

Translation

"Writers make national literature but translators make universal literature"

— Jose Saramago

Objective

After reading this Chapter you would have learnt about:

- Importance of translation
- Types of translation: word to word and idiomatic translation
- Theories and practices of translation
- Translation: Then and Now
- Translation and interpreting

Introduction

If Rabindranath Tagore's *Gitanjali*, which was originally written in Bangla, had not been translated in English, it would never have got Nobel Prize in literature. If the *Bible* would not have been translated in English, maybe it would not have become a much translated book afterwards. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 2011 was originally prepared in English, Spanish and French but was later translated in 438 languages including Hindi.

We are a part of a multinationalist society and ourselves multiculturalist citizens of a globalised world. Translation helps in being better connected and mediated with others. Translation has acquired greater significance in today's globalised market by providing linguistic accessibility to the market forces though much of it had been in vogue since centuries and played a creative role in dissemination of international cultures and eventually acculturation. Literature of different languages, especially the classic old languages, has been translated in many contemporary languages. We are introduced to the cultural capital through adaptations

and translations, like *The Mahabharata*, *The Ramayana*, televised or abridged versions.

Since translation deals with languages, and languages keep evolving, therefore, translation also has acquired different dimensions according to changing languages.

Translation is a process which transforms "a text originally in one language into an equivalent text in a different language retaining, as far as possible, the content of the message and the formal features and functional roles of the original text"—Roger Bell

It is derived from a Latin word which means "carrying from one place to another". Translation is a huge communicative activity.

Translation requires much more than knowing two languages. It requires many other skills and qualities obligatory for translation like cultural, situational and textual in addition to the knowledge of the original and the target language. Discipline and continuous practice have no substitute in translation. Even a native speaker of a particular language may not be a good translator vis-a-vis non-native speaker as s/he may lack in the aptitude for translation.

Source Language (SL) and **Target Language (TL)** are the two terms related to translation from a particular language to a specific language.

If some centuries ago, translation was mainly for literary purposes, in the changed globalised world, it is more for professional and commercialised use.

When you buy an electronic product, you get a manual or instruction booklet with it which is generally bi-lingual. Official invitation cards, parliamentary documents, question papers of other than language subjects, are generally bi-lingual - most of the times English and Hindi or any other Indian language.

A translator creates an image of an author and then sees to it to become a reality in the real world. The role of a translator is not just confined to word to word translation, rather it is much deeper.

Terms Related to Translation

- **Source Language (SL):** The language from which translation is done.
- **Target Language (TL):** The language to which translation is done.
- **Equivalence:** Broadly speaking, it is a kind of similarity between two languages not sameness which could be at the level of word meaning, structure, grammar, etc. No two words are synonyms in two languages. While translating from one language to the other, one looks for approximation rather than sameness. The word 'sameness' may have the following 'synonyms': similarity, regularity, evenness, consistency, uniformity, monotony, repetitiveness. Similarly one may not find equivalents in the target language.
- **Negotiation:** It is an essential feature of translation. It is the area between cultures, texts, writer and reader, original text and the translated text where the gap between what is known and unknown is prevalent, and the space is full of uncertainty and tension. Dominance (of the source language and of source culture), submission (the target culture feels proud. In the case of English, Indian people take pride in using words like: awesome, cool and hot), resistance (in the target language to accept), etc. are related to negotiation.
- **Acculturation:** is related to the cultural distinctness of the original language and the negotiation on this level to find equivalence. Advertisements all over the world look like American advertisements is an example of acculturation.
- **Paraphrasing:** It is the same as we have studied in detail in the previous Chapter. In the context of translation it is meaning to meaning translation, or in other words, dynamic equivalence.
- **Adaptations:** Relegated to periphery of faithfulness, where the person adapting/translating it takes liberty in content and expression. You would have heard of the term in reference to theatre and films. Shakespeare's plays have been adapted into some Hindi films too. Some other writers' works have also been adapted into theatre and movies.
- **Transliteration:** It is conversion of script from one language to another. It is one to one mapping from one system to another. For example, a Hindi word 'आंख' can be written in Roman script instead of the usual Devnagri one as *aankh* for which English equivalence is 'Eye'.

