Pragmatic Equivalence in Translation

(U. Aruna, Assistant Professor, Department of English, GSSJC, Chennai.

Abstract: 'Translation can be defined as an act of interpretation of the meaning of a content and consequent reproduction of equivalent content' – Eugene Nida. The interpretation of the meaning along with its context can be achieved by understanding pragmatic equivalence in translation. Pragmatic equivalence is concerned with the way utterances are used in communicative situations and the way they are interpreted in context. It comes under semantic study. It carries much importance while translating the mood and feel expressed in the source text. Though it is highly complex, it can be considered as the most fascinating subject in translation. It is concerned with the study of meaning conveyed by participants in a communicative situation. Bringing the original intensity of the mood and feeling along with the context from the source to the target is a kind of an art in the field of translation. No translation can be faithful but to some extent pragmatic equivalence can be achieved. Understanding and concentrating on pragmatic equivalence will help translators to reflect the original beauty and mood in the target text. The contextual meaning cannot be acquired through literal meaning. Pragmatic equivalence will analyse the age, mood, culture, situation, etc of the source text and concentrate on giving those in the target without losing its original impact. This filed is always a challenge to the translators since languages are closely connected with culture and social setup. This paper tries to focus on the importance of pragmatic equivalence in Translation. Translating Tamil texts in to English is observed here.

Introduction

While translating from one language to the other, equivalence plays an important role. Equivalence may be of textual, formal, dynamic, grammatical, Pragmatic, etc. communicative approach to translation is needed to attain perfection in translation. Equivalence above word level has to be concentrated much. Baker gives a definition of the term *word* "since it should be remembered that a single word can sometimes be assigned different meanings in different languages and might be regarded as being a more complex unit or *morpheme*. This means that the translator should pay attention to a number of factors when considering a single word, such as number, gender and tense".

Meaning plays an important role in translation. Translators have to concentrate in identifying the exact meaning behind the context more than analyzing word for word or literal translation. Meaning has a strong connection with necessary background information like social concepts, mood, register, political knowledge, culture, etc. Syntactic notions are completely different from semantics. And semantic is different from pragmatics. In all the translations of Sangam anthologies translators like AK Ramanujan and George L Hart have concentrated on reestablishing the original environment and context in the target language. A faithful translator must be one who depicts the contextual meaning more than the literal.

Readers will always develop a kind of relationship with what they read. It's a duty of a translator to build perfect understanding of the SL in the minds of TL readers or audience.

This concept is defined as pragmatics.

Pragmatics is the subfield in linguistics that is developed in the late 1970's. It studies the ways people comprehend and produce a communicative act in the speech situation. It is mainly concerned with the analysis of interpretations between the speaker and listener.

There is a joke in understanding pragmatics,

'A lady is sitting in a park. And there is a dog beside her. A man on his way asks the lady 'will your dog bite?'. And the lady replies, 'No, it will not. The man touches the dog and the dog bites him. The angry man asks the lady,'you told your dog will not bite.' The lady says, 'Yes, it will not, but this is not my dog.'

This joke implies the needs to concentrate on pragmatics. The mere misunderstanding between the writer and the translator may lead to mistranslations. And hence it is a foremost duty of the translators to understand the pragmatic importance.

 Pragmatics can be included in linguistics that studies the ways in which context contributes meaning. It talks about contextual analysis based on philosophy, sociology, linguistics and anthropology. Pragmatics is concerned with the use of language in social contexts and the ways in which people comprehend meanings. C.W. Morris, the philosopher, coined the term pragmatics. Betty J. Birner, in his *Introduction to Pragmatics* has stated "What does pragmatics have to offer that cannot be found in good old-fashioned linguistics? What do pragmatic methods give us in the way of greater understanding of how the human mind works, how humans communicate, how they manipulate one another, and in general, how they use language?...The general answer is: pragmatics is needed if we want a fuller, deeper, and generally more reasonable account of human language behaviour..." . The statement clears the idea that understanding pragmatic concepts are equivalent to one's understanding of human behaviour.

When a translator tries to concentrate on pragmatic equivalence he deeply analysis the contextual meaning in the source and tries to replace that in the target language. More than textual equivalence, every translator should concentrate on pragmatic equivalence. Implicature is the beautiful factor in pragmatics. It is not about what is explicitly said but what is implied. Therefore, the translator needs to work out implied meanings in translation in order to get the ST message. The role of the translator is to recreate the author's intention in another culture in such a way that enables the TC reader to understand it clearly.

As Mona Baker points out pragmatic equivalence is concerned with the way utterances are used in communicative situations and the way we interpret them in context. The interpretation of semantic relations can be understood by understanding the pragmatic concepts. Different societies and group of individuals within the same society have different experiences. The concept in one society may be different in the other. Fixational meaning cannot help a translator understand the whole concepts of the source. In order to analyse the real meaning of texts one has to analyse deeply the contextual meaning along with age, mood, culture, situation, etc., of the source language and the target language. Nida points out " Translation can be defined as an act of interpretation of the meaning of a content and consequent reproduction of equivalent content."

