



Cultural Terms in Translation: Techniques and Gaps

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Abstract

The article entitled Techniques and Gaps in Translation of Cultural Terms is an attempt to find out the techniques adopted in translates in cultural terms an observe gaps in the process of translation. The main purpose of this study has to evaluate the techniques of translation of cultural words and to find out the gaps. For this purpose, the researcher collected cultural terms as corpus of data for the study from Nepali cultural words and the corresponding translated words from the English language. They were categorized them into five different categories. Findings of the study shows that ten different techniques such as literal, addition, deletion, claque, back translation, borrowing, definition are to be found to have been employed in translating cultural words of the novel. Among them literal translation was the most frequent which cover most of the part in translation. Similarly six types of gap were found in this study.

Keywords: Target language (TL); Source language (SL); Target cultures (TC); Source cultures (SC); Gaps in translation.

1. Introduction

The term 'language' comes from 'lingua' which means 'tongue' in Latin. 'Lingua' was modified into 'langue' and then into 'language' in French. The English people modified it into 'langue' in the 13th century with its core meaning 'communication by using words.' The origin of language is as old as human civilization. It is vehicle for human thoughts and a medium of mutual exchange of ideas and feelings. It is closely tied to human's feeling and activities.

Language is generally believed to be the essential instrument of ethnic expression: a viaduct for the belief, customs, rituals and behaviors, which constitute cultural identity. It is seen as the embodiment of human action for most; language is inextricably linked to the very essence of being human and of belonging a specific cultural group. It is social phenomenon possessed by human society which makes sets of rules, according to which members of society co-operate and interact with each other, socio-cultural norms and values, thoughts and conventions are presented, nourished and inherited from generation to generation.

Culture, on the other hand, is "the way of life and its manifestation that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression. It is the full range of learned human behaviours patterns" (Newmark, 1981). According to Richards (1983), culture means "the total set of beliefs, attitudes, customs, behaviours, social habits etc. of the member of particular society." A particular culture is the way of life, especially general customs, beliefs, social habits, etc of a particular group of people. As culture is a way of life in a society, it consists of prescribed ways of behaving or norms of conduct, beliefs, values and skills. It also includes the institutions, values, religion, community, food, heritage, history, and so on.

Culture is human creation and use of symbols and artifacts. Culture may be taken as constituting the way of life of an entire society and this includes codes of manners, dress, language, rituals, norms of behaviours and system of beliefs. Socio-linguists stress that human behaviour is primarily the result of nurture than nature. Similarly, culture is all that which is non-biological and socially transmitted in society, including artistic, social, ideological and religious patterns of behaviour and the techniques for mastering the environment.

Language and culture are interrelated. According to Sapir and Whorf "No language can exist unless it is stepped in the context of culture: and no culture can exist which does not have at its center, the structure of natural language. Language then, is the heart within the body of culture, and it is the interaction between the two that results in the continuation of life energy. In the same way that the surgeon, operating on the heart, cannot neglect the body that surrounds it (cited in Bassnett (1991).

2. Translation

Language was born with the need of exchanging thoughts, feelings and opinions among human beings and translation was born for making the exchange of those thoughts, feelings and opinions possible between two or more dialectal human beings or communities. The process of translating started shortly after the invention of language and

this trend of translation for a long period have been managed orally. Translation has been developed with the invention of letters and their development in writing.

Translation before reaching the present stage has experienced different ups and downs in the process of its evolution and finally got its power only after its designation as 'Translation Studies' proposed for the first time in 1978 by Andre Lefevere. The subject has been developed as a separate discipline in many parts of the world and is clearly destined to continue developing well in twenty first century. Translation Studies brings together work in a wide variety of fields including linguistics, literary study, history, anthropology, psychology and economics. Besides, the process of translating has become the central concern for learners and researchers who desire to get through the cultural studies and its peripheral identities.

Translation is an act of rendering sense or meaning of a word, an expression etc, from one language to another language. Duff (1987), writes translation is "Crossing the Border" from one language to another. Translation is the process of conveying message across linguistic and cultural barriers. The process of rendering a text in one language into another language to maintain the linguistic and pragmatic equivalence is translation. It is the dynamic and indefinite phenomenon of transferring the concepts of language.

