

Cultural Contexts and Linguistic Complexities in the French Translation of Indian Folktales

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Abstract

The translation of Indian folktales into French requires delicate attention, as it involves linguistic and cultural adaptation. This work explores the various complexities, highlighting the persistent challenges encountered, particularly in terminology, the selection of suitable equivalents, and the cultural elements embedded within the folktales of Bihar, a state of Eastern India. The importance of this study lies in its focus on the challenging task of translating folktales rooted in cultural traditions, offering valuable insights into translation as an intercultural practice. This work provides strategies for translators to address cultural and linguistic hurdles. The significance of this work lies in its contribution to the broader understanding of translation as an intercultural activity. The present work contributes to the discussion on navigating cultural and linguistic aspects, thereby assisting translators in effectively managing the complexities. The primary objective is to summarize the stages involved in translating these folktales, identifying and analysing recurring challenges related to terminology, the selection of appropriate equivalents, and intercultural aspects. Descriptive and analytical methods were employed to scrutinize both linguistic and extra-linguistic aspects, revealing significant challenges, especially in the absence of direct equivalents in the target language. The findings emphasize the importance of employing culturally nuanced translation methods to retain the original text's integrity while making it accessible to the target audience.

Keywords: Culture; French; Indian Folktales; Linguistics; Transculturality; Translation.

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Introduction

Translation is the process of converting a written or oral message from one language into another while preserving its meaning and context. It involves addressing linguistic, cultural, and idiomatic differences to accurately convey the original message to the target audience. According to Das (2021, p.3), Translation is a transference of meaning from the Source Language (SL) to the Target Language (TL). Since meaning is the main goal in translation, there is not much difficulty in non-literary translation. But the difficulty arises when we are engaged in translation of literature. It is not easy to find the equivalent textual and literary material of the Source Language (SL) in the Target Language (TL). This process encompasses understanding the nuances from both source and target languages. The source language (SL) carries the information, while the target language (TL) receives the translated message. Both languages demand equal attention and meticulousness from the translator. Translation endeavors to bridge two languages and, in doing so, fosters connection between distinct cultures. It is evident that for national or global unity, cultural or political, translation serves a vital role. Translation involves converting text from one language to another while preserving the original ideas. According to the Oxford Dictionary, “translate” means converting language while maintaining the intended meaning. Nida and Taber define translation as “reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style” (Nida & Taber, 1974, p.12).

Translation focuses on the structural and semantic elements of language that must be carefully navigated to ensure accurate and effective translation. This involves analysing the syntax, grammar, vocabulary, and phonetics of both the source and target languages to maintain the integrity of the original message. It is linked with comparative linguistics. In fact, it builds its foundation on comparison and contrast between two languages. Comparative Linguistics also incorporates the historical studies i.e. the synchronic and diachronic studies of languages. While translating the source language material into target language, a translator is expected to have a good knowledge of both SL and TL. Failing to understand the linguistic structures of both the languages will lead to problems in the process of translation. As Catford (1965, p.20) defines translation from the linguistic point of view, Translation may be defined as follows: the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent material in another language.

The translation of the folktales requires also a profound understanding of cultural aspects embedded within the narrative. These tales often carry elements deeply rooted in the cultural heritage, including customs, beliefs, traditions, and societal norms unique to a particular community or region. When translating, it is vital to retain these cultural nuances to ensure that the essence and authenticity of the story are conveyed accurately in the target language. Cultural elements in folktales can manifest through idiomatic expressions, metaphors, proverbs, or references to specific historical events or figures. Each of these elements holds significant cultural value, enriching the story and providing insights into the community’s collective experiences and values. Maintaining cultural sensitivity in translating folk tales is essential to resonate with the audience of the translated version while honoring the richness of the original culture. This involves careful consideration of the target audience’s cultural background to ensure that the story remains relatable and meaningful to them, fostering cross-cultural understanding and appreciation. To illustrate this, consider the English greetings words - good morning, good evening, and good night symbolize differences in time and flexibility of culture. The Hindi words such as Pranam, Namaskar or Namaste express politeness, reverence and straight forward forwardness of the Hindus and their culture.

The translation of folktales, in particular, requires a meticulous approach that goes beyond mere linguistic conversion. Folk tales carry significant cultural elements that manifest through idiomatic expressions, metaphors, proverbs, and historical references, each of which holds immense cultural value. The translator must navigate these cultural nuances to ensure that the essence and authenticity of the original narrative are preserved in the target language. This work becomes even more challenging when trying to make the translated text relatable to the target audience while preserving the cultural depth of the original story.

The relevance of this research is reinforced by the increasing importance of preserving cultural heritage in an era of globalization. The folktales of Bihar offer a unique window into the region's history, traditions, and social norms. However, translating these tales into French poses significant challenges due to the cultural and linguistic disparities between two languages.

Recent research in translation studies has emphasized the importance of cultural sensitivity in translation (Munday, 2020). Studies have also highlighted the role of comparative linguistics in understanding the structural differences between languages (Bassnett, 2022; Gentzler, 2017). The historical development of languages, as well as synchronic and diachronic studies, have been recognized as crucial for translators to navigate linguistic challenges effectively (Tymoczko, 2021). Moreover, recent advancements in translation technologies have provided new tools for translators to manage cultural and linguistic complexities (Pym, 2023; Cronin, 2022).

