

Comparing A Select Couplets of Thomas's Translation of *Tirukkural* with Its Source Text

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Abstract: The procedure of examining a text to ascertain its meaning and purpose as well as the most effective technique to translate it into another language is known as textual analysis in translation. The procedure usually include reading the work closely and learning about its background, setting, and culture. The well-known work known as *Tirukkural*, a Tamil classical epic composed in earlier times, is a key component of translation studies. *Kural* is the well-known text that was apparently penned by Tiruvalluvar. From the first translation, which took place in 1593, until the present, there are many translations that have been in circulation in our society. However, the researcher has selected Thomas Hitoshi Pruiksma's most recent translation for this article. He comes under the category of native translator because he translated the text into his native language. He translated in 2022 which is titled "The *Kural*: Tiruvalluvar's *Tirukkural*, A New Translation of the Classical Tamil Masterpiece on Ethics, Power and Love". This paper aims to understand how well this contemporary translator has reached the audience.

Keywords: translation, comparing, purpose, and language

1. Introduction

The word "translation" has Latin roots that suggest "to bring or transfer across." The Ancient Greek word "metaphrasis," which means "speaking across," is the source of the English term "metaphrase," which describes a "word-for-word translation." These notions have formed the cornerstone of translation theory throughout history, shedding light on the various situations in which translation has been used. The translation was known to have happened as early as the Mesopotamian era when the Sumerian poem *Gilgamesh* was translated into Asian languages. This dates back to around the second millennium BC. Some additional old translations date back to Buddhist monks who translated Indian scriptures into Chinese. a few years later Roman poets created sophisticated literary works meant for entertainment by translating and altering writings from Ancient Greece. It is well known that until improved protocols were developed in the 17th century, Cicero and Horace utilized translation services in Rome. Translating religious texts into spiritual philosophies was becoming more and more important. As religion developed, religious literature had to be translated into different languages in order to spread the word and strengthen faith. One of the first translated religious texts is the Old Testament, which was translated into Greek in the third century BC. The "Septuagint," a Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, is the subject of this translation. The Latin origin of the word "Septuaginta" means "seventy." This is the reason this body of writing is often called the "Greek Old Testament." Without the use of contemporary methods or resources, more than seventy scholars painstakingly translated the book into Greek; this endeavor served as the paradigm for later bible translations into other languages.

Because religion played such a significant role in the development of translation, the church has declared Saint Jerome to be the patron saint of translators. A Latin Bible was written by Saint Jerome in the fourth century AD. This bible was adopted by the Roman Catholic Church as its primary source. With the growth of Protestantism came a greater need to translate the Bible and other religious texts into European

languages. Roman Catholicism and Protestantism are two different branches of Christianity that emerged from the rapid translation and distribution of the bible during the Protestant Reformation. The most noticeable differences between these two sorts of religions were the disparities in literature and the variations between key terminology and biblical passages.

Machine translations have begun to replace traditional translations in recent years. Translation software includes the following features:

- Computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools

- Machine translation (MT) software

- Translation management systems (TMS)

As with any activity backed by technology, translation technology tools can enhance productivity, efficiency, and overall effectiveness in managing multilingual information. Many of the techniques used in modern translation technology have their roots in the work of the Arabic cryptographer Al-Kindi, who developed the frequency analysis methodology that is still in use today in the ninth century. However, it wasn't until the middle of the 20th century—when computers began to become more accessible and affordable—that translation technology began to take shape. Thanks to CAT technologies, which help organizations handle enormous amounts of text more quickly and efficiently while also saving money and time, translation technology has experienced a revolution. The main benefit for translators is that by leveraging the time they save on time-consuming tasks, they can focus more of their attention on the translation process. Text can be translated automatically with machine translation software, negating the need for human intervention. Machine translation is not a recent development, as this article has already explained. Nevertheless, new developments in technology have led to a rise in the use of MT. Machine translation, in contrast to CAT technology, creates translations entirely on its own without the assistance of a human.

