

The Interplay of Invisibility and Appropriation in the Translated Text of Oscar Wilde's Play

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Abstract

This paper explores the appropriation process in the classical Urdu translation of Oscar Wilde's play, particularly around the concept of invisibility. Appropriation essentially refers to the act of taking ownership of the original text and elevating target culture and language. The research explores how appropriation influences translation, which often presents itself at various levels, including the removal of words, phrases, sentences, expressions, the central message of the original, and even the presence of the translators themselves. The source and target texts were meta-textually analyzed in order to assess how appropriation gives rise to invisibility. Antoine Berman's model of textual deformation formed the basis for identifying elements of appropriation. Additionally, Eugene Nida's principles of correspondence, particularly formal and dynamic equivalence, were applied to explain translation extracts at the word and sentence levels. Gerard Genette's concept of paratext helped to examine promotional materials, reviews, prefaces, and copyright information in both the source and target texts. The analysis shows that translators have used different deforming strategies of omission, rationalization, clarification, ennoblement, expansion, quantitative impoverishment, adjustments, and destruction of the original's structure. The findings indicate that the combined forces of invisibility and appropriation often result in the domestication of the source text, causing shifts in its linguistic and cultural nuances. This study theorizes different concepts in the field of translation studies and provides an angle to the translators to improve the process of translation.

Keywords: Appropriation, Invisibility, Deformation, Domestication, Foreignization

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Introduction

Language plays the most vital role in the translation process. It is also an element through which cultural, historical, political, social, and religious ideologies converge under the power of centrifugal and communicative forces. Language wields the power of expression, facilitating not only communication within a single social group but also enabling dialogue across diverse communities. In this context, Crystal (1987) suggests that language connects thoughts that can be experienced through sound, touch, and vision using symbols, letters, and signs. Essentially, language provides a structured system that allows individuals to share their ideas and emotions with others. Beyond its functional role, language also carries cultural practices and traditions—not only within specific communities but across a wide spectrum of global contexts. Considering language and cultural nuances as important aspects in the process of translation, there is always a possibility that appropriation and invisibility deforms the translation and original meaning remains hidden. Making it the focal point, this study manages to understand those nuances and provides a way forward to the translators to make the process of translation a more transparent one that reveals all the dots of the original texts.

In addition to this, translation emerges as the principal mechanism for transmitting ideas, bridging linguistic and cultural divides. This process may take the form of written texts or oral exchanges, enabling communication from one cultural and linguistic context to another. In such scenarios, speakers of different languages often strive to connect by identifying similarities and differences between their languages. Translation, therefore, involves the interpretation of language to understand and communicate the intended meaning of a text, be it oral or written. The process is both synchronic (within the same historical context) and diachronic (across different historical periods), and thus dynamic and multifaceted. In both the scenarios, the process of translation needs a comprehensive study considering appropriation, invisibility, domestication, and foreignization as the modifiers of this process.

Furthermore, a translator maintains a constant dialogic interaction with the source text, a process that is crucial for gaining a meaningful understanding and accurate interpretation. This dialogic relationship forms the basis for assimilation and incorporation of the text's essence. However, when the translator disengages prematurely from this interaction, the connection weakens, leading to the appropriation of the source text rather than its faithful representation. Translation,

at its core, is a creative act aimed at creating a work that not only respects the original but also adds value to it by making it accessible to monolingual audiences. The fidelity of the translation to the original text determines its ability to preserve the original's value and authenticity. It becomes challenging in literary translation to represent and transfer the aesthetic nature of the source culture to the target culture. Studying the modifiers of translation process in the Urdu translation of Oscar Wilde's plays gives a wider canvas to understand the cultural and linguistic nuances of Britain and the Subcontinent. Taking this as a lead, Ma (2009) identifies that literary translation relies on aesthetic value representation so that it translates the emotional and intellectual depth of the source text. It depends greatly on human artistry; that is, both emotional profundity and intellectual resonance infuse translation. Only when translation faithfully renders the artistic and expressive elements of the source language does it validate the original work and allow its universal appreciation across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