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Types

Translation has come a long way from the translation of classics of Greek and Roman to the machine translation of present times. Through this period, it has traversed a journey of many beliefs, myths and parameters of judgment. Some thought that bringing in equivalence from a Source Language to the Target Language was the only task of a translator; others believed in identical reproduction of an original text.

There are many terms related to translation, like faithful translation, idiomatic translation, word for word, adaptation, paraphrasing, etc.

Depending upon the closeness to the source text, the level of faithfulness is decided. The more freedom is given to a translator, communicatively better translation can be got. Adaptation can be the farthest end of freedom, wherein just the gist of the source document is conveyed for a specific purpose, like the movie adaptations of novels and written texts; children's abridged versions of bigger texts in a target language.

Intent of a translator is actually the purpose of translation which is crucial in deciding the type. Broadly speaking, it can be categorised as Non-literary (academic) and Literary (creative) for which mainly two approaches are adopted:

A. Literal Translation for Non-literary Texts

Literal, word for word translation is perceived as non-figurative and not having specific contextual meaning. Literal is basically the meaning of a word which can be found in a dictionary, held by the word itself. Therefore, in literal translation the exact words and grammar structure are translated faithfully the same way in the target language also. Faithfulness is, in a way, one to one equivalence. Word for word, same order maintained translation is called interlinear translation in which grammatical structure also remains the similar, though this approach also seems to be unnatural.

Example: सरकार ने दिल्ली से आगरा के बीच बुलेट ट्रेन को मंजूरी दे दी है।

The Government has approved the bullet train between Delhi and Agra.

Most of the administrative and technical translation comes in this category. Manuals, parliamentary documents, bilingual websites, etc. are the examples of literal translation. Here it must be kept in mind that literal translation does not stop a translator to be creative in translation though faithfulness to the source text and language remains primary focus.

B. Idiomatic Translation for Literary Texts

This type of translation is basically reproduction of the original text. In other words, idiomatic translation keeps into account meaning to meaning changes while translating. It is mainly used for literary translation. Old classics and the present masterpieces written in regional languages may become accessible through such translation. Free translation is for meaning for meaning and 'meaning' may vary according to one's interpretation and inference of meaning.

Example: उसका जीवन बंसत बहार था।

He was in the prime of youth.

The theories of translation move between the two extremes

Activity 1

Read the following Hindi poem by Amrita Bharti and its English translation in two versions. Now work in groups and note down the points of difference between the two versions and share it with other groups. Make a final comparative analysis of the two. Are you satisfied with the first or the second version? Or would you like to have your own translation?

Now translate any one Hindi poem of your choice in English. work in pairs/groups. Alternative pairs/groups can work on literal and figurative translation respectively.

Original	Literal translation	Idiomatic translation
वह औरत का दिल था जो बोल रहा था बोले ही जा रहा था युगों से ।	<i>That Very Same Incident</i>	<i>It Happens Again</i>
वह औरत का दिल था जो चुप था चुप चला आ रहा था सदियों से ।	It was woman's heart Which was speaking Kept on speaking For ages.	It was a woman's heart that was speaking had been speaking for ages
और इनके बीच एक पहाड़ था एक आदमी या एक चूहा जो कुतर रहा था मित्र क्षणों में भी चीत्कार करती आवाज़ को सुन्न हुई जुबान को पहले ही दिन से ।	It was woman's heart Which was silent Stayed silent For centuries.	It was a woman's heart that was silent had been silent for centuries
	And between them there was a mountain A man A rat Which was gnawing Even in moments of friendship At the screaming voice At the silent tongue From the very first day.	And between them was a mountain - a man or a rat that gnawed even in times of friendship at the screaming voice at the silent tongue from the very first day

Translation type may be chosen according to the need and objective of it. So many other factors than the two languages also decide how much originality seems to be retained.

