism. Trier, who is a pioneer in the lexical field analysis, opines that lexical fields are neatly structured. The whole vocabulary is organized in fields. He introduced the notion of concepts and fields and conceptual fields and advocates that when concepts change in our heads, meaning of a lexeme also changes. Semantic field demonstrates vocabulary organization on the paradigmatic level. The basic assumption is that the vocabulary of a lexical field is an integrated system of lexemes which are interrelated in meaning. The whole of the lexical field consists of many semantic fields that accumulate lexemes which are close in meaning. The vocabulary of a lexical field is a mosaic without gaps or overlaps. His followers disregarded conceptual field. They preserved very neat and rigid structures but could not explain how and why lexical fields change.

It is often common for lexical gaps to come to the fore within semantic fields where there is a hole in the pattern, i.e. "the absence of a lexeme at a particular place in the structure of a semantic field" (Lyons, 1977:301). For instance, the semantic field of temperature in English, as introduced by Conner (1983:43), consists of four terms: *cold*, *cool*, *warm*, *hot*. In

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 20:5 May 2020**
Prof. Rajendran Sankaravelayuthan
Lexical Gaps and Untraslatability in Translation   61

some contexts, these terms turn to be synonyms (e.g. *cold/ cool water*) and in other, they are antonyms (e.g. *cold/ *cool outer space*). On the other hand, in Tamil, the semantic field of temperature involves different terms where a lexical gap is easy to recognize.

The lexical framework of any language is often built in terms of semantic fields (e.g. kinship relations, colour terms, military ranks etc.), sense relations (e.g. hyponymy, synonymy, antonymy etc.), collocation, idioms, and relational opposites. The basic principle behind the availability of certain lexis in any given language is its users' needs. So, a lexical item referring to a particular object or concept can be found in one language, but it is absent in another. Bentivogli and Pianta (2000) are of the opinion that a lexical gap occurs whenever a language expresses a concept with a lexical unit, whereas another language expresses the same concept with a free combination of words. Lyons (1977:303) maintains that lexical gaps are attributed to unlexicalized concepts or objects across languages. For instance, the distinction between dead humans and dead animals leads to the coinage of two lexical items referring to them as 'corpse' and 'carcass' respectively because of institutionalization. However, there is no word referring to dead plants.

The lexical gap ("hole in the pattern") indicates the absence of a lexeme in a point in a particular lexical field. According to Trier, there are no gaps in the system. If they arise (by conceptual innovation), they are quickly filled by borrowing or by extending the meaning of an existing lexeme. It should be remembered in the context that, according to Chomsky, there are no gaps in the system. Gaps appear when you compare languages. Languages show cultural gaps. As one language is culturally different from another language, likely, the cultural items of one language may not be found in the other language. So, it is needless to say that lexical gaps are inevitable in the vocabulary structure of a language. The main reason for lexical gaps is the absence of lexicalization, which is not easily pinned down. However, a major group of lexical gaps can be explained by social and cultural differences of source and target language users. A lexical gap in a target language is identified when its users cannot know the concept encoded by a source language.

Rajendran prepared a thesaurus for Tamil (Rajendran, 2001) based on Nida (Nida, 1975) who developed a thesaurus dictionary for bible translation on the principles of componential analysis. He made a detailed study on lexical gaps or vacuums in the vocabulary structure of Tamil (Rajendran, 2000).

6. Issues with Lexical Gaps in Translation

There are many questions and issues related to lexical gaps in translation. The following are some of them.

6.1. Unadapted loanwords

While translating, we make use of loan words to serve our immediate purpose. There are two kinds of loans, loans adapted to the native language structure and another is unadapted loans. Unadapted loanwords are strange creatures: they are impossible words that are nevertheless lexical words. Lehrer (1974, pp. 95) observes that the incorporation of loanwords into the lexicon of a language can change the orthographic rules of the language.

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 20:5 May 2020
Prof. Rajendran Sankaravelayuthan
Lexical Gaps and Untraslatability in Translation   62

As a consequence, the unadapted loanwords become possible words. This, in turn, creates new orthographic gaps for similar words that become possible but not lexicalized.

6.2. Gaps in the Translation of Idioms

Translation of idioms from SL to TL is a difficult and challenging task. It is challenging to find TE in idioms. The translation of idioms has remained controversial among translation professionals. Lot has been said about the translation of idioms from SL into TL. There is always a dispute over the adequate rendering of idioms. The reason for the difficulty in rendering idioms from SL to TL is that such idioms have one-to-zero equivalents in the TL. Proverbs are no exception in this regard since they are classified as a subcategory of idioms and they are culture-bound. However, this does not mean that this applies to all proverbs; on the contrary, some have one-to-one or one-to-many equivalents.

The translator's task becomes complicated when the expressions and functions of idioms differ in both SL and TL. For the functionally adequate renderings of such idioms (including proverbs), the mastery of the culture and the way of life besides that of the linguistic system become prerequisites. (e.g. *kicked the bucket* in English can be translated normally as *iRa* 'die' in Tamil; a parallel phrase *kalam uTai* 'break the pot', one of the rituals performed during Hindu funeral, is not used in *kick the bucket* sense).

6.3. Morphological Gaps in Translation

Lehrer (1974) and Kjellmer (2003) use the term "derivational gaps" and identify them as gaps within the limits of one language. According to them, derivational gaps are words produced from partially productive stems and suffixes, which are understandable, but not acceptable in a language. For example, although we understand the meaning of "mistelephone", "conversate" or "friable", they do not comply with the norms of the English language (Lehrer 1974b:96-97). We make use of the term to indicate the kind of lexical gaps results from different morphological processes in the source and target languages. The English language has the potential to pack complex concepts into one word because of its rich choice of prefixes, suffixes and stems, most of which have roots in Latin or Greek.

English has a rich in word formation process. It forms verbs from nouns by conversion, nouns from verbs and other grammatical categories by affixation, adjectives and adverbs by adding suffixes *ful* and *ly* respectively (*beauty* + *ful* beatutiful; *beautifull+ly>* beautifully. Though Tamil is a morphologically rich inflectional language and forms new words by suffixation and conversion, the derived words and the meanings are mostly different from English. So, Tamil shows derivational gap when matched with English. Tamil does not usually make use of negative affix equivalent to *un* in English (*un* + *happy>unhappy*, *un* + *healthy>unhealthy*). Many of the derived words in English pose semantic challenges (resulting from morphological gaps) to translators who are attempting translation from English to Tamil.