❖ **Notions of Invisibility and Appropriation**

The concept of appropriation in translation is intrinsically linked to the paradigms of domestication and foreignization, reflecting the interplay between language, culture, and society. Language, as a profound expression of human culture, carries the essence of its origins and serves as a unique medium of communication. Despite extensive studies on linguistic families and their development, key questions about the nature and evolution of language remain unresolved. This never-ending mystery is thus built into the culture, where any language will represent its distinct identity due to the tradition of that country's linguistic tradition. Under that very rubric, the role of a translator tends toward dominance in his mother-tongue culture, exercising it through some sort of metonymic dominance on source culture, replanting the source work into target culture, almost usually modifying the original and doing so at the expense of all that was original concerning its history and culture. This process, according to Asghar (2015), causes cultural and linguistic erosion. Lawrence Venuti (1995) further develops this by using the concept of translator invisibility.

Discussing this further, translator invisibility is a phenomenon whereby translators alter a source text to make it fluently written in the target language. Such alterations range from changing individual words and phrases to altering sentences and even changing the author's intended message. While these changes may help make the text readable and smooth for the monolingual reader, they often remove crucial

parts of the original text, like its linguistic complexity, cultural richness, and the voice of the author. It means that a translation made this way, even if it is easy to read, covers up the authenticity of the original source material. The reader may be unaware of these transformations; they are blind to layers of meaning and cultural nuances that have been lost. Translation also acts as a force for globalization, creating a common ground of diverse languages and cultures. Yet, this convergence can be a source of tension, as one culture, either the source or the target, overshadows the other.

This balance risks leaving the cultural core of the source text in the shadows or alienating the target audience from their own linguistic norms. To overcome such difficulties, translators use principles that balance the needs of both the source and target cultures. These principles are meant to promote mutual understanding and respect so that cultures can enrich one another without losing their identities. Translation studies is a very young discipline, which came into prominence in the latter half of the 20th century. Its development has been a continuous process of refinement of its guiding principles. This transitional phase requires ongoing discussion to discuss challenges such as cultural and linguistic appropriation.

These discussions are necessary to striking a balance in translation to translate fairly and represent the voice of the original author and the translator, ensuring that the source text and the translator remain visible. Translation should win neither to diminish either the source nor target language.

Translation of a play is different from other genres of literature, as plays are intended not only to be read but also to be performed. A translator must render the text to support dramatic performance, thus allowing actors effectively to collaborate with the playwright's vision in the target language (Carlson, 1964). The language of the play incorporates pragmatic and situational nuances of real-life conversations, which must be preserved to maintain the integrity of the original text. Failure to assimilate these features leads to the appropriation of the source text and the invisibility of the original author. Appropriation may involve changes in lexicogrammatical elements, semantics, cohesion, syntax, figurative language, idioms, and the author's message, creating barriers to appreciating the original work's cultural and linguistic essence. This study investigates instances of cultural and linguistic appropriation in Urdu translation of Oscar Wilde's selected play, focusing on how

these appropriations contribute to invisibility and domestication, while evaluating the translations' ability to retain the play' original impact.

This study explores appropriation as a lens to analyze the contrasts and parallels between source and target cultures and languages, emphasizing translation concepts like influence, foreignization, domestication, intertextuality, and transculturation. Appropriation functions through the adaptation and revision of foreign literary works to align with the ideological, cultural, and narrative frameworks of the target culture. However, this process often reconstructs the text while neglecting the original author's message. By examining the strategies employed in translating Oscar Wilde's play, this research aims to uncover the tendencies shaping the translation process. The findings contribute to establishing essential benchmarks for future translators, particularly in preserving the integrity and performative essence of dramatic texts during translation.

