

Cultural Nuances in Translation: Subtitling and Dubbing in Indian Cinema

Manoj Kumar *

Professor,
Dept. of English and MEL,
University of Allahabad, Prayagraj, UP.
<https://doi.org/10.57067/ir.v1i10.357>

Abstract

This paper attempts to examine the particulars involved in subtitling and dubbing in Indian cinema namely the sanctions and the presentation of cultural subtleties. In a multilingual country like India, where films often traverse linguistic and regional borders, translation becomes not just a semantic act but a profoundly cultural one. The analysis examines how idiomatic expressions, humour, religious references, caste markers and regional dialects can be re-fashioned or occasionally weakened as they underpin the translation process between subtitling and dubbing. Further supported with the excerpts from certain case studies of some of the celebrated films of India, the paper also criticizes against the impoverishment on both the semantic and cultural intricacies in translations. It also demonstrates the ways in which translators struggle with the tension between source culture fidelity and target audience accessibility. The article claims that successful audiovisual translation in Indian cinema depends on a delicate blending of linguistic precision, contextual and cultural adaptability. The results add to existing translation studies perspectives, especially in the postcolonial and multicultural Indian context, where possibilities to develop a more culturally satisfying quality for translations of cinematic texts are opened.

Keywords: Indian cinema, audiovisual translation, dubbing, subtitles, cultural nuance.

Introduction to Indian Cinema and Translation

The linguistic, cultural and regional diversity of India is well portrayed in Indian cinema. India is one of the nations in the world that produces the highest number of films of which over 1,600 films and more than 900 films are in regional languages, but there is no denying the fact that it is a multilingual country with more than 22 officially spoken languages and hundreds of unofficial languages and dialects. While Hindi cinema, commonly referred to as Bollywood, has often kept the limelight in discussions about the state of Indian cinema, the regional industries, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Bengali, Kannada, Marathi, Punjabi cinema, play an equally, if not more important, role in upholding the flag of Indian cinema. As M. Madhava

* Corresponding Author: Manoj Kumar

Email: manojenglish@gmail.com

Received 19 Nov. 2024; Accepted 15 Dec. 2024. Available online: 30 Dec. 2024.

Published by SAFE. (Society for Academic Facilitation and Extension)

[This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)



Prasad notes, “Indian cinema cannot be seen as a singular entity but as a multilingual field of production and reception” (Ideology of the Hindi Film).

In a multilingual situation such as this, translation is a vital pedagogical aid that guarantees the cross-linguistic availability of cinema. Subtitling and dubbing, the two dominant subfields of audiovisual translation (AVT), are the links between film and audiences across a language barrier. It is a Tamil-speaking person watching a Bengali art film or a Bhojpuri speaker watching a mainstream film in Bollywood, dubbed content makes all this possible. The importance of translation in Indian cinema has seen a sharp increase post-free access of movies on OOT platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Hotstar, and ZEE5, which serve to a pan-Indian and global audience. These platforms are known for the multi-language content and subtitles and dubbed versions in Hindi, English, Tamil, Telugu language. This multilingual availability has brought regional films beyond their native speakers. For example, the runaway success of Bahubali or RRR is not just due to the visual splendour but due to the fact that all these movies have made in multiple dubbed languages and subtitled versions.

Moreover, it can no longer be said that subtitles and dubbed content are just translations, they have become part of the content distribution plan. In a land where language is a source of identity and division, translation makes it possible for everybody to be included, so that stories cross the borders of languages and cultures. As Susan Bassnett aptly puts it, “Translation is not a matter of words only: it is a matter of making intelligible a whole culture” (Translation Studies).

Subtitling and Dubbing: Definitions and Techniques

Within the field of audiovisual translation (AVT), subtitling is compared to or dubbed in one of the two most widely used modes in order to mediate language barriers between source and target. Both have the same fundamental aim of communicating visual stories, however in terms of their shape, technique and cultural impact, they share nothing in common. Subtitling is the process of adding interlingual written translation that is usually displayed at the bottom of the screen in synchrony with the oral discourse of the AV. It enables to hear the original soundtrack with the reader translation. There is quite a lot of subtitling especially in India because of potential audience multilingualism and an increasingly literate audience that is getting used to reading subtitles in English or Hindi while watching other-language or regional content. As Díaz Cintas explains, “Subtitling is a form of constrained translation, limited by space (generally two lines) and time (duration of utterance)” (Audiovisual Translation: Subtitling). The technical and stylistic features of subtitling are:

- Compression of words by dialogue (without losing meaning because of small screen size (~40 characters per line).
- Synchro with images and speech timing.
- Streamlining and vernacularising of statements for fast comprehension.
- Tone, mood and cultural references are kept while ensuring viewers are capable to comprehend.

