# UNIT 3 TRANSLATION AND THE POLITICS OF LANGUAGE

**Structure**

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## 3.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will be able to:

- know more about the translations among 'major' Indian languages and in English;
- learn about translations between 'minor' and 'major' Indian languages; and
- understand the different languages and problems of translations.

## 3.1 INTRODUCTION: TRANSLATIONS AND LANGUAGES IN INDIA

### 3.1.1 Translations among 'major' languages in India: an overview

Let us begin our discussion with translation among 'major' languages of India. Translations among major languages of the Indian subcontinent can be broadly divided into two categories, viz. (a) translations among languages of the subcontinent and (b) translations from languages of the subcontinent into English language. In this Unit, we shall discuss primarily the major languages of the subcontinent. In the next unit, we shall discuss translations in the English language.

The phenomenon of translation among the major languages in this regard has been closely related to the 'rise' of certain languages in the modern period as

'major' languages. For example, languages like Urdu, Hindi, Bangla, Tamil and Malayalam and others came to be recognized as some of the 'major' languages of the subcontinent by the first half of the 20th century. 'Rise' of these languages as 'major' languages was closely related to two processes that came into existence, especially since the 19th century. One was the significance of nationalism or anti-colonial movements and the other was formation of political identities. However, we need to remember that both the processes were related to each other. Language and literature in a language became a vehicle for propagation and promotion of nationalism in the subcontinent. This could be seen in the case of most of these 'major' Indian languages. For example, the writings of Rabindra Nath Tagore in Bangla besides having other characteristics, was nationalist in nature as well.

It is also important to observe in this regard that it was only some languages among many that emerged as 'major' Indian languages in the subcontinent. Every language is based in a certain society. Historically, every society in the subcontinent was primarily based on hierarchy. Therefore, different social groups that were to be found in a society would be placed in an order of hierarchy. For example, caste system was one such form of hierarchy. In tribal societies, hierarchies were based on clans. Most of the 'major' languages that emerged in the modern period were the languages of the dominant groups of these societies. For example, in the Brahmaputra valley (of Assam), there were many languages. But it was Assamese that emerged as the 'major' language among all of them. These 'major' languages came to be treated as markers of political identity of a given society. Thus, for example, Assamese became the marker of identity for all societies in the Brahmaputra and Cachar valleys, or Hindi became the marker of all societies inhabiting the country of India. The acceptance of these markers of identity was related to the role of the dominant social groups respectively.

Further, most of these 'major' languages underwent a process of modernization. Through it, changes were introduced in grammar and syntax, vocabulary, etc, i.e. their linguistic structure. Thereby, despite the continuities in these languages from the pre-colonial period, they came to get established as distinct and different from their pre-colonial structure. This process of linguistic changes was also related to which kind of social groups emerged dominant within the society during the period. Therefore, one can say that fundamental changes came about in the nature of languages during the 19th and early 20th centuries. These changes were related to the changes in nationalist and anti-colonial politics in the region as well as the changes in the relation among the social groups within a society.

Translation among 'major' languages of the subcontinent, therefore, primarily includes literary activities that took or still takes place in these dominant languages of the region. It is also important to highlight here the role of institutions in this process. In most of the societies, institutions for the promotion of language and literature came up during the colonial period. And in most cases, these institutions continued to remain the vehicles of literary activities in the post colonial period as well. New institutions were established also by the newly independent governments in the region, such as the Sahitya Akademi in India that was established in 1955. These institutions also played a vital role in the establishment of a few languages as the 'major' languages of the subcontinent.

Because these languages came to be established as 'major' languages of the region, translation among languages of the subcontinent even today comprises general activities in these languages. Nevertheless, there are two categories of exception

in this regard in India. One is the Urdu/Hindustani language and the other is the Sanskrit language. Urdu/Hindustani and Hindi are similar, but distinct from each other. Development of the Urdu language can be traced to the 12th century AD. Though Urdu continues to be used in poetry, its use in prose has witnessed a steady decline. Surprisingly, though translation from Urdu into other languages still flourishes, translations into Urdu from other languages is in steady decline. Further, most of the fiction in Urdu that gets translated comprises its classic fiction of the 20th century. It is often pointed out that the readership and the role of Urdu as an identity marker, especially in the post colonial period, have been taken over by the Hindi language. But Urdu continues to flourish in Pakistan.

