Intertextuality in Translation: A Critique from Bangladeshi Perspective

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ABSTRACT

In his book *The Scandal of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference*, Lawrence Venuti vehemently asserts that translation "…entails the creative reproduction of values," and at the same time, it is usually seen with suspicion (1). He examines a bunch of reasons which instigate this suspicion. According to him, translation domesticates a foreign text and goes through a continuous inscription process in the stages of production, circulation and reception. While a foreign text is inscribed with linguistic and cultural values of the target readers, it runs into the risk of surrendering its individual tone and voice to the target readers' interest and thus, the target text is re-written and reproduced in the local dialects and the framework of local discourses. It is a common belief that translation causes violence to the source text because intertextuality between two distinct languages, cultures and minds gives rise to a new space where it "suffers from an institutional isolation" (Venuti, *The Scandal of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference*, 2). If it is so, a lot of suspicion regarding the authenticity of translation immediately emerges out of this limitation. As translation contributes to the mobility and multiplicity of understanding, it goes hand in hand with ambivalence and destabilization in establishing communication while intertextualizing the source text with the target text. To reduce this ambivalence and bring about equivalence between the source text and the target text theoretical framework is followed sometimes knowingly and very often unknowingly by the translators. In Bangladesh, translation at present turns into a field of study and so it invites a critical evaluation. This paper seeks to explore from a Bangladeshi perspective how intertextuality impacts translation.

Keywords: Intertextuality, pedagogy, target text, source text, hegemony, theoretical pedagogy

Translation lies in human instinct. It is as old as human beings. From the very inception of man's appearance on the earth, he has been translating his langue into parole, feeling into speaking, seeing into believing and so on. The more he becomes successful in reducing the gap between these two, the more successful he becomes in producing an authentic version of his act of translation. The task of reducing this gap is daunting and a

successful translator can do this task successfully. Translation, of course, runs the risk of loss and gain simultaneously. While causing intertextuality between two different languages, ways of seeing, ethnographical and anthropological realities, it recreates new values, understanding, misunderstanding, equivalence and alterity.

Translation not only transcribes a text in a different language but also adapts and interprets it in a distinct framework of correspondence. Again, it promotes 'intercultural understanding' (Maranhao xi). It is also marked as inter-semiotic and intra-semiotic systems (ibid xi). It is as old as languages because "languages are organized along the lines of political hierarchies and translation seldom is a spontaneous event" (ibid xiii). Alterity emerges out of the space between the source language and the target language and translation predominantly tends to domesticate it. This is the reason for which Lawrence Venuti, in his book *The Scandal of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference*, asserts that translation "is often regarded with suspicion…" (67). He examines a bunch of reasons that work aptly behind the formation of this suspicion. According to him, it domesticates a foreign text and goes through a continuous inscription process in the stages of production, circulation and reception. While a foreign text is inscribed with the linguistic and cultural values of the target readers, it runs into the risk of surrendering its original tone to the target readers' interest and thus the translated text appears to be a new construction, re-written in the framework of domestic dialects, theoretical pedagogy and discourses. It is also widely perceived that translation causes violence to the original text because of intertextuality between two different languages, cultures and minds.

Collaboration between the writer of the source text and the translator is obviously a prerequisite to making a translation authentic to a great extent. For example, if a Western text is translated by a Bangladeshi translator without any sort of collaboration or negotiation with the realities out of which it emerges, then it has the probable risk of being Bangladeshised in tone and voice. It is undeniable that in translation, "something is lost", because of the lack of sufficient negotiation between the cultural spaces of the author and the translator (Caciun 83). A transcultural collaboration authenticates as well as domesticates a target text. Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi, in their book *Post-colonial Translation: Theory and Practice* (1999), put forth the idea that post-colonial literature or texts should be read not in translation but as translation because these are produced through negotiations and collaborations between different cultural spaces. So, according to them, "…the word 'translation' seems to have come full circle and reverted from its etymological physical meaning of locational disrupture; translation itself seems to have been translated back to its origins" (12-13).

To overcome all these fatal charges against translation a translator has to do certain jobs. If he takes up this task as a discipline then he can take resort to the theories which obviously provide him with a framework and it will ensure, to a great extent, the authenticity of the text because theories take the translator in contact with an innovative and experimental world and make him indulge in a richer mental world. Theories do these great jobs by evoking an urge in the translator's mind for knowing the cultures, customs, languages, political realities, psychological disposition, economic activities and even the power-structure of the time in which the text is produced. It is just like, according to Boase–Beier, "knowing about seasonal pattern, phases of moon, soil and plant nutrition before sowing seeds" (Fawcett, et al XII). Knowledge about the synchronic and diachronic location of the source text and its structure helps a translator remain faithful to the voice, tone and mode of the author.