For example, “Arey tu toh chhori se chhora ban gaya” in the 2016 film *Dangal* was translated in English as “You’ve become a boy from a girl!” an approximate, but humorous, translation that sort of makes you laugh at the meaning of the line.

Dubbing is the technique of replacing an original audio track with a voice track spoken in the target language and synchronized with the lip movements and emotional inflections of the original actors. It enables a viewer to watch the content without reading and is applicable to child, the aged or people that cannot read subtitles. Mass-market productions (especially in the South or in their Hindi-dubbed versions or Hollywood releases) are also preferably dubbed. The dubbing involves several key techniques:

- Lip-syncing to mimic the speech of the original actor with the mouth movements of the replacer.
- Prosody matching, such as rhythm, intonation and stress patterns.
- Adaptation of idioms, comedy, and slang for regional audiences.
- Voice acting that matches the tone and identity of the original actors.

The Hindi dubbed version of *Avengers: Endgame* (2019) being a case in point, the iconic line “I am Iron Man,” is delivered aptly as “Main hoon Iron Man” a direct yet emotionally-laden statement well-known to Indian viewers.

So as much as subtitling and dubbing have their advantages, they both contain inherent problems of attempting to marry the accuracy, nuance, and technicality of the native language. Which to use often relies on the preference of a target audience, production budget and market for the content produced. As scholar Henrik Gottlieb puts it, “Subtitling is translation with constraints; dubbing is translation with transformation” (*Subtitles, Translation & Idioms*).

Cultural Nuance in Indian Context

Translation in Indian cinema A unique, daunting problem in Indian film translation, especially in subtitling and dubbing, is how to carry nuance across cultures and why the nation’s linguistic and socio-cultural variety demands continuing attention. India’s is a multilingual cinema, but it’s also one deeply invested in region-specific idioms, humour, proverbs, caste markers,

dialects and spiritual references. These factors frequently defy direct translation, requiring a more subtle and contextually appropriate approach.

It can be especially challenging when translating idioms and proverbs. An example would be the Hindi phrase “naach na jaane aangan tedha” which describes someone who blames the surroundings for his own incompetence. Its sarcasm and colloquial cleverness just don’t come through in a straight translation as “Can’t dance, blames the crooked courtyard.” Perhaps a more serviceable translation would be that bad workmen blame their tools but in this anglicised formulation there is a loss of local colour.

As a rule of thumb, jokes tend to be puns, wordplay, or localized in-jokes. In films like the Marathi hit *Sairat*, the slangy, rustic jargon of the dialogue signifies not just adolescent high spirits but also caste-coded speech. This energy is difficult to maintain when subtitled in English without rendering the cultural texture flat. Similarly, the comedy scenes in *Chennai Express* are heavily dependent on Tamil-Hindi word puns that are tough to translate and don’t make the same impact during the translation or via subbing.

Song lyrics are another site of cultural plenitude and translation problems. The words in Bollywood songs are almost always written in the Hindustani language (Hindi), colloquial Hindustani, or Urdu and are composed in a unique and often symbolic manner using idiomatic phrases from colloquial Hindustani, such as *kya* at the end of a question. Translating a line such as “Tumhi ho bandhu, sakha tumhi” to “You are my kin, my friend” gets the meaning across but loses the spiritual overtones and poetic cadence. There’s no avoiding that you start to lose the music, the rhyme, the colloquialisms.

Slang and colloquial expressions also pose a challenge. Words like “jugaad” (a flexible, quick-fix innovation) or “mehfil” (a poetic gathering) carry dense cultural baggage. Translating “jugaad” as “hack” or “improvisation” lacks the socio-economic and inventive flair it holds in Indian society. Similarly, “namaste”, a common greeting with spiritual resonance, is often reduced to “hello,” which strips it of its cultural humility and meaning.