1. Objectives

This present study builds on these insights to examine the specific challenges of translating the folktales of Bihar into French, focusing on the intersection of cultural and linguistic elements. In this research, we utilize a comparative linguistic approach, incorporating both synchronic and diachronic analysis to understand the structural differences between Hindi and French. We also employ cultural analysis methods to identify and retain the cultural nuances present in the original folk tales. The objective of this study is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the challenges faced in translating the folktales of Bihar into French and to suggest strategies for addressing these challenges. The Specific objectives are as follows:

- i. To investigate issues in selecting lexical items during translation, analyzing the choices and strategies for determining specific equivalents from the source language into the target language.
- ii. To identify the effect of modifications, additions and droppings of grammatical elements.
- iii. To identify alterations in the standard syntactic structure of the target language during the translation of source language sentences and linguistically analyzing these changes.
- iv. To analyze the cultural problems of translation and the principles to deal with them.

2. Research questions

In order to systematically explore the complexities involved in translating the folktales into French, it is essential to formulate research questions that align with the study's specific objectives. These questions will guide the investigation and provide a framework for addressing the various challenges encountered throughout the translation process. Based on the given objectives, the following research questions can be formulated:

- i. What are the key challenges in selecting appropriate lexical items during the translation of folktales of Bihar into French?
- ii. How do modifications, additions, and omissions of grammatical elements affect the translation process?
- iii. What are the syntactic alterations in the French translation of the folktales of Bihar, and how do these changes affect the linguistic structure?
- iv. What cultural problems arise during the translation of the folktales of Bihar into French, and what principles can be applied to address these issues?

3. Methodology

This study focuses on the linguistic and cultural challenges encountered while translating selected folktales of Bihar into French. We adopted a comparative approach to analyze terminological issues and select the appropriate terms in French. The descriptive and analytical methods are used in the present study. The linguistic and the extra linguistic properties of the translation are analyzed with a view to improve upon the theoretical foundation already laid by the different translation theorists. And the folktales have been rigorously analyzed at linguistic and cultural levels of the text. The exclusive features of the source language and receptor language have been examined at first. Sincere efforts have been taken to observe the changes in the syntactical pattern in the TL text from that of SL and how the translators have succeeded in their attempts to transfer the linguistic and cultural features like denotations and connotations into TL.

First of all, we explore the linguistic challenges of translating from Hindi to French, focusing on syntactical and grammatical differences. Secondly, this study delves into the cultural elements present in the folktales of Bihar and examines how these can be preserved in translation. Then, we present case studies of specific folktales, analysing the translation process and the challenges encountered. At last, we draw the conclusion and recommendation for future research in this area.

4. Literature review

Several previous studies have addressed linguistic and cultural issues in translation. One such study by Satisha (2021), titled “Linguistic and Cultural Challenges Faced by Translators,” explores the language and cultural difficulties encountered by translators when converting from the source language (SL) to the target language (TL), particularly when the two possess distinct languages and cultures. The study examines various elements such as customs, social interactions, celebratory practices, and traditions. Furthermore, it proposes solutions to address these challenges.

The study by Tiara Ridha Imami (2021), titled “Linguistic and Cultural Problems in Translation” examines issues related to lexical, morphological, syntactical, and cultural aspects, using Tolkien’s *The Hobbit* and its Indonesian translation as a case study. The findings highlight the need for careful adjustments and methods to achieve an accurate and culturally appropriate translation. Effective translation approaches can preserve the source text’s meaning without major sacrifices.

Ahmed Azeez Mohammed (2022), titled “Linguistic and Cultural Problems in Translation and Solutions,” examines the general challenges of translation, focusing specifically on major linguistic and cultural issues faced by translators. The study pays particular attention to linguistic problems such as word order, passivation, sentence length, idiomatic expressions, and concord.

In another study by M. Albakry (2004) titled “Linguistic and Cultural Issues in Literary Translation,” examines the translation of a short tale from Arabic to English. This research focuses

on the translation process and reconstruction, particularly addressing the linguistic and cultural challenges encountered in the original text and how these were managed in the translation.

One of the prominent studies in the field of problem in translation by Eugene Nida (1945), titled “Linguistics and Ethnology in Translation-Problems” explores the complex relationship between linguistics and ethnology in translation. Nida argues that successful translation requires more than just linguistic competence; it also demands an understanding of the cultural and ethnological context of the source language. This work discusses challenges translators face, such as dealing with cultural concepts and idiomatic expressions that may not have direct equivalents in the target language. It emphasizes the importance of achieving dynamic equivalence, where the translation conveys the same effect and meaning as the original text, despite cultural differences.

The above reviewed studies collectively highlight the significant linguistic and cultural challenges in translation. These works explore difficulties arising from differences in languages and cultures, focusing on elements such as customs, social interactions, and traditions. They emphasize the need for careful adjustments to maintain accuracy and cultural relevance, addressing specific linguistic challenges like word order, idiomatic expressions, and the translation process in literary works. Additionally, they underscore the importance of understanding both linguistic and ethnological contexts to achieve dynamic equivalence, ensuring the translation conveys the meaning of the original texts and effect despite cultural differences. In this present study, we are going to analyze the problems encountered while translating the folktales of Bihar into French Language by taking into account the cultural and linguistic aspects. This kind of study, which involves translating the folktales of Bihar, a rich cultural region in eastern India, into French and examining the problems encountered, has not been addressed previously. This work is unique in its nature.

