

## ***The Need for a 'National Translation Theory' in the Pakistani Academic Discourse***

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### **Abstract**

*Dr. Nighat Shakur's statistical research in the 2014 issue of Pakistan Journal of Language and Translation Studies (PJLTS) highlights a major concern of the depletion of regional/local languages of Pakistan. The reason for the depletion is due to the world (including Pakistani academic discourse) moving forward with globalization and adopting English as the lingua franca. With this concern in mind, a lingual-literary theory is required that provides practical solutions towards keeping the Pakistani (national) and its regional cultural richness intact. This can be helpful in order to keep pace with the 'globalizing' world – that is our only option. But we need to hold on to our roots and pride as an independent Pakistani identity and we need to move beyond the 200-year colonial legacy. The paper explores the need for a 'National Translation Theory' which provides an overview of how regional/local languages, literature/s, and cultural knowledge/s need to be disseminated in other languages (particularly English as lingua franca) while keeping the sense and essence of nationalistic pride intact. Inversely, other languages, literature/s, and cultural knowledge/s need to be translated into the local/regional languages of Pakistan to promote the positive globalization from a transcultural perspective. Both these attempts then need to be practiced in the academic discourse to promote its practicality. The key research questions for this study include: How are we still suffering from the colonial identity crisis? What are the good literary and translation examples that could serve as a precursor for developing such a theory? What should be the policies/steps (monetary, challenges, government support etc.) that can frame such a theory?*

**Keywords:** Pakistan Academia, Post-Colonial Identity, Globalization, Translation Theory, Cultural Knowledge

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### **Introduction and Theoretical Framework**

In the 2014 issue of Pakistan Journal of Language and Translation Studies, Dr. Nighat Shakur highlights a

statistical research of depleting local/regional languages of Pakistan. The figures in her research show many languages becoming extinct and some close to extinction. The depletion/extinction of such regional

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languages is an effect, caused by the adoption of English language as the Lingua Franca. As globalization moves forward in the 21st Century, it is no wonder that the current times require the adoption of English as a necessary step to follow through with. We cannot negate the importance of English language in this 'Globalizing World', rather we need to accept it as the lingua franca in order to call ourselves 'Globalized'. This adoption of English language as the lingua franca is our only option nonetheless, but we need to hold on to our roots and our pride as an independent Pakistani identification and we need to move beyond the 200-year colonial hangover. To do this, what we need to do is to frame a lingual and literary theory on a national level that provides practical solutions towards keeping the Pakistani (including regional) cultural richness intact. The demand for the 'National Translation Theory' provides an overview of how local languages, literature, and cultural knowledge/s need to be disseminated in other languages (particularly English as lingua franca) while keeping the sense of nationalistic pride and essence intact. The nationalistic pride and essence have no doubt been subject of ambivalence and ambiguity due to the aforementioned 200-year colonization. The post-colonial efforts in academic and literary discourses is an effort to centralize the marginalized identities of the 'colonized'. For 200 years, within the colonial hegemony, the colonizers had forcefully imparted the identity of 'Other' upon the colonized/native masses. With time, this identity had been accepted bitterly by the

colonized/native masses. In the post-colonial era, the 'marginalized' natives are trying to put themselves back at the 'center'. To move beyond the 'marginalized' identity, which has left its permanent mark on the post-colonized masses towards the 'centralized' identity, which itself has become ambiguous and ambivalent is a difficult task. Hence, the post-colonized are stuck between two b i n a r i e s (Marginalization/Centralization) which serves as a notion to the identity crisis.

### **Analysis**

adopting to this notion of the colonization and moving beyond it, the theoretical framework of a 'National Translation Theory' can be looked into from the prospects of different theorists and their take on the translation processes. Muhammad Safeer Awan states that "A national literature evolves not only within cultural confines of a nation, but also as a result of textual exchange and cultural interactions across geographical boundaries" (Awan 10). Awan's statement compliments Walter Benjamin's view that the translation process is a continuation of literary tradition from one culture/language to other culture/language. He says "Since a translation comes later than the original, and since the important works of world literature never find their chosen translators at the time of their origin, their translation marks their stage of continued life" (Benjamin 1968). Contrary to this belief, Victor

Hugo (qtd. in Lefevere) believes that “When you offer a translation to a nation, that nation will almost always look on the translation as an act of violence against itself” (Lefevere 2). These two binary oppositions when connected to the globalization effect as stated by Anthony Pym can work in a suitable way to theorize and practically apply the 'National Translation Theory' to disseminate the true essence of a Pakistani identity. Pym states that “Globalization is neither the friend nor the foe of translation. It is quite simply changing many of the situations in which translation is called upon to operate” (Pym 747). From these theoretical situations/viewpoints, the most suitable one to apply for developing such a theory is to take the notion of 'Globalization' subjectively. Pym's notion needs to be taken subjectively from the perspective of keeping the Pakistani nationalistic pride at the 'center' – meaning that we need to start at the 'center', rather than trying to (re)achieve it after it was lost due to the historical colonization. It needs to be noted that the translation process from Urdu to English should contain the cultural richness through the use of footnotes/explanatory notes/explicitation by allowing objective inclusion of national/regional references to the original (source) language culture.

