

## **EXPLORING THE QUALITY OF TRANSLATED TEXT FROM ENGLISH TO TAMIL: A STUDY BASED ON UNDERGRADUATES OF TRANSLATION STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF JAFFNA**

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### **Abstract**

Fidelity and transparency are regarded as the two major factors in the process of translation. Therefore, maintaining both fidelity and transparency equally in the same text is the Herculean task for a translator. Hence, the aim of this study is to explore the quality of translated text from English to Tamil by analyzing the levels of fidelity and transparency. A quantitative methodology has been used to collect the primary data by conducting a test among thirty second-year undergraduates of Translation Studies at the University of Jaffna. A qualitative methodology has been used to identify the problems of undergraduates in translating expressive sentences from English to Tamil. Therefore, a comparative method has been used to compare the pertinence of the translations of undergraduates with the source sentences. Meanwhile, a descriptive method has been used to describe the study. The major findings of the study highlighted that the undergraduates have faced obstacles in finding equivalences of expressive sentences. They have used translation procedures and methods to tackle such obstacles. According to the study, it can be concluded that a translation could have more fidelity and less transparency or vice-versa but, never be at an equally high amount.

**Keywords:** *Fidelity, Methods, Procedures, Translation, Transparency*

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## **Introduction**

Fidelity means the precise rendering of the meaning of source text without doing any types of alterations such as additions, omissions, subtractions and distortions. This is mostly suitable for unidiomatic texts. Meanwhile, transparency means comprehensibility of the translation in terms of the cultural perspectives of the target readers. High fidelity and high transparency of translation are known as ‘faithful translation’ and ‘idiomatic translation’ respectively. Here ‘idiomatic translation’ is not actually meant to translate idioms or phrases. Indeed, idiomatic translation refers to rendering the intended meaning of the source text into the target text which sounds natural in the target language. This is a difficult task for a translator. When demonstrating the role of fidelity and transparency in the process of translation, the French Critic Ergo compares the translation with a woman. According to him, if a translation is beautiful, it is not faithful; if it is faithful, it is most certainly not beautiful. In this regard, this study explores the quality of translated text from English to Tamil from the perspective of levels of fidelity and transparency based on second-year undergraduates of Translation Studies at the University of Jaffna.

