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NEGOTIATING HUMOR ACROSS LANGUAGES: AN ANALYSIS OF PATRAS BUKHARI'S ESSAYS

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Abstract
This study explores the complexities of translating humor in the works of the renowned Urdu humorist Patras Bukhari, focusing on three of his essays: Hostel mein parhna (Hostel Life), Sawere jo kal aankh meri khuli (Early Yesterday Morning), and Marhoom ki yaad mein (Obituary). Through a close comparative analysis of the original Urdu texts and their English translations, the research investigates the extent to which the humor, tone, and socio-political critique embedded in the source language are preserved in the target language. Guided by Delia Chiaro's theory of humor translation, particularly insights from The Language of Jokes and the concept of "verbal play". This study examines the linguistic and cultural challenges involved in translating Bukhari's satire. It highlights how idiomatic expressions, cultural references, and linguistic nuances shape humor in Urdu and how these elements often shift or lose impact when rendered in English. Key questions include how Bukhari's social and political satire is altered during translation and to what extent the target language can maintain the same comedic tone and critical commentary. The research reveals that while some humor can be effectively transposed, much of Bukhari's wit is deeply rooted in cultural context, making full equivalence challenging and sometimes resulting in a loss of original flavor and meaning. This study contributes to translation studies by underscoring the need for culturally informed translation strategies when handling literary humor, particularly in multilingual and postcolonial contexts such as Urdu-English translation.

Introduction
Laughter is a universal human phenomenon, yet the translation of humor is notoriously difficult to achieve faithfully. Humor is deeply embedded in culture; as Mushirul Hasan observes, "Urdu humour offers such rare insights into South Asia's cultural history that it can be read as a historical document without undermining its artistic achievements". In South Asian literary history, colonial and postcolonial Urdu literature was indeed enriched by a vibrant tradition of humour and satire. From the satirical verse of Mir and Akbar Allahabadi to magazines like the *Avadh Punch* (founded 1877 in Lucknow as a local Punch imitation), Urdu writers have long wielded wit to critique society. By the 20th century, essayists such as Patras Bukhari (1898–1958) emerged as leading figures in this genre. Bukhari, born Syed Ahmad Shah Bokhari, is widely cited among the "leading modern writers" of Urdu humour alongside peers like Rasheed Ahmad Siddiqui and Mushtaq Ahmad Yousufi. This literary context – in which *tanz o maẓāh* (humour and satire) are intertwined – forms the backdrop for our study of Bukhari's essays and their translation.
Patras Bukhari himself was a Cambridge-educated professor and statesman whose public career belies his fame as a humorist. He taught English literature at Government College, Lahore, served as Director-General of All-India Radio, and later became Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the United Nations. Despite these distinguished posts, "he is best known for his humorous writings in Urdu literature"kitaab.org. Writing under his pen name *Patras* ("letter"), he collected hundreds of witty essays that chronicle the absurdities of everyday life. His landmark collection *Patras ke Mazameen* (1927) is often called "an asset in Urdu humor

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JALT

writings… one of the finest works in Urdu humor". Scholars note that Bukhari's style is marked by **situational humour** and a distinctive play with the Urdu language ("Urduness") that invites readers' participation. In one analysis, for example, the author remarks that "Patras… describes an experience as it is lived" and uses an open-ended, suggestive tone so that readers must "correlate their schemas with that described in the writing to amplify the finer aspects of humour". This engaging, observational humor – wry but never cruel – has made Bukhari a classic figure whose work, though rooted in his own culture, still resonates with a wide audience.

Translating Bukhari's urbane wit into English highlights the many challenges of translating humour. Jokes and puns often rely on wordplay, idioms, or cultural references that have no direct equivalents. Patrick Zabalbeascoa notes that in humor "sameness, or similarity, may have little to do with funniness," creating "a dilemma for translators wishing to achieve equivalent effect". In practice, this means a literal rendering of a joke can fall flat if the target audience lacks the necessary background. Rather, translators must decide how to re-create the comic effect: should they replace a locally meaningful pun with a different joke in English, or try to explain the original? Lawrence Venuti's framework illuminates this choice. Venuti defines **domestication** as adapting the text to target cultural norms (making it feel "closely conform[ing] to" the target culture) and **foreignization** as retaining source-language elements and "deliberately breaking the conventions of the target language" to preserve source-specific meaning. Humor translation often involves a mix of these strategies: for example, a translator might domesticate an idiom by substituting a roughly equivalent English proverb, or foreignize a pun by noting the original wordplay in a footnote. Delia Chiaro's work similarly stresses that translating humour is an *inter*-disciplinary task requiring sensitivity to audience expectations and cultural scripts. In short, translating Bukhari's essays is not merely a linguistic task but a cultural negotiation – one that must preserve his gentle satire while keeping the text readable in English.

This study focuses on three representative essays from Bukhari's oeuvre and their English translations. The first, **"Hostel Mein Parhna" (Hostel Life)**, humorously depicts student life in a boarding college, pointing out the quirks of dormitory routine and academic culture. The second essay, **"Sawere Jo Kal Aankh Meri Khuli" (Early Yesterday Morning)**, describes an absurd scenario upon waking – a play on time and expectation that creates situational comedy. The third, **"Marhoom Ki Yaad Mein" (Obituary)**, satirizes the writing of an obituary by highlighting social rituals of remembrance and the irony of legacy. Together, these essays cover a range of everyday themes – education, the passage of time, and death – each filtered through Bukhari's witty lens. They are also among his more popular and enduring pieces. Scholars have remarked that Patras's "selected essays are [a] rich source of humour preserved in Urdu"suggesting their broad appeal. By examining the English versions of these essays, we can see how Bukhari's humor survives (or shifts) in translation.

We frame this investigation using two main theoretical perspectives. Delia Chiaro's work on the translation of humor directs us to consider factors like target audience and the types of humor being translated (verbal jokes, cultural references, situational gags, etc.). Lawrence Venuti's concepts of domestication and foreignization give us a lens to categorize the translators' strategies: did they make the jokes more "domestic" to English readers, or did they preserve exotic elements of Urdu culture? With these frameworks, our analysis will attend to questions of equivalence, adaptation, and cultural loyalty.

1. **How are Patras Bukhari's comic techniques and cultural references conveyed in the English versions of his essays?** In other words, what strategies do translators use to render the humour, and which elements of the original jokes are maintained or altered?

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2. **To what extent do the translations employ domestication versus foreignization?** Using Venuti's terms, do the English versions tend to substitute familiar English expressions for uniquely Urdu content (domestication), or do they deliberately preserve foreign terms and contexts, signaling difference (foreignization)?
3. **How successfully do the English translations preserve the tone and wit of the originals?** Drawing on Chiaro's insights, we ask whether the translated essays evoke a similar humorous effect for English-speaking readers, and what this implies about humour's universality or cultural specificity.