Pragmatic equivalence in translation will analyse,

- How the same kind of utterances may have different meanings in different situations.
- How language is used in communication?
- How the meaning in relation to speech situation.
- How the meanings are communicated by a speaker and interpreted by a listener?

The two important aspects in pragmatic equivalence are coherence and implicature.

Coherence Vs Cohesion

Mona Baker views that "coherence is a network of relations which organise and create text. Cohesion is the network of surface relations which link words and expressions to other words and expressions in a text and coherence is the network of conceptual relations which underlie the surface text."

Cohesion helps to derive the conceptual relations. The semantic relations can be clearly understood by cohesion.

Implicature

Implicature is achieved through context and the information about the setting and the participants. It helps understanding what the speaker means or implies than what he literally said.

Pragmatic equivalence will help translators to understand the text beyond the textual level and help to understand how utterances are used in communicative situations.

Implicature in pragmatic equivalence. Grice proposed a well-known distinction between what is said and what is implicated, distinguishing truth-conditional aspects of meaning as what is said, and conventional and conversational implicatures as what is implicated. Translation should be context-dependent. More than finding out the literal meaning it is important to analyse the implied meaning while translating. Implicature meaning is totally different from Idiomatic meaning. Idiomatic meaning is conventional whereas implicature is totally depended on the context. Implicature helps us to understand the meanings which are beyond literal. We may have conventional implicature and unconventional implicature. A translator has to anlayse implicatures inorder to retain the contextual accurateness in the target.

Better communication is based on better understanding between the speaker and the listener and better translation is based on better interpretation of the original which will lead to better understanding to the target audience. In this aspect translation is slightly complicated. To achieve success in this a translator has to be clear about both the languages and background which is not possible to all. The emphatic elements in the original have to be brought to the target with the effect of making the target readers to understand the original without losing its effect. Thus concentrating on implicature during translation is becoming quite hard.

Understanding a source text is not merely based on the understanding of the literal meaning. It is based on the speakers' motives, context, background knowledge and information, age, mood, environment, etc. Translators have to be faithful in depicting the implied meaning of the original text to the target audience. In this way they can try themselves to be faithful to some extent.

De Beaugrande and Dressler define a meaningless or nonsensical text as "one in which text receivers can discover no continuity (of senses), usually because there is a serious mismatch between the configuration of concepts and relations expressed and the receivers' prior knowledge of the world."

What is pragmatic equivalence in translation?

Pragmatic approach gained prominence in 1990s. it can even be analysed as discourse analysis. It aims in translating the social relationship more than text analysis. Communicative situations are producing pragmatic interpretations. The relationship between the sender and receiver carry much importance in pragmatic understanding. Understanding the cultural background of the participants is very important during translation. Pragmatics is beyond syntactic codes. It is more than understanding the forms and structure of the language. Levinson criticizes restricting pragmatics to the grammatical aspects. Appropriateness in identifying the contextual utterance carries much importance in translation process. Levinson says that pragmatics is between the semantics and the sociolinguistics. He even assures that 'it a line drawn to indicate the division between the linguistic and the extra-linguistic concepts'. Communicative approach in translation is needed to achieve effective interpretation of the source in the target.

Daniela Sorea, in her book Translation, Theory and practice lists some of the main theories of meaning, among which she mentions the so-called use theory of meaning, strongly connected with the pragmatic view upon language. Pragmatics deals with meaning not as a mental representation, nor as a relation between a symbol (word, phrase or the other categories) and an object or an entity designated by that symbol. "In other words, pragmatics situates language within wider social and cultural settings and behavioural patterns and, while laying heavy stress on the context of the verbal exchanges, it deals with the way people exploit words and combinations of words, with the actions actual users perform in the act of communication. The meaning

of a linguistic expression is given by its use, under certain circumstances, where interlocutors nourish specific intentions and pursue specific goals." (Sorea, 2007. 23-24)

Translating thanks, greetings, praying, conventional stories, expressing gestures, idioms, etc. from one language to the other is a difficult task since it is bound with social, political and cultural setting of the source.

In the pragmatic concept the contextual meaning is given much importance (Linguistic and cultural familiarity of the SL). Readership sensitivity should be taken into account while taking the translation. The emotive aspects have to be understood and felt by the target readers.

Translators face certain difficulties to fix the original words and phrases with their context in the original. Any careless interpretations may lead to mistranslation. Translator has to identify the context with all its nuances and background information.

While translating the expression 'Warm Welcome' in to Tamil the translator has to give a positive translation whereas in Tamil context kathakathappu which means warm is not being used to greet.

