Building Bridges across India's Language Barriers: Translation as Transforming Agency (Reflections on Translation as Unifying Negotiatorof India in the Context of NEP-2020)

Kumar Chetanya Joshi

Research Scholar
Department of English
Jain Vishva Bharati Institute-Ladnun, Rajasthan

Abstract

In a multilingual and diverse country like India, language has always been a significant factor that has both united and divided the country. The Indian government has been taking several initiatives to strengthen regional languages and their literature while simultaneously promoting English as a global language. One such initiative is the provision of translated English texts for students pursuing technical courses like engineering and medicine in local languages as India has a big population and any one language (even English for that matter) can't be imposed on the people. This article, thus, explores the role of translation in bridging the language barriers in India and promoting linguistic diversity. The study uses a qualitative approach and draws insights from previous leading translation theorists to understand their viewpoints about the translation as a powerful tool and a unifying agency and also how it can helpthe promotion of local languages and their literature thus paving a way for them. The present study also highlights the challenges faced in implementing this initiative and suggests ways to use translation as a 'Unifying Negotiator' of India in the context of NEP-2020. Overall, the article emphasizes the importance of translation as a transforming agency in building bridges across India's language barriers and promoting linguistic diversity.

Keywords: Translation, Language Barriers, India, Engineering, Medicine, Linguistic Diversity, Cultural Diversity, Language Policy, Language Policy, Language Revitalization

Introduction

The need for translation arises because human beings speak thousands of different mutually incomprehensible languages. Each language has its own speech community and its own cultural and linguistic heritage. It is humanly impossible to know very well even some of the major languages of the world. Translation is a ready means for different speech communities to know about and interact with each other. It facilitates interaction and understanding among different speech communities. Effective communication across different languages is possible because of translation. Without going through the hardship of learning a language one can know the culture and the literary and scientific achievements of a speech community. The translator, though is never considered equal to a creative writer, renders great service. But for him, we could not have had an access to the great works of literature like the Bible, the Mahabharata, the Ramayana and the Gita. These works became popular only because of their translations into a number of different languages of the world. Thus, translation serves as a source of diffusion of

knowledge of several kinds. Its function as an essential tool for international understanding cannot be underestimated. Translation is a very difficult and challenging job. It involves far more a working acquaintance with two languages. A. Levy (1963) puts it,

A translation is not a monistic composition, but an interpenetration and conglomerate of two structures. On the one hand there are the semantic content and the formal contour of the original, on the other hand the entire system of aesthetic features bound up with the language of the translation. (Levy5-6)

It is an inter-textual activity involving the establishment of equivalence at the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic levels depending on the purpose of translation and the nature of the Source Language text, the method of translation may range from word to word translation to transcreation or recreation. Translation types can be classified basically into four: (i) Word-to-word translation; (ii) Literal translation; (iii) Free translation; and (iv) Transcreation. The word-to-word translation is the closest to the SL text at the textual or linguistic level. Transcreation may be considered closest to the spirit of the original, but farthest away from the original linguistically. However, it should be remembered that these four types cannot be treated as water-tight compartments. The distinction between them is blurring. In fact, translation passes through literal and free translation. The continuum gradually drifts away from the form and letter of the SL text and proceeds towards its meaning and spirit.

Translation plays a key role in the utilization, addition and expansion of languages. It enriches both the target language and the source language. The target language is benefitted through the absorption of phonology, vocabulary and syntax of the Source Language (SL). Translation reveals strikingly the likenesses and differences between two civilizations because it depends on a double awareness of the cultural context in which the original was produced and of the context into which it is to be projected. Translation also serves as an academic need. Generations of teachers have used this as an essential aid to language learning. It offers a particular insight into the nature of language as well as contrastive linguistic and cultural studies.

