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Popular or Pure Hindi: Analysing the Problematics of Literary Translations from Spanish to Hindi

Hindi popular o puro: análisis de las problemáticas de las traducciones literarias del español al hindi

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of the paper is to analyse the problems of translation when the source and target languages are foreign to each other. This creates an added responsibility on the translator to create a text that represents the original in a foreign language culture. Keeping this in mind along with the cultural aspects of making Indian audience aware of the diverse cultural, societal, and language nuances of Spanish ethos, the paper will create a base with translation theories and look at concrete and published translation of Spanish literary texts. Literary works from Spain like *España Cuenta Sus Cuentos-El rey se divierte* (Valera, Alarcón, Clarín, López Pacheco), *Cinco Visiones Críticas de España - Antitauromaquia* (Manuel Vincent), *La casa de Bernarda Alba* (García Lorca) along with their published Hindi translations will be used to explain and analyze the practical problems faced when undertaking literary translations in the multicultural and multilingual context of India.

KEYWORDS: source and target languages; problems of literary translations; Spanish-Hindi translations; culture in translation.

RESUMEN: El propósito del artículo es analizar los problemas de la traducción cuando los idiomas de origen y de destino son extraños entre sí. Esto crea una responsabilidad adicional para el traductor para crear un texto que represente completamente el original en una cultura de lengua extranjera. Teniendo esto en cuenta, junto con los aspectos culturales de hacer que la audiencia india sea consciente de los diversos matices culturales, sociales y lingüísticos del ethos español, el artículo creará una base con teorías de traducción y analizará la traducción concreta y publicada de textos literarios españoles. Obras literarias españolas como *España Cuenta Sus Cuentos-El rey se divierte* (Valera,

Alarcón, Clarín, López Pacheco), *Cinco Visiones Críticas de España-Antitauromaquia* (Manuel Vincent), *La casa de Bernarda Alba* (García Lorca) junto con sus traducciones al hindi publicadas se utilizarán para explicar y analizar los problemas prácticos a los que se enfrentan a la hora de realizar traducciones literarias en el contexto multilingüe y multicultural de la India.

PALABRAS CLAVE: lenguas de origen y de destino; problemas de las traducciones literarias; traducciones español-hindi; cultura en la traducción.

1. TRANSLATION MODELS AND THEORIES

Translation is not limited only to translating the word but more and more emphasis is being given on conveying meanings and to do so special attention is applied on to appropriate idiomatic usage, nomenclature, and terminology according to need and requirement of literature. Therefore, the translator often encounters with problems while translating the literary text in cultural ethos. Language is a fundamental aspect of human civilization, serving as a vehicle for expressing thoughts and facilitating mutual exchange of ideas and feelings (Adhikary 2020).

Before delving into the specific case studies regarding the cultural aspects of translation in the Indian multilingual context, a framework of literary translation theories is required, their development and how these have impacted on the psyche of the translators that have a challenging job of ensuring that nothing is lost in translation. Translation studies initially evolved as an independent academic field from the theories propounded by the Russian linguist Andrei Fedorov and the American Eugene A. Nida. However posterior works and theories further developed this field from its nascent stage to a more developed discipline with a shift in attention in literary studies to considerations of the impact, reception, and communicative function of a literary work of art has acted as the motivating factor behind the study of literary translations and the role they play in the literary process.

In recent years, the field of translation studies has become a relatively independent discipline with clearly delineated goals, i.e. the description of translations and translation processes and the discovery of general rules for the development of models capable of explaining these phenomena. (Lefevere 1978)

The normative theory of translation has been explained in the landmark work of Eugene A. Nida and Charles R. Taber's «The Theory and Practice of Translation». In this certain fundamental set of priorities has been delineated and the book mentions that:

- a. Contextual consistency has priority over verbal consistency (or word-for-word concordance);
- b. Dynamic equivalence has priority over formal correspondence;
- c. The aural (heard) form of language has priority over the written form;
- d. Forms that are used by and acceptable to the audience for which a translation is intended have priority over forms that may be traditionally more prestigious.