6.4. Semantico-lexical Gaps in Translation

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 20:5 May 2020**
Prof. Rajendran Sankaravelayuthan
Lexical Gaps and Untraslatability in Translation   63

Semantic gaps result when there are notions for which we have no word to express. To illustrate, consider some words that describe the family members showing specific genders. The words "father," "uncle, "son," "nephew" and "grandfather" indicate male members of the family. The corresponding words for the female family members are "mother," "aunt," "daughter," "niece" and "grandmother." However, the term "cousin" is gender-neutral. It is a term that can be used for a female or male relative. This is an instance in which a semantic gap arises when a specific word has a meaning distinction that can be seen but is missing in the vocabulary. Most instances of semantic lexical gaps are not particularly interesting. A specific type of matrix gap is one that is expected to exist in a hierarchy, either a taxonomic or a meronymic hierarchy, but does not exist (see, for instance, Cruse 2004). Another type of lexical gap of special interest concerns those notions that are lexicalized in one language, but not in another. Here we are concerned with intralanguage semantic gaps.

As mentioned above, the lexical gaps are the resultants of the unlexicalized concepts in a given culture. Language and culture are so intimately related in the sense that the latter is part of the former, which is why some regard language as the mirror of culture. Since the Tamil language has got a long cultural heritage behind it and the Classical Tamil has enriched its lexical framework based on this cultural heritage, much of classical Tamil lexis has no one-to-one equivalents in English. The translators who try to translate classical Tamil have volumes to tell about this predicament. Culture causes many more severe complications for the translator than doing differences in language structure. (Nida, 2000:130).

On the other hand, English has a rich scientific and technical vocabulary. Tamil is very poor when compared to English in these domains. Its lexical gaps are plenty in these domains when comped to English. So Translating science and technical texts in English to Tamil becomes a great challenge to the translators.

7. Resolving the Problem of Lexical Gaps in Translation

Lexical gaps are attributed to a variety of reasons such as the absence of the lexicalization of some concepts in a given language. The lexicalization of the same concepts in another language constitutes translation problems and difficulties. Cultural differences are mirrored by linguistic ones. As there is a very close relationship between language and culture, the cultural gaps are realized in the vocabulary structure of a language. This makes translators' job difficult. Treating the cultural aspects implicit in a source text (ST) and finding the most appropriate techniques for successfully conveying these aspects in the target text (TT) are the problems the translators permanently face. Depending on whether the two (or more) languages concerned are linguistically and culturally related or not, these problems may vary in scope. This could lead to two types of untranslatability: linguistic and cultural. The former is ascribed to the non-existence of a syntactic or lexical substitute in the TT for an ST item, whereas the latter, on the other hand, is due to the absence in the TT culture of a relevant situational feature for the SL text (McGuire, 1980:32). This situation is reflected in

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 20:5 May 2020**
Prof. Rajendran Sankaravelayuthan
Lexical Gaps and Untraslatability in Translation   64

Lyons's (1981:310) statement that "differences of lexical structure (including most obviously, lexical gaps...) make exact translation between languages difficult and at times impossible".

The physical environment of a speech community is also involved in creating lexical gaps in the sense that words are coined by speakers to refer to objects or animals found in their surroundings, but not necessarily found elsewhere. The influence of the environment on language leads the coinage of fifty Eskimo words for 'snow' and one hundred names for the 'camel' in the Arabian Peninsula. When speakers of a language become familiar with the new concept, the lexical mechanism compensates the lack of a particular word in a language for a particular concept or object by adding a new word. Speakers of a language resort to at least the following four mechanisms to fill such lexical gaps: semantic extension, blending, combination of old existing words or borrowing. As to translation, Weise (1988:190) maintains that any gap either in the form of one-to-zero or one-to-many equivalents must be compensated by the translator's skill.

The existing studies on lexical gaps adopting a cross-cultural perspective concentrate too much on the exploration into the lack of equivalents in the process of translating from the SL to the TL. It is a very common fact that a term expressing a particular idea or concept in the SL may not have a corresponding equivalent in the TL. Every translation practitioner is well aware of this fact. In this circumstance, the translator has to resort to free word combinations or translation to give full expression to the idea or concept, which is expressed by one word in the SL. For example, the word *tavil* in Tamil does not have an equivalent in English. Therefore, when translating the word from Tamil into English, we have to use a phrase to do justice to its meaning. In English, it can be expressed by the phrase "a kind of two-headed drum". Many words in English do not have equivalents in Tamil. For example, the word *wittol* does not have an equivalent either in Tamil. It can only be rendered into a phrase.

Svensen (2009, pp. 271-273) divides the cross-linguistic lexical gaps, into two kinds in terms of fields they are mainly concerned with. They are lexical gaps in political systems and lexical gaps in habits and customs. The former refers to the lexical gaps resulting from the absence of the terms in the target language for the particular political, economic and legal institutions. They are readily lexicalized in the source language (e.g. the Electoral College, the Federal Reserve System in the USA). The latter refers to the lexical gaps resulting from the absence of the terms in the target language for the historical events, customs, and festivals (e.g. Thanksgiving, Boston Tea Party). They cannot be translated word for word as both are products of the lack of culture-loaded words in the source language. They must be translated freely and, if necessary, be added with annotations so that the target language readers can understand source language text accurately.

Language speakers take efforts to fill a lexical gap when the language lacks a word for a newly emerging concept. There are methods for filling lexical gaps. One such method is

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 20:5 May 2020**
Prof. Rajendran Sankaravelayuthan
Lexical Gaps and Untraslatability in Translation   65

filling the lexical gaps by means of hypernyms. The vocabulary of a language is a hierarchical system in which words are ranked differently. Some of the words are ranked as superordinate terms or hypernyms, while others are rated as subordinate terms or hyponyms. When a language lacks an appropriate hyponym to express a concrete concept, we can use its hypernym to express this concept by modifying the hypernym with words borrowed from other cognitive domains. For example, *stallion* in Tamil is referred to as *aaN kutirai* 'male horse', which is a combination of 'horse', a hypernym for stallion and the modifier *aaN* "male". Similarly lioness is referred as *peN cingkam* 'female tiger' Relations between hypernyms and hyponyms form the basis of traditional dictionary definitions: the hyponym can be defined in terms of the genus (the hypernym) and the differentiae specificiae, the differentiating features. Therefore, in order to properly relate the Tamil word *viral* with the English word finger, we should not only specify that they are (possible) translations of each other, but also how they differ from each other: that a finger is a dedo, but specifically one of the hand.