In exploring these questions, this paper aims to shed light on the broader challenges and possibilities of translating humour between Urdu and English, and on the cross-cultural appreciation of South Asian literary humor.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Patras Bukhari (1898–1958) is celebrated as "a pioneer of the mizah genre in Urdu literature," renowned for his witty, satirical essays that critique social norms. The English translations of his landmark collection Patras ke Mazameen (1927) include "Hostel Mein Parhna," "Sawere Jo Kal Aankh Meri Khuli," and "Marhoom Ki Yaad Mein," which are translated as "Hostel Life," "Early Yesterday Morning," and "Obituary." Situational irony and exaggeration are key components of Bukhari's humour. In order to make readers laugh at cultural follies, he frequently writes in the first person and employs exaggeration and common situations. He explains, for instance, in Hostel Life how anxious parents view hostel life as a "hellhole of sin" (drunkenness, gambling, rash proposals).A humorous exaggeration of the concern of parents. The articles are renowned for their subtle yet scathing societal criticism. Such humour highlights the age-old questions of foreignization vs domestication when translated. According to Venuti, a foreignizing translation maintains cultural differences by keeping original phrases or uncomfortable wording, while a domesticating translation smoothes down foreign features to meet target-culture standards, creating a "transparent, invisible" (VISIBILITY, ETHICS AND SOCIOLOGY). Venuti cautions that "an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to receiving cultural values" is one way that domestication may occur. (VISIBILITY, ETHICS AND SOCIOLOGY). Humour "frequently travel badly" across languages, according to Chiaro and others, who focus on humour translation in particular. This is because wordplay, idioms, and cultural allusions may make straight translation difficult. (Ciancitto 1-20). According to one study, making jokes frequently necessitates "sacrifices for the sake of equivalency" (Pilyarchuk 2). In order to preserve meaning, translators may, in practice, explain jokes, replace culturally particular jokes with new ones, or just eliminate some Humorous impact.

Below, we look at how Bukhari's Urdu literary devices—such as exaggeration, conversational asides, and rhetorical repetition—remain (or change) in these English translations. We enquire as to whether Bukhari's humorous tone is preserved and if the English translations convey the same societal criticisms. We also take into account whether the translators tended towards foreignization (preserving Urdu cultural identifiers) or domestication (making the text easily understandable in English).

Bukhari frequently uses social and generational satire in his humour. For example, the narrator's parents in "Hostel Mein Parhna" saw hostel life as a serious moral danger. They declare that "residing in a hostel was completely out of the question, but attending college was necessary". College excellent; hostel dreadful is a paired construction that employs parallelism

ISSN E: 2709-8273
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JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

and rhythm to create a humorous impact. He makes fun of his parents' reasoning by saying, "Hostel, unmentionable; college". In a similar vein, Bukhari peppers his story with ridiculous tales. For example, one describes how "poor Ashfaq" arrived at the hostel just "two minutes late" and was greeted with telegrams, police summonses, and a frozen allowance. Another recounts Mahmood's punishment for buying a slightly pricier movie ticket. These extreme instances convert genuine anxieties into amusement by parodying rigid hostel rules and paranoid parents. The tone is conversational and self-effacing; as narrator, Bukhari jokes about hissincere attempts to explain "hostel life" in the face of scepticism from the outside world. Humour in the Urdu original relies on formal frameworks (couplets of opposites, lists of ridiculous penalties), as well as tactful jabs at elders and authority.
The narrator of "Sawere Jo Kal Aankh Meri Khuli" (Early Yesterday Morning) is similarly awakened at three in the morning by a servant (Lalaji) posing as a demented divine messenger. "The wooden walls started to shake, the drinking glass on the stand started to vibrate like a musical instrument, and the calendar on the wall began to sway like a pendulum," is an exaggerated description.
Bukhari's exaggeration (even claiming it woke *"the souls of my dead ancestors"*. Bukhari creates a humorous picture of pandemonium with his hyperbole, even going so far as to say that it awakened "the souls of my dead ancestors". He intersperses his complaint with colourful epithets and rhetorical asides, such as yelling, "You stupid! "You idiot!" with Lalaji. This would have a recognisable colloquial bite in Urdu. In a similar vein, "Marhoom Ki Yaad Mein" (Obituary) features a humorous exchange on the humiliations of walking with his buddy Mirza Sahib. "I've been walking since the day I was born – one foot on the ground and lifting the other…" the narrator ends. Walking is a certain way to go insane, I promise. It makes you less intelligent than a donkey and destroys your imagination. Bukhari uses the wordplay of "motor" vs. "car" to make fun of his pretentiousness as he suddenly announces that he would get a motorcar, satirising boredom and material ambition.
Exaggeration, a straightforward tone, and cultural allusions (such as religious warnings, family honour, and colonial-era institutions like telegrams) are the sources of humour in each of these writings. Bukhari's humour "is centred on overstatement and exaggeration," according to critics, using "situational irony" (BAIG 2).
By using poetic-sounding sentences or repeating single words for emphasis, he writes in a dynamic Urdu style that fluctuates between formal and humorous modes. The problem is that many of these effects rely on a unique Indian cultural context or the Urdu language.
How are these difficulties addressed in the English translations? Venuti's ideas point to two extremes. The writings would be translated into fluid, colloquial English using a domesticating technique, which may include modify jokes to conform to American and British standards. By retaining names like Lalaji, untranslated phrases, or Urdu idioms, even at the expense of discomfort, a foreignizing strategy would preserve more of the "native flavour." (VISIBILITY, ETHICS AND SOCIOLOGY 2). In practice, translators often mix both strategies.
According to Chiaro, vocal humour is very delicate. Linguists concur that humour is "associated with both universal and general themes" as well as particular cultural traits (Ciancitto 2-20). The joke's "semantic information" might not be properly interpreted if readers are not aware of the pertinent cultural background. One must decide between faithfulness to affect (similar laughing) and adherence to form (literal wordplay) while translating. "Translating humour is similar to working with poetry: one has to make sacrifices for the sake

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JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

of equivalency," according to one researcher. (Pilyarchuk 1) Often this means explicating or replacing wordplay.

We may observe both theories in action when we examine Bukhari's essays. For instance, several Urdu cultural markers are still present in the English version of Hostel Life, including names like "the hostel" and "superintendent," as well as amusing titles like "Your Highness" to his guardian (a mocking epithet). These decisions provide English readers a feeling of the South Asian locale while also foreignizing the story. The translators also make the humour understandable. In Obituary, the text immediately adds a parenthetical clarification when the narrator eventually states, "I'm going to buy a motorcar": "It's a kind of vehicle that many call a motor and others call a car." This acknowledges that the double use is a joking. Chiaro would understand that this explanatory addendum is required when a straightforward pun would otherwise be missed, as it compromises literal brevity for clarity of impact.