Sanskrit, which, along with Tamil, came to be recognized in the 19th century as the two classical languages of the subcontinent is another example of a language that has nearly become a 'dead' language. This is despite efforts of the government to keep it 'alive' through educational institutions, literary institutions and various other activities and schemes. One reason for its condition has been that Sanskrit no longer exists as an identity marker of any given community/society or culture in the region. In fact, since the colonial period and the emergence of nationalist politics, there is a close parallel between the decline of Sanskrit and the 'rise' of the 'major' languages of the subcontinent. A similarity that Sanskrit shares with Urdu is that though the classic works in Sanskrit continue to be translated into other languages, there is hardly any translation into Sanskrit.

### 3.1.2 Translations and English language

Now let us focus on Indian translation and English language. Translations made available in the English language have emerged as one of the most widespread and commercially viable forms of translation in the subcontinent, especially since the last quarter of the 20th century. The spread of higher education, English generally being the medium of higher education and thereby its emergence as a link language, especially in India, and the burgeoning of the middle class in the subcontinent, can be considered some of the important reasons behind the phenomenon. The beginning of the process could be traced to the middle of the 20th century as well. However, it was only in the last two decades of the century that the combined impact of the process became evident in the success of translations in the English language. The success of commercial publishing organizations in making available translations in the English language is a part of the phenomenon.

Translations in the English language have been critiqued on two grounds, viz. (a) that there are limits to how much a European language can convey the meaning of the matter in any of the languages of the subcontinent and (b) that the success of the translations in the English language endanger translations in other languages of the region.

With regard to the first critique, it is generally assumed that because the different societies and cultures of the subcontinent have shared certain common cultural elements among them, hence, despite the languages of these societies and cultures being different, it is possible to convey the meaning of one culture in a given language in the language of another culture. This, however, is not possible with the English language. But despite this argument, it became evident that translations in English language had commercially succeeded compared to translations in other languages. Therefore, the second critique came up as a further justification

against translations in the English language. More than translatability, the second critique focuses on the issue of domination that the language has come to exercise as the language of the educated vis-à-vis the other languages of the region. Translations, as books, cater primarily to the educated.

The debate on translations in English language is critically connected to the role of the middle class in the post colonial period. Policies and practices of higher education in a country like India ensured that the bourgeoning category of middle class not only acquires skills and knowledge in English but also produces and disseminates knowledge (literary/art and scientific) in the English language. The trend, it is true, began since the colonial period when education in the English language began to be imparted. However, the magnitude of success of the English language in the acquiring and production of knowledge and art is a post colonial phenomenon. The criticism of dominance that English language is leveled with has to be seen in relation to the limited success of the other languages of the subcontinent in becoming the vehicle for acquiring and production of scientific and artistic knowledge.

Further, as a foreign language, English also escaped certain political limitations vis-à-vis other languages of the region and is emerging as a link language in the subcontinent. For example, dominant linguistic communities across the subcontinent found it difficult to accept any one language among them to become the link language. In India, though the government promoted Hindi as the official language of the country, it faced opposition from other dominant linguistic communities. It was argued that Hindi as a language was an identity marker of certain societies and cultures of the subcontinent. Therefore, it cannot be privileged over others as an official language. The fact that the English language already existed, and as a European language, did not exist as a marker of political identity of any specific, social or cultural group facilitated its acceptance as the link language across the subcontinent. Sahitya Akademi, the main wing of the Indian government on language and literature, today recognizes English as one of the 'major' languages of India. Yet, it still continues to be peculiarly placed vis-à-vis other 'major' languages of the country. Unlike other 'major' languages of India, English does not have linguistic community of its own, i.e. it is not a marker of any political identity. Yet, it is through its translations of literatures in other languages into English that it is able to reach out to the diverse 'major' linguistic communities at the same time. It is also evident in the fact that its well known journal *Indian Literature* is also published in English, besides Hindi.