However, the normative approach theorists have been traditionally insensitive to a key ingredient of translation which are the socio-cultural aspects. If these theorists of normative approach are followed then the problem of translation is reduced to a mere problem of translatability, while ignoring the conditions under which translations are produced. It was Romy Heylen who in his work «Translation, Poetics and the Stage» pointed out that (Heylen 1993, 4) historical changes and the socio-cultural context of the reception of translation determine a reader's expectations, and form part of his or her notion of what constitutes translation. Heylen goes on to insist that «normative models of translation based on absolute concept of equivalence need to be replaced by a historical-relative and socio-cultural model of translation» (Heylen 1993, 5).

The socialization process through which individuals use language in socio-cultural contexts is crucial for understanding the dynamics of translation. Beyond the linguistic elements of a text, the task of translation requires a deep understanding of the cultural frameworks and nuances that shape the original work, as well as the ability to effectively convey these cultural underpinnings in the target language. Translators must be adept at navigating the complexities of cultural modelling, leveraging their bilingual skills to bridge the gaps between the source and target cultures (Orellana and Reynolds 2008).

A cultural model that was proposed was that of defining translation as a series of decisions and choices rather than as a process of blindly following mechanical rules. In one of his landmark essays of Jiří Levý titled «Translation as a Decision Process» he characterizes translation from a teleological point of view as a process of communication and translating from the pragmatic point of view as a decision process¹

However, unfortunately Levý offers few insights into the motivations underlying the translator's decisions. The historical and cultural aspects of both, the transmitted and the receiving cultures should not be ignored (Bassnett 2013). Language then is the heat within the body of culture, and it is the interaction between the two that results in the continuation of life-energy. In the same way that the surgeon, operating the heart cannot neglect the body that surrounds it, so the translator treats the text in isolation from the culture at his peril.

The new theorists of literary translation also lean towards this tendency of dealing with translation as a cultural negotiation and would prefer to propose a historical-relative, socio-cultural model. Thus, translation is perceived not as a rule regulated activity but as a decision-making process it is not really a question of identity or synonymy but rather one of differences and shifts.

All translations are goal- and audience oriented, since they are not produced in a cultural vacuum... By underlining the translator's active intervention in appropriating a acculturating a foreign text, the underlying motives and the decisions which inform the translational process, it is possible to reach a better understanding of the process by which existing translations are created. (Heylen 1993)

¹ A series of a certain number of consecutive situations – moves as in a game – situations imposing on the translator the necessity of choosing among a certain (and very often exactly definable) number of alternatives.

In the context of India, where multiple languages co-exist, the challenges of translating between these languages, particularly Spanish and the diverse linguistic landscape, become particularly salient. The intricacies of cultural translation pose significant challenges for translators working in the Indian multilingual context, particularly when translating from Spanish into the diverse linguistic landscape of the subcontinent.

2. SPANISH TEXTS IN AN INDIAN CONTEXT

2.1 *The Historical Background: National vs Official Language*

The Indian context is vastly different and more complicated in its dimensions. It has its own unique features both in the historic and in the contemporary setting. In the historic setting, one witnesses here the superimposition of diverse colonizing empires over a vast subcontinent peopled by different ethnic and linguistic groups with vast cultural diversities, exclusive and unrelated to the colonizers.

India has a diverse list of spoken languages among different groups of people. At least 800 different languages and around 2000 dialects have been identified. The Constitution of India has stipulated the usage of Hindi and English to be the two languages of communication for the Central (Federal) government. The state governments use their own language along with English for communication with the Central government. For example, the central government sends its information in Hindi and English to the state of Karnataka and this state communicates back in Kannada and English. India has a list of 22 Official Languages.

The first question that comes to the mind is that why do we call it «official» language and why not «national» language? Considering the language and linguistic demography and cultural diversity of India, it was arduous task for the elected representative of people of this country to decide one language as a national language, the main argument these leaders put across the parliament that by this act of one national language formula will undermine the emotional and sentimental value of other language speakers and this will lead to political turmoil in future as this is against the essence of our constitution. Therefore, a middle path was invented and unanimous consensus was taken to have Official Language.

