New Translation Studies

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Abstract

The conceptualizations of Translation as a mode, rewriting, cannibalistic re-creation. representation. orrecontextualization emphasize and focus upon ideology, the performative aspect of language, cultural milieu, and the power-relations involved in the process and product of Translation. This paper considers the return to Translation marked by a significant change in Translation Studies. Moving away from the 'humanist' notion that Translation is about the noble task of bridging the gap between peoples and cultures, Translation scholars today focus on the problematic of Translation rather than the "problems" of Translation (Niranjana 1992:2). This paper maps the trajectory of Translation Studies in India and argues in favour of New Translation Studies that refer to all innovative and radical Translation theories under the umbrella term.

Keywords: Translation Studies, Post-colonial Translation, Translation Studies in India, New Translation Studies.

Introduction

In recent years, translation and Translation studies have moved from the periphery to the centre. As Translation studies emerged from the shadows of literary studies, comparative literature or linguistics, it is no more a secondary or an invisible activity. The publication of journals, handbooks, anthologies, and well-researched books on Translation, of late, testifies to the increased interest and popularity of the discipline. As we know, Translation studies, in its evolution as an independent discipline, exploring newer research areas, has shed its age-old obsession of treating the original and translations in a master-slave relationship. The

conceptualizations of Translation as rewriting, a mode of representation, cannibalistic, or creative activity emphasize focus upon ideology, the performative aspect of language, cultural milieu, and the power-relations within which translations are produced.

Moreover, Translation is central to the culture and life of post-colonial societies, which were "textualized" (Niranjana 1992) by the Imperial/Orientalist discourses. It underwent various processes of colonial modernity during the colonial period decolonizing itself simultaneously. Edwin Gentzler's observations on what Translation means to South America hold good for all post-colonial nations. For them, "Translation is much more than linguistic operation; rather, it has become one of the means by which the entire continent has come to define itself (Gentzler 2008:108).

This return to Translation is also marked by a significant change in the field of Translation studies. Translation theorists today look beyond the traditional view of Translation as the noble task of bridging the gap between peoples and cultures. Instead of considering Translation as a transaction between two languages, a simple linguistic affair, scholars in Translation studies see it as fundamental to constitutive of culture. According to the above view, translation 'takes shape within the asymmetrical relations of power' (Niranjana 1992:2) operating in a historical context of the linguistic culture and in turn shaping that very culture. Hence, we no longer treat Translation as a given phenomenon but arrive at its differential definitions in a context. Today, the focus of translation analyses has moved from word to discourse, reaffirming Walter Benjamin's formulation that Translation represents the afterlife or survival of the original (Benjamin:23, Tr Harry Zohn:71). The questions of cultural identity, colonialism; gender; multiculturalism; cross-cultural communication;

Diaspora, nation, etc., are brought to the field of Translation. Thus, Translation Studies cuts across disciplines to become truly interdisciplinary. Translation is seen more and more as a 'performative' nature of cultural communication. The Indian academic scenario may not be as bright as I have depicted. Nevertheless, it is very encouraging.

Translation studies in India

Quite a few Universities in India are offering courses in translation and Translation studies. While a few Universities offer courses leading to M.Phil and PhD degrees, others provide a couple of papers in Translation studies as part of English Literature, Comparative Literature, or Linguistics courses. The UGC has also started courses in Functional Hindi in several Universities with particular emphasis on Translation. Machine translation is another area of current interest in the Indian Higher Education sector. Projects on Translation are ongoing in several institutes of higher learning. MA courses in Language technology with special reference to Translation are offered in certain other places.

Moreover, there is a renewed interest in translation among policymakers. The National Translation Mission, an initiative of the Government of India, was launched in 2008 on the recommendation of the National Knowledge Commission to 'kick-start the industry of Translation.' Before that, the 11th plan working group on languages and book promotion recommended 'immediate intervention' of the Government in the area of Translation to promote "knowledge books and new discourses". It points out:

Translation is another area that begs for the immediate intervention of the Government. It is true that Translation has been an ongoing activity, which India as a multilingual country cannot do without. Institutions like Sahitya Academy and National Book trust have also

stressed translation as a major regular activity, and it is yet to make a real headway when it comes to knowledge books and other new discourses. The National Knowledge Commission has also focused on Translation as one of the key thrust areas of the knowledge economy of India. It has been recommended by the NKC that a National Translation Mission be launched which would take up the related activity in a systematic way" (Govt. of India, MHRD, XIth Plan (2007-2012):4).