There are relatively rare cases of culturally dependent untranslatable concepts. We can quote examples like *mangkalsutram* or *mukuuratam* as untranslatable words. However, the majority of lexical mismatches between languages are more mundane. The following are two typical examples: (1) in Tamil, the same words are used for the extremities of your hand (fingers) and the extremities of your foot (toes), and (2) Tamil lacks a specific word for a female foal (a filly). These are cases where the translational gap can also be described as a taxonomic gap: cases where a hypernym or a hyponym is missing. Notice that *finger* is in no way fundamentally untranslatable in Tamil. There are several strategies for translating such words, and in this particular case, one would use either *viral* or *kai viral* (*viral* of the hand) as the translation depending on the context. But it is a translational gap since there is no direct, single word expression in English for a word in Tamil.

8. Overcoming Untranslatability

The translation procedures that are available in cases of lacunae, or lexical gaps, include the following: adaptation, borrowing, calque, compensation, paraphrase, translator's note, register, etc. (This portion is an abstraction from Wikipedia on "Untranslatability".)

8.1. Adaptation

An adaptation, also known as a free translation, is a procedure whereby the translator replaces a term with cultural connotations; where those connotations are restricted to readers of the original language text, with a term with corresponding cultural connotations that would be familiar to readers of the translated text. Adaptation is often used when translating poetry, works of theatre, and advertising.

For example, in the Belgian comic book *The Adventures of Tintin*, Tintin's trusty canine sidekick Milou is translated as Snowy in English, Bobbie in Dutch, Kuttus in Bengali, and Struppi in German; likewise the detectives Dupont and Dupond become Thomson and

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 20:5 May 2020
Prof. Rajendran Sankaravelayuthan
Lexical Gaps and Untraslatability in Translation   66

Thompson in English, Jansen and Janssen in Dutch, Jonson and Ronson in Bengali, Schultze and Schulze in German, Hernández and Fernández in Spanish, Dùběn and Dùpéng, in Chinese, Dyupon and Dyuponn in Russian and Skafti and Skapti in Icelandic.

8.2. Borrowing

Borrowing is a translation procedure whereby the translator uses a word or expression from the source text in the target text unmodified. In English text, borrowings not sufficiently anglicized are generally in italics.

A loanword (also loan word or loan-word) is a word adopted from one language (the donor language) and incorporated into another language without translation. This is in contrast to cognates, which are words in two or more languages that are similar because they share an etymological origin, and calques, which involve translation. A loanword is distinguished from a calque (or loan translation), which is a word or phrase whose meaning or idiom is adopted from another language by word-for-word translation into existing words or word-forming roots of the recipient language.

Examples of loanwords in the English language include *café* (from French *café*, which literally means "coffee"), *bazaar* (from Persian *bāzār*, which means "market"), and kindergarten (from German *Kindergarten*, which literally means "children's garden").

In a bit of involutionally heterological irony, the word calque is a loanword from the French noun calque ("tracing; imitation; close copy"); while the word loanword and the phrase loan translation are calques of the German nouns *Lehnwort* and *Lehnübersetzung*.

Loans of multi-word phrases, such as the English use of the French term *déjà vu*, are known as adoptions, adaptations, or lexical borrowings. Strictly speaking, the term loanword conflicts with the ordinary meaning of loan in that something is taken from the donor language without it being something that is possible to return.

The terms substrate and superstrate are often used when two languages interact. (However, the meaning of these terms is reasonably well-defined only in second language acquisition or language replacement events, when the native speakers of a certain source language (the substrate) are somehow compelled to abandon it for another target language (the superstrate).

8.3. Calque

Calque (/kælk/) entails taking an expression, breaking it down to individual elements and translating each element into the target language word for word. For example, the German word "Alleinvertretungsanspruch" can be calqued to "single-representation-claim", but a proper translation would result in "an exclusive mandate". Word-by-word translations

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 20:5 May 2020**
Prof. Rajendran Sankaravelayuthan
Lexical Gaps and Untraslatability in Translation   67

usually have comic value but can be a means to save as much of the original style as possible, especially when the source text is ambiguous or undecipherable to the translator.

In linguistics, a calque or loan translation is a word or phrase borrowed from another language by literal word-for-word or root-for-root translation. When used as a verb, "to calque" means to borrow a word or phrase from another language while translating its components, so as to create a new lexeme in the target language.

"Calque" itself is a loanword from the French noun calque ("tracing; imitation; close copy"). Proving that a word is a calque sometimes requires more documentation than does an untranslated loanword because, in some cases, a similar phrase might have arisen in both languages independently. This is less likely to be the case when the grammar of the proposed calque is quite different from that of the borrowing language, or when the calque contains less obvious imagery.

Calquing is distinct from phono-semantic matching. While calquing includes semantic translation, it does not consist of phonetic matching (i.e., retaining the approximate sound of the borrowed word through matching it with a similar-sounding pre-existing word or morpheme in the target language).

Types

Calques can be classified into five groups as follows:

- Phraseological calques, in which idiomatic phrases are translated word for word. For example, "it goes without saying" calques the French *ça va sans dire*.
- Syntactic calques, in which syntactic functions or constructions of the source language are imitated in the target language, in violation of their meaning. For example, in Spanish the legal term for "to find guilty" is properly *declarar culpable* ("to declare guilty"). Informal usage, however, is shifting to *encontrar culpable*: a syntactic mapping of "to find" without a semantic correspondence in Spanish of "find" to mean "determine as true."
- Loan-translations, in which words are translated morpheme by morpheme or component by component into another language. The two morphemes of the Swedish word tonåring calque each part of the English "teenager": *femton* "fifteen" and *åring* "year-old" (as in the phrase *tolv-åring* "twelve-year-old").
- Semantic calques, also known as semantic loans, in which additional meanings of the source word are transferred to the word with the same primary meaning in the target language. As described below, the "computer mouse" was named in English for its resemblance to the animal; many other languages have extended their own native word for "mouse" to include the computer mouse.
- Morphological calques, in which the inflection of a word is transferred.

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 20:5 May 2020**
Prof. Rajendran Sankaravelayuthan
Lexical Gaps and Untraslatability in Translation   68

This terminology is not universal. Some authors call a morphological calque a "morpheme-by-morpheme translation". Other linguists refer to the phonological calque, in which the pronunciation of a word is imitated in the other language. For example, the English word "radar" becomes the similar-sounding Chinese word *pinyin* "*léi dá*".

Loan Blend

Loan blends or partial calques translate some parts of a compound but not others. For example, the name of the Irish digital television service Saorview is a partial calque of that of the UK service Freeview, translating the first half of the word from English to Irish but leaving the second half unchanged. Other examples include "liverwurst" (< German *Leberwurst*) and "apple strudel" (< German *Apfelstrudel*).

