



VIDHYAYANA

ISSN 2454-8596

www.vidhyayanaejournal.org

An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal

Cultural and Dialectical challenges in translation from Gujarati to English with reference to the short stories of Pannalal Patel.

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VIDHYAYANA

ISSN 2454-8596

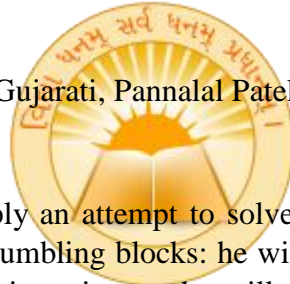
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Abstract

Gujarati is a language gaining interest very fast among the people, not only in India but also in South Asia and North America. Apart from some regions in Pakistan and Rajasthan, it is spoken in union territories i.e. Diu, Daman and Dadra Nagar Haveli too. It is an Indo-Aryan language and almost 700 years old which is evolved from Sanskrit. Though it is named commonly as Gujarati, there are many other dialects of Gujarati practiced in Gujarat itself. Gujarati of Saurashtra is not completely similar to that of middle Gujarat or of North Gujarat. In Gujarati, there is a cliché relating the language *bar gave boli badle*, meaning language takes a change after every twelfth village. Here *Boli* is not a language but a dialect. Pannalal Patel is a Novelist and Short story writer and is credited with 61 novels and 26 short story collections. He belongs to Dungarpur which is in Rajasthan but he later moved to Ahmedabad. His language has rural touch in diction. A reader of Pannalal Patel would find many colloquial as well cultural words where one would also find the idioms from Sabarkantha district. These takes labour for a translator to understand him and translate his works. This paper attempts to bring out some such usages in Gujarat used by Pannalal which may challenge the task of translation. The four stories taken for the reference are *Sukh Dukh na Sathi*, *Ek Raat ma*, *Ghadato Talati* and *Chaplaben* roughly translated as Companions, Within a Night, Clerk in Making and Chaplaben respectively. The above-mentioned stories are taken from the collection of short stories of Pannalal Patel titled *Sukh Dukh na Sathi* (Comapnions).

Key words: Culture, Dialect, Translation, Gujarati, Pannalal Patel, Sukh Dukh na Sathi, cliché and sayings.



“All translation seems to me simply an attempt to solve an impossible task. Every translator is doomed to be done in by one of two stumbling blocks: he will either stay too close to the original, at the cost of taste and the language of his nation, or he will adhere too closely to the characteristics peculiar to his nation, at the cost of the original. The medium between the is not only difficult, but downright impossible.”

(Humboldt, 1796)

Translation is very old practice. Earlier it has been said to be literal and ideal. As the time passed it took many changes. So far there has been two major turns, cultural turn and linguistic turn. In the 21st century and with the advancements of technology it is under technical turn these days, though not completely reliable. There have been few issues in translations which emerged out of its practices. Cultural issues have always bothered translators. It is widely accepted so far that the targeted culture should be on centre while translating any such complex cultural texts. Issues of equivalence, idioms, phrases and sayings have also been the main focus of translation studies. It has been debated whether the translation is a gain or a loss. Where most of the western concerns about translation shows the issues and problems in translation, Indian theories of translation tries to resolve them. A.K. Singh considers the translation as a gain only and there can be only one complaint and that is whether it is a less gain or more. He also considers the issue of untranslatability as myth because what is untranslatable for one is not the same with other. This paper attempts to bring out some such challenges while translating from Gujarati to English with reference to selected short stories of famous writer Pannalal Patel.



VIDHYAYANA

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Pannalal Patel (1912-1989) is a prolific and Jnanpith award winning writer. He is credited with 26 short story collections and 61 novels including *Malela Jiv* (translated as *United Souls* by Rajesh I. Patel) and *Manvini Bhavai* (translated as *Endurance: A Droll Saga* by Y.V. Kuntak). In most of his stories love becomes the central theme and they convey that regardless of worldly notions, all human beings share the emotions. Since in many stories, the language he uses are colloquial and rural, it would be challenging as well interesting to analyse them with translational approach. The following writing is categorised with three titles with some examples.

Some cultural words

I see translation as the attempt to produce a text so transparent that it does not seem to be translated. A good translation is like a pane of glass. You only notice it's there when there are little imperfections- stretches, bubbles. Ideally, there shouldn't be any. It should never call attention to itself.

Norman Shapiro

(as cited by L. Venuti)

As mentioned above that Pannalal Patel uses Sabarkathian idioms and vocabulary in his narration which makes the task of a translator challenging. To quote from the first story mentioned above, the very first line of it you come across the word *Mai-Bap* which would literally mean mother and father or parents in short. To look that word into the context of 1. Who speaks? 2. To whom do they speak? 3. Culture of the words spoken and 4. Context. They variably differ. The words aforementioned are uttered by a beggar to the pedestrians. Generally, beggars are observed using this word while begging but they do not literally mean that they are asking or begging to their parents. They put the donators, whosoever donates at god's place. The touch/accents of that dialect are non-translatable. It is ineffable to define what loses but there is something which lacks. It is just a difference of *Sanskrit, Prakrit and Apbhrams*. Meaning the same language spoken with accurate grammar, without much care of grammar by majority of populace and by rural people respectively. i.e. instead of *Kon jane?* we find *Kun jane?* which both roughly would mean the same *Who know/s?*

From the story of Ghadato Talati (Clerk in Making) we get many words which come from the older social and ruling system. There are words like *Bavsi, Thakor Saheb* and *Bapji* which in different context would mean differently but here they are attributed to same person. they can be considered as King in the context. The story is also full of the words with regional attires i.e. *Safo, Dhoti, Padtalo*, etcetera. *Safo* can be roughly translated as *Turban* yet the form and the tying of them differs.