**Check Your Progress 1**

**Note:** 1) Your answers should be about 100 words each;

2) You can check your answers with possible answers given at the end of the Unit.

1) What do you understand by 'major' Indian languages?

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2) Do you think it is possible to convey entirely the meaning of literature from one language into another?

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3) What has led to the emergence of English as a significant language into which literature is translated in the post Independence period?

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## 3.2 TRANSLATIONS BETWEEN 'MINOR' AND 'MAJOR' LANGUAGES: AN OVERVIEW

### 3.2.1 The divide of 'minor' and 'major' language

Let us now discuss the divide between the 'major' and 'minor' languages in India. The historical process that led to the emergence of 'major' languages in the Indian subcontinent was highlighted in unit 1.1. The emergence of 'minor' languages was also related to the same process. A given society in the subcontinent was composed by various social groups on the basis of caste, tribes, etc and they were generally organized in a hierarchy as part of the society. The hierarchy was the nature of relation that the various groups had with each other. The 'major' languages that developed since the 19th century were primarily the language of the dominant groups within a given society. Further, it is also noted that these languages underwent a process of linguistic transformation, often referred to as 'modernization'. The changes were in grammar and syntax, vocabulary, and usages.

These changes also were related to larger socio-cultural changes that came about in a given society. For example, in the case of the Assamese language, there were four variants of the language, viz. Sibsagar variant, the Nagaon/Central variant, Kamrupi variant and the Goalpara variant. However, since the late 19th and by early 20th century, it was the Sibsagar variant that had emerged as the dominant form of the language. To be noted is that prior to the colonial period, it was Kamrupi variant that was most extensively used in most of the literatures. This transformation was closely related to the emergence of the eastern part of the Brahmaputra valley (where Sibsagar is located) as the most important socio-political and economic zone due to the production of tea and oil. The middle

class too primarily came from eastern part of the valley. It was also in this area that missionary activities in the field of modern education had taken strong roots.

The other important feature in the 'rise' of 'major' languages was that these languages emerged as the markers of political identity of a given community. The re-organization of the Indian state in the 1950s was also along such linguistic lines. However, by the last decades of the 20th century, it came to be increasingly realized that these 'major' languages and the literature in these languages did not or could not speak about those social groups which were the dominated ones vis-à-vis the dominant socio-cultural groups. It was also shown that 'major' languages had become means of not allowing the dominated social groups to express themselves culturally. This was because the 'major' languages, as markers of political identity of a given community, had come to be used to signify that community as a single entity. In other words, the 'major' language of a given community signified the universality of the community rather than the multiplicity that it contained within it. As a result, the dominated groups, along with other tools, also came to view their language as a vehicle of protest against their socio-cultural domination and seek voice for self expression through their own language. Such languages came to be called 'minor' languages.

In the category of 'minor' language were also those languages which, due to various reasons, had fallen into complete or relative disuse. For historical reasons, the speakers of such languages had taken to other languages, generally the dominant language of a given community. These languages were, however, different from the 'major' languages like Urdu or Sanskrit that had fallen into complete or relative disuse in the colonial or post colonial period. For example, the Tai language was the language of the Ahom rulers (who had migrated to the Brahmaputra valley in the 13th century from Myanmar) in Assam. Though they adopted the Assamese language, they continued to use Tai as one of the official/court languages along with Assamese. However, by the 18th century, they had almost entirely given up Tai language in favour of the Assamese language. The attempts at revival of the Tai language took place throughout the 20th century. The Ahoms sought to establish themselves as a distinct political category within the larger Assamese identity and the Tai language became their identity marker. Today, the promotion and preservation of the Tai language takes place as a 'minor' language of Assam.

There are also cases where a 'minor' language generally lacks a linguistic structure of its own. This is evident in the case of the Bagania language, the language of the tea plantation workers community in Assam. The plantation workers were imported by the colonial plantation regime from different parts of British India, especially from Chotanagpur area in the 19th and early 20th century. Their language emerged as a mixture of the numerous languages such as Oriya, Assamese, Bangla, Hindi, etc. To be noted is that though their oral traditions continue to be in the Bagania language, most of the written literature that the community has produced exists in the 'major' Assamese language. It is increasingly being realized that the preservation of their oral traditions is necessary to preserve a cultural heritage of a community. Towards that end, preservation and promotion of the Bagania language becomes necessary. The Bagania language exists as a 'minor' language of Assam.