Bukhari parodies both his parents' overprotectiveness and his naiveté in Hostel Life. His storytelling voice is carefully followed in the English translation. Punchy contrast and parallel phrasing are examples of techniques that remain intact. The last sentence in Urdu, "College, bada; hostel, bura," for instance, would read "College, great; hostel, terrible" in English. College, of course; dorm, of course. The rhythmic humour is still present in this repeat. Anecdotes are translated nearly word for word as well. The entire story of Ashfaq's two-minute delay is revealed: He came two minutes late one evening after spraining his ankle on his way back to the hostel. The superintendent promptly contacted the police, sent a telegram to the boy's father, and suspended the boy's stipend for a month. The ridiculousness, he's punished for two minutes is as evident in English, demonstrating that the criticism of harsh punishment is universal. Mahmood's mishap with the one-rupee cinema ticket is later described in the book in a similar manner.

But there will always be certain cultural nuances that change. Some formal parts are smoothed out; for example, the Urdu may use deferential suffixes to address authority, while the English reads "Sir" or "Your Highness" more directly. The Urdu original may have used colloquial terms for money or honour that are rendered clearly in English (for example, "two-rupee tier" is retained as i). Bukhari's Urdu might rely on readers' cultural understanding in the form of telegraph penalties and religious allusions such as "disobeying parents is forbidden in every religion.". The reference is kept exactly as it is in the translation. This tends towards foreignization: references to religion and "swatting flies and mosquitoes" monitoring are nevertheless included in the English text. Rather, it foreignizes the essay, sometimes leaving a detail unexplained. In Early Yesterday Morning, for instance, the term "Lalaji" is left untranslated even though the context suggests he is a servant.

From a critical standpoint, the humour that has been translated still functions as societal criticism. The same parents' preconceptions show up in Hostel Life. They contend that living away from home is "extremely harmful to young men" and that "outside a hostel, your personality will never evolve". The English keep these, which are the direct objects of Bukhari's sarcasm. As a result, the fundamental criticism—that conventional guardians overstate the risks—is maintained. The ludicrous stories themselves (Ashfaq, Mahmood) expose the parents' credulity; the translator incorporates them completely, ensuring the mockery endures. The mock-formal manner ("I had to convince them of the strict rules of the hostel by providing thousands of examples", remains, reflecting how Bukhari's Urdu often uses formal diction for comic contrast.

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

In *Early Yesterday Morning*, Bukhari's humor relies heavily on exaggerated imagery and a lively narrative voice. The translation generally captures this tone. Consider the description of the violent awakening: **"the wooden walls began to shake, the drinking glass…vibrate like a musical instrument and the calendar on the wall began to sway like a pendulum! "**. This vivid, simile-laden language is intact in English. The punchline that even *"the souls of my dead ancestors"* were awakened remains a comic climax. When the narrator bursts into dialogue with Lalaji, his exasperation translates clearly: **"Lalaji…It's dark. What do you expect at three in the morning?… You idiot! You fool!"**. The overt taunts and cultural allusions (he says he was woken up at a period when even his grandpa "never sets foot in water") are evident.

Any changes are minor. The translator mimics Bukhari's own casual Urdu tone by sticking to a conversational register, including contractions ("you're," "I'm"), and utilising short phrases. He shouts, "Oh God, what have I brought upon myself?" which reflects Bukhari's tendency of addressing "dear readers" and employing religious exclamations (such as "For God's sake!"), , keeping the frightened asides intact. Thus, the English humour maintains the lively, conversational tone of the original. The joke is still clear even though some aspects of the primarily Urdu culture are inevitably flattened, such as the importance of three in the morning or the polite "ji" in names.

When the narrator chastises Lalaji for waking him up at three in the morning, the translator retains the term "railway guard" ("You think I'm some railway guard?"). This is an example of borderline domestication. The metaphor endures because a contemporary British reader would identify a night worker with hospital or railway employees. The sentence is only transferred since there isn't an explanation footnote. Though societal, the aim of this satire is largely interpersonal (young idleness, the intrusiveness of servants), and it is not very heated. The modest criticism is not softened by the translation. The tone, which combines religious sarcasm with ridiculous scenarios, mostly stays true.
A humorous discussion of walking vs contemporary living may be found in the essay "Marhoom Ki Yaad Mein" (Obituary). Here, Bukhari's satire is a little more philosophical; he reflects on what it means to be human and ends with a middle-class desire (auto ownership). The hilarious structure is maintained in the English text. The narrator's constant complaining about walking "one foot on the ground and lifting the other" is particularly noteworthy. The translator sticks to the exact, almost lyrical phrase, "one foot, then the other," which leads to the punchline that he is "dumber than a donkey" because of this way of moving. In this case, the translation domesticated an animal comparison; the term "dumber than a donkey" is a little more direct than standard Urdu, which may say "gaadha se be-wakoof." However, it makes the joke quite evident.

It's a type of vehicle that many call a motor and others call a car, but because you're a little dimwitted, I used both phrases so that you would be sure to understand. This humorous aside comes after the climactic statement, "I'm going to buy a motorcar". This humorous definition of a straightforward term is undoubtedly a direct translation of Bukhari's manner (the word "motorcar" may have been broken down similarly in Urdu). The translator's decision to leave it in English and even explain the humour (referring to Mirza as "dim-witted") demonstrates some domestication because it assumes that the intended audience would want the explanation. It's interesting to note that the title "Obituary" is a domesticating decision. "In memory of the deceased" is the literal translation of the Urdu phrase "Marhoom ki Yaad Mein," which is

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JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL

frequently used, for example, in memorial compositions. Although marhoom implies “the late one” (without mentioning death), the translators decided to use Obituary, a term that is well-known to English readers. This selection suggests a punchier, domesticated title.
This essay contains subtle social satire. Bukhari makes fun of the narrator's personal aspirations, as well as maybe postcolonial India's preoccupation with cars. The sardonic tone is maintained in the English version. It is nevertheless humorous to read the narrator's comment that going everywhere is mind-numbing. The translators let the ridiculousness speak for itself by using declarative, flat English when conveying the car-buys joke. Calling Mirza "nitpicking" and "a little dim-witted" are examples of the scathing tone that is maintained, coupled with mock insult and self-importance, echoes Bukhari’s original banter.

For the most part, Bukhari's humour remains consistent across the three articles. The same social issues are addressed in the English translations: middle-class desires in Obituary, the peculiarities of colonial-era life and authority in Early Yesterday Morning, and parental duplicity in Hostel Life. The preceding translated sections demonstrate how the sardonic contrasts and humorous exaggerations are retained. Key comedic elements (punchy language, rhetorical repetition) are typically preserved verbatim. For example, the English narrator's informal asides and enquiries mimic the Urdu approach of addressing readers directly as "dear."

