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The Problems of Translation of Denotation and Connotation Elements in Tamil Proverbs into French

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Abstract

The proverb is a statement, often short, that expresses a general truth of life. It gives us advice, makes an observation, or presents a teaching in a brief and memorable way, is easy to remember, and provides a quote for different situations. People also use them to express their understanding of beliefs, values, and surroundings in their daily lives. Tamil has a long history, not only in culture but also in language. The proverbs of this language play an indispensable role because people use them frequently in their verbal or oral communication or day-to-day conversation in different circumstances. This study aims to find the denotative and connotative elements in the Tamil proverb. Denotation and connotation are fundamental concepts in the study of language, playing a crucial role in communication and interpretation. Denotation is the definition of a word given in the dictionary, whereas connotation refers to emotional or cultural associations with a word beyond its literal meaning. Understanding of these two elements improves our ability to analyze the text and engage more deeply with the language. These elements pose problems of translation in the Tamil proverb into French. In terms of translating proverbs, one might note that translation recaps or reinforces an existing truth, a real experience of a specific community. Proverbs are inserted into the culture, history, society, etc. of a particular language group. This particularity requires a linguistic and extra-linguistic understanding of the community in question. The translation of proverbs faces two challenges at once: first, in terms of understanding, and then, in terms of re-expression.

Keywords: Proverb, Tamil, Connotation, Denotation, Translation, Problem, French.

1 | Introduction

The proverb is a short expression that gives us a very high moral value and is commonly used in everyday life, especially through spoken language. It is easy to recall and evoke for any situation. It plays an inevitably important role and is very rich in Tamil culture, especially in oral or verbal communication. [1] It is a short

phrase, formed at the origin of a long experience. Time passes, but the proverb continues to carry on for a long time [2]. Every culture on Earth has hundreds, perhaps millions, of proverbs, and they all borrow from each other. Much can be said about a culture by the wisdom it encodes in proverbs, and by the imagery or metaphors it uses to express that wisdom [3]. Because of their brevity and frequent use of metaphors, proverbs are very easy to remember, and they often stay with us for a long time after we have heard them [4]. Such characteristics give proverbs remarkable holding power in combination with their general applicability, which explains why they float in culture for centuries or millennia, and why they can be so easily transformed from one culture to another [5].

Like Tamil has a long and enriched history not only in culture but also in language. Proverbs in this language play an essential role because people use them frequently in spoken language in different circumstances [5]. In this study, we selected a few proverbs about connotation and denotation elements in Tamil proverbs. Our research aims not only to analyze the characteristics of Tamil proverbs, which convey deep logical meaning, especially in semantics in the Tamil language, in order to identify and trace the moral value, but also to see that some of the proverbs have been misinterpreted in the present-day meaning. This study will present the following method: First, we explain the literal meaning, then, narrative of the story about these proverbs by giving a very small explanation. Finally, it highlights the real meaning or historical meaning of the proverb for better understanding of context. The proverbs have different characteristics, namely, rhythmic characteristics such as alliteration, assonance, rhyme, etc., and also syntactic characteristics such as antithesis, repetition, etc., and lexical context such as comparison, metaphor, metonymy, allusion, etc. It tries to find the different proverbs that have mentioned the above characteristics [6].

When this study highlights the connotation and denotation elements in the Tamil proverb, it can also note that the meaning of the proverb represents a very important moral value. So, it is trying to analyze a semantic study. It looks at how meaning works in language, and that is why the insights of native speakers about the meaning of words and expressions are often used as a foundation for research. Whereas semantics is the study of the linguistic and philosophical meaning of terms that are created logically and semantically in language. It deals with the relationship between signifiers such as words, expressions, signs, and symbols and what they actually represent, their denotation [7]. Semantics analyses the meaning of words and language, including the symbolic use of language. It also refers to the multiple meanings of words. Connotation and denotation are the two terms related to semantics. Connotation refers to the meanings associated with the word, beyond the literal meaning in the dictionary. The connotation of a word includes all the emotions and feelings that go with the use of the word. The denotation includes the literal meaning of the word [8].

When we read literature, we look at the language used to designate and connote meaning. Semantics is the study and analysis of how language is used figuratively and literally to produce meaning. Semantics is about describing how words are used, not prescribing them. Semantics examines these relationships in language and also examines how these meanings are created, which is an indispensable component in the knowledge of the language feature as a whole. Understanding how meaning manifests itself in language can illuminate other sub-disciplines, such as language acquisition, to help us understand how speakers acquire meaning, and sociolinguistics, since the realization of meaning in language is important in a social situation. It is also informed by other sub-disciplines of linguistics, such as morphology, since the understanding of words themselves is an integral part of the study of their meaning, and syntax, which semantics researchers use extensively to reveal how meaning is created in language, subsequently the way in which language is structured, which is focused on meaning.