8.4. Compensation

Compensation is a translation procedure whereby the translator solves the problem of aspects of the source text that cannot take the same form in the target language by replacing these aspects with other elements or forms in the source text because "equivalence in translation is almost always only partial." For example, many languages have two forms of the second person pronoun: an informal/singular form and a formal/plural form. Tamil has three forms for 'you': *nii*, which is an informal usage, *niingkaL* 'formal' and *niir,* which lies between nii and *niingkaL.* The contemporary English has only one form 'you.' Hence, to translate a text from one of these languages to English, the translator may have to compensate by using a first name or nickname, or by using syntactic phrasing that is viewed as informal in English (I'm, you're, gonna, dontcha, etc.) or by using English words of the formal and informal registers, to preserve the level of formality (you sir, Mister). Similarly, to overcome the lack of distinctive singular and plural forms, the translator may add a word, as in the New English Bible's John 1:51, "I tell you all."

8.5. Paraphrase

Paraphrase, sometimes called periphrasis, is a translation procedure whereby the translator replaces a word in the source text by a group of words or expression in the target text. For example, the Portuguese word *saudade* is often translated into English as "the feeling of missing a person who is gone." A similar example is "dor" in Romanian, translated into English as "missing someone or something that's gone and/or not available at the time".

An example of untranslatability is seen in the Dutch language through the word *gezelligheid*, which does not have an English equivalent, though the German equivalent *Gemütlichkeit* is sometimes used. Literally, it means a cozy, friendly, or nice atmosphere, but can also connote time spent with loved ones, the fact of seeing a friend after a long absence, the friendliness or chattiness of a specific person, or a general sense of togetherness. Such gaps can lead to word borrowing, as with *pajamas* or *Zeitgeist*.

8.6. Translator's Note

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 20:5 May 2020**
Prof. Rajendran Sankaravelayuthan
Lexical Gaps and Untraslatability in Translation   69

A translator's note is a note (usually a footnote or an endnote) added by the translator to the target text to provide additional information about the limits of the translation, the cultural background, or any other explanations.

8.7. Register

Although Thai has words that can be used as equivalent to English "I", "you", or "he/she/it", they are relatively formal terms (or markedly informal). In most cases, Thai people use words which express the relation between speaker and listener according to their respective roles. For instance, for a mother to say to her child, "I'll tell you a story," she would say *mae ja lao nitaan hai luuk fang*, or "Mother will tell child a story." Similarly, older and younger friends will often use sibling terminology, so that an older friend telling a younger friend "You're my friend" would *be nawng pen peuan pii*, would translate directly as "Younger sibling is older sibling's friend". To be translated into English correctly, it is proper to use "I" and "you" for these example statements, but normal Thai perceptions of relation are lost in the process. Similar phenomena can also be observed in Indonesian. One may use the formal form of pronouns, which are generally distinct from the informal/familiar forms; however, the use of these pronouns does not evoke sufficient friendliness or intimacy, especially in spoken language. Instead of saying "*Anda mau pesan apa*?", a waiter/waitress will most likely say "*Bapak/Ibu mau pesan apa*?" (lit. 'Sir/Madam wants to order what?'). Both expressions are equally polite; however, the latter is more sympathetic and friendly. When conversing with family and relatives, most Indonesians also prefer using kinship terminology (father, mother, brother, sister) when addressing older family members. When addressing younger family members, informal pronouns are more prevalent.

8.6. Grammar
Possession

In the case of translating the English word *have* to Arabic, Tamil, Finnish, Hebrew, Hindi, Irish, Japanese, Korean, Russian, Turkish, Urdu, or Welsh, some difficulty may be found. There is no specific verb with this meaning in these languages. Instead, for "I have X" these languages use a combination of words that mean X is to me, or (in Finnish) at me is X; (in Turkish) my X exists or at me exists X; or (in Hebrew) there-is of-me (represents ownership, could mean to-me) X.

In Hungarian, there is a word corresponding to "have": *bír* - but its use is quite scarce today, usually turning up in very formal and legal texts. It also sounds outdated since it was used to translate the Latin habeo and the German *haben* possessive verbs when these languages had official status in Hungary. The general grammatical construction used is "there is a(n) X of mine". For example, the English sentence "I have a car." translates to Hungarian as "Van egy autóm." which would translate back to English word by word as "There is a car of mine".

A similar construction occurs in Russian, where "I have" translates literally into at (or by) me there is. Russian does have a word that means "to have": *imet* - but it is very rarely used by Russian speakers in the same way English speakers use the word have; in fact, in

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 20:5 May 2020**
Prof. Rajendran Sankaravelayuthan
Lexical Gaps and Untraslatability in Translation   70

some cases, it may be misinterpreted as vulgar slang for the subject rudely using the object for sexual gratification; for example, in an inept translation of "Do you have a wife?".

In Japanese, the English word "to have" is most often translated into the verbs *iru* and *aru*. The former verb is used to indicate the presence of a person, animal, or other living creature (excluding plant life) while the latter verb is closer to the English "to have" and is used for inanimate objects. "I have a pen" becomes "*Watashi ni wa pen ga aru*" which can be represented in English as "I (topic) pen (subject) exists", or "I have a pen". To indicate the English "have" in the sense of possession, the Japanese language uses the verb *motsu*, which literally means "to carry". This could be used as "*Kare wa keitai wo motteiru*", which becomes "He (subject) cellphone (object) is carrying" or "He has a cellphone".

Verb Forms

English lacks some grammatical categories. There is no simple way in English to contrast Finnish kirjoittaa or Polish *pisać* (continuing, corresponding to English to write) and *kirjoitella* or *pisywać* (a regular frequentative, "to occasionally write short passages at a time", or "to jot down now and then"). Also, *hypätä* and *skoczyć* (to jump once) and *hyppiä* and *skakać* (to continuously jump; to be jumping from point A to B) are other examples.

Irish allows the prohibitive mood to be used in the passive voice. The effect is used to prohibit something while expressing society's disapproval for that action at the same time. For example, contrast *Ná caithigí tobac* (meaning "Don't smoke" when said to multiple people), which uses the second person plural in the imperative meaning "Do not smoke", with *Ná caitear tobac*, which is best translated as "Smoking just isn't done here", uses the autonomous imperative meaning "One does not smoke".

Italian has three distinct declined past tenses, where fui (*passato remoto*), *ero* (*imperfetto*) and *sono stato* (*passato prossimo*) all mean I was, the first indicating a concluded action in the (remote) past, the second a progressive or habitual action in the past, and the latter an action that holds some connection to the present, especially if a recent time is specified ("stamattina ho visto" for this morning I saw). The "*passato remoto*" is often used for narrative history (for example, novels). Nowadays, the difference between "passato remoto" and "*passato prossimo*" is blurred in the spoken language, the latter being used in both situations. What difference there exists is partly geographic. In the north of Italy, the "*passato remoto*" is very rarely used in everyday speech, whereas in the south, it often takes the place of the "*passato prossimo*". The distinction is only alive in Tuscany, which makes it dialectal even if hardline purists insist it should be applied consistently.

