

Investigation on The Usage of Omission as A Method of Translation: With Special Reference to English Translation Of “Heart of A Dog” By Mikhail Bulgakov And Its Sinhala Translation ‘*Ballekuge Hadawtha*’ By Gamini Viyangoda

ACHIRA DULARI¹, HARSHA AMARASINGHE²

^{1,2} *Department of Languages, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka*

Abstract- Method of omission in translation could be applied as a solution for overcoming non-equivalents among languages. However, the manner in which the omission has been used particularly in the literary translation is questionable. Therefore, major objective of this study was to provide a comprehensive explanation about the usage of omission in translation. Accordingly, this research is conducted in line with qualitative approach with reference to English translation of the Russian novel “Heart of a Dog” by Mikhail Bulgakov and its Sinhala translation “බල්ලෙකුගේ හදවත”(BallekugeHadawatha) by Gamini Viyangoda. Three forms of omissions in translation proposed by Mona Baker (1992) in “In Other Words” have been applied to analyze data. The results indicated that the English translation of the Russian novel “Heart of a Dog” has been translated into Sinhala preserving the meaning of the original text for most part, although the translator has ignored certain terms, expressions, phrases, and details in the source text. The neglected elements could be categorized into three forms of omission in translation; the omission of a word or an expression, omission of idioms, and omission of information in the content. The majority of omissions were observed in the omission of a word or expression (53.3%). omission of information in the content (44%) has also been used largely while omission of idioms (2.7) was hardly employed. Usage of omission has avoided exaggeration, and repetitions in the target text, but in certain parts, it was observed that the omission has negatively affected on the target text. Therefore, usage of omission could be introduced as a reasonable method of translation, but the translator

needs to be clever to avoid missing key parts of the translation.

Indexed Terms- Language, Non-equivalence, Omission, Translation

I. INTRODUCTION

The field of translation plays a major role in reducing the language barriers between Source Audience (SA) and Target Audience (TA). However, the diversity of syntax, phonology, morphology, semantics and cultural influences within languages function as challenges in translation. In order to overcome those non-equivalent features among languages, translators tend to use different translation methods in practice. Omission in translation, based on a reader-oriented perspective is employed in translation when the translator unable to find equivalents from Target Language (TL) for certain parts of a text in Source Language (SL).

The main objective of this research is to provide a comprehensive explanation about omission as a method of translation. This research is conducted in line with qualitative approach with reference to English translation (by Avril Pyman) of the Russian novel “Heart of Dog” by Mikhail Bulgakov and its Sinhala translation “Ballekuge Hadawatha” by Gamini Viyangoda. Three forms of omission in translation according to “In Other Words” by Mona Baker (1992) are studied and applied, in order to analyze collected data. This research will accomplish a comprehensive explanation about Omission as method of translation by recognizing omission included in the Sinhala

translation comparing with the English translation of the selected novel and analyzing the selected omissions according to Mona Baker's three forms of omission in translation.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The term "translation" is defined according to different perspectives of various translation theorists and linguistics. Munday (2001) describes translation as a process of "changing an original written text (the source text, or ST) in its original verbal language (the source language, or SL) into a written text (the target text, or TT) in a different verbal language (the target text, or TT) in a different verbal language."

Nida (1982) denotes, "Translation consists of reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message first in terms of meaning and second in terms of style." Newmark (1988) also mentions the same idea in other words. "It is rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way that the author intended the text." (P.5). According to Nida (1982) and Newmark (1988) translation is an attempt to reach equivalence with the original. Furthermore, they believe that the translators never reach to the level of original text; also translations are not different to the original texts, but not the same. This phenomenon arises when certain parts or elements of source language adhere to morphology, phonology, syntax, semantics or context do not exist in target language. Those kinds of dissimilarity factors among languages are defined as 'non-equivalents'.