Review of the Literature

❖ Idea of Translation

Translation has historically played a pivotal role in bridging languages and cultures, with its origins tracing back to ancient civilizations (Asghar, 2014). The term "translation" derives from the Latin word *translātiōnem*, which emerged in the 14th century carrying the meaning to carry across, to bring across, to remove to heaven, and to transfer a saint's relics to a new place. Its etymology is also linked to the Greek word *μετάφρασις*, meaning speaking across (Asghar, 2014). Venuti (1995) explains translation as a process, in which translator through interpretation keep replaces text of source text with the text of target language. This makes the role of translator important.

❖ Domestication and Appropriation

The idea of appropriation works as a modifier in the process of translation, which takes the power from the underlying concepts of domestication. In this context. Munday (2009) examines the various dimensions of translation. He distinguishes between written translation and oral interpretation and describes translation as an academic discipline, a product, and a process. The concept of "sense-for-sense" translation prioritizes the preservation of the original author's message in the target text, relegating the word-for-word approach to secondary importance. However, the translator's interpretation plays a significant role in this process. Once s/he gives

importance to target text, it is labelled with domestication; however, valuing source text leads to foreignization. Taking any of these the core of translation process, effective interlingual translation requires cultural sensitivity to ensure that the source culture is visible to target readers. Failure to achieve this balance risks misinterpretation and appropriation, leading to the erasure of the source culture and language. Furthermore, Munday (2008) defines intersemiotic translation where the source is translated into another medium - music, film, or paint. This form of translation calls for creativity and demands cultural sensitivity and linguistics to avoid misappropriation. The worst mistake in intersemiotic translation is the one that removes the original meaning; for this reason, misappropriation is the most important struggle in such a transformation.

Apart from this discussion, appropriation has been a crucial focus across different forms of literature, from prose from the medieval period to the present, which is relevant to present study as well. Considering its importance, Nelson (2003) noted that scholars in Medieval Europe focused on the retrieval of original texts and studied the influence of such original works on contemporary ones. While influence is perceived to be less subjective, appropriation is viewed as a motivated and subjective act. Borrowing, Nelson argues, more closely aligns with influence, but it lacks reciprocity between the original and the borrower. Postcolonial theories further elaborate on the dynamics of appropriation. Parry (1987) critiques postcolonial theorists for framing the colonized as powerless victims while assigning absolute authority to imperial forces. She contests that weaker cultures often resist dominant agendas through appropriation, which paradoxically mimics the same act of dominance they resist, blurring distinctions between the two.

Similarly, Bhabha (1994) expands on this by introducing the concept of “colonial mimicry,” describing it as ambivalent yet inseparable from colonialism since mimicry replicates the original. The colonial aspect is interestingly different in this study as the translators are trying to resist the target culture and linguistic expression in translation. This resistance and conflict are well explained by Pratt (1992). He introduces the notion of a “space of colonial encounter,” where dominant and subordinate cultures interact under conditions of inequality, coercion, and conflict. Within this space, transculturation occurs, often marginalizing and subordinating weaker cultures during the transmission of material. However, in the present study this marginalization is contrary as the colonized culture and language is resisting for its survival through the process of translation.

❖ Nexus of Appropriation and Invisibility

Translation, according to André Lefevere (1990), is a form of rewriting that is radically ideological in nature and manipulates literature to serve specific functions in society. From the cultural turn in translation studies, as initiated by Lefevere and others, translation is no longer just about linguistic transfer but an intercultural act of communication that is imbued with power and ideology. This perspective positions the translator as both a mediator and an interventionist, whose choices can shape literary innovation or impose constraints on the source text. Translation, therefore, is never neutral; it responds to power structures, reflecting manipulation and subversion in varying degrees. Lawrence Venuti's (1995, 1998) theory of translator invisibility underscores this power dynamic, revealing how translators often render their work invisible to ensure fluency for the target audience.

