

## Translating Distance Teaching Materials

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In countries like India, a university has to make provision for multilingual instruction. It is true that some universities and professional institutions use English as the only medium of instruction, but there are many which use more than one language for this purpose. At open and distance teaching institutions, this phenomenon finds correspondence in the need for providing study materials of all types in more than one language. Rather than preparing materials separately in each of these languages, translating them from the one, in which the materials are prepared in the first place, is seen viable economically. Having accepted this line of action, the problems in translating study materials have become a matter of concern. This paper touches upon a few of these problems and suggests solutions too.

Translation is and has always been an important facility in education. In language teaching it serves as a medium for the process of second language learning or foreign language learning. In various disciplines of learning, it serves as a bridge to the knowledge available in the classical and medieval languages as well as in the foreign languages. Thus it becomes an instrument which links the academic, intellectual, scientific and technological activity worldwide. It is thus an integral part of any modern education system.

But apart from this there is another significant role played by translation activity. This role is related to the medium of instruction in the education system of a multi-lingual society. Western countries like England and America may be called "one language" countries with reference to academic interaction in higher education institutions. But in countries like India, instructional medium at the higher level is multi-lingual. This linguistic plurality has made it obligatory to provide education through the medium of more than one language. In 1947, i.e., when India became an independent country, English was the main medium of education especially at the higher education level. Afterwards teaching through modern Indian languages was also demanded and these languages were made the mediums of instruction at various levels. Today, English as well as the language of the state or region concerned are the mediums of instruction right from the school level to the university level. The national level institutions and universities generally offer English and Hindi as instructional mediums. Similarly, most state level institutions and universities use English and the respective regional language as the mediums of instruction these days. At some levels, especially at the level of non-formal education or continuing education, more than two languages are offered as the mediums. In the area of technical education and medicine, bilingual instruction is not so com-

mon, but it does exist in a few cases and there is an increasing demand for its wider application.

In a situation where bilingualism is an important aspect of the educational system, translation of texts is a vital and ongoing activity in the preparation of study materials, actual teaching and assessment of student performance. Basic to this activity is the belief that translation ensures the same course contents for the students of both the mediums.

Writing of texts on a particular topic in both the languages is a better choice from the point of view of language development and academic independence. Yet there are some practical as well as financial considerations which justify and affirm the need for translation, especially for those organisations which are simultaneously preparing materials for both mediums of instruction. Consequently, translation is a major undertaking of organisations like the National Council of Educational Research and Training, Correspondence Institutes and Open Learning Institutes and Universities engaged in preparing textbooks or course materials in two or more languages. They thus ensure uniformity in the text or course material given to the students of both the language streams. If they prepare the material in two languages separately, they need to have check-points at various stages on the contents detailed in the syllabi. However, the state level Text Book Boards for the School and the College level books and the University book production centres preparing books in Indian languages do not depend entirely on translation. They encourage original writing in the language concerned, and the authors resort to translation when they have to quote from or indicate references to some new research or some standard or classical text. But the organisations offering materials in two mediums simultaneously generally prefer translation from one into the other.

The monetary aspect is no less important in this choice. The remuneration rates for translation and original writing are vastly different in India. Actually, rates for translation are about the half, and sometimes even less than half of those for original writing. It may not be an ideal or happy situation but it does exist. So, it is cheaper to prepare books or other material through translation. This factor also encourages these organisations to opt for translation.

Since the inception of DE and Open Learning system in India a more diverse responsibility has been placed on translators and translation has become a more challenging task. The change in the method of instruction has generated an entirely different atmosphere in the educational system. In the classroom system the teacher serves as a mediator between the student and the textbook. He or she explains and interprets it, gives additional information wherever it is relevant and necessary, recapitulates by asking students questions about what they have learnt, and solves their problems through a direct question and answer session. In such a situation the translated text or course material is not the sole basis of communication with the students. But, in the distance teaching system the relationship between the course material and its reader is different from the one between the textbook and the student in the conventional system.

