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TRANSLATION STRATEGIES AND READER RESPONSE OF PARTITION TRAUMA IN SELECTED AFSANAS OF SAADAT HASAN MANTO

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Abstract
This paper examines how different translation strategies affect a reader's understanding of Partition trauma in Manto's Afsanas, Thanda Gosht, Khol Do, and Toba Tek Singh. In his original Urdu narratives, Manto uses stark realism, narrative restraint, and so-called 'the silence' of partition, all of which communicate the psychological violence of the partition. In translation, Manto's effects are changed due to the translator's linguistic and cultural choices, which affect the reader's engagement with the trauma. Steering a path of intersection between translation studies and reader response theory, this paper is positioned within the framework of domestication, foreignization, explication, and omission concerning the source and target texts. The study shows that although some strategies enhance readership in the target texts, they also paradoxically diminish Manto's shock value, cultural ambiguity, and moral perplexity. The study argues that for Manto, the act of translation is beyond a mere transfer of meaning; it is a process of re-visioning which alters, in a significant way, the reader's ethical and emotive engagement with the trauma.

Keywords: *Manto, Partition literature, reader response, Urdu–English translation, translation strategies, trauma*

Introduction

Saadat Hasan Manto (1912-1955) is considered to be one of the most important and controversial authors of the 20th century, and the short stories, or Afsanas, he has written show great originality and mastery of the craft and engagement with the literature of the social and cultural taboos of the time. Manto's works include: *Thanda Gosht, Khol Do and Toba Tek Singh*, and many narratives and works of literature depict the human condition and the suffering that the Partition of India and Pakistan that took place in 1947 brought. Manto's literature exposes the suffering and trauma caused by the violence of the partition, the social disintegration and the loss of identity that comes with and from the violence of partition and exposes and gives the reader an experience of the trauma caused by the evil of the partition. Manto uses many techniques that are morally ambiguous and minimally use moral sentiments, create sudden ruptures in the flow of the narrative and disrupt the social order and narrative of the partition, and this gives the literature its shock value, social recognition and its value in conceptual disintegration. These qualities also make Manto's literature difficult to translate.

The translator thus bears the responsibilities as both a mediator and a co-creator of meaning, shaping the ethics and emotions the reader engages with the text. With Manto, where the

story shocks the reader the most due to the narrative economy and other subtleties, the technique used by the translator to transform or preserve the reader's experience is most valuable. One must analyze the text and the reader to understand the reception of the literature that has been translated. Reader reception theory is primarily concerned with the text and the audience, where the theory of meaning is posited to reside in the reader's culture, society, and emotions. In Manto's translated Afsanas, the translator's choices, to a large extent, will determine how the original trauma's shock is preserved or even how the effects of the shock are reduced. The articulation of the relationship between the strategies of translation and the response of the reader in Manto's stories conveys to the reader the intersection of literary theory and cultural mediation with the ethics of trauma. This paper deals with the range of effects of translation strategies on reader reception for the English translations of *Thanda Gosht, Khol Do, and Toba Tek Singh*.

Through detailed textual examination and analysis of source and target texts, it seeks to investigate the effects of the phenomena of domestication, foreignization, explicitness, and omission and their implications, in the emotional, psychological, and moral aspects of Partition trauma.

The research also analyses how these factors affect readers' understanding, empathy, and ethical thinking, which further develop inquiries at the intersection of translation studies, trauma studies, and Urdu literature, as well as illustrating the challenges of translating culturally and emotionally laden texts. This research also underscores the importance of stating that a translation can never be a neutral conduit; it is a carrier of the subjugation of emotions and the meaning of the text, and, in the process, deprives or alters the emotional response of the audience to the literary articulation of the trauma of history.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the extent to which such strategies affect the representation of Partition trauma in the translated texts.
2. To assess the extent to which translation choices affect the emotional, psychological, and ethical engagement of the readers.
3. To analyze the extent to which the translations are faithful in preserving the narrative strategies, moral ambiguity, and cultural context of Manto's original afsanas.