However, certain subtleties do change. The English might come out as more literal at times, possibly due to the difficulty of imitating Urdu's rhythm and innuendo. A humorous Urdu metaphor may be translated into simple English, losing the original flourish, as the translator frequently chooses to translate from sense to sense. A proverb or an indigenous joke, for instance, would have been employed in parentheses in Bukhari's Urdu, but the English tends to simplify things. However, when a joke depends on language, the translation could explain, like in the case of "motorcar”. In addition to ensuring understanding, this domestication technique makes the language a little more apparent than it may have been in the original. The friendly, conversational tone of Urdu is usually reflected in English. If anything, the translation retains Bukhari's amiable sarcasm while occasionally seeming more professional in syntax (complete phrases, less colloquial shortcuts). The tone of mild humour at human follies, which is sarcastic, is maintained. Lines like "My spirits sank; something like mould began to grow on my mind" are examples of it, which the translators portray with equal intensity. Additionally, we witness Bukhari's self-deprecating humour ("I thought it wasn't my place to reform every man, woman, and child on earth, but I wanted to hit him").Bukhari's subtle sarcasm and humorous arrogance are not avoided by the translators; in fact, they emphasise it by employing comparable emphases (capitalisation, exclamation) in the English version.

Venuti's framework aids in the explanation of these results. Neither complete integration nor complete alienation is the choice made by the Patras translators. They mostly maintain cultural details, which is frequently a foreignizing decision: mentions of telegrams, nocturnal curfews, religious ideas, and the honorific "Sahib" are still there. However, they domesticate by smoothing down ugly idioms and occasionally making jokes more understandable. Venuti's theory that fluency is often prioritised but that certain traces of foreignness endure is supported by this hybrid approach. According to Chiaro, translators deal with wordplay by either translating it literally or, if necessary, reworking it so that the humour is still clear.
Overall, despite minor changes in impact, the translated humour does capture the original social criticisms. English stories continue to feature the ridiculous remark on the folly of parents in

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JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

Hostel Life. The knock-on-wood moment in Early Yesterday Morning completely satirises the societal satire about the ridiculousness of rigid rule, especially at prayer times. Additionally, the English punchline mirrors Obituary's subtle criticism of pride (the notion that having a vehicle makes one respectable). Local colour nuance, not satirical content, is mostly lost. Indeed, the translations open up Bukhari's Urdu humour to a wider audience, extending the reach of "his sublime comic genius" beyond Pakistan.

All things considered, Patras Bukhari's pieces provide an example of the fine balance humour translators must maintain. Humour "varies from culture to culture," according to one academic; therefore, translators need to be creative in their adaptation. (Pilyarchuk)

Generally speaking, the translators can capture Bukhari's essence in these works. Despite navigating the limitations of language, The English Hostel Life, Early Yesterday Morning, and Obituary all retain the author's energetic tone and amusing commentary. Both Venuti's ideas of foreignization and domestication are evident in this book, which is mostly written in fluent English without sacrificing its Urdu character. Chiaro's observations enable us to recognise the minor adjustments that are made to reproduce laughter for a different audience, such as explaining a joke or keeping an Indian phrase. The ultimate effect is a translation that, as Patras Bukhari himself intended, continues to make readers laugh at the peculiarities of society.

Methodology

The original Urdu writings and their English translations are compared textually in this study using a qualitative method. Every Urdu text and its English translation are read side by side and methodically compared using Chesterman's comparison technique. According to eltsjournal.org, the process of gathering data entails "reading the source and the target text … extracting the words, phrases, clauses, and sentences, then comparing both to generate the data corpus." This entails closely reading each essay line by line, recognising any humorous elements (such as wordplay, irony, exaggeration, and situational comedy) in the Urdu source, and noting how those elements have been translated into English. Then, the aligned corpus of Urdu–English segments serves as the foundation for analysis, where each segment is examined to ascertain the translator's approach and how it affects tone and humour.

The three articles were picked because they were culturally rich and characteristic of Patras Bukhari's comic style. "Sawere Jo Kal Aankh Meri Khuli" (Early Yesterday Morning) provides a caustic commentary on daily life, "Hostel Mein Parhna" (Hostel Life) parodies student boarding life, and "Marhoom Ki Yaad Mein" (Obituary) humorously discusses death rites. These subjects encompass a range of situational situations, including instructional, everyday, and ceremonial ones, as well as many types of humour, including societal satire, situational irony, and self-deprecation. Furthermore, Baig notes that he "has chosen essays of general interest and universal experiences that readers from across cultures can read, familiarise and enjoy." These essays have been praised for their cross-cultural appeal (BAIG 3).

Put in another context, these stories' humour is based on universal human circumstances. The "universal appeal across cultures" of comedy is demonstrated by comparing the Urdu and English versions of Patras's articles, according to Baig, who also finds that they are a "rich source of humour preserved in Urdu" (BAIG 12). These evaluations support the study of these specific texts since they are both genuinely Urdu in style and have a widely accessible topic, which makes them perfect for analysing how tone and humour translate—or not. Iteratively closely reading each Urdu essay and its translation while paying particular attention to aspects connected to humour forms the basis of the process. Determine humour indicators. Puns, idioms, exaggeration, rhetorical figures, cultural references, incongruities, and

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JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

unexpected juxtapositions that elicit laughter or an ironic impact are among the examples of humour that are identified in any Urdu work. The matching section in the English translation is found for each of these markers. Examine the target and source renditions. We compare the rendering of the hilarious element for each aligned pair of segments. This entails identifying if the translator employs an omission, a cultural substitute, a neutral paraphrase, an explanatory gloss, or a direct counterpart (literal translation). We document any modifications to the sentence structure, language, or other contextual information that the translator may have included or left out. Examine the register and tone. We evaluate if the original's humorous tone and sardonic attitude are preserved. Does the English translation, for instance, maintain Bukhari's light-hearted, subtle storytelling style? Do punchlines have comparable placements? It is mentioned that humour may be impacted by any move towards formality or simplicity. **Classify translation strategy.** Every instance is classified based on translation strategies, such as compensatory insertion, literal vs adaptive, word-for-word versus sense-for-sense, etc. Culture-specific terminology receive special consideration. For example, does the translator retain an Urdu-specific element (foreignization) or choose for a well-known English cultural reference (domestication)?

A qualitative content-analysis methodology serves as the basis for these procedures: we first create a "data corpus" comprising aligned text fragments and comments, after which we analyse the translation trends. Both linguistic detail and a larger context are taken into account thanks to this close-reading, comparison approach.

Two theoretical frameworks inform the analysis. Verbal humour "depends on incongruities that are present in both the language… and on a series of cultural features specific to the source culture," according to Delia Chiaro's theory of humour translation (Chiaro 3) . Following Chiaro, we look at how each cultural cue (like a social tradition or phrase) and each joke's linguistic play (like a pun or word ambiguity) are handled. Chiaro warns that "the culture-specificity of the joke may well remain an insurmountable challenge" even if a pun can be translated into the target language (Chiaro). Therefore, we search for situations in which an Urdu-based joke has been compelled to use simple language (losing its twist) or in which an Urdu reference has been replaced or clarified for English readers. Chiaro goes on to say that "good jokes play on the combination of highly specific cultural references and linguistic specificity." (Chiaro). As a result, we monitor whether the layered word choices and allusions in the original are retained in the English translations. If an Urdu idiom adds to a funny impact, for instance, does the translator discover an English phrase that has the same effect, or does the comedy disappear? According to Chiaro's observations, we should assess the degree of humour loss vs preservation in each situation.