After India's independence one of the main political issues in Indian politics was connected to language problem and the government decided that the Official Language of India will be Hindi. The Indian constitution uses the term «mother tongue» instead of Language or dialect. Officially the central government recognizes 23 languages, but each language includes in it many mother tongues. The Indian census records over 200 different mother tongues.

The languages and mother tongues of India, in effect, arranged in a hierarchy of official status. At the top are the two languages, Hindi, and English, recognized as Official Language of the Union. At the next level are the regional languages recognized as Official Language in the linguistically recognized states, all of which are also listed in the Eight Schedule. At the third level are those languages listed in

the Eight Schedule which have no official status in any province, namely, *Sanskrit* and *Sindhi*... At the lowest level are those mother tongue of the people which are not recognized either as Official Language of India or of any state and are not listed in the Eight Schedule. Such mother tongues were recorded fully for the first time in the 1961 census of India (Brass 1994, 175-78).

2.2 *Problematics of Spanish to Hindi Translations*

Before its independence, majority part of India was a British colony. Before the British the most dominant Empire of north India was the Mughal Empire. The Mughals arrived in India from the central Asia. The Official Language of the Mughal courts was Persian. The Mughals, like other residents who lived to the west of the Indian sub-continent named India as *Hind* or *Hindustan*, after the river Indus which flows in the present-day Pakistan. The Language spoken in *Hind* was called by them Hindi or *Hindustani*.

After India's independence when Hindi² was chosen as the Official Language of India. This Language and its script were based on an ancient Indian Language called Sanskrit. Most of the sacred books of Hinduism are written in Sanskrit and the script is called *Devanagari*. The first problem was which dialect of Hindi is the right Hindi. Hindi has at least 13 dialects³, some of them completely different from each other. Two reasons caused to it that Hindi language includes in it so many different dialects. One reason was related to the fact that India is called *Hind* in many languages spoken west from it up to the Middle East. Mughals called the language spoken in *Hind* as Hindi. The Indians also began calling their different Languages as Hindi. The other reason which concerns to the fact that Hindi has so many different dialects, is related to the independence period of India and the debate of the Official Language of India.

Traditionally in the Indian context it has been English and or Hindi which have been used as the buffer or filter languages for translating of literary and/or theoretical texts. With the advent of English amongst the educated Indian masses and classes, many landmark international works were now within the reach and were widely read. The usage of Hindi has also created a lot of problems. The experts are still divided in their opinion of which version of Hindi should be used. For example, the standard of Spanish is the Castilian version yet there are many Latin American variants of the same language. In a similar fashion in India the translator must decide between the Purist Hindi which is quite sensitized and the *Hindustani* which is considered by many to be the Lingua Franca of India and which is the most widely spoken language.

² The official Hindi is based on the dialect which was spoken in the Delhi-Agra region with a Sanskrit vocabulary. While the popular Hindi spoken by majority of Indians is based on this dialect, it is also affected by the different cultures of India mainly the Hindi cinema based in Mumbai (formerly Bombay) in west India and it includes many English words.

³ Hindi spoken in Rajasthan is different from Hindi spoken in Bihar or Hindi of Himachal Pradesh. Sometimes the different variations of a language are considered as separate Language with their own literature.

2.3 *Analyzing the Spanish to Hindi Translations of Literary Texts*

With the growing popularity and expertise of foreign languages in India, this traditional usage of filter languages like Hindi or English has been considerably reduced and many translations are being done directly from foreign languages into Indian vernacular languages, which have also been provided all support and encouragement by various national and international agencies.

It is on doing away with filter languages in the Indian context that the translator is faced with a much more difficult task of choice making and cultural transference. Previous translations have traditionally tended to appropriate or domesticate a foreign text and adapt it to the Indian context and ethos. A case in point is the translation of the work of Spanish writer García Lorca, *La casa de Bernarda Alba*, into Hindi via the use of English as a filter language. In his translation or better said transcreation, Raghuvir Yadav adapts the family of Bernarda Alba into the Indian context. So, the setting of the story unfolds in a remote Rajasthani village in India and the same characters of the original text are maintained in the domesticated version of the work. The exotic, bizarre or the foreign element is hardly present as one feels that he is dealing with a text which is essentially Indian.