1.1 Translation as Power, and Knowledge in a Postcolonial World

Many theorists of different languages have considered translation as a great power as it is a great carrier of different languages which means it is a knowledge sharing device. Even the greatest countries cannot underestimate the importance of translation. In a postcolonial world, power of translation and knowledge are closely intertwined, and dominant languages and cultures exert power over marginalized languages and cultures. Translation, in this context, becomes a site of struggle for power and knowledge. Michel Foucault's ideas on power and knowledge are relevant to the study of translation as a power in a postcolonial world. Foucault argues that power is not a possession but a relation. Power operates through the production and dissemination of knowledge, which in turn creates and reinforces power relations (Foucault 67). Dominant languages and cultures use translation to extend their power over marginalized languages and cultures, while marginalized languages and cultures use translation to resist and subvert dominant power relations. Gayatri C. Spivak argues that marginalized groups are often excluded from the production and dissemination of knowledge, and their voices are silenced or misrepresented(Spivak 103). Translation, in this context, becomes a way of representing the voices of the subaltern, and of challenging dominant power relations.Translation has always been a crucial tool for cultural exchange and understanding. However, it has also been used as a means of power and control. As Michel Foucault argues, language itself is a site of power, and translation can be used to maintain or disrupt power relations (Foucault 67).Edward Said, in his concept of colonial discourse, argues that the British used translation for their own benefit, often suppressing the voices of the colonized (Eward Said 143).

In his essay *The Task of the Translator*, Walter Benjamin emphasizes the role of language in shaping cultural and historical identity. He contends that translation can be used to bridge cultural and linguistic differences and to facilitate cross-cultural communication. He suggests that translation can also be used as a tool of resistance against dominant discourses and as a means of challenging existing power relations. He also argues that translation is a creative act that involves the transformation of the original text. While translation can be used to promote cultural exchange and understanding, the challenges of translation lie in maintaining the integrity of the original text. (Goyal 12)

In the context of colonialism, Said argues that the translation was used as a tool of domination and control. He contends that the British used translations of Arabic and other texts to represent and construct the Oriental 'other' as inferior and exotic, and to justify their colonial policies (Eward Said 146). Said emphasizes that the act of translation is not just a linguistic activity, but also a process of cultural representation and interpretation that can reinforce or challenge power relations between societies.

A noted translation theorist Susan Bassnett argues that translation has played a significant role in the formation of national and cultural identities. She contends that translation has been used as a tool of cultural transfer, and that it has contributed to the dissemination of cultural ideas and practices across different societies (Bassnett 65). She also emphasizes that translation is not a neutral process but is influenced by power relations and cultural biases. Bassnett emphasizes the importance of considering the social and cultural contexts in which translation takes place and the ways in which these contexts shape the process and outcome of translation (Bassnett 69).

In her book *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, Spivak argues that translation is not just a linguistic activity but also a process of cultural and social transformation. She contends that translation can be used to challenge dominant discourses and to create alternative modes of cultural and political representation.Spivak contends that the act of translation involves a process of selection, interpretation, and representation, and that this process can reinforce or challenge existing power relations. Spivak argues that translation is not a neutral process but is influenced by cultural and social biases, and that these biases can have significant implications for the ways in which cultural and political identities are constructed and represented(Spivak 134).Derrida also emphasizes the role of power in the process of translation, arguing that translation is not a neutral or objective process but is shaped by cultural and social hierarchies. He contends that the act of translation can both reinforce and challenge existing power relations, and that it can be used as a tool of resistance against dominant discourses.

Harish Trivedi has also emphasized the role of translation in the development of Indian literature, and has called for greater recognition of the contributions of translators in this regard. He has argued that translation has played a key role in the dissemination and development of Indian literature, and that translators should be regarded as important cultural intermediaries who help to bridge the gap between different languages and cultures (A 9).Tejaswini Niranjana is an important Indian theorist of translation; known for her contributions to the field of translation studies has emphasized the importance of understanding the power dynamics that are inherent in the act of translation, and has called for a more nuanced approach to the practice of translation.