True, translation is a ubiquitous and inseparable process of human psychology. It continues all the time without any drawing even in the best attention of a man. There always

exists an arbitrary space between the source text and the target text, similar to that between signifier and signified. But the arbitrary space between signifier and signified appears to be a challenge to the translator. The more successful he becomes in facing this challenge the more authentic and faithful target text appears to be. Langue is distinctively and subtly different from parole. Reading is also different from writing. Of course, there are lots of nuances between reading and writing and between langue and parole. There exists an intrinsic missing link between these binaries and this missing link persuades the readers to go back to the origins out of which the source text emerges. The work of approaching this missing link can be done with the help of theories which work as a tool and with it a translator can reduce the nuances between these binaries. But this gap cannot be sealed wholly and satisfactorily. Here lies the risk of losing of the authenticity of the source text.

Nevertheless, translation is widely known as an art, a process, a craft on both philosophical and scientific basis. Though translation involves the "linguistic, semantic and socio-cultural" difficulties, it is philosophical because it simultaneously generates questions and answers out of the interaction between the source text and the target text (Elmgrab 191). This interaction can be termed as dialogues which conspicuously work behind the act of translation. A translator must possess a philosophic disposition that deepens his acquaintance with the mode and structure of the source text. The deeper this acquaintance is the more successful is the task of translation because it ensures intersectionality between the translator and the source text and arguably it:

> … lies behind the act of translation itself, ideally enabling a flow of meaning between languages and cultures that not only helps us to recognize and respect individual difference but may ultimately perhaps allow us to consciously participate in that unifying and coherent whole which underlies our being in this world. (Fawcette at al 4)

The interplay between theory and practice fortifies dialogues. A theory does not directly take a hand in the act of translation. It remains at a considerable distance but through a telepathic reciprocation, it fashions the practice of translation; makes it scientifically precise and evokes study of sociological, political, historical and psychological aspects of the text. Thus, the practice of translation simultaneously interacts with theory. A practitioner may be a theorist and vice versa and for this reason, translation theory goes simultaneously with practice. Even if the translator does his job without any direct correspondence with theories, his translation will fall into the framework of any of the translation theories.

Practice is guided by theories and theories are generated from practice and this process of creation and recreation is a commonplace everywhere. The tool of culture by which we are identifying ourselves with regard to our entity is also passing through a continuous translation process. Hence, translation inherits the antiquity and heritage of history. Even in the early Byzantine period the Greek professors of law, who were at that time called *antikinsores,* used to teach their pupils Latin texts in Greek language, not in word to word translation, but in the form of summary. Chinese interpreters also played a remarkable role in sermonizing Buddhism among the people. The Turk appointed Dragomans in their institutions to bridge between the locals and the foreigners. Early explorers like Cartier in Canada and Columbus in Latin

America trained some local interpreters to be comprehensible to the natives and facilitated themselves with imperializing enterprises. It is true that "…the Bible has provided the main impetus for translation activity in much of Europe since the birth of Christianity" (Saldanha xvii). In the same vein, the arrival of the Bible and the Quran in this subcontinent stimulated translation to a great extent. Translation of these holy books was mostly done with a view to converting the local Hindus into Christians and Muslims. Shah Abdul Qadir was the first to produce the Urdu version of the Quran in 1826. Shah Waliullah also translated the Quran into Persian, the then language of the educated middle class Muslims during the Mughal regime. The Bible was translated into Persian language in this subcontinent with a view to converting the natives into Christians. With the onset of bilingualism and multilingualism translation received an impetus in different parts of the world. But European societies even in this twenty first century do not accommodate multicultural nature of translation. In this connection Suzanne Romaine affirms, "European societies have been based on the notion of one language, a characteristically European mode of socio-linguistic organization. Multiculturalism was seen as a threat to the integrity of the state, and a common language critical for unification" (93). So, translation in any other language except French, English and Portuguese does not have an encouraging status in European countries. Even "The Greeks called others 'barbarians' if they could not speak Greek or pronounced it improperly" (Romaine 93). Such biasness acts as a block to the way of democratization of translation which is inherent in translation studies. Linguistic parochialism tells upon translation. Again colonial legacy which instigates a translator to put more importance on European text to be translated only, other than local texts of epistemology, not in the mainstream language but in the indigenous or ethnic languages, usually marginalizes the local texts and opens up the path of linguistic imperialism.

