



Linguistic function in the select poem of Bharathidasan: A Translation Study

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Abstract: Every act of translation is mingled with some problems and challenges. Poetry translation may be more challenging than other types of translation due to its form and content. In poetry translation, one of the most essential issues to be addressed by the translator is whether the translator prefers the form to the content or both. The translator of poetry has to be aware of finding language equivalences at three levels namely lexical, phonic and syntactical. The study of literary pragmatic and semantic has a wider range that includes translation studies. This paper attempts to highlight the significant linguistic function involved in translation studies.

Key Words: Pragmatic, Semantic, Polysemy, Linguistic and Cultural Untranslatability.

In translation of poetry, it is necessary to know that the literal sense as well as the symbolic meanings of the text is to be understood by the readers in order to appreciate the text in the target language. The use of diction should be contemplated seriously to make the right meaning of the poem. It may express the intention of the poet as well as the tone of the poem. But the translator's task is to have the linguistic concern of the target language audience.

Polysemy is a pivotal concept in linguistics. According to A.S.Hornby's *New Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, Seventh Edition, polysemy means that "a word having more than one meaning" (1167). Polysemy is the existence of several meanings of a single word or phrase. The etymology of the word 'polysemy' is from the Greek word 'polysema' in which 'poly' means 'many' and 'sema' means 'sign'. In Latin language 'polysemus' means 'a word having more meanings'.

The first problem encountered by the translator is to preserve both form and content as far as possible in order to transfer all aesthetic aspects of the source text to the target text. According to Nida and Taber, "the conflict between the dictates of form and content becomes especially important where the form of the message is highly specialized" (126), as it is poetry. Despite these difficulties that accompany poetry translation, excellent and acceptable translations of masterpieces of world poetry have been presented by a number of translators and the translation of the *Selected Poems of Bharathidasan Translation from Tamil to English* by Murugan, could serve as one of the best examples.

J.A. Cuddon's book *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* defines poetry "it is a work of art, a composition, a work of verse, which

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may be in rhyme or may be blank verse or a combination of the two, or it may depend on having a fixed number of syllables” (678). S.K.Nair believes, “poetry is an imaginative rendering or a poet’s feelings and expressions” (93). Hence, translating a poetry text is also expected to have such poetic attributes.

The twentieth century modern Tamil poet, Bharathidasan significantly revived classical *Cankam* poetry of ancient Tamil and widely used this polysemy technique in his poems. The researcher has chosen a poem titled, “படி! படி! படி!” that has been translated into English by Murugan under the title *Study! Study! Study!*. Bharathidasan has used the word “படி” with different meanings such as ‘நூலைப்படி’(Study), ‘முறைப்படி’(order’ or ‘in the manner right’), ‘பொருள்படும்படி’(understand the meaning), ‘சொன்னபடி’(the way it is said), ‘எப்படி’(how), ‘சொல்லும்படி’(according to), ‘அதன்படி’(the same way), ‘படிப்படியாய்’(step by step), ‘தாழ்ந்தபடி’(lowly class), ‘தள்ளுபடி’(dismiss outright), ‘மறுபடி’(again) ‘மூக்காற்படி’(measuring with three fourth or in three quarter), ‘காற்படி’(measuring with one fourth or in one quarter), ‘ஏமாறும்படி’(cheating), ‘ஒப்புவதெப்படி’(how to understand), ‘வருந்தும்படி’(Unhappy), ‘ஊன்றிப்படி’(study carefully or plunging deep) and ‘ஆன்றோர் சொற்படி’ (these sage words of the ancestors).

In Tamil language, the word “படி” has been used as ‘a noun and a verb’. According to *The Lifco Tamil - Tamil – English Great Dictionary*, the word “படி” has several meanings. When the word “படி” has been used as a noun, it refers to “தராசின் எடைக்கல்” (stone used for scales), “நாழி”(a measure of capacity), “ஏணிப்படி”(rung of a ladder), “மாடிப்படி”(stair-case), “வரிசையில் நிலை” (rank in a series), “தினசரி உணவு வீதம்;”(daily food allowance), “தினசரிச்செலவுக்கான பொருள்;”(daily (money) allowance), “பூமி”(the earth) and “பிரதி” (copy). When the word “படி” has been used as a verb it has a number of meanings namely “கற்றுக்கொள்” (learn), “வாசித்தல் செய்”(read), “சொல்லு “(tell), “புகழ்ந்து பேசு”(praise), “தங்கு” (settle down), “கீழ்ப்படி” (obey), “தரையில் பொருந்தி வணங்கு”(prostrate) and “விலை ஒத்து வருதல் செய்” (be in agreement in a bargain) (p.658).

