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# Analyzing English Translation of Premchand's Urdu Short Stories: A Cultural Perspective

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## **ABSTRACT**

**Purpose:** The aim of this research is to look at the idea of mistranslation in English translations of Premchand's Urdu short stories. The source text is Urdu short stories penned by Premchand and the target text is its English translation. Translating the culture of source language is considered to be one of the most challenging tasks faced by translators. The translators confront several challenges to translate the source culture.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** The researchers use the model of Newmark in order to analyze the mistranslation from the cultural perspectives. It has always been a heated debate whether the cultural embedded ideas and concepts may be exactly translated into target language or not. Though the translators have been using various strategies in order to translate the culturally specific items both in form of material and expression, they are not fully successful in translating the culturally specific terms and concepts. These culture embedded concepts can be the religious beliefs or social dialogues that are only understandable for the source culture readers.

**Findings**: The study concludes that mistranslation occurs because of many reasons such as translator's immature knowledge of the two languages, translator's intentional use of mistranslation, cultural barriers, language differences on lexical level and ideological differences.

**Implications/Originality/Value:** The study also reveals that there are many problems in the translation of the cultural items both in material forms and expressions due to translators, incompetence intercultural pragmatics.



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#### Introduction

Scholars of translation have different attitudes towards the role and essence of translation. Researchers in this field are of the view that translation is an extraordinary broad notion. They state that it is a process or product or the act of transferring the text that is in written form. While some are of the view that it is translating the SL into TL by preserving the semantic or stylistic equivalence. According to Larson (1998), translation is not only about the text but also about the cultural context. As we all know, each culture has its own language, a language of idiomatic expressions, which presents a significant challenge for translators. There are many difficulties inherent in the translation of colloquial phrases. Each culture is unique. Cultures vary on a variety of levels, including social, material, and religious. Whenever a translator makes an error during the cultural translation process, mistranslation occurs. The term "mistranslation" refers to an inaccurate translation that obscures the original text's true meaning. The purpose of this research is to examine the problems that arose during the translation of an Urdu text into English. This article discusses mistranslation at the word, phrase, and sentence levels. Occasionally mistranslation occurs because there is no equivalence between two languages and sometimes the translator is deliberately responsible for certain reasons. There is a lack of equivalency between two languages, two cultures and the translator is responsible for this act and sometime translator deliberately does this in order to achieve certain objectives. In order to find out the phenomenon of mistranslation at the word or sentence level, the change in meaning during translation has been studied. Translator uses the model of Newmark that consists of following strategies like descriptive equivalence, compensation, cultural equivalence, functional equivalence, paraphrasing, omission and compensation. Actually, a great translator ought to be comfortable with the way of life, culture, and social settings of the source and target language speakers. He ought to likewise be acquainted with various styles of talking, and social standards of the two dialects. This awareness, can improve the nature of the translations and all things that are considered necessary. As indicated by Hatim and Mason (1990), the social setting in translating a book is most likely a more significant variable than its sort. The practice of translation happens in the sociocultural setting. Thusly, it is significant to judge translational action just inside a social setting.

Sugeng Hariyanto says in "The Implication of Culture on Interpretation Theory and Practice" that culture manifests itself in two distinct ways when it comes to translating. To begin, the concept or reference of the vocabulary is, in some manner, unique to the specific culture. Second, the concept or reference is wide yet conveyed in a way that is clear to the culture of the source language. However, it is suggested that a translator should take the purpose of the translation into account when translating socially and culturally bound terms or idioms.

This research can be helpful for students and teachers to be familiar with the tribulation of cultural translation and the strategies that are applicable in this regard. The study will compare the concept of mistranslation to its original text. Indeed, the most significant and difficult issue encountered throughout the translation process is that of cultural differences. Individuals see other cultures and the world through their own lens. The term "culture" refers to a variety of objects, values, common ideas, and language. As a result, many civilizations have different focus. The difficult job that arises between the SC and TC is resolving the discrepancies that occur during translation. There are translators who use a variety of methods for cultural translation. The study examines the strategies used by translators to bridge the cultural divide between two different cultures. How the translated material takes on a new perspective for the target readers. The Study is limited to English translation of Premchand's Urdu short stories by English translators.

