

**Tirukkural Translations of G. U. Pope and Rajaji –
A Comparative Study**

J. Jaya Parveen and V. Rajesh

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Background of the Study

Translation Studies emerged as a new academic discipline in the late 1970s. Bassnett (1980) discussed the problems of 'period study' in translation. George Steiner, in *After Babel*, divides the literature on the theory, practice, and history of translation into four periods. The first period extends from the statements of Cicero (106 BC - 43 BC) and Horace (65 BC - 08 BC) on translation up to the publication of Alexander Fraser Tytler's *Essay on the Principles of Translation* in 1791. This period focuses on the 'immediate empirical focus', i.e. the statements and theories about translation in 'practice' (47-48).

Steiner's second period extends up to the publication of *Larbaud's Sous l'invocation de Saint Jérôme* in 1946. During this period, the focus is on the theory and hermeneutic enquiry with the development of a vocabulary and methodology of approaching translation. The third period begins with the publication of the first papers on 'machine translation' in the 1940s. It is characterised by the introduction of 'structural linguistics' and 'communication theory' into the study of translation (48).

The fourth period, coexisting with the third, has its origins in the early 1960s. It is characterised by 'a reversion to hermeneutic, almost metaphysical inquiries into translation and interpretation'. It includes other disciplines like Classical philology and comparative literature, lexical statistics and ethnography, sociology of class-speech, formal rhetoric, poetics, and the study of grammar. These are combined in an attempt to clarify the act of translation and the process of 'life between languages' (48).

Translations in Tamil language can be classified into 6 phases: Translation started during the period of Tolkappiar who wrote *Tolkappiam*, the first grammatical treatise in Tamil. *Tolkappiam* (written between 5th century BCE and 2nd century CE) contains three divisions: *Ezhuttadikaram*, *Solladikaram*, and *Poruladikaram*, with 9 chapters each. Discussing the art of translation, Tolkappiyar states: *tokuttal, virittal, tokaiviri, mozhi peyarttu... atarppaTa ya:ttalo:Tu anaimara pinave*. This systematises the art of rendering a book at different levels: compilation, elaboration, condensation, and translation (qtd. Bose 8).

During the second phase, the ancient classical literary works, especially the ethical and moral literature in Tamil (e.g., *Tirukkural*), were translated into different languages by Christian missionaries. These missionaries involved themselves in translations to convert the local people to Christianity. Initially, three German missionaries translated Bible into Tamil. Bartholomew Ziegenbalg published his *New Testament* translation in 1714. Benjamin Schultze completed the *Old Testament* translation (of Ziegenbalg) and published it in 1728. After working hard for 24 years, Philip Fabricius published his Bible translation in 1777 (Hudson 142-43).

Irish by birth, Robert Caldwell (1814 -1891) visited India as a Christian missionary. His main concern was to convert South Indians to Christianity by establishing a break in the relationship between the high-caste Hindus and the lower caste people in South India (Daugherty 8). He settled in Idaiyangudi village in Tirunelveli district and systematically studied the South Indian languages. He published the highly controversial book *A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South-Indian Family of Languages* in 1856, causing a breakthrough in Dravidian studies and creating a distinctly Tamil identity (8).

During the third phase, Tamil language became prominent for business transactions. From mid-18th to late-19th century, the East India Company functionaries tried learning Tamil, the local language, in order to develop their business in South India (Indra & Rajagopalan 2017). Printing press was introduced. Bible translations flourished. The works by Shakespeare, Milton, George Eliot, and Dickens were rendered as Tamil adaptations. *Cankam* ethical literature (e.g., *Kural* and *Naladiyar*), twin epics (*Silappadikaram* and *Naladiyar*), grammatico-theoretical works like *Nannul*, Saivite mystical poetry, and Saivite philosophical tracts were translated into English (Raman 2018).

Scholarly writers started translating Tamil classics into English. A. K. Ramanujan, M. Shanmugam Pillai, David E. Ludden, George L. Hart, A. V. Subramanian translated *Kuruntokai*, the love poems of *Sangam* literature, into English. J. V. Chelliah and N. Ragonathan translated *Pathuppattu* into English. V. R. Ramachandra Dikshithar, Alan Danielou, and Ka. Naa. Subramaniam translated *Silappatikaram*, one of the five Tamil epics, into English. G. U. Pope translated another Tamil epic *Manimegalai* into English (Bose 3-7).