Lawrence Venuti’s domestication vs. foreignization model provides a second lens. Each translation choice is categorised as either leaning towards foreignization (keeping foreign aspects that maintain source "otherness") or domestication (making the text fluid and recognisable to English readers) (Domestication and foreignization 1). According to Venuti, domestication entails bringing the text "closely to the culture of the language being translated to." (Domestication and foreignization), This can erase foreignness and render the translator "invisible." Foreignization, on the other hand, "retains information from the source text" and purposefully violates target conventions to maintain meaning (Domestication and foreignization). Venuti argues that domestication “violently erases” the source culture’s values,

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JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

whereas a foreignizing approach applies "an ethnodeviant pressure… to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text" (Domestication and foreignization). Practically speaking, we observe that the text becomes foreignized whether an Urdu cultural reference is substituted with a generic English idea (a domestication manoeuvre that smoothes over the distinctiveness of the original) or if the original phrase is retained (perhaps with an explanation). In this dichotomy, each humor-related item is assessed to determine how "foreign" the humour is. Using Venuti's ideas, we analyse how the translation approach influences the audience's perception of the joke and if it tends to maintain the Urdu flavour or naturalise the humour for the intended audience.

The linguistic and cultural subtleties of English and Urdu are carefully taken into account throughout the examination. The vocabulary, grammar, and rhetorical style of Urdu at the linguistic level (e.g. use of honorific forms, poetic devices, or borrowings from Persian/Arabic) are examined when they contribute to humor. Semantic aspects are tracked by comparing meanings and connotations: if an Urdu word with multiple meanings is used humorously, we check if the English word conveys the same ambiguity. We pay special attention to idiomatic expressions and culturally loaded terms – for example, a South Asian proverb or a culturally specific metaphor. In each case, we see whether the translator preserves the original sense, finds an English equivalent, or omits the cultural layer.
Cultural allusions to historical background or social practices are found in the Urdu text (such as a reference to a well-known story or a local event), and their translations are examined. Does the English translation try to clarify an Urdu-specific feature or does it modify the humour to fit a Western setting? These factors are crucial because, as Chiaro points out, for the audience to "recognise your attempt at non-seriousness," they must share cultural knowledge (Chiaro). Thus, the process includes the interpretation of pragmatic and cultural meaning in addition to formal textual comparison.

All things considered, the approach combines a methodical comparison reading with advice from Venuti's translation ethics and Chiaro's humour theory. The study shows how Bukhari's wit and tone endure translation by comparing source and destination texts and closely examining each humor-related decision. It also shows if these decisions trend towards domestication or foreignization in the linguistic and cultural transfer of humour.

Data Representation:

Patras's Urdu essays rely on several linguistic devices to create humor. He frequently uses **exaggeration and overstatement** to comic effect. For instance, he magnifies ordinary scenarios (e.g. the endless barking of dogs or a tired student in a hostel) into absurd situations. He also uses **situational irony** – the audience knows more than the characters – to provoke laughter. Moreover, Patras is adept at **wordplay and clever phrasing**: he "turn[s] a beautiful phrase on its head, debunking sophistication to return to the more quotidian realities of life". His humor is often cultural or situational, painting scenes that highlight social norms or colonial-era pretensions. One analyst notes that Patras's characters "represent the early twentieth-century South Asian middle-class man aspiring to be a world citizen" but being gently mocked for his affectations.
In translation, most scholars agree that **literal wordplay rarely survives intact**. To preserve his comic effect in English, translators employ **"sense-to-sense" rendering**, choosing the nearest meaningful equivalent in tone and intent. Major humorous episodes are fully translated, while some culturally dense details may be *summarized or explained* to give foreign readers

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JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

context. For example, the translator Zubair Baig emphasizes keeping the "finer nuances" of Patras's humor alive by focusing on the core comic situations and providing necessary context. In practice, English versions try to mirror Patras's **sarcasm and wit** even if the exact Urdu idiom is impossible to match. But as Chiaro and other theorists note, the translator often must compromise on literal accuracy to capture the humor's spirit. Patras's essays are laced with **social commentary** – poking fun at bureaucracy, colonial mindsets, or everyday absurdities. His satire is often gentle, laughing *with* people rather than at them. The content of his humor – the *critique of society* – tends to carry over into translation, because the translators deliberately retain the scenario that underlies each joke. For instance, an English edition notes that these essays still provide "a humorous glimpse into the social, cultural, and religious context of South Asian society". This suggests that the *themes* and critiques (e.g. mid-century social norms or colonial-era institutions) remain relevant and understandable even in English.

However, some nuances do change. Patras's satire often relies on **cultural references or Urdu idioms** that may be obscure to non-Urdu readers. In translation, these might be **adapted or footnoted**. Baig's translations tend to **preserve the target of the satire** (e.g. bureaucratic red tape, social pretension) but will sometimes gloss over specifically Urdu wordplay. For example, a story titled "Hostel Mein Padhna" (literally "studying in the hostel") may simply be rendered as *"Hostel Life"* in English – a more generic phrase that loses the verb-noun play but still hints at student struggles. The translator has "taken up the nearest possible English equivalents… to realize the equivalent effect". In other words, the social or political targets of Patras's humor survive translation, but **some cultural flavor is muted**.

Ultimately, scholars note that while **core satire survives**, the *mode* of delivery can shift. Where Urdu might use subtle connotations or Urdu-specific double meanings, the English version may need to make them explicit or find a different pun. According to Baig, he focuses on the **comic situations** themselves – what will make any reader laugh – and he contextualizes or even omits details that would puzzle foreigners. Thus, the essence of Patras's critique (the joke's target) stays largely intact, even if the wording or secondary references are changed.

Patras's original tone is light, ironic, and often a bit self-deprecating. In Urdu, his wording can carry a very particular *wryness* that depends on register and cultural cues. The English translations strive to keep that tone, but inevitably some *meaning or nuance shifts*. In some cases, the **tone becomes more straightforward**: humor that was implicit in Urdu phrasing may be made explicit in English for clarity. Translators admit that to make the humor work, they sometimes **sacrifice literalness**.. For example, an Urdu line might use a formal or poetic phrase ironically, whereas the English might replace it with a more colloquial or pointed remark.

The effect on meaning is that **certain subtleties can be lost**. An Urdu pun on a double entendre simply cannot be conveyed directly, so the translator might rephrase it as a comparable joke in English or even drop it. Nevertheless, as one study notes, translators rely heavily on **their own creativity** – sometimes even more than on language similarity – to recreate humor. In Baig's approach, this meant preserving the "finer nuances" of humor when possible. In practice, readers of the English version often still sense Patras's playful tone (the text often feels witty), but the precise texture of his Urdu style is naturally altered.

