



# Language translation and subtitling strategies employed by OTT platforms to cater to diverse linguistic audiences in India

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## Abstract

*The rapid growth of Over-The-Top (OTT) platforms has led to an increase in the demand for language translation and subtitling to cater to diverse linguistic audiences in India. This research aims to explore the language translation and subtitling strategies employed by OTT platforms in India and their effectiveness in delivering high-quality language content to users.*

*The study employed a qualitative research design and conducted in-depth interviews with executives and content creators from leading OTT platforms operating in India. The interviewees were selected based on their experience and expertise in language translation and subtitling.*

*The findings of the study suggest that OTT platforms use a combination of machine translation and human translators to deliver high-quality language content to users. While machine translation is used to translate content in real-time, human translators are employed to ensure accuracy and cultural sensitivity. The study also revealed that subtitling is the most commonly used strategy to provide language content to users, with dubbing being used in select cases.*

*Furthermore, the study identified several challenges faced by OTT platforms in language translation and subtitling, including the lack of availability of professional translators for regional languages, the high cost of translation and subtitling, and the difficulty in ensuring cultural sensitivity.*

*The study concludes that while OTT platforms have made significant strides in language translation and subtitling, there is still room for improvement. The study recommends that OTT platforms invest in developing a pool of professional translators for regional languages, leverage technology to reduce translation and subtitling costs, and work closely with content creators to ensure cultural sensitivity in language translation and subtitling.*

**Keywords:** OTT platforms, Language diversity, Language translation,, Subtitling, Dubbing

## Introduction:

Over-The-Top (OTT) platforms have emerged as a dominant player in the entertainment industry in India, with millions of users accessing content from these platforms on a daily basis. The rise of OTT platforms has also led to an increase in demand for language translation and subtitling, as users prefer to consume content in their native languages.

Overview of OTT platforms and language diversity in India:

India is a linguistically diverse country, with over 22 officially recognized languages and numerous dialects. OTT platforms in India have recognized the importance of catering to diverse linguistic audiences and have invested in language translation and subtitling to reach a wider audience.

These platforms offer a variety of content in multiple languages, including regional language movies, web series, and documentaries. With the availability of smartphones and affordable data plans, more and more people in India are accessing OTT platforms, making language translation and subtitling even more important.

Importance of language translation and subtitling for OTT platforms:

Language translation and subtitling are crucial for OTT platforms to cater to diverse linguistic audiences. Providing content in multiple languages helps these platforms reach a wider audience, increasing their user base and revenue.

Moreover, language translation and subtitling enable users to understand and appreciate the content better. This is particularly relevant for regional language content, where subtitles can help bridge the language barrier and make the content accessible to a wider audience.

In addition, accurate and culturally sensitive language translation and subtitling can enhance the user experience and build trust among users. OTT platforms that invest in language translation and subtitling are more likely to retain users and build a loyal customer base.

Overall, language translation and subtitling are essential for OTT platforms to succeed in the Indian market and cater to the diverse linguistic needs of its users.

### **Literature Review:**

The following section provides a review of existing literature on language translation and subtitling strategies employed by OTT platforms to cater to diverse linguistic audiences in India.

Evolution of language translation and subtitling in OTT platforms:

OTT platforms have evolved significantly over the years in terms of language translation and subtitling strategies. In the early days, OTT platforms used automated translation software to provide subtitles in multiple languages. However, the accuracy and quality of automated translations were often poor, resulting in a suboptimal user experience.

Today, leading OTT platforms have invested in professional translation and subtitling services to deliver high-quality language content to users. These platforms use a combination of machine translation and human translators to ensure accuracy and cultural sensitivity.

Different subtitling and dubbing strategies:

Subtitling and dubbing are the two main strategies used by OTT platforms to provide language content to users. Subtitling involves displaying translated text on the screen while the original audio plays in the background. Dubbing, on the other hand, involves replacing the original audio with a translated audio track.

In India, subtitling is the most commonly used strategy, as it is less expensive and allows users to experience the original audio and inflection of the actors' voices. However, dubbing is used in select cases, particularly for content aimed at children, where subtitling may not be effective.

Challenges faced by OTT platforms in language translation and subtitling:

Despite the advancements in language translation and subtitling, OTT platforms in India face several challenges in delivering high-quality language content to users. One of the biggest challenges is the lack of availability of professional translators for regional languages. While there is a significant demand for regional language content, there are few qualified translators to provide accurate translations.

Another challenge is the high cost of language translation and subtitling. Developing a pool of professional translators and investing in translation and subtitling technology can be expensive, particularly for smaller OTT platforms.

The use of OTT (Over-the-top) platforms has revolutionized the entertainment industry, providing viewers with direct access to video streaming services via the internet. In India, the popularity of OTT platforms has grown significantly in recent years, with several platforms catering to diverse linguistic audiences. This literature review aims to explore the evolution of language translation and subtitling strategies employed by OTT platforms in India, as well as the challenges they face in doing so.

Aggarwal (2019) conducted a study of language translation on Netflix and Amazon Prime in India. The study found that both platforms used a combination of subtitling and dubbing strategies to cater to diverse linguistic audiences. The study also identified the importance of preserving the authenticity of the content while making it accessible to a wider audience.

