

The Cohesive Inter-relationship between the Semantic Layer of Language and the Literary Translations (With Reference to Few Literary Works Translated into Sinhala from English and Vice Versa)

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ABSTRACT

This research attempts to determine the cohesive inter-relationship between the semantic layer of language and literary translations with reference to the selected literary translations including prose, poetry and drama. This research also addresses the issues which arise when translating literary works without grasping the authentic meaning which the original author has conveyed through the original text. The paper tries to bring out the difficulties faced by the translator when successfully achieving the above challenge and also it reiterates that it is not an easy game of words using a dictionary. Subsequently the paper indirectly reinforces the idea that the linguistics knowledge is necessary for a translator especially the knowledge on semantic layer. The paper discusses salient points which are useful for a literary translator by drawing linkages to the semantic layer of the language supported by the selected literary works translated into Sinhala and vice versa and equivalents. The research uses the methodology of illustrating the meaning conveyed in the original text and analyzing the way in which it has been translated in the target text and measuring and weighing the effectiveness of translating the meaning by finding out the particular strategies used by the translator so as to convey the meaning effectively, comprehensively and vividly which enable the reader of the target language to enjoy and feel it in the very same way that the source language reader does.

Key Words: Equivalents, Literary Translation, Poetry, Prose, Drama, , Semantic Layer.

1.INTRODUCTION

In linguistic perspective, language is the one and only man made yet natural device. Though it is something man made, it is human, it belongs to human being. Each and every language has its own unique characteristics. Something is unique means it is exclusive, incomparable and unequalled, but the translator has taken the job of

reversing this impossible task, which means his job is to make the unique characteristics comparable, reproducible and equal. Therefore the translator's job is not merely replacing words or copying words from one language to another. Translator has to deal with two languages which are unique, exclusively bound with its unparalleled culture. Thus translation is highly complicated process requiring rapid multilayered analysis of semantic fields, syntactic structures, the sociology and psychology of the reader or listener - response and cultural difference. Like all language use, translation is constantly creative constantly new.

There are different types of translations namely 'Technical Translations, Literary Translations, Legal Translations, Religious Translations and Scientific Translations. All these four types of translations require a four different skills and knowledge on four different disciplines in addition to the linguistic knowledge, proficiency of source language and the target language and the translator's fullest understanding of the subject matter of the source text.

Literary translation is both a craft and art, that is to say it involves an accurate and controlled manipulation and creativeness. Literary translator should possess a fine knowledge on literature, the languages which involve with the translation and their culture. Actually literary translation is like a battle between two different cultures trying to abridge across the cultural gap of those countries. Bernard Shaw once said that "England and America were two countries separated by the same language"

Thus it is obvious that the literary translator have to be fully equipped with an outstanding ability to hear, sort out, produce and manipulate the complexities of both the languages and transfer among them, which are studied under the discipline called linguistics. Linguistics is the scientific study of language, which means its subject matter is the language. Linguists divide language into

four layers called Phonetic Layer, Morphological Layer, Syntactic Layer and Semantic Layer. The semantic layer on which I am discussing is a synthesis of the first three layers.

2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The theoretical subjects like Science, Mathematics, and Geography etc speak to our brain which means they awake our wisdom first, but the aesthetic subject like “Literature, Music, Performing Arts” speak to our heart and make an emotional awakening first and then knock on the wisdom. Therefore the literary translation is an active and dynamic field which should be stylistically immaculate and incorporate the correct vocabulary which coins the authentic meaning. When coining the meaning “equivalents” play a major role. Actually the collocation is “coining a word” not “coining a meaning”, but the question arises that why do we need to coin words? It is because there is a new meaning. Therefore in deeper realization we are not coining a word but we are really coining a meaning. If that meaning is already available in the target language, we select that particular written orthography or the signifier. Meaning is conveyed in the form of a word written in orthography (Signifier - as one of the pioneer linguist called “Ferdinand De Saussure” pointed out). So, at the surface level we take that it is the word which carries the meaning, but in reality, the meaning carries the word, it can be any word, there is no specific word. That is why Saussure emphasized that there is no inter-relationship between the word (language sign, signifier) and the meaning (signified). When there is a meaning only we need a word, if there is no meaning the words do not exist. The meaning is unchanged but the word is changed from language to language. The “word” is a variable but the “meaning” is a non-variable. Thus a translator specially a literary translator should understand that he or she should grasp the meaning or the sense of the original text and then reproduce it using the most applicable equivalent which produces the required meaning of the target language. Thus this paper researches the equivalents along with examples and its role in the field of literary translation.

