The Use of Code-Switching in the English Translation of Amrita Pritam's Pinjar

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Abstract

Translation enables a work to reach out to the masses in a multitudinous manner. Indian writing in translation boasts of a bountiful of literary works. Amrita Pritam's Punjabi novel Pinjar won great accolades when it was translated into English by renowned writer Khushwant Singh. The humongous reception of the translated novel proved that translations could be well-appreciated if the target population felt a connection with the source text. Using stylistic devices like code-switching and borrowing, Singh presented the epic Punjabi tale in a flamboyant manner to the global readers. The poignant story of a Hindu abducted girl Pooro and the guilt-stricken Muslim abductor Rashida brought tears to the eyes of the readers because of the cultural connection felt by all. The use of Punjabi words, tags and phrases highlighted the Punjabi cultural intricacies. This paper is an attempt to analyse the English translation of the Punjabi novel Pinjar through translation studies; and to understand the linguistic and stylistic technique of code-switching used in the novel.

Keywords: Code-switching, re-representation, stylistic, code-mixing, sentential

Indian English writers have tried their level best to depict India truthfully in the English literature. Some of these writers have resorted to translation of mammoth works from regional languages into English so as to present local, popular and path-breaking novels to the global readers. Writers like Chaman Nahal, R.K Narayan, Khushwant Singh, Manju Kapur, Attia Hosain, Manohar Malgaonkar, Amitav Ghosh have depicted India with all her varied hues through their works. Those who wrote in local languages could not get a wide reach for the novels, so they began to look out for translators who could give new wings to the novels and short stories. Khushwant Singh was one such prolific short story writer, novelist, columnist as well as translator. He translated Amrita Pritam's Punjabi novel Pinjar into English keeping the title same. The word 'pinjar' means skeleton. Singh did not want to disturb the rustic charm of the Punjabi novel and he succeeded in his endeavour by integrating many Hindi-Punjabi words into the translated version. He used the device of code-switching to achieve this purpose. Code-switching is moving effortlessly between two languages within a single conversation. This can be done by a person who speaks both the languages well, the source language (SL) and the target language (TL) . According to Ana Celia Zentella in her book Growing up Bilingual, nowadays "an informal mixture of languages such as Spanglish, Taglish, or Hinglish is seen in routine use (Zentella 1997)."

Code switching is a stylistic device first used by Nigerian novelists to aid in better comprehension of Nigerian literature. Later it was used worldwide by novelists and translators to make the readers understand the social and cultural nuances of the place which was included in the setting.

Elin Asklov in the article "Code switching the Weird and Wonderful Side of Bilingual Communication" studied the need for code- switching and elaborated that in order to express their feelings like anger, shock, frustration we resort to use of words from our mother tongue. She adds that "it's natural to be bilingual especially if we are proficient in both (www.babbel.com)."

F.M Hult studied the finer aspects of code-switching and pointed out that the rationale for code-switching can vary according to the need of the situation. He commented, "It can be used to clarify certain concepts, to quote someone, to express gratitude, to show solidarity with the group, to strengthen an argument, to say something in secret, to just fit in, to explain the true meaning, to achieve the desired target (Hult 63)". Peter Auer concluded from his study that code-switching can help the analyst to create social situations,as mentioned in the book Bilingual Conversation (Auer 1984).

Translation studies is an emerging branch of English literature and is growing in popularity. Renowned translators in India are Nirupama Dutta,J.Devika, N. Kalyan Raman, Aruni Kashyap, Jerry Pinto. Famous writers and translators have translated numerous works from various languages like Bhisham Sahni (Tamas), Sunil Gangopadhyay, Nonabi Mitra (The Fakir), T.S Pillai, Anita Nair (Chemmeen), Sachin Kundalkar, Jerry Pinto (Cobalt Blue) according to wikipedia. Mark Polizzotti mentions: " A good translation offers not a reproduction

of the work but a re- representation, just as the performance of a play or a sonata is arepresentation of the script or score, one among many possible representations (Warner 21)."

The term 'translation studies' was coined by American scholar James S. Holmes in his article "The Name and Nature of Translation Studies'' (Holmes pp 67-80). Translation studies is a branch of study interdisciplinary in nature; it has opened up new vistas in the world of language and literature and has brought new fields in literature like adaptation studies, intralingual translation. The concept of translation was first put forth by Roman Jakobson in his essay titled "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation'' in 1959 (Jakobson 21). According to Wikipedia ``translation studies is an academic discipline dealing with the systematic study of the theory, description and application of translation, interpreting and localization."

