

Abstract 11

A Linguistic Study on the Japanese Translation of “Viragaya”

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This research discusses the possible cultural influences on translation with special reference to the cultural words found in Professor Tadash Noguchi’s Japanese translation of the Sinhalese novel “Viragaya” by Martin Wickramasinghe. The aim of this research is to find out how the culture influences translation and how the problems created by cultural words in translation can be solved using the appropriate strategies which suite both surface and contextual meaning of the particular cultural word. The cultural data related to the cultural words from the original text and its translation was categorised according to several sub topics such as religious terms, units of measuring, foods and beverages, clothing items, proper nouns etc. The categorised data was analysed based on the translation strategies used by the translator. The data analysis proved that the cultural words which appear in SL text have been greatly influenced by the Theravada Buddhism where the translator sometimes have found it difficult to translate the concepts to the TL as most of the TL readers are from Mahayana background. Moreover, the translator had to face problems in translating beliefs, traditions and customs appearing in the SL text as they are totally different from that of the target culture. To overcome the aroused problems regarding the cultural words translation, the translator has used three main strategies as; borrowing the words from SL, use of cultural equivalent and creation. This research points out that a literary translator should have sufficient knowledge in both source language and target language along with their respective cultures, aiming a more successful translation which paves the path to the TL readers to touch an untouched culture smoothly.

Key words: borrowing, creation, cultural equivalents, cultural words, literary translation