

Importance of Translation and Translation as a Means of Language Development

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Abstract

Translation in general terms means converting a text from one language to another. Translation plays an important role in today's globalized world and multilingual societies in which we live in. Nowadays it is used as a means of communication, as an effective mode of learning and practicing what is learnt. It also helps in building strong business relationship, politics etc. It's also seen that local culture and language has the strongest effect on people than any other language. Although English is considered as the global language yet everyone prefers to interact and communicate in their own native language. The various applications of it can be seen in the field of education, tourism, business, technology and science, literature and many more. Through this article I would like to highlight the importance of translation and how does it help in development of language.

Keywords: translation, religion, internet, bible, translation activities, grammar, reading, writing, vocabulary, India, Sanskrit

Importance of Translation and Translation as a Means of Language Development

Introduction

We are all well versed with the term 'Translation'; it means communication of meaning of an original language text by means of an equivalent target language. Translation has its origin in the early Mesopotamian civilization. There are various evidences which show the prevalence of translation in olden days. It's seen that Buddhist monks used to translate various Indian scriptures into Chinese language in ancient times. Later it was observed that ancient Greeks also translated various texts and scriptures into Roman. The need for translation came into picture with the advent of religious text and scriptures. With the growth of religions all across the globe there was an urge among the preachers to spread it across the world hence it required them to make their religious scriptures available in multiple languages. The most ancient religious text that was translated is the Old Testament. It was translated to Greek language in the 3rd century BC. Religion played a vital role in promoting translation. Saint Jerome, patron saint of translation created Latin Bible in 4th century AD.

Now we come to the term 'Translator'; a person who translates a particular text from one language to other language is a translator. Translators were present since the advent of the concept of 'translation'. In the ancient times these translators were unnamed and they often used to keep their identities secret. This is because it was dangerous to work as a translator, it would even cost their life. William Tyndale, a famous translator was executed from Holland in 1536 because he translated the Bible into English. Chinese monk Xuan Zang was applauded for

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translating 74 volumes of Indian Buddhist into Chinese in 645 AD. Garnett was a famous Russian translator whose works included Chekhov, Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky. Some of the contemporary translators include Gregory Rabassa, Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky, Jorge Luis Borge, Edward George Seidensticker and many more. Jorge Luis Borge translated The Happy Prince by Oscar Wilde into Spanish for a Buenos Aires newspaper when he was just 9. Gregory Rabassa translated many works of renowned authors like Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Julia Cortazar, Jorge Anado and many more. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky, the couple worked on updated translations of Russian literary classics. Some works include Anna Karenina and The Brothers of Karamazov. Oprah Winfrey choose Richard and Larissa version of Anna Karenina for her book club back in 2004.

With the Industrial Revolution machines were invented for translating texts. As a result, translation became easier and people now did not have to translate it manually. With the passage of time and advent of technology and especially internet, translation became easy for everyone. Internet has made it easy to access various documents and translate them whenever and wherever they want to. Many instant translation tools and application are available too. They do meta phase translation; they are able to translate various spoken words and texts into multiple languages by keeping into account the culture and the relevance of the receiver.

Translations are of different types they may be categorized as:

A. GENERAL TRANSLATION: This is the simplest translation. The source material of this type of translation is generally the day to day conversations. In general translation one need not understand special terminologies; most of the works fall under this category.

B. LEGAL TRANSLATION: It is one of the complex type of translations. It is described as translation of treaties, contracts and various other legal documents. In this type of translation, the translators have to be familiar with politico-legal and socio-cultural context behind the legal text. Legal translations are done in such a way that the target audience belonging to different cultures, background etc. can easily understand. Not everyone can do legal translations. People having a clear and vivid idea about the source and target cultures are eligible for the legal translator's job. Legal translators have to be very cautious when translating a particular text because if there is a single error or misinterpretation of any term in the legal document then it may result to some dangerous situations.

C. COMMERCIAL TRANSLATION: It is very similar to legal translation, but in this type of translation commercial or business documents are translated. For this type of translation, a translator must have good knowledge about business and should specialized translation skills in order to translate business reports, important documents, maintain company account and many more.

D. LITERARY TRANSLATION: This type of translation is basically used to translate poems, prose, drama or any kind of literary work. There are many people who consider legal translation to be the most difficult type of translation and general translation the easiest, but literary translation is considered to be the highest form of translation. In this type of translation word by word translation does not work; a literary translator should be able to translate humour, feelings, emotions and various other elements through their work.

