



Socio-cultural and linguistic problems in translation of Marathi plays into English

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Abstract

Translation is rendering of source language (SL) text into target language (TL). Translation is both linguistic and social activity. Good knowledge of source language as well as target language is the main prerequisite for translating any text from one language into another. Literary translation is a complex phenomenon. It is not a word for word translation. Translation of drama from one language into another is different experiment. Marathi literature has a very glorious past. Marathi plays have their special identity in a multi-lingual country like India. Translation of Marathi plays into English is challenging work. The researcher has translated four Marathi plays of Vasant Kanetkar into English. Language is the product of society. Any language in the world originates according to the need of that particular society. Therefore, social rituals, traditions, economic conditions, cultural practices, linguistic groups etc. affect the development of the language. All languages do not get equal socio-cultural and linguistic background. As a result, 'translation' does not remain merely linguistic activity, but it gives exposure to study the socio-cultural, political and historical background of the language. Taking into account socio-cultural and linguistic differences between languages, translator has to face problems while translating SL text into TL text. The present research paper is an attempt to focus on problems that occur while translating Marathi plays into English.

Keywords: translation, source language text (SL), target language text (TL)

Introduction

Translation is not a new phenomenon. It is as old as literature in any language. Translation does not mean to find equivalent words in target language and render source language text into target language. The area of translation is vast and it encompasses understanding the source language text, its linguistic, socio-cultural, historical and economic depth. Source language (SL) in this particular context means the language of original text. And target language means any other language in which translator is likely to render original text. For example, suppose, somebody has to translate Shakespeare's 'Hamlet' into Hindi, here in this specific context 'English' will be the 'Source Language' (SL) and 'Hindi' will be the 'Target Language'.

As a part of his research, here researcher has translated four Marathi plays of Vasant Kanetkar i.e. *Prema*, *Tujha Rang Kasa?*, *Raigadala Jenwaha Jag Yete*, *Devanche Manorajya* and *Ashrunchi Jhali Phule* into English. Vasant Kantkar is Marathi dramatist and novelist. Kanetkar has written forty full-length plays in Marathi. Besides, he has written short stories, essays and *Sangeet Natakas* (Operas) in Marathi. In 1992, he received Padma Shri, the highest civilian award in India for his contribution to Marathi literature. Kanetkar's plays have been translated into Indian languages like Hindi, Gujarati and Kannada. Kanetkar's plays covered a wide range of subject matters. Kanetkar has written social plays, history plays as well as *Sangeet Natak* (Opera) in Marathi. Researcher has translated four Marathi plays written by Kanetkar into English. A number of socio-cultural and linguistic problems occurred while translating select plays of Kanetkar into English. The main focus of the present research paper is to discuss these problems.

Objectives

Objectives of present study can be stated as below:

1. To discuss socio-cultural and linguistic problems those occur while translating Marathi plays into English.
2. To analyze critically 'uniqueness' of both 'source language' and 'target language' with special reference to the translation of select Marathi plays into English.
3. To make a comprehensive statement on translation process.

Method

In order to achieve the aforesaid objectives, the following methods are employed:

1. Four Marathi plays of Vasant Kanetkar are translated into English. A play-wise list of socio-cultural and linguistic disparities between Marathi and English was prepared.
2. Study of drama is incomplete without watching the performances. Therefore, theatrical performances of these plays were watched thoroughly on YouTube.

Language is the medium of translation. Languages differ from one another on linguistic and socio-cultural grounds. Marathi belongs to the Indo-Aryan family of languages and English is a West Germanic language. English is a major connecting link language in a multi-lingual country like India. English has become part and parcel of lives of people in India. However, both languages i.e. Marathi and English are originated and developed in different linguistic, socio-cultural contexts. Moreover, language is the product of society. In this specific context, both languages that is to say, Marathi and English are socio-culturally and linguistically rich as well as distinct. Translator has to bridge the gap

between two languages while translating SL text into TL text. Therefore, the present researcher has faced a number of linguistic and socio-cultural problems. The present research paper is an attempt to focus on these problems.

Prema, Tujha Rang Kasa? (*Love, What is Your Colour?*) is a domestic comedy by Kanetkar in Marathi. Translation of Marathi plays like *Prema, Tujha Rang Kasa?* into English is a challenging work. There are a number of idioms and phrasal verbs in the play that are deeply rooted in socio-cultural and linguistic entity of Marathi language. Especially, the use of interjections, greeting habits of people, influence of local words and dialects, all become the major problem in translating play like *Prema, Tujha Rang Kasa?* into English. Translation of Marathi popular refrains into English is the main problem. Marathi colloquial speeches are used abundantly in the play; translation of such colloquial speeches into English is the major socio-cultural and linguistic problem.

In Marathi syntax, it is common practice to use suffix '*Wala*' to form noun that describes the profession of the person. For example, '*Dudhwala*' that is to say a milk-man or '*Paperwala*' that is to say a paper-boy. In the play, *Prema, Tujha Rang Kasa?*, Nilubhau Gore is described as '*Kolasewala*', that is to say 'coal-man'. In Marathi speaking culture, it is common practice by a wife to call her husband by saying '*Aho*'. In English, we have common ways of greeting or addressing somebody may be male or female. Therefore, in English, one has to use 'Hi, hello' etc. expressions to greet anybody according to the situation. *Prema, Tujha Rang Kasa?* is a Marathi romantic-comedy. In the play, *Prema, Tujha Rang Kasa?* Priyanwadabai hums refrains of popular Marathi romantic song, '*Galala padate khali mala pahuni*' or Prof. Ballard sings the line '*Goli goli pan, fulasarakhi chhan*' at the end of the play. Translation of such rhymes or refrains into English is one of the problems. Translator has to grasp the situation in the play in order to create the maximal equivalent text in target language like English.