However, as Venuti and Tymoczko (2010) point out, foreignization and domestication strategies have different impacts upon dominant and minority cultures. For example, whereas it may challenge cultural hegemony in dominant cultures, foreignization may work against subaltern cultures fighting for their identity against cultural impositions of language. "The impact of translational strategies is always shaped by their socio-cultural context, with ideologically significant implications" Hatim and Mason (1997). This research builds on such frameworks to examine the appropriation of Oscar Wilde's play in their Urdu translations. Following the structures used by Asghar (2014) in his study of Iqbal's poetry, this research explores how appropriation in a minor culture like Urdu often results in resistance, achieved by undermining the original text while maintaining fluency for target readers.

Historically, translation into Urdu gained momentum during British colonization and peaked in the 20th century, fostering Urdu prose development through English and French literary influences (Askari, 2004). Early Urdu translations prioritized delivering the story's plot over preserving its creative and cultural essence. Modern scholars like Asghar (2017) continue to stress the importance of translation in fostering cross-cultural understanding, particularly in translating Urdu literature into English, where cultural representation remains paramount.

Appropriation, as a concept, offers multiple dimensions for analysis. In translation studies, it enables scholars to examine English-Urdu translations through a tailored framework. Such frameworks facilitate the comparative analysis of source and target

texts, allowing researchers to uncover cultural, linguistic, and ideological shifts that occur during translation. This study applies these principles to provide insights into the interplay between appropriation and invisibility in translating Wilde's works, offering potential advancements for translation practices and theories.

Method and Materials

Translation Studies, as an interdisciplinary field, enables researchers to analyze translation at both micro and macro levels. At the micro level, this study focuses on the textual analysis of source and target texts to explore linguistic elements at the word and sentence levels. At the macro level, the socio-cultural aspects of the source and target languages are examined meta-textually to understand their meanings within broader contexts. A tailored framework has been employed to integrate these two levels of analysis. These two levels help to mitigate the limitations of qualitative study. The tailored framework under meta-textual analysis works around these two levels to highlight all the aspects of source and target texts. Considering it one of the widely read classical plays in the genre of comedy, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, as the core text of this study, the sanctity of both translated and translation is preserved. Due to limitations of paper, few chunks are chosen out of many for the ease of readers.

❖ Data Collection

The source and target texts were sourced from online archives and libraries. The English texts were accessed through the British Library (<https://www.bl.uk/>), while the Urdu translation was obtained from Rekhta (<https://www.rekhta.org/>). Both texts are in the public domain and readily available for analysis.

This study examines the Urdu translations of Oscar Wilde's play, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), through a theoretical framework emphasizing invisibility and appropriation. By analyzing these translations, the research identifies tendencies that contribute to appropriation. The study aims to expand existing theories on translating plays and other literary texts into Urdu. Although the study focuses on the translation by Molvi Syed Tamkeen Kazmi, Molvi Muhammad Abdul Munim Saeedi (*The Importance of Being Earnest*, 1928), it limits the analysis to specific parts of the play that exhibit deforming tendencies in the process of translation, each showcasing translational strategies marked by appropriation and invisibility.

❖ Theoretical Framework

A key component of this study is Venuti's concept of invisibility, which underscores the ideological forces behind translation. Venuti (1995) describes invisibility as the translator's attempt to produce a fluent, transparent text, often resulting in the domestication of the source text. Domestication, as defined by Schleiermacher (1813/2004), involves moving the original author toward the target culture to ensure ease for the reader, but it often dislocates the linguistic and cultural elements of the source text. This study critically evaluates domestication in Wilde's Urdu translations and its role in appropriation. In contrast, foreignization emphasizes preserving the cultural and linguistic distinctiveness of the source text. It "moves the reader toward the original writer," retaining the foreign elements that challenge the target culture (Venuti, 1995). Schleiermacher views foreignization as a strategy that ensures fidelity to the source author's intent, even at the cost of readability in the target culture.