In the divide between the 'major' and 'minor' languages, script became a critical factor. One of the problems that the 'minor' languages faced was whether or not

to use the script of the dominant language. This was because many of the 'minor' languages were either oral in nature or had historically used scripts of the dominant languages of that given society. The issue of script continues to be part of political debate in the divide between 'minor' and 'major' languages in the subcontinent. The debate in this regard is whether to maintain any linguistic relation between the languages of the dominant and the dominated social groups in a given society.

Another notable aspect in the divide between 'major' and 'minor' languages in the subcontinent has been the difference between language and literature. For example, 'Dalit literature' in India is minority literature rather than minority language. Historically, Dalits were one of the dominated social groups in many parts of the Indian subcontinent. However, they use any of the given 'major' languages of the subcontinent as a medium of their expression. This is markedly different from, for example, Bodo literature of Assam. The Bodo language and literature, by the 1980s, emerged as a 'minor' language in Assam. It became a marker for Bodo ethnic identity and a protest against the dominant Assamese language. The difference from Dalit literature is that the Bodo community used its own 'minor' language for its self-expression in literature. However, by the 21st century, from being a 'minor' language, the Bodo language has emerged as a 'major' language within Assam, along with Assamese. Similarly, literature in the Bodo language has also gradually emerged as majority literature.

### 3.2.2 Translations between 'minor' and 'major' languages

Translations between 'minor' and 'major' languages in a given community involve two kinds of translations, viz. (a) translation of written narratives and (b) translation of oral narratives. Narratives are oral or written constructs of sequences which may be fictional or non-fictional. The important questions that can be posed in this regard are what necessitate translations between 'minor' and 'major' languages in a given community and what are the limits of such translations. The problems of translatability will be taken up in the subsequent unit.

The emergence of a few languages in the modern period as 'major' languages and the fact that exchange of knowledge, both scientific and artistic, took place through these languages made it necessary that all kinds of knowledge that existed in any given society in languages other than the 'major' language needed to be translated into the 'major' language. This came to be seen as the means of exchange of knowledge among the various societies of the subcontinent. As a result, different forms of knowledge (mostly traditional) whether written or oral were written down in the 'major' language of a given community and published. Since translations among the 'major' languages also took place, therefore, the entire process did help in the wider circulation of knowledge in the 'minor' languages. People came to know about songs, dances, rituals, practices and thought systems and their meanings that had earlier at times remained confined to one or a few social groups only.

However, the main critique of this situation was the condition that necessitated the translation of knowledge into a 'major' language for its wider circulation or even preservation. It came to be argued that why couldn't the knowledge be circulated in the original language itself, whether 'minor' or 'major'. This debate generally became part of the larger political debate in which 'minor' languages gradually emerged as the markers of political identity of dominated groups in

the societies. Therefore, rather than translations into a 'major' language, there was an increasing attempt to promote the 'minor' language itself. This process also got integrated with the efforts at language preservation that gained strength since the last decades of the 20th century. Various research studies by then had noted that the 'major' languages in the subcontinent have had played a significant role during the modern period in the 'death' of several 'minor' languages in respective given societies. It was also noted that rather than English language, it was these 'major' languages that had been responsible for the problem. Therefore, it came to be argued that 'minor' culture needs to be preserved in their respective 'minor' languages rather than in the 'major' languages of the society.

As a result, by the early years of the 21st century, two simultaneous processes could be seen with regard to translations between 'minor' and 'major' languages in the subcontinent. One process was wherein 'minor' languages increasingly came to be promoted, especially by the members of concerned social group and it became part of their struggle against the dominant social groups for cultural space vis-à-vis the 'major' language of the latter. In the other process, the initiative came from the dominant groups through the 'major' languages. There was a renewed attempt to integrate the 'minor' languages with the 'major' language in a given society. It was not only to provide the former the cultural flexibility that had been denied to it earlier but also to preserve the unity of the society as a single political identity which the issue of 'minor' language had threatened to disrupt. These simultaneous processes of separation and integration are today a part of the struggle for democratic space in the organization of society in most of the societies of the Indian subcontinent.