2 | Analysis of Problems of Connotation and Denotation Elements in Tamil Proverbs Translated into French

A word can have two kinds of meaning: a proper meaning, which is the primary, most common, and often concrete meaning; figurative meanings that derive from the proper meaning and are usually imaged or abstract. The denotation is a part of the meaning of a word that is common to all speakers, whereas the

connotation is a part of the meaning of a word that varies according to personal experiences, associations of ideas specific to each, or the situational context. The connotation can be pejorative. It can also be shared or individual. The role of context is essential in identifying denotation or connotation. There is the situational context, which is related to the communication situation; the lexical context, which gives the understanding of the meaning of a polysemous word only through the words that surround it; the semantic context in which the meaning of a word is conditioned by the construction of the sentence [9]. In semiology, denotation is the literal meaning of a term, which can be defined (and found in the dictionary), whereas connotation is the set of elements of meaning that can be added to this literal meaning. The field of connotation covers all the indirect, subjective, cultural, implicit, and other meanings that make the meaning of a sign rarely reduced to this literal meaning. Connotation can therefore be defined as anything that, in the sense of a word, does not fall within the meaning of denotation [10]. From the earliest days of philology, the discipline gave itself rules and principles. The predominant idea is that of continuity at once abstract and absolute, valid above all within its own sphere. Philology can be said to be denotative in the most general sense, insofar as it denotes the classical heritage in its widest extension; antiquity is its invariant and objective element of meaning. Philology can be called connotative, because it adds to the given an element of secondary appreciation; it transforms the given into a commented, denoted as connoted. From a philological point of view, the denoted is always denoted; the notated is double-noted.

Philology takes note of the denoted and at the same time supports it. It gives reality to the organic idea of a significant antiquity, while at the same time giving scope to a kind of original semiotic nucleus [11]. Understanding of these two elements improves our ability to analyze the text, particularly Tamil proverbs, and involves us more deeply in the language. Ultimately, these elements pose problems of translation in the Tamil proverb into French. In terms of translating proverbs, one must observe that translation recapitulates or reinforces an existing truth, a real experience of a specific community. Proverbs are inserted into the culture, history, society, etc. of a particular language group. This particularity requires a linguistic and extra-linguistic understanding of the community in question. It also highlights the problems of figures of analogical elements, opposition elements, and rhythmic elements in Tamil proverbs translated into French. The translation of proverbs encounters two challenges at once: firstly, in terms of understanding of denotation and connotation presented in it, and secondly, in terms of re-expression. A translator has to maintain the real or historical meaning of proverbs by stating or narrating a short description or explanation as per the context for better understanding and to recreate the reality.

The linguist, Georges Mounin, defines "Translation" as an operation relative in its success, variable in the levels of communication it reaches. Another linguist says that "translation consists of producing the closest equivalent message from the source language into the target language at first, about the meaning and then in style". But Georges Mounin [12] rightly notes that this closest equivalent is rarely given once and for all. Waliya Yohanna Joseph [13] mentioned in his work that all languages have seen changes in recent days, which have crossed several civilizations of counterculture, which makes it complex and very difficult to understand and translate into another language, because each language synchronously and diachronically evolves. The only option for translating from a source language to a target language is that the languages share the same original stories. Most European languages are especially Indo-European. Thus, indigenous people may share the same cultures, technology, socio-political life, vegetation, history, etc. The equivalences of figures of speech are in high demand. Translating these styles sometimes is difficult because the explanation serves to replace the translation in this case to avoid the dilemma. Everyone knows that translation is not an explanation of words. Gouadec states that, in fact, translation cannot be reduced to the passage from one language to another; it always requires a complete adaptation of the original document to an audience that is characterized by different habits, different tastes, different ways of thinking and behaviors. An audience, therefore, who will have to receive the translated document as if it had been written by someone of the same culture," [14] Le Grand Larousse de la langue française defines translation as the «action of passing, transposing from one language to another; result of the action of translating; work that reproduces other in another different language». Translation, which also means «interpretation, way of expressing, corresponding to», thus refers to