During the fourth phase, works of many European and Latin American authors have been translated into Tamil. Russian short stories and novels have been rendered in Tamil. Short stories and novels of classical writers (e.g., Kafka's *Metamorphosis* by Prof. Dr. R. Sivakumar) are translated into Tamil. Prof. Dr. R. Azhagarasan and Prof. Dr. R. Sivakumar discuss how the influx of modernist and post-modernist theories of literature, either as translated texts or as introductory treatises, published in little magazines, transformed critical practices in the Tamil milieu since the 1980s (Raman 2018).

During the fifth phase, writers like Lakshmi Holmstorm started translating Tamil modern writings into English. English translations of Bama's *Karukku* (2000), Imayam's *Beasts of Burden* (2001), Sundara Ramasami's *That's It But* (2003), Mauni: *A Writer's Writer* (2004), Na Muthuswamy's *Neermai (Waterness)* (2004), Madhavayya's *Clarinda* (2005), Ambai's *In A Forest, A Deer* (2006), Salma's *The Hour Past Midnight* (2009), and Cheran Rudramoorthy's *A Second Sunrise* earned global recognition for the regional Tamil writers.

During the sixth phase, Tamil texts, transliterations, and translations are widely used in the Internet. Tamil *Wikipedia* was started in 2003 (Prince 2009). Tamil lexicon or dictionary was digitalised in 2011. Google Neural Machine Translation introduced in 2016 was enabled for Tamil (along with Hindi, Russian, Vietnamese languages, Indonesian, Bengali, Gujarati, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Punjabi, and Telugu) in 2017.

J. Parthasarathy discussed the concept of 'faithfulness' to the translation of *Sangham* poetry into English. P. Anandakumar discussed the challenges in translating *Kunjanni* poetry. Mu. Govindarasan remarked that translation from one language to another should happen without change in meaning, essence, or quality. He wanted the translated text to have the lucid style, simplicity, magnitude, and richness of meanings, similar to that of the source text. (Devadas 16)

M. Ganathi Pillai states that translation is not building word-by-word or sentence-by-sentence. Meaning or sense should be rendered by adding, omitting, expanding, or deleting the content, with no alteration in quality. He wanted the translated text to reflect upon the essence of the source text, without adding or subtracting anything from the essence or quality (Devadas 15).

As in any language, some translators in Tamil support word-to-word translation, and the others promote sense-to-sense translation. Some are conscious about fidelity to the original work, while others are more concerned about meaning and sense-making. Tamil translation has a longer history than one expects. However, the theories or methodologies for translation have not been documented systematically by the Tamil writers or translators (Devadas 2).

Objective of the Study

G. U. Pope's *Tirukkural* translation focuses on word-to-word translation while Rajaji's translation focuses on sense-to-sense translation. The objective of this paper is to compare and contrast *Tirukkural* translations of G. U. Pope and Rajaji, at the linguistic level.

Discussion and Analysis

Tirukkural written by Tiruvalluvar is the most translated text in Tamil language. The book which is described as the *Ulaga Pothumarai* has been translated into more than 42 languages around the world. V. Ramasamy's doctoral dissertation submitted in the University of Madras in

1988 focuses on *The Problems in the Art of Translation with Special Reference to English Versions of Tirukkural*. His book *On Translating Tirukkural* (2001) published through the International Institute of Tamil Studies provides details about the various translations of *Tirukkural*.

Tirukkural was first translated into Malayalam (titled *Tirukkural Basha*) by an anonymous writer in 1595 CE. It was translated into Latin by Constantius Joseph Beschi in 1730 (Ramasamy 2001). It was partially translated into English verse by Nathaniel Edward Kindersley in 1794. It was translated into French by Monsieur Ariel in 1848. It was translated into German by Karl Graul in 1856. It was translated into English prose in 1812 by Francis Whyte Ellis who worked as District Collector in Madras (Mahadevan 2007).