Actually, dialogues between 'informing theory' and 'performing practice' significantly contributes to a translator's capability to have a reliable command upon the target language and the target culture. This very capability helps a translator reconstruct the translated text with a suitable and congenial aura for the target readers. To reach the target readers successfully authentic approach to the contextual conditions related to the target culture and readers is required for the translator. This dialectical task may be accomplished and the stereotype of his attitude may be overcome by the translator's adherence to the discursive approach to the theories. But the question, in this regard, arises regarding the translator's lack of discursive knowledge of theory- is it possible to reach the target readers without having subjugation to the praxis? The answer is- 'Yes' and it may be possible to some extent if the translator can overcome this stereotype by indulging his self in the selves of the target readers. This task of indulgence may be achieved if the translator is aware of the anthropological constituents of his target readers. This task enables the translator to bring about a negotiation between his own experience and the response of the target readers to it. The thought process of the target readers may be reshaped and reconstructed by the translator if they are not well aware of their own way of thinking and perception. In this way, translation gets every possible chance to be used as an apparatus or tool in the hands of the translator to misinform and mislead the target readers and lead them to the trap of subjugation to misconception about the text.

True, translation is remarkably a political act as it can play a significant role in creating new political and cultural stereotypes and act in shaping and reshaping the disposition of the target readers. It is true in the case of books of theology. If examined from the colonial

perspective, it is also found that in this subcontinent the act of translation was done as a gateway to the local epistemology and ultimate colonial desire to subjugate the natives. Sherry Simon and Paul St-Pierre, in the introduction to their book *Changing the Terms: Translation in the Postcolonial Era* put forth that "translation becomes an instrument of power, an Orientalizing tool, in colonial context, both in relation to translation from English into the native languages and the other way around" (Craciun 85). The colonizers' dialogic negotiation with the local texts enabled them to catch hold of the cultural realities and exploit it in their own favor, by shaping and reshaping the minds of the natives through the continuous process of generating signified different from signifiers and causing the death of the original authors. This is analogous with the process of Otherizing, deculturizing and finally alienating the natives from their own epistemology. In the same vein, the task of translation was taken up as a colonial project by the British colonizers in this subcontinent in particular. Shashi Tharoor, in his *An Era of Darkness: The British Empire in India* (2016), overtly declares that "colonialism as itself a cultural and was produced by it; in certain important ways, knowledge was what colonialism all about" (122). European colonizers very deliberately tended to translate the natives into subjects, local law into terms, local system into fluidity, indiscipline and chaos. For doing this, they targeted the epistemic and institutional materials of the natives, for example, theology, books of history, technology, education system, literary texts and the 'cult of rituals'. Access to these narratives comfortably as well as deliberately was required for taking the country in their grip with a view to ruling over it. And proper understanding about a nation usually helps the colonizers exercise hegemony upon it.

In this sub-continent, William Jones set up Asiatic Society and introduced the study of comparative linguistics but deliberately preserved the hegemonic status of English. The British rulers got Shastra translated from Sanskrit to English so that they could discover the nuances and pitfalls of our political, cultural and linguistic realities and branding the local culture and languages as inferior they defined their own culture and language as superior and invited the natives to take up the "White man's Burden'. Besides, for enslaving the natives they took resort to replicating local epistemology with their own knowledge. But the Persian and Sanskrit languages were inscrutable to them. So, they needed the translated version of the local texts in their own language. Warren Hastings introduced Punditocracy by appointing eleven Brahmin pundits to translate the ancient books of ethics and scriptures from Sanskrit into English with a view to exercising intellectual hegemony upon the natives. He became successful in turning translation into an apparatus of understanding the local epistemology and in it placing their own knowledge. In connection with this project of Warren Hastings, William Jones who arrived at Calcutta in 1783 as a junior judge at the Supreme Court set up by the Company learnt Persian and Sanskrit languages from the local Pundits and studied ancient Indian texts extensively on law, philosophy, religion, politics, morality, arithmetic, medicine and other sciences. Many other English men shared their interest and started learning local languages. William Jones established Asiatic Society in 1797 with a view to making the epistemology of India available to the British in their own language. He did not want to depend on local pundits for knowing the local tradition. In his words, as we find in Tharoor's *An Era of Darkness* (2016), "I can no longer bear to be at the Mercy of our pundits who deal out Hindu Law as they please, and make it at reasonable rates, when they cannot find it readymade"(126). Consequently, old neglected Shastric texts were translated into English language and under

political, cultural and theological subterfuges the colonial rulers deliberately imposed control upon the natives. In addition, they used this apparatus to divide the Indians and set against each other.