The continued focus on Translation is reflected in the National Education Policy-2021 of the Union Government of India, in its recommendation to establish the Indian Institute of Translation and Interpreting (IITI). It observes,

High-quality programmes and degrees in Translation and Interpretation, Art and Museum Administration, Archaeology, Artefact Conservation, Graphic Design, and Web Design within the higher education system will also be created (Govt. of India, MHRD, NEP 2020:54).

India will also urgently expand its translation and interpretation efforts to make high-quality learning materials and other important written and spoken material available to the public in various Indian and foreign languages. For this, an Indian Institute of Translation and Interpretation (IITI) will be established. Such an institute would provide a truly important service for the country, as well as employ numerous multilingual language and subject experts and experts in Translation and interpretation, which will help to promote all Indian languages. The IITI shall also make extensive use of technology to aid in its translation and interpretation efforts. The IITI could naturally grow with time and be housed in multiple locations, including in HEIs to facilitate collaborations with other research departments

as demand and the number of qualified candidates grows (Govt. of India, MHRD, NEP 2020:55).

Translation Studies in India needs to be streamlined. mainstreamed and further institutionalized. At present, translation research in India is mainly carried out by a few scholars from different institutions purely as individual efforts without any institutional support. While they have published interesting academic works that are well informed in recent theory, the pedagogy of Translation Studies in higher educational institutions is still a mix of old and new concepts of Translation. Hence, we may conclude that the fundamental and conceptual problems regarding Translation and translation pedagogy aren't fully addressed in HEIs of India. A few translation courses are framed within the new space created by critiquing the humanist theory of Translation. However, in the Government policies and institutes established by it, the understanding and pedagogy of Translation Studies and training primarily comprise what one may term as the humanist discourse on Translation - one that looks at Translation only as a linguistic activity, a transaction between two languages. Such a theory reduces Translation to two languages and focuses primarily on issues of fidelity and felicity. Most translation courses in our colleges Universities consider issues in Translation Studies as the question of "method" (Niranjana 1992:49) rather than addressing the problematics of Translation. A glance at the translation syllabi of different universities confirms Niranjana's point. In several postgraduate-level courses in our universities, the linguistic and politics of translation essays prescribed sit together somewhat uneasily.

Translation Studies in India is yet to absorb the implications of the contemporary discourse on Translation fully. It's vital to consider various other practices under the rubric of Translation and to revamp and theorize Translation differently, keeping in view the fact that Translation Studies is multidisciplinary that involves linguistics, literary studies, comparative literature, cultural anthropology, cultural history, philosophy, postcolonial studies, gender studies, ecology, identity studies, diasporic studies and so on. Such an endeavour will have farreaching resonances in the pedagogical practices of the Sciences, the social sciences and the humanities.

Approaches

Several approaches to study Translation have been rapidly developed in the past few years, attempting to define Translation as a new academic field - 'at once international and interdisciplinary.' Translation issues are discussed within the new space resolved by questioning the 'humanist' assumptions reality. language, and representation. about developments are related to the explosion of cultural studies, post-colonial studies, feminism and critical theory that have foregrounded and expanded the notion of culture in general and the notion of power/knowledge in particular. According to the new perspectives, Translation is no longer seen as a mere practice that objectively carries over or transfers meanings from one language into another but as a discourse inextricably linked to power relations. Like many other discourses, Translation too writes culture, creates subjectivities, is linked to the politics of identities, and operates within the hierarchy and inequalities of languages. The hegemonic social/cultural practices implicit within the society operate through the enterprises of the democratic state and its various discourses, including Translation. In recent years, many studies on Translation have analyzed the sight and sign of Translation in the contexts of colonialism and post-colonialism as well as concerning the women's question. Translation needs to be considered not in the realm of language but as a discourse. In this sense, Translation is the crucial site for our understanding of culture, to account for the 'multiple forces act on it' and to know how it 'gives rise to multiple practices'. Hence, today we need to consider Translation much more seriously to understand the nuances of our culture.