As a method of reducing non-equivalents in translation, several theorists and researchers have proposed omission as a method of translation under different labels. According to Nida (1964), "There are cases where omission is required to avoid redundancy and awkwardness and this strategy is particularly applied if the source language tends to be a redundant language." Newmark (1988) indicates the fundamental intention of usage of omission in translation as, "A translator with his eye on his readership is likely to under-translate, to use more general words in the interests of clarity, simplicity and sometimes brevity, which makes him omit to translate words altogether. (A translator has to account for every SL word, not to

translate it.) Under-translation is justified if an informative text is deficient in clarity. It is not justified if it is unnecessary and is a mere retreat from a literal translation. "Also, he adds that, "...the translator has a wide semantic choice if he wishes to supply a verb, since stylistically the source language text in omitting the verb is attempting to give a rather general impression of sudden: strong action. Obviously, the selection is finally limited by the context, but contexts (unlike explicit words) often exercise a wide rather than a close semantic constraint. When a verb is omitted it is inevitably semantically underdetermined, but given its importance the translator must supply it, if he decides that the reasons for its omission, which may be syntactical, stylistic or pragmatic, do not apply in the target language." If the meaning conveyed by a particular item or expression is not vital enough to the development of the text to justify distracting the reader with lengthy explanations, translators can and often do simply omit translating the word or expression in question."

Furthermore, Baker (1992) declares, "As with single words, an idiom may sometimes be omitted altogether in the target text. This may be because it has no close match in the target language, its meaning cannot easily be paraphrased or for stylistic reasons." Also Baker (1992) states, "The change in the information content of the message may be in the form of omitting information specified in the source text. If target language lacks a grammatical category may have to be ignored." Apart from that, Punga (2016) has classified omissions as omission of noun phrases and adverbs functioning as adverbials of manner, omission of adverbs functioning as intensifiers, omission of entire clauses, omission of single words related to taboo topics, omission of entire clauses that deal explicitly with taboo topics, omission of noun phrases with negative connotations, and omission of whole text fragments.

Moreover, Punga(2016) declares, "In the case of the printed translation, the omissions at word, phrase and sentence level have minor effects on the overall propositional meaning of the text, but they do influence its expressive meaning. On one hand, they contribute to cancelling part of this meaning, and thus, part of the emotional effect that the text may have on its readers (this absence of what Nida (1964) calls

‘dynamic equivalence’ is, however, felt rather locally, since it is attached to very small portions of the text). On the other hand, omissions sometimes function as a ‘protective’ translation technique, in that, the potentially harmful consequences that the use of certain taboo words may have on the child readers are eliminated.”According to Dimitru (2004), the purposes of using omission are:(a) ensuring linguistic accuracy and stylistic acceptability leveling differences in grammatical structures of languages and avoiding text redundancy; (b) presenting the information in a more concise manner; (c) presenting only essential information; (d) avoiding unnecessary culture, time and space bumps; (e) observing text-type and genre-related norms; (f) observing editorial norms, (g) supporting the ideology of a political system; and (h) translating for a particular group taking into account its characteristics of age, education, gender and social class.

Also Davies (2003, p. 79 as cited in Butkuvienė, 2012) claims that the strategy of omission refers to the elimination of a problematic culture-specific so that no trace is left in the translation. Majorly, usage of omission as a method of translation can be noticed in subtitling due to the restrictions between different media. Especially in audio-visual translation, taboo language and slangs are usually omitted. Several researches have been conducted to determine the usage of omission as a method of translation [Abraitienė, Konverienė, and Ubboniene (2015), Guardini (1998), Ivacovoni (2009), Pedersen (2008)]. Moreover, in news translation, researchers have accepted the usage of omission to preserve the clarity of the intended messages. H.Khanmohammad and A.Aminzad (2015) claims, “The changes in grammatical structures including tense and voice modifications, nominalizations and omissions of articles had been acceptable based on global media translation norms. This implies that the translators working for the news agency have been skilled and trained for the job, rather than being untrained translators who would make inadvertent mistakes.”Although, the usage of omission is appeared as an acceptable method of media translation still it has not gained a considerable recognition as a method of translation. Dimitriu (2004) also believes that the concept of omission as a method of translation has been neglected in the translation studies. She states,