Likewise, English lacks a productive grammatical means to show indirection but must instead rely on periphrasis, which is the use of multiple words to explain an idea. Finnish grammar, on the contrary, allows the regular production of a series of verbal derivatives, each of which involves a greater degree of indirection. For example, based on the verb *vetää* (to pull), it is possible to produce:

vetää (pull),
vedättää (cause something/someone to pull/to wind-up (lie)),
vedätyttää (cause something/someone to cause something/someone to pull),

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 20:5 May 2020**
Prof. Rajendran Sankaravelayuthan
Lexical Gaps and Untraslatability in Translation   71

vedätätyttää (cause something/someone to cause something/someone to cause something/someone to pull).

Hindi has a similar concept of indirection. *Karna* means 'to do'; *karaana* means 'to make someone do'; *karwaana* means 'to get someone to make yet another person do'. Malayalam too has the three forms with the same meaning as that of Hindi: *cey*, *ceyi* and *ceyyipi*.

Most Turkic languages (Turkish, Azeri, Kazakh, etc.) contain the grammatical verb suffix *miş* (or *mis* in other dialects), which indicates that the speaker did not witness the act personally but surmises or has discovered that the act has occurred or was told of it by another, as in the example of *Gitmiş*! (Turkish), which can be expressed in English as "it is reported that he/she/it has gone", or, most concisely, as "apparently, he/she/it has gone". This grammatical form is mainly used when telling jokes or narrating stories.

Similar to the Turkic *miş*, nearly every Quechua sentence is marked by an evidential clitic, indicating the source of the speaker's knowledge (and how certain s/he is about the statement). The enclitic =*mi* expresses personal knowledge (*Tayta Wayllaqawaqa chufirmi*, "Mr. Huayllacahua is a driver - I know it for a fact"); =*si* expresses hearsay knowledge (*Tayta Wayllaqawaqa chufirsi*, "Mr. Huayllacahua is a driver, or so I've heard"); =*chá* expresses high probability (*Tayta Wayllaqawaqa chufirchá*, "Mr. Huayllacahua is a driver, most likely"). Colloquially, the latter is also used when the speaker has dreamed of the event told in the sentence or experienced it under alcohol intoxication.

Languages that are extremely different from each other, like English and Chinese, need their translations to be more like adaptations. Chinese has no tenses per se, only three aspects. The English verb *to be* does not have a direct equivalent in Chinese. In an English sentence where to be leads to an adjective ("It is blue"), there is no to be in Chinese. (There are no adjectives in Chinese; instead, there are stative verbs that don't need an extra verb.) If it states a location, the verb *zài* is used, as in "We are in the house". In some other cases (usually when stating a judgement), the judgment verb "*shì*" is used, as in "I am the leader." And in most other cases, such structure ("to be") is simply not used, but some more natural structure in Chinese is used instead. Any sentence that requires a play on those different meanings will not work the same way in Chinese. In fact, very simple concepts in English can sometimes be difficult to translate, for example, there is no single direct translation for the word "yes" in Chinese, as in Chinese, the affirmative is said by repeating the verb in the question. ("Do you have it?" "(I) have".)

8.7. Vocabulary

German, Dutch and Danish have a wealth of modal particles that are particularly difficult to translate as they convey sense or tone rather than strictly grammatical information. The most infamous example perhaps is doch (Dutch: toch, Danish: dog), which roughly means "Don't you realize that . . .?" or "In fact, it is so, though someone is denying it." What makes translating such words difficult is their different meanings depending on intonation or the context. A common use of the word *doch* can be found in the German sentence Der Krieg

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 20:5 May 2020**
Prof. Rajendran Sankaravelayuthan
Lexical Gaps and Untraslatability in Translation   72

war doch noch nicht verloren, which translates to *The war wasn't lost yet, after all*, or *The war was still not lost*.

Several other grammatical constructs in English may be employed to translate these words for each of their occurrences. The same *Der Krieg war doch noch nicht verloren* with slightly changed pronunciation can also mean excuse in defense to a question: . . . but the war was not lost yet (. . . so we fought on).A use which relies heavily on intonation and context could produce yet another meaning: "So the war was really not over yet (as you have been trying to convince me all along)."Another change of intonation makes the sentence a question. *Der Krieg war doch noch nicht verlore*n? would translate into *"(You mean) the war was not yet lost (back then)*?"

Another well-known example comes from the Portuguese or Spanish verbs *ser* and *estar*, both translatable as *to be* (see Romance copula). However, ser is used only with essence or nature, while estar is used with states or conditions. Sometimes this information is not very relevant for the meaning of the whole sentence and the translator will ignore it, whereas at other times, it can be retrieved from the context.

When none of these apply, the translator will usually use a paraphrase or simply add words that can convey that meaning. The following example comes from Portuguese:

"*Não estou bonito, eu sou bonito*."
Literal translation: "I am not (apparently) handsome; I am (essentially) handsome."
Adding words: "I am not handsome today; I am always handsome."
Paraphrase: "I don't look handsome; I am handsome."

Some South Slavic words that have no English counterparts are *doček*, a gathering organized at someone's arrival (the closest translation would be *greeting* or *welcome*; however, a 'doček' does not necessarily have to be positive); and limar, a sheet metal worker.

Kinship Terms

For various reasons, such as differences in linguistic features or culture, it is often difficult to translate terms for family members. Many Tamil kinship words consider both gender and age. For example, Father's elder brothers are called *periyappa*, while younger brothers are called *cittappaa*. Their wives are called *periyammaa* and *cinnammaa*, respectively. Father's sister is called *attai*, mother's sister is *citti*. Mother's brother is called *maama* and his wife, *attai*. English would just use Uncle and Aunt. An elder brother is *aNNan*, elder sister is *akkaa* while the younger brother is *tampi* and younger *sister*, tangkai. Similar is the case with many Indian languages like Malayalam, Hindi, Gujarati, and many others.

It is usually also difficult to translate simple English kinship words accurately into Chinese, for Chinese distinguishes very many kinship terms, depending on the person's actual position in family kinship.

Most Thai words expressing kinship have no direct translations and require additional words. There are no Thai equivalents for most daily English kinship terms, as English terms leave out much information that is natural to Thai.