To lead the learner towards self-learning being one of the goals of distance teaching and open learning, the preparation of study material requires an approach different from that required for writing textbooks in general. Those involved in the preparation of this material always have to keep in mind that the material prepared by them should, in addition to providing information to the learner, also perform the tasks of the conventional teacher. The translation of the texts being a part of the process of course material preparation, an activity at par with the original writing, the presentation of the translated materials should be as conversational, self-instructional and analytical as the study material originally prepared in English.

Distance teaching through correspondence institutes has been in vogue in India for the last three decades (starting with the University of Delhi in 1962) and is now in practise in about 48 institutions in the country. Most of the courses offered by these institutions are in two mediums — may be English and Hindi, English and Tamil, English and Marathi, English and Telugu and so on. This is something quite specific about the open education system of our country. And this trend is becoming stronger and stronger with every passing day.

The open system of learning has been promoted with the object of reaching education to those who are not or have not been able to get it in the normal course or who have been deprived of it due to some reason or other. So the question of making education available to them in a language accessible to them is very important. In addition to this, there are areas of education which are more

important from the viewpoint of their socio-economic needs rather than from the viewpoint of getting a degree or formal education. For example, in the areas of Food and Nutrition or Child Care, education has to be provided in languages widely known to the masses. Distance teaching in India has not emerged from needs exactly similar to those out of which it emerged in the western world. In India it is seen, among other things, as a means of socio-economic change, for which it needs to reach the masses — which in turn becomes easier if we approach the masses through their own languages. Hence, translation which puts the teaching material in a language known to the people who are lagging behind is a tool of socio-economic development. And at the same time it is expected to maintain the academic standards, fulfil the needs of distance teaching and contribute to the language concerned, enriching both in the process.

It is obvious then that the distance teaching system demands more from its teacher-translator than the traditional system does. An academic involved in distance teaching in India cannot afford to be monolingual. In the traditional system the teacher is not necessarily involved in the work of preparing study materials. He or she may be teaching in a single medium or may be teaching in both mediums but it does not get him or her involved in the translation of the study material. But in the open learning system, the teachers sharing work in the process of developing and designing study materials are very often assigned the task of translating them too. Of course, they are not supposed to be translators. Most of the time professional translators are employed for the actual translation work, but the academics have to join the translators at the stage when content and language is vetted. It is the faculty concerned that is ultimately responsible for the quality of a particular course. Consequently, an academic cannot say that he or she is responsible only for the English version of the course; and that Hindi or some other versions are somebody else's responsibility. If the course material is not upto the mark, the onus is on the academics concerned. So it becomes necessary for the academics to train themselves to be able to judge the quality of the translated versions as well. Of course, it is not binding on him/her to do so, but it is a practical demand to which academics need to respond. Academics working with translators or language experts, discussing the problems about terminology, expression, syntax, etc., is a regular activity in the process of developing distance teaching materials. One of the field experiences is that in the process of preparing course materials, it often happens that corrections, additions or deletions in the materials are made as late as at the proof stage. Any change made in the original after the manuscript has been given for translation remains obviously unknown to the translators. So it becomes necessary for the academics of the faculty concerned to contact the translator, find at what stage the translation work is and make the corresponding changes in the manuscript meant for translation or in the translated manu-

script itself. An academic cannot escape from being involved in translation work at such crucial stages.

The involvement of the academics is not over with the publication of the course materials. It continues with the maintenance of the courses. Every rectification and modification done in the English version needs to be incorporated in the translated versions. And it is again the responsibility of the faculty to see that the same has been incorporated. Operationally, it is advisable that the original copy in which the errata have been given or alterations made be given to the translators to incorporate corrections and changes in the translated versions. It is preferable to make the changes simultaneously in all versions. It is possible that changes are stylistic in nature and do not affect the content in the other language, yet it should be made sure that the other language versions have taken care of it, because sometimes even a single punctuation mark makes a major difference from the semantic point of view.

