



Analysing English Translation Of Premchand's Urdu Short Stories: A Cultural Perspective

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Abstract

Translating a different culture is considered as one of the most challenging task faced by translators. The fact is that it raises potential problems due to limitations in the source culture. Translators use various strategies in order to translate these cultural specific items. Either they are in the form of material or in the form of expression. They can be our religious beliefs or social dialogues that are only understandable by the source culture readers. The aim of this research is to look at the idea of mistranslation in the translations of Premchand Urdu short stories. The source text is Urdu short stories by Premchand and target text is its English translation. The researcher uses model of Newmark in order to analyse the mistranslation in two different cultural perspectives.

Key words: cultural perspective, cultural specific items, mistranslation, translation strategies

Introduction

The scholars of translation have different attitudes towards the role and essence of translation. Researchers in this field are of the view that translation is an extraordinary broad notion. They state that it is a process or product or the act of transferring the text that is in written form. While some are of the view that it is translating the SL into TL by preserving the semantic or stylistics equivalence. Larson (1998) states that translation is not only about the text, it is rather about the cultural context as well. As we know, every culture has its own language, and specific idiomatic expressions. It is quite a challenging task for translator to translate such expressions. During the translation of idiomatic expressions, there are many instances of mistranslation. Cultures are various from each other. Cultures vary at different level like social, material or religious level. Whenever the translator makes mistake during

the process of cultural translation it results in mistranslation. Mistranslation is the incorrect translation that misleads away from the intended meanings of the source text.

This study aims at investigating the issues in translation while translating the Urdu text into English language. This article addresses the issue of mistranslation at word, phrase or sentence level. Sometimes mistranslation occurs because of lack of equivalence between two languages and sometimes it is intentionally caused by the translator to fulfil some purposes. In order to find out the phenomena of mistranslation at the word or sentence level, that how the meaning is changed when they are translated, the translator uses the model of Newmark. This model consists of the strategies like descriptive equivalence, compensation, cultural equivalence, functional equivalence, paraphrasing, omission and compensation. In fact, a translator ought to be comfortable with the way of life, culture, and social settings of the source and target language speakers. He ought to be acquainted with various styles of talking, and social standards of the two dialects. This awareness, can improve the nature of the translations and all things that are considered necessary.

As indicated by Hatim and Mason (1990), the social setting in translating a book is most likely a more significant variable than any other. The practice of translation happens in the socio-cultural setting. Thus, it is significant to judge translational action just inside a social setting.

Hariyanto (1999) in "The Implication of Culture on Interpretation Theory and Practice" states that having relevance with the translation, culture shows itself in two different ways. To begin with, the idea or reference of the vocabulary is by one way or another particular for the given culture. Second, the idea or reference is broad however communicated in a manner explicit to the source language culture. It is recommended that a translator should consider the reason for the translation in translating the socially and culturally bound words or expressions.

Purpose of the study

The research analyses to find out what kind of strategies are used by the translators in order to fill the gap of culture of two opposite cultures. How the translated text has different perspective for target readers?

Aims and Objectives

This research aims at investigating that how the translation of different cultural perspectives can lead the target readers to different knowledge about which they have no specific background. It also aims at analysing the cultural barrier and the way through which the translators of Premchand's short stories mistranslate these deep rooted cultural words or items.