In other words, Translation Studies is moving into new spaces and opening up new horizons. The books and papers published in the realm of Translation studies in recent years are exciting and thought-provoking. Our perception of the 'everyday' has been transformed radically and productively by such intellectual endeavours. The understanding that translation shapes and takes shape within culture, and that, like any other discourse, it too operates within the structures of power, has resulted in a multitude of explorations and research in Translation Studies asking new questions. Consider the question addressed in Translation Studies in recent years: the concepts of nation, modernity, colonialism, post-colonialism, globalization. gender, minority, domination, hegemony, identity, subjectivity, resistance. cities. conflict. multilingualism, ethnography, ecology, cultural difference and cultural Translation to name a few. The above questions are raised within the new interdisciplinary space of Translation Studies which was cleared by questioning the 'humanist' assumptions underlying the enterprise of Translation and the conventional analytical categories used to study it. That apart, the digital communication, speedy travel of texts across cultures and audio-visual Translation bring forth new contexts, problems and issues. Several scholars of Translation Studies have published fascinating and productive research in recent years. Today, Translation is understood in its broadest and metaphorical sense to indicate the mode of communication and production of a variety of texts and discourses across borders the territorial borders of nations and academic disciplines. In this background today, I would like to present a few significant texts and their theoretical concerns to demonstrate that Translation is an integral part of language studies, humanities, social sciences and even natural sciences today.

In the paper "What is a "Relevant" Translation?", Derrida observes that "the relation of the letter to the spirit, of the body of literalness to the ideal interiority of sense is also the site of the passage of translation, of this conversion that is called translation" (Derrida 2001:184; Tr. Venuti). He considers Ferdinand De Saussure's theoretical model of language in which meanings are made by negation, articulation, or "systemic play of difference." (Jixing 2013:112). According to this well-accepted notion, linguistic meanings are not inherent to a language, not apriori language. Instead, the uniqueness of signifiers in a system of signs, differences, and social conventions determine them. Derrida's treatment of meaning as differance rather than presence results from his critical reading of Ferdinand De Saussure, Walter Benjamin, and Ludwig Wittgenstein. According to Benjamin, it can be demonstrated that "no translation would be possible if in its ultimate essence it strove for likeness to the original. For in its afterlife - which could not be called that if it were not a transformation and a renewal of something living - the original undergoes a change" (Benjamin 1923, Tr. Harry Zohn:69-82). Hence, the question of the source text, the meaning, and an absolute translation doesn't arise. Texts are spaces for multiple readings, and all translations are tentative. It is now history that Derrida's explorations of the very nature and limits of language have opened up the floodgates of new research in Translation Studies.

Post-colonial Translation studies has very interestingly/ effectively used the insights of deconstruction, cultural studies, and feminism. For example, Tejaswini Niranjana distinguishes between "problems" of Translation and the "problematic" of

Translation. According to her, the humanist theories of translation "belong properly to the question of "method." (Niranjana 1992:49) But, "In the post-colonial context, the problematic of *Translation* becomes a significant sight for raising questions of representation, power, and historicity. (1) She has demonstrated that "Translation as a practice shapes, and takes shape within, the asymmetrical relations of power that operate under colonialism" (2). In recent years Translation Studies have been more and more concerned with exposing the many kinds of power relations that underwrite translations.

The gender question, translating gender and gendering translation have become prominent research areas after the "cultural turn" in Translation Studies. According to Sherry Simon (1996), "This turn in Translation Studies prepared the terrain for a fruitful encounter with feminist thought" (7).

Translation Studies have been impelled by many of the concerns central to feminism: the distrust of traditional hierarchies and gendered roles, deep suspicion of rules defining fidelity, and the questioning of universal standards of meaning and value. Both feminism and Translation are concerned with the way "secondariness" comes to be defined and canonized; both are tools for a critical understanding of difference as it is represented in language. The most compelling questions for both fields remain: how are social, sexual and historical differences expressed in language, and how can these differences be transferred across languages? What kinds of fidelities are expected of women and translators—in relation to the more powerful terms of their respective hierarchies" (8).