The translation of distance teaching material requires one to keep in mind that the material to be translated is self-instructional. Not only does it have to fulfil all that is expected from a translation in general — to be faithful to the original, and to look like an original piece in itself — but it should also serve as a companion to the learner in the process of learning. Care has to be taken to ensure that those students who study through a medium other than English are not deprived of even a fraction of the content which the English medium students receive. So the material prepared through translations should be communicative, informative, interesting and easy to comprehend. For this, it is necessary that the idiom of the language into which it is translated should be maintained without fail. If the material is to be translated into Hindi it should use the Hindi idiom/register of the particular discipline being translated. For instance, before the translator can translate a commerce text into Hindi he should familiarise himself with the Hindi idiom/register of commerce. The translator should have at his command appropriate terminology, i.e., while choosing the appropriate equivalents for the scientific and technical terms of English, care should be taken to choose the equivalents which are accepted in the discipline concerned. For this purpose the terms given in the Dictionaries prepared by the Commission for Scientific & Technical Terminology, Government of India, may be used. While choosing one term from a number of equivalents given in a dictionary care should be taken to choose terms which are commonly used in textbooks in that subject area. This will make reference work easier for distance students, who will then be at ease while studying other books on the subject concerned. In the case of a term which is not purely technical the choice of the required equivalent should be nearest to the connotation. Often words of similar meaning in a particular discipline may indicate subtle variations in meaning. It is the task of a good translator to pick the closest/best equivalent.

For example, while preparing the Commerce course material the term 'लेखा करण' has been used for 'accounting' and 'लेखाविधि' for 'accountancy'; these terms should be used consistently to convey their respective meanings. Care should be taken that the same terms are used not only in various blocks of the course materials but also in other courses on Commerce. Also, uniformity of the terminology within the subject must be maintained. Besides this there is also need for uniformity in equivalents chosen for technical terms in associated subjects like Economics and Management or various branches of Science or Social Science. For example, 'राष्ट्रीयता' is the Hindi equivalent for 'nationality' and 'राष्ट्रीय' for 'nationalism'. It is necessary that the same equivalents be used in the study materials of History, Political Science and Sociology. To illustrate further, let us take another example: while talking of 'Nuclear Winter' the faculty in the School of Sciences chooses the term 'नाभिकीय शीत', while the faculty in the School of Social Sciences chooses 'परमाणु शीतलन' as the corresponding equivalent; in Hindi these two sets of phrases sound like two distinct terms and can be understood as such. It is advisable that the same translation equivalent be used for a word appearing in the same context in both the subjects. This will not only assist comprehension but also make it easier for the student to correlate the knowledge and information given in two disciplines. Moreover, in the present situation when there is a lot of emphasis on inter-disciplinary education there is a good deal of interaction amongst various disciplines. The register of science influences the register of literature, the register of literature again influences the register of social sciences. For this reason coordination in the use of terminology across disciplines is essential when an institution takes up the mission of translating courses of different disciplines.

Such coordination in the use of terminology of scientific and technical terms is essential for the purpose of examination also, as the terminology used in the texts and in the question papers has to be similar. For this purpose, developing and maintaining a glossary of equivalent terms is essential at the school level.

As far as the choice of equivalents for the general terms is concerned, one may look for the nearest connotation as well as the usage prevalent in the respective languages. Here again the practice of translating word for word has to be avoided. To arrive at equivalence, besides the dictionary meaning the meaning in the particular context should be examined. At the same time it is imperative that the usage and idiom of a particular language is observed. For example, take the English statement :

"Why should we search the past ? In order to link it with the present."

If we say in Hindi

"विगत की खोज क्यों करें ?

विगत को वर्तमान से जोड़ने के लिए"

the term "विगत" will sound rather unusual and odd. In the same way the phrase "जोड़ने के लिए" is not a very lucid and impressive expression. Instead if we say "अतीत की खोज क्यों जरूरी है? अतीत का वर्तमान से संबंध स्थापित करने के लिए", it sounds quite sensible and Hindi-like.