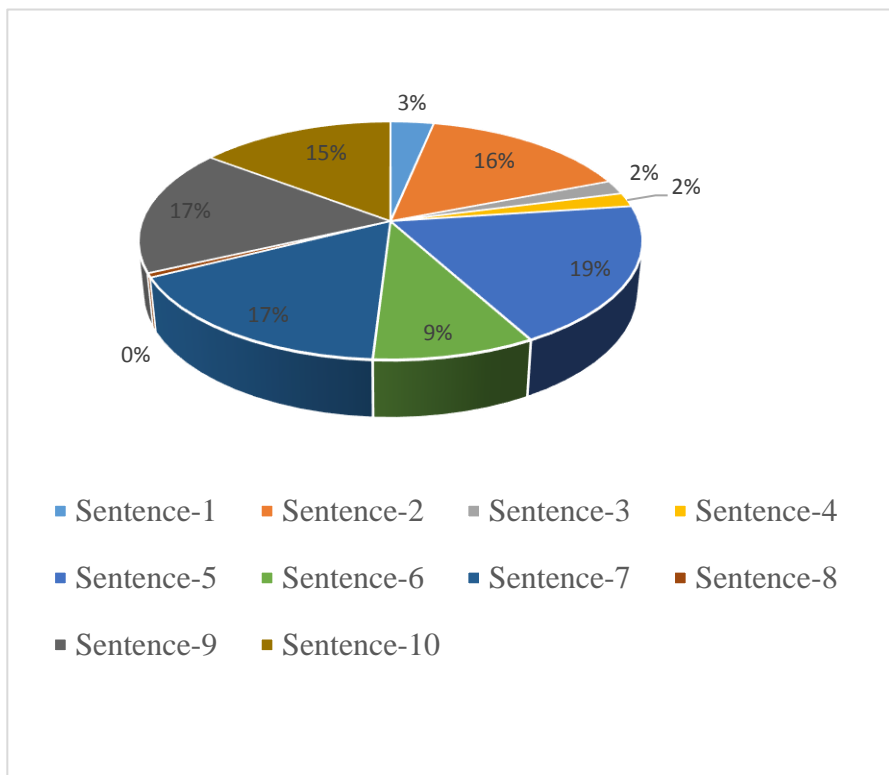
## **Methodology**

This study is primarily focused on quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Quantitative methodology was used to describe the statistical analysis of the percentages of the undergraduates’ levels in translation. Qualitative methodology was used to identify the obstacles faced by the undergraduates in translating expressive sentences from English to Tamil. Further, a comparative method was used to compare the relevancy of the translation of the undergraduates with original sentences. The descriptive method was used to describe the study. In this regard, the sample selected for this study involved thirty second-year undergraduates of Translation Studies from the University of Jaffna. Accordingly, the researcher has selected ten English sentences and provided such sentences to the undergraduates in order to evaluate the quality of translation from English to Tamil. Therefore, the data collected via test conducted for the second-year undergraduates has been used as the primary data for this study and the research articles, books and journals have been used as the secondary data for this study.

## Results and Discussions

**Figure 1:**

*No of Correct Translation*



### ***Sentence 1 - John always talks the talks not walks the walk.***

According to the first sentence, the expression “talks the talks and walks the walk” is used to denote a person who always does what he says. In Tamil language, it has an idiomatical expression “ஜோன் எப்போதும் சொல்வதையே செய்வான் செய்வதையே சொல்வான்”. Accordingly, only 17% of undergraduates have translated correctly using the sense-for-sense translation method rather than using vernacular translation. When the above sentence was provided to the undergraduates, 83% of them failed to identify the actual meaning of the sentence due to their lack of familiarity with translating idiomatic expressions.

### ***Sentence 2 - Hey Arthy! Don't leave him in the cold.***

The expression “don't leave him in the cold” means do not leave a person in a bad situation. Hence, it could be translated as “ஆர்த்தி! அவனை ஒருபோதும்

நட்டாற்றில் விட்டுவிடாதே” using the ‘cultural equivalence’ strategy. When the source sentence is translated literally, it gives wrong meaning “ஆர்த்தி! அவனை குளிரில் விட்டுவிடாதே”. However, 83% of undergraduates identified the correct meaning according to the context. The remaining undergraduates (17%) used literal translation. This proved that they have a lack of knowledge in identifying the contextual meaning while engaging translation process.

***Sentence 3 - He gave me a cold shoulder when I saw him at the market.***

The intended meaning of the expression “give me a cold shoulder” is to ignore someone intentionally in an unfriendly manner. While translating such phrases, a translator does not render directly using denotative meaning. It should be translated as “நான் அவனை சந்தையில் பார்த்த போது அவன் என்னைப் பார்த்தும் பார்க்காதது போல் சென்றுவிட்டான்” in Tamil. Therefore, it could be noticed that only 10% of the undergraduates have been able to identify the intended meaning of the sentence. However, 90% of them have failed to adopt proper translation techniques. This shows that the undergraduates lack knowledge in finding the connotative meaning of the original text.

***Sentence 4 - I think you got out of your bed on the wrong side.***

According to the diagram, 90% of undergraduates have failed to bring out the correct equivalence of the sentence. Since they have erroneously understood the real sense of the sentence, they directly rendered the meaning “நீங்கள் உங்களது கட்டிலைத் தவறான இடத்தில் வைத்துவிட்டீர்கள் என நான் நினைக்கிறேன்”. Though 10% of them translated correctly, they have not rendered an actual cultural equivalence of the original. They have paraphrased it. This expression means “நீங்கள் இன்று யார் முகத்தில் முனித்தீர்களோ தெரியவில்லை” in Tamil. Accordingly, it could be observed that the undergraduates had a lack of understanding of the subject matter.

***Sentence 5 - The trafficking and exploitation of children in the world, has been a serious issue for decades.***

Based on the analysis, all the undergraduates (100%) have perfectly translated the aforementioned sentence into Tamil “உலகில்இ சிறார்களைக் கடத்துதலும் அவர்களை சீரழிப்பதும் பல தசாப்தங்களாகப் பாரியதொரு பிரச்சினையாக இருந்து வருகிறது”. Therefore, they have applied the ‘faithful translation’ method in order to bring out the correct meaning of the original.

***Sentence 6 - During the pandemic period, properly following the safety measures is a herculean task for everyone.***

The expression ‘Herculean task’ means ‘the toughest job’. This idiom is related to the Roman myth of Hercules. In Tamil, this expression is used to describe the huge work of king Bhageeratha who brings down the sacred Ganga from the Himalaya Mountain after the many struggles. Hence, this expression means “பகீரதப் பிரயத்தனம்” in Tamil. Translators can substitute such rendering according to the Tamil culture. The aforementioned diagram reveals that 47% of the undergraduates were able to identify the meaning precisely. They mostly rendered the word ‘கடினமான செயல்’ in their translation. No one has substituted such an expression in Tamil. However, 53% of them have failed to grasp the actual meaning of the source sentence.