Research Questions

1. In what ways do the translation strategies affect the representation of Partition trauma in the translated texts?
2. In what ways do translation strategies affect readers' understanding, emotional and ethical engagement and response to the narratives of Manto?
3. How do the translations preserve or modify the narrative style, moral ambiguity, and cultural and historical context of the original Urdu text?

Literature Review

Saadat Hasan Manto's literature demonstrates devastation, pain, and suffering, both during and after the partition of the Indian subcontinent. It summarises Manto as a historian of anguish and the atrocities of war that reflect a particular socio-historical period, and in relation to Manto's literature. Bashir et al. (2022) discuss the psycho-emotional impacts of partition and its outcome on individuals and on the collectivity. Manto's short stories narrate the trauma of war and the suffering it brings, and construct narratives of suffering and trauma (Shah et al., 2021). Insufficient

and inappropriate linguistic expression is, in this case, the testimony of the absence of trauma of the Partition, Hazra's Manto's selected language (Hazra, 2025).

Much of the critique of Partition literature deals with the trauma of women. Rehman et al. (2025) consider Khol Do from a feminist perspective, arguing that the absence of articulation of women's trauma in the narrative is due to the combination of cultural silence and the patriarchy of the 'speaking' and the 'listening' of the narrative. Likewise, Dilip Hazarika and other scholars consider the Partition stories of Manto and especially the women characters, saying that women's suffering calls for the reader's empathy to the violence and loss.

Researchers within translation studies have scanned the correspondence of Manto's works. Bhatti et al. (2023) examine foregrounding in English modulation, addition, omission and compensation narrative techniques. Analysis of English translations of *Thanda Gosht* also illustrates the use of domestication and foreign elements and the achievement and variation of the target text's cultural and ideological value (Parekh, 2022). Using Venuti's model, Batool and Naz (2024) apply the translation theories of Manto's Mummy and show how the median processes of domestication and foreignization shape the cultural translatability of the text. Riaz (2018) also points to the difficulties of achieving balance in the Lexical, Syntactic and Stylistic levels of Urdu narratives and their translated English versions, and notes that the narrative tone lacks in translation works. These studies have depended on the translation studies publications.

Nida (1964) idea of dynamic equivalence involves a rationale for the explanation of the purpose of translation. It aims for readers of the translated text to respond to the text the same way the readers of the original text responded. It follows that the translator has the greatest interpretative burden.

The scholars of translation, for instance, Bassnett (2013) and Lefevere (2016), have, among other things, argued for the role of translation as cultural intermediation and the intralingual negotiations as opposed to the mere transfer of texts, which also involves the construction of meaning. In the domain of trauma literature, translational strategies, in this case, affect the receivers of the narratives in question on the emotional and psychological planes. This perspective has also been adopted by reader-response theorists. In the case of Fish (2021) and Jauss (1984), the emphasis on the reader's cultural and historical background is partly meant to articulate that translation-mediated texts are to be read differently, depending on the reader's contextual factors.

There are very few studies specifically analyzing the translation choices and the implications on the reader's emotional and psychological reception of the text, though trauma, gender politics, Manto's translation realism and other studies have been done in relation to Manto.

Moreover, there are studies that deal with the thematic structuring of the source text, or studies that deal with one translation strategy, studies that are, however, clearly limited in range with regard to the integration of the dynamics of reader response and trauma. This review has found a clear gap in the literature that combines the forecasting of specific translation strategies and the emotional and ethical trauma of partition in the translated narratives.

Research Gap

The majority of the studies on the trauma and realism in Manto's literature focus on the scholars' depiction of Manto and the issues surrounding Manto's translations. There are studies that identify the lack of systematic studies that establish the correlation between the strategies of translation employed and the trauma being experienced by the audience. Most studies, however, focus on the

style and the aesthetic of translation or the thematic concerns of the texts, ignoring the consequences of the translator's choices on the receiver of the text in the target language. The use of reader-response theory in translation, specifically in Partition literature, has received scant attention.

