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CULTURAL TRANSLATION OF PROVERBS FROM NEPALI INTO ENGLISH

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Abstract
Proverbs are witty, pithy, and epigrammatic expressions. They are idiosyncratic, being based on a specific culture. As cultural translation is difficult, translation of proverbs is not easy. Yet, translation practices on such genre have been appearing. In such a scenario, some such practices are found in the domain of Nepali into English translations. In this background, the present study aims at reviewing the available models for translating proverbs and recommending one, which can be used for translating Nepali proverbs into English. To achieve the objectives, I collected twenty proverbs purposively from Lall (1991) and Sharma (2000), primarily because I could deal only with twenty in a short period and limited space. By way of qualitative analysis and interpretation and by testing Wilson's (2009) model, I have concluded that the model is applicable for the purpose.

Keywords: proverb, translation, model, connotation, context

Introduction
Translation practices began as early as human contacts began. This is evidenced in Dam, Brogger, and Zethsen's (2019) words, "Translation as an activity, a phenomenon, a concept is of course as old as mankind, and has been and will continue to be part of human life regardless of the existence or not of a scholarly field" (p. 231). This implies that translation began since antiquity; and has been and will be an integral part of human life. Even for Stenier (1975), history of translation can be marked in the statements of Cicero (106-43 B. C.) and Horace (65-8 B. C.) on translation (as cited in Bassnett, 2005). On the other hand, tracing the history of translation in the East, Krishnamurthy (2011) has written:

> The first need for inter-language communication in the subcontinent probably arose through trade. The oldest linguistic evidence is to be found in the characters inscribed on steatite seals found in the Indus valley in the North West. These are said to date from 2500 to 1500 B. C.
>
> (Krishnamurthy, 2011, p. 450).

Therefore, history of translation in the Indian subcontinent can be marked as back as 2500 B. C. Although translation history of Nepal has not yet been marked, Sharma and Shrestha (1999) have viewed that Sanskrit scriptures were translated into

Nepali since 1770. They have further written that Shakti Ballabh Aryal's *Mahābhārat viratparva* (1770) *Hāsyakadamba* (1778), Bhanu Dutta's *Hitopadeś mitralāv* (1774) marked the translation history in Nepal. Since then, different institutions and translators have been practising translation works (i.e. literary, academic and technical translations).

Literary translation has been flourishing worldwide as literature reflects society and culture. A big canvas of cultural heritage can be traced in literature and its translation has been essential to expand the horizon of knowledge. Out of other literary texts, proverbs are nail marks of culture as all cultures have a storehouse of such formulaic expressions. They are based on cultural settings, historically remarkable events, folklores, expression of feelings, experiences, and quotations of public figures and celebrities. So, they are deep-rooted on folk tales, beliefs, traditions and customs.

In the context of Nepal, only a few books are published on proverbs and their translations. Sharma (2000) has asserted that Motiram Bhatta's *Ukhānko bakhān ra jānne kathāko sangraha* [Description of proverbs and a collection of known stories] (n.d.) was the first book in Nepali proverbs. Taking help of this book, Puskar Shamsher published a book *Nepali Ukhān ra tukkāko barnanukramānusārī sūcī ra bākyapaddati ityādiko koś* [A bibliometric list of proverbs and idioms, and a dictionary of the history of the syntax] (1941). Sharma (2000) has further conceded that Ganga Prasad Pradhan's *Nepali Ukhānko postak* [A book on Nepali proverbs] (1908) was published from Darjeeling. Therefore, Nepali proverbs got a form of a book only in the early 20th century. Regarding their translations, I have found only two, viz., Lall (1991, first published in 1985) and Sharma (2000). Therefore, translation of proverbs has been burning need to identify culture to Nepali people themselves and the world outside, which is observing multiculturalism, multilingualism, cultural pluralism, and co-existence of all the tribes and their traditions.

On the background mentioned above, the present article aims at reviewing the available models for the translation of proverbs. Specifically, testing a selected model for translated Nepali proverbs, it aims at developing or recommending a suitable model for Nepali proverbs. Despite its limitations of time and scope, I think, this study will be significant for translators and translation researchers as it forwards a translation model for proverbs.

