

AN ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF SEMANTIC EQUIVALENCE IN THE TRANSLATION PROCESS (ENGLISH AND TAMIL)

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Abstract

The study analyses the impact of semantic equivalence in the translation process, particularly when translate between English and Tamil Languages. This study consists the role of semantics in meaning discrimination. The meanings of the words and sentences are analysed under the categories: synonymy and polysemy. When more than one word has the similar meaning or nearest meaning, such words are called synonymy. One word has a number of related senses called polysemy. Polysemy is the change in the general semantic structure of a word. It may happen when the existing meaning is lost and new ones are added. The study is based on qualitative methodology and particularly the examples are cited from the real-life experiences. Further, comparative and descriptive methods were used to enhance the study. The finding of the study indicates that the translators or undergraduates should have adequate knowledge about the semantic concepts of a word to produce an effective translation. This study will help the researchers who are involved in the fields of linguistics and translation.

Keywords: *Equivalence, Polysemy, Semantics, Synonymy, Translation.*

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Introduction

This study consists of the role of semantics in linguistic and translation. Translators are all necessarily interested in meaning. They express the meanings of new words. Sometimes they are not sure about the message and they may get from something they read or hear. Particularly translators or Students of translation studies find pleasure in jokes, which often depends on their sense of humour in double meanings of words or ambiguities in sentences. Not only in one field, but also in numerous fields such as the documentation of commercial organization, document of legal field and in literary fields, translators have to face several problems to identify the accurate meaning of a text.

Linguists prefer to understand how language works, just what common knowledge do two people possess when they share a language. Semantics is the systematic study of meaning and linguistic semantics is the study of how languages organize and express meanings (*Introducing English Semantics Charles .w. Kreidler 1988 page 02*), in other words, Semantics is a field of linguistics that is defined as the study of the meanings of parts of words, phrases, sentences and texts. It can be approached from theoretical as well as an empirical point of view. The meaning of words which can be analysed by homonymy, synonymy, antonym, polysemy, and hyponymy. Therefore, the study focused on the importance of semantics in linguistics and translation.

Materials and Methods

This study is based on the qualitative methodology. The study is based on the secondary data collected from the real life experience of the researcher and from different materials analysed based on their different semantic meanings. Comparative method and descriptive method were used to bring out the study. Comparative method was used to compare the source text with its different meanings whereas descriptive method was used to describe the study with justifications.

Results and Discussion

The nature of the word that can be accounted for the traditional semantic classification of words in terms of synonymy and homonyms. The proper understanding of the meaning discrimination of the words is important to produce an effective translation in the target language. The semantics of the words can be classified as follows;

1. Two or more forms may be associated with the same meaning.
2. Two or more meanings may be associated with the same form in which case the words are homonyms.

3. In semantics, language is one of which the orthography is at variance with or unrelated to the phonology, and one may of course further distinguish between homography and homophony.
4. One word form brings out several meanings and several word forms are related to one meaning.

When comparing the English and Tamil examples of one word form with several meanings the researcher can observe the qualitative difference. One example is the English word *crane* and the Tamil word *Kaal*. Here, the similarity and dissimilarity are observed. The similarity is that the bird crane and the machine crane are similar in appearance or image. But the difference is one is a living thing, small in size, another is a non-living thing and very large in size. Due to the slight difference, the translator has to pay attention on the perception of the contextual meaning of a text, otherwise the accuracy of the translation will be lost.

When more than one word has the similar meaning or nearest meaning, such words are called synonymy. For example:

ST: அவள் கண்ணன் தன்னை திருமணம் செய்துகொள்ள விரும்பும் விருப்பத்தை ஏற்கமறுத்துவிட்டாள்

- She refused kannan's proposal to marry her
- She rejected kannan's proposal to marry her
- She declined Kannan's proposal to marry her.

The abovementioned sentences have the similar meaning and they differ only in the three words such as refused, rejected and declined. Translator when they translate or paraphrase the text, he or She has to find out the similar meaning to the context without affecting the original text. Accordingly, the translator must act as a lexicographer and must know the diction and synonyms accurately.

E. g: 02: **ST:** Her dance gives pleasure for the audience

TT:

- யுளயடயவார யேனயயெஅ ியசியளயசமயடரமர நயீயஅ வாயசரமகைசெயவர
- யுளயடயவர யேனயயெஅ ியசியளயசமயடரமர அயமடைஉாை வயசரமுகைசெயவர
- யுளயடயவார யேனயயெஅ ியசியளயசமயடரமர யயெயவொயஅ வாயசரமகைசெயவார
- யுளயடயவார யேனயயெஅ ியசியளயசமயடரமர ஊயவெழழளயஅ வாயசரமகைசெயவார

In the above translations, the words *inpam*, *makilchi*, *aanantham*, *santhoosam* have the same meaning. Accordingly, the difference in the form of these words is synonymous, two or more words if they are substitute at least in one context without meaning difference, would be synonymous.

The next problematic area is “Polysemy”. Polysemy or multiplicity of meaning is considered a common feature of English and Tamil since it exists in both languages. The existence of the linguistic phenomenon produces lexical problems in many situations. There are many definitions put forwarded about polysemy. Ullman (1967) defines polysemy as a “situation” in which the same word has two or more different meanings. The larger part of the vocabulary of a language includes of polysemous words. One word has a number of related senses called polysemy. For example, mouth can be defined as a part of human body and secondly, as any opening.

Polysemy is the change in the general semantic structure of a word. It may happen that some of the meanings have been lost and new ones are added. Due to this reason, the multiplicity of meanings is a reason for ambiguity in a language. The semanticist encounters the problems whenever he or she has to deal with polysemous words.