Let me give one more example. In a course on "Food and Nutrition" the terminology used in translation to describe the texture or flavour of food should be culture based. In English while talking of the textures of food we can describe them as 'hard', 'soft', 'crisp', and 'chewy', and in Hindi we would say 'सख्त', 'मुलायम', 'कुरमुरा' and 'खस्ता'।

But if for 'chewy' we try to use 'चबाने लायक' as an equivalent, it would not be suitable because in Hindi "चबाना" is a verb. 'सख्त', 'मुलायम' and 'कुरमुरा' are all terms which can be associated with the process of chewing, but there is no adjective like "चबाने लायक" which can be an equivalent of 'chewy' in Hindi. In the same way, taste may be described as 'sweet', 'sour', 'salty', or 'bitter' in English, their Hindi equivalents being मीठा, खट्टा, नमकीन या कड़वा. But the word order would sound more natural as follows: खट्टा, मीठा, और नमकीन.

As far as 'कड़वा' is concerned, it is not a much relished taste in the Indian culture. So even if one keeps the word for its own sake, it would not be effective. However, this is a view that may not be acceptable to one and all.

Another way of developing equivalent terms is 'transliteration', i.e., transfer of a particular term/word into a different script. Modern Indian languages have received words directly from English and from the international terminology used in sciences, hence transliteration is a useful technique of building technical and scientific terminology in these languages. While transliterating care should be taken to maintain the accuracy and uniformity of spellings in the receiving language, otherwise the student may be confused between two or more different spellings, or may even treat each of them as a different term. If such problems come up in the process of distance learning the students may not even have access to a proper solution. Therefore, at the stage of materials preparation, it should be seen that the spellings of the transliterated terms are standardised and established by constant use and appropriate documentation. Such care must be taken in transliterating proper nouns also. The names of authors, scientists, historical and political personalities, etc. should be written in the spellings prevalent in the target language. For example, Aristotle is अरस्तु and Alexander is सिकंदर in Hindi. In such cases, if the English pronunciation is transliterated, the student may mistake them for persons different from अरस्तु or सिकंदर. Not only in the case of foreign names but in the case of Indian names also such difficulties and differences do exist. For example, in English the spelling is 'Dada Saheb Phalke' while in Hindi it is दादा साहब फ़ाल्के.

While referring to books special care should be taken to find out whether a particular book has been translated into the language concerned. If it has been translated the

exact title should be given in the translated version. If it is not known, then instead of translating it, the English title should be transliterated, because a random translation may be misleading. The book under that name may not exist at all. For example if Nehru's 'Discovery of India' has been referred to in the text it should be seen that the correct title of the Hindi translation of the book is given, i.e., instead of just writing 'भारत की खोज', the exact title, i.e., 'हिन्दुस्तान की कहानी' should be given. If this is not done the learner may not be able to trace the book at all.

Yet another item to take care of while translating the distance teaching units is the 'key word'. Key words given in the original text need not be the key words in the translated version. The translated version should be treated as an independent entity, and only the terms or concepts that need to be explained to the learner should be listed as key words.

The format of the distance teaching material in terms of the structure of the unit remains more or less the same in the translated version. The self check exercises form a significant part of this structure because they are a means by which students can recapitulate what they have learnt. While translating this part of the unit one has to be particular about clarity in the phrasing of questions. It should be ensured that the meaning of each question is clearly conveyed. Here is an example of the translation of the objective type questions taken from our distance teaching material:

#### The original in English

#### Check Your Progress :

- Note: a) Write your answers in the space provided  
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

Tick (✓) mark in the appropriate box :

1. a) The first cooperative society in India was started in  
i) 1929    ii) 1861    iii) 1891    iv) 1922
- b) The second cooperative Act was passed in  
i) 1896    ii) 1906    iii) 1910    iv) 1912
- c) In 1945, the number of cooperative societies in existence was  
i) 18,000    ii) 23,000    iii) 147 000    iv) 172000