5. Theoretical background

Translation theory provides a foundational framework for understanding the complexities involved in translating folktales. Concepts such as equivalence, cultural transfer, and fidelity to the source text are crucial in the translation process. As Venuti (1995) argues, translators often face the dilemma of either domesticating the text to make it more familiar to the target audience to retain the foreignness of the original. This dilemma is particularly pronounced in the translation of folktales, where cultural authenticity is paramount.

Translation according to Dr. Johnson involves the process of change into another language, retaining the sense which is indeed the basic objective (Das, 2021, p.1). Modifying this statement A.H. Smith maintains that to translate is to change into another language retaining as much of the senses as one can (Aspects of Translation. 1958, p.8). Catford defines translation from the linguistic point of view: Translation may be defined as follows: the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent material in another language (A Linguistic Theory of Translation.1965, p.20).

Catford adds emphatically that the central problem of translation-practice is that of finding TL translation equivalents. A central task of translation theory is that of defining the nature and condition of translation equivalence (A Linguistic Theory of Translation.1965, p.21).

J.C. Catford suggested that the meaning of the source language is substituted by the meanings of the target language. Thus, Catford stated that translation is an operation performed on languages: a process of substituting a text in one language for a text in another. Clearly, then, any theory of translation must draw upon a theory of language-a general linguistic theory (A Linguistic Theory of Translation.1965, p.1).

As Susan Bassnett observed that A translation is a physical manifestation of one person's reading and rewriting of someone else's text, and so can offer unique insights into processes of textual manipulation (Translation Studies. 2014, p.13)

Susan Bassnett emphasizes that translation involves the transfer of meaning contained in one set of language signs into another set of language signs through competent use of the dictionary and grammar, the process involves a whole set of extra- linguistic criteria also (Translation Studies. 2014, p.25).

Nida and Taber explained that translation involves recreating the source-language message in the receptor language, prioritizing two main aspects: meaning and style. The successful translation requires finding the closest natural equivalent in the target language for both meaning and style. The translated text should not only convey the same ideas as the original but should also reflect its tone and style, ensuring that it resonates with the audience in the same way (The Theory and Practice of Translation, 1982).

Translation holds immense significance as it acts as a vital bridge connecting people, ideas, and cultures across linguistic boundaries. It goes beyond the realm of literature, extending its influence to various fields of development. Through translation, literary works from diverse cultures become accessible to a wider audience, fostering cultural exchange and mutual understanding. Moreover, it facilitates the dissemination of knowledge and advancements in science and medicine, contributing to global progress and improving healthcare worldwide. In addition, it ensures accurate communication and collaboration in political and legal matters, thus fostering international cooperation and legal frameworks. Overall, translation plays a crucial role in nation-building by promoting cultural exchange, facilitating cooperation, and fostering mutual understanding among nations.

The translation involves various processes to ensure equivalence between the source and target languages. Vinay and Darbelnet (1987) identified seven fundamental processes:

- i. Borrowing: This involves integrating a word from the source language into the target language without modification, as *déjà vu* in English (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1987).
- ii. Calque: A word or expression is translated literally, for example *skyscraper* becomes *gratte-ciel* in French (Munday, 2020).
- iii. Literal translation: It consists of translating word for word when possible, without harming the meaning, such as *I love you* → *Je t'aime* (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1987).
- iv. Transposition: This process involves a change of grammatical category without altering the meaning, for example *He misses France a lot*. Become *La France lui manque beaucoup* in French. (Newmark, 1988).
- v. Modulation: It changes the perspective or point of view, like *It is not difficult* translated as *It's easy* (Munday, 2020).
- vi. Equivalence: Used for idiomatic expressions, such as *It's raining cats and dogs* translated as *Il pleut à torrents* (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1987).
- vii. Adaptation: This process adjusts a cultural reference to better match the target language, such as *Jaws* become *Les dents de la mer* in French (Newmark, 1988).

These processes allow translators to adapt to linguistic and cultural differences while respecting the intelligibility of the target text.

Domestication and foreignization are two fundamental translation strategies that provide both linguistic and cultural guidance. These terms were introduced by the American translation theorist Lawrence Venuti. According to Venuti, domestication refers to “an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values, bringing the author back home,” whereas foreignization is “an ethnodeviant pressure on those cultural values to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad” (Venuti 1995: 20). In simpler terms, domestication involves producing a translation that adopts a fluent, transparent style to minimize the foreignness of the original text for target-language readers, while foreignization retains elements of the original language and culture, deliberately breaking target-language conventions (Shuttleworth & Cowie 1997:59).

The domestication and foreignization are not synonymous with liberal and literal translation, they may sometimes overlap. The degree of foreignness in language or culture can serve as a criterion for determining whether a translation leans toward domestication or foreignization. Literal and liberal translations are techniques for handling linguistic structures, functioning as two methods of language transcoding. In contrast, domestication and foreignization pertain to cultural considerations: domestication replaces elements of the source culture with those of the target culture, whereas foreignization preserves the distinctiveness of the source culture. These strategies become relevant only when both linguistic and cultural differences exist between the source and target texts.

Eugene Nida (2001:82) emphasizes that “for truly successful translation, biculturalism is even more important than bilingualism, since words only have meanings in terms of the cultures in which they function.” Bridging cultural gaps between the source and target languages remains a significant challenge for translators. Christiane Nord (2001:34) similarly asserts that “translating means comparing cultures.”