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 20:5 May 2020
Prof. Rajendran Sankaravelayuthan
Lexical Gaps and Untraslatability in Translation   73

As an example, Thai does not distinguish between siblings by gender, but by age. Siblings older than yourself are (*Pii*), and those younger are (*Nawng*). Almost similar distinctions apply to aunts and uncles, based on whether they are older or younger than the sibling parent, and also whether they are maternal or paternal uncles. Thai disregards gender when aunts or uncles are younger than his/her parents. But when aunts and uncles are older siblings of his/her parents, gender comes to differentiate them, but whether they are from the maternal or paternal side is no longer important. For instance, (*Naa*) means "mother's younger brother/sister". *Aah* means "father's younger brother/sister". But *Loong* means "father's or mother's older brother" and *Paa* means "father's or mother's older sister". As for nieces, nephews, and grandchildren, Thai only have one genderless word *Laan* to describe all of them.

Siblings

In Arabic, "brother" is often translated into *Akh*. However, whilst this word may describe a brother who shares either one or both parents, there is a separate word - *Shaqīq* - to describe a brother with whom one share both parents.

In Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Thai, Lao, Tagalog, Turkish, most north Indian languages, Sinhala, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Hungarian there are separate words for "older brother" and "younger brother" and, likewise, "older sister" and "younger sister". The simple words "brother" and "sister" are rarely used to describe a person, and most commonly appear in the plural. (In Hungarian, however, the terms "*fiútestvér*" and "*lánytestvér*", meaning "male sibling" and "female sibling" respectively, exist but are not commonly used.). On the other hand, the word for 'sibling' in many other languages lacks the slightly technical/non-colloquial nature of the English word, which often leads to native speakers preferring the longer 'brother(s) and/or sister(s)' instead.

Grandparents

Swedish, Norwegian and Danish have the terms *farmor* (father's mother) and farfar (father's father) for paternal grandparents, and *mormor* (mother's mother) and *morfar* (mother's father) for maternal grandparents. The English terms great-grandfather and great-grandmother also have different terms in Swedish, depending on lineage. This distinction between paternal and maternal grandparents is also used in Chinese, Korean, Thai, Tamil, Malayalam as well as Hindi, Gujarati, Bengali and other Indo-Aryan languages.

Norwegian also has the terms *sønnesønn*, *dattersønn*, *datterdatter* and *sønnedatter*, meaning respectively "son of my son", "son of my daughter", "daughter of my daughter", and "daughter of my son". Similar words exist in Swedish, Danish and Icelandic. In both cases, there exist terms synonymous with the English grand-prefixed ones, which are used when exact relation is not an issue. This distinction is also used in Chinese, whereas Chinese almost always states the relationship clearly.

Aunts and Uncles

Lexical Gaps and Untraslatability in Translation

In Danish, Tamil, Kannada, Bengali, Persian, Turkish, Chinese, Swedish and South Slavic languages, there are different words for the person indicated by "mother's brother", "father's brother" and "parent's sister's husband", all of which would be an uncle in English. German had distinct words for maternal uncles (*Oheim*) and maternal aunts (*Muhme*), but they are not used anymore. An exactly analogous situation exists for aunt. In Thai, Hindi, Malayalam and Punjabi this concept is taken a step further in that there are different words for the person indicated by "mother's elder brother" and "mother's younger brother", as well as "father's elder brother" and "father's younger brother".

The Polish language used to distinguish "paternal uncle" ("stryj") and "maternal uncle" ("wuj"), but the first term is now archaic.

Swedish (and Danish) has words tant/tante for "auntie" (rarely used in Swedish) or "old lady" in general, moster for maternal aunt, and faster for paternal aunt, but the last two are contractions of mors syster/søster and fars *syster*/*søster* ("mother's sister" and "father's sister", respectively). The same construction is used for uncles (rendering morbror and farbror). In Danish, and occasionally in Swedish, the word onkel corresponds to the Danish word tante.

The distinction between maternal and paternal uncles has caused several mistranslations; for example, in Walt Disney's DuckTales, Huey, Dewey, and Louie's Uncle Scrooge was translated *Roope-setä* in Finnish (Paternal Uncle Robert) before it was known Scrooge was Donald's maternal uncle. The proper translation would have been Roope-eno (Maternal Uncle Robert). This is also the case for Donald Duck, who is called Aku-setä in Finnish and not *Aku-eno*, despite being the brother of Huey, Dewey and Louie's mother. Arabic contains separate words for "mother's brother" (*Khāl*) and "father's brother" ('Amm). The closest translation into English is "uncle", which gives no indication as to lineage, whether maternal or paternal. Similarly, in Arabic, there are specific words for the father's sister and the mother's sister, (*Khala*(*h*)) and (*'Amma*(*h*)), respectively (in both cases being the feminine forms of the masculine nouns, by addition of fatḥa-tāʾ marbūṭa). Bengali has separate words for such relations, too.

Albanian distinguishes maternal and paternal aunts and uncles; paternal uncle and aunt being "*ungj*/*xhaxha*" and "hallë" respectively, while maternal uncle and aunt being "*dajë*" and "*teze*" respectively.

IsiZulu, spoken in South Africa by the Zulu people, distinguishes between maternal and paternal uncles and aunts. Paternal uncles (father's brothers) are designated as 'fathers' where *'baba omkhulu'* (meaning 'great father') designates brothers older than the father, and *'baba omncan*e' 'meaning 'small father' designates brothers younger than the father. The archaic *'babekazi'* meaning 'female father' or the modern *'Anti'* borrowed from the English *'Aunt'* is used for the father's sisters. Likewise, the mother's sisters are also 'mothers' with the mother's older sisters designated as *'mama omkhulu'* (meaning 'great mother') and the mother's younger sisters designated as *'mama omncane'* (meaning 'small mother'). The mother's brother is called 'malume'- which is the translation of the usual English uncle and is the one used conventionally as in English- to apply to older family friends, respected older males or male peers of the parents. In Zulu culture, a child of the father's brothers or the

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 20:5 May 2020**
Prof. Rajendran Sankaravelayuthan
Lexical Gaps and Untraslatability in Translation   75

mother's sisters is 'brother' (or *'mfowethu'*) or 'sister' (or *'dadewethu'*) since their parent is a 'father' or 'mother'. *'Mzala'* (cousin) is applied to children of one's mother's brother or father's sister.

Nephews, Nieces, and Cousins

Whereas English has different words for the child of one's sibling based on its gender (nephew for the son of one's sibling, niece for the daughter), the word cousin applies to both genders of children belonging to one's aunt or uncle. Many languages approach these concepts very differently.

The Polish language distinguishes a male cousin who is the son of an uncle ("*brat stryjeczny*") and a male cousin who is the son of an aunt ("*brat cioteczny*"); and a female cousin who is the daughter of an uncle ("*siostra stryjeczna*") and a female cousin who is the daughter of an aunt ("*siostra cioteczna*"). Polish distinguishes four kinds of nephew and niece: the son of a brother ("*bratanek*"), the daughter of a brother ("*bratanica*"), the son of a sister ("*siostrzeniec*"), and the daughter of a sister ("*siostrzenica*").