Activity 2

For Assignment/Project

- A. Make a list of some of the novels/plays which have been adapted into Bollywood movies.
- B. Now take one of them and compare the text with the theatrical adaptation. For how far is it faithful to the original? Write a review of the film with that perspective in mind.

Theories and Practices of Translation

When we talk about literary translation, it is actually a much neglected area of literary criticism, where broadly speaking, the ways to study literature are discussed. **Study of translation begins as an area of specific study called Translation Studies.** Although translation was in vogue many centuries ago but it was in the 1970s that the concepts to discuss translation were devised and some strategies evolved. There are basically two different parameters of translation: **originality** and **creativity**, around which the theories of translation revolve.

- **Originality:** The concern is on faithfulness towards the original text.
- **Creativity:** The focus is on tempering with original text and bringing into another one is considered
- **Literary Translation: An Inferior Skill?**

Literary translation begins with the presumption of inferiority and it is considered a second hand literature. In the Preface of Thomas Malory's *Morte d' Arthur* the publisher writes: "...which copy Sir Malory did take out of certain books of French and reduced it to English", which proves how translation was considered an inferior activity than original writing.

DON'T JUST
TRANSLATE
WORDS.
TRANSLATE IDEAS.

Original text is considered the absolute standard whereas translated version as second rate. Translation has been totally source oriented and it has been considered an ad-Hoc arrangement and an unproductive activity.

Although, the situation is a bit better in Comparative literature and the importance of translation has been recognised to some extent. Even the duty of a translator is to work as mediator who transfers themes and motifs from one language to another.

In spite of this step-motherly treatment given to translation, it is undeniably a fact that Homer, Plato, Dante and others are known to us because of translations. We have been introduced to a rich ocean of world literatures and varied world cultures through translations only.

Still the fact remains that the translated texts are never considered as separate texts and translation is given an inferior role through its history. The problem has been with the approach- whether the translated version is true to the source or not. The deviation from source is taken as a sign of poor translation skill.

Therefore, there is a need to question and change the entire perspective of translation, its definition and scope. The strategy of keeping close with the source while translating from Source Language to Target Language requires some review in linguistics/literary criticism.

Some strategies do not work for translation of non-literary and literary texts. Linguistics has helped in non-literary translation but not much in literary one, though the approach has somewhat changed since mid-1970s since translation studies began as a separate field of study.

Do You Know?

Rajbhasha Vibhaag (Department of Official Language) of the Government of India works under the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India according to the Official Language Act, 1963. The guidelines related to the use of Hindi and English in official work of the Government offices have been laid down in this Act and the offices have to ensure its compliance.

Commission for Scientific and Technical Terminology, Government of India brings out various bi-lingual and even tri-lingual dictionaries and glossaries on various specific fields like administrative, technical, etc. which are considered standard dictionaries and are used widely by translators not only in Government offices but even outside.

Assumed or explicit negotiation takes place between the parties or languages. While negotiating, cultural aspect is also taken into consideration. Cultural interactions can take place in other than translation situation as well but translation is a better and unique way to study acculturation. Similarly histories can be studied only through translation whether it is the history of a language like Latin and Greek; philosophy, and/or religion.

Therefore, translation from Bangla to Hindi or translation from Oriya to Hindi should sound different and that is the uniqueness of it. And the fundamental observation is why should all translations sound same? Translation today is much more than the strategies alone and the main focus is that otherness of SL should be maintained.

Beginners may begin being more loyal to the source language and they may maintain discipline initially. Moreover, no one strategy is exclusive rather all three of them have contributed considerably in what today is known as translation studies. Moreover, they supplement each other and translation has become a process of acculturation - constructing cultures, and even deciding which texts to be rewritten. Acculturation process between cultures will decide the future of translation. Here it must be highlighted that abundant translation work is being witnessed from different regional cultures

Activity 4

Read the following small Hindi poem, then translate it in English without looking at the translation provided here. Compare your version with the given one and share it for peer review or teacher's feedback to find out which version is better.