Literature Review

It is a fact that the notion of translation is indispensably associated with that of culture. It is also the fact that culture is considered a crucial part of translation. The role of culture is elaborated by Armstrong (2005) who states that it is only possible for bicultural or bilingual person that he may produce accurate translation. Nida (1964) opines that the problems that appear during the translation from one culture to other are due to the linguistic and cultural gap between two cultures. He is of the view in translation we cannot decide that whether linguistic gap is more significant or cultural gap as both SL and TL are of equal importance. Venuti (1995) describes that the process of translation looks for the similarities between the two cultures and languages. Said (1997) gives four factors that may influence the translation; translator, text being translated, purpose of translating a text and context of translation. In this way, one can say that translation process is not simple. It involves many dimensions. Each of the translated text involves four factors that can affect it. Here the reason behind mistranslation may be traced. The source text may require a deep analysis and transcription on a deeper level but it is translated at surface level that may cause mistranslation. Sungar in his conference proceedings quoted that translation is an act of understanding what is foreign and translating it in a language that is one's own. Therefore, it can be said that translation is a process of domestication (Sungar, 2015). He quoted Graham that translation is an act of the "internalization of the other so that it can be rewritten in the language of the familiar." Mistranslation is studied in this article as a significant issue in the field of translation. However, mistranslation although leads some very drastic results in past years as well as a few funny and embarrassing situations. Here are some instances that are the part of recent history. The most famous instance of mistranslation is what resulted in the attack on Hiroshima. The U.S. government issued the Potsdam Declaration in 1945 and demanded Japan's surrender. The prime minister of Japan responded by the word "mokusatsu", which is meant by, "No comment, we are still thinking about it." Unfortunately, it was interpreted incorrectly and was mistranslated as "We ignore with contempt", which resulted in the atom bomb attack on Hiroshima. Another incident is when prime minister of US visited Poland and a person who knew the two languages but did not know the art of translation, wrongly translates his words. He translated the words of prime minister, as he is happy to grasp private parts of Poland when he actually meant that he is happy to visit Poland. There are many instances in history like this (Gentzler, 2014). In translation, studies there are many scholars who have different views regarding the awareness of the culture when they start their research in this area. For example: James Holmes describes that analysing the characteristics of poetry is not the issue of linguistics rather it is studying the social culture and literature as he takes into consideration the diachronic elements in the translation of poetry. Susan Bassnett describes in detail the four areas of translation studies among which one is the translation in the target culture. Ling-wei Yin in his article on "English Lexical Mistranslation of Vocabulary List and Plausible Translation and Teaching Strategies" opines that vocabulary is an essential

part in mastering the second language. Errors that occur at vocabulary level; words, grammar and use of language cause mistranslation and hinder the actual meaning of a translated text. Geoffrey Leech (1981) gives seven semantic meanings; conceptual meaning, connotative meaning, social meaning, affective meaning, reflected meaning, collocational meaning, and thematic meaning. These meaning are contributively conveying the actual sense and meaning in the process of translation. Lack of the ability to use vocabulary can cause the mistranslation in the meaning at these levels. Culler (1976) states that if there was no difference between the cultures and languages and if they shared a common set pattern of cultural concepts, then it would have been a very easy task for translators to translate the culture. However, some serious problems come into its way. He was of the view that languages and cultures differ and they organize the world differently. Newmark (1995) opines that it is not difficult to learn language. Any old fool can learn language but to become translator one needs to be intelligent.

According to Snel-Hornby (1988: 40), the association between language and culture was first formally defined by Wilhelm von Humboldt. For this German rationalist, language was something dynamic: it was a movement (energia) as opposed to a static stock of things and the result of movement (ergon). Simultaneously language is an expression of culture and uniqueness of the speakers, who see the world through language.

Nida (2001), focuses on the message rather than the form and view translation dynamically, arguing that it is a communicative process. Nida & Waard (1986) discuss dynamic and functional equivalence, which advocates reproducing the source text message in the closest natural way in the target language. (Alhihi, 2015).

Krings (1986) is of the view that translation strategy is basically a potential plan used by the translator in order to solve the difficult translation task of cultures.

Research Methodology

The study is descriptive in nature. It focusses on the data analysis and gives its theoretical explanation. The study explores and describes that how some problems are occurred and who are the agents of these problems. Research question are explored in the data analysis and conclusion is drawn. Researcher is keen to address the problem of mistranslation in which the following data is being explored. The study is confined to Urdu to English translations. Researcher chooses data randomly from Premchand short stories and its translations by English translators.

Model of Newmark has been implied by researcher in order to look at the cultural perspective and to demystify the cultural gap between two languages, source language and target language which results in mistranslation. Model of Newmark consists of different strategies for translation of cultural specific items. These strategies include descriptive equivalent, cultural equivalent, functional equivalence, generalisation, omission, and compensation.

There are various ways of translating cultural specific items. There are many reasons due to which translator do not find exact word in the target language. As it has been mentioned by Jakobson (1959/2000, p.114) that during the process of translation “there is ordinarily no full equivalence between code- units”.

According to Newmark’s model there are some strategies which translator can use to fill the cultural gaps in the translation of culture specific items which are either religious, social or material. Many translation scholars describe these strategies. For Newmark (1988, p.82) the term cultural equivalent means “an approximate translation where a SL cultural word is translated by a TL cultural word”.

Data Analysis

Data comprises short stories of Munshi Premchand’s Urdu short stories that are translated in English by Khushwant Singh, Fatima Rizvi and Frances W. Pritchett.