The lack of research focusing on Manto's Afsanas and trauma literature through the lens of reception theory stresses the need for trauma literature analysis, particularly the literature of trauma and the different methodologies of the translation of literature. This also relates to the moral dimensions of a reader's understanding, emotional engagement, and the reader's transformation of thought and behaviour.

Research Methodology

This research integrates textual analysis with translation theory and reader-response theory, focusing on the reception of Manto's Afsanas, employing qualitative research. It analyses three of his short stories, which are regularly translated into English and represent trauma relating to the Partition: *Thanda Gosht, Khol Do, and Toba Tek Singh*. This study investigates translation practices for three stories with a variety of content, different tones, and disparate narrative styles.

The analysis uses the comparative textual method to find specific translation strategies, ranging from domestication and foreignization by Venuti to Nida's dynamic equivalence. The strategies of omission, explication, modulation, and cultural substitution are assessed to determine the effect of narrative fidelity, emotional engagement, and cultural concentration.

By employing Reader-Response Theory, the analysis outlines the impact derived from the changes made to the text, the changes made, the audience's comprehension, the changes made, the audience's level of emotional engagement, and the changes made, the audience's moral concerns. The study examines the different responses to the cultural components, narrative ambiguity, and the morally complex elements of the source and target texts. The study focuses on the trauma, violence, and emotional suffering passages, as Manto's literature suggests that these elements impact the reader.

The analysis first focuses on how partition trauma-relevant themes explain particular extracts from each of these Afsanas. Then the translation strategies used are explained, noting the style, tone, and meaning. Changes are outlined in the translations to compare the original text and the translated text. Then, it is explained from Reader-Response Theory and Translation Theory, the audience's emotional and moral state, and how the changes in the texts may affect the audience's emotional and moral state.

This is how it is intended to analyze reception and translation. Then, the ethics and aesthetics of trauma literature translation are explained as a combination of textual analysis and theory-based analysis. Then, the extent to which translation affects the reader's engagement with the literature in relation to culturally and historically significant texts is outlined.

Analysis of Manto's Afsanas

Textual Analysis of Thanda Gosht: Violence, Silence, and Translational Mediation

In ***Thanda Gosht,*** Manto presents one of his most unsettling and yet most restrained stories. Moral disintegration during the partition is one of the unsettling topics Manto deals with in his stories.

Here, the use of description is minimal, and instead, there is an intentional use of a buildup, a silence, and other such devices. In the original Urdu account, the withholding of information by

the author means that the audience has to make meaning incrementally and, in the process, confronts the moral dilemma, if there is one, directly.

The best example of this is when he speaks of his 'confession' and reaches an almost understated climax with **"وہ ٹھنڈا گوشت نکلی"** Manto refers to a woman with the phrase 'she is cold flesh', which is also a direct translation, and there is nothing in this phrase which spells out the morally and psychologically heavy connotation. In one phrase, Manto sums up an episode referring to a moral and psychological collapse, and without a narrative. From the absence of a narrative, Manto psychologically burdens the audience to assume what has not been said.

In English translations, this moment is vague and is explained in different ways. Some translators preserve the metaphor and let the audience grapple with the ambiguity and metaphorical weight, while others use explanation strategies that circumvent the problem. Although such strategies might aid in comprehension, they lessen the audience's engagement and the intended audience shock that is caused by the more gradual comprehension. The original text is dependent on the audience for some level of interpretative engagement, and the explanatory translation is an effort that shifts that dependency, implying that the text is difficult.

Like *Kalwant Kaur*, the response she evokes is equally characterized by the absence of response. The absence of response is often a result of the narrative being conflated with her presence and absence. The use of silence in Urdu, the ethico-narrative reminder of **"وہ چپ رہی",** captures the ethical interruption of the narrative without a very much of a sentiment description. The translation of silence retains the narrative tension and the potential for the audience to respond. Yet, in the event that the translation adds a description of sentiment in even the slightest manner, it begins to sketch the phenomenon, and the response potential is guided, thus circumscribing the ethical.