**Check Your Progress 2**

**Note:** 1) Your answer should be about 100 words each;

2) You can check your answers with possible answers given at the end of the Unit.

4) What, according to you, is the difference between 'major' and 'minor' languages in South Asia?

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## 3.3 LANGUAGES AND PROBLEMS OF TRANSLATABILITY

### 3.3.1 The problem of languages

Now let us now focus on the problem of languages. With regard to languages and problems of translatability, two kinds of problems are generally discussed. Both have been related to what/why to translate and how to translate. The two problems are (a) when translation involved cultures or languages within a same society and (b) when it involved cultures or languages of two different societies.

In the first case when translation involved cultures and languages within a same society, most of the translation generally took place from the 'minor' cultures or languages into the 'major' culture or language. For example, in Assam, the different tribal literatures in their respective languages were translated into the Assamese language. One problem in such cases is what is selected to be translated and the other problem was how it was translated. Most of the tribal literatures also existed in the oral form. Therefore, the translation involved also translating the oral into written. In most of such translations in the subcontinent, it can be observed that generally those kinds of literatures were selected for translation that either did not critique or critiqued less the dominant culture rather than those that were critical. The objective was generally to highlight that the various social groups in the society and their cultures formed a single entity, and thereby a single political identity. This was especially found in societies (like Assamese) where politics based on ethnic differences emerged extremely powerful. This once again brings back the issue of limits of 'representation' in translation, i.e. how much, in such cases, can the translation let us know about the minor cultures.

The more common debate in the subcontinent, however, has been with regard to the second case when two different societies or languages are involved in the process of translation. There are two broad patterns in this regard. Firstly, it is translation from any major language of the continent into English. Secondly, it is translations among the major languages of the subcontinent. When translations take place among major languages of the subcontinent, it is generally argued that there are difficulties in translating names of institutions or ideas and practices in the translated language. Names, ideas and practices often exist in the original language as symbols or signifiers, i.e. with implied meaning. It is argued that translations cannot render such implied meanings in the translated language, primarily because such names, ideas or practices are not to be found in that given language. Nevertheless, since the subcontinent has historically shared certain common cultural features, translators use substitutes and glossaries to convey as truly as possible the meaning of the original text.

The other problem that is pointed out is with regard to translations into English language. Though extremely popular, translations into the English language are critiqued on the grounds that there are serious limits to a European language being able to convey meaning of texts written in any sub-continental language. Translators have generally used three techniques to overcome this problem, viz. (a) use of substitute motifs to convey implied meanings of the original text, (b) use of local words in italics rather than any substitute motifs with glossary at the end or (c) use of English equivalent words to convey the meaning as closely as possible to retain readability in the English language. There has been no consensus on which technique is ideal. Nevertheless, it is stated that since higher education in the subcontinent is generally in English, therefore, translation in English is viable and necessary. Thus, translators would have to choose a technique or a combination of techniques to translate from any sub-continental language into English. However, once again we need to keep in mind that these issues highlight the limits of 'representation' in translations.

### 3.3.2 Non-translatability as politics of resistance

In the previous section **(3.3.1),** we have discussed the problem of languages in translations. One of the major problems that is encountered has been that of

translating the implied meanings of languages, and thereby, in how to highlight the role of language in the given culture from which the text is being translated. In this regard, one of the arguments being offered is also that of non-translatability as politics of resistance. This is seen mostly in the case of translation into the English language, and the practice of resistance is from the 'major' languages of the subcontinent. The general critique against the English language as a hegemonic language has already been highlighted. In continuation of that line of thinking, there are cases when it is argued that substitutes, whether of words or motifs, should be used less or minimal, and the practice is part of the resistance or protest against the domination of the English language. The translator has to nevertheless ensure that the meaning of the text is sufficiently conveyed.

