Equivalence and the Loss of Originality: A Comparative Study of English Translation of Selected Urdu Idioms

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A B S T R A C T

This study attempts to examine the impact of equivalence and the loss of originality issues in the translated Idioms from Urdu to English. Equivalence is considered as a principal concept in translation theory, but it is replete with problems. This paper aims to highlight the loss of originality in the selected translated idioms because these are considered as frozen patterns of language which allow a very little or almost no variation in form and their meanings cannot be taken from their individual components as per compositionality principle. i.e., meaning of sentence can be deduced from the individual meaning of words. This idea of transferring the different meanings and objectives of a given text poses an important question that the researcher tries to answer in this paper. "Does translation responsible in the loss of originality for being unable to find suitable equivalents at inter-lingual situations"? After reviewing the relevant literature and by analyzing different translated idioms from Urdu to English, it elucidates that translator must be well-educated abut both languages and especially for target language in terms of its norms, social and cultural values in order to produce an accurate translation. This study is qualitative in nature. The data is collected by the observation technique and analyzed from the perspective of equivalence and loss of originality between two languages i.e., English and Urdu.

Keywords: Equivalence, Loss, Originality, Comparative, Study, English, Translation, Selected, Urdu, Proverbs.

INTRODUCTION

Equivalence is basically a prime concept in Translation theory. In the domain of translation studies, theorists are interested to understand the impact of the way how translators deal with the text and discover its effects. The process of translation is not as simple as it appears on the surface level rather it is complicated because translator must be educated about the objectives, context, culture and meaning delivered in the source text for the successful effort to produce accurate translation in the target text. The fact about importance of translation cannot be denied because it has been exercised throughout the ages by many nations and Civilizations. In spite of highly modern and advanced ways of international communication which actually reduced the distances between people and large communities and in spite of excessive use of English language at global level, the process of translation is even indispensable ways for providing access to understanding and awareness about knowledge to different fields like science etc. On the other hand, nations around the globe could not get acquaintance with the latest advancement in knowledge in the different domains if translation would not have created convenience for them. The requirement of translation is increasing in the current scenario due to the enormous growth and advancement in Science, Culture and Technology despite translators have to encounter numerous linguistic problems such as culture, grammar and context. Besides this, there many equivalence issues at various levels like equivalence at word level, above world level, grammatical equivalence, textual equivalence and pragmatic equivalence. This study attempts to investigate the equivalence issues in the selected translated idioms from Urdu to English. Idioms are sort of fixed expressions and confined to the context

in which these are used so it falls under the category of pragmatic equivalence. A translator needs to be tactful as it is a very sensitive issue to translate the form and meaning accurately from the source language (SL) to the target language (TL). In this process, the choice of words is really important as the threat of losing form and meaning and even context is always circulating around. It is possible to retrieve the meaning of words or utterances from one language to the other but unfortunately, the same spirit and form of those words are lost in one way or the other to some extent in the translation process. This is the most challenging task for translators because translation is judged by how faithful it was to the source text. The choice of equivalence is taken as important facet of translation and generalship can be taken to prefer an appropriate choice in translation as different parameters may be needed by various text types and the choices of equivalence may be influenced by the text types.

Equivalence is not unproblematic despite it is considered as principal concept in translation theory. According to Catford (1965), "A central task of translation theory is that of defining the nature and conditions of translation equivalence". From his perspective, "the central problem of translation practice is that of finding TL equivalents". In accord, translators encounter labor- intensive and challenging task in the process of finding and choosing equivalence when translating one language into another by keeping all the norms, culture, social context and many other such factors. Many variations are found in the process if translation; the primary difference between two languages starts with the basic structure as it is SVO in English and SOV in Urdu. These languages are very different from each other. Moreover, absolutely identical or similar things cannot be found in two languages which are entirely different from each other in many aspects. Nida states this standpoint as "there are no two stones alike, no flowers the same and no two people who are identical. The structures of DNA in the nucleus of their cells may be identical but two sounds are exactly ever alike and even the same person uttering the same words or phrases will never articulate it in an absolutely identical manner (Nida, 1986).