We find two words for animals regionally in use but rarely known to other Gujarati speakers from the Story *Ek Raat ma* (Within a Night). One is *Faludi* which is used for a fox and *Baata* is word which is used for a smaller animal but not found even in Gujarati dictionary.

Though translation of these words would try to afford the meaning in original culture and language but the real touch would be missed. Translator's understanding and uniqueness is what such challenges



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would seek. Even while trying to stick to the original text, there is originality of translator too which may or may not be observed and appreciated. In this regard L. Venuti cites the following lines...

The translator is a writer whose singular

Originality lies in the fact that he seems

To make no claim to any.

-Maurice Blanchot

(as cited by Lawrence Venuti)

Parona is a word which roughly may mean to come. But the word *Parona* has a sense of gratitude for a person who comes. It is similar that, if a person who is of high repute for you accepts your invitation and comes to your home. There is a use of one Gujarati Dish which doesn't have equivalence in other languages and requires only explanations of it.

Addresses

One another interesting word in Gujarati (in some other Indian languages too) is a suffix added to proper noun to denote the respect for an elderly person in the name itself. For man and woman, they are different. That is *Bhai* and *ben*. When used separately these words may mean brother and sister. But when added to name as suffix may not necessarily mean that he or she is brother or sister to the addresser. It is used in routine language but it is very regular. The way English expressions have Mr. and Mrs. or so on to address a person. let's say the title of one of the stories itself is *Chaplaben*. Where the word *Ben* in last is not the part of name itself. Name is only *Cahpla* but *ben* is added to denote the respect. Another such example is the names for other relatives. Say for example in English all the brother from both the sides of parents (father and mother) are called uncle and sisters are aunty. When in Gujarati (in almost all Indian language) they have separate addressal. For most of the relations, Indian languages do have different names to address. They do not simply end by brother in law or sister in law. When addresses in Indian languages are made one would easily identify the person directly that is meant i.e. when said *Kaka* will always be a paternal uncle and *Kaki* being his wife, similarly *Mama* is maternal uncle and *Mami* is her wife.

Expressions and Cliché

Sayings and clichés are formed and came into usage after many reoccurring experiences. Though they are simple in their expressions, the meaning they carry are always contextual and different than what seems literally. Translation of them into another culture are challenging as the clichés may and may not be applicable universally as well, they do not contain the literal meaning of the words spoken. To get them suit and conveyed into target language and culture requires labor.



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The narration of the story Ghadato Talati (A Clerk in Making) uses rural language of tribes and old words of Gujarati. For example, there is a use of very old and famous cliché “*Pele j koliye Makh*” which literally would mean, on the very first morsel found a fly. But that would suggest the hurdle occurred in the beginning of any task. One more such saying is “*Ghanay pasa ghasya*” would literally mean “rube dices many times” but in context that would mean tried a lot in various ways.

To bring one more such example of cliché usage is from the same story “*Bai bai charni karta*” which is untranslatable even literally. Though if forced to do so it would be “Gossiping”

In such cases not only translation but the real meaning of and the root of such usages also become difficult to understand. In such case translator shall have to understand it only in context and will try to convey in translation.

To take another instance of such word/ phrase from story Sukh Dukh na Sathi (Companions) is, *Annpurna jewo Vadko*. Annpurna is a Hindu goddess of Food but here it is used as a metaphor rather than as proper noun for goddess. A beggar’s little bowl (Vadko) is his/her Annpurna. The translation of the sentence into English may fail or require labor to bring the context and the gratitude that is there in Gujarati expression while calling a bowl his/her annpurna. Another equally culturally bound word with different context occurs is *Akshaypatr* which would mean a vessel or a container which would never be devoid of food. Not only a cultural context but it has allusion to Mahabharat, where this vessel was gifted to Yudhisthira by the god Sun. We can have a word “cornucopia” but it differs in form of the vessels and also in the stuff it contains. In English context it would mean to be a horn of an animal and not only full of food but it also contains flowers and the stuff. A translator will have to adjust with that word though. There is an expression for the negation in Gujarati i.e. *Umhu* which is not articulated the way it reads even. It’s a glottal expression with closed mouth. And in the Literally it would mean “No”. one can use the words from English vocabulary but it will still fail to bring the context. The same expression in different tones would also suggest different thing. Such word in isolation from sentence can not be translated properly. Say for example, over here in the story, though the word is denial, it occurs in romantic manner. This emotional touch is what is lacked in translation. The translation of the word as “deny” may not bring that emotion. Hills (2012, 77) suggests that entering into translation is like entering into a relationship, and that, through contact with the language of others, translators can get a greater sense of themselves. (as cited by Severine Hubcher Davidson, *Advances in Translation and Interpreting Studies*, 04)



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VIDHYAYANA