“Whereas it has been amply demonstrated that many translators, at least between Indo-European languages, exceed their sources in length, comparatively fewer studies have approached instances in which, for translated, ‘omitted’ something from the source-text in their translation. Many recent dictionaries of translation studies do not have any particular entry for term ‘omission’, or (at least) for some of its partial synonyms, ‘implication’, ‘subtraction’, ‘economy’, ‘consideration’, or ‘deletion’. Moreover, books on translation studies that incorporate translation strategies tend to briefly mention omission, and mainly in close connection with its more ‘positive.’”However, to investigate the usage of omission as a method of translation, fewer researches have been conducted regarding to printed media. The conducted researches are relevant to the language couples such as English to Romanian, Chinese to English but not English to Sinhala.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in line with qualitative approach observing the English translation by Avril Pyman, 1968 of the Russian novel “Heart of a Dog” by Mikhail Bulgakov and its Sinhala translation “බල්ලෙකුගේහදවන” (*Ballekuge Hadawatha*) by Gamini Viyangoda which was selected as the corpus of the study.

The content analysis technique was employed to analyze the data.Both primary and secondary data were applied to conduct the research. English translation of the Russian novel “Heart of a Dog” by Mikhail Bulgakov and its Sinhala translation “බල්ලෙකුගේහදවන”(*Ballekuge Hadawatha*) by Gamini Viyangoda were used as for primary data. As for secondary data, e-books, previous research papers were referred. The classification of omission in translation proposed in “In Other Words” by Mona Baker (1992) was applied to analyze data. First, instances of omissions were observed comparing the source text and the translation after which the observed omission were analyzed and categorized according to the classification of omissions in translation proposed by Mona Baker (1992). The observation of the different forms of omission was then demonstrated in the table 1.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Comparing the source text and the target text, omissions could be observed in certain words, expressions, idioms, and information in the content. The observed omissions were categorized into three forms according to the classification of the omission in translation proposed by Baker (1992), in “In Other Words.”

i. Omission of a word or an expression

“Look at me, look,” has been translated as “..... බලන්න මගේ දිහා.” (p.1)

In this example, it could be observed that the verb “look” which has been written twice in the source text, is omitted avoiding redundancy of the similar verb which could be certainly seen as a purposeful use of omission by the translator.

“Some dogs I know from Prechistenka, by the way, told me that in the restaurant Bar on Neglinny Alley the plat-du-jour is mushrooms in sauce-piquante at 3 roubles 75 kopecks per portion. An acquired taste — like licking galoshes,” has been translated as “ඒ වුණාට, පෙවිස්තෙන්කා විදිසේ ඉන්න මං දන්න මොව්ට යක්කු මට කියලා තියනව, නෙග්ලිනි විදිසේ බාර් එකේ මිනිස්සු නලු මර මර කනවාලු; දැවිල්ල හොදවල තම්බපු හතුවු. එක පිඟානක් කියද? රුබල් තුනකුත්, කොපෙක් හැත්තෑ පහක්.” (p.1)

‘Plat-du-jour’ is a French term which indicates the meaning of special dish for the day in a restaurant. The word has been omitted without providing an explanation or translating the word using any other method of translation which certainly unacceptable. Instead, the translator should have opted for footnotes using which the readers of target text could understand what the particular phrase means.

"Pup-pup-pup! Sharik, hey, Sharik ... why are you howling, poor thing? Who's been unkind to you? Ooh!.." has been translated as “ඡාර්ක්, ඒයි ඡාර්ක් මොකද උඹ ඉකිගහන්නේ? අසරණයා. කවුද උඹට තුවාල කළේ?” (p.19)

“Pup-pup-pup!” and “Ooh!” which are indicated as expressions in the source text are omitted in the

translation without causing any harm to the meaning, but particularly in literary translation there is always room for creativity.

“There's a uniformed porter at the door. And there's nothing worse than that in the whole world,” has been translated as “අනන් දොරටුපාලකයෙක් ඉන්නවා.ඔයිට වැඩිය නපුරු සනෙක් තවත් ලෝකෙ නැහැ.”(p.26)

‘Uniformed’ the adjective of the noun “porter” has been omitted in the translation, but it did not make a major impact on the meaning of the noun.