There are religious references and caste markers as another layer of complexity to what’s going on. For example, lines about *jaati* (caste) in films such as *Article 15* also need the most intricate handling to prevent disappearance and misrepresentation. A slur like “chamar” (a reference to a Dalit caste) loses its meaning in translation into English, reconstructed though not being conversational. Translators tend to stay those terms and add a footnote (in academic publications) or use generic names—always imperfect solutions.

Regional dialects further complicate translation. A film like *Peepli Live*, teeming with Awadhi and rural idioms would lose a lot of its satirical bite if it were spoken altogether in North-Indian

standard Hindi or English. A character's class, location or even education is often communicated through dialect — something difficult to convey in a single target language. As translation theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak observes, "Language is not only a means of communication; it is also a carrier of culture." In Indian cinema, subtitlers and dubbing artists often walk a tightrope between functional clarity and cultural integrity. Retaining such nuance is not just a matter of linguistic skill, but also cultural responsibility.

Translation Challenges in Subtitling

While, subtitling is a significant mode of audiovisual translation in Indian cinema, it still includes some unique linguistic and technical challenges. As in a multilingual, multi-culture-oriented cinematic space, so the subtitling hereto should be a well-balanced section between accuracy, brevity, and audience understanding. The most difficult obstacles are space, time, loss of the poetic line, code-switching and the required condensation.

One of the most prominent difficulties exists in spatial and temporal restrictions. Captions necessitate concision to fit on screen—typically no over twice as long—while detectable simply for a couple seconds. As Díaz Cintas and Remael note, "Subtitlers are constrained not only by time and space, but also by the pace of the film and the viewers' reading speed" (2007). This regularly forces interpreters to cut dialog, prioritizing quickness in addition to lucidity above profundity as well as nuance. Occasionally, a complex sentence blends with an easier one, like the translators find a method to yield viewers comprehension without forfeiting the director's creativity in expression.

While translating films poses difficulties retaining poetic cadence and linguistic nuance remains paramount. Regional Indian cinema frequently incorporate melodic passages replete with symmetrical consonance, reiterative refrains, and imaginative idioms. Consider the ditty "Pyaar hua, iqraar hua hai" where rhyming harmonies and lilt elude rendition as "Love has happened, confession has happened." Emotional register is not as conveyed when you watch in translation. The regional films represent the Indian multilingualism but losing a lyric rhythm means possibly forgoing something that is fundamentally an Indian form. For such faithful exchanges, verse-form reinvention is here necessary as well reconsideration of repetition and the renewing literal meaning in tendentious European word-images if effectiveness poetically across-languages is to be retained.

Puns, idioms and cultural references that find themselves woven into dialogue are even more complicated. "Doodh ka jala chhaachh bhi phook phook ke peeta hai," chirps a character in a Bollywood movie — one who's been signed by milk drinks buttermilk cautiously, explaining

its cautious approach. They're verbatim translations which just screw up understanding and communication. Echoing the message with a corresponding metaphor, "Once bitten twice shy," makes it clear while losing etymological history. The conversation deftly waltzes in and out of illustrating local color, accessible to relation.

Code-switching is a significant aspect of Indian linguistics that allows speakers to alternate between Hindi, English and the regional languages in one sentence. This quality, emblemized by the dialogue of current Bollywood film releases, bears resemblance to hybrid language practices in contemporary urban Indian society. Take "Yeh toh full drama hai, boss!" What came out was a mixing of Hindi and English, not in vocabulary so much as syntax: something to read for the bored bilingual. Yet, subtitling requirements whittle down these mixtures to one "normative" language only —usually English— thereby reducing the polyphonic richness of sociolinguistic texture and all its nuance regarding identities.

The limitations of time and space also mean that translations must often be rendered succinctly, which may lead to cultural references being cut or omitted as well as instances where respectful language forms are concerned. In so doing, subtitling may truncate the depth of culture for readability's sake. The term "bhabhi," holding unique implications within Indian kinship networks, may reduce merely to "sister-in-law," losing its position and emotional dimension. As scholar Lawrence Venuti warns, "The translator's task is not just to transfer content but to preserve difference" (1995). For subtitling of Indian cinema, adherence to technical formatting often compromises this objective of retaining culture while pursuing clarity. Hence, subtitling entails negotiating between comprehension and custom, favoring one at the other's cost.