However, if we were to deal with the current translations without the use of the filter languages and which are directly done from Spanish into Hindi or vice versa then the scenario changes and we are faced with a different set of problems. On the other hand, though, it must be pointed out that by the removal of these buffer or filter languages and undertaking translations directly from the source language to the target language have had many benefits also. The prime benefit that has been derived is that many who are dedicated in this field have been able to do away with the cultural baggage of colonization. So much so that in these translations there is hardly any negotiation with the colonial background and the decision process is limited to just that of a process of communication and of negotiating the foreign, exotic or the bizarre elements of Spanish or Latin American texts into the Indian context.

The contemporary debate has been revolving around a key issue of domesticating the text or keeping the foreign element intact and bring the reader closer to the text, i.e. acculturate the readers. As a concrete case study, the analysis of a story that was translated by Dr Rajiv Saxena, entitled *El rey se divierte* written by Pedro Antonio Alarcón (1833-1891). It's set during the time of the Spanish Inquisition wherein the King Carlos II of Austria in 1860 at the tender age of 19 years wanted to hold an Inquisition. Thus, in the text there is a lot of usage of the formal addressing of the King and of images and symbols very typical of the Spanish Inquisition. For the formal usage of language, it was a relatively easy job conveying the idea of the power, prestige, and position of the King and of the other court luminaries of King Carlos II as *Hindustani* is a derivative of Persian, the Court language of the Mughals and the local Hindi. It is the cultural aspects like *Auto general de fé*, the Green Cross symbol, *brasero*, *coroza y sambiento*, *mordazas*, the singing of the *Veni Creator*, etc. which created the maximum communicative problems.

Hence the translator maintained all these typical imagery as such in the target language and provided the explanation by way of translator's notes so as not to break the

flow of the original. A balance is sought to have been made by incorporating translator's notes because we have been able to acculturate the audience without compromising with the source text.

The last case study is also that of Dr Rajiv Saxena entitled *Cinco visiones críticas de España*. As is evident from the title itself this is a collection of satirical essays from Spain. The works were fragments from a collection of essays from the famous *Antitauromaquia* written by Manuel Vincent. The first challenge that the translator is faced with is trying to find an equivalence of such a typical Spanish socio-cultural aspect as the bull-fight⁴. Even though many people do know of the same but the various subtleties and details of such a culturally and historically rich event are, in many cases completely strange, alien, or foreign to the common readers.

Right from the brilliant *traje de oro* worn by the traditional bull fighters of Spain, up to the typical red *bandera*, the *banderillas*, the *picador*, etc. which are so much part and parcel of the bull fights. Even the highly stylized movements of the *matador* with his sword and flag are too typical to be transplanted into any other culture. Such a type of text inherently makes the task of acculturating the text impossible and it is up to the translator to acculturate the audience. Thus, the role of the translator is to try and convey all these images to the reader without breaking the crisp rhythm of a satirical short essay and hence the terms were included in parenthesis so that the readers do the needful in approaching and understanding the text.

Thus, each text presents a different set of challenges of nuances and socio-cultural characteristics. Compounded with it, is the additional burden of deciding which language to use while translating into the Indian vernacular. It is just not sufficient to say that the target language is going to be, in this case, Hindi, but the translators must make an added decision of which variant of Hindi will be used for which text. Even if there is going to be an interplay of many variants of Hindi, then the translators must be context specific and use the language to distinguish the linguistic hierarchies of the Indian context.

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⁴ Although in southern India, there is a bull fight which happens on a particular auspicious day, as per the Hindu calendar. On this day village folk grapple bare handedly with bulls and literally «take them by the horns». This «bull fight» has nothing to do with the Spanish concept which is considered by many to be an art form.

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