## **Aims and Objectives**

The aims and objectives of this research are to:

- 1. Investigate how does the mistranslation of different cultural terms happen?
- 2. Analyze the strategies used by English translators of Munshi Premchand's Urdu Short Stories in translating cultural terms.

## **Research Questions**

- 1. How does the cultural perspective in Urdu language cause mistranslation into English translation of Munshi Premchand's short stories?
- 2. What are the strategies used by English translators of Munshi Premchand's Urdu short stories for translating cultural terms?

#### **Literature Review**

It is a fact that notion of translation was mixed with that of culture. It is also fact that culture is considered a crucial part of translation. The role of culture can be seen by the point of view given scholar Armstrong (2005) who states that it is only possible for bicultural or bilingual to does that accurate translation. Nida (1964) is of the view that the problems in the translation of cultural terms are due to the linguistic and cultural gap between two cultures. He is of the view for sake of translation we cannot give weight to one thing rather the linguistics or cultural items of both SL and TL are of equal importance. Venuti (1995) describes that the process of translation looks for the similarities between the two cultures and languages. Said (1997) gives four factors that may influence that translation; translator, text being translated, purpose of translating a text and context of translation. In this way, one can say that translation process is not simple. It involves many dimensions. Each of the translated text involves four factors that can affect it. Here the reason behind mistranslation may lie. The source text may require a deep analysis and transcription on a deeper level but is translated at a minor level that may cause mistranslation. Sungar in his conference proceeding quoted that translation is an act of understanding what is foreign and translating it in a language that is one's own. Therefore, it can be said that translation is a process of domestication (Sungar, 2015). He in his studies quoted Graham that translation is act of the "internalization of the other so that it can be rewritten in the language of the familiar."

This article examines mistranslation as a massive problem in the area of translation. However, mistranslation has resulted in some severe consequences in recent years, as well as a few amusing and humiliating instances. When the US Prime Minister visited Poland and a person who spoke both languages but was unfamiliar with the art of translation mistranslated his remarks. He interpreted the prime minister's remarks as if he were delighted to grasp private aspects of Poland when, in fact, he meant that he was delighted to visit Poland. This has occurred many times throughout history (2014) (Gentzler). As it comes to translation studies, there are many academics that have different opinions on the importance of cultural understanding when they begin their study in this field. For instance, James Holmes explains that analyzing the qualities of poetry is not a matter of linguistics but rather of social culture and literature, as he considers diachronic aspects in poetry translation. Susan Basnett discusses the four branches of translation studies in depth, one of which is translation in the target culture.

According to Lingwei Yin's paper "English Lexical Mistranslation of Vocabulary List and Plausible Translation and Teaching Strategies," vocabulary is a critical component of second language acquisition. Errors of the vocabulary, words, syntax, and language usage all contribute to mistranslation and obstruct the true meaning of a translated document. Geoffrey Leech (1981) defines seven semantic meanings such as conceptual, connotative, social, emotional, reflected, collocative, and thematic. These meanings contribute to the process of translation by communicating the real sense and meaning. A lack of vocabulary skills may result in a mistranslation of meaning at these levels.

Culler (1976) states that if the there was no difference between the cultures and languages and if they share a common set pattern of cultural concepts, then it would have a very easy-going task for translators to translate the culture. However, some serious problems come into its way. He was of the view that languages and culture differ and they organize the world differently. Newmark (1995) once stated that it is not difficult to learn language. Any old fool can learn language but to become translator there is need of being intelligent.

According to Snel-Hornby (1988: 40), Wilhelm Von Humboldt was the first to explicitly describe the

relationship between language and culture. Language, for this German rationalist, was dynamic: it was a state of motion (energeia), as opposed to a static collection of objects as a consequence of movement (ergon). Simultaneously, language is a manifestation of culture and the speakers' individuality, since they see the world via language. Identical to Goodenough's view of culture as the sum of information, this current view may see language as the psyche's representation of information.