One of the most frequently used procedures in the translation is equivalence. In the theories of translation, it is found that there is no absolute equivalence between units of code; in the meanwhile, messages may serve as appropriate interpretation of alien messages or code-units (Jakobson, 1992). From this angle, equivalence in translation is almost or always considered as partial not complete. This statement implicitly demonstrates that originality of the text is not retained and there is always some loss in the process of translation from one language to another in any way. English and Urdu languages exhibit numerous variations and translators encounter challenges on the level of inter-lingual translation. Furthermore, they usually face equivalency problems in the process of translation from Urdu to English. The fixed expressions or idioms often have fairly transparent meanings. For instance, the meaning of 'as a matter of the fact' may easily be grasped from the meanings of the words which constitute it unlike the meanings of an idiom. Despite its transparency, the meaning of an idiom or fixed expression is somewhat more than the collective meaning of its words because the expression has to be taken as one unit to construct meanings.

Idioms allow no variation in form under normal circumstances less a person is intentionally attempting a play on words, a translator cannot do any such thing with an idiom like Changing the word order of words, deleting a word form, adding a word to it, replacing a word with another by choice or changing its grammatical structure. Most idioms resist variation in form, but some are comparatively flexible.

The communicative competence of a person in promptly using the idioms of a foreign language rarely even coincides that of a native speaker. Most of the translators who are working into a foreign language encounter many challenges in achieving the same sensitivity that native speakers appear to have for intuitive judgment for the appropriate situation when and how an idiom can be used or manipulated based on situational context. This idea basically promotes the argument that translators should preferably work in their own mother language or the language of their habitual use. This study attempts to unearth the challenges of translators in the process of equivalence between Urdu and English by drawing comparison between these two languages and the process how source texts lose its originality when translated into target language.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the field of translation theory, equivalence is considered as one of the most labor-intensive and

contentious areas where this terminology remained the pivotal point within the domain of translation studies, but it does not have practical applications rather it is badly overlooked in reality. Equivalence is extremely difficult to define because elaboration for the concept of equivalence in translation by contemporary theorists is not adequate. It is generally believed that there is huge gap between theory and practice in translation because theoretical work is hardly retreated by the translators when they translate. Consequently, universal approach may not be agreed upon to the concept of equivalence.

In a study, it is elucidated that the term equivalence is used in a broad sense even outside the domain of translation studies. According to Halverson (1997), equivalence is defined as "A relationship existing between two (or more) entities and the relationship is described as one of the likeness/ sameness/ similarity/ equality on terms of a number of potential qualities".

This definition explicitly supports the argument that the concept of equivalence is considered as one of the most heated controversial areas within domain of translation studies.

In this study, the history of the origin of equivalence is given in a way that the concept of 'equivalence' is primarily from Latin like 'equi and valence' which means 'the same value'. The American theorist Nida (1964) has dealt with the notion of equivalence in Translation studies. The primary focus of the theorist was on word's etymology as the first part of the phrase 'equal in value' can also be viewed 'like'. In order to get the right meaning of a word in a language (Source language) must emphasize on attaining equivalence in the second (Target language). Unfortunately, it is not as simple and easy as it seems to be. Nida (1964) stated that "no two languages re identical, either in the meanings given t corresponding symbols or in the ways in which such symbols are arranged". "Between the resultant text in language 2 (the target language text) and the source text in language 1 (the source language text) there exists a relationship which can be designated as a translational, or equivalence, relation" (Koller, 1995, Cited in, Hatim and Munday, 2004). According to Pym (1995), equivalence is," a fact of reception and expectation that TTs should stand in some kind of equivalence relation to their STs (Cited in, Baker and Saldanha, 2009).

Equivalence in translation always remains the most challenging and difficult task for translators and few attempts have been made to define the notion of equivalence in translation. According to Newman (1994), equivalence translation as a "a commonsense term for describing the ideal relationship that a reader would expect to exist between an original and its translation" (Cited in, Baker and Saldanha, 2009).