Code-switching is the incorporation of certain words from the first language i.e the source language into the second language i.e the target language. It is seen that whenever a person wants to convey intimate emotions like fear, anger and grief, he or she uses the mother tongue or the first language that was learnt. The values adopted in early childhood are expressed best through the first language. Translators have tapped this innate quality of people and have translocated certain words from the source language to the target text to give a cross-cultural impact. In the words of Mario Pei," a complete translator is not only bilingual but bicultural. A good translator not only maintains the grammar and syntax of the sentences but also projects the various cultural references. It comes close to being a lifetime job (Mario Pei 424)."

The novel Pinjar depicts the struggles of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs as they try to cope up with the pressure of a sudden Partition which disrupted their lives (Pritam, Amrita. Pinjar Tara Press,1987,2015). The story of Pinjar unravels the journey of a Hindu girl Pooro in the pre-partition times. It narrates how her life was torn apart when she was abducted by Muslim boy Rashida, of neighbouring village Rattowal in an act of vengeance. At that time, she was about to get married to Ram Chand and was excited for her future. Pooro was forced into a life of despair. After the abduction Rashida began to love her but only got utter hate in response. Just then the partition violence started and her husband decided to shift to another village Sakkar, a few miles away. With the announcement of partition she found herself in an alien land Pakistan, as her new home fell on the other side of the boundary line. The partition violence led to

chaos and destruction. Hindus fled from Pakistan towards India. Ramchand's sister Lajo was abducted by Muslim hooligans. Ramchand was flabbergasted with this turn of events. He met Pooro accidentally in a refugee camp and narrated the entire ordeal two Pooro. Pooro with the help of Rashida decided to search for Lajo and finally managed to save her from the clutches of her abductor. Rashida threw his life into danger and saved Lajo. When they finally handed over Lajo to Ram Chand, Pooro forgot all her bitterness towards Rashida and accepted him wholeheartedly as her husband.

The Punjabi culture is reflected vividly in this novel, so it was quite a challenge for Khushwant Singh as a translator to convey the same emotions and depict the everyday scenes from Punjabi household in the English language. Singh used the technique of code-switching effectively to convey the Punjabi ethos through few Punjabi words amalgamated with English words. Punjabi words like kameez (5),dupattas (5), jamun tree (6), peepul tree (7) tins of ghee (10), moorhas (10), sarson (10), charpoy (13), maulvi (16), nikah (16), Shaikhs and the Sahukars (16) Baisakh (27), lumps of gur (27), jalebis (29), pakoras (29), Bhangra (30), kismet (58),Om (58) add to the aesthetic appeal of the translated version, giving a rustic touch to it. Code-switching is of three types i.e:-

Tag switching in which a tag or a word or both are switched from the source language to the target language; Intra sentential in which words or phrases from SL are incorporated within the TL sentence; Intersentential means outside the sentence.

Donald Winford described the types of code-switching in his article "Code-switching: Linguistic Aspects" and elaborated on the intra-sentential type. According to him,"If the intra sentential type alters the grammar structure of the two languages then it is called alternation code-switching and if the insertion of elements from one language binds with the morphosyntactic frame of the other, then it is called insertional code-switching(126-167)." The first two types are used in the translated version of Pinjar. The words which are borrowed from the source language are often printed in italics to show that they are of foreign origin. The English novel Pinjar showcases many such sentences which are based on the use of code-switching.A few examples are enlisted here:-

"When your nose-ring gleamed the sun
The ploughmen left their ploughing,
Your wet lungi sticks to your bottom
Maiden fair, turn not your back to us (30)."
"Hai ma !" (38)
' "In the name of Allah!"muttered Rashida as he severed

the cord. Hamida wrapped
the baby in her dupatta ."(54)
" We too know that ghee only sticks
to the crooked finger ." (65)
" Abba,where have they taken my little brother?" (67)
"What is written in your kismet will come to pass." (104)
"Who can she be but a khes seller?" (114)

All the above examples demonstrate effective use of code-switching for enhanced effect of the translated work. Code-switching can also be used for dramatic effect; a larger-than-life effect for rhetoric purposes. Use of Punjabi names like Pooro, Kammo, Lajo add a local colour, as it is a tradition in India to give short nicknames to boys and girls.Even the title of the English novel has been kept same i.e Pinjar not to alter the rustic appeal of the story.It can be concluded that Khushwant Singh has managed to conserve the originality of the Punjabi novel Pinjar, which was possible only because of intelligent use of code-switching ,a stylistic device. According to J. Boase Beier, "Translation is closely connected with stylistics because stylistics aims to explain how a text means rather than just what it means it includes not only what happens in the world in which the text is situated but also what speakers of a language members of a culture or readers of a poem or tourist brochure know and think and feel with respect to both text and world (www.benjamins.com)."

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