Lori Chamberlain, examining the cultural politics of and struggle for "authority and the politics of originality" involved in the representation of Translation, observes that in most of the writings, "translation has been figured literally and metaphorically in secondary terms". According to her, "the cultural elaboration of this view suggests that in the original abides what is natural, truthful, and lawful, in the copy, what is artificial, false, and treasonous" (Chamberlain 2000:319). By deconstructing the sexualization of Translation, she raises the question: "why have the two realms of translation and gender been metaphorically linked?" and argues that the "implied narrative concerns the relation between the value of production versus the value of reproduction. What proclaims itself to be an aesthetic problem is represented in terms of sex, family, and the state, and what is consistently at issue is power" (Chamberlain 2000:322). Addressing the issues of postcolonial Translation from a feminist perspective Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak opines that "the task of the feminist translator is to consider language as a clue to the workings of gendered agency" (Spivak 1993:179-80). This is crucial because "the writing of the writer writes" a differential agency. Spivak's views are significant for the history, context and politics of feminism in India. Indian woman/citizen is situated in a different history, history of feminist thought, political and cultural contexts. In the same vein, Tejaswini Niranjana suggests that "discussion of linguistic translation in postcolonial contexts would help open up larger questions of cultural and political representation" (Niranjana 1998:133). In her view, in the context of Indian feminism, Translation refers to a space in which the translator simultaneously negotiates different kinds of languages" (Niranjana 1998:133). Hence, "the situation of the feminist intellectual located in the postcolony is, therefore, one of being "in-translation." (Devika 2008:185). The post-colony Translation is a space within which the post-colonial subject/translator moves between different languages, continuously negotiating different meanings. She has to be aware of the fact that it is critical in "any rethinking of the political terrain" (Niranjana 1998:133).

Hence, in the post-colonial context, we are constantly between at least two political languages, the language of the capital and of the community. We face a political impasse as these two languages always do not mesh with each other. However, they crisscross, converge and diverge "in many different registers." Niranjana suggests that "political initiatives in the post colony" must be attentive to this fact. She seems to propose critical bilingualism that allows a movement between two or more languages. Though the post-colonial political subject is not "outside" modernity, one may understand "how the (feminist) subject of politics is being shaped by the process of moving between languages" (143). It's from such a perspective that Niranjana concludes,

There is an important difference, then, between being translatable (the political subject of Indian left-liberal discourse) and being in-translation (the subject of critical feminism): the goal of the first sort of project is the achievement, however, deferred, of an ultimate transparency; the second kind of project strains in the other direction, accepting the need for Translation not as a process which simplifies or makes transparent, but one that draws attention to its very tentativeness (143-144).

Considering feminism in India as "in-translation" allows self-reflexivity, course-correction, tentative fixing of meanings being fully aware of its tentativeness, and listening, instead of thinking of secular modernism and the language of rights as an 'absolute horizon' (144).

The essays of Sherry Simon, Chamberlain, and Niranjana demonstrate how even the linguistic questions of Translation lead to and open up larger questions of language history, culture, and political representation. Such research is significant in the Indian context as it addresses the questions and issues concerning our society. The essays, books, and

edited volumes of Mona Baker, Barbara Godard, J. Devika, Emek Ergun, Henitiuk Valerie, N. Kamala, Levine Suzanne, Louise Von Flotow, Maria Tymoczko, Mona Baker, Olga Castro, Rita Kothari, Rukmini Bhaya Nayar, Susan Bassnett, Vanamala Viswanatha etc. among many others, deal with different aspects of gender and Translation from varied perspectives. Indian academia has to take such writings into account while institutionalizing and mainstreaming Translation Studies.

When we think of Translation and migration, representing cultures in cultural anthropology and ethnography gains significance. Talal Asad's essay "The Concept of Cultural Translation in British Social Anthropology" is one of the key texts to understand the conventional relationship between Translation and ethnography. Citing several anthropologists, he demonstrates that social anthropology and ethnography have implicitly perceived their project as something similar to Translation. As we know, Asad's essay is a sharp response to and critique of Western social anthropology that explains "other" cultures in terms of their own without being sensitive to the nuances of indigenous communities and people.