Newmark (1981), defines translation as "rendering the meaning of a text into another language in a way that the author intends the text."

2.1. Language Culture and Translation

Culture is, "the way of life and its manifestation that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression (Newmark 1988:94 cited in Bhattra (2000)". It is the full range of learned human behaviour patterns. It is a deep rooted phenomenon in relation to human civilization.

As culture is away of life in society, it also includes the institution, values, religion, community, food, heritage, history and so on.

Language is primarily a social phenomenon, which is naturally and intricately interlinked with culture. It is embedded in culture such a way that the meaning of any linguistic item can be properly understood only with reference to the cultural context. The meaning aspect is important in translation. It follows that translation can not be fully understood outside a cultural frame of reference.

Translation is a process or act of transformation between two languages. There is no uniformity between two cultures within the same language, it is very difficult to correlate the cultures within the two languages which are in translation. Highlighting the close relation of language and culture Casegrande (1954L338) writes "In effect one does not translation language, one translates cultures" in Wagle (2004).

From this we can say that translator transfers cultures not language. In process in translation, language is not the main aspect, it is only a medium but the major aspect is the culture, which is to be translated. In their words, the overall concern in the process in translation is less as a linguistic and more as a cultural procedure. Translating is the most difficult and challenging job because if the two cultures cannot correlate or give clear idea about the concerned cultural aspect it may be worthless.

2.2. Cultural Implication on Translations

Translation is primarily a linguistic activity which comprises the transfer of the meaning of a text in one language and the production of a new equivalent in another language .But translation is not only a linguistic activity it is also a culture and truth .language is concept bound and to understand meaning of text, contextual factor one of the factor id culture, should be at least a bilingual but also bicultural. It is less linguistic and more, even exclusively as cultural procedure. In translation we transfer cultures not language. Culture as the way of life and its manifestation that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular languages as its means of expression frequently where this a culture focus, there is a translation problems due to the cultural 'gap' or distance between the sources and target language. Language dose however, contains all kind of cultural deposits in the grammar, form of address as well as the lexis which are not taken account of in universals either in consciousness or translation cultural words are associated with particular languages and can not be laterally translated.

The cultural implication for translation are, thus of significant importance as well as lexical concerns. Since translation is bilingual as well as bicultural endeavor, the translator has to undergo various difficulties not only at linguistic level but also at the extra linguistic level. The fundamental problems involved in translation arises from the basic fact that any two natural languages differ in the matter have a lexical item in its vocabulary for a particular concept, while another language (L2) may lack the lexical items in its vocabulary for the concept.

Translation is such an activity which inevitably involves two languages and two cultural traditions. Languages and cultural are seen as being closely related and both aspect must be considered for translation.

2.3. Techniques /Procedures in Translation

Translation is a versatile means of communication in transferring knowledge, truth, cultural ideas and so on. It is the process of the rendering of the meaning of text into another language.

Crystal (1990), defines the terms 'translation' as a neutral, term used for all the task where the meaning of one expression in one language (the 'sources ' language) is turned into the meaning of another (the target languages), weather the medium is spoken written or singed". By this definition we can say that the term translation is a bilingual activity, it is the product of rendering or transferring the meaning or message in one language into another. The process of rendering the message into another or meaning may also be from one dialect or register to another dialect or register. Specially two languages are involved in translation i.e. sources languages (SL) and target language (TL).

There are number of techniques or procedures of translation cultural term. Various scholars have suggested various techniques of translating cultural terms. The 12 different translation procedures which are as follows:

- transference\ borrowing
- a) Cultural equivalent
 - b) Neutralization
 - c) Literal translation
 - d) Label
 - e) Naturalization
 - f) Componential Analysis
 - g) Deletion
 - h) Couplet
 - i) Paraphrase
 - j) Classifier

There is no single procedure which is absolutely helpful to produce perfect translation without any gap in TL from SL. In the translation procedures, these are mostly used techniques. They are describing in the following paragraphs:

2.3.1. Literal Translation

It is a translating techniques (approach) in which the translator following the syntax and semantics of the SL very closely showing greater faithfulness toward it. It is the form based or the SL translation approach in which SL form dominates the TL form.