Review of Literature and Theoretical Framework

Language is context-bound. Context is made up of different parameters, such as participants, purpose, settings, way of expressing something, time, etc. Context is also dependable on culture, in which language flourishes. Culture and language are inseparable (Wang, 2019) and language study encompasses culture (Dumraz, 2017). To carry on culture, proverbs are primary means. Proverbs encapsulate a society's values, beliefs and culture; and therefore, they are backbones of culture.

Regarding the history of proverbs, Hernadi and Steen (1999) have written that proverbs are with us "for much of the last two thousand or more generations of roughly thirty years each." It implies that the history of proverb goes back to sixty thousand years before. They have further mentioned that the proverbs in written form circulated more than forty-five hundred years ago. Besides, embroidered shawls, diaries, letters, devotional manuscripts and printed compilations offer evidences for

the existence of proverbs in the past. Since then, proverbs have been an integral part of culture and language.

Proverbs have been defined in several ways. Hernadi and Steen (1999) have offered selected snapshots of the landscapes of *proverbia* and they have offered some definitions of proverbs and their outlook. They have cited a definition forwarded by Brunvand (1986), who defines proverbs as a popular saying in relatively fixed form, which is in oral circulation. Emphasizing the folk element in proverbs, Mieder (1993) defines a proverb as a phrase, sentence, statement or expression of the folk, which contains wisdom, truth, morals, experience, lessons and advice concerning life (as cited in Hernadi & Steen, 1999). Therefore, proverbs bear folk elements and they are transmitted orally from generation to generation. Virtually, proverbs have been an inseparable part of folk culture. They are readily available and easily memorable formulas as they are metaphorical, alliterative and grounded on accumulated experiences. For example:

A cat may look at a king.
Every dog has his day.
A problem shared is a problem halved.
A stitch in time saves nine.
Where are bees, there is honey.

Proverbs have been practised by common people from ancient times. They represent folk wisdom, accumulated through the ages. Some proverbs are universally applicable while others have a distinct flavour of a land and its people (Neupane, 2017). Translation of the former types poses ease whereas latter (language/ culture-specific) ones are difficult to translate. Generally speaking, proverbs are metaphorical sayings in the form of prefabricated patterns, conveying cultural concepts. So, the pragmatics of proverbs should be understood for their better translation.

Translating proverbs requires multidisciplinary knowledge as proverbs are related to sociology, semiotics, anthropology, pragmatics, folklores, culture, etc. Suggesting three ways to translate a proverb, Beekman and Callow (1974, as cited in Gorjian, 2008) have written: (a) the words following the proverb could be introduced as the meaning of the proverb; (b) it can be replaced with an equivalent local proverb, and (c) its non-figurative meaning could be stated straight forwardly. Beekman and Callow's (1974) strategies suggest that the translators should seek either equivalent local proverbs or their literal meanings. However, proverbs are not so easy to translate these ways as they are idiomatic expressions and wise sayings, apparently simple but illusory. In this connection, Duff (1989) has proposed four strategies in case of non-equivalent: (a) literal translation, (b) original word in inverted commas, (c) close equivalents, and (d) non-idiomatic translation. The four methods cannot be yardsticks for translating proverbs beautifully and faithfully.

Tuning the intermediate view, Hatim and Mason (1990) recommended communicative translation to translate socio-cultural and metaphorical elements of language. Hatim and Mason (1990) further mentioned, "Translation is the negotiation of meaning between the producer of the source-language text and the readers of the target text, both of whom exist within their different social framework" (p. 1). Therefore, the translator explores the intended meaning of the source text

speaker/writer and manipulates the meaning in the target text. This view embraces the domain of pragmatics in translating metaphorical sayings (i.e. proverbs). Further, Thalji (2015) has found these four techniques for translating proverbs: TL equivalent, paraphrasing, literal translation, and glossing. However, gaps are apparent in the use of these techniques.