Jakobson (2000) demonstrates three different kinds of translation i.e., inter-lingual, intra-lingual and inter-semiotic. The first one reveals translation between two different written languages and the second one refers to substitute linguistic signs by other linguistic signs in the same language. The last one is substituting linguistic signs by non-linguistic signs in the process of translation. In Jakobson's (2000) description, inter-lingual translation includes "substituting messages in one language not for separate code- units but for entire messages in some other language". The job of translator is basically to recode and send a message received from another source. Consequently, "translation includes two equivalent messages in two different codes" (Jakobson, 1995).

Moreover, translation theorists mentioned equivalence at various levels because it is mutually constructed on the basis of sameness or commonality of Source and Target text as they refer to same things. There are different types of equivalence according to typology such as lexicon equivalence, equivalence with compound words and equivalence of idioms and proverbs.

It is described in this study that translators should have awareness and full command of source text (ST) and target text (TT) when they translate idioms and proverbs. They need to broaden their horizon of knowledge as it is pre-requisite for the process of translating idioms and proverbs.

In another study, it is mentioned that the requirement of translation is attaining a great success because of inevitable development of science, culture and technology in spite of numerous linguistic problems like grammar, context, culture and the uncertainty of finding equivalents. It is mentioned in this study that translation has always been conceived as a written transfer of a message or meaning from one language to another. It is defined formally in this study as "translation is the expression in another language (or target language) of what has been expressed in another source, language, preserving semantic and stylistic equivalences".

Many translation scholars suggested various translation strategies within the domain of translation. Baker (1992) and Newmark (1988) described that the concept

of equivalence is not unproblematic in translation studies and to overcome or dominate this problem numerous translation techniques and strategies are recommended in this domain.

In a study, the literal meaning of translation is stated as "carrying across" or "bringing across". The etymology of the word translation is given in this study. To illustrate, the Latin "translation" is derived from the past participle which is 'tranlatus', of transferre means 'to transfer'- from "trans, "across" + "ferre," 'to carry or to bring'. It is mentioned that translation is the dispersal or transmittal of text (written) from one language to another. Moreover, there are two terms which are used interchangeably i.e., translation and interpretation and in order to differentiate these terms; the former refers to the written language and the later refers to the spokem mode of communication. The transmittal of same message into some other language is also recognized as translation. In other words, it is primarily the interpretation of the meaning of a text or the choosing and finding the subsequent equivalent. This study described the source text i.e., the text to be translated; the target text is the final product and language to be translated into is called the target language.

Many translation theorists view translation in different ways such as translation as a process "Translation is recording of a linguistic text, accompanied by the creation of its new linguistic appearance and stylistic shape". The process of translation is also viewed as an activity in which translator creatively chose variants which relies on resources of language variability, types of texts etc. It is basically result of some activity. Moreover, translation may be seen as communication as it is a social function between people of two different languages or it is source of providing inter-lingual communication by the ways of construction or creation of a text in the target language. It can be seen as, "a skill or craft which attempts to replace a written message in one language of the similar message and statement in some other language"

It is mentioned that this classification did not include all possible criteria for taxonomy. In accord, translation is viewed as a process and the result of this process i.e., a type of a skill and communication.

The theory of equivalence states that there is an equivalent and this notion opposes to structuralism (often called 'natural' or at times called 'dynamic equivalent') of a word between languages, phrase or concept which can be sought. It is illustrated in this study that a good translation is a mirror or equivalent to the source text and it is judged by how "faithful" it was to the original text (Baker, 1992). The underlying concept here is that "everything you need is in the source text" and if someone is faithful to the original source, he/she has done his/her job. Though there are many points of strengths and weaknesses about this theory; the former supports the allowance of translating again and to realize the significance of the source text. In addition, it is an "honest and clean" theory as it grants for machine translation and emphasizes on the completion of job by translating the source text. On the contrary, the reader or the objective is not of worth importance in the communicative act rather only source is important.

