Proverbs in Translation: 
A Study Based on Some Identified Proverbs

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Introduction
Translation is indispensable towards the march of globalization. It is an art of reproducing the substance of the original in target language(s); first in terms of meaning then in terms of style. In a way translation is the replacement of textual material in one language by equivalent textual material in other language(s).

Many aspects ought to be taken into consideration with keen attention in the process of translation. The original should be viewed from word-level to pragmatic-level. Finding an appropriate equivalent or substituting with an apt parallel is the first and foremost process. Translation involves the studying of the Lexicon, grammatical structure and cultural context of the source language text, analyzing it in order to determine its meaning and then reconstructing the very substance to suit the structure and cultural context of the target language without any shortcomings. Finding the apt equivalence is the most important procedure in translation.

In order to do a translation a translator should be familiar with the cultural aspects of the source language as well as the target language. A language has strong influence on the traditions, norms and culture of the people who speak the language. As far as proverbs, idiomatic phrases and such cultural aspects are concerned they ought to be substituted with parallels.

Research Problem
Proverbs, idioms and phrases have been in vogue among the country folks for long. Their interpretations depend on the clime, culture, norms, traditions and the context in a particular language of a group of people. In translation proverbs, idioms, phrases and the likes are substituted with their respective parallels in the target language.

It is observed in this study regarding the awareness of this culture specific expression while doing translation. Some challenges have been encountered while transferring these culture specific expressions from the source language into the target language.

Objective
This study aims at analyzing possibilities of some such substitutions between English and Tamil languages. Through which awareness may be created in the translations of these traditional aspects. As translation is an ongoing process the knowledge of parallel
proverbs in different languages may be helpful to the budding translators to cope up the problems emerging in the modern context of globalization.

**Limitation of the Study**

Among all culture specific expressions such as proverbs, idioms and phrases, some proverbs of contemporary usages in Tamil language are identified and given to a group of Undergraduates of Translation Studies.

The substitutions are viewed through some classifications in order to give a clear explanation.

The proverbs are cited with their respective parallels in the suitable classification.

**Methodology**

A group of under graduates of Translation Studies of University of Jaffna is given a task of transferring the identified proverbs from the source language into the target language. Students encounter many issues regarding these culture specific references to search for the proper parallels.

Then the culture specified aspects, connotations and cultural terms are explained.

Their translations are analysed. So, attention should be paid while doing translation of these culture specific references as they ought to be substituted with the respective parallels.

Some classifications could be observed in the substitution of parallels of the identified proverbs.

It is felt that this classification may ease the study and give clarity.

1. Some parallels seem to be direct translation.

   Technically they are known in translation as formal equivalence.

   **The face is the index of the mind**
   
   அமாவாசை அடைப்பாக்கியில் உறைப்பு

   **All that glitters is not gold**
   
   மலர்கூற்றும்பொழுது பொருள்பு

   **No smoke without fire**
   
   நீர்ப்பல்லடி பொட்டமா

2. Some parallels differ as per the cultural elements of the languages.

   **Good wine needs no bush**
   
   சிலைத்துறைகளில் சிலைத்துறை சிலைப்பிள்ளை

   **Robbing Peter to pay Paul**
   
   ல்ரோப்பிங் பெய்ட் பெய்ல் ல்ரோப்பிங் பெய்ல்

   **Wolf in sheep’s clothing**
   
   பெரியங்கள் பெரியங்கள் பொன்ற
3. Some parallels give the same meaning with the rhetoric beauty of the languages.

   Burnt child dreads fire
   வெட்டப்பட்ட குழந்தை தான் போற்றுவது

   Birds of a feather flock together
   சுருள் சுருள் கூடும்

   Still water runs deep /
   Empty vessels make loud noise
   இழுமையானது கோட்பரழு

4. There may be more parallels in the target language for a proverb in the source language.

   In such cases appropriateness could be achieved by selecting as per the context.

   Unity is strength
   இணையும் இயல்பு

5. Some proverbs are provided with a rhythmic pattern in the language.

   Health is wealth
   உறுதியான குழந்தை

   A hungry man is an angry man
   மாரணமான பாுண்டம்

   Art is long and time is short
   கலை வேண்டும் காலம் சுமார்

6. Some proverbs may sound as the same. But they give entirely different meanings.

   வலுவு கூட நிறைந்தது மேல் கூட அறிவியல்
   நிறை தேவியான, விளைவுகை கலவைப்பள்ளியின் விளைவிற்கு விளையாடும்

   Right hand doesn’t know what the left hand does.
   It means that,
   One member of a group does not have knowledge of the other member’s actions or tasks.

   Some proverbs in the source language may not have parallels in the source language.
   “Action speaks louder than words”

   Here a question arises, whether such proverbs can be translated directly into the target language or not.

   Such proverbs can be substituted as per the need and context.
   இலக்கணிக்கும் மறையும் மாறு

   During translation the parallels should be aptly chosen and employed with careful attention to the matters mentioned above.
Conclusion

With the enhancement of knowledge and evolution of language, Translation has become a powerful medium. Indeed Translation has a prominent role in a multi-lingual society.

An accomplished translation should suit the milieu of the target language. Thus, in the art of translation, proverbs should be carefully considered and properly substituted with the respective parallels. Since each language has its own peculiar linguistic elements intertwined with literary and cultural connotations. Therefore, an awareness and knowledge of these traditional aspects may enrich the performance of translation and enhance the effect of translation.

Though the undergraduates are aware of substituting the parallels, at times they encounter some challenges especially in culture specific expression. So it is appreciable to have a close acquaintance with the source culture as well as target culture.

Keywords: Culture; Parallel; Proverb; Substitution

References