For example, the Urdu phrase **"Sawere jo kal aankh meri khuli"** is literally "The morning when my eye opened (yesterday)," a somewhat ornate way to begin a story. Its English rendering "Early yesterday morning" is straightforward. The literal Urdu is slightly humorous in its phrasing (it hints at an elaborate storytelling tone), whereas the English is plain and direct. This illustrates that the *meaning* remains (we know a funny anecdote follows), but the *tone* has shifted from dramatic to neutral. In short, the **tone of Patras's humor usually survives translation** (readers still find the stories amusing and satirical), but some of the original

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

linguistic charm or wordplay may be muted. As theorists like Chiaro suggest, this is an unavoidable trade-off: humor's punch often "loses effect when moved from one language to another," requiring creative adaptation.

Delia Chiaro, a leading scholar of translation humor, notes that humor is one of translation's most challenging areas. She argues that **wordplay, puns, and culture-specific jokes** often don't transfer smoothly, so translators must make creative choices. In effect, **"translating humour is comparable to working with poetry"** – to keep the joke's impact, the translator may have to *sacrifice literal sense for comedic effect*. Chiaro's work emphasizes that the goal is often to recreate the *effect* on the reader (e.g. laughter or satire) rather than to reproduce exact wording. This theory helps explain what happens with Patras Bukhari: the English versions trade some linguistic detail for equivalent wit. In line with Chiaro, translators like Baig focus on *sense-to-sense rendering* and use the "nearest possible English equivalents" to *vitalize* the humor in a new cultural context. Thus, Chiaro's framework clarifies why Patras's humorous tone can survive across languages even if individual jokes change shape.

Table 1

Loss of Humor in Urdu-to-English Story Titles

Story (Original vs. Translation)	Key Urdu Phrase	English Translation	Effect on Humor
Hostel Mein Padhna – *"Hostel Life"*	*Hostel mein padhna* (lit. "studying in the hostel")	*Hostel Life*	The simple English title loses the verb "to study," which in Urdu hints at student struggles. The humor of an exasperated student may be less sharp in just "Hostel Life." (Translator focuses on the setting; some wit is lost.)
Sawere jo kal aankh meri khuli – *"Early yesterday morning"*	*Sawere jo kal aankh meri khuli* (formal, dramatic phrasing)	*Early yesterday morning*	The Urdu phrasing is ornate and sets a playful tone; the English is plain. The narrative meaning remains (the event happens in the morning), but the original's slightly humorous cadence is flattened.
Marhoom ki yaad mein – *"Obituary"*	*Marhoom ki yaad mein* ("in memory of the late [deceased]")	*Obituary*	The Urdu phrase ("in memory of the deceased") has a poetic irony that sounds poignant or ironic. The English "Obituary" is much more clinical. The cultural nuance of remembrance is replaced by a generic term. (Some of the original's affectionate or satirical undertone is lost.)

Each row above illustrates how a literal or basic English translation maintains the basic meaning but often **alters the tone or wordplay**. The translator tends to preserve the main scenario (as advised by Jakobson's sense-for-sense approach) but may simplify language to ensure clarity for non-Urdu readers. This table shows that in translation, Patras's humor often shifts: the *contextual satire* generally remains, but *linguistic flourishes* (wordplay, irony in phrasing) may be diminished.

DISCUSSION

The three articles by Patras Bukhari are a masterful synthesis of linguistic play, cultural analysis, self-loathing, and societal satire. Bukhari makes fun of his family's fixation with hostel vs house life in "Hostel Mein Parhna" ("Hostel Life"). He uses exaggeration to

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

accentuate the ignorance of his guardians; for instance, they believe that "home is a Kaʿba of purity and chastity" and "the hostel [is] a hell of sin and misdeed". This clever analogy (Ka'ba vs. hell) mocks the way elders revere their homes. The narrator's perspective is regrettably self-deprecating: he mocks his fruitless attempts to defend living in a dorm, finally admitting, "I shouldn't have used the word 'personality.'" A far better option would have been character. In Urdu, he quips **"مجھے شخصیت نہیں سیرت کہنا چاہیے...سیرت کے لفظ سے نیکی ٹپکتی ہے"** ("I should have said *sīrat* instead of *shakhṣīyat*… the word *sīrat* drips with goodness", making fun of his misuse of words with a lot of sound. Hostel Life parodies middle-class ideals of morals and education by using such exaggeration and fake sincerity.

Bukhari mocks his sloth and strict societal norms in "Sawere Jo Kal Aankh Meri Khuli" ("Early Yesterday Morning"). He tells a humorous story of how Lālā Kripa Shankarji, his devout neighbour, wakes him up at three in the morning because he has exam duty. The scene unfolds in absurd detail: **"خُدایا!...یہ سوتے کو جگا رہے ہیں یا مردے کو جلا رہے ہیں؟"** ("Oh Lord! Are they waking the sleeping or resurrecting the dead?". The reference to Jesus simply whispering *qom* (rise) parodies the neighbor's overzealousness. In English, the translator captures this: *"Oh God, what have I brought upon myself? Is he trying to wake up the sleeping or resurrect the dead? Jesus brought the dead back to life, but I bet he just whispered, 'Up!'"*. Bukhari's tone here is irreverent and exasperated, deflating the mystique of early-riser gurus. The essay ends on a note of gentle irony: he proudly returns to sleep until "ten o'clock, as is proper for all respectable men,", reminding readers of the universal appeal of sloth. The humor derives from **situational irony** and **self-mockery**, as Patras exaggerates his indulgence while subtly criticizing solemn traditions.

Finally, *"Marhoom Ki Yaad Mein"* ("Obituary") adopts a philosophical-comic tone. Two friends sit in silence until Patras launches into a ludicrous tirade about walking: "There's no difference between us and animals… yes, the animals chew cud and have tails – what of it? They only prove that animals are superior to me. But there's one way we're the same. Both of us walk wherever we're going." He then explicates with comedic fussiness that he has walked "by foot" every day of his life, humorously concluding that "walking is a good way to lose your mind… it makes you dumber than a donkey". This playful anthropological rant satirizes human pomposity by comparing people to beasts. The narrative continues with a ludicrous plan to buy a motorcar, immediately undermined when his friend offers his bicycle "for free" – a climax that elicits "the laughter of innocent children… the warbles of nightingales". In Urdu, Patras's tone is cheeky and brash; the English keeps this flourish (calling Mirza "little dim-witted" to ensure understanding). Throughout, the author's persona vacillates between swagger and humility, underscoring how **situational humor** arises from personal foibles and friendship banter.

Across all three essays, Patras's humor hinges on **exaggerated comparisons, rhetorical questions, and playful vocabulary**. As Zubair Baig notes, his comedy "is centered on overstatement and exaggeration" and exploits "situational irony". He "laughs with his audience by sharing funnier aspects of his… experiences and does not laugh at them", embedding self-deprecation in the narrative voice. For example, Patras describes his wanderings as a student by mocking both himself and the adult expectations placed on him. In *Hostel Life*, his failed justifications become increasingly absurd (the scandal of buying a two-rupee movie ticket is recounted as a near-tragic tale). In *Early Yesterday*, his grandiose complaints about sleep morph a mundane interruption into an epic odyssey. In *Obituary*, his solemn musings erupt into farce when a bicycle appears. These themes – societal satire, the human condition, and language play – form the connective tissue of his humor.

