

Balancing Meaning and Readability: Semantic and Communicative Translation in the Kannada Short Story *Baduku Kaayuvudilla* (Life does not wait)

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Abstract: Translation plays a pivotal role in facilitating the dissemination of knowledge, culture, and literature across linguistic and cultural boundaries. In a multilingual country like India, literary translation serves as a vital medium through which regional literatures attain wider visibility and readership. However, literary translation poses unique challenges as it involves not only the transfer of meaning but also the preservation of aesthetic value, emotional depth, and cultural sensitivity. This paper examines these challenges through the translation of Nemichandra's Kannada short story *Baduku Kaayuvudilla*, as *Life Does Not Wait* in English, translated by the researcher herself using Peter Newmark's theory of translation as its theoretical framework.

This research primarily focuses on the application of Newmark's concepts of Semantic Equivalence and Communicative Equivalence in the translation process. Semantic Translation attempts to preserve the semantic and syntactic structures of the source text as closely as possible. It is source-oriented and emphasizes fidelity to the original text. Communicative Translation focuses on producing the same effect on the target reader as the source text does on the source reader. It is target-oriented and prioritizes readability and naturalness.

Through a detailed analysis of selected textual samples, the study identifies key linguistic and cultural issues encountered in translating the Kannada short story *Baduku Kaayuvudilla*, including lexical multiplicity, syntactic variation, idiomatic expressions, culturally embedded meanings, and sound devices such as alliteration and assonance. The analysis demonstrates that while certain stylistic and phonetic features of the source language cannot be fully reproduced in the target language, communicative strategies can successfully convey the thematic and emotional depth of the original text. The thematic concerns of the story—modern work culture, erosion of family relationships, and the transient nature of life—are effectively communicated through the balanced and integrated approach of combining semantic and communicative translation. Such an approach enables the translator to maintain conceptual integrity, cultural sensitivity, and emotional impact, thereby reaffirming translation as a creative and interpretative act rather than a mere linguistic substitution.

Key Words: Semantic Translation, Communicative Translation, Equivalence, interpretative, creative

1. Introduction

Translation has been an integral part of Indian literary and cultural history since ancient times. Through translation, religious, philosophical, and literary texts have travelled across regions and languages, making knowledge accessible to diverse linguistic communities. In contemporary India, translation has gained renewed importance due to globalization, academic interest in regional literature, and increased demand for cross-cultural communication.

A translator functions as a mediator between the author and the target reader. The translator's role is not limited to replacing words but extends to recreating meaning, tone, and cultural essence. As Nida observes, a translator cannot merely match dictionary meanings but must create a new linguistic form that carries the original concept effectively (Nida, 1964, p.145).

The present study focuses on Nemichandra's Kannada short story *Baduku Kaayuvudilla*, translated by the researcher into English as *Life Does Not Wait*. The story presents the life of Vishu and Samyukta, a young couple in Bangalore, and explores the emotional and relational consequences of modern workaholic life. Vishu's obsession with work and recognition causes him to neglect his wife,

children, and even personal moments of peace. The story reaches a powerful emotional climax when Vishu recalls how he failed to spend time with his dying mother—realizing that life does not wait for convenience.

This research attempts to examine how the translator maintains balance between meaning and readability while applying Peter Newmark's semantic and communicative approaches.

2. Methodology: The present study follows a descriptive and analytical methodology.

2.1 Primary Data:

The primary data for this study consists of selected passages from Nemichandra's short story *Baduku Kaayuvudilla*.

2.2 Theoretical Framework:

The research employs Peter Newmark's translation theory, particularly his distinction between Semantic Translation and Communicative Translation. Semantic Translation gives priority to the source text meaning, form, and stylistic features while Communicative Translation prioritizes the target reader's comprehension and aims to produce an equivalent effect.

2.3 Linguistic and Cultural Analysis:

The researcher draws upon knowledge of Kannada linguistic structure and stylistic devices, Cultural and contextual meanings embedded in Kannada expressions, English grammar, idiomatic usage, and readability. This helps in identifying translation difficulties and bridging gaps between two languages and cultures.

3. Discussion: The discussion is based on **random** text samples from the short story *Baduku Kaayuvudilla* with reference to Peter Newmark's Theory of Equivalence. In emotionally rich passages, communicative translation is preferred to preserve effect. In structurally important sentences, semantic translation is used to retain meaning and form.