Dubbing Challenges

Dubbing as a form of audio-visual translation entails the replacement of source-language (SL) speech through target language voice recordings that match lip movements, intonation and general affective presentation. While this serves to deepen the immersion for both local audiences, particularly within India's multilingual film industry, it also presents a series of unique challenges.

One of the toughest technical problems is lip-synch. what the dubber needs to do is perfectly sync both translated lines with actor's lips, face mimics and/or all his motions. But not all languages take the same amount of time to articulate an idea." For example, a brief Hindi sentence such as "Chalo, jaldi karo!" could also work river when translated into Tamil or English which either could make it seem as though delivery were hurried to accommodate a rush, and then again awkward pauses. "Lip synchrony demands a surgical precision in timing,

phonetic matching, and articulation,” observes Chaume (2012), rendering it both art and science.

The casting of the voices is also a trail that can only be trod carefully. Selecting the dubbing artist whose voice, tone and pitch match to near perfection that of the actual actor is vital for continuity in character. Personally I like being able to hear someone else act out a scene. Inappropriate voice casting can break the illusion of performance and experience, that we as viewers or listeners have. For example, a Salman Khan movie dubbed in Telugu might struggle if the voice artist doesn't get as close to his gruff baritone and charismatic pitch of making style.

Performance tone and emotional nuance are also frequently lost in dubbing. The translator needs to translate lines, not just linguistically but also emotionally. A moment of quiet tragedy or ironic inflection in the original can be pummelled into ridiculousness if a dub doesn't have the... well, prosody to capture its rhythm and stress as they convey emotion or character. You particularly lose this in emotional scenes, due to the psychological grounding of whatever actor's voice were being heard previously that you just don't get with mechanical translation. Another serious challenge is the need for cultural adjustment, while maintaining one's identity. Indian movies are steeped in regional identity, language eccentricities and local humour. Getting these strands across to another audience without bleaching out their cultural specificity is a challenge. For example, a line in Tamil cinema that is based on local proverbs or casteist humour, may be next to impossible for it to adapt into its North-Indian audience without either hurting the sentiments of people who they are explaining so vividly about or notable even conveying what was intended. As does Thalaivar or God, in reverence to Rajinikanth figures of Tamil cinema that ends up just being names like leader or boss after it is dubbed in Hindi and loses its iconic fan culture weight.

Such issues occur fairly regularly in cross-regional dubbing within India, for example with North Indian (Hindi/Punjabi) films dubbed into Tamil/Telugu/Malayalam etc., and vice versa. The current wave of pan-Indian releases, Baahubali, Pushpa, and RRR has highlighted the importance for culturally sensitive dubbing. “Word for word” translations in a country like India, the highest grossing films have been dubbed into Indian languages, and these hits seem to prove that there is demand specifically for “dubbed content”. But discerning audiences sometimes notice differences in emotional tone or comedic timing or pacing of dialogue from language versions.

Consequently, dubbing is not just the mechanical substituting of one language for another, it's an act of imagination and transformation on performance, dialects, and personal identity. As

Nornes aptly writes, “Dubbing must not only reproduce words, but reperform the actor’s body and soul in another tongue” (2007).

Role of Translation Strategies in Indian Cinema

Translation in Indian film, particularly subtitling and dubbing requires more than merely exact words. In order to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers, translators use strategically motivated principles that are conducive to meaning retention, emotion elicitation and reader-response generation. Notable methodologies include domestication and foreignization, Skopos Theory, or transcreation and all are essential in localizing your content for multilingual multicultural audiences.

L. Venuti’s terms domestication and foreignization present two possible approaches. Domestication is a process of making the target text more familiar to the audience, by employing culturally bound references, idioms and behaviours. For example, a South Indian film could be sub/dub-titled with either an Indo-reliable Hindi or English equivalent of Tamil idiom—for e.g., “kozhandhai madiri irukku” (like baby) is trans created into “He’s so naïve.” This approach makes audiences more relatable, but at the cost of erasing cultural specificity. In contrast, foreignization preserves original terms or food items, festivals and idioms (e.g., using “pongal,” “jugaad,” “mehfil” or even namaste in subtitles) to maintain authenticity while possibly sacrificing clarity.

