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Research Article



A Critical Analysis of Adaptation, Domestication and Foreignization as Effective Strategies for Translating Shakespeare's Plays into Assamese

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Abstract

One of the major challenges faced by the translators is finding equivalence in the target language. The translators of Shakespeare plays have used Assamese words as appropriate equivalence of English words used by Shakespeare. However, it is not possible for the translators to claim that a particular kind of translation is the most faithful to the source text or

the original text. The critics of translation studies are divided on deciding the parameters to assess whether a particular translation is faithful or not. The translators face various challenges in the process of translation such as finding equivalence, truthfully representing the linguistic and cultural nuances etc. In this process, the Assamese translators of Shakespeare's plays have used adaptation, domestication, foreignization etc. Although the methods are different, they serve a common purpose, i.e., to bring a culturally and linguistically different text close to Assamese readers. *The Comedy of Errors* was the first Shakespeare play to be translated into Assamese by Ratnadhara Barua, Ramakanta Barkakoti, Gunjanan Barua and Ghanashyam Barua as Bhramaranga in 1888. Since then, a good number of Shakespeare plays have been either adapted or translated into Assamese. *As You Like It, Cymbeline, Macbeth, Troilus and Cressida, Taming of the Shrew, King Lear, A Midsummer Night's Dream* etc. were adapted into Assamese. *Romeo and Juliet, Othello, Twelfth Night* etc. were translated using domestication as an effective strategy. *Othello, Macbeth, Measure for Measure* were also translated by other translators using foreignization as an effective strategy. The paper examines the multiple methods that have been used for translation of Shakespeare's plays into Assamese across time with special emphasis on adaptation, domestication and foreignization. As multiple translations of the same Shakespeare plays are available in Assamese, the paper also highlights the features of those translations and critically comments on their effectiveness in terms of strategies used by the translators. It also underlines the challenges faced by the translators while translating Shakespeare's plays into Assamese. Specific examples from both the source texts and target texts are given to assess the process of translation. A few translators have retained the original names in the translations. A few others have change the names completely giving some indigenous flavor to the target texts. The choices of the translators and the factors responsible for such choices have also been discussed in this paper. The paper also documents most of the Shakespeare plays translated into Assamese since 1888. However, the assessment of the strategies used to translate the plays is not chronological. The paper is divided into three main parts: 'Adaptation of Shakespeare's Plays into Assamese', 'Domestication in Translation of Shakespeare's Plays into Assamese' and 'Foreignization in Translation of Shakespeare's Plays into Assamese'.

Keywords: Adaptation, Domestication, Equivalence, Foreignization, Transcreation, Word-For-Word Translation

Introduction

Domestication and foreignization are effective strategies in translation which are frequently used by the translators. They are defined in the following way:

Domestication and foreignization are strategies in translation regarding the degree to which translators make a text conform to the target culture. Domestication is the strategy of making text closely conform to the culture of the language being translated to, which may involve the loss of information from the source text. Foreignization is the strategy of retaining information from

the source text, and involves deliberately breaking the conventions of the target language to preserve its meaning.

(Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Domestication_and_foreignization)

Adaptation is also frequently used by the translators in the process of translating source texts to target texts. The choice of the translator becomes very important as there is no single ideal strategy for translation. That is why the translators employ various effective methods of translation. Domestication, foreignization and adaptation are some of the frequently used methods in translation. *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* defines adaptation in the following way:

Adaptation may be understood as a set of translative interventions which result in a text that is not generally accepted as a translation but is nevertheless recognized as representing a source text. As such, the term may embrace numerous vague notions such as appropriation, domestication, imitation, rewriting, and so on. (3)

However, adaptation is a very popular strategy which is discussed under the discourse of translation studies. While translating Shakespeare's plays into Assamese, the translators have used adaptation, domestication and foreignization as effective tools.

The first instance of Shakespeare translation can be traced back to the late 19th c. A-Bha-U-Sa, i.e., Asomiya Bhashar Unnoti Sadhini Sabha, was established on 25 August 1888 by a group of Assamese students studying in Calcutta. It was also the great Jonaki Era in Assamese literature. It was during this time when Shakespeare's play *The Comedy of Errors* was translated into Assamese by Ratnadhar Barua, Ramakanta Barkakoti, Gunjanan Barua and Ghanashyam Barua. The title *Bhramaranga* was suggested by Shivanath Bordoloi. This was the first instance of domestication of a Shakespeare play in Assamese. The title *Bhramaranga* in Assamese means 'illusion'. Therefore, *Bhramaranga* as the equivalence for *The Comedy of Errors*, in a way, reflects the essence of the play. This was performed on a makeshift stage at Patuatola Street, Calcutta, in 1890 (*Manchalekha*: 96). *Bhramaranga* was again performed in the annual festival of A-Bha-U-Sa held on 8 September, 1895 (*Manchalekha*: 96).

