

## MODERN TRENDS IN TRANSLATION STUDIES AND PRACTICES IN INDIA: BRIDGING LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY IN A DIGITAL AGE

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### Abstract

India's linguistic landscape, characterized by over 22 official languages and thousands of dialects, positions translation as a critical tool for cultural preservation, economic integration, and technological advancement. This paper explores modern trends in translation within the Indian context, focusing on the integration of artificial intelligence (AI), the resurgence of literary translation, audiovisual practices, and localization efforts. Drawing on recent scholarly works, government policies, and industry reports from 2023–2025, it examines how these trends address multilingualism while navigating challenges like data scarcity and cultural nuances. Key findings highlight the hybrid AI-human model as a dominant paradigm, the global recognition of Indian literary translations, and policy-driven initiatives for indigenous language support. The analysis underscores opportunities for equitable knowledge dissemination but warns of persistent barriers in low-resource languages. Recommendations include enhanced investment in AI training datasets and collaborative translation ecosystems to foster inclusivity.

### Keywords

Translation studies, AI machine translation, literary translation, audiovisual translation, multilingualism, India, localization, government policies

## 1. Introduction

India's multilingualism is both a cultural asset and a translational imperative. With Hindi, English, and 20 other scheduled languages recognized under the Constitution, alongside numerous endangered dialects, translation serves as the linchpin for national cohesion, education, and global outreach. In the post-colonial era, translation has evolved from a tool of colonial imposition to a vehicle for decolonizing knowledge, amplifying regional voices, and adapting to digital globalization. Recent years, particularly 2023–2025, have witnessed transformative shifts driven by AI advancements, rising demand for localized content, and policy reforms under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

This paper investigates these modern trends through a multidisciplinary lens, integrating insights from translation studies, linguistics, and technology. It argues that while AI promises efficiency, human-centric approaches remain essential for preserving cultural fidelity in India's diverse idiom. The structure proceeds from historical foundations to contemporary practices, challenges, and prospects, supported by empirical data from recent publications and initiatives.

## 2. Historical Context of Translation in India

Translation in India predates colonial encounters, embedded in ancient practices like the rendering of Sanskrit texts into Persian during the Mughal era or Buddhist scriptures into regional vernaculars. The 19th-century colonial period introduced English as a translational medium, often for administrative dominance, as seen in the Macaulay Minute of 1835, which prioritized English education. Post-independence, the Official Languages Act of 1963 formalized bilingualism (Hindi-English), mandating translations for parliamentary proceedings and legal documents.

The 1990s marked a "translation boom," spurred by globalization and the liberalization of publishing, with houses like Oxford University Press and Katha championing regional literature into English. This era shifted focus from mere

linguistic transfer to cultural negotiation, as theorized by scholars like Sujit Mukherjee in *Translation as Discovery* (1981), who viewed translation as an act of cultural rediscovery rather than equivalence. By the 2010s, digital platforms amplified this, but uneven access exacerbated divides between high-resource languages (e.g., Hindi, Tamil) and low-resource ones (e.g., tribal dialects).

Contemporary trends build on this legacy, leveraging technology to democratize translation while confronting the asymmetries of multilingualism. As Rita Kothari notes, India's "continuous straddling of languages" renders translation an "everyday affair," yet one ripe for theoretical innovation.

### 3. Modern Trends in Translation

#### 3.1 AI and Machine Translation

AI-driven machine translation (MT) has revolutionized India's translation ecosystem, particularly for Indic languages. Neural MT models like Google Translate and IndicTrans2 have improved accuracy for Hindi, Tamil, and Telugu, with Large Language Models (LLMs) such as GPT-4o and Gemini achieving up to 85% semantic fidelity in benchmark tests. A 2025 study by UNSW Sydney researchers found LLMs excelling in literal translations but faltering in sentiment preservation for philosophical Sanskrit texts, highlighting the need for hybrid models combining AI with human post-editing (MTPE).

Government investments, including Microsoft's US\$17.5 billion commitment (2026–2029) for AI infrastructure, integrate MT into public services like e-Shram and the National Career Service (NCS), enabling multilingual job matching and résumé generation. The National Translation Mission (NTM), launched in 2009 and expanded in 2025, promotes machine-aided translation for knowledge texts, targeting 22 scheduled languages. Trends indicate a shift toward adaptive AI, where models fine-tuned on Indic corpora handle code-switching—a common Indian linguistic practice blending English with regional languages.

Industry reports predict MTPE will dominate by 2025, with tools like SYSTRAN and Azure AI enhancing real-time applications in e-commerce and healthcare. However, ethical concerns, including data privacy under India's Digital Personal Data Protection Act (2023), necessitate oversight.