For the translator, the challenge lies in maintaining a balance between the accessibility of the text and the constraints of the narrative scope. While making a text's language more indirect and neutral, as well as less metaphorical, does not remove an ethical dimension of the story, the audience's required response will be different. The original text provokes critical and judgmental thinking as critical thinking has been a significant aspect of today's era (Azmat et al., 2021; Jamil et al., 2024; Jamil & Muhammad, 2019; Jamil et al., 2025; Naseer et al., 2022). On the other hand, the neutral text invokes sympathetic thinking, deflecting confrontation with a problem. Overall, *Thanda Gosht* demonstrates the ways in which trauma narratives usually have imputed meanings. The translation techniques that deal with silence and the absence of definitive description afford the reader a confrontation with the morally troubling core of the narrative.

Textual Analysis of Khol Do: Silence, Authority, and Mediated Trauma

Kholl Do is characterized by a total absence of explanation, voice, words, and power. Trauma is not illustrated by Manto in a detailed way, but through the absence of detail, and in such a case, the ordinary language is endowed with a powerful, disturbing value. The strength of the story is in the absence of an explanation of what has transpired, and this compels the audience to acknowledge the harm through suggestion.

The most important example here is the phrase **'کُھول دو'** ('open it'). The original instructions are neutral and monotone. The only moment of heaviness is when Sakina, in the order of her command

conditioning, utters it. Manto offers no interpretations, no explanations, and invites the readers to confront the silence.

In English translations, these sections usually have contextual explanations. In most cases, the command is kept, but translators prioritize interpretative clarity. The narration is sometimes added to, and the explanations contribute to this, but while such additions are useful for the purposes of the translation, they tend to remove the abruptness that the author created with Whiting. The original text expects the readers to recognize the absence. Any translation that does not recognize the reader in the text loses that recognition.

The importance of culture is particularly notable in this case. The source text involves commands, movements of the body that respond, and silence. All of these can be interpreted in different ways depending on the culture of the readers and the culture of the authors. When these components are replaced by seamless matching features, the cultural aspects of the story can be lost. The culture of the story's author and the story's audience is the culture that is omitted from the story's critique of authority and the critique of obedience.

From a reader-response perspective, "**Khol Do"** employs what can be termed postponed understanding. The reader is not asked to feel a particular way but is placed in a position to understand. This is possible if there is a narrative economy, and in the case of a lack of economy, understanding is the result of an explanation of the narrative, which leads to an assumption that the author is trying to convey an emotion via a coat, thereby inhibiting/tying the readers' capacity to think.

The Khol Do story highlights the importance of silence in the story and the literary device of silence, and the narrative describes the violence that is silence. A translation that captures the violence of silence and the narrative device of silence will enable the reader to interpret the story in a narrative that is unwritten and pre-uninterpreted.

Absurd Language and Political Dislocation in the Textual Analysis of Toba Tek Singh

In the other Partition narratives of Manto, the Absurd and the ironic in Toba Tek Singh offer a particular reading of identity and displacement that is different. Here we have the border of an institution and the border of a discursive speech, and its repetition defies the logic of a politically divided and fragmented society. One is left with the perception that the so-called irrationality and disorder of a fragmented society have to be the answer to an elusive and abstract order in the system of social order of the imposed society.

The main character, Singh, uses repetition of single words and multiple phrases to create an effect that is somehow detached from the confounding political machinations of the partition and the bewildering political system of the time. Singh's Urdu phrases and sentences of the longing school of poetry herein take on the adjective, an Urdu praghvya, that linguistics has perhaps not yet defined or described.

Such sentences of longing, translated into English, invariably lose meaning. One such approach, the so-called dynamic equivalence, attempts to recreate the original, albeit from a distance. While many such unoriginal attempts succeed, they lose the immediate, primary, socially controlled, or ordered system of that language or its socially restrictive connotations. More euphemistically, such a description would become an original void of tension or conflict, a psychologically defunct system, and a dissociated absurdity.