“But for heaven's sake...’ Philip Philipovich suddenly raised his finger and listened tensely,” has been translated as “ඒත්....’ හදිස්සියේම සුපර්ක්ඡාකාරී වූ පිලිප් පිලිපොවිච් ඇඟිල්ලක් ඉහළට එසවුවේය.” (p.169)

The expression “for heaven’s sake...” which is used as an exclamation of anger is ignored in the translation which is a poor piece of translation as the target text reader is unable to identify the anger with which the dialogues are being exchanged.

ii. Omission of idioms

“What man from Mars, damn it? This is becoming a nightmare has been translated as” “මෙය නම් දවල් සිහිනයයි.” (p.100)

“What a man from Mars” is an idiom which is used to indicate a man who has essentially dissimilar nature. Word “damn” is involved as a cuss word. Therefore, the phrase “What man from Mars, damn it” has been ignored.

iii. Omission of information in the content

“In the first place, we're not gentlemen,’ pronounced the most youthful of the four who had peach-like complexion and was wearing a leather jacket,” has been translated as “ ‘මුලින්ම කියන්න ඕනේ, මහත්වරු නෙවෙයි කියන එක!’ එවර කතාව පටන් ගන්නේ පිරිසේ සිටි වඩාත් තරුණ වූත් ලම්ප්සියකගේ වැනි මුහුණකින් යුක්ත වූත් පුද්ගලයා ය.” (p.49)

The phrase “and was wearing a leather jacket.” renders more information about the man who uttered “In the first place, we are not gentlemen”. However, it has been omitted in the translation without harming the intended meaning.

“From the Diary of Dr. Bormental

A thin exercise book such as children uses to learn to write, all in the hand of Bormental. On the first two pages the writing is neat, well-spaced and clear but after that it becomes bold and scrawling and there are many blots.

“From the Diary of Dr. Bormantal” is mentioned as the title of fifth chapter in the source text. However, it has been omitted in the translation which is once again questionable translating.

“12 January. Puts his hands in his trouser pockets. We are teaching him not to swear. Whistled the popular tune Oho, the apple-oh! Can sustain a conversation,” has been translated as “ජනවාරි 12..... ජනප්‍රිය රිද්මයකට දැන් ඔහු උරුවම් බායි. සාකච්ඡාවට ද වරින් වර එක් වෙයි.” (p.104)

‘Oho, the apple-oh’ has been omitted in the translation as it is mentioned as a name of a tune which appears as an untranslatable element with the cultural difference.

“The porter's gold braid disappeared below us.”– “ගොතා බැඳ නිඛු දොරටුපාලයාගේ කොණ්ඩය, අහළ මහලෙන් නොපෙනී ගියේ ය.” (p.29)

The adjective “gold” has been neglected in the Sinhala translation, which signifies the physical appearance of the porter. Also, it does not convey the sense of nationality of the porter which the author of the novel has intended.

“No diagnosis was agreed. Temperature—normal (Note in pencil)” has been translated as “සාමාන්‍ය තත්වය තවමත් අවිනිශ්චිතයි. උෂ්ණත්වය (පැන්සලකින් යමක් ලියා ඇත.)” (p.97)

Word “normal” has been omitted in the Sinhala translation which conveys lack of detail to target audience.

“I ought to have exemption on medical grounds,’Sharikov replied to this one –‘a white ticket,’” has been translated as “‘මට නියෝජන ඕනේ සුදු කාච් එකක්.....එව්වරයි.’ ඡාරිකොච් පිළිතුරු දුන්නි.” (p.125)

“I ought to have exemption on medical grounds,” phrase has been omitted in the Sinhala translation. Therefore, target audience is unable to assume the reason for Sharik owes a white ticket. It resulted in lack of sense.

