Loss and Gain in Translation from Hindi to English: A Stylistic Study of Multiple English Translations of Premchand’s *Godaan* and *Nirmala*

ABSTRACT

THESIS
SUBMITTED FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN
ENGLISH

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UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF
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ALIGARH, INDIA.
2011
Abstract

Although translation is an old phenomenon, it is only after the 1970s that it develops as an academic discipline. Nevertheless in the comparatively short period of the last five decades, it has developed enormously. Today it is multi-disciplinary in nature and can boast many publications. Recent developments have also created formal training programs and translation associations. However, inspite of all these developments, its scope has mainly been superficial as most of the studies focus on general aspects of a translation.

That said, the present study specifically takes up Hindi English translation tradition and closely explores problems, issues and possibilities in translation from Hindi to English. To accomplish this task, the researcher structurally divides the study in seven chapters.

The discussion in Chapter I historically surveys the beginning and the development of translation studies in India and the West. It indicates that historically the role of a translator has been seen differently in these two cultures. While the Indian tradition has appreciated a translator’s creative labor and sees him as a ‘co-creator’ of a new text in the target language, the Western tradition has seen him as a traitor, a bearer of a divine punishment or a mere scribe. The survey also highlights that with global change in the 1960s, these outlooks begin to change and the translators, translation theorists and scholars start to be taken more seriously. From the 1970s onwards, translation studies as an academic discipline is initially established as a field of study.

Further in the research, Chapter II shifts the attention from the history of translation studies to Hindi English translation. The chapter first discusses available English translations of Godaan and Nirmala, and then reviews available literature on four of them. Since there is not much literature available on these translations, it also discusses the translators’ own views expressed with the translations or somewhere else in the form of introductions, foreword,
notes, afterword, and interviews. By the end of this chapter, the researcher becomes well aware of the general opinion of the critics and reviewers of the translations.

Chapter III’s role in the research is centralized. It not only introduces a stylistic model to be applied throughout the research on the four translations, it also conceptualizes what can be considered loss in a translation. Under the stylistic model, it studies the loss of meaning in two translations of *Godaan* respectively done by Jai Ratan & P. Lal, and Gordon C. Roadarmel. The stylistic analysis takes place in two major categories—textual and cognitive—and their six levels.

Chapter IV discusses another aspect of the translations i.e. gain. It first examines what can be considered gain in a translation and then applies those foundations to the two translations of *Godaan*. It points out the places, and the ways in which, the English translators of *Godaan* gain meaning. The study is again conducted under the same two major categories of the stylistic model; however the translators do not necessarily gain on the same levels. Thus, while Chapter III talks about the issues and problems in Hindi English translation, Chapter IV explores the possibilities involving translation from Hindi to English.

The next two chapters respectively parallel Chapter III and IV. Chapter V discusses the loss of meaning while Chapter VI the gain. They also use the foundations and the stylistic model of the previous two chapters. However, their contribution lies in the fact that they study two newer translations, accomplished by David Rubin and Alok Rai, of another source language text. The source language text under consideration in these chapters is *Nirmala*, also written by Premchand. The study in these two chapters not only provides validity to what has been concluded in the previous chapters but also adds new findings.

Thus, these four chapters altogether discusses how the four (five) English translators—two (three) domestic translators and other two foreign translators—lose and gain meaning in translating two different source language texts.
The final chapter, conclusion, sums up all the previous chapters. Towards the end, it also discusses findings and makes some general observations.

As for the findings, it states that the loss of meaning in Hindi English translation in Chapters III and V takes place mainly because of three reasons:

The first and most important reason for causing the loss of meaning is the translators themselves. It appears that, at times, the translators do not take the act of translating seriously and see it as a task which only needs to be completed, regardless of its exactness. It is possibly because of this tendency that they do not revise the texts properly and leave words, phrases and sentences untranslated. In the study, it is also apparent that there are times when the translators do not understand some SL textual and cognitive references properly or if they do, they do not know how to recreate them in the TLTs. In such cases, they mistranslate those references.

The second reason, another important factor, which causes loss of meaning in the four translations, is the different natures of Hindi and English. In the stylistic study it appears that the translators do not have total control over this loss. Still, this loss is vital in Hindi English translation because it happens on a larger scale in at least three levels of the text: sound system, grammar and syntax, and semantics.

The third reason which makes the translators lose meaning in Chapter III and V is the almost untranslatability of the SL cultural setting and references in the TLTs. It is because of this almost untranslatability that the translators lose meaning in translating cultural terms and references, allusions, idioms and proverbs, slangs, and euphemisms in semantics. Their failure to recreate many ideological references in the cognitive part of the stylistic analysis also accounts for the same reason.

Furthermore in the findings, it is revealed that, unlike the three reasons which cause loss of meaning, there are only two reasons which make the gain of meaning possible in
Chapters IV and VI: translators’ creativity and imagination and the nature of the TL. These two elements together help the translators gain meaning not only in textual part of the stylistic model but also in cognitive realm. However, the gain in the cognitive part is independent and involves translators’ creativity and imagination.

In addition to the above observations about the loss and gain of meaning in translation from Hindi to English, the conclusion makes two more observations about Hindi English translation. Finally, it ends in a positive note expressing that, although Hindi and English are two different languages, their belonging to the same family group, Indo-European family, makes translation between Hindi and English possible. It also promises that the further research in the field can bring fruitful results not only for the translation studies in general but also for an English translator of Hindi texts and his readers.