William Henry Drew's *Tirukkural* translations in English prose published partially in 1840 and 1852 contained the original Tamil text, Parimelalahagar's review, and Ramanuja Kavirayar's comments. This translation was completed by John Lazarus, a native missionary. In 1886, George Uglow Pope translated the full text of *Tirukkural* and brought it to the reach of the Western audience (Ramasamy 2001).

The first English translation by a native Tamil scholar was made in 1915 by T. Tirunavukkarasu. V. V. S. Aiyar translated the entire work in prose. C. Rajagopalachari's translation appeared in 1935. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar's translation was published in 1988.

Lexical choice, collocation, addition, omission, punctuation, implicitness, explicitness, modulation, open choice principle, and idiom choice principle are some of the techniques used in translation. 'Collocation' refers to certain modes of expression or linguistic configurations in the source or target language (qtd. Figueiredo 263).

'Addition' is a translation adjustment technique used to enhance meaning in the target text. 'Omission' is a translation strategy which is used to avoid redundancy, useless explanation, or odd combination of sounds (qtd. Figueiredo 263). 'Punctuation' brings lots of changes in structure and meaning.

'Explicitness', over-explicitness, or over-signalling is used to make the translation as clear as possible, causing repetition or redundancy in the target text (qtd. Figueiredo 263). 'Implicitness' occurs when 'word to word' translation happens not at semantic level but only at the syntactic level, making certain meanings implicit.

'Modulation' means 'change in point of view without change in meaning' in translation. In 'idiom choice principle', the idioms and collocations are adapted to the target language i.e.,

TL's norms and conditions. In 'open choice principle', words are treated as independent items of meaning. Each of them represents a separate choice (qtd. Figueiredo 267-268).

The researcher aims to compare and contrast a few couplets from G. U. Pope and Rajaji's translations of *Tirukkural*, from a linguistic point of view. The main aspects of comparison used in this study are collocation, addition, omission, punctuation, implicitness, explicitness, modulation, open choice principle, and idiom choice principle.

1. இல்வாழ்வான் என்பான் இயல்புஉடைய மூவர்க்கும்
நல்ஆற்றின் நின்ற துணை

Pope: The men of household virtue, firm in way of good, sustain
The other orders three that rule professed maintain.

Rajaji: The householder so-called helps the other orders in the proper fulfillment of their duties.

G. U. Pope has done 'word to word' translation, not at semantic level but only at the syntactic level. He has not given reference to the word 'three', indicating 'implicitness' in the translation. Rajaji has excluded *three orders* and used the phrase *other orders*, indicating 'omission' in his translation.

The same couplet can be best understood from Mu. Karunanidhi's explanation "பெற்றோர், வாழ்க்கைத் துணை, குழந்தைகள் என இயற்கையாக அமைந்திடும் மூவர்க்கும் துணையாக இருப்பது இல்லறம் நடத்துவோர் கடமையாகும்" which indicates 'parents, marriage partner, and children' as the *three* who are to be taken care of by a virtuous family man.

2. குழல்இனிது யாழ்இனிது என்ப தம்மக்கள்
மழலைச் சொல் கேளாதவர்.

Pope: 'The pipe is sweet,' 'the lute is sweet,' by them't will be averred,
Who music of their infants' lispings lips have never heard.

Rajaji: They speak of the sweet tones of the flute and of the harp, who have not had children and heard them lisp their newly learnt words.

In this couplet, G. U. Pope's lexical choice is very different from Rajaji's. Pope has used the word 'pipe' and Rajaji has used 'flute' to refer to the word 'குழல்' in the source text. Pope has used 'lute' and Rajaji has used 'harp' to refer to the word 'யாழ்' in the source text.

G. U. Pope has done ‘word to word’ translation while Rajaji has attempted ‘sense to sense’ translation. The word ‘lisp’ means a speech defect in which ‘s’ is pronounced like ‘th’ in ‘thick’ and ‘z’ is pronounced like ‘th’ in ‘this’ (*oxforddictionaries.com*). In the translation of the above-mentioned couplet, G. U. Pope has used the ‘collocation’ *lispng lips* which is not commonly used in English. Rajaji states *lisp their newly learnt words* which causes ‘mistake’ in meaning.

3. ஈன்ற பொழுதில் பெரிது உவக்கும் தன் மகனைச்
சான்றோன் எனக் கேட்டதாய்

Pope: When mother hears him named 'fulfill'd of wisdom's lore,'
Far greater joy she feels, than when her son she bore.