In Indian context, translators play a crucial role. Translating between Indian languages poses fewer challenges compared to translating from an Indian language to Foreign Language especially French due to the greater cultural intimacy, shared syntax, idioms, and other linguistic elements. A flawed or inadequate translation can cause more harm than benefit, as it may lead to misunderstandings and misinterpretations of the original work if the translation is unclear.

Folktales are characterized by their simplicity in language, tone, and narrative style. They are straightforward, rustic, and often humorous. Despite certain words, experiences, cultural institutions, and phenomena are not present in French culture, they can still be recognized and understood in various regions of India. The rural settings and corresponding cultural environments in India are rich with practices that are common across the country.

When translating the folktales of Bihar into French, finding ideal and perfect equivalence becomes challenging due to the cultural differences between the source language (SL) and the target language (TL). The translator must be keenly aware of the cultural contexts of both languages. Word to word translation fails to capture the spirit of the original.

A fundamental aspect of translation, regardless of its nature, is a profound understanding of both the source and target cultures. Translators must possess comprehensive knowledge of the cultural nuances, customs, and social contexts of both the languages. This entails more than just linguistic proficiency; it requires an intimate familiarity with the cultural intricacies that shape language use and interpretation. To convey the meaning and essence of a text, translators must not only comprehend the literal sense but also grasp the broader cultural context in which the text is situated.

By understanding the cultural background and context, translators can ensure that the translated text accurately reflects the intended meaning and resonates with the target audience. Thus, successful translation necessitates a simultaneous understanding of both the sense and the context of the original text.

Indian folklore encompasses a vast array of stories, myths, and legends, reflecting the diverse cultural landscape of the country. As Rao (2009) observes, Indian folklore is deeply rooted in oral tradition and is characterized by its diversity, with each region having its own distinct storytelling style and themes. For instance, tales from the *Panchatantra* and *Jataka* reflect moral values and teachings, while stories from the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* are steeped in mythology and epic narratives.

Translating the folktales of Bihar into French involves overcoming several challenges, including linguistic, cultural, and contextual barriers. Linguistic challenges arise from differences in syntax, grammar, and vocabulary between the source and target languages. As Munday (2016) points out, translators often need to find equivalent expressions and idioms in the target language while maintaining fidelity to the original text. Cultural challenges involve conveying cultural nuances, beliefs, and values inherent in the original tales. For example, translating terms related to caste, religion, or social hierarchy requires careful consideration of cultural context. Contextual challenges stem from the need to make the stories accessible and engaging to the target audience while retaining their authenticity. According to Lefevere (1992), this may involve adapting the narrative structure or adjusting the tone to suit the cultural sensibilities of the target audience.

Translators employ various strategies to address the challenges of translating the folktales into French. Linguistic adaptation involves finding equivalent expressions and idioms in French while preserving the essence of the original text. As Newmark (1988) suggests, translators may resort to compensation, modulation, or paraphrase to achieve this. Cultural mediation requires explaining unfamiliar cultural references and concepts to the French audience. As Bassnett and Lefevere (1998) argue, this may involve reinterpreting motifs, characters, or plot elements to make them more relevant to the target culture.

The translation of the folktales of Bihar into French has broader cultural implications, contributing to cross-cultural understanding and appreciation. It facilitates the exchange of cultural knowledge, promotes intercultural dialogue, and fosters mutual respect and appreciation for diverse traditions. As Bassnett (2022) notes, translation serves as a bridge between cultures, allowing readers to gain insights into different worldviews and perspectives. Additionally, it allows French-speaking audience to gain insights into Indian culture, mythology, and worldview, highlighting a deeper appreciation for cultural diversity and heritage.

6. Result and discussion

Languages of Bihar are a group of Indo-Aryan languages spoken mainly in the state. The people of Bihar predominantly speak languages such as *Bhojpuri*, *Maithili*, and *Magahi*. *Hindi* serves as a unifying or link language in the region. *Magahi* is spoken in south of the Ganges and east of the Sone rivers. *Maithili*, influenced by *Nevari* and *Bengali*, is spoken in North Bihar and southern Nepal. *Bhojpuri*, distinct from the others, is found in western Bihar, Eastern Uttar Pradesh, border regions of Jharkhand, Chattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Nepal, and shares roots with *Awadhi*.

Folklore is an ideological manifestation of human creativity. Folklore includes myths, legends, folk tales, ballads, riddles, proverbs, and superstitions. The term folklore was first coined by William J. Thomas in 1846. Folk tales are a significant part of folklore, serving as a key form of entertainment and education for many people worldwide. In India, folk tales are cherished by millions for their entertainment and aesthetic value. These tales are typically passed down orally from one generation to the next, and in more recent times, they may also be found in written form. Folktales from different regions reflect the thoughts, traditions, and culture of their people, providing both entertainment and insight into their past and present customs. Bihar is one of the most important states of India, located in the eastern region of the country, has a rich tradition of folk culture. Besides folktales, Bihar owns a wealth of ballads and folk songs. Additionally, its proverbs and riddles reflect a profound understanding of worldly affairs. But unfortunately, whatever literature is found in it, is mostly available only in oral form. The authors have made a humble effort to collect these scattered gems and keep them in a book-like box. But a lot of work still remains.

