

Translation of Buddhist Philosophy

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This study investigated the English glossary which is used in Buddhist translations. At present, Buddhism has become a philosophy that people around the world follow and practice. Around 535 million people follow Buddhism as their religion. The Source Language of Buddhism is believed to be Pali alias Magadhi languages. The study examined the lack of English terms to translate Buddhist doctrinal and literary texts and certain practical difficulties that have emerged in Buddhist textual translation. Therefore, possible causes for such complications in Buddhist textual translation were studied. Thereafter alterations and better solutions, which can be used for both Buddhist followers and translators who are engaged with Buddhist philosophy, were explored. Selected Sinhala and Pali documents written on the Buddhist philosophy and culture were taken as source documents in order to identify specific terms that are challenging to translate. The above documents were distributed among final year undergraduates following the bachelor s degree in Translation studies at the University of Kelaniya and their outcomes for certain technical terms were studied and analyzed in this research. Furthermore, particular English dictionaries, glossaries, which are based on Buddhism, were also referred to in order to obtain a comparative understanding. It was observed that most of the issues occur due to several factors such as the conventional dialect that the Buddhism has inherited as a subculture and the conceptual complexity of some sections of Buddhist philosophy such as ‘Abhi Dhamma’ and the linguistic complexity of the Mahadhi language itself. The findings of this study show that most of English definitions in this relevant field are demonstrated erroneously with ambiguous meanings, which can be incomprehensible especially to an outsider to this subject area. In addition, exact translation phrases could not be found for most of the cultural terms in Buddhism. Hence, it can be recommended that by providing descriptive explanations for such phrases and by using accurate glossaries it is possible to achieve better translation outcomes. Following these methods in Buddhist textual translation is of utmost importance since the accuracy in translation is essential to preserve the originality of the Buddhist Philosophy while also ensuring its future existence.

Key words: Buddhist philosophy, glossary, Pali language, translation

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