



16

LINGUISTIC PROBLEMS IN TRANSLATION OF MARATHI DALIT POEMS

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Abstract:

Dalit Literature is the literature of the oppressed group of India that is lower in the caste hierarchy. Translating Dalits literature presents linguistic challenges because the experiences of Dalits are deeply rooted in the social context of the conflict between the dominant Brahmanical caste system and the Dalits. The linguistic problems at Onomatopoeia, Homonymy, Lexical Gaps, Colloquial Elements, Creativity levels occur in the process of translation. The researcher has analyzed the Marathi Dalit poems and their English translations to study the cultural nuances and linguistic problems occurring in the translation process and has provided solutions.

Keywords: *Dalit Literature, Translation, Linguistic Problems, etc.*

The translation is an act of annihilating barriers of languages to understand different cultures, populations, and literature. It is a communication between people who belong to different social backgrounds and ways of life. Translation primarily aims to carry the literary and linguistic codes of the Source Language text into another language i.e. the Target Language text. All the linguistic elements at the linguistic level, syntactical level, semantic level, etc. are rendered in the translation process. Many problems occur in the process of translation as the linguistic features of two languages differ. As Maria Tymoczko has rightly pointed out:

Many of the differences between source text and translation are inescapable, resulting from the shift from the obligatory features of one language to the obligatory features of another (Tymoczko).

Every two languages in the world are different from each other. Each language has different characteristics. Every language grows from the cultural influence of that region. Linguistic features like phonology, morphology, syntax, affixes, and grammar vary from language to language. Many linguistic features are unique to a particular language. While transferring the literary and linguistic codes from the source language to the target language, the translator must consider the formal aspects of both languages. The translator must have a



thorough knowledge of both the language systems and their subsystems. He must know well the phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics of both languages. Transference of content from one language into another is not a simple task. The translator faces several difficulties while shifting the content of the source language into the target language. The difficulties arise when it is verse translation. All these linguistic challenges are discussed in detail below.

Onomatopoeic Effect:

Following are the lines from the Marathi Dalit poems and their translations in English. The sound device onomatopoeia is used to create an onomatopoeic effect, which adds intensity to the poems. Unfortunately, this intensity is often lost in the translations, as the onomatopoeia used in the original cannot be transferred to the target language text.

दुखाने गदगदताना हे झाड मी पाहिलेले

This tree I saw mangled with sorrow

(From the poem *Zaad* by Daya Pawar translated as *Tree* by Graham Smith.)

माय आली पाय बांधून भळाभळा रक्तवाही

Mother came, foot wrapped, blood flowing down

(From the poem *Mayby* Waman Nimbalkar translated as *Mother* by Vidyt Bhagwat and Eleanor Zelliott)

मंदिराचे दगड गदगद हालले

The stones of the temple shook

(From the poem *Mahapurusha* by Hira Bansode translated as *O Great Man* by Jayant Karve and Eleanor Zelliott)

The onomatopoeic devices used in the Marathi poems are employed to depict the intensity of the incident or occasion. Poetry, being more expressive than other genres, uses onomatopoeia to convey intensity. However, in translation, the poetic quality is often lost as the onomatopoeic effect in the original is not transferred to the target language text.

Homonymy:

Homonymy refers to a single word having two or more different meanings, which can create ambiguity for translators. Without thorough knowledge of the source language, translators may struggle to understand the intended meaning of the word.

म्हणून मी गेलो

When Patil sent for me, I went

A. Name of the Caste

B. Administrative Post

The underlined word is from the poem *Patil* by PralhadChendvankar translated as *Patil* by Gauri Deshpande. The word has two meanings in Marathi language. One refers to the highest



administrative post in the village, and the other to one of the castes in Maharashtra. Considering the cultural context, it is apparent that the caste mentioned is one of the upper castes in Maharashtra. The administrative post 'Patil' is often assigned to people belonging to the 'Patil' caste, leading to the interchangeable use of the two meanings. Therefore, the meaning of the word can be an 'upper caste person' or both. Therefore, the translator has not translated the word, rather he has used the word as it is in Marathi, which can give a nuanced cultural understanding if it is explained in the footnote of the translation. Translators must be cautious when dealing with homonyms, as choosing the wrong meaning can significantly alter the intended message.

Lexical Gaps:

Translators encounter lexical gaps when words or concepts from the source language text are untranslatable because there are no equivalent words and concepts in the target language culture. Dalit people are a marginalized group in India with traditions that differ from the dominant Brahmanical culture. The nuances related to the culture of Dalits and their resistance to the established culture pose challenges in translation.

मसनात गुडसा चघळीत बसलेला
माझा आज्ञा
*Bone-chewing grampus
at burning ghat*

The lines from the poem Bolee by Arun Kamble, translated as Speech by Gauri Deshpande, refer to the tradition of consuming carcasses that is prevalent among the Dalits. The underlined word Gudsa in Marathi refers to a part of the carcass, specifically bone. Various parts of a dead animal's body were named and distributed among untouchables based on their social status. Gudsa not only means bone, as translated, but also refers to a part of the carcass. The word Gudsa is untranslatable because there is no equivalent tradition of consuming carcasses in the target language culture.

Colloquial Elements:

Colloquialism is an important linguistic style used in everyday communication, also known as everyday language or general parlance. It occurs in informal contexts and is distinct from formal speech or formal writing, as it may include slang or non-standard language. The Marathi expressions and their translation into the target language are provided below.

*Hadn't eaten no fodder
at his father's hand*

(From the poem Patil by PralhadChendvankar translated as Patil by Gauri Deshpande)

हा संसदेचा रंडीखाना
This parliament's brothel

(From the poem Ambedkar 1979 by Namdev Dhasal translated as Ambedkar 1979 by Laurie Hovell and Asha Mundlay, with Jayant Karve)



The Marathi expressions clearly demonstrate that they are colloquial and are suitable for informal settings in the source language culture. Translating colloquial elements is challenging as they contain cultural nuances and humor that have no direct equivalents in English. Colloquial elements can become formal in translation, as informal language varies from culture to culture. The colloquialism is lost as the localness of language gets vanished in the translation. Prashant Ingole points out,

Translation is a way of globalizing the local. But in standard English, the localness of the language is lost, and when it is specifically about Dalit writing, translation is unable to capture the sense of caste hierarchies as it is illustrated in texts written by Dalit authors (Ingole).

Creativity:

ही देश नावाची आई

राजरोस निजते कुबेराच्या सोबत

This country we call mother

Sleeps with the god of wealth

(From the poem Ambedkar 1979 by Namdev Dhasal translated as Ambedkar 1979 by Laurie Hovell and Asha Mundlay, with Jayant Karve)

The Marathi expression has reference to the God, *Kubera* from Hindu Mythology. *Kubera* is a God who is known as God of wealth in Hindu Mythology. The translator has removed the name of the God and refers to *Kubera* as the God of Wealth, which *Kubera* is known for. But the translation of the personal pronoun *Kubera* differently can make the readers of the translation ignorant about the Source Language Culture. If *Kubera* is referred to in the future, the readers of the translation will not understand, who is he.

All the above examples are evident of the fact that linguistic problems occur in the process of translation as the rules of grammar change with the language. The translator must have through knowledge about both Source Language and Target Language. The language used in the mainstream literature is not same with that of the language used in marginalized literature. Therefore, the translator should learn and understand how languages operate in different social contexts.

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