Confusions Faced by Translators in Translating English Homonyms into Sinhala

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Abstract

A homonym can be defined as a word that is spelt like another word (or pronounced like it), but which has a different meaning. Homonyms play a tricky role in a language as there is more than one possible meaning despite the fact of similar spellings. Usually, translators come across a massive collection of homonyms in the process of translation. As translating is merely an exchange of two languages, homonyms cannot be omitted from the text. Hence, this particular text attempts to examine the translation of homonyms from English to Sinhala. In order to analyze this problematic area of the language, several publications on homonyms were referred as the primary source. 10 peers of University of Kelaniya who follow Translation Studies degree programme were asked to translate few sentences which included English homonyms into Sinhala. After evaluating the data gathered, it could be perceived that different types of translations are available for homonyms and they affect the meaning of the sentences. The use of various semantic units for the same word shows that homonyms have already created ambiguity in the process of translation and it eventually makes the reader confuse as the reader is unable to distinguish the correct and wrong meanings. On the other hand, totally different messages can be spread in respective translations while damaging the essence of the original text due to ambiguity in homonyms. Thus, there is a need of solving the confusions in English homonyms in order to avoid the obstacles occur in the process of translation. As long as translators are not aware of the context of the given source text, it is pretty difficult to translate the homonyms effectively. If the translator has a good grasp of the context in which the words are written, no confusion will arise out of homonyms as the purpose of the original text is crystal clear. In conclusion, the study states that paying more attention to the context of the source text is the best solution to avoid confusions faced by translators when translating English homonyms into Sinhala.

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