The main criticism against this line of thinking has been primarily two-fold. Firstly, it is pointed out that the practice should not defeat the basic goal of translation, i.e., making literature in one language or form, one culture available in other languages or cultures. Secondly, it is also noted that through which mechanism it would be possible to ensure that a distinction can be maintained between non-translatability as a practice of resistance and insufficient translation. The absence of a mechanism to ensure the distinction could also lead to translation of poor quality becoming as legitimate as non-translatability as practice of resistance. However, the main current lacuna in non-translatability as a practice is that it does not address the context that has led to the emergence of the English language as the language of the educated and for education. It only addresses a manifestation of that context, i.e. translations in the English language.

**Check Your Progress 3**

**Note:** 1) Your answer should be about 100 words each;

2) You can check your answers with possible answers given at the end of the Unit.

5) What, according to you, are the reasons for resistance to English translations in South Asia?

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## 3.4 LET US SUM UP

In the section (**3.1.1**), we tried to trace the background of the emergence of certain languages of the subcontinent as 'major' languages of the region. Translations that have generally taken place and those that still continue to take place mostly comprise these 'major' languages. We also came across two languages in India that despite being 'major' has generally fallen into disuse. One is Urdu and the other is Sanskrit. A fundamental reason behind it has been that these two languages do not exist as a significant marker of political identity of any society or culture in the country. Whereas the decline of Urdu, especially prose, is a post colonial phenomenon in India that of Sanskrit has been since the colonial period. However,

it is to be noted that literatures from Urdu or Sanskrit continue to be translated into other languages in the region, but translations into these languages is on a steady decline.

In the section (**3.1.2**), we discussed how the English language emerged as the most important vehicle for the acquiring, production and dissemination of knowledge in the post colonial period. Along with it, the bourgeoning of the middle class has helped English to emerge as the language of the educated in the subcontinent. English language does not function as a marker of political identity of any social or cultural group in the subcontinent. This also helped in its emergence as a link language in the region. The relative success of English vis-à-vis other 'major' languages of the subcontinent with regard to translation is also a result of its emergence as the language of knowledge acquisition, production and dissemination in the region.

In the section (**3.2.1**), we have tried to identify the historical factors that led to the divide between 'major' and 'minor' languages in the Indian subcontinent. It has been shown that the processes that led to the emergence of 'major' languages were also responsible for the emergence of 'minor' languages. Some of the main reasons behind the divide have been socio-economic and political transformations that have occurred through the colonial and post colonial periods. However, the difference between 'minor' and 'major' language could alter under given conditions. T he gradual transition and transformation of Bodo language and literature from minority status to majority status in Assam is an example of such changes in the 21st century.

In the section (**3.2.2**), we have discussed how the 'major' languages had become the vehicles for the exchange of knowledge among the various societies in the subcontinent and how it necessitated that forms of knowledge in any of the 'minor' languages needed to be translated into the 'major' language in a given society. However, as has been shown, the issue of 'minor' language became a part of the larger ethnic and political contest over socio-economic and cultural space between dominated and dominant groups in the societies. Therefore, rather than translating knowledge of the 'minor' language (or 'minor' culture) into the major language, the 'minor' language itself came to be promoted and preserved as the medium of social and cultural exchanges.

In the section (**3.3.1**), we have discussed the problems of languages and problems in translations either among languages of the subcontinent or from these languages into English. With regard to translations among major languages of the subcontinent and in English, the problem has been generally in translating the implied meanings of the original language. However, translators have devised mechanisms to overcome the problem and try to be as close to the original as possible in conveying the meaning of the original text. With regard to translations from 'minor' culture or language into the 'major' one in the same society, it has been shown that for both what is being translated and how it is being translated, it has been guided by political considerations of identity formation than only literary considerations. In all the cases that were highlighted in the unit, the main focus was on the limits of 'representation' in translations and the various attempts that have been made to overcome those limits.

In the section (**3.3.2**), we discussed the issue of non-translatability as a practice of resistance in translation. The language that is primarily in question in this

regard is the English language. Further, the resistance is also generally from the 'major' languages of the subcontinent rather than from the 'minor' languages. The resistance is a continuation of the belief that English language in general and translations available in the English language generally pose a threat to the other 'major' languages of the subcontinent. We have also shown in the unit that as a practice of resistance, the argument could be problematic because of two reasons. Firstly, non-translatability, as a practice, should not defeat the very objective of translation and secondly, it is also necessary to put in place a mechanism that a distinction can be maintained between non-translatability as practice and translations of poor quality.