#### Hindi Translation:

#### बोध प्रश्न

- टिप्पणी: (क) अपने उत्तर के लिए नीचे दिए गए स्थान का प्रयोग कीजिए।  
(ख) इकाई के अंत में दिए गए उत्तरों से अपने उत्तर मिलाइए।

सही बाक्स में टिक (✓) लगाइए।

1) क) भारत में प्रथम सहकारी समिति निम्नलिखित सन् में स्थापित की गई थी।

i) 1829    ii) 1861    iii) 1891    iv) 1922

                                                                

ख) दूसरा सहकारी अधिनियम निम्नलिखित सन् में पारित किया गया था।

i) 1896    ii) 1906    iii) 1910    iv) 1912

                                                                

ग) सन् 1945 में विद्यमान सहकारी समितियों की संख्या निम्नलिखित थी।

i) 18,000    ii) 23,000    iii) 147,000    iv) 172,000

                                                                

The questions in Hindi have not been put in appropriate language. In क and ख instead of the word 'निम्नलिखित' the word 'किस' should have been used and the 'stem' should have been presented as interrogative sentences, like., भारत में प्रथम सहकारी समिति किस सन् में स्थापित की गई थी? The full stop marks should not have been used.

The translated answers should also be checked with the translated questions because there is a likelihood of variations in the expression which may lead to variation in connotation.

Another major responsibility of academics regarding the translated versions of the distance education course materials pertains to the books suggested for further reading. For this purpose they have to be in touch with good books in the area concerned that are available in the target language. The English units suggest books in English which may be useful for the student for the specified topic. For Hindi medium students it is better to suggest books available in Hindi rather than those in English. Only then the reading list may be useful to the students, otherwise it may not serve any purpose. So up-to-date information about the latest publications in Hindi etc. should be available to the academics of the various subjects.

Distance teaching being a multi-media instructional system, translation activity is not limited only to the written word. The media support in the form of audio-video teaching materials also requires translation in many ways. Thus a new dimension is added to the responsibilities of the translator. The shift from the written to the spoken word brings in the issue of spoken communication in the translated material. Besides, in this process the translation activity has to orient itself to the production technology of radio and television. While translating a script care needs to be taken that the words, phrases and sentences sound natural and spontaneous, are neither ambiguous nor roundabout and suit the cultural environment of the illustrations and visuals. The scripts of the audio-video programmes made for the non-English medium students are usually translations of the English version. Of course, in some cases two separate scripts are written. In such cases, a close eye needs to be kept on the English script so that the scripts in

other languages are not entirely independent of the English version programmes.

While interviewing an expert for an audio/video programme effort should be made to make him or her speak in both the languages. If that is not possible then another expert should be interviewed for the translated version. If it is felt that the same expert should necessarily be brought on the screen in the programmes in both the languages, then the techniques of voice-over, dubbing or sub-titling need to be adopted. In the case of dubbing, care should be taken to match the timing of the translated sentences with the timing of the movement of lips by the speaker. If it is voice-over then the content of the speech is to be summed up carefully.

The role of translation in the process of examinations is again very vital. In order to maintain a uniform standard in the examinations it is necessary that the students of all the mediums should be given the same question paper. For this we need to translate question papers. Such translation again needs not only special care but also regular recourse to the course materials in both languages. While translating the question paper the translation equivalents used for technical terms in the course materials should be used. If there is a variation here, it may mislead the students and they will be deprived of justice. For example, 'राष्ट्रमंडल' is the Hindi equivalent of 'Commonwealth' given in the glossary made by the Commission for Scientific and Technical Terminology (CSTT). It is in common usage. But nowadays the term 'राष्ट्रकुल' is also used for 'राष्ट्रमंडल'. Accordingly, in a question paper the term might be translated as 'राष्ट्रकुल'. This may puzzle the student in the examination hall as in his course material he might have read 'राष्ट्रमंडल' and may think that 'राष्ट्रकुल' is something new.