Niranjana has argued that translation is not a neutral or objective process, but is always shaped by the social, political, and cultural contexts in which it takes place. She has emphasized the need for translators to be aware of the power dynamics that are at play in the act of translation, and to be conscious of their own positionality in relation to these dynamics. She has also emphasized the importance of translation as a means of promoting cross-cultural dialogue and understanding. She has argued that translation has the

potential to break down barriers between different cultures and to facilitate the exchange of ideas and perspectives (Niranjana 231).

1.2 Translation as Unifying Negotiator of India

India is a country with immense linguistic diversity, with over 19,500 languages spoken throughout its various regions. However, this linguistic diversity has also created a significant barrier in communication and education, as many individuals are unable to understand or access information in languages other than their own. This issue has been particularly prominent in the fields of engineering and medicine, where English has traditionally been the dominant language of instruction and communication. To address this issue, the government of India has been providing English texts in translated versions for the students of engineering and medical, in an effort to bridge the language barrier and promote local languages and literature. Hence the importance of translation as a transforming agency in India and the impact of the government's translation initiatives on local languages and literature are of paramount importance.However, with the rise of globalization and the dominance of English as a global language, many Indian languages and their literature are facing the threat of extinction. This has prompted the Indian government to take serious steps to promote and preserve regional languages and their literature by providing English translations of works in fields like engineering and medicine.

India is a land of multiple languages as many languages are used and spoken unto the Indian land and multilingualism is an essential aspect of India's cultural heritage. However, with the rise of globalization and the dominance of English, many Indian languages are facing the threat of extinction. The promotion of regional languages and their literature through translation is a step towards preserving India's linguistic and cultural diversity. It is essential to recognize the importance of multilingualism and promote it as a valuable asset that contributes to the richness of India's cultural heritage (Goyal 16).

Needless to say, local languages play a vital role in shaping identity, social cohesion, and community development. However, many local languages are endangered, and their speakers face marginalization due to the dominance of global languages. In this context, translation has emerged as a powerful tool for the development of local languages. Translation helps in making information and knowledge accessible to people who do not understand the source language. It is essential for preserving and promoting local languages and cultures.Translation is a critical tool for the development of local languages. It helps in making knowledge and information accessible to people who do not understand the source language. Translation enables local languages to compete with global languages and to participate in the global knowledge economy. It is essential for promoting linguistic rights and cultural diversity. Translation also helps in preserving endangered languages and promoting language revitalization.Translation has significant implications for language planning and policy. It can help in the formulation of language policies that support the development of local languages by facilitating the implementation of language policies by means of making information and resources available in local languages. It can help in promoting multilingualism and language diversity, which are essential for sustainable language development.

Translation plays a crucial role in language revitalization. Language revitalization aims to reverse language shift and revitalize endangered languages. Translation can help in achieving this goal by making resources available in the endangered language. It can help in promoting literacy and education in the endangered language, which is essential for language maintenance and transmission.Translation can also help in promoting the use of the endangered language in domains such as administration, media, and the arts. It can create new opportunities for speakers of the endangered language and promote pride and self-esteem in their linguistic and cultural heritage (Sonal Desai 65). Translation can also help in promoting

intergenerational language transmission by making resources available to parents and caregivers who want to teach the endangered language to their children.

Recognizing the importance of translation in promoting linguistic diversity and cultural exchange, the government of India has undertaken various initiatives to provide translated texts in the fields of engineering and medicine. These initiatives aim to bridge the language barrier and provide access to educational materials for individuals who may not be proficient in English. For example, the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) has directed all technical institutions to provide textbooks in regional languages for students who are more comfortable studying in their mother tongue. Similarly, the Medical Council of India (MCI) has directed medical colleges to provide study material in regional languages.

The Indian government has been actively promoting the translation of English texts into regional languages as part of its efforts to strengthen local languages and their literature. In recent years, the government has provided translated versions of textbooks in fields like engineering and medicine to students in regional language-medium schools. This move has been seen as a way to bridge the gap between English-medium and regional language-medium schools and provide equal opportunities to students from all linguistic backgrounds.

