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Self-Translation and Translation: An Exploratory Study Based on the Translated Plays of Mahesh Elkunchwar and Satish Alekar

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Abstract:

Translation as a medium of cultural and linguistic exchange plays a significant role in the literary world. Studies have shown that translation is not merely about the language, but it is about the people, places and the different lives and cultures. Translation process acts as bridge between different cultures, traditions and customs. The process of translation is not the mere process of altering or metamorphosing one language into other, but is the transference of one culture to another. Translation as a process of exchange of ideologies, culture and traditions varies in its nature. Depending upon the nature of the text, the translators are required to apply the translation method that fits the structure of the source language text. Some of the most commonly adopted translation methods are communicative translation, semantic translation, word by word translation, and self-translation among the few. In the current paper, the researcher attempts to study the differences and significance of self-translation and normal translation. By adopting the translated works of Mahesh Elkunchwar and Satish Alekar, the researcher will look into the works translated through by Mahesh Elkunchwar himself and the translators on Satish Alekar's works. By exploring previous studies on the impact and influence of self-translation and translation methods, the current paper attempts to assess the pros and cons and other related aspects of translation and translation theory.

Keywords: Translation, Self-translation, Mahesh Elkunchwar, Satish Alekar, Comparative study.

Introduction

Translation acts as a form of exchange of ideas, from one language to other, and from one culture to the other. Translation is not merely about the language, but it is about the people, places and the different lives and cultures. Translation enables the border crossing of ideas and thoughts across different places, resulting in translation to be regarded as the transporter of culture across nations and countries. The world of Indian literature has embraced the culture of translation, extending the Indian regional languages reach to the global context. As defined by Nida, *Translation consists in producing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent to the message of the source language, first in meaning and secondly in style* (Cherniakhowskaya 22). The process of translation is not restricted to the literary forms only, but extends to the non-literary forms as well. The 'word-for-word' translations and the 'sense-for-sense' translations are highly relevant in the current modern age, regarded as the *Age of Translation.* Focusing on the translation of literary texts, it can be incurred that there is an exalted commitment towards the area of translation theory and practice.

> *In spite of the apparent heterogeneity of the literary scene in India, the multilingual Indian literary scenario is marked by the existence of Indian writing in English and regional language literatures translated in English.* (Kaur 383)

The process of translation is not the mere process of altering or metamorphosing one language into other, but is the transference of one culture to another. Translation is an art, a science, an expression and a reconciliation that connects the different cultures and traditions of the world. Not only does it connect the different cultures of the world, translation as a bridge extends the possibilities of understanding the different cultures. The translator is the most significant part of the process, who must be a master of both the target language and the source language (Biguenet and Schulte). The translator acts as the representative of the disparate culture and traditions, a medium that connects the audience with the literature of different ethnologies and customs.

Focusing on the translation culture in the Indian literature field it can be pointed out that translation plays a critical role in elevating the status of Indian literature, in the global prospect. The current paper focuses on exploring the different methods of translation, adopted in the translating the Marathi plays of playwrights Mahesh Elkunchwar and Satish Alekar. Translating a play is deemed to be one of the most difficult tasks. The playwrights lack the

freedom enjoyed by novelists and poets who has the flexibility and independence to express as deep and vast as possible. As a form of expressive piece of art, plays, the Indian plays especially are an amalgam of the Indian thoughts and identity. The glorious tradition of the Indian theatre is exponentially viewed in the regional language plays as well. In India, the Marathi theatre had the greatest prominence compared to the other language theatres which was limited to the regional language audience. Vishnudas Bhave, the father of Marathi drama popularised the folklores, customs and traditions of the Marathi culture in the Indian theatre. Social activism in the hearts of the Marathi playwrights were the themes of prime focus in the plays. Marathi theatre played a direct role in the political movements and social reforms that panned in the Indian society, altering the expectant relevance of theatre in the social and political arenas (Mossop 35).