Though Italian distinguishes between male (*cugino*) and female (*cugina*) cousins where English does not, it uses nipote (nephew or niece) for both genders, though a masculine or feminine article preceding this can make the distinction. Moreover, this word can also mean grandchild, adding to its ambiguity. However, though the words are the same, the concepts are distinguished, so when hearing about a nipote one is likely to ask whether a child's child or a sibling's child is meant. To clarify the relationship, Italians generally add the diminutive ino/a when referring to grandchildren nipotino/a.

Albanian as well has two genders for cousins, male ("*kushëri*") and female ("kushërirë"). It also distinguishes between nephew ("*nip*") and niece ("*mbesë*"), but those words can also mean "grandson" and "granddaughter" respectively.

The Macedonian language also distinguishes between male (*bratuched*)) and female (*bratuchetka*)) cousins, the son or daughter (respectively) to an aunt or uncle. The Bulgarian language is similar in this respect and contains an extensive list of words for referring to family members and relatives, including relations by marriage and acquaintance.

Spanish and Portuguese distinguish in both cases: the son of a sibling is sobrino or sobrinho, whereas a daughter is sobrina or sobrinha; likewise, a male cousin is primo, while a female cousin is prima. However, when used in the plural, and both genders are involved, only the masculine form is used. If a speaker says that he went out with his cousins (primos) last night, it could refer to a group of all men, or of men and women. All women would use the female form. This is a general rule in that the plural male form is used in any group of people that may be of mixed gender, not just cousins.

Norwegian and Danish also distinguish both cases: the son of a sibling is nevø, whereas a daughter is a niece; equally, a male cousin is fætter, while a female cousin is kusine. Collectively the term søskendebarn is used for both. Swedish does not distinguish between male and female cousins. For children of siblings, Swedish has three levels of specificity: the term syskonbarn for all such people regardless of sibling gender and child gender. There is also brorsbarn or systerbarn depending on the gender of the sibling whose

children it is. Finally, Swedish uses the terms brorson, brorsdotter, systerson, and systerdotter to exactly describe the relation between the two people referred to. The most specific terms are the most commonly used, with brorsbarn or systerbarn usually used when one wants to speak about the children of one sibling as a group.

Dutch, on the other hand, distinguishes gender: *neef* (male) and *nicht* (female). Nephews and nieces are commonly given a diminutive form, neefje and nichtje respectively (although these can also sometimes refer to younger cousins).

Hindi, Hebrew and Arabic contain no word for "cousin" at all; one must say "uncle's son" or an equivalent.

Cousins from different generations, such as "third cousin twice removed" can be readily expressed in English, but many languages do not have equivalently succinct constructs.

Relations by Marriage

There is no standard English word for the Italian "*consuoceri*", Yiddish "*makhatunim*", Spanish "*consuegros*" or Portuguese "*consogros*": a gender-neutral collective plural like "co-in-laws". If Harry marries Sally, then in Yiddish, Harry's father is the "*mekhutn*" of Sally's father; each mother is the "makheteyneste" of the other. In Romanian, they are "cuscri". In Bengali, both fathers are *beayi* and mothers, *beyan*. Bengali has *dada/bhai* for brother and *jamai-babu/bhagni-pati* for brother-in-law; *chhele* for son and *jamai* for son-in-law.

Spanish and Portuguese contrast "brother" with "brother-in-law" ("hermano/irmão", "cuñado/cunhado"); "son" with "son-in-law" ("*hijo/filho*", "*yerno/genro*"), and similarly for female relatives like "sister-in-law" ("*cuñada/cunhada*") and "daughter-in-law" ("nuera/nora"). Both languages use "*concuño*" (Sp.) or "*concuñado/concunhado*" (varying by dialect), as the relationship between two men that marry siblings (or two women, using the feminine "*concuñada/concunhada*" instead). In the English language this relationship would be lumped in with "*cuñado/cunhado*" (sibling's husband or spouse's brother) as simply "brother-in-law".

Serbian and Bosnian have specific terms for relations by marriage. For example, a "sister-in-law" can be a "*snaha/snaja*" (brother's wife, though also family-member's wife in general), "zaova" (husband's sister), "svastika" (wife's sister) or "*jetrva*" (husband's brother's wife). A "brother-in-law" can be a "*zet*" (sister's husband, or family-member's husband in general), "djever/dever" (husband's brother), "*šurak/šurjak*" (wife's brother) or "*badžanak/pašenog*" (wife's sister's husband). Likewise, the term "*prijatelj*" (same as "makhatunim" in Yiddish, which also translates as "friend") is also used. Bengali has a number of in-law words. For example, Boudi (elder brother's wife), *Shaali* (wife's sister), Shaala (wife's younger brother), *Sambandhi* (wife's elder brother/Shaali's husband), *Bhaasur* (husband's elder brother), *Deor* (husband's younger brother) *Nanad* (husband's sister), *Jaa* (husband's brother's wife), etc.

In Russian, fifteen different words cover relations by marriage, enough to confuse many native speakers. There are for example, as in Yiddish, words like "сват" and "сватья"

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 20:5 May 2020**
Prof. Rajendran Sankaravelayuthan
Lexical Gaps and Untraslatability in Translation   77

for "co-in-laws". To further complicate the translator's job, Russian in-laws may choose to address each other familiarly by these titles.

In contrast to all of the above fine distinctions, in American English the term "my brother-in-law" covers "my spouse's brother", "my sister's husband", and "my spouse's sister's husband". In British English, the last of these is not considered strictly correct.

Relations by Work

Japanese has a concept, *amae*, about the closeness of a parent-child relationship, that is supposedly unique to that language and culture as it applies to bosses and workers.

Foreign Objects

Objects unknown to culture can actually be easy to translate. For example, in Japanese, *wasabi* is a plant (*Wasabia japonica*) used as a spicy Japanese condiment. Traditionally, this plant only grows in Japan. It would be unlikely that someone from Angola (for example) would have a clear understanding of it. However, the easiest way to translate this word is to borrow it. Or one can use a similar vegetable's name to describe it. In English, this word is translated as wasabi or Japanese horseradish. In Chinese, people can still call it wasabi by its Japanese sound, or pronounce it by its Hanzi characters, (pinyin: shān kuí). However, *wasabi* is currently called (*jiè mò*) or (*lǜ jiè*) in China and Taiwan. Horseradish is not usually seen in Eastern Asia; people may parallel it with mustard. Hence, in some places, yellow mustard refers to imported mustard sauce; green mustard refers to wasabi.