Translation, hence, has a significant role to play in the field of technical and medical education even. The translation of textbooks into regional languages can help students from non-English-speaking backgrounds to access knowledge in fields like science, technology, and medicine. This can help bridge the gap between English-medium and regional language-medium schools and provide equal opportunities to students from all linguistic backgrounds. Moreover, the availability of translated textbooks can also help promote the use and development of regional languages and their literature.

Translation can also play a vital role in the preservation and promotion of regional literature. Many Indian regional languages have a rich literary tradition that is often overlooked due to the dominance of English as a global language. Translation can help bring regional literature to a wider audience and promote cross-cultural exchange. The translation of literary works can also help preserve regional languages and their literary traditions by making them accessible to future generations. It can be a transforming agency that bridges the gap between languages and cultures, promotes intercultural dialogue and understanding, and helps preserve and promote regional languages and their literature. The Indian government's efforts to provide translated textbooks in fields like engineering and medicine to students in regional language-medium schools are a step towards promoting linguistic and cultural diversity. However, there are challenges to overcome in the translation process, and it is essential to recognize the importance of multilingualism and promote it as a valuable asset that contributes to the richness of India's cultural heritage.

Translation is a vital tool in bridging the language barrier and promoting communication and understanding across different cultures and communities. Translation not only facilitates communication, but also transforms language and culture by exposing individuals to new perspectives and ideas (Rita Kothari 76). Through translation, individuals are able to access and appreciate works of literature, scientific discoveries, and cultural traditions that were previously inaccessible to them. Translation also plays a crucial role in preserving local languages and literature, as it allows for the dissemination of local knowledge and culture to a wider audience.

In India, translation has been a transformative force in promoting linguistic diversity and cultural exchange. India has a rich literary tradition, with numerous languages and dialects contributing to its vast

literary canon. However, many of these languages and their corresponding literature have been marginalized and neglected due to the dominance of English in education and communication. Through translation, local languages and literature are able to reach a wider audience and gain recognition and appreciation (Goyal 76). Translation has also played a role in preserving endangered languages and their corresponding literature, by translating them into more widely spoken languages.Translation is not just a process of transferring the meaning of a text from one language to another, but it can also be a transforming agency that brings about social and cultural change. Translation can enable the dissemination of knowledge across linguistic and cultural boundaries and help promote intercultural dialogue and understanding. Translation can also help preserve and promote regional languages and their literature by making them accessible to a wider audience.

In today's globalized world, the use of local languages has been declining, and many languages are facing the risk of extinction. The loss of local languages results in the loss of cultural diversity and a decrease in linguistic rights. In this context, translation has emerged as a powerful tool for the development of local languages. Translation helps in making information and knowledge accessible to people who do not understand the source language. It is essential for preserving and promoting local languages and cultures.

1.3 Translation and Language Revitalization

Translation is a critical tool for the development of local languages. It helps in making knowledge and information accessible to people who do not understand the source language. Translation enables local languages to compete with global languages and to participate in the global knowledge economy. It is essential for promoting linguistic rights and cultural diversity. Translation also helps in preserving endangered languages and promoting language revitalization since it has significant implications for language planning and policy. It can help in the formulation of language policies that support the development of local languages. Translation can also facilitate the implementation of language policies by making information and resources available in local languages. It can help in promoting multilingualism and language diversity, which are essential for sustainable language development.

Translation plays a crucial role in language revitalization. Language revitalization aims to reverse language shift and revitalize endangered languages. Translation can help in achieving this goal by making resources available. It can help in promoting literacy and education in the endangered language, which is essential for language maintenance and transmission.Translation can also help in promoting the use of the endangered languages in domains such as administration, media, and the arts. It can create new opportunities for speakers of that language and promote pride and self-esteem in their linguistic and cultural heritage. Translation can also help in promoting intergenerational language transmission by making resources available to parents and caregivers who want to teach the endangered language to their children.