a process, result or product [12]. Vinay and Darbelnet try to develop in their work an approach to translation based on a comparative study of French and English. They consider that translation, the transition from language A to language B, is a comparative discipline. The purpose of such a discipline is to explain the processes involved in the translation process and to facilitate its realization by highlighting valid regulations for both languages. The discipline likely to explain the mechanism of translation is nothing more than comparative stylistics, according to Vinay and Darbelnet. Comparative stylistics is based on the knowledge of two linguistic structures rooted in two cultures that, by nature, perceive reality differently. According to Vinay and Darbelnet, translation and comparative stylistics are inseparable and any comparison must be based on equivalent data. There is a close interrelationship between translation and stylistics [15]. Vinay and Darbelnet note that the language given to us has the easement and option, which are respectively grammar and stylistics. It is therefore for the translator to make a distinction between what is imposed on the writer and what is his free choice. The easement and options operate on three levels: vocabulary, arrangement, and message. They are the basis of different possible translation strategies. According to Vinay and Darbelnet, there are two: direct translation or literal translation and indirect translation. Direct translation consists of transposing the elements of the source language into the target language, but when transposition is impossible because of structural and metalinguistic differences between the source language and the target language, indirect translation is essential. On the other hand, it is evident that the seven translation processes resulting from this approach take very little account of cultural differences, text types and functions, and the target audience. Indeed, throughout the text, the authors keep repeating that the message is the main concern of the translator. The notion of unity of translation, despite its originality, is still guided by the importance given to the message [16].

2.1| Problems of Figures of Analogy Elements in Tamil Proverbs Translated into French

Figures of analogy are a style that creates a connection, implicit or explicit, between two elements. It is built on a relationship of similarity, concordance between the two elements that are compared, creating a new reality [1]. It refers to a relationship and a relation of similarity and likeness between two entities having a common point. The linguist Gadoffre defines analogy as “a cosmic feeling in which order, symmetry and perfection triumph” [17]. In fact, it is based on the relationships of similarities that exist between beings, events and things [18]. The following proverbs belong to the figures of analogy that play on the relationship between two elements in order to create images.

[1] இருப்பவன் இரும்பை தின்பான் போறவன் பொன்னை தின்பான்

(Irupavan irumbai thinban poravan ponnai thinban)

The literal meaning of the proverb in French indicates that "Si on veut rester, mangera le fer; celui qui veut aller, mangera l'or," which means "If one wants to stay, will eat iron; those who want to go, will eat gold."

The literal meaning of this proverb cannot be understood without context, so what the proverb indicates. These two terms act as a structure of paradox, apparently contradictory, to indicate a certain truth. It does not signify a verb like "to stay" and "to go", but those who transmit the meaning of the first part of the proverb as "Those who live" and the second part "Those who die". Therefore, the present or actual meaning is "Those who have iron-enriched foods will eat them; whereas when someone who is attempting to die or commit suicide, will eat gold."

When we analyze deeply, this proverb signifies that one usually needs to take essential foods that contain iron and vitamins enriched for the functioning of the body. If it is reduced, it indicates the symptoms of iron deficiency, which can lead to anemia. One should avoid “deficiency anemia”; it is necessary to have foods enriched with iron and vitamins. On the contrary, if someone who wants to die or commit suicide takes gold powder, which can be used as a toxic substance. If one does it like that, one will have to face problems with blood vessels, urinary, etc.; it signifies that one will soon invite death. In light of this explanation, the historical

meaning teaches us in French that "Celui qui vit, mangera les aliments riches en fer et de vitamines; au contraire, on se meurt, mangera la poudre d'or comme une substance toxique," which connotes "Those who want to live, will eat iron-enriched foods which also contain the vitamins; on the contrary, those who want to die, will take gold powder as a toxic substance."

[ii] என்ன தின்னாலும் அதற்கு மேலே நாலு பேரிச்சை பழம் தின்னா எல்லாம் அடிபட்டுவிடும்

(Enna thinnralum, adarkumelai nalu perichapazam thinna, ellam atipatuvidum)

The literal meaning of the proverb in French indicates that "Quoi que vous mangiez, si vous mangez aussi quatre dattes, tout sera réglé," which denotes whatever you eat, eat four dates in addition to it, everything will be balanced.