Actually, translated texts in the hands of the hegemonic rulers very often could be used as a tool or apparatus to give the natives a concocted impression that local epistemology in all possible ways is not equivalent to the imported discourse. It is undeniably true that translation creates new meanings and interpretations of the source texts. This newness may not be identical to the objective of the target texts. So, the local narratives can be marginalized deliberately and an artificial vacuum is created and there the colonizers usually place their own texts and fortify their hegemonic status. However, Jones' Asiatic Society and its journal *Asiatick Researches* created a lot of impetus among the contemporary British officers to know the local cultures and realities through translation and this knowledge helped them in their administration. Even if English language could translate the knowledge of India, it fatally failed to hold its impulsive spirit and it is one of the fatal drawbacks of the translation of local texts into English.

In this connection, Raja Rao, in the Preface to his *Kanthapura,* rightly asserts that English is the language of intellect, not emotion. True, local languages of India are teeming with emotion. So, when local texts were translated into English they, of course, have the risk of failing to bridge the gap between the signifier [source text] and signified [target text] and losing their impulsive tone and becoming mechanical and being devoid of the enthusiasm of the typical life of the natives. Hence, translated texts arguably evoke suspicion because they have every possible chance to be intertextualised by the translator's hegemonic disposition, point of view, attitudes and voice and thus, they no more become solely an adaptation of the source text; it may rather turn into a new text. It happens because it may be dictated by the translator's 'will to power' and rule the conscious of the target readers. But it is undeniable that translation possesses the power of both transformation and resistance. During the colonial era in this subcontinent, the colonizers' project was to transform the natives into subjects, not citizens. European countries were made nation-states and the people there grew into citizens. True, a citizen refers to an entity defined by the constitution of a nation who has rights and who is marked for a developed sense of nationhood. But a subject is enslaved because his conscious is not allowed to develop independently and question about the role of the colonizers who claim solely to be their masters. Relation between a master and his subject is determined by the terms 'domination' and 'submission'. But the relationship between a nation state and its citizens is defined by the space which ensures a congenial environment of negotiations and dialogues. In his book *Dominance without Hegemony* Ranajit Guha has mentioned how the British rulers exercised every possible strategy to transform the natives of this subcontinent into subjects by creating situations in their favor so that the natives might take up British education and be transformed into an ambivalent self because education was one of the chief determinants working effectively for the implementation of this project. And as a part of their project of exercising dominance upon the people here without hegemony, they fell upon Indian Shastra and got them translated into their languages so that they could rule the conscious of the people and exercise dominance upon their historiography. According to Ranajit Guha, as he quotes Stuart Mill, it is a project of "reducing Indian History to a "portion of the British History" (83). Even under the stimulus of Western education the process of nationalism got retarded and sometimes weakened.

Again, translation serves as a translingual vector of meaning and

> … it is only through translation efforts, processes, and types, however defined, that elements of one culture become available to Other, along with those specificities that ultimately constitute the identity of the culture and its mark of difference from the Other. (Oju 4).

So, translation has the power of bringing about 'cross-cultural accommodation' and at the same time 'cultural cohesion'. But at the same time, in this process of cohesion local culture faces the risk of appropriation or abrogation. It has a positive effect, too. Through this process of intersectionality both the cultures find a fertile ground on which both of them enrich themselves through dialogues and negotiations.