Skopos theory According to Hans J. Vermeer, the purpose (skopos) of a target text must justify deviations from normal translation practice; in other words, an otherwise acceptable translation should be rejected if it does not serve its skopos effectively and efficiently. While looking at Indian cinema, this theory allows translators to modify dialogues according to the target audience’s linguistic competence and ability in cultural understanding of the film medium. When translating the dialogue of a Hindi musical hit into Tamil, for instance, an over-zealous admirer might wear his heart on his sleeve — but which hyper-local idiom would be best suited in this case: “Chandni Chowk mein” or “T Nagar-la”? This change from the word-for-word translation to meaning-based adaptation, guarantees that impact of and response to a film may be retained even if the words are different.

Transcreation, a hybridisation of translation and creative writing is another avant-garde approach in Indian AVT. It permits the librettists and composers to set a melody or text free, while keeping its depth of feeling, rhythmical pulse or point. Take for example the translation of Bollywood song lyrics—translating it ‘word-for-word’ wouldn’t sound right in English and might even feel nonsensical. Instead, a transcreated version may still retain the emotional tone and rhyme of AIV while not necessarily consisting of direct grammatical equivalents.

Similarly, a lot of jokes or punchlines actually make use of linguistic substitution in the form of cultural references being interchanged (with local variety to avoid much loss) instead. For instance, while a Hindi reference to “Sholay’s Gabbar” could be converted in the Tamil version to Rajinikanth for local impact.

When used sparingly, these strategies provide a toolkit for striking the delicate balance between fidelity and fluency, authenticity and accessibility, original intent and target audience expectation. But the responsibility is still to ethical: it is for a translator of demographic power not to allow adaptation that helps create, perpetuate and serve stereotypes or erase minority voices in order simplify cultural complexity.

In the era of Indian cinema going more and more pan-Indian or even global, particularly with new OTT platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime and Hotstar translating these movies in multiple ways to connect better with a wider audience can influence how culture moves. An attentive, well-informed translator therefore acts not merely as linguistic intermediary but also cultural ambassador.

Case Studies

It is important, therefore, to see how translation in a filmy context - whether through subtitling or dubbing - has been deployed as an engagement with the religiously pluralistic nature of modern India. Movies like *Gully Boy* (2019), *Bahubali* (2015), *Article 15* (2019) and *Lagaan: Once Upon a Time in India* are prolific examples of this phenomenon, with much to offer for analyzing the effectiveness as well limitation of these translation strategies over regional or global viewers.

A. *Gully Boy*: Translating Urban Slang and Code-Switching

Zoya Akhtar’s *Gully Boy* gritty underground rap scene-based Mumbai, and the excessive use of Bumbaiya slang combined with English-Hindi code -switching and street idioms. Lyrics like “Apna time aayega” were left untranslated in various international subtitles to maintain cultural premium. But in some areas, the subtitle was “My time will come,” a correct translation but it doesn’t have that harsh beat and cultural edge of the mutilation. At the same time, words like “bhidu,” “setting kar liya” or “scene tight hai,” for example, refuse easy translation. The challenges thus demonstrate the complexity of subtitling youth idioms and urban speech with all their emotional and cultural charge.

B. *Bahubali*: Myth, Epic, and Localization

A Telugu film, *Bahubali* was dubbed into many Indian and foreign languages carrying mythic vocabulary as well as high register language usage. The Tamil and Hindi dubs would also convert metaphors or idioms to make sense locally. For instance, the Sanskritic terms such as “mahishmati”, or senapati were kept in all languages since they were usages of epic tone but other expressions which sounded a bit tough at places had to be toned down under regionalization. This is a Skopos-oriented approach - to focussing on the function of the film as an all-India Epic and accepting minor variances in language use for accessibility.

C. Article 15: Translating Caste Discourse

Article 15, by Anubhav Sinha deals with caste-based violence and discrimination in India head first. Subtitling this film for international audiences, on the other hand, meant threading some loaded caste terms — “Brahmin,” say; or “Dalit”; or slurs like “chamar” — through a needle at once thick and delicate. In the English translation, caste-based abuses frequently muted or translated generically. In one instance, the Hindi slur “chamar ki aulaad” was translated to simply say “you low-caste scum,” which dilutes the richer casteist insult. This is an example of the inadequacy on subtitling to translate caste, a concept deeply roots in culture and history.

