



The Concept and History of Translational Practice: An Overview

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Abstract

The present paper analyses one of the oldest practices in human society and civilization that is translation and its emergence as a literary discourse. It investigates the concept of translation from both the Western and Indian outlook. The paper digs into the beginnings of translational practice in the West, dating back to Herodotus' time, and in India, dating back to the Vedic era. The paper's final section delves into the topics of rewriting and postcolonial translational issues.

Keywords: postcolonial , rewriting, translation, west

Introduction

The practice of translation is as old as the expression of humans in civilization. Before the development of proper language and diction, humans were unable to communicate like today and they used to communicate with certain non verbal gestures like dancing, shaking body parts or acting. This helped the human race to translate their mind into distinct sorts of performances. Later on when human civilization developed, they found diction and sound to effectively communicate with each other. Each and every civilization possesses its own way of practice of translation, for that, it becomes an ever continuing force in any civilization. Translation is not just a practice but a powerful medium to hold records of epistemology of a particular community or region. Oral tradition was quite famous during the ancient times when it used to be recorded into manuscript. The role of translation as a process of communication is one of the ancient practices in human civilization. India and the Western countries also have ancient traditions of literary translation and the encounter between these two

civilizations occurred from the very beginning of British colonialism in India. Both the civilizations got familiar with each their contrasting patterns of translations. It is obvious to understand that both the civilizations observe a varied culture of receiving, doing and commenting on translation.

Translation Studies as a discipline deals with translation as a method, as a production and as a phenomena. The discipline promotes the scientific analysis of translation and scholarship engaged with it came forward to assimilate and historically organise the definitions of the translation and to popularise certain definitions of translation according to the need of the discipline. The emergence of translation studies in the West as a systematised discipline has its historical significance in India as well. This emergence of the discipline insists the academicians and the scholarship of India to introduce it and which led to the establishment of independent departments in the Indian universities to explore history to find the notions of translation which are already prevalent in Indian culture. The Translation Studies as a term is advocated by James S. Holmes in his work published in the early decade of 1970's. Holmes asserts that translation studies is concerned with, "the complex of problems clustered round the phenomena of translating and translations" (Mundy 5). Translation Studies as a discipline engaged with different issues related with the practice of translation. Jeremy Mundy, in his book *Introducing Translation Studies: Theories and Applications*, defines the discipline as, "Translation Studies is the new academic discipline related to the study of the theory and phenomena of translation. By its nature it is multilingual and also interdisciplinary, encompassing languages, linguistics, communication studies, philosophy and a range of types of cultural studies" (1).

Translation : From Western Lens

The birth of the translation theory in the Western region can be delineated from the time of Herodotus. Among the earliest western translators there are Aristeas and Cicero who came after Herodotus. Herodotus' central concern was with cross-cultural verbal and non verbal exchange and "how people speaking different languages manage to pass ideas on to each other – and he places that process in an insistently geopolitical context" (Robinson:1). The book entitled *Letter of Aristeas* unfolds that during the time of Alexander, translation was practised with sanctity and they used to clean their hands every day, as a ritual, before starting with translation practice Cicero who was a rhetorician as well as a famous orator often credited as the founding figure of Western translation theory. He was the first person to talk about different methods of translation and also debated how to achieve the best translation. "His remarks on the pedagogical use of translation from Greek to Latin in the training of an orator were expanded by Horace, Pliny the Younger, Quintilian, and Aulus Gellius in Rome,

adapted for medieval Christian theology by Jerome, and cited repeatedly by Catholics and reformers and humanists in support of their translatorial and pedagogical principles from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries” (Robinson: 7).

Dryden provides three categories of translation that can be applied to every type of translation. He speaks first on metaphrase, or the process of converting text from one language to another word by word, line by line. This is where Ben Jonson's translation of Horace's Art of Poetry fits in. The second, he claims, is paraphrase or latitude translation, in which the author is kept in mind by the translator so that he is never lost, but his words are not strictly followed in his own sense, and this is also recognised to be exaggerated. This includes Waller's translation of Virgil's fourth Aeneid. The third method is imitation, in which the translator (assuming he hasn't already changed his name) takes the liberty not only to deviate from the words and sense, but also to forsake both as he sees fit, adopting only a few general clues from the original to run division on the groundwork. Mr. Cowley's practice to translate two Pindar Odes and one Horace Ode into English falls in this category.