Furthermore, Nida's (1964) concepts of formal and dynamic equivalence also guide this study. Formal equivalence focuses on preserving the original text's form and content, while dynamic equivalence emphasizes natural expression in the target language to ensure a similar impact on readers. West (1932) further explains equivalence as a "debt" that translators repay not with exact currency but with equivalent value. As Rossetti (1874) notes, translation inevitably involves interpretation, making it a form of direct commentary on the source text. One of the relevant aspects in the framework is initial and final pages of ST and TT, which also help to understand the invisibility and appropriation in terms of domestication and foreignization. To study the pages, paratext (Genette, 1997) helps to understand the changes that occurred in the process of translation which highlight invisibility and appropriation.

❖ Procedure of Analysis

The researchers meticulously examined each line of the source and target texts, identifying instances of invisibility and appropriation. Antoine Berman's deforming tendencies (2004) were applied to decode the texts meta-textually, while the tailored framework guided analysis from micro to macro levels. This dual-level analysis provided a comprehensive understanding of the translators' strategies and their cultural implications. In the present study, the researcher has analyzed each word of ST and settled the corresponding equivalent in TT. By doing this, I have identified the way translators have altered the value of words of original text at

micro level. To identify the equivalent effect, I have used the dictionary of Urdu language - Feroz-ul-Lugat (Feruzuddin, 2010); and for English language, I have used Oxford Dictionary of English (Stevenson, 2010).

Analysis

The researchers analyze the source and target texts using the tendencies outlined in the research design. Extracts from both texts are categorized under relevant tendencies and examined through meta-textual analysis. This process identifies how specific linguistic and cultural choices in the translations lead to invisibility and appropriation. By linking these tendencies with the resulting forms of invisibility, the analysis explores how linguistic and cultural dislocation facilitates domestication. Below are key examples illustrating the dynamics of foreignization and domestication in Wilde's play.

❖ Metatextual Analysis

Source Text	Target text
Algernon: I am sorry for that, for your sake. I don't play accurately – anyone can play accurately – but I play with wonderful expressions. Sentiment is my forte... I keep science of life. (Wilde, 1895, p. 114)	اگر تان: مجھے اس کا افسوس ہے، گو میں اصول کے مطابق نہیں بجا سکتا۔۔۔ جذبات کو اپنا مقصد اعظم سمجھتا ہوں۔۔۔ میں زندگی کے لیے علم کو ضروری سمجھتا ہوں۔ (Munim, 1928)

Comment

The original dialogue by Algernon is rich in puns and layered cultural expressions, which serve to critique Victorian societal norms while adding depth to his character. However, the Urdu translation fails to retain these subtleties, leading to a loss of

meaning and cultural nuance. The phrase "for your sake" suggests Algernon's mock regret for Lane's inability to hear his piano playing. This omission in the target text diminishes Algernon's sarcasm and shifts the focus from Lane's perspective to Algernon's inability to play accurately, altering the original tone of mock sympathy. In the source text, "forte" serves as a pun with dual meanings: as a musical direction to play loudly and as a metaphor for one's strength or skill. Algernon uses it ironically to highlight his exaggerated emotional expression while admitting his lack of accuracy. The translation renders "forte" as "مقتصدراً عظم", which does not convey either the pun or the intended irony. A closer equivalent, such as "مضبوط پہلو" or "مہارت", would have been more appropriate.

The translation of "don't play" as "بجاسکتا" rather than "بجاتا" introduces a syntactical shift that alters the original meaning. Instead of expressing Algernon's choice to prioritize expression over accuracy, the translation suggests an inability to play according to rules, which distorts the character's confident, ironic tone. Algernon's phrase "science of life" in the source text juxtaposes his methodical approach to life with his disregard for piano-playing accuracy.

This reflects Wilde's critique of Victorian society's obsession with formality over substance. The Urdu translation simplifies this phrase to "زندگی کے لیے علم", missing the nuanced cultural critique and the pun that emphasizes Algernon's prioritization of emotional expression over rigid rules.

