Translating English Sentences into Tamil by P.G Students: Problems and Perspectives by R. Saranya

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Abstract

Translation is not a simple linguistic process but a complex process in which a number of factors come into action and effect the outcome. In translation, one can see the interaction of various facets of the language in action. There are some problems of choosing the equivalent word exactly in both languages - the source language and the target language. The students may have difficulties in harnessing the structural differences between the languages. In the process of translating English sentences into Tamil and vice-versa, there are many problems faced by students. Similarly, many issues crop up during the process of translation. An effort is made to identify the problems faced by students and also to provide suggestions to rectify them. Problems coming under the process of translation are enormous. It is very difficult to cover the entire spectrum which relate to this area. Thus, some of the issues are to be identified and given remedies.

Introduction

The study of any discipline cannot be completely succeeded without a glimpse of its origins, development and growth through the ages. 'Translation' as a term used in Translation studies, refers to the process of transferring messages from one language to another. The translating text may be small or big; but it carries the message which has to be transferred from one language to another; the former is termed source language and the latter is target or receptor language. This process takes place between two languages; it makes communication possible from one language to another. Not only the languages but also the relevant cultures are involved in the process. The starting point of translation may have co-existed with language split and the development of separate languages. Translation is, at present, an inevitable activity in the world, because it contributes more to the richness of literacy and the wealth of knowledge. It is all the while changing and progressing.

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Progress poses several challenges in natural languages. It invests language with new powers, as well as new patterns, including sharpeness with freshness.

The significance of translation is expressed in the statement of E.S. Bates as follows:

"*Nothing moves without translation*. Human experience is covered by three terms: emotions, techniques and thoughts. Emotions (fear, anger, sympathy etc.) do not change in character; but thoughts and techniques do. No change in thought or technique spreads without the help of translation; because, if it is to spread, it has to spread from people to people and therefore from language to language." quoted by Pradhan gurudatta(2004).

This statement makes others to easily understand the necessity and usefulness of translation in memorable words. It initiates us to assume that emotions, thoughts, and techniques which initiate literature, science and technology i.e. the universal knowledge. If all these activities and their results are to be enjoyed by the entire humanity; the translation does not come to the rescue. Thus, the entire process of progress comes to a standstill. Hence, there is a need to over-emphasize the necessity and usefulness of translation.

Aim

1. To evaluate the students' skills on translation.

2. To identify the problems faced by the students while translating English sentences into Tamil.

3. To make the students to become good translators and also good communicators (i.e., having language competence in source and target languages).

Methodology

- Data have been collected by questionnaire method.

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- The questionnaire consists of pronouns, their inflected forms and also demonstratives in English for identifying the problems faced by students at morphological level and also it consists of 25 simple sentences in English for identifying translating problems at syntactical level.

- The questionnaire was given to 40 both male and female students (20 + 20) respectively who belong to the department of English and Business Administration. The collected data were analyzed by applying translation theory given by Nida and Tabor (1964).

The Research Questions

1. Whether everyone can become a translator or not?

2. Whether students from language department can translate properly or not?

Translating problems

According to Nida and Tabor, the words are classified into four such as *Object* words, *Event* words, *Abstract* words and *Relations.* The *object* words refer to those semantic classes which designate things or entities which normally participate in events(i.e., student, water ,school).The e*vent* words denote the semantic class which designates action, process, happenings etc., (run, translate, call etc.,).The *abstract* words refer to the semantic class of expressions which have as their only referents, the qualities, quantities and degrees of objects, events and other abstracts e.g., *green* is nothing in / of itself ,it is only a quality inherent in certain objects (green hat, green dress). From the objects, the quality red is abstracted and named as if it had separate existence. Similarly, 'quickly' is a quality of certain events, such as run quickly, but it can be conceptually abstracted and named abstracts of quality which include two and twice, many, often, several, etc., The abstracts which serve to mark the degree of other abstracts e.g., *too* and *very,* belong to this general subclass. Words which represent *Relations* are expressions of

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the meaningful connections between the other kinds of terms. Often, they are expressed by particles (in English, prepositions and conjunctions). In other words, these correspond to the grammatical classes (i.e., noun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition etc.,) respectively. Thus, the entire universe of experience is divided into four semantic categories namely, object, event, abstract, and relations. They refer to the basic semantic categories in contrast with more familiar terms such as noun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition etc., which refer to grammatical classes. And also these categories included extensively all the semantic subcategories of all languages, though most of the languages have quite different sets of grammatical classes. They create problems in translation. Such a kind of translating problems have been classified into two levels namely, morphological level and syntactical level, based on the difficulties to choose the correct equivalent word and also to restructure the sentences. They have been illustrated under the following topic 'discussion.'