The current study attempts to investigate the equivalency issues and loss of originality by sketching a comparison in the English translation of selected Urdu Idioms and proverbs. It is centered on a question, "Does translation responsible in the loss of originality for being unable to find suitable equivalents at inter-lingual situations? The objective of this study is to identify the factors responsible for variations in the process of translation from one language to another. "Does it really a question of faithfulness"? This study reports on the equivalency issues along with the originality loss in the English translation of selected Urdu idioms and proverbs.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study paves the way for the readers to know how translators deal with idioms and proverbs because these expressions grant almost no variations. Consequently, it is very hard to find the exact equivalent for each word in a language when translating into another language. Besides this, translators use various translation techniques so that they can do translation near to the source text. It is generally believed that no two absolute or identical things are same in two different language systems. The objective of this paper is to conduct comparative study of English translation of selected Urdu idioms because it does not seem as simple and easy as literal meanings cannot be deduced from idioms so translator needs to acquire a great knowledge of both source and target languages by keeping in mind the social norms and cultural values of the target language. Moreover, it also sheds light on the originality of source text and its nature once it is to be translated into another

language. This study will provide answer with suitable instances, "Would the originality of source text be retained after translation or not?

Delimitation

This study is delimited to selected Urdu idioms and proverbs due to time and space constraints and not all the fixed expressions. It attempts to investigate the retention of originality of selected Urdu idioms and proverbs once they are being translated to English. It is further limited to equivalency of idioms and proverbs only and does not deal with lexicon and compound words equivalency.

Research Objectives

- To investigate the equivalency problems encountered by translators in English translation of selected Urdu Idioms
- To examine the issue of loss of originality in the process of translation from Urdu to English

Research Questions

- What are the equivalence problems encountered by translators in English translation of selected Urdu Idioms?
- Does original text lose its originality in the process of translation from Urdu to English?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is mainly inspired by the theory (concept) of equivalence in translation. There were few attempts to define this terminology, but a general consensus has been acquired yet. Newman (1994) elucidates equivalence translation as "a commonsense term for describing the ideal relationship that a reader would expect to exist between an original and its translation" (cited in, Baker and Saldanha, 2009). Moreover, three kinds of translations were identified by Roman Jakobson (2000) i.e., intra-lingual (In the same language, replacement of linguistic signs) inter-lingual (Translation between two different languages) and inter-semiotic (Replacing linguistic signs by non-linguistic signs).

This study falls with Jakobson's description of inter-lingual translation includes "substituting messages in one language not for separate code- units but for entire messages in some other language". The job of translator is to recode and send a message received from another resource. According to Jakobson (1995), translation includes two equivalent messages in two different codes. Translation theorists mentioned the concept of equivalence at various levels. It is basically created on the grounds that Source text and Target text refer to the common thing.

According to typologies of equivalence, there are different types of equivalence i.e., Lexicon equivalence, equivalence with compound words and equivalence of Idioms and Proverbs. The present study is concerned with equivalence of idioms and proverbs.

The researcher has collected data from different sources of idioms, E- sites and dictionaries to draw comparison between English and Urdu frozen patterns of language. This study is qualitative in nature and observation technique has been employed. There are idioms of more or less importance and the researcher has picked up the most common ones.

Data Analysis/ Interpretation

The theory of equivalence is considered as an important aspect when there is a comparison between texts of two languages and its inclusion becomes inevitable. Over the past fifty years, numerous theories relevant to the concept of equivalence have illustrated many controversies about this notion as it can be viewed as the central issue in translation in terms of its definition, relevance and practical implementation in the domain of translation theory. Many innovative scholars have interpreted the concept of equivalence entirely in a different way within the field of translation studies. These theorists have used different angles or approaches to study the notion of equivalence by relating it to the translation process. Moreover, three main groups were identified while analyzing these theories. The first one is concerned with the linguistic approach to translation studies and these translation scholars entirely ignored the underlying concept that it is not itself only an integral part of linguistics. To illustrate, when there is exchange of message between Source language to Target language, it is not only a dispersal of message rather two different cultures came into consideration at the same time. This idea was conceived by the second group of translation scholars, and they focused on the theories which are based on semantic, pragmatic and functionalistic approach to translation studies. Lastly, the third group stood in somewhere middle position. For instance, Baker stated the concept of equivalence is understood in a way that it is used 'for the purpose of ease or convenience' as majority of the translators are habitual of it instead of concentrating to some theoretical position (Cited in Kenny, 1998).