The Eurocentric nature of ethnography is indicative of the European "desire" to appropriate non-European cultures, othering them through the technologies of knowledge and objectification. Writings of Asad, James Clifford, Mary Louise Pratt, and many others demonstrate a pertinent point made by Jacques Derrida that ethnology had come about when the European culture had been "dislocated" and "forced to stop considering itself as the culture of reference." Primarily it's a European science, using the traditional concepts, and "the ethnologist accepts into his discourse the premises of ethnocentrism at the very moment he denounces them" (Derrida 1978:282). However, post-Saussurean

anthropologists, ethnographers, and critical theorists argue that it's not enough to provide a critique of the traditional formation of anthropology, and one needs to problematize the classical ethnographical text itself. Challenging the notion transparency of representation, they acknowledge the constitutive role of language and consider cultural Translation as construction. For example, Claire Chambers argues that "ethnographic writing translates, selects, and fashions its subjects." Though the ethnographers live, see, experience, and record hours of conversations with their "informants", ultimately, they select only what they consider to be relevant for 'writing up' and "dissenting voices or information that is not commensurate with the ethnographer's vision may be excluded from the text" (Chambers 2006:17). She shows how ethnologists tend to produce their narratives using Western tropes. Hence, Clifford very rightly calls such narratives allegories because,

"A recognition of allegory [in ethnography] emphasizes the fact that realistic portraits to the extent that they are 'convincing' or 'rich,' are extended metaphors, patterns of associations that point to coherent (theoretical, esthetic, moral) additional meanings. Allegory (more strongly than "interpretation") calls to mind the poetic, traditional, cosmological nature of such writing processes. Allegory draws special attention to the narrative character of cultural representations in the stories built into the representational process itself. It also breaks down the seamless quality of cultural description by adding a temporal aspect to the process of reading. One level of meaning in a text will always generate other levels. Thus, the rhetoric of presence that has prevailed in much post-romantic literature (and in much 'symbolic anthropology') is interrupted" (Clifford 1986:100).

The critical ethnographers and auto-ethnographers are committed to respect and show cultural differences in their writings. The above, relatively brief mention of issues in ethnography shows that we, in Translation Studies, need to take note of them. The conventional translation theories are insufficient to deal with such matters, and today translation theorists are committed to developing the discipline as genuinely multidisciplinary.

Homi Bhabha has proposed a very different notion of cultural Translation, which is more relevant to the theme of this conference. It deals with the movement of people and addresses the question of the immigrant individuals and groups of people migrating from the post-colonial counties to the West. How the minority cultures can live with the majority and dominant cultures that have already translated them is the central concern of Bhabha. He suggests that the minority needs to 'rewrite' the oppressive culture exposing the internal contradictions of the colonial/imperial discourse dismantling their supposed structural cohesion. Bhabha believes that it is possible to refashion Western discourse into something relevant to migrant/minority discourses. Though Bhabha's essay primarily addresses the question of diaspora, his insights are productive to address several kinds of movements and migrations and produce counter-narratives that challenge the dominant ones. For example, the Indian linguistic communities' move to colonial modernity could be construed as a migration from the pre-modern to the modern. One may discuss various aspects of colonial modernity and the fashioning of linguistic identities and nationalisms through the lens of Translation. The advent of colonial modernity. universalization of education and new job opportunities have resulted in the migration of people, primarily to city spaces within the country. Modern cities thus have different linguistic zones, often overlapping with each other. Studying the

different linguistic regions of a city and the mutual interaction and Translation between these regions is a fascinating subject. Michael Cronin & Sherry Simon (2014) observe,

Questions of public space – and in particular their visual aspects – have been central to debates over public engagement and belonging, but the city's audible spaces have not received the same attention. What is surprising is that language, itself an essential instrument and domain of the public, the medium through which public discussion takes place, is simply taken for granted. Despite the sensory evidence of multilingualism in today's cities, there has been little sustained discussion of language as a vehicle of urban cultural memory and identity, or as a key in the creation of meaningful spaces of contact and civic participation (Cronin & Simon 2014:119).