D. *Lagaan*: Colonialism and Linguistic Irony

Ashutosh Gowariker’s *Lagaan*, for instance, set during the British Raj incorporates both Hindi and English dialogues (and at times juxtaposes them as a form of irony). The British characters talk among themselves in proper English, while Indian villagers speak a Hindi leavened with Bhojpuri. This contrast between colonizer and colonized in the original was diminished to some extent, particularly in Tamil and Bengali dubbed versions of film (wherein both were represented using a single language). The absence of this contrast is a loss to the film as one of its main themes. The English subtitle version, in contrast, preserves this distinction but loses the regional flavour of Hindi dialects to a superficial homogenization that tidies away political and cultural nuance even at an auditory level.

In all of these instances, AVT treatments illustrate how cultural references, dialects and emotional tones are addressed divergently in different formats. Subtitling may keep word-for-word accuracy but lose cultural density, dubbing reconstructs for speaking quality and affective depth of the voice while potentially effacing original languages. The work of translators — what to keep, domesticate or discard altogether from the source—doesn’t exist just on a technical level, but is weighed down with an ideological calculus and cultural back-and-forth.

Ethical and Political Considerations in Translation of Indian Cinema

Indian cinema translation is not just a linguistic or technical act, but an ethical and political intervention in the way stories get read, interpreted and remembered across cultural differences. In the multilingual, politically riven and communally-charged marketplace for content that is India [sub]titling (and dubbing) presents a host of such thorny questions – from censorship to cultural propriety to misrepresentation of voices/authenticity.

Censorship Board of Film Certification (CBFC) censors Indian films in India, but unofficial or regional censorship happens through local boards since *ibid*) was released with cuts meaning dubbed versions are hence different from the original. When it comes to multilingual OTT platforms, distributors tend to give a ‘scrub’ (wherein dialogues with potentially controversial content are removed), so that no religious or regional sentiment is sparked. While some like *Padmaavat* (2018) references to Rajput honour or Islamic marauders were censored, edited out from regional subtitles/international versions by the movie team for fear of communal retribution. Likewise, the political content of *Haider* or *The Kashmir Files* is sometimes muted or altered when it’s time for its translation to reach a wider audience.

Translation can play a role in the obliteration of culture by rendering local idioms, caste-specific references or regional dialects into more universal but neutral language. That’s especially tricky in movies like *Article 15* or *Sairat*, stories set up around caste and regional identities. For example, a Marathi word such as *Zingat* (from *Sairat*) was replaced in the subtitles with *Let’s dance* rendering it devoid of its culture-sensitive significance and sociolinguistic content. The same way, when *Kabir Singh* got dubbed in South Indian languages, the North college slang and culture set failed to strike a chord as now these were rendered in generic sense.

OTT platforms frequently engage in self-censorship, toning down profanity or politically charged language from subtitles and dubbed tracks to adhere to family-friendly (or “global”) norms. In the process, they neutralize or soften some of the film’s realism and interest level. The very raw street language of *Sacred Games* or *Delhi Crime* is diluted, if not edited in subtitled versions to match Western sensibilities raising ethical questions about the manipulation of audiences and the commodification of Indian realities for international consumption.

The question of voice is one of the most hotly debated ethical issues concerning translation. That is a different matter altogether from when the words of a Dalit character in our film – Hindi, say it may be- are voiced by an artiste who comes necessarily from another socio-cultural world (an English-speaking one or perhaps Tamil), and this raises issues of appropriation as well as representation. With regards to dubbing, the pitch and intonational

contours of an actor's voice can change its perceived identity. That has led some Indian film critics to urge that media companies and streaming platforms hiring dubbing artists or writing subtitles pay closer attention to people's intersectional identities — which are constituted by caste, gender, class and region.