Literary texts can be divided into three categories, mainly, Prose, Poetry and Drama. Novels, essays and short stories are known as Prose. Literature attempts to promote certain ideas, values, or ideologies. All literary works are produced by specific human beings belonging to specific cultures at given historical times and occupying very definite positions within the structure and hierarchies of their society, hence not surprisingly, the ideas and values which literary works seek to promote are influenced by the history, culture and circumstances relevant to the

individuals who produce them. Also literary works are usually written in figurative and persuasive language which is sharp enough to artfully instill its message by concealing it under a cover of fictional situations and devices affecting the audience on emotional, intuitive, experiential and instinctive levels. How is it able to do so? It is able to do so because the meanings of the ideas are conveyed in such a way which evokes the feelings of the reader.

So, that is the nature of the subject area or the material of the literary translator. Hence he should not deviate from it, which means his translation should also carry the above nature and it happens only if he is able to translate it in such a way as described above which is not an easy task at all. Therefore the translator has to grasp the meaning of the idea accurately and convey that particular meaning so as to tickle the emotions of the audience.

When it comes to prose, it is written in sentences or as chunks and does not carry prosodic features or a specific meter (iambic pentameter, iambic tetrameter etc.) But as I described above, since it is a literary product it carries the figurative language which evokes the feelings, broadens the horizons and the imagination, and sharpens the critical faculties of the reader that is where the delight lies in a literary work. Therefore if it is a literary translation it should also carry the same qualities or attributions. If the translator fails to do so, the translation will not be a literary translation any more.

One of the greatest literary master pieces in the entire world of fiction called “Les Miserables” written by an ancient laureate “Victor Hugo”. It has been translated into Sinhala as “Manutapaya” by I.M.I.A Iriyagolla. He mentions in his preface reiterating the importance of meaning and conveying it as it is. The name of the main character of the original text is “shawalsha (ʃa:walʃa:)” in French and he was named as “Jean Vailjeen (ji:n wælji:n)” in the English translation. This person was rejected or condemned by the public at the very beginning of the plot of the story. The words which convey meaning of the “rejected” or “condemned” and “public” in Sinhala are “Warjana “(වර්ජන - wa:rjəna)” and “Jana” (ජන - jana)” respectively. Consequently the translator has coined the word as “Janawarjana “(ජනවර්ජන - janəwa:rjəna)” which is incorporated with the situational meaning and resembles the English phonetic “Jean Vailjeen (ji:n wælji:n)” as well.

In the novel “The Three Characters” translated by “Edwin Ariyadasa” of which the source text is “Charitha Thunak” (චරිත තුනක්) written by K.Jayathilake, the translator has provided foot notes explaining the culture bound dynamics expressed in the source text because

the meaning of these words cannot be understood by the reader of the target language. If the meaning was not conveyed properly the translation is not a success. Prof. Ediwin Ariyadasa has transliterated that untranslatables using English orthography and provided the meaning under a footnote because these words mean nothing to the target language's reader.

Pol Sambol - A preparation from scraped coconut, this is grind with chilies, onions and other ingredients. This goes well with cooked rice and most of other dishes.

Embula - on the threshing floor, the meals are described as "Embula". This is part of the cultivation ritual.

Heel Bath - the rice left over from the last night's meal. This is eaten for their breakfast as it is considered quite nourishing.

The above dynamics appear as just a mere collection of orthographic signs to the foreign reader and do not depict any picture in the readers' mind. He or she might find difficulties in understanding and as well as it will make the pace of reading slower and eventually degenerates the interest of reading the book, mainly because it doesn't mean anything to the reader. Thus it is obvious that a literary translator should convey the authentic meaning of the source text in such a way that the reader can conveniently understand. This particular way of translating the meaning differ from the other types of translations because technical terms, glossaries or fixed definitions are available for them. For example I would like to mention some legal terms and technical vocabulary used in the commerce and management field.