Rajaji: Hearing words of appreciation uttered by people about her son, the mother feels greater joy than what she felt on the day he was born.

The word ‘lore’ means ‘a body of traditions and knowledge on a subject or held by a particular group, typically passed from person to person by word of mouth’ (*oxforddictionaries.com*).

G. U. Pope has used the ‘collocation’ *wisdom’s lore* which is not commonly used in English. He has used the word *lore* to rhyme with the word *bore* in the next line, causing ‘collocation’ error. Rajaji has used the phrase *hearing words of appreciation* without giving reference to the phrase சான்றோன் என which is the essence of the given couplet. This is called ‘omission’ in translation.

4. காலத்தினால் செய்த நன்றி சிறிதுஎனினும்
ஞாலத்தின் மாணப் பெரிது.

Pope: A timely benefit, -though thing of little worth,
The gift itself, -in excellence transcends the earth.

Rajaji: By itself the help rendered may be a trifle, but the hour of need when it was given makes it bigger than the whole world.

G. U. Pope has used ‘open choice principle’ to do ‘word to word’ translation, but his use of ‘punctuation’ in the translation is not equivalent to the punctuation in the source text. The punctuation in the given couplet is irrelevant to the context and meaning. Rajaji has used ‘idiom choice principle’, translating the phrase காலத்தினால் செய்த நன்றி into *hour of need* which is an alteration of the phrase ‘need of the hour’.

5. அகழ்வாரைத் தாங்கும் நிலம்போலத் தம்மை
இகழ்வார்ப் பொறுத்தல் தலை

Pope: As earth bears up the men who delve into her breast,
To bear with scornful men of virtues is the best.

Rajaji: Does not the earth support the man that is engaged in digging it? It is proper that we too bear with those who wrong us.

G. U. Pope has used the phrase *delve into her (earth's) breast* in his translation. The archaic meaning of the word 'delve' is 'dig'. Pope has used the word *breast* (for which there is no reference in the source text). He has used 'addition' as adjustment translation technique to bring poetic effect to his translated text. On the other hand, Rajaji has done 'sense to sense' translation using 'paraphrasing' technique. He has missed out the interesting 'simile' (அகழ்வாரைத் தாங்கும் நிலம்போல) in his process of translation.

6. இன்னாசெய்தாரை ஒறுத்தல் அவர்நாண
நன் நயம் செய்து விடல்.

Pope: To punish wrong, with kindly benefits the doers ply;
Thus shame their souls; but pass the ill unheeded by.

Rajaji: The best punishment for those who do evil to you, is to shame them by returning good for evil.

Even in this couplet, G. U. Pope has used 'punctuation' which is not equivalent or relevant to the source text. After saying "To punish wrong, with kindly benefits the doers ply; Thus shame their souls", he has used the phrase *pass the ill unheeded by*, confusing the readers whether to *benefit the doers* or to *leave unheeded*.

Rajaji is directly addressing to the reader in this translation: "The best punishment for those who do evil to *you*..." which is called 'modulation' which means 'change in point of view without change in meaning' in translation.

Key Findings

Both G. U. Pope and Rajaji have used collocation, addition, omission, punctuation, implicitness, explicitness, modulation, open choice principle, and idiom choice principle in their *Tirukkural* translations.

G. U. Pope's word-to-word translation of *Tirukkural* lacks clarity in meaning. He has used inappropriate word choice, collocation, punctuation, etc. Rajaji's sense-to-sense translation is direct but very plain. It lacks the beauty of Tiruvalluvar's poetry.

Limitation of the Study

The researcher has analysed only a few couplets from *Tirukkural* translations of G. U. Pope and Rajaji.

Scope for Further Study

The history of translation in Tamil language can be traced in detail. The theories and methodologies in Tamil translation can be systematically studied. *Tirukkural* translations of Parimelalagar or Mu. Karunanidhi can be compared with Pope and Rajaji's translations.

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J. Jaya Parveen, Asst. Professor
Chevalier T. Thomas Elizabeth (CTTE) College for Women
jayaparveen@gmail.com

V. Rajesh
Vice-Principal
Velammal Vidyalaya