

TRANSLATION AS A GATEWAY TO COMPARATIVE STUDIES

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Abstract

The phenomenon of globalization has influenced the human life to a great extent. It developed an interest among the people of getting new knowledge of the world and brought the world together. As a result, a trend of comparative studies has emerged in literary study. Translation made it possible to read and understand the literature written in many languages. The study of translation can bring the literatures of the world together for the betterment of mankind. It paved a way for intertextuality which is the core of comparative studies. Hence, translation is a gateway to comparative studies as it hangs upon the skill of translation. It is called 'after life' for it holds the original beyond its life. Therefore the significance of translation and translation studies can't be ignored. As such, the paper aims to trace out the concept of translation in detail including its definitions, kinds, problems, limits and the role of a translator. It also intends to reveal the co-relation between translation and comparative studies.

Key words – translation, translation studies, translator, intertextuality, comparative studies

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Introduction:

Globalization has influenced the human life to a great extent and brought the world together. In the process of globalization, translation played a pivotal role and made it possible to read and understand the literature written in many languages. Number of spoken/written languages exists in this world with their distinguished features which develops a vague sense of distinctness among people. Translation removed the gap and brought the world together for the betterment of mankind. It brought intertextuality to our knowledge which is the core of comparative studies. It is only through translation that one can study the literature written in unknown languages. Therefore, the role of a translator is of much significance while translating a text from SL (source language) to TL (target language).

Translation: Meaning and Definition

The term translation has been differently defined by various scholars. Some defined it as 'art', others considered it as 'skill' while for some others it is a 'science'.

According to J. C. Catford 'Translation is an operation performed on languages: a process of substituting a text in one language for a text in another.'ⁱ He also defined it from linguistic point of view as 'the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent material in another language.'ⁱⁱ

A. H. Smith states that 'to translate is to change into another language retaining as much of the sense as one can.'ⁱⁱⁱ

Dr. Johnson defines it as 'change into another language, retaining the sense'.^{iv}

While Cambridge Advance Learner's Dictionary (3rd Edition) set forth the meaning of translation as 'the process of translating something, from one language to another'.^v

From the above definitions it can be said that translation is a process of substituting a text in source language for a text in target language retaining the sense of source language.

Types of Translation:

It is not easy to state the specific types of translation as diversity can be observed while dividing translation into various types. Traditional translation theorist divided translation into two main types:

- a) Literary translation: concerned with both sense and style.
- b) Non-literary translation: emphasizing sense rather than words.

John Dryden divided translation into three basic types:

- a) Metaphrase: word by word and line by line translation.
- b) Paraphrase: Sense for sense
- c) Imitation: the translator can abandon the text of the original as he sees fit.^{vi}

Roman Jakobson divides translation into the following types:

- a) Intralingual translation or *rewording* (an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs in the same language).
- b) Interlingual translation or *translation proper* (an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language)
- c) Intersemiotic translation or *transmutation* (an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems)^{vii}

There are still other scholars who divided translation into various other types based on their perception of translation. However, about all types of translation it is argued that it loses meaning, adds meaning and skews meaning. Therefore, 100% translation is not possible.

Problems of a translator:

While translating the text from SL to TL the translator faces many problems, which can be pointed out as follow:

- 1) Translation of culture based words into TL with different culture - for instance the word *Swayanvar* is difficult to translate into English.
- 2) Translation of the words indicating relations for example 'uncle' and 'aunt' - there are so many equal words available in Indian languages.
- 3) Translation of the language used in literature - Sometimes in literature the writers use metaphorical language in such cases it is difficult for the translator to

understand the meaning for translation (literal meaning or metaphorical meaning). The language in poetry is difficult to translate as it is full of ornamental words and lyrics.

- 4) Translation of the language influenced by mother tongue - mother tongue influence creates problems for the translator. For example 'I am feeling sick' instead of 'I am sick'. Sometimes in Marathi progressive tense is used instead of simple tense for example 'I am knowing everyone' in place of 'I know everyone'.
- 5) Translation of homonyms - sometimes the meaning of the same word changes in different languages. For example in Marathi the word 'kar' means 'to do' but in Sanskrit it means 'hand'.
- 6) Translation of sentences - the structure of sentence in English is SVO i. e. subject, verb and object but in Marathi it is SOV i. e. subject, object and verb.
- 7) Translation of jokes - It becomes difficult for the translator to translate the jokes in SL to TL without having knowledge of its nature and origin.