Legal Terms:

Exterminate	-	මුලෝත්පායනය කරනවා
Non - Indictable	-	අනධිවෝදනීය
Exquay Contract	-	බිනිතොට ගිවිසුම
Mint Bar	-	ටංකන සාමයනය
Extraditable	-	උද්භවණීය
Law of Tort	-	තෝරන නීතිය
Inviolable	-	අලංඝනීය
Itinerant	-	වරමාන
Irrebuttable	-	අනුපමර්දනය

Commerce and Management

Accured Expenses	-	උපචිත වියදම්
Excemption	-	වයනතිරේඛය

Errors on Commission and Omission -

කරණ ආකරණ දෝෂ

Appropriation Account	-	විසර්ජන ගිණුම
Confidence Limit	-	විශ්වසනීය සීමා
Del Credere Commission	-	කැපකරු කොමිස්
Dependant Variable	-	පරායත්ත විචල්යතය
Imperfect Oligopoly	-	අපූර්ණ කතිපයාධිකාරය
Imprest	-	අග්‍රිමය

Unlike the literary translator, the technical translator does not need to worry about the fact whether the target audience can understand these terms and whether these terms are familiar with their culture. Therefore the meanings that the literary translators encounter in the field of literature are bound with complexities and it is multi faceted and the translator must understand the complexities and multi faceted nature of the meanings and choose the apt meaning because the meaning and the literary translation interrelates with each other cohesively.

Meaning also sets the tone and creates the atmosphere of a literary work. If I explain in details the words, mother, mama, mummy, and mum are synonyms, but not the similar because there is a keen difference in meaning in each word. That subtlety is the entity which sets the tone and it is the meaning which creates that subtlety. In Sinhala there is lot of synonyms for the English word "you" such as ඔයා (oya) ඔබ (oba) ;uqfia (tamuse) නුඹ (nuba) ඔහේ (ohe) උඹ (uba) hqIau;d (ufmāta) තොප (topa) තෝ (ta:) තා (ta:) and each word is embedded with their own unique differences which distinguish the tone and atmosphere of the entire plot. "Tone" and "Atmosphere" play a major role in a literary master piece, the writer should be able to create the correct tone so as to instill the ideas predominantly and evoke the feeling of the reader impressively, so similarly the literary translator should also reproduce the same tone and the atmosphere which strike on the same feeling of the target reader.

"The Village in the Jungle" an all time phenomenal creation of Leonard Wolf has been translated into Sinhala as "Baddegama" which is considered as a perfect translation which stood a test of time translated by Gunarathna, ideally proves the above idea. Colloquial regional dialect of Sinhala has been employed by the translator which sets the ideal tone and the atmosphere applicable for the ordinary conversations of the story.

"O, Karlinahami!", Nanchohamy the headman's wife would say, "you are growing an old woman and, alas, childless!, but you have done much for your brother's children. Shameless they must be, to leave it to you. This is the forth chatty full you are carrying today. I have seen

it with these eyes. The lot of the childless woman is a hard one. See how my little one of eight years helps me!” “ආ කර්ලිනාහාමි උඹ දරුවෙක් මල්ලෙක් නැතුවම නිකම් නාකි වෙනවා නේ දැන් ඉතින් අයියගේ ළමුන්ට ඔය කළා මදි උඹට කිසිම උදව්වක් නොදි උන් උදේ හවස උඹ ලවා වැවෙන් දිය අද්දවන එක කොව්වර ලැජ්ජ නැති කමක් ද උඹ අදට ගෙනියන හත්වැනි හට්ටිය නේද මේ මගේ දැහින් දෑක්කි දරුවන් නැති අම්මා කෙනෙකුගේ දසාව බොහොම නරක එකකි දැන් බලාපත් මගේ පොඩි එකිට වයස අටයිය එකි මට කොව්වර උදව් වෙනවද යි ගමේ ආරච්චිරාලගේ මායියා වන නැන්වොහාමි කියයි

Here we realize how precise and shrewd the literary translator has to be when selecting words especially he should be sensitive with the language mainly the keen differences of the meaning of the synonyms. In the above example, the word “you” has been translated as “WU (uba)” not “ඒමයා ඔබ; තමුසේ; යුෂ්මතා; නුඹ; තා; තෙපි; and “udhshd” was the word selected for “wife”, he has refrained from selecting words such as “iB’o” Nd%4hdj” .Eks” ydñfka” wUqj” which are synonyms of “wife” , though they are synonyms they do not suit with the colloquial rural context, thus the translator has selected the word “udhshd”. Moreover the “going as an old woman” was translated as “ඒනිකන් නාකි වෙනවානේ; and “eyes” was as “oEyska” not as “weia folska” fka;%d folska” and “lot” as “oidj” and “She” as “talS” and the ‘headman” as “wrÉÑrd<” though there are lot of synonyms are available.