SL (Nepal)	TL (English)
yatyat	Transportation

According to Vachon-Spilaka, literal translation is the basic procedure in translation from which translation begins. Normally, it is important for its transparency in TL and its faithfulness to SL. In literal translation, the translator can neither omit a word or a line nor add to them.

2.3.2. Borrowing

Borrowing is the process of transferring an SL word to the TL. When can not translate a TL word\phrase, it usually takes possession of its. Borrowing is probably the most frequency adopted procedure for the translation of international term such as unites elements, sciences and technology. Terms are borrowed from the SL and translated in the TL with or without any noticeable morphophonemic change. Once an expression enters into the domain of TL, it started being used in almost all context and collections as in SL situation. It includes translation of SL word into TL script. eg.

SL(Nepali)	TL (English)
pathi	pathi

According to Newmark (1981), normally, names of people, places and country, names of news paper, names of institution and companies, street names, indentation, brand names, etc are transferred. In the process in translation the translator the word to show the respect for the SL culture. Cultural words are often transferred to given local colour in translation.

c) This is blinding. in this process word are coined through borrowing one constituent from the SL or donor languages is reproduced or translator into the other constituent of the construction. A single word or phrase is translator with the combination of two or more than two techniques. eg.

SL (Nepali)	TL (English)
cure pahad	cure hill

2.3.3. Calque

Calque is a translation procedure in which each unit is translator into the equivalent unit in other languages, i.e. TL. The morphem, word, phrase or even a sort sentences are the unit in translation but not idiomatic expressive because it makes on sense. If follow the word order of the SLT. eg.

SL (Nepali)	TL (English)
caran chetra	grazing grounds

2.3.4. Addition

It is a translation technique in which which some word are added in the TL text or SL expression are structually expanded. In the technique, the translator gives additional information of the cultural terms of the STL by suitable addition from the cultural context available in the TC. To make reader understand information easily or to make the

text more informative or explicit some additions are made. This procedure is adopted when some expressions in SLT are left unsaid and the translator intends to convey the supplementary message by appropriate addition from the cultural context of the TL. eg.

SL(Nepali)	TL (English)
upatyaka	kathmandu valley

2.3.5. Deletion

It refers to omission of SL lexical items, phrases and even sentences while reducing into TL. Generally, it occurs at syntactic level in translation but items omitted are mostly lexical expression. A translator decides to delete some items not faithfulness in translation but to make the communication effective. In some redundant and unnecessary items are omitted, eg.

SL (Nepali)	TL (English)
ear byag	bag

2.3.6. Back Translation

Back translation is one of the ways of testing the quality in translation. [Crystal \(1978\)](#), introduces back translation as one translator then turns the 'B' text into 'A' and the resulting 'A' text is compared with the original 'A' text. If the text are virtually identical. It is strong evidence that the original translation is of high quality. eg.

SL(Nepali)	TL (English)
teliphon	Telephone

2.3.7. Couplet

Couplet is the combination of two translation procedures (borrowing-literal) for the translation of one SL terms. In [Newmark \(1981\)](#) words, "it refers to the combination of two translation procedures for one unit as a couplet." The SL terms are borrowed and transliterated

Rules in the target languages". [Crystal \(1991\)](#), argues a similar view as "The sources text is followed, but is normalized according to the rules of the target language".

Translation is also SL oriented. In the translation the SL grammatical construction into their nearest TL equivalent but the lexical word are again translated singles, out of context ([Newmark, 1981](#)) Literal translation preserves linguistic meaning of sources languages text. It focuses on semantic contain of SL but neglect pragmatic meaning eg.

SL (Nepali)	TL English)
gover	dung (gover)

2.3.8. Paraphrasing/Definition

This procedure is a form of explanatory equivalence. Target language explains the meaning of the source language term using different words in order to make it easier to understand. In paraphrasing, the semantic content which is realized in the source language in a single term is syntactically distributed in the TL.

[Newmark \(1981\)](#), argues paraphrasing is "an amplification or explanation of the meaning of a segment of the text." Normally, if the TLT has not exact substitution for the SLT term is replaced by definition or description.

SL (Nepali)	TL (English)
mela	religious fair

In short, defining means 'reducing the unknown to the known and the unshared to the shared ([Iver, 1987](#)).