Text:1

SLT: ಇಲ್ಲಿದ್ದು ಇಲ್ಲರಲಿಲ್ಲ. ಅಲ್ಲಿದ್ದು ಅಲ್ಲರಲಿಲ್ಲ. ಇದ್ದಲ್ಲಿ ನಾನಿರಲಿಲ್ಲ.

SLT(Transliteration): *Illiddu illiralilla. Alliddu alliralilla. Iddalli nāniralilla.*

TLT: Though I was physically present here, my mind was elsewhere. Even when I was there, it was no different. Wherever I went, I was never fully present.

Analysis: Kannada literary writing frequently employs sound devices such as alliteration and assonance to create rhythm and musicality. In the SLT, the writer uses assonance effectively through the repeated vowel sounds in expressions like "illiddu illiralilla," "alliddu alliralilla," and "iddalli nāniralilla," which gives the lines a lyrical rhythm and a striking effect.

However, this musical sound pattern could not be reproduced in the English translation without disturbing the fluency and readability. Therefore, instead of attempting a sound-based imitation, the translator adopts a communicative approach, rendering the meaning in a descriptive manner. This helps the TLT convey the emotional tone, content, context, and sense of mental detachment, even though the original rhythmic effect is reduced.

Text:2

SLT: ಮರಳ ಮೇಲೆ ಮಲಗಿದಂತೆ ಗೋವೆಯ ಅನಾತುರ ಮಾಂತ್ರಿಕತೆ ಮೈ ಮನಸ್ಸು ಆವರಿಸಿತು.

SLT (Transliteration): *Maraḷa mēle malagidante gōveya anātura māntrikate mai manas'su āvarisitu.*

TLT: As I lay on the sand, the mysterious charm of Goa slowly engulfed my mind.

Analysis: The source text contains alliterative phrases such as *Maraḷa mēle malagidante* and *māntrikate mai manas'su*, which create a musical rhythm and enhance the oral appeal of the sentence when read aloud. However, this stylistic sound-pattern could not be effectively reproduced in the target language. Therefore, in the translated version, the rhythmic repetition of consonant sounds is replaced with a descriptive and communicative rendering, focusing more on meaning than on sound.

Text:3

SLT: ಅಬ್ಬಬ್ಬ, ನೀತಾನೇ ಎಂದು ರಜೆ ಹಾಕಿದ್ದೀಯ?

SLT (Transliteration): *Abbabba, nī tānē endu raje hākiddiya?*

TLT: My goodness! When did you ever take a holiday?

Analysis: Many Kannada expressions do not have exact equivalents in English. Therefore, instead of translating the sentence word-for-word, the translator chose a natural English expression that conveys the same tone and communicative effect.

Text:4

SLT: ಎಲ್ಲ ನನ್ನ ತಲೆಮೇಲೆ ಹೇರಿ ನಿಶ್ಚಿಂತ.

SLT (Transliteration): *Ella nanna tale mēle hēri niścinta.*

TLT: You've put all the responsibilities on my head and you're carefree.

Analysis: Kannada idioms are highly culture-bound, and conveying their exact tone in English can be challenging. A purely literal translation may distort the intended meaning. Although it is difficult to fully capture the force of the idiom *tale mēle*, the translator retains the idiomatic rendering "on my head" in the TLT. This helps preserve the original sense of burden and responsibility, showing a clear preference for semantic translation while still maintaining naturalness.

Text: 5

SLT: ವಿಶೂ, ಒಂದು ಸಂಜೆ, ಕೇವಲ ಒಂದು ಸಂಜೆ ಜಗತ್ತು ಮರೆಯಲು ಸಾಧ್ಯವೇ?" ಬೇಡುವಂತೆ ಕೇಳಿದಳು.

SLT (Transliteration): *Viśū, ondu sañje, kēvala ondu sañje jagattu mareyalu sādhyavē?" Bēḍuvante kēliḍaḷu.*

TLT: "Vishu... just for one evening—only one evening—can you forget the world?" she pleaded.

Analysis: The story strongly critiques modern work culture and its impact on relationships. The negative effect of modern lifestyle on family life is brought out well in the SLT. It conveys Vishu's urgency and obsession with work. TLT retained the repetition of the word 'one' and the interrogative sentence thereby remaining faithful to SLT ensuring smooth English readability.