### 3.2 Literary Translation

Literary translation has surged, with Indian works gaining international acclaim. Geetanjali Shree's Tomb of Sand (2022 International Booker Prize) and Vinod Kumar Shukla's recent honors exemplify this, translating Hindi narratives into English for global audiences. From 2023–2025, translations from Malayalam, Bengali, and Marathi have proliferated, with publishers like Penguin Random House India reporting a 40% increase in bhasha-to-English titles.

Trends emphasize non-fiction and memoirs, countering the fiction bias. Yoda Press's Arpita Das notes a growing interest in regional non-fiction, though economic constraints limit distribution. Inter-language translations (e.g., Tamil to Hindi) are rising, supported by prizes like the JCB Prize for Literature, which awarded translated works in 2024. Bibliometric analyses reveal a 25% annual growth in translation studies publications, focusing on postcolonial dynamics and gender perspectives.

This trend democratizes Indian literature, challenging the "Indian English" monopoly and fostering epistemic justice.

### 3.3 Audiovisual Translation

Audiovisual translation (AVT) in India mirrors Bollywood's global reach, encompassing subtitling, dubbing, and voice-over for OTT platforms like Netflix India. A 2025 Routledge volume by Priyanka Rachabattuni and J. Prabhakar Rao documents a shift from lip-sync dubbing to AI-assisted subtitling, improving accessibility for 500 million regional viewers. Trends include fan-subbing communities and AI tools for real-time captioning in live streams, as seen in IPL broadcasts.

Challenges persist in handling dialects, with initiatives like the Bhasha Sangam app promoting AVT for endangered languages. By 2025, AVT constitutes 30% of India's translation market, driven by video content growth.

### 3.4 Localization and Technical Translation

Localization adapts content culturally, vital for India's digital economy. With Hindi demand surging due to economic growth, firms like Tridindia report 50% revenue from tech localization. E-learning platforms use AI for multilingual courses, aligning with NEP's three-language formula. Technical translation in finance and healthcare leverages cloud-based tools, though script diversity (e.g., Devanagari vs. Tamil) poses hurdles.

## 4. Government Policies and Initiatives

The NEP 2020 mandates multilingual education, extending translation services to six new languages (Bodo, Dogri, etc.) in Parliament by 2025. The NTM and Scheme for Protection and Preservation of Endangered Languages (SPPEL) digitize 5 crore learners' resources via SWAYAM, using AI for textbook translations. UGC guidelines (2023) endorse generative AI for higher education translations, supporting indigenous policies.

These align with the Official Languages Act, ensuring Hindi-English parity while promoting regional equity. However, implementation lags in states like Tamil Nadu, where political resistance to the three-language policy hinders progress.

## 5. Challenges in Multilingual Translation

India's 19,500+ dialects create data scarcity for AI, with low-resource languages like Bhili yielding error rates up to 40% in LLMs. Cultural nuances—idioms, code-mixing—evade automated tools, as in Urdu-Hindi script divergences. Economic barriers limit regional publishing, while the three-language policy faces resource shortages and untrained educators.

Multilingualism, while enriching, complicates reception; Trivedi argues it reduces translation's urgency in daily life. Preservation efforts for oral traditions add layers, demanding hybrid strategies.

## 6. Case Studies

### 6.1 IndicTrans2 for Speech-to-Text

IndicTrans2, a transformer-based model, translates across 22 Indian languages, supporting real-time speech applications. A 2025 preprint demonstrates 92% accuracy in Hindi-Telugu pairs, bridging communication in tribal regions.

### 6.2 Tomb of Sand: Literary Global Reach

Daisy Rockwell's translation of Shree's Hindi novel exemplifies postcolonial trends, winning the Booker while critiquing partition trauma, reaching 1 million readers globally.

### 6.3 GeM's AI Multilingual Assistant

The Government e-Marketplace's GeMAI uses Azure for procurement translations, serving 10 million users in 12 languages by mid-2025.

## 7. Future Directions

By 2030, hybrid AI ecosystems could standardize low-resource translations via crowdsourced corpora. Policy expansions under SPPEL should prioritize oral archives, while international collaborations (e.g., with IBRO) enhance neuroscience-informed MT for cognitive linguistics. Ethical AI frameworks must address biases, ensuring equitable representation.

## 8. Conclusion

Modern translation trends in India reflect a dynamic interplay of technology, culture, and policy, transforming multilingual challenges into opportunities for inclusion. AI's efficiency, paired with human insight, and bolstered by initiatives like NTM, positions India as a global translation leader. Yet, sustained investment in data

diversity and training is crucial to realize this potential, ensuring no voice is lost in translation.

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