When this study is analyzed, the human being, in general, has a tendency to eat whatever is seen, either spicy or fatty food. Sometimes it makes you fall sick because of a digestive problem. In order to escape such a difficult situation, one must begin to solve this health problem. Then find a solution by using dates at the end of each meal. These dates are one of the most popular fruits, well known for a remarkable list of highly nutritious elements, vitamins, and minerals which are essential for normal growth, in general, development, and well-being. This fruit is rich in fiber, which prevents various diseases. It contains antioxidants called "tannins," which are known to have anti-infectious properties. The consumption of natural fruits enriched in vitamin A is known to protect against various diseases. It is also an excellent source of iron and potassium, and also rich in minerals such as calcium, manganese, copper, etc. Therefore, the nutritional factors of dates make the digestion process easier. When one consumes dates, it restores energy and instantly revitalizes the body. One does not find too much difficulty, so one will feel much better. In light of this explanation, the proverb gives a real or historical meaning in French that "Même si vous mangez le repas, vous mangerez aussi peu de dattes à la fin de chaque repas, tous seront facilement digérés," which signifies "Even if you eat the meal, you will also eat a few dates at the end of every meal, all will be easily digested."

2.2| Problems of Figures of Opposition elements in Tamil Proverbs Translated into French

A figure of speech consists of an opposition between two ideas. The opposition figures make it possible to compare two realities, two ideas... in a formal way, to compare or oppose them, and thus give them a stronger point: Antithesis, Chiasm, Reprise [19]. The following proverbs are suitable for figures of opposition that play on the opposition between two elements.

[i] கொல்லுகிறது சோறு பிழைபிக்கிறது சோறு

(Kollukiradum Soru Pizaipikiradum Soru)

The literal meaning of this proverb in French is "Quelqu'un qui est tué par la nourriture, en revanche, celui qui est guéri par la nourriture," which connotes "Someone is killed by food; on the other hand, it is healed by food."

When we started analyzing intensely, the meaning did not give real meaning because the first two words of each part evoke a situation that is quite antagonistic. So what does the real meaning of the proverb connote? Let's analyze this proverb; the terms kollukiradum" and Pizaipikiradum have a strong link with the word "soru," which denotes food, has an energetic component that converts into power, which is inevitably essential in everyone's life. If someone is sick, it is compulsory to eat healthy food, according to the medical prescription prescribed by the doctor, and one should get healthy food in good hygienic condition. Due to the medicine's effect, the food that one takes supports the medicine in such a way that there will be a possibility to heal. But this effect does not support a sick person; as a result, it leads to death. The term kollukiradum" does not denote the meaning of "kill", but it means "die" and then, other term "Pizaipikiradum" does not give the meaning of "heal", but, it means "survive". In light of this explanation,

the real meaning of the proverb is "Si on prend des aliments sains pour tous les jours, on aura donc une possibilité de survivre, sinon, on mènera à mourir" which signifies, "If one takes healthy food every day, then there will be a possibility to survive, otherwise this will lead to death".

[ஓ] ஒரு போது உண்பான் போகி, இரு போது உண்பான் போகி, முப்போது உண்பான் துரோகி

(Orupodu unban yogi; irupodu unban pogi; muppodu unban drogi)

This proverb gives the literal meaning in French that "Celui qui mange une fois par jour comme un yogi; deux fois comme un roi; trois fois comme un escroc" which means "Those who eats once a day like an yogi; twice like a king; three times like a cheater or fraud"

People love their meals very much, are attached to them, and always reach the table first. Those who want to eat food once a day, ultimately, wish to maintain the body well. A country like India, which is traditionally rich in religion, not only in Hinduism but also in other religions, plays a very important role in that people usually observe fasting, especially during auspicious times and also during fasting days. It is also noted that many "Sadhus" who eat food once a day and do yoga extensively, and even Siddhas, practice tantra yoga. According to them, if one does it regularly under their directions, there will be a possibility of a hormone secretion process that occurs in a very small part present just below the hypothalamus; this hormone secretes enzymes that are good for health. Then, those who wish to eat food twice a day may not get sick or may rarely get sick in life. Finally, those who eat three meals a day will be more likely to suffer from a lot of diseases, such as indigestion, constipation, and intestinal disorders. There will always be a situation to fight against diseases throughout one's life. There is a possibility of becoming a sick person who lives the same. The present meaning is described as "Those who eat food once a day, ultimately wish to become a yogi, twice a day as a person in good health, thrice a day as a person who has often fallen sick. In the light of this explanation, we find that the historical meaning of the proverb in French signifies: "Celui qui prend son repas au moins qu'une fois ou deux fois par jour, on gardera bien son corps, sinon, on arrivera à tomber la malade," which means "Those who eat one's meal at least once or twice a day will maintain his or her body well; otherwise, they will be urged to fall sick."