Translating folktales of Bihar into French involves navigating significant linguistic and cultural differences, requiring more than a straightforward word-for-word conversion. The idiomatic expressions and regional dialects, such as *Bhojpuri*, *Maithili*, and *Magahi*, are deeply rooted in the culture of Bihar, often lacking direct French equivalents, which can result in the loss of nuanced meanings. Cultural references, including allusions to Hindu deities, local festivals, and social structures like the caste system, may be obscure or irrelevant to a French audience, necessitating careful adaptation or explanation. Moreover, the customs and values depicted in these folktales, such as gender roles, family expectations, and rituals, often reflect Indian traditional norms that may not align with French cultural sensibilities. The challenge lies in preserving the original essence and emotional impact of the stories while making them accessible and resonant for French readers. This requires a delicate balance between fidelity to the source material and the necessary adaptations to ensure that the tales remain authentic, engaging, and meaningful in their new linguistic and cultural context.

Although both *Hindi* (and its dialects in Bihar) and French belong to the Indo-European linguistic family, translating between these two languages presents unique challenges due to their significant cultural, geographical, and linguistic differences. The concept of “distal translation” comes into play, emphasizing the distance not just in physical geography but in cultural and social contexts. While the two languages share a common ancestral root, they have evolved in vastly different environments: Bihar with its rich tapestry of Indian culture, deeply influenced by Hinduism, and France with its own distinct history, climate, and predominantly Christian traditions. These factors shape not only the vocabulary and idioms of each language but also their syntax, grammar, and overall expression, making direct translation difficult.

We encountered several difficulties while translating the folktales of Bihar into French, in the context of language and culture due to their different geographical and cultural spaces. Most of the problems result from differences between the linguistic structures of Hindi and French as well as the differences between Indian and French culture.

6.1. Linguistic complexities

While translating folktales of Bihar into French, we have encountered the following language-related issues:

As Hindi and French belong to the same language family, exhibit profound linguistic differences due to their distinct historical, cultural, and geographical contexts, which have shaped their evolution

over centuries. These differences manifest across various linguistic domains, including script, phonology, vocabulary and grammar.

6.1.1. Script

Hindi is written in the Devanagari script, an abugida where each consonant has an inherent vowel sound that can be modified or suppressed by diacritical marks (*Matras*: ँ, ि, ी, ु, ू, े, ै, ो, ौ *Chandrabindu*: ॠ, *Anusvara*: ॡ, *Visarga*: ॢ; *Virama*: ॣ, *Nukta*: ।). The script is more complex, with 13 vowels and 33 consonants. Devanagari is a phonetic script, meaning words are spelled as they are pronounced, which differs significantly from the often-irregular spelling rules of French. French is written using the Latin alphabet, consisting of 26 letters, with additional diacritical marks such as accents (acute, grave, circumflex, diaeresis, and cedilla: à, ç, é, è, ê, ë, î, ï, ô, ö, û, ù etc.) that modify pronunciation. The script is largely non-phonetic, meaning pronunciation often cannot be inferred directly from spelling.

6.1.2. Phonology

The phonetic systems of Hindi and French are quite distinct. Hindi has a rich array of vowel and consonant sounds which includes a distinctive feature of aspirated and unaspirated consonants, as well as retroflex sounds (e.g., ढ (/ṭh/), “ख” (kha), (ड /ḍ/), (थ /th/), (ध /ḍha/). This kind of retroflex sounds are not in French language. Hindi language uses nasalization, where vowels are pronounced with a nasal sound, as in “माँ” (*mā̃*, meaning “mother”) and “हाँ” (*hā̃*, meaning “yes”) like French nasal sounds (/ɑ̃/ and /ɔ̃/). French consonants are generally less complex than *Hindi*’s, though French has a unique uvular “r” sound, and unlike *Hindi*, it doesn’t distinguish between aspirated and unaspirated consonants. In *Hindi*, the “H” (ह) sound is commonly used and is an integral part of the language’s phonetic system. For example, the word “हाथी” (*hāthī*) meaning “elephant” begins with the “H” (ह) sound. However, in French, there is no direct equivalent to this sound. French phonetics do not include the pronounced “H” (ह) sound found in Hindi. For instance, in French, the word “hôtel” is spelled with an “h” but the “h” is silent, so the word is pronounced as “ôtel”.

6.1.3. Vocabulary & Lexicon

French vocabulary has been heavily influenced by Latin. Its lexicon is characterized by a significant number of words with Latin roots. On the other hand, Hindi vocabulary is a blend of native Sanskrit-derived words and borrowings from Persian, Arabic, and English, reflecting India’s diverse cultural and historical influences.

6.1.4. Syntax & Grammar

The sentence structure in Hindi typically follows a Subject-Object-Verb (SOV) order, whereas French follows a Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) order. This fundamental difference affects how sentences are constructed and understood in each language. French verbs are highly inflected, with conjugation patterns that change based on tense, mood, aspect, and subject pronoun. Regular and irregular verbs follow complex rules, and verb forms can vary significantly between tenses.

Both languages have gendered nouns, but the systems differ significantly. French nouns are either masculine or feminine, and adjectives and articles must agree with the gender and number of the

noun. For example, “un homme” (a man) and “une femme” (a woman) show how articles change according to gender.

Hindi also uses gender, but it is more pervasive. Nouns can be masculine or feminine, and this affects not just articles but also verbs, adjectives, and postpositions. For example, “लड़का” (boy) and “लड़की” (girl) require different verb conjugations: “लड़का आया” (The boy came) vs. “लड़की आई” (The girl came).

French uses definite (le, la, les), indefinite (un, une, des), and partitive (du, de la, des) articles, which precede nouns and are essential in sentence structure. On the other hand, *Hindi* does not use articles in the same way. Instead, definiteness is often implied through context or specific words like “एक” (one) for an indefinite sense.