दिल का दर्द - हिन्दी प्रेमकविता
 दिल में दर्द होठों पे मुस्कुराहट हो
 ऐसा लगे जिंदगी से कोई शिकायत ना हो
 फिर जिंदगी भी क्या याद करेगी
 खुद बखुद फरियाद करेगी
 कहेगी शामिल कर लो मुझे भी खुद में
 बस खुशामद आपकी करना
 उसकी ज़रूरत रहेगी
 -गुमनाम कवि

The Pain of Heart - A Hindi Love Poem
 Pain in the heart and a smile on the face
 It should seem that there are no complaints from life
 Then life will realize the fact
 It will request by itself
 It shall say please include me in yourself
 Just pleasing you
 Will be its necessity

Source: <http://hindilovepoems.com/2014/03/29/dil-ka-dard-hindi-love-poetry/>

Examples from Literature

Translation is considered an inferior skill as compared to creative writing. Therefore, translators are looked down as compared to creative writers, and translated books inferior to originals. Still many a times it has been proved just the opposite in many pieces of literature.

One Hundred Years of Solitude by Gabriel Garcia Marquez was originally written in Spanish but translated in English later on. The author himself believed that the translated version was much better than the original work, contrary to the general belief.

Some writers have been opposed to translation work and have made fun of it. Valadimir Nabakov was one of them.

Let us take a few examples from literature to have a critical discussion on translation and related issues. Let us take the case of two stories by Mahasweta Debi- *Breast Giver* and *Draupadi*, originally written in Bangla as *Standaayini* and *Daupadi* respectively but later translated in English. *Standaayini* has been translated as 'Wet-Mother' and 'Breast giver' as two different versions, the synonyms of a nurse who feeds upon others' children.

Debi has used the expression 'Durga' many a times in *Breast Giver*, which has been translated as 'Lion-seated' in English by Gaytri Spivak. *Draupadi* and *Breast Giver* both are a few pages long stories each but Spivak has written much longer Forewords to the stories than their actual length. Such lengthy forewords require some elaboration and explanation here. Some of the words and expressions uniquely understood in Bangla and to the Bengali psyche do not have exact equivalents in English and with the English readers who cannot equate with them and contextualise them.

In *Draupadi*, Spivak explains the two versions of the names- *Draupadi*, the Sanskritised name from *Mahabharata* and *Draupadi*- the tribalised version of the name; then some details about *Mahabharata* and the role of *Draupadi* there; different type of kinship in the epic; some comments about the legitimised pluralisation of *Draupadi*, a wife to five husbands, her strange status and how clothing become a medium of *Dharma*. Foreign English readers may require such details when they read the English version of the story.

The examples of these stories show how translation helps in the wide reach of a literary work and how a good translator may help by providing notes and annotations to reach to readers of different cultures.

Activity 5

Name some Hindi or other Indian language's literary texts translated into English or vice versa. Some examples have been given. Expand the list further by adding more.

Like:

- *Hejar Churashir Ma* has been translated as *No.1084's Mother* in English
- *Panch Parmeshwar* by Premchand has been translated as *The Holy Panchayat*
- *Aadhe Adhoore* by Mohan Rakesh as *Half Way House*

Activity 6

Work in groups of 4-5 and translate the following poem in English. Do not do word to word translation, but you must broadly be keeping the theme the same, i.e. Idiomatic translation will be preferred.

इतना तो सुबूझ है कि कुछ को ही सही, अपनी साँधी मिट्टी की महक याद है
अच्छा है, जिज्ञे-धुत्तों को ही सही, अपनी संस्कृति की गरिमा का भान है,
कहने-सुनने-देखने में तो मैं सवा सौ करोड़ बच्चों की माँ हूँ,
पर गतीमत है कि कुछ को तो अपनी माँ के आँगन में बितार पल याद है।

म्हट में अफसोस ही करती रहूँ कि मेरे बच्चे अक्सर नुझ से ही नजरें कतराते हैं,
अपनी माँ से कन्नी काटकर, किसी आँटी से दुआ-सलाम करते हैं,
शर्म आती है उन्हें, अपनी माँ को माँ कहने में
और बाहर वालों से हँस-हँस कर बतियाया करते हैं।

