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# Language Policy and Translation in Karnataka

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### Introduction

Karnataka was formed by integrating 18 Kannada speaking segments in 1956. As per 1991 Census this state has a population of around 4 crores. This is a multilingual state where Kannada (65.69%), Urdu (9.53), Telugu (8.12%), Marathi (3.77), Tamil (3.76), Tulu (3.30), Hindi (1.78), Konkani (1.74), Malayalam (1.60) and other indigenous languages like Kodagu, Lambani, Yerava etc., are mother tongues of the population according to the 1981 Census.

Translation in a multilingual society like the one in Karnataka plays many roles and has many dimensions:

1. The statutory role to fulfil the *Constitutional* and other *obligations* bestowed through different rules formulated by the government and other statutory bodies.
2. The social and psychological role of integration of society and minds of its people.
3. The *pedagogic* role of educating the students in formal and nonformal streams of education by making available both basic, supplementary and reference materials for teaching and learning.
4. The Communicative role of dissemination of information through audio, video and print media for both literate and illiterate masses.
5. The cultural role envisages cross-cultural communication of ethos represented by the source language to the target language (mainly) in literary works.
6. As a result of 1 to 5 above, the linguistic dimension envisages mutual development of the major language: Kannada, and also development of indigenous languages of Karnataka like Tulu, Kodagu, Lambani, Yerava etc., through expansion of vocabulary, manipulation of language structures to facilitate novel expressions, innovative discourse patterns to coalesce with contemporary domains of use.

In order to have a clear picture of translation in Karnataka, it is essential to look at both sides of translation, from other languages into Kannada and from Kannada into other languages wherever it is possible. Different parameters are to be used to evaluate the translation policy and activity. In case of planned translation there are three levels: policy formulation, implementation and strategies adopted to achieve the goals; the outcome and the total impact of the resultant product on the purpose for which the act was undertaken and on the language itself.

## Administration and Judiciary

The Karnataka Official Language Act 1963, authorized Kannada translation of Central and State Acts, with effect from such date as the State Government may, by notification in the official gazette, specify. A translation in the Kannada Language published under the authority of the Governor in the official Gazette: (i) of any Central Act or of any Ordinance promulgated by the President with respect to any of the matters enumerated in list III of the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution or of any State Act or of any Ordinance or rules made by the Governor; or (ii) of any order, rule, regulation or bye-law issued by the State government or other authority or officer of the State Government under the Constitution or under any Central Act or any State Act or any other law in force in the state, shall be deemed to be the authoritative text thereof in the Kannada Language.

Regarding translation work in minority languages important Government notices and rules are to be published in the minority languages in addition to English/Kannada in the districts and smaller areas where a linguistic minority constitutes 15 to 20 per cent of the population of that area. (1966, p11). In the matter of translating Acts, Bills, Rules, Regulations, Notifications, etc., into the minority languages, the Department or Office concerned may first decide whether any Act, Bills, etc., should be translated into the minority languages in the public interest and if so in which of the minority languages viz., Tamil, Telugu, Marathi and Urdu and issue orders for their publication in those languages. From April 1968 Notification and Orders of the Government were published in the Gazette both in English and Kannada simultaneously.

Similarly in 1968 it was found necessary to ensure simultaneous publication of Bills, Acts, Ordinances and Rules in English and Kannada. This policy is implemented by the Directorate of Translations and a small cell in the same Directorate looks after translation of matters in minority languages like Marathi, Telugu, Tamil and Urdu. Since the Official Language Act came into existence, most of the important and necessary manuals, glossaries, Constitution, Criminal Procedure Code, Evidence Act, 174 Central Acts, 72 State Acts required for the day to day functioning of the State government are translated into Kannada from English.

In the judiciary too the government declared that 'Kannada shall be the language of all civil Courts subordinate to the High Court in the State and all the Courts of sessions and Judicial Magistrates in the state, for the purpose of the Code of Criminal Procedure, since May 1980. However, English shall also continue to be the language of the said courts for purposes of pronouncing judgment and orders.'