## 3.5 ACTIVITY

Try reading a work of translation between 'minor' and 'major' language and then find out if you could identify any problem when translations take place from 'minor' languages to 'major' languages.

## 3.6 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

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Compagnon, Antoine. *Literature, Theory, and Common Sense*, Princeton University Press: Princeton and Oxford. 2004.

Barthes, Roland. *S/Z: An Essay*. Hill and Wang: New York. 1970.

## 3.7 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

1) Since the 19th century, the history of languages in South Asia has seen the 'rise' of certain languages in the modern period as 'major' languages of the region. For example, languages like Urdu, Hindi, Bangla, Tamil, Malayalam, Assamese and others came to be recognized as some of the 'major' languages of the subcontinent by the first half of the 20th century. 'Rise' of these languages as 'major' languages was closely related to the two processes that came into existence, especially since the 19th century. One was the significance of nationalism or anti-colonial movements and the other was the formation of political identities. However, we need to remember that both the processes were related to each other. Language, and literature in a language, became a vehicle for propagation and promotion of nationalism in the subcontinent. This could be seen in the case of most of these 'major' Indian languages. For example, the writings of Rabindra Nath Tagore in Bangla, or Lakhminath Bezbarua in Assamese, besides having other characteristics, were nationalist in nature as well. The other important feature in the 'rise' of 'major' languages was that these languages emerged as the markers of political identity of a given community. The re-organization of the Indian state in the 1950s was also along such linguistic lines.

2) It is generally accepted that perfect translation of literature in one language into another is impossible. Every language is situated in its specific cultural context and a language, therefore, bears the peculiar markers of the culture. For example, there could be words, expressions, exclamations, syntax etc in a language that could only have meaning in its own context. Such peculiarities of a given language cannot be translated into another language, since the

other language may lack such expressions or syntax etc. However, it is also seen that numerous mechanisms have been developed in the field of translation that helps overcome many of these limitations. Use of glossary, use of closest equivalents in choice of vocabulary, distinction between translation and transliteration are some of the understandings that are used in translations to retain the meaning of the original as much as possible.

3) The English language emerged as the most important vehicle for the acquiring, production and dissemination of knowledge in the post colonial period. Along with it, the bourgeoning of the middle class has helped English to emerge as the language of the educated in the subcontinent. English language does not function as a marker of political identity of any social or cultural group in the subcontinent. This also helped in its emergence as a link language in the region. The relative success of English vis-à-vis other 'major' languages of the subcontinent with regard to translation is also a result of its emergence as the language of knowledge acquisition, production and dissemination in the region.

4) In the modern period in South Asia, a language became 'major' or 'minor' based on its political significance. In other words, the status of 'major' and 'minor' are political markers of a language rather than cultural markers. The processes that led to the emergence of 'major' languages were also responsible for the emergence of 'minor' languages. Some of the main reasons behind the divide have been socio-economic and political transformations that have occurred through the colonial and post colonial periods. However, the difference between 'minor' and 'major' language could alter under given conditions. The gradual transition and transformation of Bodo language and literature from minority status to majority status in Assam is an example of such changes in the 21st century.

5) Though extremely popular, translations into the English language are critiqued on the grounds that there are serious limits to a European language being able to convey meaning of texts written in any sub-continental language. Translators have generally used three techniques to overcome this problem, viz. (a) use of substitute motifs to convey implied meanings of the original text, (b) use of local words in italics rather than any substitute motifs with glossary at the end or (c) use of English equivalent words to convey the meaning as closely as possible to retain readability in the English language. There has been no consensus on which technique is ideal. Nevertheless, it is stated that since higher education in the subcontinent is generally in English, therefore, translation in English is viable and necessary. Thus, translators would have to choose a technique or a combination of techniques to translate from any sub-continental language into English. However, once again we need to keep in mind that these issues highlight the limits of 'representation' in translations.