सोचती हूँ अक्सर, कैसे इन नादानों को मिट्टी का मोल समझाऊँ,
कैसे इनको रिशती की गरिमा और सभ्यता-संस्कृति की पहचान कराऊँ,
कैसे भूले-भटके-बहके गुमराहों को घर पर वापस लाऊँ,
तोपकर पूरे घर को गोबर से, खुद स्वागत में बिछ जाऊँ।

सच यह भी है कि कब तक मायावी भूल-भुलैयाँ में रम पाओगे,
कब तक चुँधियाती दुनियाँ की जगमग में मशगूल रह पाओगे,
कब तक गुलाम दिमागियत की बेड़ियों में जकड़े रह पाओगे,
धूल-फिर थककर, शाम को बुद्धू घर ही लौटकर आओगे।।

By: Prerna Malhotra

Translatability Issues or Lost in Translation

"Languages are not mere languages, they are worldviews and hence untranslatable."

Nancy Huston

- Some words/ expressions and concepts of a particular language do not find exact equivalence in target language. For example, in Hindi there are specific terms for familial relations like, बुआ, मामी, चाची, ताई, भौसी but in English there are no equivalents for them.
- It is quite difficult to translate some expressions as the readers of the target language are not familiar with the cultural context of the original expression. For example, an expression like 'नीलकण्ठ' may not be understood by non-Indian readers.
- A particular word may have two different meanings or false cognate in two languages. For example, the word 'Menu' in English and French has different meanings. In France, it is set meal but in English it is a list of the options available in a restaurant.
- Asymmetry in languages- when no exact equivalent is available in a language.
- Then there may be a case of general vocabulary and specific vocabulary, like 'Bus' is a public transport but as a specialised case it is a vocabulary of computer. Similarly, mouse is a small rodent but as a specific case it becomes an input device of a computer. 'Bank' may have different meanings - the bank of a river or a place where financial transactions take place.

Activity 7

Make a list of some words which have a general meaning and some specific meaning like the examples given above: bank, mouse, etc.

- Then there is the dilemma of in-betweenness in general and specific vocabulary.
- Grammatical and rhetorical differences may cause another translatability issue.
- Fidelity to the original is a perennially contentious issue.
- If the original text has a word which does not have an equivalent in the target language, like Mango is not grown in some places. Then should it be replaced by some other term?
- Changing the names and setting to the localised needs is another aspect which is usually taken care of in children stories.
- It is difficult to keep translation true to original when there is conflict between naturalness and faithfulness.

- Another issue is about timing. For example, should a 17th century text should be set in the 17th or 21st century?
- Greetings in different cultures and their transferability in target language is another perspective.

These are some of the issues related to translation and most of these questions should have been solved through theories of translation.

Some Interesting Facts about Translation

- The concept of World English is being propagated as opposed to British English, American English, Indian English, etc.
- 30th September is celebrated as International Translation Day.
- All efficient translators may not be equally good interpreters.
- Meaning, tone and intent of an original writer needs to be retained. Only a human translator can do that. Machine cannot always replace humans in translation.
- St. Jerome is considered the father of translation. His translation of the *Bible* in Latin was done in the 4th or 5th century.
- 'Therein' is a seven letter word which has 10 different words without rearranging the letters. They are: the, he, her, here, there, in, ere, rein, therein, herein
- It is believed that the changes in a language take place on such a speed that a person cannot understand his/her own language used five hundred years back without the help of an expert.
- Robert Frost was of the opinion that '**poetry is lost in translation**'.
- The length may vary from one language to another. According to the experience of English-Hindi and vice-versa translators, Hindi has at least ten percent more length than English version.

Machine Translation or Machine aided Translation

Machine translation is translation through computer software like Babelfish, Google Translator, Bing Translator, etc. It is also called **automated translation**. There is no replacement to human translation yet information technology has made it possible though the quality of translation can be debated.

Computer linguists cannot develop a human substitute at least it does not seem a reality now.