Conclusion

India Indian cinema translation, the ethics of transcreation in the realm of Indian popular media reciprocation. Every decision, about whether to leave in a caste slur or how we translate the meaning of an old regional proverb into English affects what parts of India's complicated cultural reality is made clarified or muddy for our audience. As Indian cinema ventures beyond its borders on OTT platforms, subtitlers and dubbists would do well to keep an eye out towards more than just the letter of translation — but also cultural justice: not translating in such a way as to hurt or ridicule or demean what is being meant that we make a joke out of it. The translation of and for Indian cinema – whether it is subtitling, dubbing or otherwise -is not only a question of translating from one language to another. It is difficult cultural and political work, an aesthetic circus act that must somehow reflect the tens of spoken languages in India (in various states), ancient social structures and globalising audiences. In an expanding multilingual film practice and global digital platforms, cultural-savvy translators are more necessary than ever.

Sensitising India There should be greater focus on the recruitment and training of encounter mongering translators who are not only well-versed in languages but also understand cultures, regions and politics better. The translator without knowledge of caste codes, religious customs and regional idioms or masculine gender traditions might be unknowingly expunging meanings. As film theorist Ella Shohat puts it, "Translation is not only linguistic, it is a political act that can either bridge or reinforce cultural hierarchies." In the Indian scenario, it's a must to be culturally sensitive so that these narratives are not damaged.

One of the oldest tensions in film translation is that between access and fidelity. Such simplifications tend to flatten indigenous experiences and identities, even as they may make the basic plot more accessible for global audiences. Translators, however have a particularly complex job: to find that balance between providing the text over language and cultural boundaries, whilst also maintaining depth or tone, humour of resonance. For example, rather than translate the word *jugaad* as "quick fix," perhaps we'd need only to include a two-word subtitle or explanation: its uniquely Indian resonance.

One serious drawback of the Indian film industry is that there are no school courses in audio-

visual translation (AVT). Subtitling and dubbing are frequently the afterthought, with many jobs handed out to third parties without adequate editorial attention. New interdisciplinary course in film schools, language departments and media institutes creating proficiency as well studying culture/film aesthetics? Such programs should focus on:

- Lip sync dubbing and subtitle timing.
- Regional Speech, Caste Education and Oral Tradition.
- Translation and legal/ethical obligations (e.g., censorship, representation).
- Leverage machine and AI translation but not at the expense of human judgement.

There also needs to be translation guidelines along with style sheets which have been designed for Indian multilingual content that will ensure equivalence and culture-specific representations across the media. When an attention in the media oppresses us automatically, subtitles and dubbing become intrinsic forces to construct narratives, identities and audience experiences. It is not just a means of comprehension, but a site where cultural negotiation occurs. When we invest in the ethics, education and empowerment of translators today, tomorrow the resonance of India's cinematic stories will reverberate with authenticity at home as well as overseas.

Works Cited:

- Bassnett, Susan. *Translation Studies*. Routledge, 2002.
- Chaume, Frederic. *Audiovisual Translation: Dubbing*. Routledge, 2012.
- Cintas, Jorge Díaz, and Aline Remael. *Audiovisual Translation: Subtitling*. Routledge, 2007.
- Gambier, Yves, and Henrik Gottlieb, eds. *Multi-Media Translation: Concepts, Practices, and Research*. John Benjamins, 2001.
- Gottlieb, Henrik. *Subtitles, Translation & Idioms*. University of Copenhagen, 1997.
- Kothari, Rita. *Translating India*. Foundation Books, 2003.
- Kumar, Anuj. "In a Country Like India, Where Language Is Identity, Dubbing and Subtitling Are Never Neutral." *The Hindu*, 2020.
- Nornes, Abe Mark. "For an Abusive Subtitling." *Film Quarterly*, vol. 52, no. 3, 1999, pp. 17–34.
- . *Cinema Babel: Translating Global Cinema*. University of Minnesota Press, 2007.
- Prasad, M. Madhava. *Ideology of the Hindi Film: A Historical Construction*. Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Simon, Sherry. *Cities in Translation: Intersections of Language and Memory*. Routledge, 2012.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "The Politics of Translation." *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, Routledge, 1993.

Venuti, Lawrence. *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference*. Routledge, 1998.

Venuti, Lawrence. *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*. Routledge, 1995.

Vermeer, Hans J. "Skopos and Commission in Translational Action." *Readings in Translation Theory*, edited by Andrew Chesterman, 1989.