The piano, a symbol of social refinement and status in Victorian culture, plays a crucial role in Wilde's critique of societal norms. Algernon's dismissal of accuracy in piano playing reflects Wilde's satire of society's preoccupation with appearances over authenticity. The translation fails to capture this cultural critique, leaving readers unaware of the piano's significance as a Victorian icon.

The translation misrepresents Algernon's speech, shifting the focus from his playful critique of societal norms to a simplistic expression of regret. This leads to the invisibility of Wilde's intended irony and cultural critique, creating a significant gap between the source and target texts.

Source Text	Target text
Jack: Well, you have been eating them all the time. (Wilde, 1895, p. 5)	جیک: یہ تو ابھی بات ہے تم خود تو جب سے کھا رہے ہو؟ (Munim, 1928, p. 8)

Comment

In the process of translation in the given text, the phrase all the time is rendered as "جب سے", maintaining formal equivalence. However, the translators altered the statement into a question by adding a question mark and using "خود تو". This change distorts Jack's assertion, shifting the tone and intent of the original text. The resulting translation creates invisibility by misrepresenting the original message, resisting the source text's linguistic structure, and allowing space for appropriation.

Source Text	Target text
Cecily (sweetly): Sugar? (Wilde, 1895, p. 36)	سلی: (ملامت کے ساتھ) شکریہ؟ (Munim, 1928, p. 74)

Comment

In this exchange, Cecily's tone of false sweetness, reflecting her subtle competition with Gwendolen, is translated as "ملامت کے ساتھ" (with reproach). The translators replaced the original tone of sweetness with regret or criticism, which does not settle the corresponding equivalent value and the intent remains omitted. This adjustment alters the character's subtle animosity, creating invisibility in the original emotional nuance and cultural expression.

Source Text	Target text
Algernon: Yes, but that does not account for the fact that your small Aunt Cecily, who lives at Tunbridge Wells, calls you her dear uncle. Come on, old boy, you had much better have the thing out at once. (Wilde, 1895, p. 7)	اگلی: مگر اس سے یہ بات صاف نہ ہوئی کہ تمہاری چھوٹی خالہ سلی جو ٹن بریج ویلس میں رہتے ہیں کیوں تمہیں اپنا چچا پکارتی ہے، اب پتا محال ہے فوراً حقیقت ظاہر کر دو۔ (Munim, 1928, p. 12)

Comment

The translation omits "old boy," a cultural phrase referencing camaraderie and familiarity, and replaces it with "اب بچنا محال ہے" (now escape is impossible), an expansion does not present in the original. This omission and addition dislocate the linguistic and cultural value of the source text, replacing Wilde's colloquial tone with localized dramatization. The translators' preference for target-culture readability leads to invisibility and appropriation.

Source Text	Target text
Jack: Yes, charming old lady she is too. I live at Tunbridge Wells. Just give it back to me. (Wilde, 1895, p. 6)	جیک: ہاں وہ ایک ہمدرد، شفیق، ضعیف عورت ہے جو ٹن برج ویلس رہتی ہے، اگلی! مجھے کیس دے دو۔ (Munim, 1928, p. 10)

Comment

The word "charming" is expanded into "ہمدرد" (sympathetic) and "شفیق" (affectionate), which are not in the original text. These additions represent ennoblement and shift the tone, making the original linguistic intent invisible. The translators' choices prioritize the target culture's linguistic preferences over fidelity to the source text, exemplifying cultural dislocation.

Source Text	Target text
Gwendolen: I am always smart! Am I not, Mr. Worthing? (Wilde, 1895, p. 10)	گوینڈولن: کیوں مسٹر ورڈنگ؟ (Munim, 1928, p. 18)

Comment

Gwendolen's self-praising comment - I am always smart is omitted in the target text, removing her characteristic tone of vanity and self-assurance. This omission disrupts the coherence of her dialogue and erases a defining trait of her personality.

The translators' focus on fluency for the target audience results in invisibility of the original text's intent and cultural significance.