Selection criteria of examples for data analysis

For the sake of data analysis researcher studied thirty short stories by Premchand and selected data randomly. By making comparison of these thirty short stories and their translation, researcher found various cultural gaps at religious, social or material level. Furthermore, researcher selected various examples but fifty examples were strong in which cultural gap can be seen. These examples were analysed and observed repeatedly in order to make the portion of data analysis stronger. Data involves short stories of Munshi Premchand’s Urdu short stories that are translated in English by Khushwant Singh, Fatima Rizvi, David Rubin and Rakhshanda Jalil

Urdu Source Language:

جیسے لوگ علی الصبح اٹھتے ہی بالوں پر چھرا کیوں چلاتے ہیں؟۔ (پریم چند، صفحہ نمبر 63)

English Target language:

For instance, why do men attack their hair with razor first thing in the morning.
(Translated by
Jalil. R. p. 86)

Interpretation

In this source text example word چھرا refers to the process of shaving and cutting of hair which is routine of every man. In this sentence word چھرا is part of the material culture. When translator translates this cultural material word he translates it as a razor. The two these words are not equivalent. Catford (1988) states that the necessary thing for translator is that he should consider both types of factors like the linguistic and cultural while he is translating. By this he means that the cultural and linguistic elements of the source language should be taken into consideration. Cultural factors for Catford (1988) are those that cannot be seen at the level of form and meaning. But they still exist in the mind of readers and speakers because of the background knowledge. The same is the case here in the translation of this word as it

translated as a razor. Readers of the source text are well aware of word چہرا but the readers of target text do not have any idea about this word. Translator tries to create a resemblance on the basis of their functions but the associated meanings are not transmitted. Translator's strategy is **functional equivalence** but he fails to provide the accurate word and it leads towards mistranslation. Catford(1988) asserts that translation is the process of replacing the text material of source culture by the equivalent of text material of target culture. However, in this expression we can see the clear difference between these two objects both on the basis of their functioning as well as on the structure.

Urdu Source Language

گویا فرشتوں کو اپنی معصومیت کا یقین دلا رہا ہو۔

English Target language

As though calling on the gods to witness his innocence. (omission)

Interpretation:

In this source text example, the source text word فرشتوں refers to the idea of God's creature. They perform the duties assigned to them by Allah almighty. The source text word for فرشتوں is 'angels' whereas translators translates this word as gods. It is the belief of Muslims that فرشتوں are not 'gods' rather they are creature of God performing their duties assigned to them. Translator here uses the strategy of **omission**. Translator omits the main word for the translation of فرشتوں and provides his target readers with the word gods. Hence, we can say that translator mistranslates the source culture belief. Larson considered that the terms which deal with the religious aspects are the most difficult one to translate for translators. He is of the view that these are the specific terms that are only known by the source text readers instead by the target text readers.

Urdu Source Language:

سارا وقت گلی ڈنڈے کی نظر کر کے ٹھیک کھانے کے وقت آیا۔ (پریم چند ، صفحہ نمبر 712)

English Target language:

I spent whole morning playing the stick ball and came back exactly at the meal time. (Rubin,David, 1969, p.160)

Interpretation

In source language the words "گلی ڈنڈا" refers to a particular street game, which is mostly played in villages and is part of our cultural heritage. This game consists of two things the first one is large stick and a short piece of stick about the length of half foot having width of one and half inch with its curved corner on both sides. This game has its own rules and regulation according to which گلی is placed on earth and it's one corner is hit by the player as soon as it lifts up, boy with the long stick smashes it far away in the air. When translator translates this cultural game into target language, he translates it as a "stick ball". Translator is unable to maintain the balance between these two games, which are played in two different countries. In the target language

translator uses the words stickball, which is also known as baseball and is played in almost every western country. Translator uses the strategy of **cultural equivalence** between these two games as in source culture it is “گلی ٹنڈا” and in target culture it is “stick ball” which results in mistranslation. Translator has failed to provide accurate referent in the target culture. The difference between these games is of ball and specially made stick. In the former ball is thrown by the player of opponent side whereas in the later the player himself hits a curved stick with a long stick. According to Aixela(1996) cultural specific items are the main part of the text that have connection to specific concepts in the foreign cultures which can be unknown to the readers of target text. On the whole translator is unable to provide accurate cultural equivalence of this cultural game which has its own significance in the source culture as the perspective and the method of playing of both games are different.

Urdu source language

ایک روز دوپہر کے وقت لال بہاری سنگھ دو مرغابیاں لٹے ہوئے آئے۔

English target language.