The literary translator has to take the words one by one and then he measures, weights, scales the meaning of it while continuously comparing and balancing the meaning of the source language’s words. Therefore finding an equivalent is not as simple as refereeing a dictionary and picking a word and replacing it. In the literary translation of the novel “Madame Bovari” written by “Gustave Flaubert” into Sinhala as “tud fndjdß” by Cyril C. Perera, he has translated the meaning given by the word “church calendar” in the source text as “,s;” not as “foajia:dkfha Èk o¾4Ykh” or “m,a,sfha osk o¾4Ykh” because those words do not create a familiar meaning or a clear picture in our mind in Sri Lankan context. Therefore the literary translator here being familiar with the culture of the target audience, picks the word “,s;” which is absolutely the most suitable, because he did not concern upon the words but the meaning. And also his knowledge on linguistics and the culture of both source and the target languages play an outstanding role in achieving the above task successfully.

When translating the idioms of a language, you have to solely concentrate upon the meaning of the idiom not the words. I would like to illustrate the fact through below idioms of which the translations are purely my attempt.

“Bird of a feather flock together”

- එක වල්ලේ පොල්ට නයත් එකයි නයි පැටියත් එකයි

“Beat about the bush”

- වහෙන් ඔරෝට වටෙන් ගොඩෙන්ට පරංගියා කෝට්ටේ ගියා වගේ

“Blowing your own trumpet”

- පුරසාරම් දොඩවනවා

“Out shine, showing off”

- කැපිලා පේනවා

“Distance is nothing if one has a motive”

- හිත ඇත්නම් පත කුඩා ද?

“I had to bite my tongue”

- සද්ද නැතුව ඉන්න සිද්ධ වුණාට කට වහගෙන හිටියා

“Don’t foul your own nest”

- උඩ බලාගෙන කෙල ගහගන්න එපි

“Cats and dogs raining”

- නා කපන වැස්සක්ට මහ වැස්සක්

“Every day has its day”

- අපටත් දවසක හඳ පායනවාට කොකාට වාරයක් නම්

නිත්තයටත් වාරයක් එනවලුට අපටත් දවසක් එනවා

“A dog in the manger”

- බල්ලා පිදුරු කන්නෙත් නෑ කන ගොනාට දෙන්නෙත් නෑ

“Flight like cats and dogs”

- නයි පොළොංගු වගේ

Just by skimming through the above equivalents, anyone can obviously understand that none of the words have been translated by the meaning in such a way that relevant to the Sri Lankan context through which the meaning can be easily and comfortably grasped. On the other hand, we also realize that idioms cannot be translated by looking at the words, it is only the meaning should be. Thus it is predominant that there is a cohesive inter-relationship between the literary translations and the semantic layer of language.

A western linguist whose native language is English and has been studying Sinhala for over thirty years makes the following observations in this regard.

“It is obvious that the essence of language is to map form to meaning. It is also true that different languages may have different ways of encoding meaning. It is also true that different languages may have different ways of encoding meaning (although translations is possible, it

is the case that single familiar words or phrases in one language would require long paraphrases in another). Thus I have never found a true single English equivalent for a Sinhala term like “iwarai” with all of its meanings, which range from English “over”, “finish” and “done” through “out of stock” and more. On the other hand I have never found a single Sinhala equivalent for the English “hope” which involves as it does, an intimate and necessary connection between the possibility that something might occur and positive feelings toward that occurrence.”

Glair’s forgoing remarks clearly indicate that achieving translation equivalence is no simple task even at word level. At the sentence level in which the structural ambiguities and many other factors come into play, the issue gets still complicated and I suggest that the best way is to adhering to the meaning always.