Indian languages do not have “determiners” except the cardinal and ordinal numbers. We don’t have “preposition”. On the contrary, we use “postpositions combined with possessives”. In India, we use postpositions where as in France they use preposition. The definite article is used (le, la, l’, and les) before each word in French. The usage of the article is not found in Hindi in this way. In the French language the article is used in many cases to mean the gender of the word or to specify something to someone, but on the other hand, there is no place for gender in Hindi because the gender is not used in the *Hindi* language in this way. The case of the partitive article or the contracted articles de, du, de la, de l’ et des. In general, the partitive article is translated into French for “*kuch*” in Hindi. Le cas de voici/voilà et ici/là. In *Hindi*, the usual meanings of these words are idhar/udhar or ihan/wohan. The case the demonstrative adjectives (ce, cet, cette et ces), we translate all these words as *ihan/wohan*.

The linguistic differences between *Hindi* and French are vast, spanning script, phonology, vocabulary and syntax & grammar. These distinctions highlight the unique paths of linguistic development influenced by the diverse cultural and historical backgrounds of these two languages. Understanding these differences is crucial for translating literary text from Hindi to French.

6.2. Cultural complexities

The cultural complexities of Bihar in India and France reveal distinct and profound differences shaped by their unique historical, religious, and social contexts. In Bihar, the rich tapestry of Hindu mythology, the legacy of Buddhism, and the agrarian lifestyle deeply influence cultural practices, with oral traditions like folktales reflecting communal values, respect for elders, and moral teachings intertwined with local deities and nature. In contrast, the culture of France, steeped in medieval European traditions and Christian values, often emphasizes individualism, social hierarchies, and moral lessons through the folktales.

Most of the Indians follow Hinduism in contrast people follow Christianity in France. The representation of religious culture is very present in French literature. It is very difficult to translate words that are linked to religious culture. That is why the Hindi translator uses the religious culture according to context to familiarize the reader. The cultures of the two countries are different due to geographical space and religion. And it is normal that its reflection can be visible in literature. And this creates an obstacle while translating literary text.

The social culture of Bihar is very different depending on the geographical space. According to the culture of hospitality, to greet someone, in French we use Salut, but in Hindi we use *Namaskar*, it is

the equivalent word in *Hindi*. For the word *Bonjour*, we can use *suprovat* in *Hindi*, but always this meaning *supravat* is not suitable. For this word *Bonjour*, we can also use *Namaskar* in *Hindi* depending on the context. The word *Monsieur* is translated as *Hujur/ Shriman/ Mahashay* in *Hindi* according to its culture. The word *Hujur* is typically used by a servant to address their master. The word *Shriman/ Mahashay* to address someone in general and the word *Madame* is translated as *Thakurain/ Srimati/mahashaya* according to the Indian culture. But *Thakurain*, this word is used to address the master's wife by her maid and *Srimati/ mahashaya* to address someone in general. According to the food culture, the French uses *Pain* in France, but in Bihar there was no concept of it. Here we use *roti* instead of *Pain*. In this context this word *roti* may be the equivalent word of *Pain*.

6.3. Case study of the folktales

The linguistic and cultural complexities involved in translating folktales across languages. Linguistically, direct translations often struggle to capture the intricate nuances of idiomatic expressions and culturally specific terms, which may lack direct equivalents in the target language. This requires finding alternative expressions or explanations that keep the original rhythm, tone, and style of the language. Culturally, the challenges are equally significant. Direct translations frequently fail to convey the rich cultural context embedded in the original tales, requiring translators to bridge cultural gaps with alternative expressions or detailed explanations that capture the essence of the folk culture while ensuring relatability to the target audience. This process demands a deep understanding of both the source and target cultures to maintain the original story's meaning and impact. Given the constraints of time and space, although we have translated numerous folktales of Bihar into French, we present only a few selected examples to illustrate these complexities. The following examples highlight the delicate balance required to preserve both the linguistic richness and cultural integrity of the original tales while making them accessible and meaningful to a new audience.

The story of *Chidiya ka Sanghars* is translated as “L’Effort de Moineau” in French. We have given this title in French to ensure that the translated title in French accurately reflects the essence and content of the story, though it differs from the literal translation of the original Hindi title. We adapted the title to capture the essence of narrative in the target language.

*Badai badai khuta chida, khutway mey dal ba
ka khai, ka pi ka ley ke pardesh jai* (Hindi)

« Ô bûcheron ! Déchirez le pieu. Ma lentille est tombée dans le pieu. Que dois-je manger et emporter pour ma famille et à l'étranger ? » (French)

O woodcutter! Tear the stake. My lentil has fallen into the stake. What should I eat and take to my family and abroad? (Meaning in English)

*Raja, Raja Badai ko danta, Badai na khuta chirey
khutway mey dal ba ka khai, ka pi ka ley ke pardesh jai* (Hindi)

« Ô roi ! Punissez le bûcheron. Le bûcheron ne déchirerait pas le pieu. Que dois-je manger et emporter pour ma famille et à l'étranger ? » (French)

O king! Punish the woodcutter. The woodcutter would not tear the stake. What should I eat and take for my family and abroad? (Meaning in English)

Rani Rani Raja Chhodo, Raja na Badai Dantey

Badai na khuta chidey, khutway mey dal ba ka khai, ka pi ka ley ke pardesh jai (Hindi)

« Ô reine ! Conseillez le roi. Le roi ne punirait pas le bûcheron. Le bûcheron ne déchirerait pas le pieu. Que dois-je manger et emporter pour ma famille et à l'étranger ? » (French)

O queen! Advise the king. The king would not punish the woodcutter. The woodcutter would not tear the stake. Lentil is into the stake What should I eat and take to my family and abroad? (Meaning in English)

According to Hindi linguistics structure, we use twice the same word to emphasize or to call the person such as *Badai Badai*, *Raja Raja* and *Rani Rani*. But in French, this is typically represented by using the word once, followed by an exclamation mark, such as “Ô bûcheron!”, “Ô Roi!”, and “Ô Reine !”. These linguistic nuances reflect the unique linguistic conventions of each language and are important factors to consider in translation or interpretation.