Therefore, the translator has to be very cautious to find out the solutions for the problems during the process of translation.

Limitations of a translator:

Sir Aurobindo states that 'a translator is not necessarily bound to the original he chooses; he can make his own poetry out of it, if he likes, and that is what is generally done'.^{viii} The aim of translation is to keep the original alive, therefore it is considered as 'after life'.^{ix} Cicero points out the dilemma of the translator in the following words:

"If I render word for word, the result will sound uncouth and if compelled by necessity I alter anything in the order or wording. I shall seem to have departed from the function of translator."^x

While translating a text translator has to guard the original one, hence he does not possess much liberty. On the contrary, if he avails liberty and goes on according to his likes and dislikes, it will be something different than translation.

The Role of a translator:

According to some scholar translation is not a creative but mechanical process. Therefore translator has to be very cautious. He plays significant role at the time of translating any text from SL to TL. Alexander Frasier Tytler in his book 'The Principles of Translation' laid down three basic principles of translation:

- 1) The translator should give a complete transcript of the idea of the original work.

- 2) The style and manner of writing should be of the same character with that of the original work.
- 3) The translation should have all the ease of the original composition.^{xi}

With the invention of printing methods, the role of translator changed significantly. According to a French humanist, Dolet:

- 1) The translator must fully understand the sense and meaning of the original author, although he is at liberty to clarify obscurities.
- 2) The translator should have a perfect knowledge of both SL and TL.
- 3) The translator should avoid word for word renderings.
- 4) The translator should use forms of speech in common use.
- 5) The translator should chose and order words appropriately to produce the correct tone.^{xii}

Hence, for objective translation, the translator should be aware of his role while translating a text.

Translation and Comparative Literature:

The term Comparative Literature has its origin in the series of French anthologies titled *Cours de Littérature Comparee* which were published in 1816. Mathew Arnold is the first one to use the term and popularize it through his lectures in English. At the time of delivering his Inaugural Lecture at Oxford in 1857 he stated:

Everywhere there is connection, everywhere there is illustration. No single event, no single literature is adequately comprehended except in relation to other events, to other literatures (*On the Modern Element in Literature*).^{xiii}

The study of Comparative Literature depends upon the skill of translation and translation studies. Intertextuality plays very important role while studying Comparative Literature. Suppose one wants to compare a novel written in Bengali with a novel written in English and (s)he doesn't know Bengali. It is possible for her/him to carry on his study through translation. (S)he will have to study English version of that Bengali novel first. Translation made it possible to read and understand the literature written in any language of the world. It is through translation only that the world could acquaint with the two great epics in India *the Ramayana* and *the Mahabharata* which are translated into several languages.

Translation has emerged as a separate discipline of study now a day. It has its invaluable place in the study of Comparative Literature. Susan Bassnett and Lefevere state the significance of translation in Comparative Studies in the following words:

With the development of Translation Studies as a discipline in its own right, with a methodology that draws on comparatistics and cultural history, the time has come to think again. Translation has been a major shaping force in the development of world culture and no study of comparative literature can take place without regard to translation (160).^{xiv}

Hence, translation serves as a tool for the study of Comparative Literature. One cannot imagine the study of Comparative Literature without considering translation.

Conclusion:

Translation is a process of substituting a text in source language for a text in target language retaining the sense of source language. The scholars have divided translation into different types based on their perception. The translator can not avail much liberty during translation process. He has to be very cautious while translating a text from SL to TL. The role of the translator is vital in the process of translation as the study of Comparative Literature depends upon the skill of translation. It is translation which brings intertextuality to our knowledge. Therefore, translation is a gateway to Comparative Studies.

Endnotes

ⁱ. J. C. Catford, *A Linguistic Theory of Translation* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965) 1.

ⁱⁱ. Ibid., 20.

ⁱⁱⁱ. B. K. Das, *A Handbook of Translation Studies* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, 2008) 1.

^{iv}. Ibid., 1.

^v. Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary (3rd Edition), 2008.

^{vi}. Ibid., 28.

^{vii}. Susan Bassnett, *Translation Studies* (London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2002) 23.

^{viii}. Das, 38.

^{ix}. Ibid., 140.

^x. Ibid., 5-6.

^{xi}. Ibid., 18.

^{xii}. Bassnett, 61.

^{xiii}. Das, 125.

^{xiv}. Das, 133.

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