A renowned formalist, Jakobson divides translation into three categories: intralingual, interlingual, and inter-semiotic. Intralingual translation occurs within the same language, interlingual translation occurs between two languages, and inter-semiotic translation occurs between two sign systems. E. Nida, a well-known linguist and one of the most influential figures in Western translation theory, defines translation as recreating the closest possible equivalent of the source language text in the receptor language, first in order to create meaning and then in terms of style. His most fundamental theory was "equivalence," to which succeeding theorists also paid close attention. Equivalence is regarded as the most important and difficult method to adapt when translating a material from a different culture. He distinguishes between two types of equivalences as formal and dynamic. Susan Bassnett discusses “Central Issues” concerning the discipline of Translation Studies by quoting Hawkes in her book- *Translation Studies* “The first step towards an examination of the processes of translation must be to accept that although translation has a central core of linguistic activity, it belongs most properly to semiotics, the science that studies sign systems or structures, sign processes and sign functions” (22)

Translation: From Indian perspective

If we look back at the history of the concept of translation in ancient India, we can find instances of translation as a popular practice of ‘retelling’ in different native Indian languages. Mainly epics like the Mahabharata, the Vedas, the Purana, the Ramayana and many more ancient Indian texts were used to be translated into various indigenous languages. And the narratives of source texts were recreated and retold again in the particular native

language to make it more convenient and acceptable to the target audience. Those pre-colonial translations have great significance in the formation of bhasha and the modern Indian languages. These translations helped to imagine Loka, Desha and Bhasha through re-telling of their native stories, for that “original has never been specially privileged” and “the translator’s position has never been secondary” (Phukan, Shibani 27). This practice of retelling of classical texts or recreation paves a way towards creative departure which was a very familiar practice or prevalent norm for translating works.

‘Anuvada’ is the Sanskrit term to denote translation in the Hindi language and Anuvada (translation) had been practised since the time immemorial in India without gaining any name or style. A famous character from Hindu mythology named as Narad, assumed to be the first translator of the source message to the target person from one place to another. Though the process of translation lacked a proper terminology at that point of time, nevertheless, it was very much prevalent under the garb of delivering messages without any distortion. During the period of colonisation of Mughals in India, Akbar took a great interest in the process of translating literature and established a ‘Maktab Khana’- a translation bureau. This bureau started translating books of Indian literature, mythology and religion. This effort paved a way towards cross cultural exchange of ideas and people got to know Indian values and philosophies across the boundaries of the nations. With the arrival of the East India Company, a new spark for the translation arose and many Indian texts got translated into the European languages. Warren Hastings, the foremost governor of the East India company encouraged the practice of translation with full heart which resulted in the translation of various texts of Sanskrit into English.

Translation as Rewriting

Andre Lefevere is credited with coining the term 'rewriting,' which is used in the literary system in two categories. The most prevalent sort of rewriting is translations, followed by the second category-reference books, critique, and historiographies. According to Lefevere, all rewritings, regardless of their goal, reflect certain ideas and modify literature to function in a specific way in a given society. In this context, rewriting refers to a social phenomenon involving a society's governing powers. As a result, rewritings cannot be considered innocent by definition. Translation has never been a stand-alone endeavour. A context in which translation occurs, a history from which a text arises, and another into which a text is transferred, are always present. Translation has always served a specific goal, or multiple purposes at once, and it has been fashioned by a different force, power, or rationale each time. Because translation works with domestic culture more than foreign culture, the translator should not be frustrated by the expectations of an institution, person, or group of

people. Certain forces shape translation as a means of cultural enrichment, including the selection of works to be translated, as well as the guidelines and aims of the translation effort. The translator and/or those who initiate the translation process choose the source material for a specific goal, and the standards for translation are developed to serve that objective. In this scenario, the translator's key concern is to meet that objective and maintaining authenticity to the source.

Postcolonial Translation

Many translation studies researchers have recently been interested in postcolonialism. Though its exact scope is sometimes unclear, postcolonialism is generally understood to encompass studies of the history of former colonies, impact of powerful European empires, resistance to colonial powers, and also studies of the impact of power imbalances between colonised and coloniser. Spivak's concerns regarding the ideological ramifications of translating 'Third World' literature into English, as well as the resulting distortion. Spivak's addresses the issues by combining feminist, postcolonialist, and poststructuralist perspectives. Spivak speaks out against western feminists who want feminist work from outside Europe to be adapted into the language of hegemony, English, highlighting tensions between the diverse approaches. According to Spivak, such translation is frequently articulated in 'translatese,' which erases the identities of politically less privileged individuals and cultures. The colonial power has traditionally employed translation into English to create a rewritten image of the 'East' that has come to represent the truth. These include missionaries who maintained schools for the colonised and also served as linguists and interpreters, as well as ethnographers who recorded native language grammars. All of these groups were engaged in the massive project of collecting and codification on which colonial power was founded.

Conclusion

This review of Eastern and Western approaches to translation provides a very basic understanding of the subject. However, translation studies as a discipline has been greatly expanded, and it now encompasses a large number of uncharted areas. As a result, we are always encountering new definitions, approaches, concepts, and translation procedures. These new investigations are introducing more difficult issues related to translation labour. The cultural revolution and post-colonial approaches in translation studies have opened up new notions and ideas in Western translation, but Indian theoretical practice has also adapted all of these theories to investigate the diversity of Indian translation.

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