When it comes to poetry, there is a specific structure, mainly it is written in a form of a verse and it has a sungable tone or a rhythm. Also a poem is comprised with lot of poetic techniques, and mostly it carries a rigorous meter or prosodic features. When translating a poem, the translator should not violate these basic features of a poem at the same time most importantly he should convey the meaning of the poem without deteriorating the idea and the way it has been expressed in the original text.

I would like to draw two lines from the collection of poems called “The Plate of Gold” which has been translated into Sinhala as “රන් තැටිය” which predominantly epitomize the significance of translating the meaning and words are only the medium which express the meaning.

“We look before and after
And pine for what is not”

Above two lines were translated into Sinhala as;

ඒබලා ඉදිරි පහු නිති නැති දයකටම
ලලා හුර හැඬම සිරිතෙකි අප උරුම

Poetic language is an instrument of artistic expression and an object of artistic perception as well. So this perception should be instilled through meaning, here we see that the meaning has been kept intact and it can be comfortably understood without chaos. The language in which it has been expressed is poetic, sophisticated. End rhyming and the syllabic meter create the singable feature. Thus it is clear that there should be a cohesive interrelationship between the semantic layer and the literary translation which can be called as the core of the sustenance of a literary translation.

ඒඅපාලේ කාවයන සංසාරේ
කවිවේ ප්‍රජාපති

This Pali verse has been translated into Sinhala by one of the great luminaries of Sinhala literature named Kumarathunga Munidasa as follows;

ඒතෙරක් නොමැති කවි සසරේ
මහබල කවියා විතරේ

This Sinhala translation has been re-translated into English as follows;

“The poet indeed is the creator
Of the world of poetry infinite”

When reading the both Sinhala and English translations we can understand the conveyed meaning conveniently and clearly. The Wikipedia illustrates the major purpose of a translation as “*Translation is the communication of the meaning of a source language text by means of an equivalent target language text*” This again reiterates the fact that meaning is paramount in a translation not the words.

One of the most celebrated poetic creations in the middle - east world called “Rubaiyat” written by an outstanding poet in Persia, Iran named “Omar Khayyam” has been translated into English by several translators and poets and out of which Edward FitzGerald’s translation is most acceptable. One of the famous Sinhala writers G.B. Senanayake translates the English translation of FitzGerald’s as follows;

Dreaming when Dawn’s left hand was in the sky
I heard a voice within the tavern cry
“Awake my little ones, and fill the cup
Before life’s liquor in its cup be dry”

නිදමින් සිටි මට
අරුණලු වමන අහසට
නැගෙන විට
සුරාහල ඇතුළ සිට
කිසිවකු කියනු ඇසිණ
දරුවනි නැගිටින්න
ජීවිත සුරාව සිඳෙන්න
පෙර බඳුන පුරවන්න...

We can notice that the structure of the Sinhala translation is not in the form of quatrain, it consisted of eight lines, but the translator has captured the very essence of the meaning of the English translation while keeping the end rhyme and the lines are short compared to the English version. Thus this also reinforces the fact that the interrelationship between the meaning and the translation is undeniable.

In the last line of the original text expresses the meaning that Sidhara Gauthama (the prospective Buddha) thinks “how good if Yashodara will be called as the most supreme woman among women” but in the translation the original meaning has been captured totally differently as “Shall I just say a word to my lovely queen?”

For more examples, I would like to give below translation of William Shakespeare’s renowned drama “Tempest” which has been translated by Mr. Daya Gunatilake.

Look at her Moor, if thou hast eyes to see
She has deceived her father and may thee

ඇව හොඳින් බලා ගන්න

ඇගේ පියාණන් ඇව රැවැටුවා

සමහර විට ඔබත් රැවටෙන්න ඉඩ තියෙනවා

Here, we encounter a severe error where the opposite of the meaning has been translated, and then it leads to dismantle the entire plot of the drama.

3. CONCLUSION

According by, the paper concludes that translators should strictly maintain the cohesive interrelationship between the semantic layers of the target language and the source language which is fundamental in producing a good translation.

It is said that half of the scientific knowledge produced throughout the world would have been silent if there was not a device called “Translation”. Today, the modern world is in thirst of traditional knowledge. Thus I reckon that “Translation” is essential to the modern world in the process of taking tradition to the modernity.

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