Some studies have indicated the difficulties of proverb translation. Of them, Mollanazar (2001) has remarked: (a) some similar proverbs can be found in the two languages with more or less similar form, vocabulary and meaning; and (b) many proverbs may be found in the two languages, which have similar meanings and can be applied in the same contexts, but they have different form and vocabulary. These cases can be encountered when a translator applies literal translation as a strategy. Likewise, Akbarian (2012) has asserted, "For a foreign or second language learning, it might be a double effort to first understand a proverb and then relate it to a proverbial equivalent in one's own native language" (p. 704). However, Shehab and Daragmeh (2014) have asserted that observational (social) proverbs are less complex than the religiously invoked ones for cross-linguistic translation. For them, the former types are related to the people's everyday experiences that are somehow universal whereas the second type is associated with the people's religious beliefs and opinions that are religious-specific. By analyzing 10 Arabic proverbs into English translations, they concluded that context plays a crucial role in translating proverbs. This study proves that the context-based approach is more suitable than the literal one. Context of the proverb adheres to culture. This is evidenced in Bhabha (2011) that quotes, "Translation is the performative nature of cultural communication […]. And the sign of translation continually tells, or 'tolls' the different times and spaces between cultural authority and its performative practices" (p. 20, as cited in Faiq, 2019, pp. 8-9). This indicates the cultural turn in translation that calls for situating translation as a cultural entity. The issue of culture in translation is also raised by Al Shehab (2016), who, in his project, asked 20 translation students to translate 25 English proverbs into Arabic. His main finding is that the students failed to achieve the exact Arabic equivalence of English proverbs. This study shows that proverbs adhere to culture and their translations across cultures pose difficulties. Also, Unscth (2006) has pointed out the limitations of translating proverbs in these words, "To try to translate the 'meaning' of a proverb without translating it into the form of a proverb is to translate only part of the meaning" (as cited in Pluger, 2015, p.325).

Like Al Shehab's (2016), Qassem and Vijayasararhi (2015) have indicated the students' difficulties in translating culture-specific expressions. Similarly, Azizah (2018) study also aimed to analyze students' ability in proverb translation. The 100 students' translation of 10 English proverbs into Arabic and 10 Indonesian proverbs into English showed that translating proverbs is complex. The main reason found was their literal translations. This study confirms that without understanding the literary (aesthetic) value of the source proverbs, their translations cannot be accurate.

Beyond the facets of context and culture in proverb translation, Dicerto (2018) has emphasized multimodality in these words, "The way translation is approached has changed […]. Modern translators more than ever find themselves working on texts that communicate by more than just 'words'. The translation is an activity that is growing even more complex and cannot be accounted for in linguistic terms any longer" (p. 1). This implies that the translation of proverbs calls for understanding

more than what is communicated by mere words. Thus, a translator needs to understand multimodal pragmatics for the sound interpretation of culture-laden texts (here, proverbs) and to transfer them into the alien language. Likewise, Al-khresheh and Almaaytah (2018) have pointed out the limitations of the use of machines for translating proverbs as, "wrong TL equivalent, literal translation, wrong word order, inappropriate lexical words, and grammatical mistakes" (pp. 162-163).

These studies exhibit that translation of proverbs poses difficulties mainly because of misinterpretation and/or mistranslation. To minimize the problems, an effective strategy can be "adaptation" that in Bastin's (2020, as cited in Baker & Saldanha, 2020) words is "frequently listed among the possible valid solutions to various translational difficulties" (p. 10). Adaptation calls for SL-orientation in translation and thus is important for proverb translation across languages.

Since proverbs are epigrammatic in the cultural history and so figurative quality of all of the proverbs cannot be translated by using a single strategy. In this line, Gorjian (2008) has proposed a three-fold strategy, which includes: (a) exact equivalents (strong version), (b) near-equivalents (moderate version), and (c) literal translation (weak version). He has recommended the use of literal translation only as a last resort.

In this study, I have selected Wilson's (2009) model for translating proverbs because of its exhaustiveness, adaptability, and relevancy. Wilson's (2009) model offers a cognitive descriptive dimension. It incorporates general cognitive tasks, such as: analyze, interpret and reformulate, and cognitive functions, such as reading, problem-solving, decision making, formulating, researching, consulting, creating, re-reading, verifying, etc. These cognitive behaviours (tasks and functions) are oriented towards the source and target texts. The translator investigates the holistic message/meaning, equivalent to both source proverb and target proverb. It is his first resort. If equivalent/exact proverbs are not found, only then, he explores its linguistic units. The translator should, at first, analyse, interpret and reformulate both the source and the target proverbs. Their linguistic units and signified meanings should also be incorporated. The structures of both the source and the target proverbs should also be analysed. Then, meaning/message is formulated form the interactions of context and connotations with the linguistic structures, units, concepts, connotations, context by way of analysis, interpretation and reformulation within the source and target proverbs. The outcome becomes target proverbs.