Activity 8

Type a few lines or a paragraph in Hindi or English. Then through a translation software like Google Translator, machine translate it in another language. Analyse the translation thoroughly and note down the words/expressions which you think were not properly translated. Work in pairs and comment about the problems of machine translation.

We cannot expect good quality translation in machine translation but it may work in certain situations like where it is technical translation and simple equivalence of words is required in target language. Yet at times the overall meaning is destroyed through it.

The Bible's Translation

The first English translation was done by Wycliffe of the Bible in 1382. It is interesting to note that immediately after this translation a decree was passed by Oxford about not translating scriptures in individual capacity and not to read such versions. This decree remained valid till the fall of Constantinople. Printing press was invented much later, therefore, the translation of Wycliffe's Bible is in handwritten format. 1611 version was called King James version and fifty translators collaborated in it.

Wycliffe Bible link: http://www.john-wycliffe.com/fac_wycliffe_open.jpg

A List of Administrative Vocabulary

Accordingly	तदनुसार
Administrative	प्रशासनिक
Technical	तकनीकी
Matter is under consideration	मामला विचाराधीन है
Interim	अंतरिम
Department	विभाग
Ad-Hoc	तदर्थ
Recommendation	संस्तुति
Submitted for necessary action	आवश्यक कार्रवाई हेतु प्रस्तुत
Earned Leave	अर्जित अवकाश

Note: This is just a suggestive list of administrative vocabulary. You can learn about many more words.

Activity 9

Make a list of translations of some sentences put up at various public places, like Metro and Airports, etc., for example, Please mind the gap.

धुली बनाए रहें

Translation and Interpreting

Translation and interpreting are interconnected skills and both are related to fundamentally translation only. If one is written translation and the other spoken, yet both are different skills. Translation is translation, and so is interpreting. Both are more different than similar skills except for the fact that both require translation from one language to another.

Interpreting is translation of spoken content- of speeches, business dialogues/meetings and concerts, live programmes where the listeners/ audience do not understand the language of speaker/s. In interpreting, time is a big factor. One has to listen to a speaker and within fraction of a second, an interpreter has to interpret too.

Then, there is no scope of repetition in interpreting, whereas a translator can re-read or re-listen to recorded original language input.

Activity 10

Work in pairs/groups and prepare a list of situations where interpreting is required.

For example: 1. Business meeting with foreign delegates

Principles for Use of Terminology while Translating into Hindi or Indian languages

- 'International terms' should be transliterated in Hindi and Indian languages, like names of elements and compounds (Hydrogen); units of weight, measure (calorie, kilogram); Scientific terms (Fahrenheit, sin, cos, etc.) though abbreviations may be written in Devanagari script.
- Clear, simple and easily understandable terms should be used so that exact communication goal is achieved.
- The foreign words which have become a part of Hindi may be retained like police, machine, etc.

(Source: *The Principles approved by the Standing Commission for Scientific and Technical Terminology*)

Conclusion

Translation is mainly done in two ways- word to word and meaning to meaning. Yet, the way two writers cannot write two similar things, no two translators can do the same. However original a writer be, yet s/he is influenced by something in past or present on any of the occasions. There is no one specific strategy for translation till this day. As expectations and requirements differ, so vary the strategies of translation which range from faithfulness to original to freedom to translate. Then, though we have reached an age of machine translation, yet machines cannot altogether replace humans in translation at least in the coming many years.

Summary

You have learnt in this Chapter that:

- Translation even being considered an inferior skill than creative writing and original being deliberated superior, it is a fact that we could know about the Roman and Greek classics and other literature of other languages due to translation only.
- There are two ways of doing translation: word to word and meaning to meaning which are used for academic or non-literary and literary translations respectively.
- Theories and strategies of translation help in dealing with the issues of translatability.
- Interpreting is also a kind of translation but unlike the latter, it requires some more skills as an interpreter has many other challenges.
- *Rajbhasha Vibhag* of the Ministry of Home Affairs decides about the issues related to English-Hindi and Hindi-English translation in Government of India Offices and prepares bilingual and trilingual dictionaries.

Further Reading

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