1.4 Challenges in Translating Local Languages

Translation is not without its challenges. Translating technical texts into regional languages like those in engineering and medicine requires specialized knowledge and skills because these technical texts have been very popular and even the leading teachers don't find their replacements in the local languages. Moreover, it is not always easy to capture the nuances and cultural contexts of a technical text in translation. Translations can also be influenced by the translator's personal biases and cultural background, which can affect the accuracy of the translation.One of the main challenges is the lack of resources and expertise in the local language. Many local languages lack a standardized orthography, which makes it difficult to produce written translations. Local languages may also lack technical terminology, which makes it challenging to

translate specialized texts such as scientific papers or legal documents.Another challenge in translating local languages is the lack of translators and interpreters. Many local languages have a small number of speakers, which makes it also challenging. The following are some challenges in translating-

1.4.1 Lack of Standardization: Technical, scientific, and medical terminology often lacks standardization, especially in languages other than English. This can make it difficult to find accurate translations of technical terms, leading to inconsistencies and inaccuracies in translated texts.

1.4.2 Limited Vocabulary: Local and regional languages may not have a sufficient vocabulary to accurately convey technical and scientific concepts. This can result in translations that are imprecise, misleading, or difficult to understand.

1.4.3 Language Barriers: Translators may not be proficient in both the source language and the target language, leading to inaccuracies and errors in the translated text. In addition, regional dialects and variations in grammar and syntax can also pose challenges for translators.

1.4.4 Cultural Differences: Technical and scientific texts may contain references to cultural practices, beliefs, and traditions that are not easily translatable. This can result in translations that are incomplete or inaccurate, leading to misunderstandings and confusion.

1.4.5 Limited Resources: The translation of technical and scientific texts requires specialized knowledge and expertise, as well as access to reference materials and resources. In many cases, such resources may be limited or unavailable in local and regional languages, making it difficult to produce accurate and high-quality translations.

1.4.6 These challenges highlight the importance of investing in translation and localization efforts in India, particularly in the areas of science, technology, and medicine. By addressing these challenges and improving access to accurate and high-quality translations, India can better support its diverse linguistic communities and promote scientific and technological innovation in the region.

1.4.7 Complex Sentence Structures: Technical and scientific texts often contain long and complex sentences that can be difficult to translate accurately. This is especially true in languages that have different sentence structures or grammatical rules than English.

1.4.8 Limited Availability of Translators: Finding qualified translators who are proficient in both the source and target languages, as well as the technical subject matter, can be challenging in India. This is especially true for less commonly spoken languages.

1.4.9 Lack of Quality Control: There may be a lack of quality control mechanisms in place for translated technical and scientific texts in India. This can lead to inaccuracies, errors, and inconsistencies in the translated text, which can have serious consequences in fields such as medicine and engineering.

1.4.10 Time and Cost Constraints: Translating technical and scientific texts can be a time-consuming and expensive process, especially for large and complex documents. This can pose challenges for organizations and individuals who need to produce high-quality translations within a limited budget and timeframe.

1.4.11 Technological Limitations: Translation software and tools may not be able to accurately translate technical and scientific terminology, leading to errors and inaccuracies in the translated text. In addition, the use of specialized fonts, symbols, and diagrams can also pose challenges for translation software.

1.4.12 Inadequate Terminology Management: There may be a lack of standardized terminology management in India, which can result in inconsistent translations and misinterpretations of technical terms across different languages and dialects.

1.4.13 Lack of Contextual Knowledge: Translators may not have sufficient knowledge of the cultural, social, and political contexts in which the technical and scientific texts are being produced and consumed. This can lead to mistranslations or misunderstandings that can have serious consequences.

1.4.14 Limited Access to Resources: Translators may not have access to the latest research and technical publications in their source language, making it difficult to stay up-to-date with the latest terminology and concepts.

1.4.15 Limited Collaboration: There may be limited opportunities for collaboration between technical experts, translators, and language professionals in India. This can result in a lack of communication and coordination, leading to suboptimal translations.

Overall, these challenges highlight the need for investment in translation and localization efforts in India, as well as the importance of developing qualified and trained translators who can produce accurate and high-quality translations of technical, scientific, and medical texts in local and regional languages.