Moving on to introducing the primary text, *Tirukkural* also referred to as the Kural, which is the main text of this article. It is a piece of traditional Tamil literature consisting of 1,330 short couplets, each with seven words. The text's three books are filled with aphoristic teachings about virtue (aram), wealth (porul), and love (inbam). Recognized as one of the greatest essays ever written about morality and ethics, it is widely recognized for being secular and inclusive. Valluvar, whose full name is Thiruvalluvar, is traditionally given credit as the author. The dates in the text are not all the same; they range from 300 BCE to the fifth century CE. The earliest translation of the Kural text into Malayalam, titled *Tirukkural Bhasha*, was produced in 1595 CE by an unidentified author. It was a prose translation of the entire Kural, written with meticulous attention to the spoken Malayalam of that era. However, this unpublished work was again unknown until the 1933–1934 Annual Report of the Cochin Archeological Department made reference to it. For three more centuries, not a single Malayalam translation was published. The earliest translation attempt in history was made in 1794 when N. E. Kindersley translated a few Kural couplets into English. In 1812, Francis Whyte Ellis attempted an additional, inadequate translation of just 120 couplets, of which 69 were in verse and 51 in prose. William Henry Drew translated the first two parts into prose in 1840 and 1852, respectively. In addition to Drew's English prose translation, it includes the original Tamil text, Parimelalhagar's Tamil commentary, and RamanujaKavirayar's amplification of the commentary. Drew, however, translated only 630 couplets. The remaining portions were transcribed by native missionary John Lazarus, giving this the first complete English translation. George Uglow Pope's first full English translation in verse by a single author was released in 1886, making the Kural text widely known across the Western world. At the start of the twenty-first century, researchers who were not native English speakers had translated the Kural into over 37 foreign languages, including at least 24 full translations into the English language alone. The Kural has been translated into over 42 languages by 2014, and there were 57 English-language translations available. The Kural is still one of the books that is translated into many languages worldwide, along with the Bible and the Quran. The Central Institute of Classical Tamil declared in October 2021 that it would be translating the Kural text into 102 languages worldwide.

Thomas Hitoshi's translation of the Kural into verse is the most latest and comprehensive version. Thomas Hitoshi Pruiksma is a writer, actor, educator, and translator. Beacon Press recently released *The Kural: Tiruvalluvar's Tirukkural*, his translation of the age-old Tamil masterpiece about love, power, and ethics. *The Safety of Edges* (poems), *Give, Eat, and Live: Poems of Avvaiyar* (translated into Tamil), and *Body and Earth* (a collaborative effort with artist C.F. John) are additional volumes. The National Endowment for the Arts has

given him fellowships and scholarships, and he gives a lot of performances and seminars. He is also an instructor for the Cozy Grammar series of online video courses. In 2022, he released his translation. In choosing this area of research, there are no articles on this translator, so there is a large gap that can be filled by this study. In this article, only ten select couplets are chosen across three sections for analysis.

2. Methods:

An interdisciplinary method for studying speech that sees language as a type of social practice is called critical discourse analysis, or CDA. As a foundation for action to alter the current social reality in specific ways, CDA blends discourse critique with an explanation of how it functions within and contributes to it. Researchers who follow the CDA tradition typically contend that language use and (non-linguistic) social practices are intertwined, and they concentrate on examining the ways in which language is used to establish and maintain social power relations. It is distinct from discourse analysis in this regard because it emphasizes problems with power imbalances, exploitation, manipulation, and structural injustices in fields like politics, the media, and education.

Discourse analysis is applied in CDA; methodologies from the humanities, social sciences, and discourse studies are generally accepted to apply to CDA research. This is predicated on its ability to sufficiently and pertinently generate insights into the ways in which speech perpetuates (or opposes) social and political inequity, abuse of power, or dominance. Instead of restricting its research to any one text or talk structure, CDA methodically connects these patterns to the sociopolitical backdrop. Rhetoric in political speech actions and other speech forms that could be used to influence the audience's perception have been studied using CDA. There have been issues with CDA, though. For instance, it has been argued that it is neither enough strong nor sufficiently broad to find everything that researchers intended to prove, while yet being too broad to identify manipulations within the discourse.

The goal of comparative analysis is to identify commonalities and contrasts between the units of analysis. Comparative studies often include an explanation and defense of the conditions and outcomes that are similar and different between large-scale social entities, usually regions, countries, communities, and cultures. A comparative analysis is a rigorous examination of two or more items side by side to determine their similarities and differences. The subject of the inquiry may be more concrete, such as two different data sets, or it may be conceptual, such as a particular problem, idea, or theory. After a successful comparative analysis, you should be able to identify the better product as well as its benefits and drawbacks.

3. Couplet Analysis

If clouds do not let their drops fall - hard to see even
One tip of green grass (16)

Analysis: This couplet is from chapter two which is titled '*Vaansirappu*' and is translated by Thomas as 'The Glory of Rain'. The term rain is indirectly mentioned in the title by the source writer but the translator has mentioned it. A few other translators have also mentioned it denoting that the translators have employed sense-to-sense translations. Also, the term 'their' is mentioned here representing the respect or reverence given to nature by the translator. Instead of the term 'their' the translator could have mentioned 'its' but he did not. The color green isn't mentioned directly in the source text but the translator has mentioned it for the context to explain the tip of the grass.