> *The importance of translation can be located in the fact that translation brings the readers, writers, and critics of one nation into contact with those of others, not only in the field of literature, but in all areas of human development: Science and Philosophy, Medicine, Political Science, Law and Religion, to name but a few.* (Das 79)

Prominent personalities such as Ganpatrao Bhagwat, Bhaurao Kolhatkar, Keshvrao Bhonsale, Ganpatrao Joshi, and Bal Gandharva played a substantial role in gathering global acceptance to the Marathi theatre (Kazakova 2842). The fresh ideologies and sensibilities achieved through the entrance of global literature in the Marathi theatre expanded and extended the Marathi theatre, but the cultural constraints acted as a hindrance. That is, the Marathi audience did not feel connected to the western culture. The introduction of the *Sangeetnatak* tradition regained the significance and worth of the Marathi theatre, which came to an end by the 1920s. The modern era in Marathi theatre dawned in the 1945s, with the end of the World War *II* (Das 79).

> *Initially, Christian missionaries such as William Carey and others, British officials such as George Jervis, Thomas Candy, and Marathi pundits such as Sadashiv Kashinath Chhatre, Hari Keshavji Pathare, Balshashtri Jambhekar, and a host of others produced a great deal of translation of English non-literary texts in Marathi.* (Sawant 119)

The influence of the western ideologies and way of living constantly reflected in the Marathi plays, such as the quest for identity, alienation, political and social corruption, and despair. The 1947s with its industrialisation and modernity influenced the Marathi playwrights to

expand the reach of the regional plays, therefore resulting in the introduction of translation process. The difference of comparing the translation culture with that of the earlier adopted translation method is that, the Marathi playwrights translated the Marathi plays into languages such as English and Hindi; extending the reach of the Marathi culture. By introducing the aspect of translation into the Marathi theatre, the regional literature reached nook and corners of the literary world. Indian theatre, especially the Marathi drama/plays has contributed towards shining light on the social and political issues that sustain within a society.

> *There is a strong interconnection between translation and the constitution of national identity. Through translations nations define themselves and in doing so they define others.* (Kaur 383)

With the advent of translation, various Marathi plays were translated into Hindi and English and various other regional languages. By bridging the inter-cultural space existing between the two languages, Marathi and English, the audience were introduced to an amalgam of culture, traditions and history. The colonial intervention perpetuated the translation culture in the field of Marathi theatre/plays, with many authors and translators rendering the translation culture. Some of the most significant and prominent works of the Marathi translation into English are that of playwrights such as Vijay Tendulkar, Satish Alekar, Mahesh Elkunchwar, and G.P. Deshpande. The current paper focuses on the self-translation of *Sonata* by Mahesh Elkunchwar and translations of Satish Alekar's *The Dread Departure, Deluge, The Terrorist, Dynasts, Begum Barve* and *Mickey and the Memsahib*. Mahesh Elkunchwar's translation will be explored and studied from the playwright's point of view and the Alekar's translated play will be studied from the translators' point of view. A playwright translating his own play into another language, in the current case, English and a second party (translator) carrying out the translation differs abundantly because the playwright-translator has the freedom and the convenience whereas the sole translator faces certain constraints that could be cultural or regional. In translating a regional language play into the global language, English, the translators are met with various hindrances with cultural and lingual limitations being the prominent ones. By exploring previous studies on the impact and influence of self-translation and translation methods, the current paper attempts to assess the pros and cons and other related aspects of translation and translation theory.

Aim & Objectives

Aim: To explore the different translation methods in playwriting, with focus on the Marathi to English translation.

Objectives:

- To explore the impact of self-translation through the play, *Sonata* by Mahesh Elkunchwar

- To explore the impact of the methods of translations used in the selected plays of Satish Alekar

- To compare between the method of self-translation and other translation methods through the translated works of *Mahesh Elkunchwar* and *Satish Alekar*