Sherry Simon's Cities in Translation: Intersections of Language and Memory (2011) is an important book that explores the plurilingual nature of the city, its linguistic divisions, creative tensions between languages, dynamics of Translation in the city, language relations and linguistic diversity of the city. This illuminating work draws attention to the importance of languages in shaping the city's historical, geographical and cultural space. Edwin Gentzler (2011) reviews, "as Translation Studies scholars move from the universal to the particular, from the global to the local, Sherry Simon's Cities in Translation furthers that trend, turning from the nation to the city as a geographic space for investigation". The representation of cities is yet another area of study. Such City studies have gathered momentum as "post-structural and postmodern epistemologies have resulted in a recasting of the questions and modes of inquiry used to study the city" (Low 1996:409). The representation of cities is part of specific

discourses. Hence, it is productive to consider the historical, social, cultural, and symbolic production of cities through various signifying practices in literary studies and Translation Studies. According to Jenneke Rauscher (2014), the 'literary staging' of cities with specific attributes lets us investigate city discourses as representations which means translations.

Michael Cronin (2017) explores an entirely different aspect of Translation not discovered so far in Translation Studies. He considers all human and non-human communication as Translation, thus decentering the centrality of humans in Translation and other discourses. He observes that "animals other than humans have been remarkably silent" in the brief history of Translation Studies. "They have not spoken about, much less spoken to. This silence is all the more unsettling in that the earth had entered the sixth mass extinction of plants and species, in the last 500 years" (Cronin 2017:70).

Cronin asks, in this context of mass destruction of biodiversity, what does Translation Studies have to offer to move away from anthropocentrism? Towards that end, he introduces the notion of *tradosphere*. He says,

"By tradosphere we mean the sum of all translation systems on the planet, all the ways in which information circulates between living and non-living organisms and is translated into a language or a code that can be processed or understood by the receiving entity" (Cronin 2017:71).

He argues that the above awareness is essential because, in the history of the universe, humans and non-humans are always connected. That connectedness is based on the practice of Translation.

"Secondly, the tradosphere, like the biosphere, is in a continuous state of evolution and in a time of ecological

crisis, is susceptible to a series of risks that can threaten its very survival... In the case of tradosphere the principal danger comes from the collapse of translation systems that allow humans to interact in a viable and sustainable way with other sentient and non-sentient beings on the planet." Cronin argues for a non-anthropocentric communication or Translation (Cronin:17, 71).

Mona Baker deploys narrative theory effectively in her fascinating account of *Translation and Conflict* (2006). Translators as narrators and interpreters may contribute to the dominant stories of conflict or could contest, resist, and subvert such narratives. Their role as interpreters in conflict zones is also crucial. Drawing upon various examples from history and contemporary conflict zones, Baker demonstrates how translators construct discursive realities.

• The book *Objects of Translation* presents the material culture and a narrative of medieval Hindu-Muslim interactions through objects such as coins, dresses, monuments, paintings, and sculptures that mediate diverse modes of representation. Through them, it questions the monolithic representations of the Hindu-Muslim encounters. This book by Finbarr B. Flood opens up new vistas of Translation Studies. The cannibalistic theory of Translation deals with the tension between the authority of the original (representing the central culture of the colonizers) on the one hand and the autonomy of the Translation (representing the peripheral culture of the colonized) on the other.

Questions

Based on the above survey of Translation Studies, I wish to raise a few questions about fashioning the translation curriculum in the Indian context. Why Translation Studies? What is its relevance in the Indian context? What role

translation is expected to play today? How is Translation, in our context, linked to the question of "English" in Indian Languages? What are the translation problems faced by the students of human and social sciences in Higher education? What is the state of human and social science disciplines and reading material in Regional Languages of India? Can Translation be of any help in this situation? How different disciplines took shape in India during the colonial and postindependence periods? Is there any connection between fields' fashioning and the state of reading material available in regional languages? What about the earlier initiatives in translating and producing reading material disciplines in these languages? What are the related linguistic/vocabulary problems? How do translations read in regional languages? What is their success rate? Why/when do the translations fail or succeed? Would it be productive to look at the academic and public intellectuals' efforts to produce regional language resources in various disciplines? How can we productively use these resources in Translation Studies? How to address the questions of new areas of academic interest such as caste studies, gender studies, cultural studies, etc., concerning Translation and regional language resourcing? Would it be possible for us to think through the "translation question" to rethink human/social sciences as they are fashioned in higher education, especially in the regional language context? -Such questions have a very marginal presence in Translation Studies. We need to return to Translation Studies considering the above and many more questions more seriously.

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