1.5 Conclusion

Edward Said has discussed the relationship between translation and power in his book *Orientalism*. He argues that translations are not neutral but rather are influenced by the political and cultural context in which they are produced. Said contends that translation is not just a linguistic activity but also an ideological and political one that involves the transfer of cultural and social values from one society to another.

Through a critical analysis of the works of various literary theorists, this article has demonstrated the complex ways in which translation has been and can be used as a tool of transforming agency. While translation has the potential to promote cultural exchange and understanding, it has also been used to maintain or disrupt power relations. By exploring the different perspectives on translation offered by the literary theorists discussed in this article, we can gain a more and complex understanding of translation in breaking barriers and building bridges in the realm of languages.

REFERENCES

1. Bassnett, Susan. *Translation Studies*. 4th ed., Routledge, 2021.
2. Benjamin, Walter. "The Task of the Translator."*Selected Writings*: Volume 1, 1913-1926, edited by Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings, Belknap Press, 1996, pp. 253-263.
3. Bhatia, Tej K. "Language Policy in Education and the Role of English in India: From Library Language to Language of Empowerment." *Language Policy*, vol. 1, no. 3, 2002, pp. 249-267.
4. Das, Sisir K. *A History of Indian Literature: 1911-1956*. Sahitya Akademi, 1991.
5. Desai, Sonal. "Translation as an Agency of Empowerment: A Study of Translated Texts in Technical Education in India." *Journal of English Language and Literature*, vol. 64, no. 1, 2018, pp. 1-14.
6. Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. Vintage, 1994.
7. Gentzler, Edwin. *Contemporary Translation Theories*. 3rd ed., Multilingual Matters, 2017.
8. Goyal, Sanjay,editor. *Expanding Words, Shrinking Worlds: Globalization and English*. Jain Vishva Bharati University, 2014.
9. Goyal, Sanjay, editor. *Rethinking Translation*. Jain Vishva Bharati University, 2012.
10. Goyal, Sanjay. "Aspects of Translation in Jain Canonical Literature." *Indian Literature*, vol. 275, no. 1, 2013, pp. 202-217.
11. Kothari, Prachi, and Kavita Anand. *New Education Policy 2020: Vision and Action Plan*. Sage Publications India, 2021.

12. Kothari, Rita. "Translation in India: Between Language and Literature." *Indian Literature*, vol. 61, no. 1, 2017, pp. 10-24.

13. Lefevere, André. *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*. Routledge, 1992.

14. Narayan, Shyamala A. "English as a Global Language: An Overview." *English Language Teaching*, vol. 5, no. 10, 2012, pp. 103-113.

15. Niranjana, Tejaswini. *Siting Translation: History, Post-Structuralism, and the Colonial Context*. Berkeley, University of California Press, 1992.

16. Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. Vintage, 1979.

17. Sharma, Rakesh Mohan. "The Politics of Language in India: Colonial Roots, Contemporary Realities." *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies*, vol. 14, no. 3, 2017, pp. 198-218.

18. Singh, Balbir. *New Education Policy 2020: Opportunities and Challenges*. Deep and Deep Publications Pvt. Ltd., 2021.

19. Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "The Politics of Translation."*Outside in the Teaching Machine*, Routledge, 1993, pp. 179-200.

20. Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*. Harvard University Press, 1999.

21. Thakur, Madhuri. "Translation: A Gateway to Empowerment." *Journal of the Poetics and Linguistics Association*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2017, pp. 99-105.

22. Trivedi, Harish. "Found in Translation" The Indian Express, 2 January 2023, p. A9.

23. Tymoczko, Maria. *Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators*. St. Jerome Publishing, 2007.

24. Venuti, Lawrence. *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*. Routledge, 1995.

25. Zhu, Chunshen. "Translating Culture vs. Cultural Translation: A Dilemma in Contemporary Translation Studies."*Perspectives: Studies in Translatology*, vol. 14, no. 4, 2006, pp. 241-247.