Method

The primary objective of this study was to test the prevailing models for translating proverbs (from Nepali into English) and to develop an appropriate model. Since document review was the primary technique applied for collecting data, this study used only secondary sources. Dictionaries of proverbs like Lall (1991) and Sharma (2000) were used for collecting Nepali proverbs, their literal translations and corresponding English proverbs. Besides, Duff (1989), Hernadi and Steen (1999) and Gorjian (2008) were used for formulating a theoretical framework, based on which, Wilson's (2009) model was selected as a sample to test.

Twenty proverbs, books, articles, and dictionaries were selected purposively for testing, using the selected model. I list them in a list, numbering from one to twenty, out of them, I selected only three for testing and analysing (as samples) by using the lottery method. After testing them, the selected model has been forwarded for further

translations of proverbs as it was found appropriate to the selected proverbs. Note that, for transliterating Nepali words, phonetic symbols adapted from Turner and Turner's (2009) are used.

Findings and Discussion

Wilson's (2009) model encompasses multiple elements and facts in translating proverbs. They are cognitive tasks and functions, linguistic structures of the source text and the target text, linguistic units, concepts, pragmatics of the proverbs, and so on.

The selected twenty proverbs are homogeneous in structure (i.e. having two-fold structures). For example:

1. *mauna sammati lakshnm* (silence grows consent) = action 1 (*mauna)* + action 2 (*sammati*)
2. *jasko lāthi usko bhaĩsi* (might is right) = possession 1 (*lāthi*) + possession 2 (*bhaĩsi*)
3. *kām garne kālu, makai khāne bhālu* (one soweth and another reapeth) = action 1, agent 1 (*kam garne kalu*) + action 2, agent 2 (*makai khane bhālu*)
4. *niveko āgo kasaile tāpdaina* (all worship the rising sun) = cause (*niveko āgo*) + effect (*kasaile tāpdaina*)
5. *ũ̃t dulāhā, gadhā purohit* (like god-like worship) = agent 1(*ũ̃t*) + possessor 1 (*gadhā*)

Since the proverbs collected are homogeneous, only three (out of twenty) have been presented and analyzed using Wilson's model, believing that other proverbs can also follow the similar path of presentation and analysis.

Proverb 2: *mwã̃i khāko hoina sĩgān lāko.* (Nepali)
A kiss of mouth often touches not the heart. (English)

For the translation of proverb 2, Wilson's (2009) model fits (figure 1).

