

Beyond the Literary and the Literal: A move towards Stylistic Equivalence

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Introduction:

It is a well-known fact that literary translation contributes a great deal to the cultural communication between speakers of different languages. However a literary text is not merely communication of information and therefore the translation of a literary text is unsuccessful if it solely aims at reproducing chunks of information from the original text. It is widely accepted that the style of a mature and distinguished author in a literary text manifests his consummate creativeness. It is important that the translation of a literary text should aspire to produce a certain impact on the reader by trying to reproduce the style of the original text. Translators and translation theorists have always been concerned with the evaluation of a translated work. It has often been said that a good translation is one which successfully renders the rhythm, the connotations and the rhetorical devices used in the source text. If we apply literary stylistics to examine a literary translation it will be noted that the stylistic analysis of the original text in terms of aesthetically and/or thematically motivated linguistic choice will enable the translators to be more sensitive to the artistic value of the original text and select functional equivalents in translating to achieve stylistic equivalence.

Due to her personal interest in the translation of creative fiction, the author of this paper will make a tentative exploration of stylistic equivalents in translation of modern Hindi fiction by analysing two English versions of a short story by Mannu Bhandari titled *NayakKhalnayak Vidushak* and discuss the deceptive equivalence in the two English versions so that we can find some solutions to the problems in fictional translation and some principles to help improve the translation.

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Stylistic Equivalence in Translation:

Equivalence has always been a kernel concept in literary translation. However it has also occupied a seat of controversy in translation research. Catford defines translation as the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL). He holds that the central problem of translation practice is that of finding TL translation equivalents. When discussing the nature of translating, Eugene Nida points out that translating consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of source-language message, first in terms of meaning and second in terms of style. He emphasizes that the translator must strive for equivalence rather than identity.

Peter Newmark put forward the notions of semantic translation and communicative translation, and offered principles for texts of different levels and types, which prove to be more adaptable than Nida's notion of dynamic equivalence. Conversely, let us investigate the counter-argument toward translation equivalence. Roman Jakobson points out that equivalence in difference is the cardinal problem of language and pivotal concern of linguistics. Similarly, Nida also argues that since no two languages are identical either in meaning given to corresponding symbols or in the way in which such symbols are arranged in phrases or sentences, it stands to reason that there can be no absolute correspondence between languages. Furthermore, Mona Baker suggests that we adopt the term equivalence for the sake of convenience because most translators are used to it, rather than because it has any theoretical status. She concludes that equivalence can usually be obtained to some extent, and is therefore always relative.

In short, it can be certain that equivalence has always been a relative notion. However, it is the ultimate goal that every translator must strive to accomplish. It is safe to state that the notion of equivalence is of positive significance in the study of translation theory and translation practice. In practice, western theorists not only consider equivalence as the standard for evaluating translation in macro dimensions but also as a yardstick for transferring

different types of texts and different levels of linguistic elements. Therefore, equivalence can still be our guideline in literary translation.

Reproduction of original style has also been the concern of western translation theorists. Popovic, in his definition of translation equivalence, distinguishes four types. Among them is stylistic equivalence, where the functional equivalence of elements in both original and translation aim at expressive identity with an invariant of identical meaning. How could we achieve stylistic equivalence in literary translation? As many scholars have verified, translators should be sensitive to the stylistic value of the original, or in other words be armed with literary stylistics. In a literary text thematic and aesthetic values are generated by linguistic forms, values which convey the author's vision, tone and attitude; which embody the mingling or shifting of points of view (e.g. through changes in register); which add to the affective or emotive force of the message; which contribute to characterization and make fictional reality function more effectively in the thematic unity. Although the effects can be locally identifiable, it is understood that linguistic features never function in isolation but in relation to each other, all contributing to the total meaning of the work, in fact the individual choices of words, syntax etc., which are selected from their paradigmatically-related alternatives in the linguistic form, are very often combined by the verbal artist into foregrounded or unique patterns which generate extra values or meanings by virtue of similarity (e.g. Parallelism) or contrast (e.g. that between direct and indirect speech). In literary discourse, stylistic values may simply reside in appropriate choices from the conventional usage or rules, to the extent of changing the code itself.

To sum up, we should bear in mind the aim of reproducing the stylistic effects in the target text, and try to achieve functional equivalence between two literary texts as phonological, lexical, syntactical and rhetorical levels. Thereby stylistic equivalence might be attained in thematic and aesthetic aspects. Since narrative fiction, comparatively speaking, is a special genre of literature, we should manage to achieve equivalence at the narrative level, viz. to fully transfer the style of the original in characterization, and in highlighting aesthetic or thematic significance.

A Contrastive Analysis of Two English Versions of *Nayak*, *Khalnayak*, *Vidushak* Based on Stylistic Equivalence

Literary Stylistics, an intermediary discipline between literary criticism and linguistics, aims at the investigation of thematically or aesthetically motivated linguistic choices. Therefore, applying literary stylistics to translation will sharpen the translator's sensitivity to the working of the language system, improve his/her understanding of the function of stylistic norm and deviant linguistic elements, and enhance his/her awareness of the stylistic value in literary texts. All the above virtues would help translators discern the writer's stylistic features due to thematically or/and aesthetically motivated choices, then try to make correspondent linguistic choice from target language. By this, functional equivalence or expressive identity might be achieved between the source text and the target text. Thereupon stylistic equivalence could be accomplished to a greater degree.