One afternoon Lal Bahari turned up with two birds in his hands. (generalization)

Interpretation

In this source text the word مرغابیاں refers to the bird but the appropriate translation is duck. In the translation of cultural items, the problematic situation arises when the translator does not have idea about the culture of the source text. Source culture can be in the form of social, material, and religious. So during the translation of this source text translator uses the **strategy of generalization**. Translator generalises the source culture textual item into general bird. Translator tries to produce accurate referent but during process of translation he simply omits the actual bird and generalises it. According to Aixela(1996) cultural specific items are the main parts of text that have connection to specific concepts in the foreign cultures which can be unknown to the readers of target text.

Urdu source language

(ابھی دکھا دوں تو دوڑ کر گودی میں اٹھا لو گے۔ (پریم چند ، صفحہ نمبر 506)

English Target language:

If I show it to you, you will surely grab it in your arms. (Translated by Rizvi. F)

Interpretation

In this sentence, word گودی is mistranslated as grab in arms. گودی itself contains its lexical meaning as lap but the translator mistranslates it with the above mentioned phrase and misleads the actual sense of the word. The source language word گودی has a strong implementation in our cultural perspective and has its own significance. The correct translation for the source language word “گودی” is lap. Grab into the arms gives the meaning of embracing when two people meet each other. “گودی” is of different kind in which a child sits in the lap of elder instead of embracing. The translator uses the technique of **descriptive equivalence** as discussed by Newmark. In this sentence paraphrasing has been used as translator wants to clear the idea to his reader but he

mixes these two cultural specific items that show love. Translator tries to interpret but fails. The main problem with the cultural translation is of difference between two cultures, the source and the target culture. Both these words provide different perspective to the different reader either they are in source culture or in the target culture. By application of this strategy, the source culture has been misinterpreted by the translator and hence it is mistranslation of the important part of source culture.

Urdu source language

یہ نہیں کہ ایک پیسے کی ریوڑیاں لیں تو چڑا چڑا کر کھانے لگا۔ (پریم چند، صفحہ نمبر 781)

English Target language:

I am not the sort who buys a piece worth of lollipops to tease others by sucking them.

(Translated by Singh. K)

Interpretation

The source text example ریوڑیاں refers to a particular type of sweet which it is made by special type of ingredients. This type of sweet has a special place in our source culture. The translator translates a culture specific sweet's name into target cultures sweet. He translates ریوڑیاں as a lollipop that is of different type of dish mostly used in the foreign cultures. The main thing with the language is the plenty of specific things that belong to different categories. Challenging task for translator comes when there are barriers between the language and culture. The second problematic task for translator is to keep the same message in target language that was in source language. When translator tries to translate an expression, the source culture item distracts him. Florin (1993: 122) is of the view that the translation of cultural specific items is not just limited to the use of daily language. He further uncovers that these cultural words have no exact equivalents in target language. Danyte (2006) describes that translator not only face difficulty of making correct interpretations of such evocations but also in transmitting them in a comprehensible way to the target readers (2006: 203). In this example translator uses the strategy of **compensation** as pointed out by Newmark. English culture and language does not possess exact meaning of this cultural sweet so the translator tries to compensate the word ریوڑیاں with lollipops. The word ریوڑیاں refers to the material culture and the translator mistranslates it and provides the word lollipops which has no resemblance with the source language word.

Conclusion

In this paper, the researcher has investigated that how cultural misunderstandings during translation has led to errors in these translated short stories. Mistranslation happens for a variety of reasons, including the translator's inexperience with the two languages, the translator's deliberate use of mistranslation, cultural barriers, lexical variations between the two languages, and ideological differences. According to data analysis, there are numerous issues with translating these cultural items, whether they are the tangible form or an expression. English translations of stories are made from Urdu. The English and Urdu languages differ on various bases. The lexical items

in Urdu, which portrays Indian culture, differ semantically from those in English and do not express the correct meanings that are truly intended. Translation difficulties are brought on by cultural differences. The language used to express English culture's cultural values, norms, and religion is very different. English language and culture do not have an equal in Indian culture.

Another reason for mistranslation is the translator's aim as well as his limited language knowledge. Cultural elements are occasionally incorrectly translated from Urdu to English because translators lack the linguistic knowledge necessary to draw comparisons. By changing a lexical item into a phrase in the target language, the translator attempts to generate dynamic equivalence, but occasionally does so at the expense of the true meaning of the source text in the target text. The main causes of mistranslation are the lack of correspondence between the meanings of lexical elements and the translator's participation in the translation process.

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