At the end of the story, Singh's insistence on not taking sides with the borders, translation remains a primary concern. A substantial problem with the translations of the text is their imposition of a structure of interpretation which the ideology of the story resists. Certain translations close the ideological configurations of the original stories. An original version, like the Urdu Border, is wordless; it relies on the readers' ability to fill in the meaning of the unwritten actions.

At a primary level, the notion of linguistic plurality invites a consideration of the edges of narrational plurality. When combined with the other, the various registers and different styles of writing imply a fractured or splintered self. The complexity of the story, framed around the dual notions of displacement and loss, is compounded, even more so when the transcending of linguistic plurality is undermined in the process of simplification. The presence or even persistence of linguistic strangeness or oddity in the story compels a level of indefinable discomfort, and even resolve, on the part of the reader.

An example that clearly illustrates the point is the often irrational and illogical absurdity of the short story *Toba Tek Singh*. Hyperliteral translations tend to close the reader's mind or limit the scope of their imagination. When the translator retains certain aspects of a story, such as ambiguity and a lack of fluency, they compel the reader to contemplate the essence of the underlying controversy central to the story without closing it off.

Cross-Story Observations: Trauma, Moral Ambiguity, and Reader Engagement

The three stories share the same translation strategies and their effects on the audience's experience of trauma, moral complexity, and subtlety of the narratives. Silence and over-domestication neutralize the messages' urgency and impact, while translation strategies such as foreignization and explicitness preserve the emotional and moral complexity of the messages. Narrative strategies, such as silence, abrupt endings, and minimalism, are employed across the narratives.

Analysis of specific translations of *Manto's* Afsanas *(Thanda Gosht, Khol Do, Toba Tek Singh)* shows the reception of Manto's trauma, cultural layers, and the complexities of translation's moral. Each translation, in this case, represents a trauma, and a retraction of emotional and ethical, an interpretive, mediative, and opaque transfer of content. For example, the use of explication, euphemisms, and such, which may serve to enhance audience accessibility to the target audience, works to remove the emotional detachment and the brunt impact of the original work. Although some domestication techniques promoted emotional readability, cultural loss and the context of available alien resources loss was frequently substituted. This confirms Zahoor et al. (2023). The trauma of the Partition collective memory transcends the conventional and the traditionally understood literature narrative frameworks, exposing psychological trauma, gender violence and the extreme cruelty of the absurd.

According to Shah et al. (2021), Manto's narratives are noteworthy literary examples of war literature and its related trauma. This also gives a hint of how much translation constrains the themes involved for potential English readers. Additionally, translation studies theorise that the choice of culture and language relates to a particular stream of ideology that tends to either foreground or background the distinctiveness of the source culture (Gohar et al., 2023).

The findings presented show that translation techniques can communicate meanings beyond the literal and include emotional and ethical. A translator as a cultural intermediary shapes how modern audiences engage with trauma literature. This aligns with the existing theories of

trauma and translation that foreground memory, emotion, and culture as central to the relationship between language and audience.

Proposed Practical Implications

Based on the findings of this study, the following suggestions are proposed to support the advancement of future studies and the practice of translation.

1. Future studies should examine the profiles of audiences, i.e. bilingual versus monolingual and how they react to the translated trauma narratives, using questionnaires, focus group discussions, and reading log sheets. This will also apply to audience studies that are not limited to textual analysis.
2. While incorporating Peritexts such as prefaces, translator's notes, etc., that explain the culturally specific and potentially traumatizing elements, the translator has to strike a balance between the source and target texts to avoid excessive domestication of the source text.
3. When teaching Manto's translated works, educators need to incorporate reading and pedagogy in such a manner that the discourse surrounding the text compels the analysis of the translation discourse. This will address the micro-analytical dimensions of language use.
4. Future research should analyze a more significant number of translations and translators, with an emphasis on the emerging and less visible South Asian names, to note variations in the strategies used and their contextual reception.

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