Another method is using a description instead of a single word. For example, languages like Russian and Ukrainian have borrowed words Kuraga and Uruk from Turkic languages. While both fruits are now known to the Western world, there are still no terms for them in English. English speakers must use "dried apricot without core" and "dried apricot with core" instead.

One particular type of foreign object that poses difficulties is the proper noun. As an illustration, consider another example from Douglas Hofstadter, which he published in one of his "Metamagical Themas" columns in Scientific American. He pondered the question, Who is the first lady of Britain? Well, first ladies reside at the Prime Minister's address, and at the time, the woman living at 10 Downing Street was Margaret Thatcher. But a different attribute that first ladies have is that they are married to heads of government, so perhaps a better answer was Denis Thatcher, but he probably would not have relished the title.

8.8. Poetry, Puns and Wordplay

The two areas which most nearly approach total untranslatability are poetry and puns; poetry is difficult to translate because of its reliance on the sounds (for example, rhymes) and rhythms of the source language; puns, and other similar semantic wordplays, because of how tightly they are tied to the original language. The oldest well-known examples are probably those appearing in Bible translations, for example, Genesis 2:7, which explains why God gave Adam this name: "God created Adam out of soil from the ground"; the original Hebrew

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 20:5 May 2020
Prof. Rajendran Sankaravelayuthan
Lexical Gaps and Untraslatability in Translation   78

text reveals the secret, since the word *Adam* connotes the word ground (being *Adama* in Hebrew), whereas translating the verse into other languages loses the original pun.

Similarly, consider the Italian adage "*traduttore, traditore*": a literal translation is "translator, traitor". The pun is lost, though the meaning persists. (A similar solution can be given, however, in Hungarian, by saying a fordítás: ferdítés, which roughly translates as "translation is distortion".)

That being said, many of the translation procedures discussed here can be used in these cases. For example, the translator can compensate for an "untranslatable" pun in one part of a text by adding a new pun in another part of the translated text.

Oscar Wilde's play *The Importance of Being Earnest* incorporates in its title a pun (resonating in the last line of the play) that conflates the name Ernest with the adjective of quality earnest. The French title of the translated play is "L'importance d'être Constant", replicating and transposing the pun; however, the character Ernest had to be renamed, and the allusion to trickery was lost. (Other French translations include "De l'importance d'être Fidèle" (faithful) and "Il est important d'être Aimé" (loved), with the same idea of a pun on first name/quality adjective.) A recent Hungarian translation of the same play by Ádám Nádasdy applied a similar solution, giving the subtitle "Szilárdnak kell lenni" (lit. "One must be Szilárd") beside the traditional title "Bunbury", where "Szilárd" is a male name as well as an adjective meaning "solid, firm", or "steady". Other languages, like Spanish, usually leave the pun untranslated, as in "La importancia de llamarse Ernesto". At the same time, one translation used the name Severo, which means "severe" or "serious", close to the original English meaning. Catalan translations always use "La importància de ser Frank". This example uses the homophones "Frank" (given name) and "franc" (honest, free-spoken). Although this same solution would work in Spanish also ("La importancia de ser Franco"), it carries heavy political connotations in Spain due to Francisco Franco's dictatorship (1939–1975), to the point that even this possible title can be taken directly as ironic/sarcastic: literally, "The importance of being Franco", so this alternative was never used.

The Asterix comic strip is renowned for its French puns; its translators have found many ingenious English substitutes. Other forms of wordplay, such as spoonerisms and palindromes, are equally difficult, and often force hard choices on the translator. For example, take the classic palindrome: "A man, a plan, a canal: Panama". A translator might choose to translate it literally into, say, French – "*Un homme, un projet*, *uncanal*: *Panama*", if it were used as a caption for a photo of Theodore Roosevelt (the chief instigator of the Canal), and sacrifice the palindrome. But if the text is meant to give an example of a palindrome, he might elect to sacrifice the literal sense and substitute a French *palindrome*, such as "*Un roc laminal'animal cornu*" ('A boulder swept away the horned animal').

Douglas Hofstadter discusses the problem of translating a palindrome into Chinese, where such wordplay is theoretically impossible, in his book Le Ton beau de Marot– which is devoted to the issues and problems of translation, with emphasis on the translation of poetry. Another example given by Hofstadter is the translation of the Jabberwocky poem by Lewis Carroll, with its wealth of neologisms and portmanteau words, into a number of foreign tongues.

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 20:5 May 2020**
Prof. Rajendran Sankaravelayuthan
Lexical Gaps and Untraslatability in Translation   79

A notable Irish joke is that it is not possible to translate mañana into Gaelic as the Irish "don't have a word that conveys that degree of urgency".

8.9. Iconicity

According to Ghil'ad Zuckermann, "iconicity might be the reason for refraining from translating Hallelujah and Amen in so many languages as if the sounds of such basic religious notions have to do with their referents themselves – as if by losing the sound, one might lose the meaning. Compare this to the cabbalistic power of letters, for example, in the case of gematria, the method of interpreting the Hebrew Scriptures by interchanging words whose letters have the same numerical value when added. A simple example of gematric power might be the famous proverb נכנס יין יצא סוד nikhnas yayin yåSå sōd, lit. "entered wine went out secret", i.e. "wine brings out the truth", in vino veritas. The gematric value of יין "wine" is 70 (50=ן; 10=י; 10=י) and this is also the geometric value of סוד "secret" (4=ד; 6=ו; 60=ס). Thus, this sentence, according to many Jews at the time, had to be true."

9. Conclusion

Lexical gaps are products of the lag of vocabulary behind conceptual development within one and the same language. On the other hand, they are gaps when you move from SL to TL. This study conducted an exploration into the lexical gaps in English and Tamil with reference to their cause and consequence in translation. It is revealed that the appropriate filling of lexical gaps adds fresh expressions to the vocabulary. It also produces impressive rhetorical effects on the audience and makes the translation penetrating and powerful.

The writers and translators should pay close attention to the peculiarities of their languages and their highly specific lexicological features. In order to produce an accurate copy of a document, translators should be aware of the fact that there is the possibility of misinterpretation of their words and this can be due to the lack of lexical material which they have at their disposal. We established above that we could call this lack of lexicalized expression a lexical gap.

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Prof. Rajendran Sankaravelayuthan
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Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 20:5 May 2020**
Prof. Rajendran Sankaravelayuthan
Lexical Gaps and Untraslatability in Translation   81

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 20:5 May 2020**
Prof. Rajendran Sankaravelayuthan
Lexical Gaps and Untraslatability in Translation   82