Literature Review

Munson and Hokenson (1) defines self-translation as the most common practice followed in a bilingual world, where a writer transforms a text of one language (source language) to another (target language). As per Munson and Hokenson's findings, the self-translators were given no prominence in the literary world in the initial times, assuming the self-translators to be nothing but *idiosyncratic anomalies*. In western literature, the study asserted that, there is a lack of self-translation and any theoretical developments pertaining to it. A self-translator is a writer who authors a text in one language and translates it into another language. A self-translator must be adept in both the languages, keeping in mind the cultural, lingual and intra-lingual aspects (Zanotti 78). The phenomenon of self-translation is not constrained to any chronological order, but endures through different languages and different period of times. The researchers point out that self-translation has been present in the literature field, since time immemorial. Self-translation as one of the most relevant and significant translation theories demands the translator to be bilingual, that is, the translator must possess accurate knowledge about the source language and the target language. Many prominent writers such as Rabindranath Tagore, Vladimir Nabokov, and Samuel Beckett self-translated many of the works, cementing the argument put forth by Vilas Sarang. Mohanti (21) asserts that translation is not just the mere process of shifting a text from one language to the other, but is the creation and interpretation of a text into another language and culture. The researcher reflects that the scope of the target language is inherently extended, but it is the scope of the elements of culture in the source language is expanded. Translation as a

process undertakes two actions simultaneously, that is, the source language is defamiliarised as a whole as well as the defamiliarisation of the source language culture in the target language culture. Translation of a text is deemed successful and productive when the source language text and its related elements are efficiently portrayed in the target language text. The target language culture and the source language culture is synergised at the linguistic level, leading towards its symbiosis on a societal level as well (Mohanti, 25).

As studied by Maklakova, Khovanskaya and Grigorieva (1260), self-translation is the most accurate form of translation, as the writer himself is carrying out the process. The author is inexplicably the better person to carry out the translation, as a translator has certain limitations when it comes to the freedom of thoughts in translating the source language text. Self-translation is the ideal and most adept form of translation process, no individual apart from the writer has the authority to shifts the source language text. A translator is limited to the role of merely translating the source language text, without hindering the structure and theme of the text. The linguistic as well as the extra-linguistic challenges are elements that influence self-translation. Based entirely on bilingualism, self-translation theory creates two separate forms of the original text. Finkel (56) points out that the self-translation theory follows the traditional translational rules, and enables an opportunity to learn the theory of translation through a different perspective. In carrying out self-translation, the writer-translator as a translator suspends the subjectivity and focuses on the subjectivity of the text from the author's point of view. As pointed out by Maklakova, Khovanskaya and Grigorieva (1267), self-translators often adopt auto-translation in creating a text between two different cultures, the self-translators are solely focused on redeveloping the text with the same impact and effect and only attempts to produce the text in the target language only with the exact and accurate information relating to the target culture and its linguistic structure and nature. The recent times have witnessed a significant rise in the attention given on self-translators in the literary field, asserts Nabokov and Nabokove, aligning with the assumptions of Gaddis (5) who points out that the recent times have expressed a significant interest in the area of self-translation.

As per the study conducted by Gronstrand and Turku (80), self-translation acts as a medium that links different languages, cultural spheres and literary traditions and denotes the procedure as a border-zone activity. Because, self-translation recognises languages and literary traditions as variables that are related with one another and challenges the age-old monolingual traditions and assumptions in the literary institution. The process of self-

translation invites the author-cum-translator to engage constantly between the two different languages, literary traditions as well as the disparate cultural spheres. Self-translation is descried as, one of the most significant theory in the translation studies as it involves the writer to be involved in expressing the same ideas and emotions in another culture, requiring the writer to be well versed with various cultures (Yildiz 12). As suggested by Kazakova (2842), the translation process or literary translation is the process of translating a piece of literature from the source language to the target language. Kazakova criticises the common perception that translation of texts are 'free' and does not require the translator to be adept in the piece of text to be translated. To process the bilingual texts, a translator is required to follow a certain set of literary techniques and strategies. Literary translation does not simply focus on transferring the source language text to the target language text, but focuses on transferring the pragmatic features pertaining to the literary texts. Pragmatic facts and translation principles play a significant role in enhancing the understanding and improving the quality of the text. On translating a piece of literature, the translator must analyse the source language text, examine the target language text, compare the utterances and its meaning in both the source language text and the target language text, using back translation to aid in the process of comparison and analysis and lastly evaluating and examining the pragmatic equivalents pertaining to the addition, deletion and changes in the target language text. Belhaj (103) describes the characteristics of literary translation as being connotative, expressive, subjective, symbolic, timeless and universal, focuses on the content and the form of the text, allows multiple interpretations, implementing devices to elevate the communicative effect of the target language text, and has the tendency to deviate from the usual language norms. Savoury points out that in dealing with different forms and types of literary texts, the translator has to be adept in choosing the suitable translation technique and strategies. He contradicts the common idea by suggesting that the literary translation of a text into a target language will not reproduce the same effect of the original text. The limited freedom available to the translator's act as a hindrance in the freedom of thoughts, as the translators are constantly reminded of the limited freedom.