Source Text	Target text
Scene Description: Morning-room in Algernon's flat in Half-Moon Street. The room is luxuriously and artistically furnished. The sound of a piano is heard in the adjoining room. (Wilde, 1895, p. 3)	ہاف مون سٹریٹ 'انگرنان کے مکان کا ایک کمرہ نہایت ہی آرائشگی سے سجا 'ہوا ہے۔ اور ملحقہ کمرے سے پیانو کی آواز آرہی ہے (Munim, 1928, p. 3)

Comment

The phrase "morning-room" is omitted, and the word "piano" is localized as "بجا," disrupting the cultural context. While the place name "Half Moon Street" is retained through foreignization, the altered cultural nuances in other details lead to partial invisibility of the original. The translators' dynamic equivalence prioritizes target-language fluency over source-language fidelity, showcasing a resistance to retaining certain cultural elements.

Source Text	Target text
Enter Lane with the cigarette case on a salver. Algernon takes it at once. Lane goes out. (Wilde, 1895, p. 42)	لین سگریٹ کیس لیکر کمرے میں داخل ہوتا ہے اور انگرنان لین کے ہاتھ سے کیس لے لیتا ہے (Munim, 1928, p. 3)

Comment

In plays, props often serve as cultural artifacts, reflecting the social and historical context of the characters. In Wilde's original text, the use of a salver—a silver tray historically associated with European aristocracy and high social status—adds

cultural specificity, particularly of the Victorian era. The salver's history as a symbol of refinement, used initially by royalty and later adopted by the upper classes, contextualizes the play's depiction of societal norms.

The translators omit the term salver, leaving it invisible to the target audience. In Hindustan, equivalent terms like 'رکابی', 'تشری', or 'پلیٹ' could have been employed to retain the cultural value, but the omission diminishes the original's historical and cultural nuance. Furthermore, the translation of "takes it at once" as "ہاتھ سے لے لیتا ہے" fails to convey the immediacy and urgency implied in the original text. By prioritizing a dynamically structured sentence over fidelity to the source's linguistic and cultural context, the translators alter the tone and subtly displace the original's cultural setting. This omission and rephrasing demonstrate tendencies of invisibility and domestication, which obscure the cultural and social layers of the source text, aligning it instead with the expectations of the target audience.

❖ Paratext

Oscar Wilde's play, *The Importance of Being Earnest* was staged at St. James Theatre located in London, on February 14, 1895, which was managed by George Alexander. However, it was published in 1899 by Leonard Smithers and Co. (Britannica, 2015). An earlier edition of 1893 by Samuel French Publishers Ltd., London reserved the copyrights. The first edition contained unique details such as Wilde's signature on each copy and a description of the play as "a trivial comedy for serious people." In contrast, the Urdu translation that was published by Matba Maktaba Ibrahimiyah Imdad Bahmi, Hyderabad –Deccan in 1928. The text published in TT differed a lot in its presentation. The first page of the translation prominently listed the translators' names, qualifications, and publisher details, accompanied by a preface, dedication, index, reviews, corrections, and biographies of the translators and author. Additionally, promotional and marketing materials appeared at the end, unlike the source text. These elements create an impression that the original might include similar content, despite the absence of such materials in Wilde's original work.

The translators acknowledged Wilde's death 28 years before the translation's publication, but did not provide evidence of formal consent from the copyright holders, potentially violating the British Indian Copyright Act of 1914. This lack of legal adherence allowed the translators freedom to adapt and alter the text, often diminishing its cultural and linguistic authenticity. Such omissions facilitated

cultural and linguistic dislocation, enabling appropriation during the translation process.