Discussion

a) Problems faced by students at Morphological level

The problems involve lexical usage (the choice of words), complexity of grammatical expression, and word forms. A number of languages in which honorific structures define three major levels i.e., speaking to honorable persons (as to royalty or deity), speaking to non-honorable persons (as to servants or persons of inferior status), and speaking to peers (as those on the same level).And also there are some differences in grammatical categories particularly in lexis of source and target languages by which the students make confusion to choose the proper equivalent word into target language, and also in which the students are unable to fix the grammatical meanings of the bound morphemes, like choosing tense suffix, person- number - gender suffix etc., come under the problems at morphological level.

i) Pronoun

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The realization of English Pronouns into Tamil is very difficult, because, except the terms *'I'* and *'It'* which denote the first person singular and the third person neuter singular respectively, the rest of the pronouns in English like *'we' 'you' 'he' 'she'* and *'they'* and their inflected forms have more than one equivalents in Tamil. Thus, the term *'we'* which represents first person plural is used to denote both exclusive and inclusive of the listener, whereas in Tamil, there are two separate terms used to denote inclusive (i.e. naam) and exclusive (i.e. naangkaL). Some of the students have chosen the term *naam* only and the rest of the students have chosen the term *naangkaL* only. No one has given these two terms *naam* and *naangkaL.* Similarly, the term 'you' which denotes the second person both singular (i.e.honorific and non-honorific) and plural. It has been represented by separate forms in Tamil as the terms *nii (*non- honorific singular*),* and *niingkaL / taangkaL (*honorific singular and plural*),* whereas the students have chosen any one of them. They fail to give these two probable equivalents.(The terms *niir, niivir, niiyiir, niiviir* and *taangkaL* were used in old Tamil for denoting second person. They could not be taken for consideration). And for third person the terms *'he'* and *'she'* and are used for denoting third person masculine gender, feminine gender for both honorific and non-honorific singular respectively and the term *'they'* is used for denoting third person plural common gender for both human and non- human. They have been realized into Tamil separately as *avan* (non- honorific masculine singular*), avaL (*non- honorific feminine singular*), avar (*honorific masculine and feminine singular*), avarkaL* (plural for both genders), and *avai* (plural non human).Thus, each of the terms (*he* or *she*) has the two equivalents in Tamil (i.e. *avan /avaL* and *avar*) and term 'they' has two equivalent words in Tamil (i.e. *avai* and *avarkaL*), whereas the students have chosen only the term *avai* for 'they'. No one has chosen the term *avar* for *he / she.* The inflected forms of the pronouns in English have more than one equivalent in Tamil. Thus, the inflected terms of *'It* ' in English have to be translated into Tamil are atukku, atanai, atanuTaiyatu,(i.e. objective forms of 'atu') and atanuTaiya (possessive form of 'atu'). Similarly, the term *his* has the equivalent words in Tamil as *avanuTaiyatu* and *avanuTaiya (*possessive forms of avan) And, the term *her* has the equivalent words in

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Tamil as avaLai, and avaLukku, (objective forms of avaL); avaLuTaiyatu and avaLuTaiya *(*possessive form of avaL). All possessive forms function as an adjective and a pronoun in a sentence. The rest of the inflected forms function as a direct or an indirect object of a verb in a sentence.

ii) Demonstratives

In English, the terms *this – these* (sg. - pl.) and that - *those* (sg. - pl.) are treated as demonstratives for denoting proximate and remote (distance) respectively. They are called as demonstrative pronouns and demonstrative adjectives based on their function. They are realized in Tamil as '*itu – ivai (*neuter sg.-pl.) ; *ivan, ivaL (* non.hon. mas. and fem.*).* And *ivar (*hon. common gender*) – ivarkaL (* human hon. sg.-pl.*)'* for denoting proximate respectively; and then '*atu-avai' (*neuter sg.-pl.) ; *avan (* non.hon. mas.*) , avar (*hon. common gender*) , avarkaL (* human hon. sg.- pl.*)'* for denoting remote (distance) respectively; which function as demonstrative pronouns.(in some dialects the terms *itu* and *atu* are used to denote human also). The terms '*inta'* (proximate) and *'anta'* (remote) function as demonstrative adjectives. Whereas the students have randomly chosen the terms *anta, inta, itu,* and *avai* as the equivalent words of demonstrative pronouns and adjectives. A few students have only chosen the terms *avai* or *ivai* as the equivalent of *these* and *those* in English. But, all failed to choose the proper equivalent words in all contexts.

b) Problems faced by students at Syntactic Level

Translating problems in which the students failed to construct or restructure the sentences properly in the target language come under the problems at syntactic level. Thus, the sentence for instance,*These chairs are new.* The correct translation of the sentence in Tamil is *inta naaRkaalikaL putiyana,* whereas the students have translated it as *ivai putiya naaarRkaaLikaL.* Similarly, the sentence *you have these books'* has to be translated into *inta puttakangal ungkaLiTam / uniTam uLLanna. or nii / niingkal inta*