***Sentence 7 - He is a big cheese in the village.***

The expression ‘big cheese’ means ‘an important person’. 87% of undergraduates translated correctly. Therefore, they correctly rendered the cultural equivalence according to the readers. Hence, they used equivalences “ஜாம்பவான்இ பெரிய புள்ளிஇ பெரிய தலைஇ முக்கிய நபர் யனெ புகழ்பெற்ற நபர்” for an expression ‘big cheese’. Some of them translated as “அவர் ஊரில் பெரிய தலைக்கட்டு ஆவார்” using idiomatic language. However, the remaining undergraduates (13%) failed to render the idiomatic meaning of the sentence.

***Sentence 8 - Why does Raja have such a long face?***

The said diagram reveals that only one participant (3%) out of thirty rendered an actual meaning of the original sentence into Tamil. The expression ‘long face’ means ‘someone who seems unhappy’. In Tamil, people can use such expressions as “ஏன் ராஜா இவ்வாறு கவலை தோய்ந்த முகத்துடன் காணப்படுகிறாய்?”. Native people mostly use such expressions colloquially as “ஏன் முகத்தை இப்படி வைத்திருக்கிறாய்?/ ஏன் முகத்தை தொங்கப் போட்டிருக்கிறாய்?/ ஏன் ‘உம்’முன்னு இருக்கிறாய்?” However, the remaining participants (97%) rendered the meaning directly as “ஏன் ராஜா நீளமான முகத்துடன் இருக்கிறாய்? incorrectly. This proved that they had a lack of familiarity with translating idiomatic expressions in a communicative manner.

***Sentence 9 - Commercial values have taken over the right to enjoy the environment and, in many instances, it is seen that common complaints are received regarding noise pollution, air pollution and environmental pollution by other means. [Source: Law Relating to Public Nuisance, P3]***

When the above sentence has been provided to the undergraduates, twenty-seven undergraduates precisely translated “சுற்றுச்சூழலை அனுபவிக்கும் உரிமையை வணிக விழுமியங்கள் தம்வசப்படுத்தியுள்ளதூடன் மாற்று வழிகளின் பிரயோகம் காரணமாகப் பல சந்தர்ப்பங்களில் ஒலி மாசுஇ வளி

மாசு மற்றும் சுற்றுச்சூழல் மாசு தொடர்பான பொதுவான முறைப்பாடுகள் கிடைக்கப்பெறுவதையும் அவதானிக்கக்கூடியதாகவுள்ளது” as it is in the source sentence. Hence, it could be noticed that undergraduates did an adequate and faithful translation both syntactically and semantically. However, only three undergraduates faced certain obstacles in arranging proper word order in the target language.

***Sentence 10 - Morality refers to values, codes of conduct or social mores that distinguish between right and wrong in human society.***

The said diagram reveals that 77% of undergraduates correctly translated the source sentence as “நன்நடத்தை என்பது விழுமியங்கள்இ நடத்தை நிதிமுறைகள் அல்லது மனித சமூகத்தில் எது சரி எது பிழை என்பதை வேறுபடுத்திக் காட்டும் சமூக நெறிகளைக் குறிக்கின்றது” using ‘literal translation’ method. However, the remaining (23%) failed to render the actual meaning of the source sentence. They faced difficulties in finding appropriate terminologies for the source sentence in Tamil.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

As per the results and discussions of data analysis, the major findings highlighted that the undergraduates of Translation Studies at the University of Jaffna have faced certain obstacles in finding the intended message of the expressive sentences. They had a lack of knowledge in translating idiomatic expressions using the idiomatic language of the target text. While translating culturally related sentences, they have failed to render the actual meaning according to the context. In such instances, a translator can adopt the procedures including paraphrasing, cultural substitutions, reformulation, modulation and synonyms in order to bring out the natural essence of the source sentence. Meanwhile, while translating legal and other common types of sentences, the undergraduates have successfully rendered the accurate meaning using certain methods including literal translation, faithful translation and communicative translation. Therefore, the methods including semantic translation, communicative translation, idiomatic translation and adaptation have been applied in idiomatic sentences in order to preserve the transparency in the target texts. This study has proved that if the translator is more faithful to the source text, he cannot provide an effective output to the target readers in aesthetic ways. Meanwhile, if he does more transparency in the target text, he cannot provide an exact meaning of the source text. In this regard, it can be concluded that a translation could have more fidelity and less transparency or vice-versa but, never be at an equally high amount.

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