

## CONNOTATION AND DENOTATION IN LITERARY TRANSLATION

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**ABSTRACT:** Translation is generally considered as the act of transforming data from a source language to a target language. It is a well-known fact that a translator should always be a good linguist since she/he tackles language all the time regardless whether it is the target language (TL) or source language (SL). Among the translation types of technical, science, literary, legal and interpretation, literary translation is of great importance since it consists of translating poetry, prose, short stories, novels and other creations related to literature. This paper focuses on connotation and denotation which could be considered as a socio linguistic aspect that is relevant in the field of literary translation. This research employs the data that is being collected by the researcher which had been extracted from the novel *Giraya* and its translation and a deductive research had been carried out since this examines an existing theory and has not generated new theories. In addition, translating connotative and denotative terms and how translators have identified and translated such terms are being eloquently discussed in this research.

**Keywords:** Connotation, Denotation, Literary Translation, *Giraya*

### INTRODUCTION

The Oxford Dictionary defines connotation as “an idea or feeling which a word invokes for a person in addition to its literal or primary meaning” while denotation is defined as “the literal or primary meaning of a word, in contrast to the feelings or ideas that the word suggests.” Especially in literary translation, connotation and denotation are given prominence since the literary language deals more with the connotative meaning. “In a literary text, you have to give precedence to its connotations, since, if it is any good, it is an allegory, a comment on society, at the time and now, as well as on its strict setting.” According to Newmark(1988) connotation comments on society and it reveals the factors related to the society.

“Connotations are indeed very important in literary translation (which may also apply to some political, religious, and advertising texts), where form and formal features have important functions and associations. Unfortunately, it is often the case that translators focus on denotative and referential meanings when rendering texts in which connotative meanings play an important functional and artistic role, producing thus incongruent and awkward renderings.” According to the above produced statement, connotations are considered to be an important

factor in literary translation. Then again Ilyas (2013) has stated that most of the translators pay attention mostly to the denotative and referential meanings in translating a literary document.

Similarly “when the SL item or expression is not used for any specific referential meaning, but mainly for its socio-cultural associations, rendering it at the denotation level into the TL would cause the loss of the original intended associations.. []” If a translator understands a connotative meaning in the sphere of a denotative or referential meaning, then it definitely will cause a loss in the original intended meaning.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study will utilize the novel *Giraya* written by Punyakante Wijenaikē and its translation by Cyril C. Perera in extracting the necessary instances and examples which will be used in the analysis. In that sense this research will be a theoretical study which is mostly based on the literature of the related fields namely translation and socio-linguistics.

Classification of the compiled data is considered as one of the methodologies that will be used in this theoretical study and a comparative and contrastive analysis of this data will take place.

## **DISCUSSION**

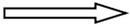
Connotation and denotation can be considered as two different techniques of bringing out the meaning of a word. Denotation always refers to the literal meaning which can also be considered as the dictionary meaning. It always grabs the meaning of a word as it is. It is unnecessary for the reader to understand the different nuances of the word, but just the surface meaning. For example, the Oxford dictionary provides the denotative meaning of ‘temple’ as this:

Temple            A building devoted to the worship of a god or gods

The above given definition can be considered as the denotative meaning of the word ‘temple’ since it is related only with the surface meaning.

On the other hand connotation is related with the emotional and imaginative meaning of a word. At the same time the connotative meaning of a word does not stay alone, but along with its

denotative meaning as well. For example the word 'snake' has both these meaning, connotative and denotative. The denotative meaning of 'snake' according to the Oxford Dictionary is

Snake                                            A long limbless reptile which has no eyelids, a short tail, and jaws those are capable of considerable extension

The connotative meaning of the word 'snake' can be considered as a person who is villainous and dangerous at the same time.

Considering literature, it is an obvious fact that literary pieces of work utilize more connotation than denotation and quite importance is given to it since it can also be called as an attribute of literary language.

#### Source Text

Adelaine:        Have you seen a gold bracelet?

Kamini:         No. Have you lost one?

Adelaine:       Yes. Have you taken it?

Kamini:         No. I'm not in need of bangles

                    I may come from a poor home. But there are no thieves among us.

Lucia Hamy: There have never been any thieves in this household either. Not until now

The above mentioned situation is extracted from the novel *Giraya* and at this point it is clearly evident that connotative language has been used by the source author. This is a situation where Adelaine, Kamini's mother in law and the servant Lucia Hamy are accusing her connotatively of thieving a bangle which belongs to the daughter of the manor house, Manel. But it is apparent that they are blaming her without even taking the words rob or robber, but just by using language in a connotative way. At the same time Kamini has also understood that they are referring to her as a thief who has stolen Manel's bangle. When Kamini replies her mother in law as;

                    "I may come from a poor home. But there are no thieves among us".

It is evident that she has understood the situation and has replied back in a way that they will also understand that she shouldn't be considered as a thief by using the utterance 'But there are no thieves among us' she has tried to imply that I am also not a thief.

On the other hand when Lucia Hamy replied;

“There have never been any thieves in this household either. Not until now”.

She is also trying to imply that Kamini is a thief and this can be clearly seen by how she has used language. It is specially depicted through her words 'not until now'. This implies the fact that until Kamini's arrival to the Walauwe, there weren't any thieves. This could be considered as one instance where connotation has been used at its best in this novel.

#### Translated Text

/ædlin/:	/ka:minirattəran valallakdækkadə/?
/ka:mini/:	/næhæ/ /ai valallaknætivela:də/?
/ædlin/:	/ou/ /ka:minigattadə/?
/ka:mini/:	/næhæ/ /maʔə valaluuvaməna: næhæ/ /maməduppapauləkəidəla a:pu kenek vennəpuluwəni/ /namut ape: paulekisiməkenekhorəkamkərannenæhæ/
/luciha:mi/:	/adə venakam me: gedərəhoruhitijenæhæ/

This is the Sinhalese translation of the above mentioned scene which took place between Kamini and her mother in law regarding the theft of the bangle. Just as how the source author has used connotation in her writing, the translator has also occupied the connotative language in recreating the scene in which the family is blaming Kamini for stealing the bangle. But it is obvious that they are not directly accusing her of this incident and they do not even use the word

thief                       $\longrightarrow$                       /hora:/

and this can be considered as one fine example of the usage of connotation in literature.

Similarly at one point Kamini is conversing with her sister in law, Manel and there she has uttered

“Your mother has turned about the common saying that it is a daughter in law who serves the plate of *pala* leaves to the mother in law when she wishes to get rid of her in a polite way”.

This particular utterance can also be taken as an incident where connotative meaning has been utilized. Not only that but also it can be considered as an instance in which the source author has directly translated a proverb from Sinhalese to English. Connotative language is used for proverbs since it signifies a far more different meaning compared to the denotative meaning.

Since the source author has used a proverb from Sinhalese, the translator has used it as it is;

*/nændammamaʃəpalənokijapala: bedənəva:/*

But the source author did not forget to explain the meaning of the proverb in her own words as;

“Instead of asking me to leave the house, she serves up bitterness in many ways”.

She has used this technique in order to make her readership understand the connotative meaning that she has projected through a proverb which does not occur in the source language. It is evident as explained through the above discussed examples and instances from the novel *Giraya* written by Punyakante Wijenaike and its translation by Cyril C. Perera that connotation and denotation plays a major role in a literary translator’s hand.

## CONCLUSION

The two different techniques of bringing out the meaning of a word is quite important for a translator because it is by connotation and denotation that one understands the text. One might think that connotation and denotation can be found only in words. But it is quite significant for the translator to keep in mind that it can be even found in a quite bulky conversation as well.

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