The government also decided to publish in Kannada translation, the selected judgments, in Aug. 1980, in 'Karnataka Tiirupugala Varadi.' However, in this domain it was also decided that ' . . . if any doubt or conflict arises in the interpretation or application of such judgment, the judgment published in the English Language in the said Indian Law Reporter *shall prevail* over the Kannada translation.'

Apprehensions were/are voiced about the communicability of administrative Kannada evolved through translation of documents. Committees were formed to simplify this register to make it more communicable. An assessment of the translation in this domain indicates that (i) in vocabulary production, translation of terms from English has taken an upper hand than exploitation of other processes. The vocabulary items that have run down into administration, in form and content, due to the natural flow from Persian and Arabic or English sources are easily communicable, but this aspect is almost ignored and (ii) the sentences arrived at are longer than others used in day to day communication or the ones used in other Kannada registers.

Thus, planned translation in these domains is too artificial and is not functional to the extent it should have been. It looks as if translation based language is for language sake and not for purposes of communication. Here the text produced is information centered and not communication centered. It can be said that this has created an unconducive atmosphere where original writings cannot develop; it has also reduced the process of natural use of language and speed of real language development.

## **Education**

Translation is considered an important component of educational policy. The National Policy on Education (1986) which reiterated, as far as languages are concerned, the policy statement of the National Policy on Education (1968), rightly recognizes translation as one of the important activities for the development of languages. The Programme of Action (1992) presented to the Parliament, emphasizes on 'translation of books from one language to another.'

In Karnataka, translation for pedagogic purpose is mainly linked with switch over from English to Kannada medium from standard one to the postgraduate level. At present Kannada is the medium of instruction: for all subjects up to Xth standard; in pre degree and degree classes for selected science subjects; and all the subjects of the humanities group. Among the professional courses only agricultural science is taught through Kannada. At the postgraduate level only humanities subjects are taught through Kannada. Neither science nor other professional courses have Kannada as medium of instruction.

In this domain, to a large extent even the curriculum is also a translation from English to Kannada. In many cases, both text books and reference materials are translated from English to Kannada. For example, 782 Kannada books were produced under the Scheme of production of university level books in Indian Languages relevant to the courses of studies meant for medium change-over in the universities (as on March 31, 1987). Among them, 193 were translations and 589 were the original works.

As a sample case for understanding quality of translation, the science text book used at present for the Xth standard was examined. This showed that the text book in question was a broad translation of the English medium textbook. While translating, whatever was found to be intricate and difficult to translate, has been left out. The aim of

uniformity, keeping the spirit of the original has distanced the Kannada medium student from the textbook. The recent Karnataka Secondary School Employees Association has pointed that only experienced people should be entrusted with the task of translating English textbooks into Kannada.

## **Mass Communication and Entertainment**

In Kannada, major and important news is translated from English. It is more instantaneous, and communicable. It is contributing continuously to the enrichment of vocabulary and spread of innovations. Nearly 25 years ago, it was necessary to sit and think before writing in Kannada on an economic issue or a scientific aspect for the media but the use of Kannada- in this domain which began mainly through translations has developed the genre to the extent that now original writing does not involve a lot of effort.

However, the commercial advertisements of Kannada in all the media, print, audio, video (i.e., pan Indian type advertisements) are normally translations from English, directly or via Hindi. This is clearly evident in the output that does not totally jibe with the Kannada tradition.

The entertainment component of the media like television and cinema have exhibited wide scope for translation from other Indian languages. But the policy of the State does not encourage translation in these domains and the entertainment industry stalls translation based telecasts. What is encouraged in the print domain is not accepted in the visual domain.