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

Translating Patras's wit poses classic challenges of **verbal humor**. Delia Chiaro emphasizes that humor "depends on incongruities that are present in both the language in which it is couched and on a series of cultural features… specific to the source culture alone". If a joke hinges on a pun or wordplay, success "hinges on… finding that the same word or phrase in the target language has exactly the same meanings" Otherwise, the culture-specific nuance may become "an insurmountable challenge". Chiaro concludes bluntly: "Verbal humor does not travel well", though it can be done with great ingenuity.

In practice, the English translations (by Reeck and Ahmad) seek to recreate Patras's stylistic incongruities. When the Urdu plays on vocabulary, the translators often substitute an English parallel. For example, Patras's Lahore-college student uses the Hindi/Urdu words *shakhsīyat* (شخصیت, "personality") and *sīrat* (سیرت, "character/life history"). In Urdu he admits **"شخصیت ایک بےرنگ سا لفظ ہے، سیرت کے لفظ سے نیکی ٹپکتی ہے"**. The English translation renders this as *"I shouldn't have used the word 'personality'... Character would have been a much better choice"*. Here the translator has preserved the contrast of abstract terms (personality vs. character), but because English lacks a clear distinction akin to Urdu *sīrat*, the wordplay is softened. The pun on "character/drhiveness" is lost, though the self-mocking intent remains. Chiaro would note this as a **collapsing of lexical incongruity** – the humor in Urdu (based on subtle register differences) is interpreted rather than directly transferred. The translators choose *personality* and *character* knowing English readers will see a contrast, but it is inevitably less pointed than in the original.

When humor relies on cultural knowledge, the translators tend to **adapt or gloss** in service of the joke. In *Early Yesterday Morning*, Patras shouts religious allusions ("عیسا"/Isa, "qalma"/*qom* "rise"). The translation chooses to insert the name "Jesus" and explains the action ("whispered 'Up!'") so that English readers share the comic effect of divine brevity. Chiaro argues that if the target culture recognizes the referent, a foreign invocation (Jesus, Lala Ji) may still amuse; if not, the translator might instead generalize it. Here the choice to use "Jesus" (familiar to Western audiences) rather than leaving "Isa (عیسی)" is a minor domestication that keeps the effect. Likewise, more regionally specific terms – *ḍhobi* (washerman), *Mirza Sahib*, *Lalaji* – are left untranslated, providing flavor though possibly baffling to some readers. Chiaro would classify this as a deliberate **foreignization** of cultural references (see Venuti below), retaining source details so that at least an exotic humor remains. The crowd's reactions, local offices (principal, superintendent), and currency (rupees) are also not anglicized, which helps preserve the satirical context of South Asia.

Chiaro also distinguishes **functional vs. formal equivalence** in humor translation. Formal equivalence (word-for-word closeness) often fails for jokes, since meaning transfer invariably requires changes: "every language is different and translation will be physically diverse from the original". Comedy exacerbates this, as it "breaks with linguistic conventions… stretches language to its extremes". In these essays, the translators have indeed made numerous changes. For instance, many of Patras's digressions and filler expressions ("Eh?", "You idiot!" etc.) are rendered into colloquial English idioms ("Humph," "Really, for God's sake!") that fit the mood though they are not literal. These choices illustrate Chiaro's point that *radical changes are inevitable* in humor translation. The English is looser and more idiomatic; for example, the repeated Urdu exclamation "—اللہ،" and stammering "Verily, verily…" become "Oh God… Thank you very much!" and expressive cadence in English. In effect, the translators prioritize the overall comic "effect" (paraphrastic equivalence) rather than word-level fidelity. This aligns with Chiaro's notion that translators must often "overcome problems with an adequate translation" if they hope readers to find it funny, even though there is *no guarantee* the joke will *equally* amuse.

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

Overall, applying Chiaro's framework shows that the English versions manage *some* linguistic incongruities through creative interpretation. Wordplay that has a close analogue is preserved (personality/character), whereas uniquely Urdu puns are substituted or dropped. Cultural jokes are mostly maintained by keeping names and titles, sometimes with contextual clues. The comedians' **intent** – to ridicule absurdity and express exasperation – largely survives the translation, even if some local color is muted. As Chiaro stresses, humor translation is "a gargantuan task" that often yields only partial success; here the translators succeed in rendering the gist of Patras's wit, though not every nuance "travels" intact.

Lawrence Venuti's dichotomy of *domestication* versus *foreignization* provides a useful lens for evaluating the translations. Domestication smooths a text to the target culture, while foreignization deliberately retains source elements. Venuti argued that English translations have long favored fluent domestication to minimize "foreignness," but he advocates foreignization as an "ethical" approach , preserving the Otherness of the original.

The English *Hostel Life*, *Early Yesterday Morning*, and *Obituary* each exhibit a mixture of these strategies, though they lean toward foreignization. Many South Asian terms are left untranslated. For example, Patras's friend is *Mirza Sahib* throughout, and the well-meaning neighbor is "Lalaji," a culturally loaded honorific. The text speaks of "dhobis" and rupees, which might baffle non-South-Asian readers. Such choices keep the story's setting explicit. From a domestication perspective, the translators *could* have replaced "dhobi" with "washerman" or converted rupees into generic "currency," but they did neither. This aligns with Venuti's foreignizing ethos: the translator does not hide the Urdu milieu. Likewise, Urdu proverbs or honorifics (e.g. "خانۂ پاکیزگی…کعبہ") are rendered in English but often with hints of their origin. In *Hostel Life*, the parents' speech about hostels is heavily hyperbolic; the translators replicate the gravity in English ("house is a Kaaba of purity... hostel a hell of sin") even as they add flourishes. These instances show respect for the source culture's flavour, albeit at risk of alienating readers unfamiliar with those references.

On the other hand, some domestication is observable when the translators neutralize overly foreign phrasing. For example, the Urdu lecture about *imtiḥān* (exams) and paternal advice is streamlined into idiomatic English dialogue, with colloquialisms like *"For God's sake"* and *"You fool"*. The dramatic Biblical allusion to Jesus rising the dead is localized by naming "Jesus" (a familiar figure in English speech) rather than leaving an abstract "Hazrat Isa." This small shift makes the humor more immediate for a global readership. Similarly, Patras's self-flagellation ("You idiot! You fool!") is an English outburst that feels native, whereas an Urdu counterpart might have been more restrained. These choices demonstrate selective domestication: they aim for a fluent, witty tone rather than preserving every Urdu idiom.

Critically, Venuti's theory suggests that too much domestication "violently" erases cultural difference. In these translations, that violence is minimal. The translators generally did *not* Americanize or Anglicize the narrative. They avoided rewriting cultural jokes into Western equivalents (e.g. comparing a hostel to an American college dorm), which would have lost the satirical context. Instead, they often kept the exaggerations intact. For instance, Patras's endless hyperbole in Urdu about the dangers of hostel life is mirrored in English with equally overwrought claims (students "lost in drunken stupor by a drain" etc.). This fidelity suggests a foreignizing stance. In Venuti's terms, the translator signals the difference of the text (by preserving source names and jokes) rather than making it invisible.