2.3 | Problem of Figures of Rhythmic Elements in Tamil Proverbs Translated into French

The popularity of a proverb among people lies in its memorability in terms of rhyming and partial tone. According to ZHOU, the proverb is a simple phrase rich in rhyming and combines full partial tones and repeated vowels. It can take the form of alliteration, assonance, consonance, rhyme, etc. [23] Proverbs contribute to the figures of rhythm that play on the relationship of replication of sound.

[i] நொறுக்குணவு பெருக்கேல்

(Norukunavau perukel)

The literal meaning of the proverb in French is "Il faut augmenter le grignotage," which means "Eat snacks for a long time."

Today, children with elderly characters adore eating snacks all the time; one can eat too many snacks, which causes trouble in the body. This snack is one of the reasons why the most dangerous diseases are caused by the continuous eating of snacks. If you do it in such a way, it makes you fall sick. In other words, "Eating snacks frequently." If you do that, you are indirectly inviting diseases. Everyone is familiar with this fact generally. So, what does this proverb symbolize? It does not mean to snack repeatedly. People have misinterpreted the present meaning of this proverb. When you eat food, you have to chew or masticate it adequately; if you do this, the food in your mouth is mixed with saliva, which is produced and secreted by the salivary glands to help lubricate and improve the solubility of the food; it is an essential component of the digestive process. In olden days, ancestors used this technique to maintain the digestive system. One must

bring it to highlight a very small explanation; this proverb shows us in French that Quand on mange la nourriture, il faut la mâcher bien doucement avant d'avaler. Il est facile à digérer quand on mâche bien la nourriture doucement avant de l'avaler sans croquer; on arrivera à éviter les problèmes de digestion, which means "when you eat food, you have to chew it very gently for a long time before swallowing. If you swallow the food without chewing gently, you will be urged to avoid digestion problems."

[ii] நொறுங்கத் தின்றால் நூறு வயது

(Norunga thindraal nuruvayadu)

The literal meaning of this proverb in French signifies "Quand on mange bien la nourriture, on atteindra à l'âge de cent ans," which means "When one eats nicely, one will attain the age of one hundred years."

Today, everyone does their work to lead their lives nicely. During their work, sometimes they do something extreme about family or professional work. When they are urged to complete a compilation process or submission of work within a short duration of time, they face difficult tasks. Hence, their time is running quickly; due to that, there is a possibility to skip their meal on time, but sometimes, they eat fast or swallow it to fill their stomach.

When you eat any food, every time, you have to chew or masticate the food well for a long time; this process flows gently, directly converting into energy that protects life. This proverb communicates to us the essential truth of medical sciences. The term "norunga thindraal" does not mean "eat well", but it explains here "chew or masticate well". And the other term "nurvayadu" is metaphorically expressed to live for a long time.

When you eat food, chew or masticate it well every time; during this time, you will have enough time for saliva, secreted in the mouth, to mix adequately in the food and flow into the stomach. This process makes it easier to digest and also helps the body obtain these essential nutrients or energy. If you do so, the organs in your body function well. In light of this explanation, this proverb explains us in French that "Quand on mange la nourriture, on doit la mâcher ou mastiquer bien pour longtemps à chaque fois à l'aide de salive qui est sécrétée dans la bouche, on arrivera à vivre pour cent ans." Ou bien "Si on a une habitude de mastiquer bien la nourriture avec la salive, en conséquence de vivre plus longtemps" which means, "when one can eat food, must chew it or masticate it well for a long time with the help of saliva secreted in the mouth, which will lead to live for a hundred years." Or if one has a habit of chewing or masticating the food well with saliva, as a result, one will live longer."

3 | Conclusion

This study observed that proverbs have different meanings, not only a denotative but also a connotative meaning. It also highlighted various problems that persist in figures of analogy elements, opposition elements, and rhythmic elements in Tamil proverbs translated into French. Sometimes one term is represented as the opposite of another term due to the meaning of a combination of ideas or contradictory ideas. The position of one particular type of rhyming words supports the other type, denoted as a rhythmic characteristic which is metaphorically expressed. The above-mentioned elements have caused the problems of translation in Tamil proverbs into French. In terms of translating proverbs, this study has witnessed that translation recapitulates or reinforces an existing truth, a real experience of a specific community. This particularity made a linguistic and extra-linguistic understanding of the community. The translation of proverbs encountered two challenges at once: first, in terms of understanding the denotation and connotation presented in it, and then, in terms of re-expression. A translator has to maintain the real or historical meaning of proverbs by stating or narrating a short description or by giving a short explanation as per the context.

Authors' Contributions

All aspects of the research and manuscript preparation were carried out by the author. The author has read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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Data Availability

The data used and analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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