Importance of Translation

In this era of globalization, English is the most commonly spoken language. But there are some people who cannot speak English properly. For these kind of people translation is important because we cannot overlook these people who do not speak this language or do not understand this language well. In a survey in 2006, 13% of EU citizens speak English as their native language while 38% of EU citizens say that they have the skill to have a conversation in English. Therefore, only 51% of EU citizens know English. Again in 2012 survey conducted by European Commission showed that only a quarter of Europeans were able to understand well enough to follow an English news broadcast.

Translation plays an important role in connecting the global economy. After globalization it is important for companies to have foreign associations, clients and customers. Although English is widely spoken yet people prefer to read about products and services or engage into contents in their native language. In this context translation comes into picture. For small companies' translation plays a critical role because they need to establish a ground in the industry. In order to grab the attention of the global customers it is important for the companies to have translators. If their competitors are able to sell their products in foreign languages, then there are chances of them capturing the entire market and the small companies running in losses. Keeping in mind this scenario the small companies have developed multilingual interface. As a result, the clients won't face much difficulties browsing through the website. With more and more small companies opting for advertising their content in multiple languages the demand of translators are growing. Hence scope of translators working on various platforms for these small companies are surely to flourish.

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Not only in the field of business but translation also has its importance in the field of education. In olden days' education was restricted to nearby schools, colleges and universities. But with advancement of time and the urge among people to learn new things, people are going to different parts of the world. Students who travel to different countries for education often for them language becomes a barrier. Although in most of the foreign universities and colleges English is the medium of teaching but it may happen that there are students who are not well versed with English; in order to make these students understand the subject a translator is required. Had education been limited to only books then it would not have been a problem because books are available in all languages but since it is not enough to have only "bookish" knowledge translation is important.

Translation also helps in connecting cultures across the world. In order to translate a particular text into the desired language it is important for a good translator to have a little knowledge about the background of the language they are translating to. This would help them to translate better, translation does not mean just changing a particular text into another language meaninglessly. A translated text should always have proper meaning.

Role of Translation in Indian Literature

India is a multi-lingual country which is divided into two broad language families the Indo –Aryan and the Dravidian. According to the Eighth schedule of the constitution of India, there are 22 languages, 15 different scripts, hundreds of mother tongues and thousands of dialects. Among the various Dravidian languages one of the most ancient language is Tamil

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followed by Kannada, Telugu, Malayalam etc. In such a multilingual country the role of translation can hardly be over emphasized. It can be said that India keeps translating every day and every moment, which means we keep translating unconsciously from our mother tongues when speaking with people who use different languages from ours.

Translation played a very important role in developing Indian Literature. Up to the 19th century the Indian Literature consisted of only translation, adaptations, interpretations and retellings. Not only literary works but translation of texts based on astronomy, architecture, metallurgy, travel, religion and poems from various languages like Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit, Persian, etc. helped to maintain the cultural part and enriched people with knowledge of the world. Sanskrit was the most dominant language of ancient northern India. Most of the ancient Indian writers were multilingual: Kalidasa's *Shakuntala* in Sanskrit and Pali; poets like Guru Nanak, Kabir, Vidyapati, Namdev, etc. wrote poems and songs in more than one languages.

In Kalidasa's Sanskrit plays it has been observed that the lower caste women and other characters spoke Prakrit, Sauraseni and Magadhi. At that time, it was normal to change dialects in the course of the same text. As the medieval period dawned in India, the influence of Sanskrit declined. With foreign invasions during that period there was a change in the cultural and linguistic background of India. Persian became prevalent at that time. At that time the Mughal courts had scholars who were translators. *Baburnama*, an autobiography of Babur was originally written in a language called Chagatay which was translated by Humayun's minister Bairam Khan. Translation of various texts during this time helped to introduce many new genres in Indian literature like *masnavi*, *qasida* and most importantly *ghazal*. Mirza Galib, one of the most eminent *ghazal* writer wrote in Persian and Urdu. Next came the colonial period; India was