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puttakangkaLai vaittirukkinRaay / vaittirukkiRiirkaL. But most of the students have translated it as *inta puttakangkaL ungkaLuTaiyatu* and *ivai ungaL puttakangkaL.* Some of them have translated it as an interrogative sentence like *inta puttakangakaL ungaLuTaiyataa?* Which means *Are these books yours? etc.,* but no one translated it properly. As far as the above discussion is concerned, one can easily understand that students belong to either from the department of language or the department of business administration. They have totally failed to understand the concept of language and also failed to study the language thoroughly. What have been discussing so far are represented   in the table as follows:

The Realization of English Pronouns and Demonstratives into Tamil

Pronouns, their inflected forms & Demonstratives in English	Probable equivalents in Tamil	Translated by the students (Department)	
		Business Administration	English
I-my-me-mine	naan-ennuTaiya-enakku,ennai,-ennuTaiyatu.	naan-enakku/ennai/ naan–enakkee, ennuTaiyatu-	naan- enakku, ennuTaiyatu
we-our-us-ours	naam,naangkaL-nammuTaita,engaLuTaiya–namakku,nammai,engaLukku, engaLai-nammuTaiyatu, engaLuTaiyatu	naam/naangkaL – avaruTaiyatu, nammuTaiyatu	naam,naangkaL, naam– namuTaiya-namuTaiya
you (nominative-objective)-your-yours	nii,niingkaL,taangkaL(nom.),unnai ,ungkaLai, taangkaLai, unakku, ungkaLukku taangkaLukku(obj.)–unnuTaita, ungkaLuTaiya,taangkaLuTaiya-	nii,niingkaL-ungkaL, unnuTaiyatu	nii,niingkaL unnai, ungkaLai-

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	unnuTaiyatu,ungkaLuTaiyatu, taangkaLuTaiyatu,		
they-their- them-theirs	avarkaL, avai, ivarkaL, ivai- avarkaLuTaiya, avaikaLuTaiya, ivarkaLuTaiya, ivaikaLuTaiya - avarkaLai, ivarkaLai,avaRRai,ivaRRai,avarka Lukku,ivarkaLukku, avaRRiRku,ivaRRiRku- avarkaLuTaiyatu,ivarkaLuTaiyatu, avaikaLuTaiyatu, ivaikaLuTaiyatu.	avarkaL- avai,avarkaL- avarkaLiTam,	avarkaL,ivarkaL,av aikaL– avarkaLuTaiya , avaikaLuTaiya avai,avarkaLai,avar kaLukku, ivaikaL, ivaikaLukku.
he-his-him	avan,ivan,avar,ivar,-avanuTaiyatu, ivanuTaiyatu,avaruTaiyatu, ivanrTaiyatu--avanuTaiya, ivanuTaiya,avaruTaiya, ivaruTaiya – avanai,avarai,ivanai,ivarai,avanuk ku,ivanukku ,avarukku,ivarukku	avan,avar- avanai, avan, avanukku,- avaniTam,avan	avan, ivan - -ivan, avanuTaiya, avanai
she-her-hers	avaL,ival, avar, ivar - avalai, ivalai,avarai,ivarai, avaLukku,ivaLukku, avarukku,ivarukku ,avaLuTaiya,ivaLuTaiya avaruTaiya,ivaruTaiya, - avaLuTaiyatu,ivaLuTaiyatu ivaruuTaiyatu,avaruTaiyatu	avaL - avalai, ival,avaL	avaL- avaLuTaiya,avaL
it-its	atu, atukku,atai - atanuTaiya, atanuTaiyatu	itu, atu	atu , atanuTaiyau
this- these	itu,ivan,ivar – ivai, ivarkaL(pronoun); inta (adjective)	itu - ivai	itu – ivai and inta
that- those	atu,avan,avar – avai, avarkaL(pronoun); anta (adjective)	atu - avai	atu – avai and anta

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Findings

As far as this attempt is concerned, the students did not have thorough knowledge of both the source and the target languages. Thus, they have failed to analyze each and every linguistic unit used in source language i.e., understanding the various functions of words, phrases and sentences which determine appropriate meanings of that particular words / phrases / sentences which have to be used in target language based on different contexts. And they were also unable to choose the appropriate equivalent word in the target language.

Remedy

Basics of linguistics have to be included in the syllabi of all disciplines, whether they belong to arts, science, engineering, medical, etc. because, linguistics is the must and also one of the main fundamental aspects for all humans. Linguistic intuition leads a person to develop his / her language competence. Language competence leads a person to become a good translator and also a good communicator.

Conclusion

The lack of language competence may pose problems at each stage of translation process. Thus, students who did not have the basics of linguistics are unable to understand the language being translated from (i.e. source language) and they also unable to generate sentences in the language being translated to (i.e. target language).Every one with sound knowledge on linguistic can be able to correctly determine the meaning in which a word is being used.

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