Gutt (41) points out that literary translation is not just the translation of word from on language to the other, but is the transfer of ideas from one audience to the other. All the relevant elements and aspects in the source language text must be transferred to the target language text. The translator must acquire the sense of the other meaning, that is, while translating a culturally significant term the translator must be aware of the term to be used in

the target language text. Unlike the author-translator, the translator does not possess the authority to make changes to the source language text. An efficient translator is solely focused on a single thing and that is to express the desired meaning in the *receptor language* even though the target language form may vary from that of the source language form. According to Enkvist (169), a complex entity in nature, translation involves a lot of technicality that surpasses the process of simply transferring the idea from one language to the other. The translator is in fact, the receiver as well as the producer of the text to be translated therefore having the "*double duty of perceiving the meaning potential of particular choices within the cultural and linguistic community of the source text and relaying the same potential, by suitable linguistic means, to a target readership*" (Mason 23). Baker contradicts the common assumption by stating that the techniques and methods pertaining to the process of literary translation does not have the ability to answer all the questions raised from the target language text. That is, often the process of literary translation takes the step of translating the text according to the estimations and assumptions of the translator. Baker also suggests that the literary translation techniques are *complementary rather than mutually exclusive.* Literary translation strategies vary according to the developers, that is, Neubert suggests linguistic, communicative/functional, sociocultural, and psycho-lingual translation as the major strategies, Abdel-Hafiz points out linguistic, pragmatic and cultural as the major relevant techniques. According to Nord (94) documentary and instrumental translations are the most significant translation techniques. Newmark perpetuated the semantic and communicative translation techniques, Nida's formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence, and Larson's literal translation are few of the effective translation strategies.

Fitch (57) points out that on comparing the self-translation theory with the other translation methods, self-translation is *superior to non-authorial translations*. The writer-translator has the complete understanding of the source language text, therefore causing no hindrances or limitations in the process of recapturing the emotions and content of the text in another language. Even if the translated text, that is, the text in target language undergoes certain shifts in the process of self-translation, it is not considered to be disturbing the theme and structure of the original text as the writer-translator has the authority and freedom to alter the texts. Gaddis (5) asserts that when compared to the standard translation, self-translation involves the author-cum-translator persona, and gives the author-translators the freedom of time and linguistic directions. Though the author-cum-translator has the complete freedom in hand, it is not necessary that the translator will produce an equally effective work in the target

language. The study also points out that likewise, it is not definite that the author-cum-translator will hinder the quality of the original work in the process of self-translation. As pointed out by Khazri (78), though the notion of self-translation has been highly neglected in the field of translation studies and theories. Khazri points out that in the initial times, the method of self-translation was considered only to be carried out by literary professionals such as Samuel Beckett, Vladimir Nabokov, Nancy Huston and many others in the same line. On comparing to the normal translation strategies with that of self-translation, Khazri (80) reflects that with time, the relevance and value of self-translation has elevated in the literary field.