Based on the results, the percentages of the usage of different types of omissions could be demonstrated in a chart as follows. (Table 1)

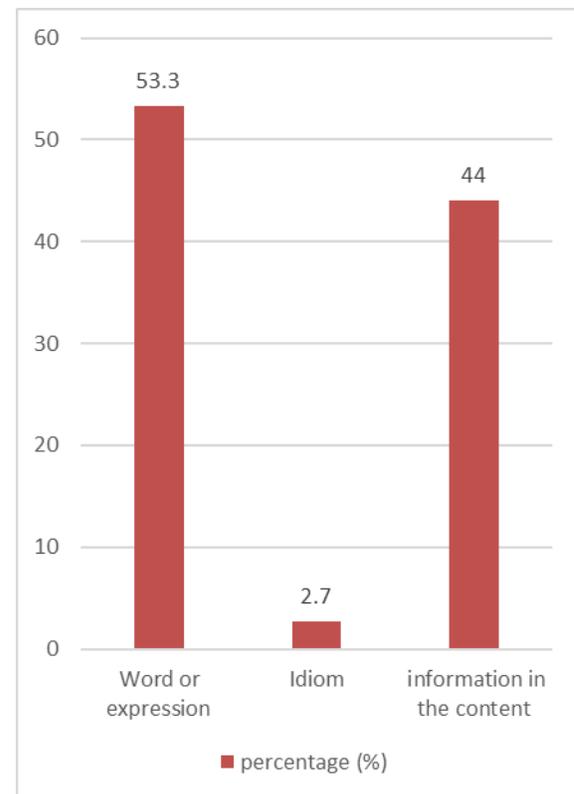


Table 1

Although, the results of the numerical values are rather different, when it compares with the research conducted by Hossennia (2014) to determine usage

omission in subtitling, the division of the omissions in different categories is similar.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Sinhala translator of the novel “Heart of a Dog” has ignored certain words, expressions, idioms and information in the content in terms of reducing cultural clashes, mistranslations, and ambiguous meanings. However, it has not made a major impact on the translation overall considering carrying the meaning of the source text. The neglected elements could be categorized into three forms of omission in translation proposed by Mona Backer: omission of a word or an expression, omission of idioms, and omission of information in the content. Out of the forms of omission in translation, majority of omissions are employed as omissions of a word or an expression (53.3%) which avoided unnecessary repetitions, jargons in the translation while maintaining the style of the target language in a reader friendly manner. Omission of information in the content (44%) has also been used largely with the intension of rendering intended meanings in a concise manner avoiding exaggerations. Omissions of idioms have been hardly employed, as idioms could be translated into target language using some of translation techniques such as literal translation, paraphrase, and imitation. Therefore, omission can be introduced as a reasonable method of translation, but the translator needs to be clever to avoid missing key parts of the translation.

REFERENCES

[1] Newmark, P. (1988). *A Textbook of Translation* [E-book] (pp.5, 50, 80). Prentice HaH International vUIO Ltd. Retrived from <https://b-ok.cc/book/2207936/d33a22>.

[2] Munday, J. (2001). *Introducing Translation Studies. Theories and Applications* London and New York: Routledge.

[3] Baker, M. (1992). *In other words* (1st ed., pp. 40, 77, 86). London and New York: Routledge.

[4] Nida, E., & Taber, C. (1982). *The theory and practice of translation*. Published for the United Bible Societies by E.J. Brill.

[5] Nida, E. (1962). *Toward a science of translation*. Brill Acad.

[6] Butkuvienė, K. (2012). *STRATEGIES FOR TRANSLATING PUBILECT FROM ENGLISH INTO LITHUANIAN*.

[7] Punga, L. (2016). *To Delete or to Add? Omissions and Additions in Two Romanian Translations of Jack and the Beanstalk*. West University of Timisorara.

[8] Dimitriu, R. (2004). Omission in translation. *Perspectives*, 12(3), 163-175. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0907676x.2004.9961499>

[9] Khanmohammad, H., & Aminzad, A. (2015). *A Study of Additions and Omissions in English Translations of Persian-based Social, Cultural and Political News Headlines: A Case Study of ISNA News Agency in Arab Spring*. Islamic Azad University.

[10] Hossennia, M. (2014). *Omission as a strategy in subtitling | October 2014 | Translation Journal*. Translationjournal.net. Retrieved from <https://www.translationjournal.net/October-2014/omission-as-a-strategy-in-subtitling.html#:~:text=The%20findings%20revealed%20that%20words%20or%20expressions%20are,words%20or%20expressions%20are%20comm only%20omitted%20in%20subtitling>.