Please Look After Mom & Its Hindi Translation: A case study of translation of “Cultural Features”

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Abstract:

This paper aims to emphasize the importance of translation of cultural features of Korean novel “Omma Reul Buthak Hae” and its Hindi translation “Maa ka dhyan rakhna.” This paper focuses on the problem and issues of translation from Korean to Hindi using examples from “Please Look After Mom” and its Hindi edition. The translation of literary works into target language is called literary translation. This kind of translations are considered higher than any ordinary translation work. Translators of literary works should be able to translate all forms of the work, such as emotions, cultural elements, and social elements. Most of the scholars say that literary translation is not possible. However, to lessen the gap between two cultures the role of translators become very important. Each country has its own language and culture. Before globalization, countries were having limited access of the literature from the other parts of the world. However, in modern society, cultures of other countries are conveyed through literary works. This delivery is mainly made through translations into other languages of literature. Scholars say that literature is the mirror of society. This is because literature represents the culture, art, and customs of the country. Therefore, translators should be more careful when translating literary works than ordinary ones. The translation should be smooth for the reader to read, and the linguistic and cultural characteristics of the original should be translated naturally. As important as accepting other countries’ cultures in the globalization trend in the 21st century is to promote their culture to foreign countries naturally and effectively. However, introducing Korean literature abroad is still qualitatively and qualitatively lacking compared to the history of accepting foreign literature in Korea.

“Please look after mom” was published in 2008 in Korea under title “엄마를 부탁해” and after achieving great success and popularity in Korea and won the Man Asian Literary Prize of 2011. After achieving the height of success, it got published in English with the title “Please Look After Mom” by knopf Publication of America. American publishing market showed phenomenal results as number of pre-booked copies surpassed 100,000 and minimum of 10 editions got printed. In addition to the America, it has also achieved great success in overseas publishing market by signing translation and publishing contract in 36 countries including Australia, Vietnam, Indonesia, other Asian and European countries.

After a worldwide success it got published in India in Hindi with title “माँ का ध्यान रखना” in 2012. This paper analyses the Hindi translation of Korean novel “Omma Reul Buthak Hae” through various examples and tries to find the issues and problems in the translation of cultural features.

Introduction

The translation of literary works into target language is called literary translation. Literary Translation is considered higher than any ordinary translation work. Translators of literary works should be able to translate all forms of the work, such as emotions, cultural elements, and social elements. Most of the scholars say that literary translation is not possible. However, to lessen the gap between two cultures the role of translators become very important.

In 1996, Aixela presented the term "cultural special items" and defined them as vocabulary and idioms that clearly represent cultural elements. In novels with many cultural elements, the content and feel of the original work vary depending on what strategy the cultural elements are translated into and how correctly they are translated.

1 Shin Kyung Sook, 2008
2 Man Asian Literary Prize 2011
3 Rajpal & Sons, 2012
Every country in this world has its own culture. Reading literary works of any country has been considered to be most effective way to know the culture and history of that country. The first Korean literature introduced in Europe is recorded as “Chunhyangjeon”⁴.

About the Book:
Please Look After mom”⁵ is a novel written by South Korean novelist Shin Kyung Sook. This novel has achieved great success not only in Korea but also in foreign countries. “Please look after mom” was published in 2008 in Korea under title “엄마를 부탁해”⁶ and after achieving great success and popularity in Korea and won the Man Asian Literary Prize⁷ of 2011. After achieving the height of success, it got published in English with the title “Please Look After Mom” by knopf Publication of America. American publishing market showed phenomenal results as number of pre-booked copies surpassed 100,000 and minimum of 10 editions got printed. In addition to the America, it has also achieved great success in overseas publishing market by signing translation and publishing contract in 36 countries including Australia, Vietnam, Indonesia, other Asian and European countries. After a worldwide success it got published in India in Hindi with title “माँ का ध्यान रखना”⁸(Maa ka dhyan Rakhna) in 2012. “Please look after mom” deals with “motherhood” which can be sympathized by anyone regardless of nationality and language or culture. Apart from this, this literary work is well blended with cultural features that reveal various native and special characteristics of Korean language and society.