According to Nemade's observations the richness and the complexity of the Marathi language is lost in the process of translation. The foreign language does not have the structure or the ability to embody the rawness of the Marathi culture, traditions and customs. Nemade criticises few of the self-translators such as Arun Kolatkar of being too focused on developing the text in the target language only to gain popularity in the society rather than focusing on recreating the source language text without losing the emotions related to it. Nemade asserts that often, the self-translators fail to transfer the emotion and content in the same structure to the foreign target language, and produce a text that is closer to the target language culture than the source language culture. Sawant (94) discusses the problematics involved in the process of translating Marathi literature into English. The study focuses on exploring the issues pertaining to the translation of an Indian regional language into that of a global language. Sawant (97) asserts that the process of translation of Marathi literature into English has a potential to hamper the modern Marathi literature in English. With the colonial encounter, the translation culture embarked its journey in India literary world. The richness of the Marathi literature was restricted to the regional audience, but the translation culture ensured the global reach of the raw emotions and the culture and customs. Indian literary figures such as Vijay Tendulkar, Rabindranath Tagore etc. began implementing the translation theory into their works, resulting in the translation of various significant works in Marathi literature. Initially, the Marathi literature was translated by the western literary figures which began to shift with time.

The Marathi literature, especially the Marathi drama was limitedly represented in the English literary field which restricted the global appreciation of the intrinsic literature. Shanta Shahane and Kumud Mehta were the first and foremost translators of Marathi literature, with Priya Adarkar acquiring a place through the translation of Vijay Tendulkar's *Silence, The*

Court is in Session! The current times view the exponent shift in the representation of Marathi drama in the translated version, with the emergence of writers like G. P. Deshpande, Satish Alekar, and Mahesh Elkunchwar the substantial difference is prominent. In translating Marathi plays into the global language of English, the translators must take into consideration a lot of elements such cultural constraints, linguistic constraints as well as the intra-lingual constraints. Translators adopt methods by analysing the structure and settings of the play, along with giving importance to the target language culture and settings. As pointed out by Kaur (383), Mahesh Elkunchwar's Sonata was translated through the technique of self-translation by Elkunchwar himself. Originally written in Marathi language, the play is not restricted or limited to the Marathi or the Indian culture in any specific. The play is an amalgam of various cultures, Hindi, Bengali and English. The play posed no cultural restrictions in the process of translation, mainly due to two reasons; that is, the play was not restricted to the Marathi culture alone and the process of self-translation allowed the author-translator to carry out the process accordingly, with ease.

Conclusion

Translation process acts as bridge between different cultures, traditions and customs. It conveys the spirit and style of the original, doing justice both to the original author and to the target readers. A significant instrument for international communication in all branches of human knowledge and experience, the translation process has emerged as an independent discipline with renewed vigour. The current paper attempted to study the different techniques of translation through the translation works of Mahesh Elkunchwar and Satish Alekar. The study focused on the techniques of self-translation and normal translation, to explore the effectiveness of both the techniques through the translated Marathi works of Elkunchwar's Sonata and Satish Alekar's *The Dread Departure, Deluge, The Terrorist, Dynasts, Begum Barve* and *Mickey and the Memsahib* and it was ascertained that self-translation is the best form of translation as the author himself can portray the emotions encompassed in the original text into the translated text without losing the originality it possesses. The independence enjoyed by the author-translator in transferring the thoughts from one culture and language to the other in the technique of self-translation ascertains it as the most efficient method when compared to the other translation methods. In analysing Satish Alekar's plays and its translation process, it was ascertained that there is a lack of studies conducted on the subject. Though various studies have been conducted on the theme and structure of Satish Alekar's play, there was a limitation in the topic of translation process. But on reviewing the

previous studies by various researchers on self-translation and other forms of normal translation it can be conferred that self-translation is the best translation process as it gives the translator the independence, the authority and the freedom to even alter the structure a bit, so that it doesn't hinder with the theme and the complete structure of the play. The normal translation carried out by just the translators does not pose any specific limitations, but the translator must be keen and focused in the carrying out the process as it does not permit the freedom to the translators on being compared with the method of self-translation. Consequently, self-translation is favourable to develop the most honest form of translation but it does not denote that the other forms of translations fail to transfer the idea, emotions, thoughts, culture, tradition and the customs pertaining to the source language text in the target language text. Also, the translator plays a critical and significant role in the effective translation of regional language texts (source language) to the target language.

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