The word “*Pardesh*” represents as the work place of birds which is already stated at the starting of this story.

In the story titled “*Khichdi*”, the word “*Khichdi*”, is directly adopted into French, as there is no equivalent word for “*Khichdi*” in the French language, and this particular Indian food culture is not prevalent in France. This preserves the cultural authenticity of the term and acknowledges the absence of an equivalent concept in the target language. It also serves to enrich the understanding of different cultural practices for the audience.

Bhula na jaey issliye wo khichdi khichdi rattey huay chal raha thha. Chaltey chaltey uskey muh say khichdi ki jagah khachidi khachidi nikalnay laga. (Hindi)

Pour ne pas oublier, il marchait en mémorisant Khichdi Khichdi. En marchant, au lieu de Khichdi, KhaChidi, KhaChidi a commencé à sortir de sa bouche. (French)

In order not to forget, he walked while memorizing Khichdi Khichdi. While walking, instead of Khichdi, KhaChidi, KhaChidi started coming out of his mouth. (Meaning in English)

The pronunciation of “*Khichdi*” as “*khachidi*” due to a lapse in memory may lead to unintentional mispronunciations. This unique pronunciation makes it challenging to find a direct French equivalent for this specific Hindi term.

Bhagwan eisa din kavi na aaey ratta hua apni rah chalnay laga. Rastay may Raja ka mahal pada woha Karamchari log Raja ke beta honay ki khushi may utsav mana rahei the. Jab logonay uski baat suni to logo nay kaha ki, iey dushman desh ka lagta hei, pit pit kar iski khichdi bana do. (Hindi)

Il a commencé à marcher, récitant que jamais un tel jour ne vienne, Dieu. Sur le chemin se trouvait le palais du roi. Les employés célébraient la joie d'être le fils du roi. Lorsque les gens entendirent leurs paroles, ils dirent : « Il semble être l'ennemi du pays, battez-le jusqu'à en faire de la bouillie. » (*khichdi*/demi tué). (French)

He started walking, reciting, God, may such a day never come.! On the way, he passed by the king's palace. The palace staff were celebrating the joy of the king's son. When the people heard his words, they said, He seems to be an enemy of the country-beat him to a pulp! (Meaning in English)

In the last sentence, the term “*Khichdi*” is used to represent a badly beating, drawing from the Indian dish “*Khichdi*” a semi-liquid mix of rice, pulses, and vegetables. However, to find an identical translation for “*Khichdi*” in French remains elusive due to its unique cultural connotations.

In the story *Bhar Bitna*, the term “*Bhar Bitna*” is retained in French because this cultural concept does not exist in the target language. In Hindi, “*Bhar Bitna*” refers to a man the size of a hand span, a concept that holds specific cultural significance but has no direct equivalent in French.

In another story titled *Andher Nagri, Chowpat Raja*, there is a city called *Andher Nagri*, which was translated to “*Ville Sombre*” in French. The name symbolizes the irrational and autocratic nature of the government system in place. The king of this city embodies this chaotic rule, as he is a man driven by whims and fancies, leading his subjects through arbitrary and unpredictable decisions.

In Indian culture and belief, the cow symbolizes non-violence and benevolence, deeply intertwined with various deities such as *Shiva*, *Indra*, and *Krishna*. Cows hold a sacred status in Hinduism, often portrayed in Indian folktales as symbols of abundance, fertility, and motherhood. They are central figures in stories that highlight themes of rural life, kindness, and compassion. Revered for the hope and peace they are believed to bring to humanity, the cow is also seen as a representation of Mother Earth, providing countless benefits, with her milk nourishing all living beings. This symbolic character of the cow is beautifully depicted in the story “*La Vache Reconnaissante*”. In this folktale, two brothers find a cow and care for her, receiving milk and several calves in return. After one brother marries, the other is forced to live in the nearby forest with the herd of cows. Driven by greed, his sister-in-law eventually kills him. However, the cow, with divine intervention, saves his life.

In Indian folk culture, rats hold significance as totems among the Oraons, a tribe from *Chota Nagpur*. The story of the mouse (*Le récit de la Souris*) tells of a rat who plants a flower tree and every day a girl used to pick flowers from the same tree, ignoring the rat’s warnings. The rat eventually tells her that if she continues, he will apply vermilion to her forehead, symbolizing marriage as per Indian culture. When she does, the rat follows through, compelling her to become his wife. This tribal tale reflects the custom of *Sindur-dan*, where applying vermilion on a girl’s forehead signifies marriage. In some cases, this custom leads to forced marriages, while in others, it is used by lovers to solidify their union, as seen in weekly markets where a boy might suddenly apply vermilion, compelling their families to acknowledge the marriage.