Bharathidasan has exercised the word ‘படி’ both as a verb and a noun in his poem “படி! படி! படி!”. Murugan has made a very good attempt to avoid both linguistic untranslatability and cultural untranslatability in his translation of the poem “படி! படி! படி! ”. In addition to that he is very particular to convey the content of the poem as it is in the target language text without affecting the style of the poem. The word ‘படி’ is polysemous by the translator without affecting the original meanings and style of the source text.

The source text of the poem by Bharathidasan has been given below:

படி! படி! படி!

எடுப்பு

நூலைப்படி - சங்கத்தமிழ்

நூலைப்படி - முறைப்படி

நூலைப்படி

உடனெடுப்பு

காலையிற் படி கரும்பகல் படி

மாலை இரவு பொருள்படும்படி நூலைப்படி!

அடிகள்

கற்பவை கற்கும்படி

வள்ளுவர் சொன்னபடி

கற்கத்தான் வேண்டும் அப்படிக்க

கல்லாதவர்கள் வாழுவ தெப்படி? நூலைப்படி!

அறம்படி பொருளைப் படி

அப்படியே இன்பம் படி

இறந்த தமிழ் நான்மறை

பிறந்த தென்று சொல்லும்படி நூலைப்படி!

அகப்பொருள் படி அதன்படி

புறப்பொருள் படி நல்லபடி!

புகப்புக் படிப்படியாய்ப்

புலமை வரும் என் சொற்படி நூலைப்படி!

சாதி என்னும் தாழ்ந்த படி

நமக் கெல்லாம் தள்ளுபடி

சேதி அப்படி தெரிந்து படி

தீமை வந்திருமே மறுபடி நூலைப்படி!

பொய்யிலே முக்காற்படி

புரட்டிலே காற்படி

வையகம் ஏமாறும்படி

வைத்துள்ள நூற்களை ஒப்புவதெப்படி? நூலைப்படி!

தொடங்கையில் வருந்தும்படி

இருப்பினும் ஊன்றிப்படி

அடங்கா இன்பம் மறுபடி

ஆகும் என்ற ஆன்றோர் சொற்படி நூலைப்படி!

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The English translation of the above text has been done by Murugan and the text is given below:

Study! Study! Study!

Study the books,
Study the **Cankam** classics,
Study them in the manner right.

Study them in the morning
Study them at noon
Study them in the evening
Study them for their meaning right
And study the books.

Study you must,
Study them so as to discern their intent,
Study them in the manner Valluvar set;
If not, how could one live in this world?
Study the books!

Study the works on Virtue,
Study the works on Wealth
And study the works on Love too.
Study them
As if resurrecting the four Vedas extinct of Tamil
Study the books!
Study the **Akam** works
Study the **Puram** works right;
As you go into them deep step by step
Scholarship you acquire sure
Study the books.
Caste is a lowly step
Which we dismiss outright.
It's the message thereof, discern it well,

Lest evil will befall us sure.
Study the books!
How could we take in those books
That are deceitful and crafty,
That comprise
Falsehood in three quarters
And guile and deceit in one quarter?
Study the books.

Exert yourself you must as you begin.
Still go into it plunging deep.
Joy unbounded results therein,
Take these words of the ancestors
And study the books.

Thus the translator makes his translation a perfect one. It is read like the original text. He is aware of the polysemy of the lexical unit 'ஹி' and it has been carried over in his translation. Polysemy is one of the components in translation studies that is adopted by the translator in the translation of the poem “ஹி! ஹி! ஹி!” . Here the translator has translated the content and the form of the poem as it is in the target language.

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