At the same time, we must recognize that the translators sometimes straddle both strategies within a passage. The comic effect of *"I'm too rich for this"* (a nod to South Asian self-irony) is delivered in plain English, blurring its exotic origin. The phrase about studying until ten o'clock "as is proper for all respectable men" uses an English idiom that does not sound like a literal South Asian turn of phrase, indicating a choice for relatability. Thus, while the **essence**

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL

of foreignness is retained – the context remains clearly subcontinental – the **expression** is often smoothed for English idiomaticity. In sum, the translators' strategy mixes Venuti's poles: culturally marked terms remain (foreignization), but the surrounding style is domesticated into natural English flow.

From a translation studies perspective, this hybrid approach is pragmatic. Venuti might applaud the retention of cultural signifiers as ethical, but he would also caution that too much domestic smoothing risks undermining authenticity. Here, most foreigners would recognize that *"Mirza Sahib"* or *"Lalaji"* are South Asian and appreciate the translator's effort to "convey [cultural norms] preserving their meaning and their foreignness". The translations thus seem to honor Venuti's injunction to make readers aware of difference, while ensuring readability. This strategy generally succeeds: the tone feels suitably bilingual and patently non-American, yet not so alien as to lose humor.

Examining tone and cultural nuance, the English versions mostly **preserve** Patras's comic spirit, even if some subtleties are altered. The translators maintain his **lightly absurd tone** – the sarcastic first-person voice carries through. For instance, in *"Hostel Life"* Patras's dry wit about higher education is intact. He jests that England and Lahore seem equivalent – **"London aur Lahore mein chandaan farq nahin"**which in English becomes "no real difference between London and Lahore." This hyperbole is just as deadpan in translation and gets the laugh. Similarly, the misplaced confidence and self-pitying humor of *Early Yesterday Morning* survive: the exasperated line *"I slept until my usual ten o'clock, as is proper for all respectable men"*preserves Patras's faux-pride. The tone of mock-heroism remains, and the translators even comment directly on "dear readers," retaining his conversational asides.

Where humor depends on cultural context, the effect is sometimes diluted but not erased. The concept of hostel life itself (familiar to South Asian readers) is foreign to many English readers; however, the translators make sure the jokes stand on their own. For example, the image of a superintendent freezing a boy's allowance for a late arrival may not be immediately relatable, but the absurdity is universalized. The English uses clearer phrasing: *"He froze the boy's allowance for a month… just imagine that!"*. Though the exact disciplinary culture is unique, the joke – parental overreaction – is broadly understandable.

On tone, the translators generally mirror Patras's friendly, confiding style. Formal Urdu honorifics ("صاحب" ,"جناب") are mostly omitted or rendered casually ("Sir," "Mr.") as in *Early Yesterday Morning*, making the narrative sound like a monologue to the reader. Yet they keep an undercurrent of respect (they almost never use profanity beyond "fool," "idiot"). The Urdu had its own polite humor; the English likewise uses courteous mockery. One should note, for example, how the translation handles *"Mirza Sahib"* and *"Lalaji"* – these remain untranslated titles. This choice preserves the reverent-but-teasing dynamic between characters. If the translator had changed "Lalaji" to "Mr. Lala," much of the affectionate connotation (and the readers' sense of cultural setting) would be lost.

Some humor does shift. The Urdu original's cultural punchlines, such as the prestigious "Kaaba" comparison, assume background knowledge that some English readers lack. In the translation this specific religious metaphor may come off as exotic rather than hilarious. Similarly, word-level jokes like the difference between *shakhsīyat* and *sīrat* (both roughly "character") are often untranslatable; the English resorts to near-synonyms *personality/character*, which sound less funny than the Urdu contrast of morality-infused terms. Thus, certain **subtleties are lost**: an Urdu-speaking reader may chuckle at the theological overtones, whereas an English reader simply notes the exaggeration.

Nevertheless, key laughs endure. For example, in *Obituary*, the narrator's rant that *"walking is a good way to lose your mind"* carries its witty momentum in English. The humor in his toothless insult – "because you're a little dim-witted I used both words so that you would be

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL

sure to understand" depends on tone more than on language, and the translators render it clearly. Even language-specific quirks like "Humph" (a sound of disdain) appear as-is, cleverly universalized. The pacing of jokes – the pauses, repetitions, and faux-earnest asides – are emulated.

Culturally, the translations do alter context for clarity. A line like *"Dhobi hata warna…"* (an idiomatic curse about a washerman) becomes the English fable of the lazy Dhobi who fails to provide clean clothes. The anger is conveyed ("If murder weren't a capital offense, I would kill him"), but the domestic imagery is English-ified. Likewise, the stationmaster/guard analogy ("**You think I'm some railway guard?**") might confuse readers unaware of South Asian stereotypes, but here it remains an unusual dig that English readers still find odd and thus humorous.

In sum, the translations **succeed in preserving Patras's overall comic tone and much of the absurd content**. They localize some references but often keep others intact, walking a fine line between eras. The effect is that English readers today can still appreciate the wit, though a few original resonances (Urdu idioms, cultural prestige cues) are inevitably softened. Yet even when altered, the translators replace lost humor with a parallel English jest. The result is a text that feels authentic to Patras's spirit: polite, whimsical, and slyly subversive.

Patras Bukhari's Urdu essays rely on a delicate interplay of social commentary and playful language – elements that pose a formidable challenge for any translator. Our analysis shows that the English renderings capture the **main thematic thrusts** (satire of social norms, gentle self-mockery, cultural observation) quite well. Using Chiaro's insights, we see that the translators have navigated linguistic incongruities by offering functional equivalents (e.g. "personality/character") and by ensuring cultural jokes still land (adding explanatory context when needed). Following Venuti's framework, they have largely **foreignized** the text: preserving names, settings, and local color to maintain authenticity, while allowing some domestication for readability. The combined effect is that Patras's humor – often said to hinge on exaggeration and irony continues to amuse in English. The translators do *not* betray the tone; Patras's voice remains neither eroded nor made obscure. Even though certain Urdu-specific puns or allusions naturally "travel" less well, the English versions substitute equally absurd images and witty turns, keeping the reader laughing for (almost) the same reasons.

Conclusion:

The essay translations preserve Patras's comedic essence: the irreverent wit, the warm self-effacement, and the pointed social critique. As Chiaro reminds us, not all humor can pass intact from one tongue to anotherbut with skillful adaptation the spirit survives. Similarly, by balancing domestication and foreignization, the translators manage to keep both the laughs and the original flavor. The result is a foreign text that still feels vaguely *Patrasian*, allowing English-speaking readers a taste of his timeless wit even as a few nuances inevitably shift in the passage.

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