## **Literature**

The tradition of translation from other languages into Kannada can be traced back to 1824 AD. By then the religious texts mainly Bible etc., translated by the Missionaries were already published. A scrutiny of 1974 translations from the year 1817 to 1968 into Kannada, from different languages, indicates that English stands first with 211 works followed by Russian (50), French (33), Greek (16), Persian (13), Indian English (8), German and Chinese (7 each), Norwegian and Italian (6 each), Arabic (5), Spanish, and Japanese (3 each), Czechoslovakian, Mesopotamian and Egyptian (1 each). Sanskrit stands first among the Indian languages with 820 works that include poetry, prose, and drama. etc., followed by Bengali (293), Hindi (127), Marathi (113), Telugu (98), Tamil (86), Malayalam (9), Urdu (6), Gujarathi (4), Pali, Prakrit, Oriya (2 each), Assamese and Kodagu (1).

The Central Sahitya Akademi, which hopes to meet the 'challenge posed by a multilingual society' has translation as one of its two main aims. It 'translates literary classics, both old and modern, from one language into other languages.' The Akademi also 'publishes translations of foreign classics into Indian languages, to widen the awareness of readers.' Another aim of it is 'publication of informative material regarding literary activities in all the Indian languages.' In order to understand quantitatively, the

give and take process at the institutional level (1992) through translation, translation from Kannada into other languages recognized by the Akademi and translations from other languages into Kannada, were analyzed as under:

Into Kannada ( ); from Kannada to other language [ ]

Language	Novels	Stories	Drama	Poetry
Asamese	(1)			
Bengali	[1]	(1) [1]	(1) (1)	
Dogri				
English	(1)			(1)
Gujarati	(1) [1]			
Hindi	(2) (2)	(2) [2]	(1)	(1)
Kashmiri				
Konkani	[1]			
Maithili	[1]			
Malayalam	(4) [1]	(1) [1]	[1]	(2)
Manipuri				
Marathi	(1)	(1)	[3]	(1)
Nepali				
Oriya	(2)			
Punjabi	(1) [2]			
Rajasthani				
Sindhi				
Tamil	(2) [3]	(1) [1]	(1) (1)	[1]
Telugu	(5) [2]	(1) [2]		[2]
Urdu	(2)			
Total	(22) [14]	(7) [7]	(3) [3] (39) [28]	(7) [4]

The position is such inspite of the fact that Kannada is the only Indian language that has got Jnanapeeth award 6 times to-date.

A look at the above analysis indicates that geographically adjacent languages have tended to translate mutually. Even in the case of institutionalized translation geographic contiguity has played an important role.

A similar scrutiny of translated publications in the past 3 years indicates that nearly 1/3 of the translations are fictions, and that in the past fiction dominated the translation scene. Currently in the area of literary forms, more novels are translated from Telugu, Hindi and Marathi into Kannada.

To a large extent, in this domain people generally do not have any formal training in translation theory and practice, but learn the process through trial and error, practice it due to personal motivation, literary and financial considerations.

## Inference

Planned translation is mainly institutional and statutorily essential to fulfil some of the constitutional and other obligations; It is undertaken for integrational purposes and is unconcerned with the demands of the society. The process is unconcerned with the linguistic needs of the target audience, with ideal communicative qualities like readability, comprehensibility of the product. The product is true to the parent language rather than the target language, and has failed to produce material readable in the target language. It is quantitatively substantial and qualitatively poor.

Unplanned translation is mainly individualistic and self satisfying, need based, demanded by the target language, committed to the demands of the society, quantitatively substantial and qualitatively also reasonably good. But, in this case also the outcome and impact of the purpose for which the act was undertaken are yet to be evaluated properly.

The contribution from planned translational activities for the development of language are not up to the expected extent and has sometimes led to an artificial vision of language development, Le., development in qualitative sense but not in quantitative sense. Efforts to standardize the terminology in some of the domains like administration have also not succeeded. Both planned and unplanned translation have also contributed to language development at different paces and resulted in unbalanced growth of the language. Translation as a statutory activity has not succeeded in producing qualitatively acceptable translation but as an individualistic and voluntary activity has succeeded to a great extent.

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