Catford's stance to translation equivalence got priority to a more linguistic-based approach to translation which is relied on the linguistic work of Firth and Halliday. The major contribution in the area of translation theory is the introduction of the notions of shifts and types of translation. He suggested three main types of translation and this criterion is broad such as full translation opposes to partial translation, rank-bound translation (grammatical rank) opposes to unbound translation and the levels of language indulged in translation.

Catford encountered criticism for his linguistic theory of translation. Snell Hornby (1988) contradicted with his definition of "textual equivalence' being circular, the reliability of theory on bilingual informants, 'hopelessly insufficient' and his examples are 'overly simplistic' (ibid.:19-20).   In accord, she takes the idea of equivalence in translation as deception or illusion. In contradiction to Catford's perspective who claimed that translation process can be minimized to linguistic exercise rather cultural, social or situational aspects should be considered or valued in the process of translation to understand its true spirits. To elaborate it further, she is not convinced with the notion that linguistics is the only domain to process translation because more than one culture or cultures and different situations are involved simultaneously and most of the time these factors lack commonality between two different languages. Many scholars have interpreted the concept of equivalence in their own ways and there is some ideological reason behind them. According to typologies of equivalence, there are different types of equivalence; lexicon equivalence, equivalence with compound words and equivalence of idioms and proverbs.

Idioms are recognized as frozen patterns of language because these expressions do not allow variations or almost little variation. Categorically, in the case of idioms, meanings cannot be conceived or deduced from the individual constituents opposite to compositionality principle. These expressions cannot be created by speakers of other languages as these are primarily the product of language used merely by the native speakers. Under normal circumstances, these are learnt and remembered as it is without any attempt to play on words. A speaker or writer cannot change the word order of the words, omit a word form, addition of any word or substitute a word with any other word and even grammatical structure cannot be altered because most of the idioms resist variation in form though some are more flexible than other. The communicative competence of a person in using idioms of a foreign language rarely ever complements that of a native speaker. The major obstacle encountered by the translators who are functioning in the domain of some foreign language remain unable to acquire the same sensitivity that native speakers appear to have to magistrate when and how manipulation can be done to an idiom. It favors the argument that translators are required to work only in their mother tongue as they are habitual users of their language.

Moving on, there is a supposition that a professional translator work merely in his native language and the affiliated unresolved problems while using idioms in a foreign language require not to be practiced. The problems primarily fall into two main areas generally; the capability of recognizing and interpreting an idiom in its true sense i.e., correctly and the problem connected with acquiring various aspects of meaning which an idiom expresses into the target language. These problems are pre-dominant in the case of idioms as compared to fixed expressions etc.

For the interpretation of idioms, the basic problem which a translator faces are being able to identify an idiomatic expression because being the speaker of another language it might be a challenge for a translator to recognize it. For this reason, he/she needs to be update and well-equipped with the latest knowledge about idioms. There are plenty of idioms in Urdu language and some of them are common and easily recognizable and others are not. By violating truth conditions, idioms are said to be more recognizable. Moreover, there are no grammatical rules for these expressions which actually made very challenging for the translator as there is no prior guideline to follow I the process of translation. Translators are given guidelines not to translate idiomatic expressions literally.

Furthermore, translator is required to get a good access to plenty of reference books and monolingual dictionaries of idioms. Besides this, the best solution to attain accurate working is to keep on consulting native speakers because some quality work inevitably requires labor-intensive efforts. A large number of idioms in Urdu language and probably all languages have literal and idiomatic meanings. If a translator is not fully aware with the idiom in a question may easily became the

victim of literal interpretation and miss the play on idiom.