The following analysis will be carried out at different linguistic levels, aiming at investigation of whether or not thematically or aesthetically motivated linguistic form is represented in the two English versions, in other words, whether or not stylistic effects or values are realized in the translations.

Proper words in proper places marks the definition of a style. As a writer, Mannu Bhandari tries to achieve certain stylistic effects by the use of her meticulous diction. The story that we are going to analyse for the purpose of the present paper is titled *Nayak Khalnayak Vidushak*. The words that she has used in this particular story helps to reveal quite a lot about the social status of the characters, their emotional states, upbringing etc., many expressions are specific, exact to the context, and full of implications. The following are examples:

Nayika ka prasthan, ab khalnayika ke pravesh tak woh bilkul swatantra hai, swatantra aur mukta

Condillac version:

Exit the heroine. Now he was free till the entry of *Ammaji*, the villain. Freedom! Liberation!

Sah version:

Exit the heroine. He's now free, absolutely free and unfettered-till the villainess makes her entry.

In Hindi, the word *khalnayika* stands for the female counterpart of a villain. In the translation by Condillac the use of the word 'villain' cannot be considered as a proper equivalent of the word used in the source text, as it is not marked for gender. The word used by P.P. Sah in his version, i.e., villainess seems more appropriate. If we compare the two versions in the remaining part of the paragraph, it will be noted that Condillac's version is extremely literal with the use of the words 'freedom' and 'liberation' as lexical equivalents of *swatantra* and *mukta*. As a result of this literalness Condillac's translation falls flat in terms of stylistic effect whereas Sah has changed the original sentence structure to suit his purpose with the use of words 'free' and 'unfettered' as equivalents of *swatantra* and *mukta*. In spite of this change Sah has managed to achieve more in terms of effect, as it is successful in depicting the emotional state of the protagonist and his relief at being left alone and thus almost achieves the stylistic value of the original.

Another example:

"amit main tumse ek baat karne aayi hoon" Aawaaz ki thodi der pehle waali khushi, garv, chuhal aur lad sab gayab.

Condillac's Version:

"Amit, I have come to talk to you about something," she said in a voice stripped of all its earlier affection, its indulgence.

Sah Version:

"I have something to say to you, Amit." All the cheer, the pride, the breeziness and the fondness had gone out of her voice.

In the original text the author has used four different words to depict the multitude of emotions expressed by *Ammaji* for Amit. Condillac has simply reduced the four words to two namely, 'affection' and 'indulgence', thereby losing out on thematic

significance. Sah has tried to supply almost identical lexical equivalents to almost all the four words and retained much of the effect of the original text.

Let us look at another example:

Amma jhatke se uti aur dhaddhadati hui sidiyan utaar gayi

Condillac Version:

In one swift motion she rose and went clattering down the stairs..

Sah Version:

Springing from the chair she swept down the stairs...

Looking at the above paragraphs we can note that Condillac has used the term 'clattering' as an equivalent lexical item for *dhaddhadati* but it fails to create the swiftness of motion depicted in the original text. On the other hand it gives the reader a feeling that some inanimate object is being rolled down the stairs. In contrast, in Sah's version we find the use of the word 'swept' which has successfully depicted the fast movement.

An Analysis of Stylistic Equivalence at the Rhetorical Level:

This particular short story by Mannu Bhandari teems with rhetorical devices, which include figures of speech, set phrases, idioms, sayings, adages, etc. Translating such devices need great care and consideration from various aspects, such as fitting the context, conforming to register in the original, highlighting thematic and aesthetic significance, etc. the author will make a tentative probe into the translation by contrastive analysis of some limited aspects.

In the story, Amitosh is the central character and it won't be an exaggeration to say that the other characters are quite peripheral and their presence and activities in the narrative helps the readers to understand the character of Amitosh. This particular character as I

have already said earlier has very strong attitudes and beliefs about certain things in life and is very articulate in voicing his feelings. The author, in the original text has used a lot of rhetorical devices to help the readers gain an insight into this character and to provide information about his social status. Therefore it is imperative that these rhetorical devices are reproduced in translation. The language used by Amitosh is different from that used by the other characters in the story. He uses a lot of colloquial and slang expressions and these are quite integral to the theme and also speak with a lot of force. The hatred and disapproval that he bears in mind about his wife and others of her class is quite obvious from the monologues that he utters.

Let us look at an example:

Baharwalon ko chahe woh chakma par Amit to uska resha resha pehchanta hai. Sabke samne apnatva mein sane, madhurta ki chashni mein page jo sangeetmay shabda parul ke muh se jharte rehte hai, uske peeche bheetar hi bheetar uske liye phohash gaaliyon aor kosno ki jo bauchar nirantar hoti rehti hai-use Amit sirf Amit hi janta hai aur chahe to unhe aksharan shabda bhi de sakta hai...