2.3.9. Substitution

When two cultures display a partial overlap rather than a clear-cut presence or absence of a particular element of culture, this procedure is adopted. In other words, when a source cultural element finds a similar/approximate/near equivalent in place of a full equivalent, the translator takes advantage of that similarity and uses that corresponding expression as a translational equivalent; this procedure is termed as substitution. In this case the TL offers a natural expression for its own cultural element that partly coincides with the source culture element. The main drawback of this procedure is that it may distort cultural flavour of foreign culture. eg.

SL (Nepali)	TL (English)
roti	Bread

2.3.10. Sense Translation

This technique is used when the exact SL equivalent is not available in the TL. In it not the words but the meaning is translated. Here, the TL term gives only one sense for the SL term not the exact meaning e.g.

SL (Nepali): logne swasniko jhagada paralko ago.

TL (English): The quarrel between husband and wife is temporary.

2.4. Transliteration

It is a process on which each SL letters or other graphological unit is replaced by a TL letter, or other unit. Crystal (1991), mentioned that "transliteration is a process in which each character of the source language is converted into a character of the target language."

In principle, the process of setting up a transliteration system involves three steps.

i) SL letters are replaced by SL phonological units; this is the normal literate process of converting from the written to the spoken medium.

ii) The SL phonological units are translated into the TL phonological units.

iii) The TL phonological units are converted into TL letters or other graphological units.

Roman scripts are usually used for transliteration. The purpose of transliteration is to facilitate the reader to read the target language well. Transliteration gives us equivalent sound system of the source language. This can be transcribed by using phonetic symbols so as to present the exact sounds of these characters.

2.5. Gaps in Translation

Generally, if there is no correspondence between SL items and TL items there occur gaps. It is simply, absence of concept. Gaps occur if concept available in one language is not available in another. Gaps may be in source language text or target language text. Gaps are termed by different names such as lacunas, blanks spaces, Slippages, absences and voids. Panikar (1994 cited in Singh (2004) observes that the shadows of language, time taste, the personality of the translator and the manner of transmission that fall between the source and target cause gaps.

Iver (1987) says "Broadly speaking, the differences between extra linguistic realities and language specific mapping of these result in void". The famous Sapir-Whorfian hypothesis of 'Linguistic Relativity and Linguistic Determinism' also justifies that gaps in SL and TL and loss of meaning in translation are inevitable. The speakers of different languages view and perceive the world differently because their linguistic structures have presented the shape, size, colour and speed of objects and events differently.

Crystal (1990), states about translation "exact equivalence is of course impossible: no translator could provide a translation that was perfect parallel to the source text. There is always some loss of information." In all translation activities gaps are natural and inevitable because it is bicultural, bilingual and bi-contextual activity. If cultural distances between languages are great, there is great possible of existence of gap.

Gaps are classified into various types lexical, structural (linguistic), cultural, pragmatic or supralinguistic etc.

a) Linguistic gap: Every language, which is existed in the world, is unique. There are not any languages which are identical. The gaps found because of difference between two languages are called linguistic gaps. Linguistic gaps are observed in different levels of language.

2.5.1. Graphological Level

Two languages are different in their graphological system. Graphemes available in one language may be absent in another language. For example, 'A one noodles' A to Z photo studio, 'ABC tent service etc.

2.5.2. Phonological Level

English has 44 phonoemes but Nepali has 36 phonemes. Translation of a phoneme which is absent in one language but present another language Gap. e.g.

Khasa bajar - vf;f ahf/

Thakuri thakuri hotel

We can see that translating 'vÚ /kh/and '7Ú /th/ is different into English because English has no/kh/and /th/ phonemes. These sounds are allophones in English but phonemes in Nepali.

2.5.3. Lexical/word Level

It refers to the absence of a lexical item form a particular language that corresponds to a particular concept. Lexical gaps create serious problems in translation. Some lexical items available in SL may not be available in TL. For example, Nepali onomatopoeic word and reduplicated words do not have equivalent terms in English.

2.5.4. Structural Level

The difference in linguistic structures and the grammar rules between the languages that create gaps. In the Nepali languages we find only three voice systems whereas English has only two voice system. Similarly, Nepali does not have article system but English has; Nepali does not have article system but English has; Nepali does not have auxiliaries but English has fixed numbers of auxiliaries.