The practice of *Sindur-dan* (applying vermilion) is deeply rooted in Indian culture but has no equivalent in France. Translating this cultural nuance into French poses challenges due to the differences in cultural context. Translators need to provide explanations of these cultural concepts to accurately convey the essence of the story.

The given below table presents a structured overview of linguistic and cultural variations, facilitating a clearer understanding of how translation strategies apply across different contexts. We have provided only a few examples to illustrate these differences due to time constraints.

Source Language	Target Language	Remark
<i>Badai Badai, Raja Raja and Rani Rani</i>	“Ô bûcheron!”, “Ô Roi!”, and “Ô Reine !”	In Hindi, repetition of words emphasizes meaning or serves as a form of address. In contrast, French conveys this with a single word and an exclamation mark. These differences highlight distinct linguistic conventions.
i. <i>Khichdi</i> ii. <i>Khichdi pit pit kar iski khichdi bana do</i>	i. <i>Khichdi</i> (Adaptation) ii. battez-le jusqu'à en faire de la bouillie.	i. The word <i>Khichdi</i> is directly adopted into French, as no exact equivalent exists, and this specific aspect of Indian dish-a semi-liquid mix of rice, pulses, and vegetables, is not widely known in France. ii. The term metaphorically signifies a severe beating, inspired by the Indian dish, However, an exact French equivalent is elusive due to its distinct cultural connotations.
<i>Sindur-dan</i>	Application du vermeillon sur le front	The practice of <i>Sindur-dan</i> (applying vermilion) is deeply embedded in Indian culture but has no direct equivalent in France. In this context, a foreignization strategy is more applicable, retaining <i>Sindur-dan</i> in the translation while providing an explanatory note to preserve its cultural significance.
<i>Andher Nagri</i>	Ville Sombre	The translation of <i>Andher Nagri</i> as “Ville Sombre” involves a domestication strategy because it adapts <i>Andher</i> to <i>sombre</i> , a familiar French term, making it more accessible to French readers.
<i>Chowpat Raja</i>	<i>Chowpat Raja</i> (Adaptation)	<i>Chowpat Raja</i> , the king, symbolizes chaotic rule, making arbitrary and unpredictable decisions driven by his whims and fancies. In translation, a foreignization strategy is preferable to retain the cultural essence of <i>Chowpat Raja</i> , possibly with an explanatory note, rather than replacing it with a more familiar but less accurate equivalent.

Table 1: Comparative Reflection

During our exploration of the linguistic and cultural intricacies involved in translating the folktales of Bihar into French, we have identified several prominent challenges. Linguistically, the complexities arise from differences in script, phonology, vocabulary, lexicon, and syntax. The transition from the original languages of these folktales to French requires careful consideration of script changes, the distinct sound systems, and the adaptation of unique regional vocabularies and idiomatic expressions to fit the French lexicon. Additionally, the structural differences between the languages, particularly in grammar and syntax, further complicate the translation process.

Culturally, the translation process becomes even more challenging as we navigate the nuances of cultural elements such as food, race, caste, and social customs etc. These elements, deeply rooted in the specific historical and social context of Bihar, often do not have direct equivalents in French culture. The divergence in cultural norms, values, and practices across different time periods and geographical locations introduces layers of complexity in accurately conveying the original essence of the folktales to target language.

Conclusions

This study set out to explore the multifaceted challenges involved in translating folktales of Bihar into French, focusing specifically on the linguistic and cultural hurdles encountered during this process. The investigation highlighted key areas such as the selection of lexical items, the impact of modifications and omissions of grammatical elements, alterations in syntactic structures, and the dealing with cultural differences.

The results of the study demonstrated that the translation of the folktales of Bihar into French is a challenging task that requires careful consideration of both linguistic and cultural contexts. The analysis of lexical selection revealed that translators often struggle to find exact equivalents, leading to the retention of certain Hindi terms in the French text or the omission of untranslatable concepts. In terms of strategy, domestication may adapt Hindi repetition into a single-word exclamation for natural readability, whereas foreignization preserves repetition to maintain cultural nuance. Additionally, grammatical modifications were necessary to align the source text with the syntactical norms of French, although this sometimes resulted in alterations that deviated from the original structure.

Culturally, the study uncovered significant challenges in conveying the essence of the folktales. The distinct cultural elements of Bihar, including social customs, food, caste, and idiomatic expressions, often lack direct equivalents in French, necessitating creative approaches to preserve the intended meaning as per the domestication and foreignization strategies. The principles of literary translation, therefore, played an important role in guiding these decisions, ensuring that the translation maintained fidelity to the original text while resonating with a French-speaking audience.

The unique contribution of this study lies in its comprehensive analysis of the translation process from a bilingual and bicultural perspective, offering insights into the strategies employed by translators to navigate linguistic and cultural complexities. The findings have important theoretical implications for the field of translation studies, particularly in understanding the dynamic interplay between language, culture, and translation. Practically, the study provides valuable recommendations for translators, suggesting methods to achieve more accurate and culturally sensitive translations.

However, the research is not without limitations. The study focused primarily on a limited set of folktales of Bihar, which may not fully represent the diversity of linguistic and cultural challenges present in other regions of India. Additionally, the translation process was examined within the constraints of current linguistic theories, which may evolve with further research. It is recommended to expand the scope of study to include a broader range of regional folktales and to explore the translation process in other languages and cultural contexts. This continued exploration will contribute to a deeper understanding of the complexities involved in translating culturally rich and linguistically diverse texts.

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