Text: 6

Text: 8SLT: ಇಲ್ಲ ಇಲ್ಲ ... ಹಾಗಲ್ಲ. ನಾಡದ್ದು ಬೆಳಿಗ್ಗೆ ಊರು ತಲುಪುತ್ತೇವಲ್ಲ, ಆವತ್ತೇ ಕಚೇರಿಗೆ ಹೋಗಬೇಕು.

SLT (Transliteration): *Illa illa... Hāgalla. Nāḍaddu beḷigge ūru taluputtēvalla. Āvattē kacērige hōgabēku.*

TLT: No, no... it's not like that. Tomorrow morning, once we reach the town, I'll have to go to the office that very day.

Analysis: The given TLT successfully balances both semantic and communicative translation. Semantically, it preserves the core meaning, urgency, and conversational tone of the SLT: the repeated denial "Illa illa" is effectively rendered as "No, no," and "Hāgalla" becomes "it's not like that," maintaining the speaker's corrective attitude. The emphasis in "Āvattē" is retained through "that very day," highlighting the immediacy of the obligation. Communicatively, the translation reads smooth and natural in English, slightly expanding the sentence "once we reach the town" to make the situation clearer for the target reader without distorting meaning.

Text:7

SLT: ಇಂದು ಬದಲಾಗಿದೆ ಬದುಕು ಹತ್ತು ಪೈಸೆಯ ಬಡಕಲು ಬಾಡಿಗೆ ಸೈಕಲ್ ತುಳಿದು ಪರಮಾನಂದ ಪಟ್ಟ ದಿನಗಳಿಲ್ಲ. ಈ ತಾಂತ್ರಿಕ ಯುಗದಲ್ಲಿ ಬದುಕು ಬದಲಾಗಿದೆ ಎಂದರೆ ಸಂಯುಕ್ತ ಒಪ್ಪುವುದಿಲ್ಲ. ಬದಲಾದದ್ದು

ಕಾಲವಲ್ಲ, ವಿಜ್ಞಾನವಲ್ಲ, ನಮ್ಮ ಆಸೆಗಳು ಎನ್ನುತ್ತಾಳೆ. ಅಂದು ಅಗತ್ಯಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ತೃಪ್ತ ಬದುಕು. ಇಲ್ಲಿ ಪೂರೈಸದ ಬಾಯಾರಿಕೆ.

SLT (Transliteration): *Indu badalāgide baduku Hattu paiseya baḍakalu bāḍige saikal tuḷidu paramānandapaṭṭa dinaḡaḡilla. Ī tāntrika yugaḡalli baduku badalāgide endare sanyukta oppuvudilla. Badalāḡaddu kālavalla, vijñānavalla, nam'ma āseḡaḡu ennutṭāḡe. Andu aḡatyagaḡalli tṛpta baduku. Illi pūraisada bāyārike.*

TLT: Life has changed today... Those days are gone when we could ride a rickety bicycle rented for just ten paise and feel truly happy. When I tell Samyukta that life has changed in this technological age, she doesn't agree. She says it isn't time that has changed, nor science, but our desires. In those days, we were content with what we really needed. But now there is a thirst that cannot be quenched.

Analysis: The SL writer uses several alliterative expressions such as badalāgide baduku, baḍakalu bāḍige, and baduku badalāgide, along with assonant phrases like andu aḡatyagaḡalli, to make the text more rhythmic and impactful, thereby reinforcing its central theme. The researcher has translated the passage using a sense-for-sense approach and has thus maintained communicative equivalence in the TLT.

Text: 8

SLT: ಕುಟುಂಬ, ಸ್ನೇಹಿತರು, ಹವ್ಯಾಸಗಳು, ಯಾವುದಕ್ಕೂ ಸಮಯವಿಲ್ಲದ ಅಪ್ಪನಿಗೆ ನಿವೃತ್ತಿಯ ಮರುದಿನ ಕೃತುಂಬಾ ಸಮಯ. ವೃತ್ತಿಯನ್ನೇ ಬದುಕೆನಿಸಿದಾಗ ನಿವೃತ್ತಿ ಹೇಗಿದ್ದೀತು?

SLT (Transliteration): *Kuṭumba, snēhitaru, havyāsaḡaḡu, yāvudakkū samayavillada appanige nivṛttiya marudina kaitumbā samaya. Vṛttiyanṇē badukenisidāḡa nivṛtti hēgiddītu?*

TLT: My father, who had no time for family, friends, hobbies, or anything else, suddenly had plenty of time the very next day after his retirement. What will retirement be like for someone who has always considered his career to be his whole life?