Ayadi Amina said in her dissertation that lexical issues are an important component of translation which leads to mistranslation. (Amina, 2014). Nida (2001) focuses dynamically on the message rather than the form and views of translation, saying it is a communication process. Nida & Waard (1986) discusses dynamic and functional equivalence, which promotes the natural reproduction of the source text message in the target language.(Alhihi, 2015). Md. Ziel Haque in his article mentions that this definition includes three essential terms; Equivalent, which refers to the source-language message, Natural, which refers to the receptor language, and Closest, which "binds the two orientations together on the basis of the highest degree of speculation". Hornby is of the view that is an element of universal and cultural overlap between languages.

Krings (1986) is of the view that translation strategy is basically a potential plan used by the translator in order to solve the difficult translation task of cultures.

These are some theoretical backgrounds on which study is being constructed.

## Methodology

The study is descriptive in nature. It focuses on the data analysis and gives its theoretical explanation. The study explores and describes that how some problems are occurred and who are the agents of these problems. Research question are explored in the data analysis and conclusion is drawn. Researcher is keen to address the problem of mistranslation in which the following data is being explored. The study is confined to Urdu to English translations. Researcher chooses data randomly from Premchand short stories and its translations by English translators. Model of Newmark has been implied by researcher in order to look at the cultural perspective and to demystify the cultural gap between two language, source language and target language which results in mistranslation. Model of Newmark consists of different strategies for translation of culturally specific items. These strategies include descriptive equivalent, cultural equivalent, functional equivalence, generalization, omission, and compensation. There are various ways of translating culturally specific items. There are many reasons due to which translator do not find exact word in the target language. As it has been mentioned by Jacobson (1959/2000, p.114) that during the process of translation "there is ordinarily full equivalence between code-units". no According to Newmark's model there are some strategies which translator can use to fill the cultural gaps in the translation of culture specific items which are either religious, social or material. Many translation scholars describe these strategies. For Newmark (1988, p.82) the term cultural equivalent means "an approximate translation where a SL cultural word is translated by a TL cultural word".

Data involves short stories of Munshi Premchand's Urdu short stories that are translated in English by Khushwant Singh, Fatima Rizvi and Frances W. Pritchett. For the sake of data analysis researcher observed thirty short stories by Premchand and selected data randomly. By making comparison of these thirty short stories and their translation, researcher found various cultural gaps either they were in at religious, social or material level. Furthermore, researcher selected various examples but fifty example were strong in which cultural gap can be seen. These examples were analyzed and observed repeatedly in order to make the portion of data analysis stronger. Data involves short stories of Munshi Premchand's Urdu short stories that are translated into English by Khushwant Singh, Fatima Rizvi, David Rubin and Rakhshanda Jalil

#### **Urdu Source Language**

## **English Target language**

For instance, why do men attack their hair with razor first thing in the morning. (Translated by Jalil. R. p. 86)

# **Interpretation**

In this text source, the term "friendly" refers to the act of shaving and hair trimming, a habit of each person. In this sentence, the word is part of our material culture. When the translator translates this cultural material term, he interprets it as a razor. The similarity between these words is wrong. Catford (1988) says that the essential element for translators is that, when translating, they must take account of both kinds of variables, such as language and culture. He meant that aspects such as cultural and linguistic components should be derived from the original language. Cultural elements are those for Catford (1988) which cannot also be observed at the level of form and significance. But they exist because of prior information in the minds of readers and speakers. The similar situation occurs in this word's translation as he interprets it as a razor. The reader of the source text knows it quite well, while the readers of the target text have no clue about it. The translator attempts to establish a similarity based on its functions, and is therefore not successful. Here the translator employs a functional equivalence approach but does not give the correct term which leads to misinterpretation. Catford (1988) claims that translation is the process of replacing source culture text material with target culture text material equivalent. However, the obvious distinction between these two things may be seen in this sentence either on the basis of their working or on the structure.