It is true that translation brings about amalgamation among different cultures and minds. But in this job care and sincerity are essential lest local texts should be marginalized and the translated foreign texts should occupy the center of local epistemology. In Bangladesh, though not exclusively, there exists a disposition that as soon as a European or American literary text in English language wins an international prize or tops the list of the Best Sellers, translators with haste and interest translate it into Bangla. But the speed and impulse that a foreign book receives are not usually invested for translating a local text from Bangla into a lingua franca with a view to taking it to the international readership. A huge bulk of seminal writings are available in the field of art and literature of Bangladesh. But only a very insignificant number of texts are translated into English, let alone into French or Portuguese. Even our classics suffer terribly from an acute scarcity of translation into English let alone into French or Portuguese or other lingua franca for the international readership. Translation of the local texts into English or a lingua franca has recently started receiving a significant amount of interest and attention. But it is still unremarkable in quantity in comparison with the translation available in Bangla though some are doing this laudable job with great enthusiasm and success. Fakrul Alam has already received immense accolade by translating a considerable quantity of the literary works of Tagore, Jivanananda Das, Kazi Nazrul Islam and Mir Mosharraf Hossain from Bangla to English for international readership. His *Jibananada Das: Selected Poems with an Introduction, Chronology, and Glossary* published by UPL in 1999 has already achieved immense appreciation for his great job of taking a Bengali modern poet with all his ability to the international readership. He translates Das's poems so that the lovers of poetry outside the Bangla-speaking world may have a taste of richness of them. Regarding Alam's competence Nuruzzaman asserts, "Alam has tried to build a bridge between the source poet and the target readers being loyal to the original as well as to introduce the richness of the source poet" (73). He has also translated a huge number of poems of Rabindranath Tagore into English. His translation of great Bangla epic fiction *Bishad Shindhu* of Mir Mosharraf Hossain is a monumental work highlighting the linguistic, socio-political realities and aesthetics of 19th century Muslim community of the subcontinent. Alam's translation of Bangabandhu's *Unfinished Memoir* into English receives international accolade. Professor Niaz Zaman, Kaiser Haque and a few others are translating the classics of the literature of Bangladesh. Besides, Mashrur Arefin, G. H. Habib and a host of creative translators are translating foreign texts into Bangla for Bangladeshi readership. Khaliquzzaman Elias has occupied a dignified position among a bunch of renowned Bangladeshi translators who have widely translated African and

Latin American fictions and short stories into Bangla. Mashrur Arefin deserves accolade for his translation of world literature for Bangladeshi readership. Besides, at present a good number of translators translate world literature into Bangla. Some universities have launched courses on translation studies here. Some universities are launching translation centers to bring about a nexus between world literature and Bangladeshi literature. For example, University of Liberal Arts, Bangladesh launched **Dhaka Translation Centre** (DTC) in 2014 with a view to bringing about 'a greater exchange with contemporary world literature'. For the last few years **Dhaka Translation Fest** has been providing a unique platform on which translators from many countries gather and their interactions contribute to the acceleration of the work of translation and at the same time it promotes bilingualism and multilingualism on the basis of negotiations and dialogues between local and international academics and professionals.

Translation enables local texts to go to the international readership and thus acquaint the readers with their aesthetics, cultural realities, identity and historiography in the form of dialogues. Besides, to be authentic in tone and voice translators cannot but seriously think of the location of the texts both synchronically and diachronically. Sometimes it is found that translators are arguably more interested in old classics of local literature than in the present day literary texts. In Bangladesh translation from English to Bangla is found more in quantity than translation from Bangla to English or French or German or Portuguese language. There exists the literature of the ethnic people in ethnic languages in all the countries of the world. Significant interests in translating ethnic literature into Bangla and English with a view to bringing it into the mainstream literature and to the interest of the international readership are to be invested. Actually, it is undeniable that translation of the local texts into a lingua franca for the international readership will obviously work to construct a counter discourse to the enterprises of linguistic and cultural imperialism of the first world narratives.

It is true that translation enables a nation to be comprehensible to the other people who do not speak its language. So, this interdisciplinary study requires an epistemic framework so that it can open up an endless horizon of knowing one another and at the same time ensure individuality. For this job, like any other country, Bangladesh, too, requires more competent translators, relevant initiatives and incentives to translate the local texts belonging to both the past and the present times in order to take its episteme and aesthetics both synchronically and diachronically to the acquaintances of the international readership. While doing this job there lies immense risk of deviating far or less from the tone and voice of the source texts because translation is also a process of remaking, reshaping, rewriting and reconstructing. So, to a translator the act of translation obviously appears to be a commitment to grapple not only with the target language but also with the target culture, ideology, language, aesthetics and power-structure. Even if it is a difficult task to accomplish these jobs, a translator's capability to bring about dialogues with the source texts can help him significantly transcend the obstacles that bar the process of translation. As translation is capable of wielding enormous power in "constructing representations of foreign cultures" and dehistoricizing the cultural heritage and aesthetics to which the source texts belong, proper acumen is to be exhibited in selection of the texts for translation (Venuti 67). Besides, a standard and institutionalized translation strategy is to be formulated and maintained to bring about a uniformed process of dialogues and synthesis among cultures in the present era of internationalization and globalism. Again, through translation the whole universe can be peeped up because "A good translation is like a

pane of glass" (Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* 1). After all, it is conspicuously undeniable that translation itself is an international language, serving as a singular platform where heterogeneity tends to embrace the generosity and broadness of homogeneity and ensures an atmosphere of mutual comprehensibility and cosmopolitanism.

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