The syntax and expression are also important features of the translation of question papers. The content of the English question paper should not get distorted when translated. Clarity in this regard would help the evaluator also in fair assessment. Here is an example :

Q. विज्ञान क्या है? विज्ञान के इतिहास के अध्ययन के लिए दो कारण बताइए।

The second part of this question is a shadow of the question in English and is not meaningful unless we read it along with the English version, i.e.,

Q. What is Science ? Give two reasons for studying the History of Science.

Now, if we put the question in Hindi as follows :

Q. विज्ञान क्या है? विज्ञान के इतिहास का अध्ययन क्यों आवश्यक है? दो कारण बताते हुए अपना उत्तर स्पष्ट कीजिए।

it would be quite clear to the examinee.

The lay out of question papers is also significant from this point of view. If the paper is printed bilingually then the errors in the translated version can be easily detected and corrected. But if the papers of two languages are printed separately, errors are not detected easily. As a

result both the examinee and the assessor suffer in so far as they fail to do themselves justice.

When it comes to translating the objective type questions or short answer questions, besides the translation of the questions from the semantic point of view simultaneous matching with the answers is also necessary as the idiom of expression at a particular point may create variations which may need a different correlation with the answer. As the objective type question papers are sometimes evaluated with the help of the computers, it needs to be ensured that every correction is fed into the computer wherever necessary.

Besides terminal examinations there is continuous assessment through the assignments given to students to work on. This continuous assessment aims not only at examining but also at teaching through analysis and comments. This instructional approach is reflected in the questions prepared for this purpose. The translation of these questions (in the assignment) should be done keeping this instructional purpose in mind. Here is an example of badly translated objective type questions which hardly help in learning:

1. सही बात पर (✓) निशान लगाकर उत्तर दीजिए:

क) शाखा विस्तार तेजी से हुआ:

- i) लीड बैंक योजना
- ii) भारत सरकार
- iii) राज्य सरकारें
- iv) खंड विकास अधिकारी

ख) ज़िला स्तर पर ऋण नियोजन की शुरुआत की:

- i) वाणिज्य बैंक
- ii) भारत सरकार
- iii) लीड बैंक

One has to see the English original in order to understand the questions :

1. Answer the following by putting a tick (✓) mark in the appropriate box:

a) Branch expansion took place vigorously through

- i) Lead bank scheme
- ii) Government of India
- iii) State Government
- iv) Block Development Officer

b) Credit Planning at the District level was introduced by :

- i) Commercial Banks
- ii) Government of India
- iii) Lead Bank Scheme

Now the following changes are needed in order to put the questions in correct and clear language :

— at the instructional level it should be said

निम्नलिखित प्रश्नों का उत्तर समुचित खाने में सही (✓) का निशान लगाकर दीजिए:

क) किसके माध्यम से शाखा का विस्तार तेजी से हुआ?

ख) ज़िला स्तर पर ऋण योजना की शुरुआत किसने की?

In view of this extensive role of translation in distance education and open learning, we need to see how it may be performed to make it more and more useful and relevant to the students, assessors and the others concerned. A sense of responsibility towards bilingualism in general, and instructional medium in particular needs to be created among the academics. If the academics realise their responsibility towards the educational significance of translation in their respective areas, they would value involvement in this activity and be prepared to enrich Indian languages in general and help their students in particular.

A congenial atmosphere to foster the culture of translation, which is obviously missing, needs to be created in the various fields of learning. Indian languages need to undertake the task of developing and enriching themselves in new disciplines and areas of learning. If positive steps to achieve these objectives are taken, the translator's task would become smoother and comparatively easier.

Since IGNOU's distance teaching system needs and provides for translation of educational materials on a large scale, it can play an important role in developing this translation-culture in various disciplines by motivating the academics to take active interest in linking Indian languages with the latest developments in their respective fields of specialisation. This should help not only in facilitating translation work at the university, but also in creating career opportunities in the area of bilingual instruction. In the bargain our students will get the education they look for in the medium that suits them most.