Analysis: The SL sentences are combination of a statement and an interrogative sentence. The idiomatic expression kaitumbā samaya has been translated by the researcher as *had a lot of time* in the TL. The translator has successfully brought the text and context into the target language following the communicative equivalence.

Text: 9

SLT: ನನಗೆ ಹಾಗೆಲ್ಲ ರಜೆ ಹಾಕೋಕಾಗಲ್ಲ. ಸಂಯುಕ್ತಾ, ಎಷ್ಟು ಜವಾಬ್ದಾರಿಗಳಿವೆ. ಈವತ್ತೇ ಹೆಡ್ ಆಫೀಸಿಗೆ ರಿಪೋರ್ಟ್ ಹೋಗಬೇಕು, ದಿಲ್ಲಿಗೆ ಫ್ಯಾಕ್ಸ್ ಕಳುಹಿಸಬೇಕು.

SLT(Transliteration): *Nanage hāḡella raje hākōkāḡalla sanyuktā, eṣṭu javābdārigaḡive, ivatte heḡ āphisige ripōrṭ hōgabēku, dillige phyāks kaḡuhisabēku.*

TLT: Samyukta, I can't take leave just like that. I have so many responsibilities. I need to submit the report to the head office today itself and I also have to send a fax to Delhi.

Analysis: Certain words like head office, report, and fax, which have already been transliterated in the SL, have been retained in the TL. The translator has rendered the message in a fluent and natural TL structure, thereby successfully achieving communicative equivalence and ensuring clarity for the target reader.

Text: 10

SLT: “ಯಶಸ್ಸು ತೀರಾ ತೀರಾ ವೈಯಕ್ತಿಕವಲ್ಲವೇ?” ಎಂದವಳು ಕೇಳಿದಳು. “ಏಕೆ ಸದಾ ಅವರಿವರ ಬದುಕಿನ ಓಟದೊಡನೆ ನಿನ್ನ ಪಂದ್ಯ?”

SLT(Transliteration): *“Yashas'su tīrā tīrā vayaktikavallavē?” Endavaḡu kēḡidaḡu. “Ēke sadā avarivara badukina oḡṭadoḡane ninna pandya?”*

TLT: “Isn’t success something deeply personal?” she asked. “Then why do you keep competing with other people’s lives?”

Analysis:The SLT consists of two interrogative sentences through which Shashi raises a fundamental concern about her husband Vishu’s attitude towards success and comparison. The emphatic repetition *tīrā tīrā* has not been retained in the TLT, since such repetition would sound stylistically awkward in English. However, the translator compensates for this loss by choosing an equivalent English expression ‘deeply personal’ that preserves the emphasis and emotional tone of the original. Thus, while the formal repetition is reduced, the intended meaning and impact are effectively conveyed through communicative equivalence.

4. Findings: The study reveals the following major findings:

Since sound-based features like alliteration and assonance in Kannada cannot always be retained in English, the translator should prioritise meaning, tone, and rhetorical impact. When direct sound repetition sounds unnatural in English, the translator may use compensation by introducing similar stylistic effects elsewhere through rhythmic phrasing, repetition of key words, or emotionally equivalent expressions. This helps preserve the aesthetic and persuasive force of the SL while maintaining naturalness and communicative equivalence in the TL.

Semantic translation helps preserve original meaning, tone, and structure but may sometimes reduce fluency. Communicative translation ensures readability and equivalent emotional impact for English readers. Source Language Kannada contains many culture-specific idioms and expressions that require adaptation rather than literal translation. Transliteration of modern English loanwords already present in Kannada (e.g., office, report, fax, sports day) helps maintain authenticity. An integrated approach combining semantic and communicative translation is necessary for literary texts.

5. Conclusion:

The translation of Nemichandra’s *Baduku Kaayuvudilla* into English as *Life Does Not Wait* demonstrates that literary translation is both a linguistic and cultural act. The translator must remain faithful to the source text while ensuring that the target language reader receives the message naturally and meaningfully. Peter Newmark’s semantic and communicative translation methods provide a practical framework for balancing meaning and readability.

The study concludes that neither semantic nor communicative translation alone is sufficient for literary translation. Instead, the translator must apply both approaches strategically, depending on the nature of the text—whether it demands preservation of structure or the recreation of effect. Ultimately, translation enriches literature by enabling stories like *Baduku Kaayuvudilla* to travel beyond linguistic and cultural boundaries.

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