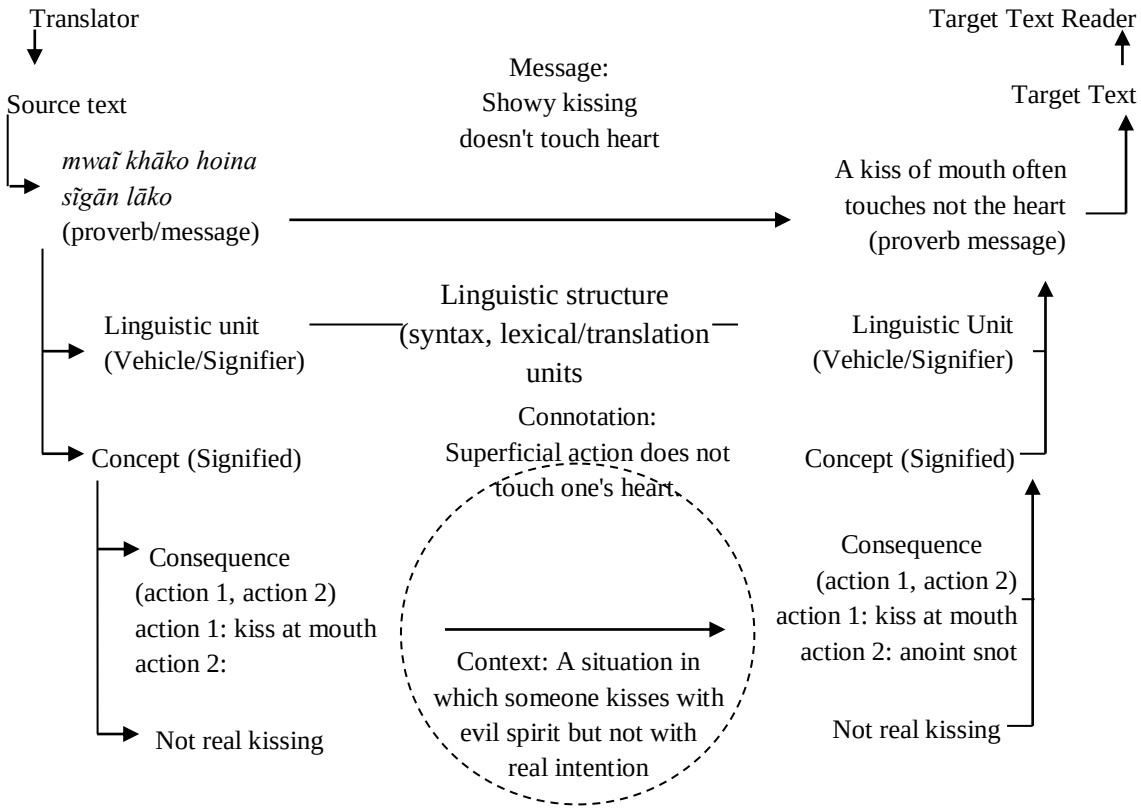


Figure 1 Application of Wilson's (2009) Model for Proverb 2

Figure 1 demonstrates the appropriate application of the model. The aspects of the model are followed in the following way:
Message : Showy kissing does not touch the heart.
Meaning : It is not kissing but anointing snot.
Connotation : Superficial action does not touch one's heart.
Context : A situation someone kisses with evil spirit but not with the real intention of kissing.

The presented proverb (proverb 2) conveys a message to be translated, linguistic structure, linguistic units and concepts, connotation and context, which are represented in its translated version. By way of analysis, interpretation and reformulation, the source proverb has been found translated. In the source proverb, there are two actions (kissing at the mouth and anoint snot), being second the consequence of the first. This mapping is equivalent in English. The linguistic meaning of the source proverb (not real kissing) is translated into the target proverb, appropriating it based on the pragmatics of the proverb. Pragmatics incorporates, here, context, in which the proverb is used and connotation-the implied meaning. The linguistic structure and linguistic meaning, incorporating its pragmatics, have been transferred into the target language.
Therefore, the translation of proverb 2 justifies the selected model.

Proverb 6 **:** *kām garne kālu, makai khāne bhālu*. (Nepali)
One soweth and another repeath. (English)

For the presentation and analysis of this proverb, figure 2 has been forwarded.