"Please look after Mom," has gained great success not only in Korea but also in foreign countries. This is a story of woman named “Pak So Nyo” who spent her entire life in a small of village of South Korea and comes to Seoul with her husband to have a 70th birthday party. However, she missed the hold of her husband’s hand and suddenly disappears from the complex and crowded Seoul Station. Story revolves around the search operation done by her husband and four of her children to find their mother. During whole process, all of her four children blame themselves for not taking care of their parents specially the mother. This novel consists of total four chapters. It’s a monologue and in each chapter, narrator speaks their mind and recollect old memories related to their lost mother (Park So Nyo).

Theoretical Framework:
This research paper compares the original version of "Please look after Mom" with its Hindi translation "Maa ka dhyan Rakhna" and analyzes the Hindi translation of cultural features used in original text. Each scholar has his or her own translation strategy in relation to text, but here this paper is linked to Lawrence Venuti's foreignization translation strategy and domesticization translation strategy in view of the large framework.

Analysis & Comparison:
The relationship between Korea and India is gradually deepening in every aspect, but there are currently very few translations of literary works from both countries are available to its readers. Unlike English, Korean literature translated into Hindi is too small, but Shin Kyung-sook's feature novel "Please Look After Mom" was translated into 22 countries, including English, and then translated into the Hindi title "Ma ka dhyan rakhna" in 2012. However, the Hindi translation of "Please Take Care of Mom" is not a direct translation, but it is translated from English to Hindi. Hindi translator Neelabh Ashk⁹ translated the English version of the novel "Please Look After Mom" into Hindi. Looking at the “माँ का ध्यान रखना (Maa ka dhyan rakhna)” there were many cases where Korean linguistic and cultural features were mistranslated or omitted in Hindi translation. This is because Maa ka dhyan rakhna is not a direct translator but an indirect one.

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⁴ It is that the first Korean literature introduced abroad, not in Europe, was Chunhyangjeon, but it is the first Korean literature introduced to Europe with accurate records.
⁵ Kim Ji Young, 2011
⁶ Shin Kyung Sook, 2008
⁷ Man Asian Literary Prize 2011
⁸ Rajpal & Sons, 2012
⁹ Neelabh Ashk (1945-2016)
Korea and India are close to each other not only socially but linguistically as well. The two countries have different grammar systems, but their word order is similar. However, English has different word order and grammar system. Also, Asian and European countries have different cultures. For this reason, translators understand and translate European culture well when translating Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and literature into English for example in Asian language. In particular, the role of culture in the target language in the translation of cultural elements becomes important. According to Ricardi (2002), cultural expressions exist in any language. Translating from one language to another is not just comparing two languages, but also comparing two cultures. The text (Nord, 2001) is a product of culture, so culture is represented in the text. Text is a concrete fact of culture. In this regard, translation can be defined as a complex act of concrete intercultural communication (Kim Hyo-joong, 2005). The translation method of cultural expression or cultural center during the translation process of literary works is different from that of other sentences and words. Lee Seung-jae (2012) said, "The cultural center is a component of culture and is not conceptualized in the discourse network, but it is a cultural product that is ready to accept the object culture."

Though there is a bit similarity between Korean and Hindi languages they have different cultural characteristics and cultural elements. For example, in English translation, various cultural elements such as Kimchi, Ramen, older sister, and Namdaemun, which appear in "Please Take Care of Your Mom," are borrowed from the original work. This is because English and Korean have different cultural characteristics. However, there are no such elements of Korean culture in English. In this paper, I would like to examine the problems and difficulties of Hindi translation of cultural elements in Korean literary works based on the Hindi translation of "Please Take Care of Your Mom" and the Hindi translation of several examples.

Example 1:

Original Text:
너는 그 집의 셋째였으므로 네 위의 오빠들이 집을 떠날 때마다 엄마가 겪는 작별의 슬픔과 고통과 염려를 지켜보았다. 큰 오빠를 보내고선 너의 엄마는 새벽마다 장독대의 장 항아리를 닦았다. (“엄마를 부탁해”, 23:2008)

Target Text 1:
As the third of five children, you witnessed Mother’s sorrow and pain and worry when each of your older brothers left home. Every morning at dawn after Hyong-chol left, Mother would clean the surface of the glazed clay sauce jars on the ledge in the backyard. (Please Look After Mom, 14:2011)

Target Text 2

Panch bachchon me se tisri hone ke kaaran tum maa ke dukh aur taklif aur chinta ki gawah rahi thi jis ke tumhare donon bade bhaiyoon ke ghara khoondne ke badd apni maa ke duh kh aur dard ko apni aamho se dekha tha. Apne bade bhai ke chale jane ke badd tumne maa ko ahl se subah har din chabutare par rakhe martaon ke barih hisso ke pochhte hue dekha tha.