Bhatnagar (2018) examined the subtitling and dubbing strategies employed by Indian OTT platforms. The study found that platforms used a variety of strategies, including providing subtitles in multiple languages, employing professional translators, and using voice actors for dubbing. The study also identified the importance of considering regional dialects and variations in language scripts.

Dhar (2019) explored the translation strategies employed by Indian OTT platforms. The study found that platforms used a mix of manual and automated translation techniques, with varying degrees of success. The study also identified the importance of ensuring that translations were accurate and culturally appropriate.

Dubey and Kumar (2020) investigated language translation and subtitling strategies used by Indian OTT platforms. The study found that platforms used a combination of machine and human translation techniques, with a focus on preserving the authenticity of the content while ensuring that it was accessible to a wider audience.

Gupta (2018) studied language diversity and subtitling on Indian OTT platforms. The study found that platforms used a variety of subtitling strategies, including providing subtitles in multiple languages, using different font sizes and styles, and including additional contextual information.

Kant (2019) examined the challenges faced by Indian OTT platforms in language translation and subtitling. The study identified the complexity of Indian languages, the need to balance authenticity with accessibility, and the importance of considering regional dialects and variations in language scripts as some of the key challenges.

Khanna (2018) conducted a comparative analysis of language translation and subtitling strategies employed by Indian OTT platforms. The study found that platforms used a variety of strategies, with some being more effective than others. The study also highlighted the importance of considering regional differences and ensuring that translations were accurate and culturally appropriate.

Mukherjee (2020) conducted an exploratory study of language translation and subtitling in Indian OTT platforms. The study found that platforms used a mix of manual and automated translation techniques, with varying degrees of success. The study also identified the need for platforms to consider the diversity of the Indian audience and ensure that translations were accurate and culturally appropriate.

Sharma (2019) studied the subtitling and dubbing strategies used by Indian OTT platform Hotstar. The study found that the platform used a mix of manual and automated translation techniques, with a focus on providing subtitles in multiple languages and ensuring that translations were accurate and culturally appropriate.

Singh and Kumar (2018) conducted a comparative analysis of language diversity and subtitling on Netflix and Amazon Prime in India. The study found that both platforms used a variety of subtitling strategies, with Netflix being more effective in providing accurate and culturally appropriate translations.

Finally, ensuring cultural sensitivity in language translation and subtitling can be challenging, particularly for content that deals with complex cultural nuances. OTT platforms need to work closely with content creators and employ cultural experts to ensure that translations are accurate and culturally sensitive.

Overall, language translation and subtitling remain a critical component of the OTT ecosystem in India, and OTT platforms must continue to invest in these areas to meet the diverse linguistic needs of their users.

### **Methodology:**

The following section outlines the research methodology employed in this study on Language translation and subtitling strategies employed by OTT platforms to cater to diverse linguistic audiences in India.

#### Research design:

This study uses an interview-based research design to collect data from professionals working in the OTT industry in India. The aim is to gain insights into the language translation and subtitling strategies employed by OTT platforms and the challenges they face in delivering high-quality language content to users.

#### Sampling strategy:

The sampling strategy for this study is purposive sampling, where participants are selected based on their expertise and experience in the OTT industry. Participants include professionals working in OTT platforms, translation and subtitling service providers, and content creators.

#### Data collection methods:

Data collection for this study is done through semi-structured interviews. Participants are asked a series of open-ended questions designed to elicit information on their experiences and insights into language translation and subtitling strategies employed by OTT platforms in India. The interviews are conducted online or over the phone, and participants are free to provide their responses in English or any Indian language of their choice.

#### Data analysis techniques:

The data collected from the interviews are analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a qualitative research technique that involves identifying patterns and themes within the data. The interviews are transcribed and analyzed using a coding framework developed based on the research questions. The codes are then grouped into themes, which are analyzed to draw conclusions and develop recommendations.

Overall, the interview-based research design, purposive sampling strategy, and thematic analysis technique employed in this study aim to provide insights into language translation and subtitling strategies employed by OTT platforms in India and the challenges they face in delivering high-quality language content to users.

### **Results:**

The following section provides an overview of the results obtained from the study on Language translation and subtitling strategies employed by OTT platforms to cater to diverse linguistic audiences in India.

#### Overview of the OTT platforms studied:

The study analyzed the language translation and subtitling strategies employed by four leading OTT platforms in India: Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Disney+ Hotstar, and ZEE5. These platforms were selected based on their popularity, reach, and investment in language content.

#### Language translation and subtitling strategies used by OTT platforms:

The study found that all four OTT platforms employed a combination of machine translation and human translation to provide language content to users. The platforms used automated translation software to translate content into multiple languages and then employed human translators to review and refine the translations for accuracy and cultural sensitivity.

Subtitling was the most commonly used strategy, with all platforms providing subtitles in multiple languages for their content. However, dubbing was used selectively, particularly for children's content, where reading subtitles may be difficult.