2.5.5. Cultural Gap

Cultural gaps means the set of beliefs, attitudes, customs, social behaviour, habits of the member of the particular society, it is obvious different from another society or cultural group and it creates gaps or losses of meaning in translation. It may have the belief and concept in one culture but another lacks which is called cultural gap. The degree of meaning loss in translation depends on the degree of similarity between the existed cultures. To compensate such gaps, translator should keep the sufficient knowledge of the both SL and TL cultures. And to translate the cultural word with explanation is another way to reduce the cultural gaps. Culture includes foods, dress, festivals, rituals etc. The ease or difficulty of translation depends on the degree of closeness ease or difficulty of translation depends on the degree of closeness (mutual similarity) or the cultures in question. Cultural gaps make translation impossible so it needs further explanation to make its readers easy to understand.

2.5.6. Extra linguistic gap

Translation is not exclusively a linguistic activity. May extra linguistic factors play crucial role in translation. The intention of a speaker or writer, his knowledge, his ideas, expectations, interests and so on have to be taken into consideration. Other verbal acts and the time of their performance and their effects need to be considered, too. The extra linguistic or pragmatic gaps can be observed beyond the linguistic order of language. Pragmatic gaps occur when there lies problem of correspondence between context of SLT and TLT. Extra linguistic gaps occur when the background knowledge and real world knowledge differ.

2.6. Cultural Categories

Culture is defined as a general term for the symbolic and learned aspects of human society, although some animal behaviourist now assert that certain primates have at least the capacity of culture. Newmark (1981), defined culture as "the way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression". Generally, culture includes the way of life of community, system of government, religious belief and values, geographical region, social class, age, sex, profession, activity of the members of the society, etc.

The cultural language is the language which is spoken in a particular culture or speech community. Newmark (1981), distinguishes 'cultural' from 'universal' and 'personal' language.

Adpting Newmark (1981) has made five fold classification: a) ecology b) Material culture c) Social culture d) Social organization, political and administrative procedures, concepts e) Gesture and habits. In general cultural terms can be categorized in five topics as followings:

2.6.1. Ecology

It refers to the relation to the plants and living creatures to each other and to their environment. It includes such geographical features as plants, animals, hills, lakes, rivers, sea, forest, winds, plains etc.

2.6.2. Man-Made Culture (Artifacts)

It refers to the things which are made by man and famous within a culture. It includes foods, clothes, housing, transport and communication, ornaments, utensils, etc.

2.6.3. Social Culture and Organizations

It includes the words concerning the social organization and relation between people and particular community. In different cultures and even in the same geographical regions, there are different communities in terms of ethnicity, education, wealth, sex, religion, tradition, culture, sub-culture which are different from one another. The topics that are included in social culture are work and leisure, political, administrative an artistic organizations, customs, activities, social traditions, sculptures, paintings, carvings and monuments, social norms and values, historical facts, etc.

2.6.4. Religious Culture

It refers to myths, religious beliefs, names of Gods, religious activities, etc. it includes the concept like swarga, narka, pap, dharma etc.

2.6.5. Conceptual Terms

Concept is a part of common system of language shared by members of a speech community. According to Palmer, conceptual terms can be given by only definition, eg. pani barnu.

3. Conclusion

In terms of translation from Nepali to English, the translator has manipulated the equivalent Images due to the cultural gap between two languages. The words and images of a language has the cultural value, meaning and importance. When one word of a language is translated in to another, the target language can't convey the same sense of a source text. Culture vehemently influences the language. The concept of translation equivalent (TE) or the question of correspondence between two languages is as old as a problem on translation theory as translation itself. Translation theorists defines equivalent into perfect equivalence, semi-equivalence and zero equivalence. In perfect equivalence, there are interchangeable some concept in both cultures. E.g. the perfect equivalence of SL term '*surya*'

is 'sun' in TL. In semi equivalence the correspondence has one to many and many to one. For example 'basket' is semi- equivalence of Nepali term '*doko*'. In zero equivalence the cultural specific terms have no equivalence and no correspondence between SL and TL. E.g. Nepali cultural terms '*janai*', '*sharadda*' have no equivalence in English. Even equivalence fail to bring interchangeableness between two images of two cultures.

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