For example: Father:

- 1) Male parent
- 2) Ancestor
- 3) Founder or first leader
- 4) God
- 5) Priest
- 6) Title used in personification

According to the above meanings, the translator must understand the context of the original text and give the suitable words. Mostly, the sources of polysemy are divided as five categories.

- 1) Shift in application
- 2) Specialization in social milieu
- 3) Figurative language
- 4) Reinterpretation of homonyms
- 5) Foreign influence

1) Shift in application: Shift in application is noticeable in the use of Adjectives. Since these are apt to change their meaning to the noun they qualify. For example

Persons:

- 1) Apt, skilled, clever
- 2) Proper, fitting, decent
- 3) Beautiful with dignity

Sizes and Sums:

- 1) Fair, moderately large
- 2) Ample, liberal, munificent

Mostly, a word belonging to one sensory organ may be shifted to other sensory organs or even mind, for example, the word “sweet” firstly the meaning was given to “taste” or the sensory perception of tongue as in examples sweet fruit sweet mango, but this is used for other sensory perceptions like smell, hearing, sight etc.

2) Specialization in Social Milieu: Each word has different meanings in the ordinary Language. But only one of the words will be applicable in a given social milieu or context. For instance, English word “action” means legal action “in the context of law court and a soldier means a military operation. The word “paper” points out to the writing material in the general meaning. Anyway it gives different meanings in the social contexts legal or official documents, a newspaper, a set of examination question, a research article, in the context of educated seminar or conference. In Tamil, the following words have different meanings but they are differed in technical meaning. For example, the word “peyar” refers in general meaning “name” but the grammatical terminology is “noun”. Likewise, the word “vinai” gives the general meaning of “action” but the grammatical terminology is used as “verb”.

3) Figurative Language: According to Ullmann’s (1962) statement that is word that creates one or more figurative meanings without losing the meaning of its source text. Old and new may lie on side by side as long as there is no possibility of confusion between them. Metaphor and metonymy are the figures of speech due to which polysemy arises in languages. Meanings of words are extended on the basis of similarity of resemblance between different sets of denotata. In all languages, the names of human body parts are used to refer to similar objects. For example, the English word “eye” denotes a number of meanings due to metaphorical extension.

E.g. **ST:** Apples of one’s eye

TT: ஆயலடை முயலே’ வாந அயசம முக முடு ிநயஉமுஉம வயடை’

4) Foreign influence: Another language's equivalent influences to the change of the meanings of a word and create a new meaning. Hence the original meaning exists then the word becomes a polysemy. The Tamil word *Kilai* 'branch' (of a tree) has created a meaning 'branch of an institution on the influence of English word branch. Another example shown here is *ViciRi* that denotes the meaning, fan (native meaning) which is acquired to the foreign influence admirer of an actor sports man etc.

According to the analysis, ample words in English are polysemous, some of which have several meanings. Translators or students of translation studies are required to have keen perception when translating a word which seems strange if translated into its common meaning. Most of the subjects of our study failed to handle the meaning of the synonym and polysomic lexeme connections of the sentence. For instance

- Her father died
- Her father passed away
- Her father deceased
- Her father kicked the bucket

The above sentences are translated as

- யுளயடரனயதைய யீய சையவொயசஇ
- யுளயடரனயதைய யீய மமயடயஅயயயெயசஇ
- யுளயடரனயதைய யீய எயமைரவொயயெனயவொயசஇ
- யுளயடரனயதைய யீய ஆயவேயலயணீமுழவவயச.

In English sentences, the same meaning is in one point. All lexicons are considered synonymous. The general meaning is that a particular person is not alive. Although the English words died, passed away, deceased, kicked the bucket give the same meaning but they have to be used in different social contexts or different emotional attitudes. Therefore, translators in some cases lose the social contextual meaning. They try to use the same Tamil equivalent as "*Eranthuviddar*". The first sentence denotes the informal way of speaking. The 2nd sentence gives the formal concept of the word which can be used in newspaper writing. In the 3rd sentence the word has to be translated related to the legal aspect. In 4th sentence the word kicked the bucket implies the idiomatic sense that is mostly used in the colloquial language which gives the emotional attitude. In this case, translators never give the direct translation or word for word translation. When they give the literal translation, it will sound as a translation never be as the original one.

A single word is connected with two or more meanings where the translator confuses to get the accurate contextual meaning. That sentence may have an

ambiguous meaning in the sentence “A synthetic buffalo hides”. Here in Tamil translation “*Seyarkaijana erumai thool*” Sometimes that sentence may give other meaning “*Seyarkaijana Seyarkaijana umai maraikirathu*” translators have to consider the real contextual meaning of the source text. In the sentence “*President is at the board*” the words president, and board have several meanings. The president may be a leader of the country or a committee. Likewise, the word “Board” also gives a different meaning. Here translators should attempt to reach the spirit of the original and avoid losing translations and possess perfect knowledge about the semantic fields particularly in synonym and polysemy otherwise translation will be humorous one.

As findings, it can be stated that, all cognitive experience plays an important role in the semantic field, without the cognitive knowledge a translator may not translate the accurate meaning in the process of translation. Whenever there is deficiency, terminology may be qualified and amplified by loan words or loan translation, neologisms or semantic shifts.

Conclusion and Recommendation

It can be concluded that translators, whose task is to bring out a target text that consists of a close resemblance to the source text, should be known the synonymic and polysemic words when translating from English to Tamil. Therefore, it is not enough for the translators to be aware of only the general meanings of the words but they must find out the accurate synonym and polysemic meaning that is related to co text meaning. They have to get across the collocation and connotative and cognitive meanings which determine the accurate meaning of the text. Most of the translators did not give the faithfulness of the original text. Therefore, they have to know the co text because the synonymy and polysemy are related to the co text dependent. Therefore, translators must be aware of the intricacies and should attempt to produce a good translation.

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