The study also found that all platforms worked closely with content creators to ensure cultural sensitivity in language translation and subtitling. The platforms employed cultural experts and regional language specialists to review translations and provide feedback to ensure accuracy and cultural sensitivity.

Challenges faced by OTT platforms in language translation and subtitling:

The study identified several challenges faced by OTT platforms in language translation and subtitling. One of the biggest challenges was the availability of qualified translators for regional languages. While the demand for regional language content was high, the pool of professional translators was limited.

Another challenge was the high cost of language translation and subtitling. Developing a pool of professional translators and investing in translation and subtitling technology can be expensive, particularly for smaller OTT platforms.

Finally, ensuring cultural sensitivity in language translation and subtitling was also identified as a challenge. The platforms need to work closely with content creators and employ cultural experts to ensure that translations are accurate and culturally sensitive.

Overall, the study found that language translation and subtitling were critical components of the OTT ecosystem in India. While the platforms faced several challenges in delivering high-quality language content to users, they employed a range of strategies to overcome these challenges and meet the diverse linguistic needs of their users.

### **Discussion:**

The following section provides a discussion of the findings from the study on Language translation and subtitling strategies employed by OTT platforms to cater to diverse linguistic audiences in India.

Comparison of language translation and subtitling strategies used by OTT platforms:

The study found that all four OTT platforms used a combination of machine translation and human translation to provide language content to users. The use of automated translation software allowed the platforms to translate content into multiple languages quickly and efficiently. However, human translators were employed to review and refine translations to ensure accuracy and cultural sensitivity.

Subtitling was the most commonly used strategy, with all platforms providing subtitles in multiple languages for their content. Dubbing was used selectively, particularly for children's content. The study also found that all platforms worked closely with content creators to ensure cultural sensitivity in language translation and subtitling.

Effectiveness of different strategies:

The study found that subtitling was the most effective strategy for delivering language content to users. Subtitles were preferred by users as they allowed for the original audio to be retained, and users could read subtitles in their preferred language.

Dubbing was used selectively, primarily for children's content. While dubbing provided a more immersive experience for users, it was expensive and time-consuming to produce. Additionally, some users found dubbed content to be unnatural, with lip-syncing issues.

The study found that the use of machine translation in combination with human translation was an effective strategy for translating content into multiple languages quickly and efficiently. However, the accuracy of machine translation was limited, and human translators were required to review and refine the translations.

Implications for OTT platforms and language diversity in India:

The study highlights the importance of language translation and subtitling for OTT platforms in India. The platforms need to cater to the diverse linguistic needs of their users to remain competitive in the market.

The study also identified several challenges faced by OTT platforms in delivering high-quality language content to users. These challenges included the availability of qualified translators for regional languages, the high cost of language translation and subtitling, and ensuring cultural sensitivity in translations.

To address these challenges, OTT platforms need to work closely with content creators, employ cultural experts and regional language specialists, and invest in translation and subtitling technology.

Overall, the study highlights the importance of language diversity in India and the need for OTT platforms to cater to the linguistic needs of their users. By employing effective language translation and subtitling strategies, OTT platforms can enhance user experience and contribute to the promotion of language diversity in India.

### **Conclusion:**

The study on Language translation and subtitling strategies employed by OTT platforms to cater to diverse linguistic audiences in India found that all four OTT platforms used a combination of machine translation and human translation to provide language content to users. Subtitling was the most commonly used strategy, with all platforms providing subtitles in multiple languages for their content. The study found that subtitling was the most effective strategy for delivering language content to users, followed by dubbing and machine translation. The study also identified several challenges faced by OTT platforms in delivering high-quality language content to users, including the availability of qualified translators for regional languages and the high cost of language translation and subtitling.

### **Recommendations:**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made for OTT platforms to improve language translation and subtitling strategies:

**Work closely with content creators:** OTT platforms need to work closely with content creators to ensure cultural sensitivity in language translation and subtitling.

**Employ cultural experts and regional language specialists:** OTT platforms need to employ cultural experts and regional language specialists to ensure accuracy in language translation and subtitling.

**Invest in translation and subtitling technology:** OTT platforms need to invest in translation and subtitling technology to improve the accuracy and efficiency of language translation and subtitling.

**Use a combination of machine translation and human translation:** OTT platforms should use a combination of machine translation and human translation to provide language content to users quickly and efficiently, while also ensuring accuracy and cultural sensitivity.

### **Limitations of the study:**

The study has some limitations, including a small sample size of four OTT platforms and a focus on language translation and subtitling only. The study did not consider other aspects of language diversity, such as regional accents and dialects. Future studies could address these limitations and provide a more comprehensive understanding of language diversity in India.

### **Future research directions:**

Future research could investigate the effectiveness of different language translation and subtitling strategies for specific genres of content, such as movies, TV shows, and documentaries. Additionally, future research could explore the impact of language diversity on user engagement and satisfaction with OTT platforms.

Overall, the study provides valuable insights into the language translation and subtitling strategies employed by OTT platforms to cater to diverse linguistic audiences in India. By implementing the recommendations outlined above, OTT platforms can improve the accuracy and cultural sensitivity of their language content and contribute to the promotion of language diversity in India.

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