# **Urdu Source Language**

گویا فرشتوں کو اپنی معصومیت کا یقین دلا رہا ہو۔

## **English Target language**

As though calling on the gods to witness his innocence. (omission)

#### **Interpretation**

In this source text example, the source text word فرشتون refers to the idea of God's creature. They are busy in their where they have been ordered by Allah almighty. The source text word for these فرشتون is angles whereas translators translate these words as gods. It is belief of Muslims that موضوع are not gods rather they are creature of God performing their duties by remaining in their limits. Translator tries to create the equal reference of this religious belief about this creature but fails to provide the exact one. Although there is word angle called angle which is accepted and endorsed universally but translator provide us with the word gods. Translator here uses the strategy of omission. Translator omits the main word for the translation of فرشتوں and provides his target readers with the word gods. Hence, we can say that translator mistranslates the source culture belief. Larson considered that the terms which deal with the religious aspects are the most difficult one to translate for translators. He is of the view that these are the specific terms that are only known by the source text readers instead by the target text readers.

# **Urdu Source Language**

# **English Target language**

I spent whole morning playing the stick ball and came back exactly at the meal time. (Rubin, David, 1969, p.160)

#### **Interpretation**

The terms گلی ڈنڈ in the original language indicates the sport, which mainly takes place in the towns and is a part of our cultural history. This game consists of two things the first one is large stick and a short piece of stick about the length of half foot having width of one and half inch with its curved corner on both sides. This game has its own rules and regulation according to which خانداً المعارفة المعار

corner is hit by the player as soon as it lifts up, boy with the long stick smashes far away in the air. When the translator into a target language translates this cultural game, he interprets it as a ball. Translator cannot keep the equivalence between these two games performed in two nations. The translator utilizes the terms stickball in the target language, which is a game called baseball played nearly everywhere else. Translator employs the technique of cultural equivalence between these two games, since in the source culture it is "functioning" and "stick ball," which leads to misinterpretation of the source culture. In the target culture, the translator fails to give a correct reference. The distinction between both sports is ball and stick. The opponent throws the former ball, while in the later the player himself hits a curved stick with a long general used stick. According to Aixela (1996), cultural elements are the primary elements of the text, linked to certain ideas that are unfamiliar to target readers in other cultures. This allows us to state that cultural translation may lead to a gap between the culture of the source and target culture. The translator as a whole cannot give the exact cultural equivalent of this cultural game which has its own importance in the culture of the source. Thus, the perspective of the two games is different.

# **Urdu Source Language**

## **English Target language**

One afternoon lal Bahari turned up with two birds in his hands. (generalization)

# **Interpretation**

In this source text example, the word مرغابيال refers to the bird whose translation is duck. During the translation of cultural items, the problematic situation arises when the translator does not have idea about the culture of the source text. Source culture can be in form of social, material, religious. It can be either the name of games, birds or sweets. So, during the translation of this source text translator uses the **strategy of generalization**. Translator generalizes the source culture bird into general bird. Translator tries to produce accurate referent but during process of translation he simply omits the main bird and generalizes it. According to Aixela(1996) cultural specific items are the main parts of text that have connection to specific concepts in the foreign cultures which can be unknown to the readers of target text. By this fact we can say that cultural translation can result in the existence of a gap between the source and target culture. Same is the case happened here with the translator who tried to translate the source culture bird but come into generalizing the bird which leads this one to the mistranslation of source culture bird.

## **Urdu Source Language**

## **English Target language**

If I show it to you, you will surely grab it in your arms. (Translated by Rizvi. F)

## **Interpretation**

In this sentence, word  $\mathbb{Z}_{\mathcal{S}}$  is mistranslated as grab in arms.  $\mathbb{Z}_{\mathcal{S}}$  itself contains its lexical meaning as lap but the translator mistranslates it with the above mentioned phrase and misleads the actual sense of the word. The source language word  $\mathbb{Z}_{\mathcal{S}}$  has a strong implementation in our cultural perspective and has its own significance. In our culture almost each and every person takes some one into his lap. The correct translation for the source language word " $\mathbb{Z}_{\mathcal{S}}$ " is lap. Translator in this sentence is unable to link the word with its correct equivalent, therefore uses the word grabs into the arms. Grab into the arms gives the meaning of like embracing when two people meet each other. " $\mathbb{Z}_{\mathcal{S}}$ " is of different kind in which a child sits in the lap of elder instead of embracing. The translator uses the technique of **descriptive equivalence** as discussed by Newmark. In this sentence paraphrasing has been used as translator wants to clear the idea to his reader but mixes these two culturally specific items that show love. Translator tries to interpret but fails. The main problem with the cultural translation is of difference between two culture source and target culture. Both these words provide different perspective to the different reader either they are in source culture or in the target culture by application of this strategy, named paraphrasing the source culture has been misinterpreted by the translator and hence it is mistranslation of the important part of

source culture.