Following are the examples which show the pronounced

Example 1
Urdu: لاتوں کے بھوت باتوں سے نہیں مانتے
English: Rod is logic of fools

Example 2
Urdu: نیم حکیم خطرہ جان
English: A little knowledge is a dangerous thing.

Example 3
Urdu: ایک تیر سے دو شکار
English: Two hunt with one arrow

Example 4
Urdu: مفت کی شراب ہو تو قاضی کو حلال
English: An open door will attempt even a saint

Example 5
Urdu: جس کی لاٹھی اس کی بھینس
English: Might is right

differences in the English translation of the selected Urdu idioms;

These illustrations reveal that there are huge differences between Urdu; source language (SL) and English; Target language (TL) as the first obstacle was identification and interpretation in a correct way. Similarly, there was a problem of finding exact equivalents in the target language as these expressions usually do not have appropriate or suitable equivalents. It is highly unrealistic to find the equivalent idioms or expressions in the target language. Idioms come under the exceptional category rather no two languages have exact equivalents for all the words in exchange of meanings from one language to another language. John Dryden has divided translation into three types i.e., Word for word translation, sense for

sense translation and free translation. Consequently, translator has to be aware of literary and non-literary textual criticism as he/ she has to assess the quality of text before it is interpreted and translated by the translator.

It is evident from the above examples that word for word translation is almost impossible in idiomatic expressions and native speakers might be considered as the most reliable source to assist in getting the right essence of the expressions. It is not only the word order that creates hindrance rather choice of lexical items id entirely different in the process of translation from Urdu to English language. Some other examples found by the researcher are;

Example 6
Urdu: دال میں کالا
English: There is something wrong in the bottom

Example 7
Urdu: دل کو دل سے راہ ہوتی ہے
English: Love begets move

Example 8
Urdu: دیواروں کے بھی کان ہوتے ہیں
English: Even walls have ears

Example 9
Urdu: خربوزہ خربوزے کو دیکھ کر رنگ بدلتا ہے
English: Society molds a man

Example 10
Urdu: جو گرجتے ہیں وہ برستے نہیں
English: Barking dogs seldom bite

It can be seen from the above examples that exacts equivalents were not found when Idioms were translated from Urdu to English which describes that there is always loss of original meaning and the content cannot be always disassociated from form, says Leonard Frazer. A huge variation was observed from the collected data regarding choice of lexical items and the researcher has shown the differences underwent by the translation process. The technical translators are concerned with the content and literary translators are more concerned towards form. The contribution of self-translators is significant in this context as they take liberty with the original text and write in a different way in the target language, but a good translation is always in close connection with the original text.

Translation is basically a process of analysis, interpretation and creation where one set of linguistic resources is replaced by another language. Despite, there is loss of original meaning, but identifiable core is left. It is considered as subsidiary or secondary activity as mechanical rather than creative not only in Pakistan but around the world.

CONCLUSION

This question can be revisited here; "Does translation responsible in the loss of originality for being unable to find suitable equivalents at inter-lingual situations"?

It is evident from the analysis of above examples that somehow the form of expressions can be retained to some extent, but the meanings and spirit are lost and there is always a loss of originality when expressions of one language is being translated to other language. It is almost impossible to procure the same spirit and sensitivity of the expressions of the original text. Moreover, these idiomatic expressions are highly culture-specific, so translator needs to have a great understanding and awareness about the culture of target language. In case, if idiom may have a similar counter-part in the target language but the use of context might be entirely different from each other because the two expressions may have different connotations.

This preliminary study paves the way for further research in exploring the strategies which really improve the trainings of translators and interpreters to make the translation process near to accuracy though bilingual writers of the present era write in their first language (L1) and in their second language (L2) while considering them 'new writings' or creative writings not merely translation from the source language (SL) to the target language (TL).

RECOMMENDATION

A comprehensive study may be conducted to see, "Can translation be considered as new writing or creative writing against the traditional notion of replicating the existing work"?

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International Journal of Scientific & Engineering Research, Volume 5, Issue 8, August 2014 ISSN, E.2229-5518.

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