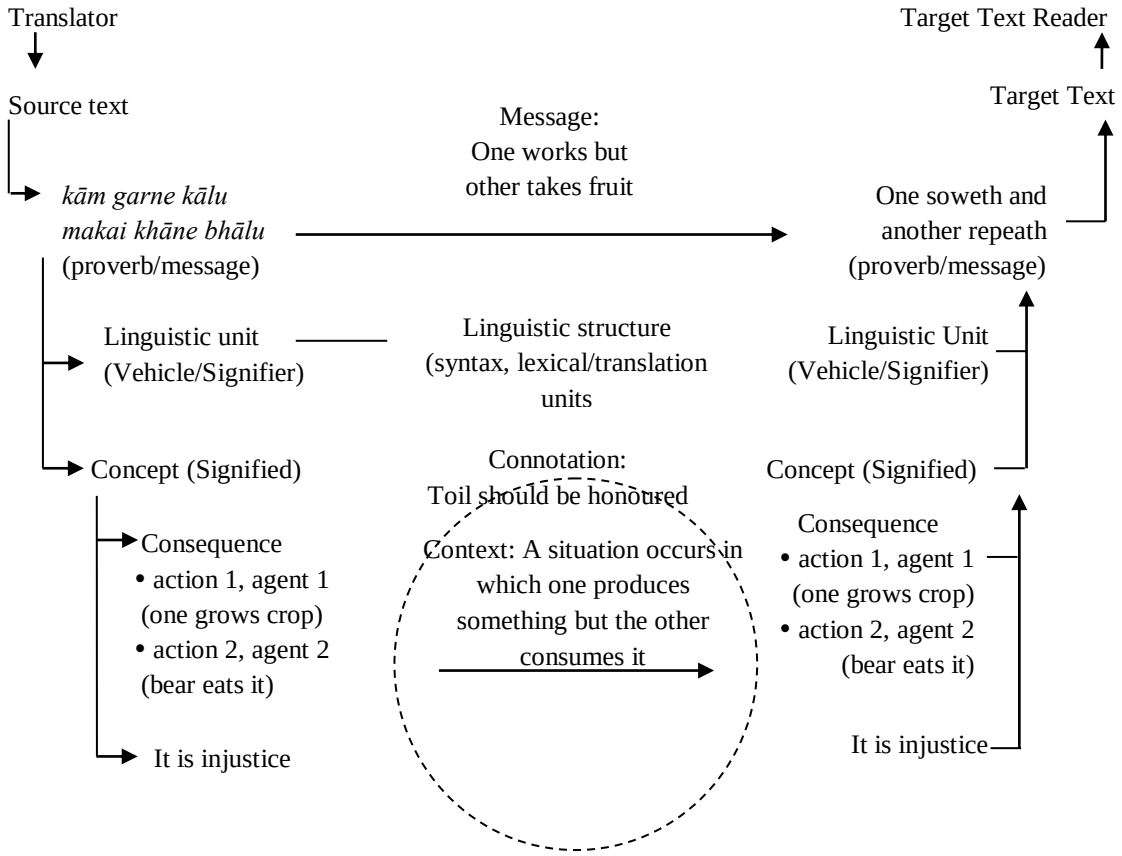


Figure 2 Application of Wilson's (2009) Model for Proverb 6

Figure 2 demonstrates how the model applies to the translation of proverb 6. Nepali proverb and English translation are matching in terms of message, meaning, linguistic structure, connotation and context. At first, the SL proverb conveys a message (one works but other takes fruit) and its meaning (the farmer grows corn, but it is bear who eats it). Both the message and meaning are transferred into English by way of analysis, interpretation and reformulation. Secondly, the consequence of action 1 and agent 1 is action 2 and agent 2, which is deliberately rendered into the TL text. Finally, connotation and context (i.e. pragmatics of the proverb) assist to reformulate and translate the SL proverb into TL. Therefore, Wilson's (2009) model is applicable for translation of proverb 6.

Proverb 16 : *ũt dulāhā gadhā purohit.* (Nepali)
Camel as a bridegroom and donkey as a priest. (English)

For the translation of proverb 16, Wilson's model is applicable (but the figure is almost similar to figure 1 and 2, therefore, it is not presented here). It exhibits how the model can be applied in translation by way of representing SL message and meaning, concept, mapping, and pragmatics in TL proverb. These aspects are presented below:

SL proverb : *ữt dulāhā gadhā purohit.*
Message : As the bridegroom, as a priest.
Meaning : Camel as a bridegroom, donkey as a priest.
Mapping : Consequence [agent 1: camel / posessor1: donkey]
Context : A situation in which the two inappropriate things are matching.

Therefore, the model (i.e. Wilson's, 2009) is applicable for the translation of proverb 16. Likewise, this model applies to other selected proverbs, too.

Conclusion

Proverbs are culture-specific. They are brief, witty, idiomatic, popular and pithy expressions, based on accumulated folk experiences. To translate proverbs from one language to another is not easy, yet approximate translation is possible. There is not a precise model, which can be completely implemented for translating proverbs. However, by implementing Wilson's (2009) model, translation of proverbs can be evaluated and other proverbs can also be translated. As a concluding remark, I must say that this study is limited only to twenty proverbs and the analysis is just a niche; through which a brief interpretation can be done. It requires more experiments and more illustrations to justify the model's reliability and applicability. This implies that this model (Wilson's model) is appropriate for translating Nepali proverbs into English.

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