Knowing the two and choosing to let go - no
Greater glory in this world (23)

Analysis: This couplet is from chapter three which is titled "*NeetharPerumai*" and is translated by Thomas as 'The Greatness of Letting Go'. The structure and the meaning have been maintained by the translator. In this couplet, the readers are expected to understand the phrase 'Knowing the two' which is mentioned by the source writer in his Kural but the translator, has mentioned it indirectly in his translation. The translator has explained its context in the comments section of his translations for better understanding. The

same happens with G U Pope's translation, he only explained it in his comments section. But it is notable that in Jayaprakasam's translation which is in prose format, he explained it in his translation.

Good grows and wrong wanes if one who loves goodness
Speaks sweetly (96)

This couplet is from chapter ten which is titled '*IniyavaiKooral*' and is translated by Thomas as 'Sweet Speech'. The translator made a wise word choice while translating this couplet. Because the translator has employed alliteration 'Good grows' and 'wrong wanes' which enhances the structure of this couplet.

For those who hit back - one day of pleasure - for those who
bear -
A life of renown (156)

Analysis: This couplet is from chapter sixteen which is titled '*Poraiyudamai*' and is translated by Thomas as 'Forbearance'. The structure stands out when compared to every other couplet. The reason behind this structure is unknown but the reason behind the usage of hyphens is mentioned in his preface. "I have thus used dashes to indicate places where a pause may help to bring the poem off the page. Here's an example from chapter two, couplet fifteen, one could of course, translate the dash here as "is", but I feel that it's closer to the spirit and energy of the original to convey that meaning with a more meaningful silence. Doing so also keeps the poem more tend to do."

To overpower arrogant insolence practice
Inborn patience (158)

Analysis: This couplet is from the same chapter as the previous couplet. The word choice he employed in this couplet is notable because the phrase 'insolence practice and inborn patience' has the same letter which is similar to the source text. Thomas tried maintaining whatever was put forth by the source writer in poem format. His translation is simple, yet conveys the meaning but other translators complicate it by using jargon or difficult words.

Fortune fed up with the envious consigns them
To her wayward sister (167)

Analysis: This couplet is from chapter seventeen which is titled '*Azhukaaramai*' and is translated by Thomas as 'Freedom from Envy'. The structure of the couplets remains the same as the source text. In this couplet, the term fortune holds an in-depth meaning which is explained by the translator in his comment section. It denotes Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and the other term wayward sister denotes Lakshmi's older sister, the goddess of misfortune. Unless and until the reader reads the comment section one will not be able to understand the context of this couplet.

They divide old friends with their words - those
Who can't speak joyfully and make friends (187)

Analysis: This couplet is taken from chapter nineteen which is titled '*Purangkooramai*' and is translated by Thomas as 'Freedom from Backbiting'. The structure remains the same when compared to the source text. The word choices are simple and straightforward. Therefore, the readers could understand it better. Thomas while translating, kept his target audience in mind which helped him to deliver the exact meaning from the source text to the target language. It is notable that the translator also in his comment section mentions "with the words: with backbiting words. Speaks joyfully and make friends: enjoy true friendship. Thiruvalluvar's comment on Iago a millennium before Shakespeare wrote Othello".

Purity without comes by water - purity within
Comes by being true

(298)

Analysis: This couplet is from chapter thirty which is titled ‘*Vaaimai*’ and is translated by Thomas as ‘Truth’. When compared to other translators, his translation is straightforward and conveys the exact meaning of the source text without complicating it. This applies to this couplet as well, because after reading the couplet the reader can understand the meaning without reading the comment section or any other translations.

One who lets go of any thing and any thing is free
Of the pain of that thing and that thing

(341)

Analysis: This couplet is from chapter thirty-five which is titled ‘*Thuravu*’ and is translated by Thomas as ‘Renunciation’. The repetition from the source has been tried by the translator. Two phrases have been repeated by the translator. It is notable to look into the comment section for this couplet because it shows that the translator Thomas has looked into Paremelaalakar’s guide while translating. He says “For Paremelaalakar, the repetition in this verse indicated multiplicity. One must let go of many, many things whether all at once or one thing at a time. Knowing the sentence structure of the language Tamil and English are different, that’s why the translator couldn’t retain the same structure from the source text.

4. Summation

Even though the time period between the two texts varies greatly, the translator has tried to get closer to the source text. Also, the translator has tried to retain the structure and the poetic devices. It is also important to note that, the translator has kept the contemporary readers in his mind while translating by implementing the simplest words yet holding the essence of the source text through poetry format.

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