Another example quoted by Sorea "In a context where participants complain of the harsh winter and biting frost, an utterance such as You've got cold feet could simply be a constative remark or maybe an expression of thoughtfulness and sympathy. In the context of a wedding which is about to take place, telling the groom You've got cold feet will indicate he groom experiencing premarital nervousness, eve fright." (Sorea, 2007)

The communication between the SL and TL has to be understood. The contextual meaning and the communicative purpose of the source text have to be rendered with deeper understanding. 'I drew a white stick and I drew a stick in white not same'. Even the minute misunderstanding may lead to mistranslation.

Communicative translation is needed for the TL readers. Communicative translation is not for word for word or literal translation. It is beyond literal. According to Shuttelworth and Cowie's Dictionary of translation studies pragmatic translation is the kind of translation "which pays attention not only to denotative meaning but also to the way utterances are used in communicative situations and the way we interpret them in context." (Shuttelworth-Cowie, 2007)

What will the translator do when there is no equivalent word in the target language that expresses the same meaning as the source language word? Then the translator has to analyse the context. Rather translating text by text the translator has to try to bring the expressive notions in the target.

Metaphor plays a significant role in pragmatic factor in translation. In order to convey strong feelings metaphor helps a lot. The most sensual feelings can be expressed through metaphor. Translating metaphors is a challenging job. While translating metaphors literal translation will not help. The figurative aspects in the original metaphor have to be analysed deeply when they are translated into the target. Even slight carelessness here will misguide the target readers. Any figurative expression is difficult to be translated.

Translators have to collect contextual references to give a completeness of the source. Word and sentence meanings have to be analysed according to the situational contexts. Understanding a sentence is not only based on its linguistic area but on the situations. This situationality has to aim in attaining intentionality. What does the speaker indent to communicate? His interpretation has to be focused along with his contextual interpretations. Achieving success in this area is often impossible since the target readers will not be aware of the background information shared by the translator.

The role of the translator is to help the TL readers understand the original writer, text and the contextual meaning. Translator is not going to give synonyms meaning but produce actual situational context of the SL

in the TL text. When a target reader reads the text he will try to link with his own background knowledge of information. The translator's success lies in making them read and interpret the text with the original sources of information. The text obtained by the reader from the target text has to be equal enough with the effect given to the source text. The real achievement of pragmatic translation is causing the effect of source text in the minds of the target readers.

Pragmatic equivalence in translation is the perfect mode to build bridge between cultures. And hence the cultural and social concepts have to concentrate without misguiding the TL readers. Green opines that 'the meaning of the lexical item in an utterance is not fixed by a linguistic system. It is entertained by the help of the context.' The translator takes the clue for the meaning from the context.

When it comes to finding out situational equivalence the context of culture and context of text and situations carry importance. When context of situation is analysed three important aspects have to be focused, tenor, mode and field. Tenors talks about the participants and their nature, and the relationship between the receiver and the sender and the social concepts. Mode talks about the role of the language in the situational context and the field talks about the nature of social action. These three aspects will be stated under register. In the process of communication, the meaning system is largely determined by the three aspects of situational context: ideational meaning by field, interpersonal meaning by tenor and textual meaning by mode (Baker, 2000). When the register is properly identified in the text the translator will find it easy to fix the original situational context in the TL text so that the SL essence can be re-established without losing its flavour. "Texts in different languages can be equivalent in different degrees (fully or partially equivalent in respects of context, of semantics, of grammar, of lexis etc.), and at different ranks (word-for-word, phrase-for-phrase, sentence-for-sentence) (Baker)

When a translator tries to preserve the originality, he has to consider the register in all its aspects. It deals with the translators priorities between the literal and the figurative, textual and the contextual, formal and the dynamic, and semantic and the communicative. Translations should also aim in concentrating on the cultural context while trying to focus on the situational. As language, translation is a perfect tool to transfer cultural values across nations.

Pragmatic discourse is framed with speech acts. The intention of speaker and the production of meaningful utterance play a vital role in pragmatics and have to be analysed while translating a text.

Expressive function carries value in pragmatic equivalence. A perfect translation will employ certain things to communicate the original meaning. One such thing is expressive function. It carries aesthetic, emotive, evaluative and ironic elements. While translating poetry expressive function has close link with pragmatic equivalence. Translating poetry should be considered as an art. The aesthetic, emotive, evaluative and ironic elements should be carefully translated without losing their original sense and touch. The poetry translation should make the readers feel the original.

Interpretation is almost writing another poem through translation. The propositional meaning of a word comes from the relationship between words and their reference. Translators have to analyse the propositional meaning along with the expressive meaning.

Conclusion

To conclude pragmatics is the study of language with its interpersonal communication which is based on the choices obtained by the speakers and the relationship between the speaker and the listener and translating a text with the aim of attaining the necessary background information of the source and careful interpretations of the contextual meaning.

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