Discussion

The classical Urdu translations of Oscar Wilde's selected plays demonstrate a level of appropriation, largely through strategies of domestication. Translators adapted or omitted linguistic and cultural elements from the original texts to make them better resonate with the target culture, often sacrificing the original message in the process. This approach reflects an intent to enhance the translations by reshaping the source material while sacrificing its linguistic and cultural authenticity in the process. The study further reveals syntactical patterns of the source texts modification. Rationalization, changes, clipping, and compensation methods were used to transform sentence forms while making it fluent to the target receivers at the expense of disrupting the cohesiveness of the linguistic original pieces. These changes have resulted in discontinuities and gaps that made translations inhomogeneous and weakened the relation towards the source material, eventually undermining the original text. Moreover, the translation of these plays removed or suppressed cultural and linguistic elements such as idioms, expressions, proverbs, and terminology in Wilde's literary flavor and cultural context.

This adaptive strategy resulted in translations that not only reduced the semantic depth and formal verisimilitude of the source texts but also moved far from the original texts. These omissions and transformations have made the translated copies of the original works take on a passive representation so that they are no more than new products which possess little resemblance to the source material. The study further exhibits a lack of coherence or continuity at syntactical, semantic, and expressive levels. This fragmentation, instead, depicts a non-referential approach by the translator who frequently misinterprets or misconstrues source material. Such practices facilitated appropriation, silencing the authentic voice of the original text. The translations achieved fluency and readability for monolingual audiences, but in the process of translation, the original author's intent, the source message, and even the translators themselves became invisible.

Conclusion

This research studies the nuanced dynamics of invisibility and appropriation in classical Urdu translations of Oscar Wilde's plays. It examines how these forces shape the linguistic and cultural essence of the source text during translation. Following the tailored theoretical framework, the study draws on Antoine Berman's model of deformation, Eugène Nida's principles of equivalence and correspondence, Gerard Genette's concept of paratext, and Lawrence Venuti's theories of foreignization, domestication, and invisibility. As this framework helps to navigate the appropriation in the process of translation, it can further be used to study the texts using the corpus and AI tools. For that, a complete corpus or AI-based digital tool of appropriation can be developed to understand the process at its core.

The findings reveal that the translation, done in the early 20th century, reflects the socio-cultural aspect of British India—a time when English held prestige and power. The techniques used by the translators include rationalization, clarification, expansion, and exoticization, often at the cost of the linguistic integrity and cultural richness of Wilde's original text. These strategies helped to "domesticate" the content, aligning it with the sensibilities of Urdu-speaking audiences while simultaneously eliminating its foreign characteristics. Such tendencies reveal a dual interplay of invisibility and appropriation, reshaping the translations to cater to local expectations but distancing them from the very essence of Wilde's work. An important aspect is that the work of Molvi Syed Tamkeen Kazmi and Molvi Muhammad Abdul Munim Saeedi shows appropriation as a recurring pattern. The original author's presence, along with specific words, phrases, cultural nuances, and the overarching message, is rendered largely invisible. This process highlights translation not merely as linguistic conversion but as a cultural and ideological act, often informed by historical and social imperatives. This study focuses on classical Urdu translations of two of Wilde's plays; however, it opens avenues for more extensive exploration. Further study would include Wilde's lesser-known works. Wilde's other social comedies consist of puns and paradoxes which can be used to further probe into issues like appropriation and invisibility. Investigations in translations made after Pakistan's Copyright Ordinance of 1962 and amendments can be used to track down the influence of legal frameworks over translation practices. Insights from such studies would show how invisibility and appropriation work across genres, periods, and culture in the digital age.

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Article Information:

<i>Received</i>	<i>11-Sept-2024</i>
<i>Revised</i>	<i>27-Nov-2024</i>
<i>Accepted</i>	<i>6-Dec-2024</i>
<i>Published</i>	<i>15-Dec-2024</i>

Declarations:

Authors' Contribution:

- All authors **Conceptualization, and intellectual revisions. Data collection, interpretation, and drafting of manuscript**
- The authors agree to take responsibility for every facet of the work, making sure that any concerns about its integrity or veracity are thoroughly examined and addressed

▪ **Conflict of Interest:** NIL

▪ **Funding Sources:** NIL

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