Translation of Marathi history plays into English is challenging work. Basically history plays are based on historical references as well as personages. In the present study, Vasant Kanetkar's history play *Raigadala Jenwha Jag Yete* is translated into English as 'When Raigarh Fort Awakens.....' There are a number of words and phrases in the play which are part of Marathi language spoken during the period of medieval era of Marathi language and literature. There is influence of Sanskrit, Persian and other languages. Therefore, translation of such historic words and phrases into English is the major challenge before the translator. The word *Ashtapradhanmandal* is the part of unique administration developed by Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. *Ashtapradhanmandal* stands for the council of eight ministers. There are other references like '*Munj*' ceremony, '*Haldi-kumkum*' ceremony in the play *Raigadala Jenwha Jag Yete*. Such words are deeply rooted in the socio-cultural milieu of Marathi language. There were a few respected positions in the court of Shivaji Maharaj such as *Surnis*, *Sarnaubat* etc. Translation of such titles into English is another problem. The play, *Raigadala Jenwha Jag Yete* ends with an epilogue.

*Itihasachya galawarati
Jithe ekada sukale oghal
Ruju lagale shatdharanni*

*Punha ekada tithech ohal
Prasanna hota rangdevata
tya shatdhara anamikechya mani ghaliti pinga
Shivrayanchya hrudayantariche shalya mala sanga
(Kanetkar, 2007 p88)*

In case with such epilogues or verses with deep connotative meanings, translation becomes challenging work. Translator has to paraphrase such quotes or verses into target language with maximum balance between two i.e. SL text and TL text. Kanetkar's *Devanche Manorajya* is beautiful blending of illusion and reality. It is translated into English as 'The Reverie of Gods'. Hindu gods Lord Vishnu, Mahadev, Bramhadev and other celestial figures frequently occur in the play. The famous Sanskrit mantra "*Asato ma sat gamay! Tamaso ma jyotir gamay! Mrityorma amrut gamay...*" overhears twice or thrice in the play *Devanche Manorajya*. Such Sanskrit hymns or mantras are part of Indian philosophy in general and Hinduism in particular. Therefore, the adequate knowledge of Hinduism or Indian philosophy is the pivotal element of the translation of Marathi plays like *Devanche Manorajya* into English. There are a lot of references from Hindu *Puranas* and scriptures in the play *Devanche Manorajya*. Translator does not find equivalent words in English. Translator has to either employ the method of borrowing words as they are with explanatory note or sometimes to paraphrase them. There are references of Vedic measure of distance like *Yojana*, months of Hindu calendar, types of Yoga etc.

Vasant Kanetkar's *Ashrunchi Jhali Phule* (1966) is translated into English as 'Tears Turned into Flowers'; Hindi movie, *Aansoo Ban Gaye Phool* is an adaptation of *Ashrunchi Jhali Phule*. Furthermore, Kanetkar received Filmfare Award for Best Story for the Hindi movie, *Aansoo Ban Gaye Phool*. The play *Ashrunchi Jhali Phule* throws light upon educational system in India. In the play, *Ashrunchi Jhali Phule* dramatist has used some reduplicative expressions. In Marathi, it is common practice to use reduplicative expressions like *kacche-bacche*, *aashirwad-bishirwad*, *dev-danav*, *chalis-pannas*, *ghar-dar* etc. Reduplicative means repeating a syllable or other part of the word with a slight change. Translation of such reduplicative expressions into English is one of the linguistic problems in translation of Marathi plays into English. Phrases like *Marwari* woman, *Peshwa* fashion seating arrangement etc. are deeply rooted in socio-cultural milieu of Marathi language. Therefore, translator cannot have equivalent phrases or words in target language like English. Translator has to use such words or phrases as they are with explanatory notes or glossary notes.

Vasant Kanetkar has plentifully used lines from Marathi *abhangas*, *shlokas*, *bhoopalis* in his plays. *Abhanga*, *shloka* or *bhoopali* are the part of glorious medieval Marathi literature developed by Dnyaneshwar, Tukaram, Namdeo and other saint poets in Maharashtra. These *abhangas* or *shlokas* have philosophical stand. Therefore, word-for-word translation or literal translation method is meager for this purpose. Translator has to get acquainted with connotative meaning of phrases and idiomatic expressions that are used by the gifted dramatist like Vasant Kanetkar. There are a lot of allusions from Hindu *Puranas* and other religious books in Vasant Kanetkar's plays. The eating habits of people, their manners, etiquettes, dialects of Marathi language, colloquial expressions, exclamations etc. cause the major linguistic as well as socio-cultural problem in translating Marathi plays into English.

Conclusion

To sum up, translation is a kind of communication between two languages, two cultures and two different nations as well. In the era of globalization, in order to bring together diverse ideas, views points, different perspectives to enrich the entire human race and to sensitize human mind, there is dire need of translation. Translation is a kind of exchange of thoughts, traditions and socio-cultural codes. Translation can make available the best literary as well as non-literary works from local or native languages into world languages like English and vice versa. Translation is multi-dimensional and multi-disciplinary work. Translator is the catalytic agent in the process of translation. There are lot socio-cultural and linguistic differences between languages in the world. Translation is not a mechanical process; rather it is creative process. Translation is not a robotic work. Initially, translator has to communicate thoroughly with the SL text. Just like an actor playing the role of villain or hero on the stage, he has to probe deep and deep into the SL text and convey the best meaning to the TL readers. Therefore, while translating source language text into target language like English, translator has to maintain the flavor of SL text as well.

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