Condillac version:

Well Parul could fool the world but not Amit. Only he knew the curses and abuses that lay behind the loving words and honeyed tones with which she addressed him in the presence of others.

Sah version:

Others could be taken in but not Amit. He knows her inside out. The sweet syrupy words, oozing affection and fondness that stream from her lips for him. Amit alone knows those abuses-and he can even verbalize them to the last word, if need be.

This particular paragraph in the original story carries a lot of force portraying the emotions of the speaker. Unfortunately, Condillac in her version has eliminated chunks of the original passage and thus her translation falls short of the stylistic effect of

the original. The version by Sah however is almost at par with the original retaining its stylistic value and also tries to reproduce the same force as the original passage.

Take another example:

Use to upar se niche tak jalaalat ke kichad mein puri tarah dhans kar, khud kis sifat se kamal ke patte ke tarah bedaag nikal gayi aur who hai ki is gaddi ki chindi chindi bikhar kar jati hui us aurat par uchaal de lekin ek ubaal khakar uska khoon jaise bilkul paani ho gaya. Uska sara astitva, sara punsatva aur paurush ekayek galkar kahin beh gaya aur oh bikul lunj-punj, apahij-sa, nire mans ke bejaan lothre ki tarah ho gaya.

Condillac version:

Having pushed him all the way into the mire of humiliation, she had walked away as spotless as a lotus leaf. He felt like shredding the bundle of notes to bits and throwing them at the retreating woman. But his blood, so recently boiling, had suddenly turned to water. His identity, his manhood, his very humanness seemed to melt and drain away, leaving him limp and lifeless.

Sah version:

So now he's to be sandbagged by a trick so mean! So villainous! All gift wrapped in upper class decency! The finesse with which she made her own exit, taintless like a lotus rising from mud, leaving him mired in humiliation, while he...For a moment, he felt he'd tear the notes into shreds and fling them after the receding figure... then his anger subsided, and in another moment it seemed that it turned into water. His entire life, his being, his masculinity, manhood, everything turned into water. He was like a jelly, he was crippled, he was a lifeless lump of flesh.

The version by Condillac as we can note above fails to reproduce the anger seething in the mind of the speaker which is partly attained by the version by Sah which is more vivid and loyal

to the original. In this version the metaphorical meanings are rendered more accurately. Therefore it has more stylistic value.

Mannu Bhandari has used a lot of proverbs and set phrases in the story. It is therefore important that these expressions are carried over in the translated version too in order to produce an equivalent aesthetic value of the original.

It will be clear if we look at a few examples from the text.

Kya boloon? Pehle aao apni durust nakkashidaar sau sunaari keh daaliye phir main apni lattmaar ek lohari tapkaoonga

Condillac version:

What should I say? Once you have delivered your intricate, finely crafted pieces, I will answer you with one rough but telling blow. It takes just one stroke of the blacksmith's hammer to equal the hundred delicate taps of the goldsmith's.

Sah version:

What can I say? Why don't you deliver your fine filigree piece with every 'I' dotted and every 't' crossed, and then watch me flatten it all with a single blow of my blacksmith's hammer.

In this case the author in the original text has used a reference to a popular Hindi proverb. Though both the translations have tried to bring out the semantic content of the original, the version by Condillac by trying to elaborate on the proverb but loses out on stylistic value. The Sah version is closer to the original in terms of stylistic value and also managed to retain the force and rhythm of the original.

Due to incomplete comprehension of the original context or insensitive to the stylistic value in the source text, translators of narrative fiction tend to produce deceptive equivalence in the target text. That is to say, the target text shares the corresponding referential meaning with the original, or the translators tend to establish equivalence at the level of paraphrasable material content (Basnett-McGuire 1980:115). But some losses are caused to the literary values of the original text in terms of stylistic analysis. Such

deceptive equivalence may occur in the translation at lexical, syntactical, rhetorical levels and in narrative discourse. Because of negligence or unawareness of the connotative meaning or contextual meaning of lexical items, translators tend to merely transfer the denotative meaning of the original, which results in deceptive equivalence.

Conclusion

Literary style can manifest a writer's artistic creativity. Transferring style, however, poses a difficult issue for translators. Although translatability of style is relative, we must endeavour to faithfully reproduce the style of the literary text in the source language because failure to do so will undoubtedly affect the quality of translation. With the goal of finding proper solutions to improving the translation quality, the author of this paper ventures to explore stylistic equivalence in translation of modern Hindi fiction. Based on fundamental theoretic viewpoints of literary stylistics, in combination with translation equivalence, the translator should strive towards the notion of stylistic equivalence, which aims at choosing functional equivalents to reproduce stylistic values or effects of the original in translation. With stylistic equivalence as evaluation norm, the author makes a contrastive analysis of two English versions of *Nayak Khalnayak Vidushak* written by Mannu Bhandari. The investigation shows that when thematically and/or aesthetically motivated linguistic forms are employed, stylistic equivalence can be achieved between the source text and target text. The application of stylistic analysis and interpretation to translation of literary texts can enhance the translators' awareness of stylistic values in source text and target text, enable translators to achieve stylistic equivalence. Thereby the translation quality of literary texts might be improved to a greater degree.

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