The practicality of developing and then adopting such a theory requires real efforts that is while moving with the 'world', we certainly need to view globalization through the 21st-century practicality. Meaning that we need to look at how globalization is happening

around us. Globalization itself is a monetary establishment. Knowledge, internet databases, exchanges, trade, languages, tourism, immigration/migration have become commodities. Then how can 'translations' remain behind? On this question, the Pakistan Academy of Letters has intimated that the academic efforts to increase the quality of translation practices will be achieved once there is an increase in investments. Not only this but Pym also suggests that for a translation authority/department to take charge of the academic and literary system for promoting their activities (i.e. translation), the production of such activities needs to take place at the centre of the country's political and academic circle (Pym 749).

Another approach within the theoretical development of 'National Translation Theory' is the idea of loss/gain. This concept in translation will always be there – but within this kind of theory, the objective should be inclined towards 'gain': Gain of wider perspectives, increase in quality of knowledge and deeper insights towards how other cultures get preserved in their original languages and literature/s. This theory should not remain one-sided, in fact, it needs to be practiced and promoted as a two-way process. Other languages, literature/s, and cultures need to be translated into the local and regional languages of Pakistan. This will promote the positive globalization from a humanitarian and transculturation perspective, as Benjamin argues in terms of moving

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knowledge forward through cultures (Benjamin 1968). Rather than just trying to keep alive the regional languages by translating them to the lingua franca (as a need to move with the globalized world), other texts (from other foreign languages) need to be translated into the local and regional languages. This can only be achieved when we start treating the other texts as a door, which will open avenues to other cultures and knowledge to promote cultural harmony (instead of treating them as an act of violence highlighted by Hugo). I disagree with Hugo's statement because if the translation is handled with a proper systematized and nationalistic theory that treats the words, meanings, connotations with such enthusiasm, then the essence of the local cultures will remain intact to a large extent. This way, an intercultural harmony can be created, not to mention, a rejuvenation of the depleting languages will become faster and safer. This way the native speakers will be treated as treasurers of cultures that these languages hold. Similarly, we need government support on a national and international level. There needs to be a monetary promotion by using mass media as a tool for advertising such literary and academic efforts. The process of such a framework can begin to bring back the concept of 'centralization', particularly in the sense that it will objectively acknowledge the colonial reality, and we will begin the efforts from a new 'centre', rather than trying to regain the old one. Transferring the knowledge from one generation to the next within the same country/regional areas will

give a new perspective to the historical understanding of the post-colonial discourse.

One example that keeps the nationalistic pride intact, is by rewriting through an agenda that omits certain words that connote the 'Colonized' as the 'Other'. An example of this agenda can be experienced in *First Love and Last Love*. Author James Grant writes:

The mutineers burned down a camp and murdered officers, ladies and children, literally in the presence of a superior force of European soldiers; superior considered in a moral sense. (Grant 134-135)

This sentence is translated by Ganga Parsad Verma as follows:

باغیوں نے ایک پڑاؤ کا پڑاؤ جلا دیا۔ اپنے افسروں، ان کی بیویوں، لڑکیوں اور لڑکوں کو یورپین افسروں کی موجودگی میں مار ڈالا۔ (Verma 133)

In this translation practice, the entire notion of the 'Moral Superiority' of the colonizers has been omitted. It is important to note that the historical element is still present as history has not been distorted even if it has been fictionally presented in the novel. Nonetheless, the local nationalistic pride has been kept intact in the translated sentence.

From Urdu to English, such nationalistic essence can be seen in Tahira Naqvi's translation of Saadat Hassan Manto's *Toba Tek Singh*. Manto Writes:

بٹوارے کے دو تین سال بعد پاکستان اور ہندوستان کی حکومتوں کو خیال آیا کہ اخلاقی قیدیوں کی طرح پاگلوں کا تبادلہ بھی ہونا چاہئے یعنی جو مسلمان پاگل، ہندوستان کے پاگل خانوں میں ہیں انہیں پاکستان پہنچادیا جائے اور جو ہندو اور سکھ پاکستان کے پاگل خانوں میں ہیں انہیں ہندوستان کے حوالے کر دیا جائے۔  
(Manto)

### **Naqvi translates it as:**

Two or three years after the Partition, it occurred to the governments of India and Pakistan that along with the transfer of the civilian prisoners, a transfer of the inmates of the lunatic asylums should also be made. In other words, Muslim lunatics from Indian institutions should be sent over to Pakistan, and Hindu and Sikh lunatics from Pakistani asylums should be allowed to go to India. (Manto & Naqvi)

In the last line, Naqvi becomes nationalistic in her approach, that the identity of Pakistan is a birthright that should be given to even the lunatics who belong to Pakistan. She writes that Muslim lunatics “Should” be sent over to Pakistan, whereas Hindu and Sikh lunatics should be “allowed” to go to India. Naqvi keeps intact a nationalistic pride, that Muslim lunatics have more of a political right to return to Pakistan and the Hindu and Sikh should be able to return to India through proper approvals.

### **Conclusions**

Realistically, this type of theory will not be constructed overnight. It is and will be a lengthy and tiresome

process to get the right kind of support to frame it into a proper and pragmatic theory. This process can certainly never remain an individual effort – It needs to be collective, holistic and more systematized. Also, on the upfront, this approach may appear idealistic – but to strive for idealism yields something in return, and in our academic circle, something is definitely better than nothing.

At the end I would quote Alok Bhalla's statement “A translator lives amongst words which have a human voice and a social purpose; a translator is a person who invites us to establish a relationship with a culture and a community...” (Bhalla 5). This serves as a strong concluding statement for promoting the regional/local social purpose of languages through the human voices (i.e. the translators) who need to promote nationalistic pride through other foreign languages and vice versa.

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