## Urdu source language

# **English Target language**

I am not the sort who buys a piece worth of <u>lollipops</u> to tease others by sucking them. (Translated by Singh. K)

## Interpretation

This specific source text sample described here relates to the specific kind of sweet. This sweet is prepared by using unique components. This kind of sweet has a particular position in our culture of source. The translator converts a sweet culture name into sweet target cultures. He interprets ريوڙياں as lollipops, which are various kinds of dishes mainly utilized in foreign cultures. The fundamental thing about language is the abundance of distinct objects belonging to various groups. When obstacles exist between language and culture, the challenge for the translator is to keep the same message as it was in the source culture. The second issue for the translator is that the same message should be kept in the target language and the source language. The source cultural object distracts him while the translator attempts to translate. Florin (1993: 122) believes that translations of particular cultural objects are not restricted just to the use of everyday language. He also discovers that these cultural terms are not exactly comparable in the target language since their creation is based on the local and historical color, which differs and is unique to each culture. Danyte (2006) highlights the challenge for the translator is not only to correctly comprehend such suggestions, but also to pass them on to target readers in an understandable manner (2006: 203). The translator utilizes Newmark's compensation strategy in this case. The precise meaning of this cultural treat does not exist in English culture and language, so the translation attempts to translate the relates to the material culture and the رپوڙياں and provides substitutes as lollipops. The word رپوڙياں translator mistranslates the word "lollipops," which is not the suitable substitute for the word of the original language.

## Urdu source language

## **English target language**

Two nails were driven into the wall, a plank put on them and a carpet of paper spread on the plank.

## **Interpretation**

In this source text example, the word کهونتایا refers to the idea of hanger or peg whereas the translator translates it as nails. The difference between the two is of structure and being sharp. Nails are sharp and they have a pointed head, on the other hand the source text word معونتایا do not have a pointed head. are driven into ground or into wall in order to provide some of the assistance or support to anything. Translator here tries to provide exact referent to this source text word. Translator here fails to provide the equal reference regarding this word. Translator lack of knowledge or background knowledge of source culture creates hindrance in the accurate translation of this example Balfaqeeh (2009, p. 1) describes that every translator uses strategy as tool to overcome and to find-out solutions for idioms and cultural bound words. Translator here uses the strategy of functional equivalence on the basis of their function and hence fails which leads to the mistranslation.

#### Conclusion

Researchers in this article try to find out how the translation of different cultural terms becomes the cause of mistranslation when the Urdu short stories of Premchand are translated into English. Mistranslation is the wrong or incorrect translation that misleads the actual sense of source text. Mistranslation occurs because of many reasons such as translator's immature knowledge of the two languages, translator's intentional use of mistranslation, cultural barriers, language differences on lexical level, and ideological

differences. The study concludes that there are many problems in translation of these cultural items either they are in material form or expressions. Stories are translated from Urdu into English. Urdu and English language are different on the different bases. Urdu language represents Indian culture that contains lexical items that differ semantically from those of English language. Cultural differences create a barrier in translation. English culture has different linguistic expression to represent its cultural values, norms and religion. Indian culture lacks its equivalent in English language and culture.

Translators sometimes lack the linguistic knowledge of languages, thus they are incapable of drawing equivalence which results in mistranslation of cultural items from Urdu language into English language. Translator tries to draw dynamic equivalence by translating a lexical item into a phrase in a target language that also creates sometimes mistranslation and hinders the actual meaning of the source text to be conveyed into the target text. Lack of equivalence among the meanings of lexical items and translator's role in the translation process are main causes of mistranslation of cultural items.

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