Tum ush ghara ke tisri bachh thi aur tumne apne bade bhaiyon ke ghara chodane ke badd apni maa ke duh kho aur dard ko apn aankhon se dekha the. Apne bade bhai ke chale jane ke badd tumne maa ko ahle subah har din chabutare par rakhe martaon ke baahri hisso ko pochhte hue dekha the.

Explanation:
In original text the word “큰 오빠” has been used for elder brother but in English translation instead of “Elder Brother” translator used the name of the brother i.e. “Hyong-chol.” This is because, there is a cultural difference between America and Korea. However, unlike English, in Hindi there are special names given for all kind of relationships. The Hindi translation of “큰 오빠” should be “बड़े भाई” (Bade Bhai).

Example 2:

원본 텍스트:
엄마의 손을 집중력이 없어 보였다. 문어를 씹으며 너는 어머니, 하고 불렀다. 엄마를 어머니라고 부르기는 처음이었다. (엄마를 부탁해, 50:2008)

도착 텍스트 1:
Her hand seemed unfocused. Eating the octopus, you said, “Mother, let’s go to Seoul today.” (Please Look After Mom, 46:2011)

도착 텍스트 2:
उसके हाथ जैसे काम नहीं कर पा रहा था. ऑक्टोपस खाते हुए तुमने कहा था, “माँ!” यह पहली बार था जब तुमने उसे “माँ” कहा था. (माँ का ध्यान रखना, 46-47:2012)

제안 번역:
उसके हाथों में तकात नहीं दिख रही थी. ऑक्टोपस खाते हुए तुमने उसे “माँ” कहकर पुकारा था. यह पहली बार था जब तुमने “अम्मा” को “माँ” कहकर पुकारा था. (Uske hathon me takat nahin dikhi thi. Octopus khate hue tumne use “maa” kahkar pukara tha. Yah pahli bar tha jab tumne “amma” ko “maa” kahkar pukara tha.)

'Mom' and 'Mother' are used to convey different meanings. If you look at Korean language characteristics, hierarchical structure is a strong and important feature of Korean. "엄마" and "어머니" have similar meanings depending on the hierarchy, but "어머니" is used as a non-verbal expression and is informal. On the other hand, "엄마" is a verbal expression. The English translation of “엄마” and “어머니” is same i.e. 'Mother'. However, in Hindi these words can be translated into "माँ" and "माता जी" as in Korean. These kind of translation issues occur due to cultural differences between source and target text.

Conclusion:

Every language has their own cultural features. A text blended with cultural features can be used as a tool to have better understanding of any specific culture or history. We all are well aware of the fact that literature is often considered as mirror image of any society and culture. Through the language used in any literary piece one can know the characteristic of language and status of that particular society, era in which that piece of work has been written. However, in the process of translation, often such linguistic characteristic gets missing due to cultural gaps between source and target text.
Through above two examples taken from Shin Kyung Sook’s novel “Omma Reul Buthak Hae” And its English and Hindi translation “Please Look After Mom” and “Maa Ka Dhyan Rakhna” respectively, we can see difference between original text and translated text, especially in the case of cultural features. Korean and American culture is far different from each other so that their societal structure and values. The original text is well blended with Korean cultural features and provides a very clear glimpse of Korean society. However, the English translation have been done using borrowing strategy of translation and in Hindi version also the same strategy can be found.

After analyzing few examples from original and translated text, we learned that the translator has also used preservation strategy to translate proper nouns and vocabularies those are widely introduced overseas, such as Kimchi, Namdaemun etc.

It was also found that the title and relationships are being translated according to European and American style which is very different from Korean hierarchal system. Due to such societal structure and cultural differences, the translation of cultural features becomes more difficult task for the translation and demands a deep and thorough knowledge of source as well as target text’s culture.

References: