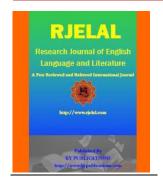**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

ISSUES INVOLVED IN TRANSLATING METAPHORS IN ASHOKAMITRAN'S THANNEER

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ABSTRACT

Communication becomes effective and enjoyable when the literary endeavor elevates itself with a distinct style. Imagery is used in literature as a stylistic device which evokes sensory experiences. These devices are employed to decorate it with a distinguishing style, adding color and interest, awakening imagination. Metaphors are important images that load the expressions with aesthetic values, along with the expressive values. In the process of translation the stylistic peculiarities pertaining to the language of the original in the form of these metaphors has to be respected and an earnest attempt to reproduce it in the target language should be made. The present paper discusses the various rendering strategies adopted by Lakshmi Holmstrom's in transferring the imagery in the form of metaphors used by Ashokamitran while translating his novel Thanneer into English which has been translated by Lakshmi Holmstrom. This novel abound in metaphors which naturally pose translation difficulties as they are embedded in the linguistic and cultural background of the source language that they defy easy transfer into a foreign language.

Keywords: style, imagery, metaphors, and translation difficulties.

INTRODUCTION

Translating literary texts comparatively creates enormous difficulties for the translators as they are confronted with many stylistic devices that are characteristic of the original language, the culture and the author. The literary text messages are packed with aesthetic as well as expressive functions both of which should be duly looked into by the translator. According to Nida and Taber (12) " Translation consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style." Though style is secondary to content, the translator is obliged to reproduce it in the TL text. First it becomes imperative for the translator to identify or recognize a stylistic feature in the text, second to look into the intention of the author behind the employment, third to study the essential components and characteristics of the various style types, fourth to analyze at the strategies through which it could be transported to the new text, and fifth, the actual translation.

Ashokamitran who has a distinct style in the modern Tamil writing belongs to a group of major modern Tamil writers who came into

S.SANGEETHA

prominence in the 1960s. These include D.Jayakantan, T. Janakiraman and SundaraRamaswamy, each of whom has a distinct literary presence in modern Tamil writing. Ashokamitran's fiction is distinguished by an engagement with urban life, by its "naturalistic" or "impressionistic" form which almost appears formless, by a bare and understated style, and by an overall perspective which is at once wry, humorous and compassionate.

Ashokamitran wrote Tannir as a long short story, beginning only with a picture in his mind of a girl who was always to be seen carrying a huge water pot, whether it was at two in the morning or in the heat of the day at high noon. It was first serialized in Kanaiyazhi from July to November 1971 and published in its present form in 1973. Although it is no more than a novella or short novel, it is a highly complex piece of writing which works at many levels. *Thanneer,* (Water) has been translated by Lakshmi Holmstrom a prolific translator with discrete niches in the field of translation. Though a writer engaged with urban life, Ashokamitran's works teem with metaphors. The present paper analyses the various strategies the translators have adopted in the translation of metaphors.

Metaphor is a rhetorical trope where a comparison is made implicitly between seemingly unrelated objects. It is created and conceptualized by experience, attitude and practices of people of particular cultures. They create collision by making sameness out of differences. According to Newmark metaphors describe an entity, event or quality more comprehensively and concisely and in a more complex way than is possible by using literal language. Explaining the purposes for which metaphors are introduced in a text Newmark (104). says, "The purpose of metaphor is basically twofold; its referential purpose is to describe a mental process or state, a concept, a person, an object, a quality or an action more comprehensively and concisely than is possible in literal or physical language; its pragmatic purpose, which is simultaneous, is to appeal to the senses, to interest, to clarify graphically, to please, to delight, to surprise". The first purpose is cognitive, the second aesthetic" He suggests seven procedures for

translating metaphors (88-91) based on which the problems with metaphors are dealt with.

REPRODUCING THE SAME IMAGE IN THE TARGET LANGUAGE

This type of transfer is possible in places where the images are simple, bringing out comparisons between common, universal terms which are not culture specific. In *Thanneer,* Chaya, Jamuna's sister deserted her and moved to the hostel as she could not bear her sister's affair with BaskarRao, the adulterer. Jamuna's attempts to bring her back home did not work out. Chaya's repeated refusal to her sister's request prompts Jamuna to compare her character to a stone,
"rhahfy;neQ;Rf;fhup…." (34)
"***cāyākalneńcukāri***"
"Chaya was **stone hearted**" (Water, 45)
When someone is not sympathetic their heart is compared to a stone in Tamil. The translator's job has become easier as English has an identical metaphor. The pitiless, unfeeling attitude of Jamuna is outlined by the metaphor. Certain basic human experiences and emotions, both negative and positive are universal and due to the unifying feature in the thought processes have created universal metaphors. These metaphors are found diffused through popular speech in different languages. In this case the translator has preserved the same metaphor. Newmark's views regarding preserving metaphors can be quoted here,
"Metaphor is the link between the expressive and aesthetic function. Through images it is also language's only link with four of the five senses: by producing tokens of smell, touch, sight as well as the sound that language consists of. Metaphor connects the extra-linguistic reality with the world of the mind through language.

REPLACING SOURCE LANGUAGE IMAGE WITH A DIFFERENT TL IMAGE

Owing to disparities in culture and religion in the set of languages involved in the translation process, the SL image may be completely new and incomprehensible for the TL readers. In such cases, the translator has used a different TL image which fulfills the function of the image to some extent. But the characteristics for which the original writer has chosen the image might be lost. In *Thanneer*the

S.SANGEETHA

women waiting to fetch water advise Jamuna to stand in the queue.

"cd; jtiyiame;jtupirapNyNatr;rpl;L…. ePAk; ,g;gb nfhYepy;Y" (13)

"*untavalayaianta*

varicayilavacitunīyumippatikolunillu"

"Put your water pot at the end of this row.and stands in **procession** here like the rest of us." (Water, 22)

The vehicle in the metaphor, nfhY*kolu*is translated as 'procession' which varies considerably in meaning. *kolu*is a festival celebrated for nine days by Hindus, particularly Brahmins, when dolls of deities of different colors and shapes are arranged in steps like shelves. Like the dolls and toys standing still in their places, the people standing in the queue to fill their pots wait for their turn which never comes. *Kolu*has religious and cultural flavours, but the translator's choice of the image procession is a deviant concept from *kolu*. In the first metaphor, the tenor 'people' stand still but the TL tenor, the 'people' move. Also here the translator has failed to transport the cultural colour of the term to the English audience though the intent of the original author is not to convey it. A short description about the term in a gloss or footnote would have furnished the dual purpose, first bringing the correct comparison and second familiarizing the local festival.

Animal metaphors are widely spread among languages to compare the qualities of humans to those of the animals either positive or negative. Abusive communication abounds in animal metaphors like fox, pig, bitch, chameleon, etc, as they are universally associated with inferior qualities. In *'thaneer'*, Jamuna's and Chaya's grandmother admonishes them for visiting their mother, after they had abandoned her. They are compared to dogs in the Tamil text as,

"Cu; Rj;jg;Nghweha;fSf;FtPLfspy; vd;dNtiy?" (100)

"*ūrcutapporanāikalukkuvītukalilyennavelai*"

What places do **bitches** who wander about the town have in decent homes?" (Water, 118)

In this context the SL word is eha; *nāi*'dog'a generic term that is replaced by a specific term, the female form of the species, bitch. The image in the TL not only is the feminine form of the SL metaphor but

acts as an exact correspondence so commonly used in the TL. Bitch, literally meaning a female dog is a common slang term in the English language, especially used as a denigrating term applied to a person, commonly a woman. It often refers to someone who is belligerent or unreasonable. Here complete fidelity to the original has not dictated the translator to go for 'dog' which would have resulted in an awkward reproduction.

OMISSION OF METAPHOR

At some places it is the discretion of the translator, after careful consideration, to delete a metaphor, for reasons he or she thinks valid. This omission may result in losing the subtle characteristics of the vehicle for which it has been selected. Though Newmark recommends this as a strategy, he suggests that the deletion and the function of the metaphor should be compensated elsewhere in the text. When Jamuna's friend teacheramma lists out her daily chores in *Thanneer*she speaks with annoyance the duties she has to perform towards her husband. She says,

"mg;Gwk;   me;jf;pof;   Nfhl;lhDf;Fgyfhuk; gz;zpitf;fDk;"(64)

"*appuram anta*

kiḻakottānukkupalakārampannivaikkanum"

"At some stage I have to make some sweetmeats for the **old man**" (Water, 77)

Here Nfhl;lhd;; *koṭṭān*'owl' refers to her husband who is a chronic TB patient, sleepless throughout nights. He coughs like a rock – horned owl, a nocturnal bird which gives a hooting call. The translator has replaced it with the general term 'man' with just the adjective 'old'. The persistent coughing, the annoyance, sleeplessness during nights are behind the comparison of the man with the exact image, 'owl'. This is a very appropriate selection by the author which at once evokes the visual and auditory senses. These nuances are completely lost in the translation. The translator has also not endeavored to fulfill the metaphor's function elsewhere in the text, as suggested by newmark.

The main problem while translating a metaphor as Dagut points out is the fact that "since a metaphor in SL is, by definition, a semantic novelty, it can clearly have no existing "equivalence"

in TL" (24). Another problem is of course that metaphors are language, and language is culture. So culture related metaphors obviously defy easy translation as they could be comprehended only with the knowledge of the cultural implications of the source language. In spite of all these the translators have made every endeavor to retain the images of the original texts in the translated texts. It should be noted that these figures of speech determine the style of the author and the uniqueness of the language, which should be carried to the readers of a different culture, to enjoy the literary beauty, for translation functions much more as a cultural missionary enabling the people of the world to know about an alien culture through their own language.

Note:

(i) The symbols used in transliteration:

Tamil vowels	Symbols	Tamil consonants	Symbols
M	*ā*	Q;	*ń*
<	*ī*	o;	*ḷ*
C	*ū*	z;	*ṇ*
l;			*ṭ*
s;			*ḻ*

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