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under the British rule. The British at first considered English as the superior language but soon they realized that it was important for them to learn the local languages in order to establish their influence. During this time reverse movement of translation occurred from India to England. Sir William Jones translated *Abhijnanasakuntalam* into English. Charles Wilkins first translated *Bhagavad Gita* into English. During this time the Bible also came to be translated into various regional languages of India. The translation of Bible helped to change the translation strategies of Indian texts. For the first time the concept of fidelity to the original and notion of equivalence were introduced to Indian sensibility. Fidelity in translation became a concern for the first time, because it was felt that the word of God had to be conveyed accurately and with no improvisations or distortions. Translation helped to promote the growth of indigenous literature and knowledge by bringing into our languages the great wealth of other literatures and cultures. Through the translation of renowned works from other Indian languages as well as foreign ones, it enriched our Indian literatures. Thus it also raises the writing standards; this happened especially when works of great writers like Shakespeare, Homer, Dante, Vyasa, Valmiki, Kalidasa and Bhasa or more contemporary writers from Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Kafka, Beckett, Lorca, Eliot and Thomas Mann to Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Mario Vargas Llosa, Orhan Pamuk, J. M. Coetzee, Pablo Neruda, Octavio Paz etc were translated. This brought about new trends in Indian Literature.

Translation as a Means of Language Development

In order to teach someone any new language translation is taken as an obvious means. It has many advantages. It can be used as an aid of teaching, practice what has been learned, diagnose problems and many more. Translation is the fundamental basis of language learning. It is a useful skill too. We living in a multilingual society and globalized world come across translation almost every day: from families, friends, schools, hospitals, courts, clinics, business meetings etc. Apart from these it allows the learner to understand the differences and similarities between the existing and the new language.

Since time immemorial teachers, linguists and scholars have agreed that translation is a way of learning any foreign language. They considered it to be useful because -

- It enhances vocabulary of students
- Improves verbal skills
- To get an idea as to how languages work
- Know the proper usage of that language

Translation in foreign language classes are no longer considered ineffective way of learning. Students taught by this method are encouraged to practice reading, writing, grammar and speaking. But the main target of the students learning foreign language is to be able to speak fluently in that language. It has been observed while teaching students that they generally prefer the terms of foreign languages to be translated to them in such a language that they are strong in. For example: a student gets enrolled for French classes. When the student first starts learning the various French words, he prefers to have those French words translated to him in his native

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language or any other language he is comfortable with. This helps the student to learn better and it also helps the teacher to put forward his ideas more clearly in front of the student. Researchers say that translation is the fifth and most important social skill because it involves communication and understanding. Translation helps in developing language awareness. While translating one gets a clear idea about the difference in grammar, structure, vocabulary of the foreign language and has to find a way to deal with it. The real usefulness of translation in foreign classes lies in comparing the grammar, vocabulary, structure and various other points of language in the target language with their own native language. Translation can be used to develop three basic skills of any language development – accuracy, flexibility and clarity. The motive of translation is not only to produce professional translators but also to help learners enrich their knowledge on English language. In order to get the students voluntarily involved in the various activities related to translation, it is the responsibility of the teacher to make the activities interesting. By just distributing texts for translation will not work. The teacher needs to explain the students the reason behind the assignment. After this a text is to be given to the students for translation. Translation activities have two parts – post translation and pre translation. Pre translation activities involve reading, grammar and vocabulary. Post translation activities involve writing, reviewing and evaluating. Next the teacher should discuss the text to be translated with the students and point out the key words to them in order to make them understand better. These translation activities have better effect if they are performed in pairs or in small groups. In this way students can compare their translated texts and understand the difference between each one's text. It also encourages students to discuss and correct their mistakes; in this way they learn better and faster. This type of activities gives the beginners further practice of grammar,

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vocabulary and even style of writing. In this context translation of sentences needs special mention as it is the basics of translating texts; it can be used as a warm up activity. In a survey it has been observed that after performing these types of activities students are able to learn their target languages faster and effectively.

Conclusion

Translation is one of the most discussed topic among researchers, linguists and scholars. It contributes immensely in development of a particular language. The skills required to develop a language completely are-

- Vocabulary
- Grammar
- Style of writing
- Reading
- Writing skills
- Speaking skills

Translation brings all these under one roof. Translation is an effective tool for teaching not only in foreign language classes but also in other subjects in schools, colleges and universities. But it should also be kept in mind that translation should not be overused. It should be used at the correct times with the right kind of students.

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