Adaptation of Shakespeare's Plays into Assamese

A few of Shakespeare have been adapted into Assamese in which the names of the plays, the characters etc have been changed. Therefore, the plays are enriched with indigenous elements of Assamese culture and tradition. Durgeswar Sarma (1885-1961)'s *Chandrawali* (1909 or 1910) was an adaptation of Shakespeare's *As You Like It* and *Padmavati* was an adaptation of *Cymbeline*. Ambika Prasad Goswami's *Tara* (1915) was also an adaptation of *Cymbeline* (*Asamiya Natak Aru Pascatya Prasanga*: 63). Debananda Bharali's *Bhimdarpa* (1918) was an adaptation of *Macbeth*; Nabinchandra Bardalai's *Tarun Kanchan* (1932), *Danduri Daman* (1932) *Bhranta Binod* (1932) and *Bishad Kahini* (1932) were adaptations of *Troilus and Cressida*, *Taming of the Shrew*, *As You Like It* and *King Lear* respectively. In his seminal book *Western Influence on Modern Assamese Drama (From 1857 to the Present Time)*, Pona Mahanta observes that in his adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew* as *Danduri-Daman*, Nabinchandra Bardalai has not tampered with the main story, but he appears to be trying his best to localize the text in his own land as is evident in the selection of names both

of persons and of places (Mahanta: 90). Mahanta goes on to say that the translation is sometimes literal, sometimes free, done according to situations and feelings expressed. Occasionally, a piece of dialogue is found dropped or added, but no liberty is taken with the main ideas of the original play (Mahanta: 90). The translation is done all in prose (Mahanta: 90).

Atulchandra Hazarika's *Ashrutirtha* (1948) was an adaptation of *King Lear*, Sailadhar Rajkhoan's *Ranjit Singha* and *Manar Manuh* were adaptations of *Othello* and *The Twelfth Night* respectively (*Adhunik Asomiya Natya Chintan*: 195-96). Dr. Dayananda Pathak in his book *Asamiya Natak aru Paschatya Prasanga*, has mentioned that *Midsummer Night's Dream* was translated by Nabinchandra Bardalai but unfortunately his translations of Shakespeare plays have never been published (Pathak: 62). Dr. Harichandra Bhattacharjya in his book *Asamiya Natya Sahityar Jilingoni (Adir Pora 1967 San Parjyanta)*, mentions that the translation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was lost by somebody who wanted to have a look at the script. He refers to Iswar Prasad Choudhury's article on Nabinchandra Bardalai, published in *Awahan*, 7th year, 5th issue, 1858, wherein the episode was mentioned (Bhattacharjya: 322). Sailadhar Rajkhowa's *Ranjit Singha* was based on *Othello* and produced with overwhelming response from the audience.

Dr. Dinesh Sarmah's translations of *Julius Caesar*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as *Anixar Bhromaranga* include detailed notes on the methods of translation. He translated *Julius Caesar* in 1992 with the same name which was published by Dr. (Mrs) Reeta Sarmah, BRPL Township, Bongaigaon. In his preface to the text, Durgeswar Sarmah, the then Vice President, Assam Sahitya Sabha, comments on the methods of translation employed by the author. He says that Dr. Sarmah's *Julius Caesar* is an adaptation of the original play. He says that it is difficult to translate a Shakespeare play into a different language keeping the statement, rhythm, *byanjana* (implied meaning) and meaning in good coordination. He observes that Dr. Sharma's adaptation of *Julius Caesar* is not a literal translation. But the translator has simplified the language without distorting the central statement of the play. As per the need, the translator has removed some minor characters and done away with some scenes and dialogues. But, this, for Durgeswar Sarmah, was a necessity considering the fact that the translator himself was an actor and he understood the requirement of the stage. In his introduction to the translated text, Dr. Sarmah justifies his method of adaptation and why he didn't try to follow literal translation method. He cites some valid reasons. He says that the text loses its beauty if a translator follows word-for-word translation method. For him, a translator must take lots of freedom while translating a foreign text and representing a foreign social reality through our lived realities. He further says that the actors find it difficult to deliver the dialogues fluently if too much emphasis is given on literal translation. Therefore, he decided to come up with an adaptation, not translation. He has taken utmost care in making the play suitable for performance on the Assamese stage. Dayananda Pathak has named Sharma's method of translation as 'Abridged Translation' (*Asamiya Natak Aru Paschatya Prasanga*: 64). Dr. Dinesh Sarmah retained the same title for the Assamese adaptation of *The Merchant of Venice* which was published in 1992 by Dr. (Mrs.) Reeta

Sarmah. He repeats the same method used while translating *Julius Caesar*. Here, too, he states that it is not a literal translation. It is an adaptation of the original play.

The third translation by Sharmah is *Anixar Bhromaranga* which is an adaptation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. This was published in 2011 by the author himself. In *Pranetar Katha*, i.e., a few words by the publisher, in *Anixar Bhromaranga*, Dr. Sharmah mentions that he did not find an apt Assamese expression (equivalence) to use as a title for the play. Therefore, he borrowed it from the description of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by Tarinikanta Bhattacharjya in his book *Shakespeare*. In his introduction to *Anixar Bhromaranga*, Kanak Chandra Sarmah, the then vice-president of Asam Sahitya Sabha, mentioned that the play was staged by Seagull Theatre in association with the National School of Drama in New Delhi in 2009. An interesting aspect of Dinesh Sharmah's translation is that he uses only eight scenes instead of five acts which, for Kanak Chandra Sarmah, is innovative and it does not diminish the aesthetic value of the original text (*Bhumika: Anixar Bhromaranga*). It is pertinent to mention here that most of the Assamese translators struggled to find equivalence for the English words. Therefore, they used words which were close to the ones used in the source texts, i.e., the plays by Shakespeare written in English with its all unique linguistic features. The translators found adaptation to be a suitable mode of bringing a culturally and linguistically different text close to the Assamese readers as they were able to play with the expressions used in the target text, without being bound by the linguistic principles of the source text. It also helped the readers understand the Shakespeare plays in familiar contexts. In a way, the adaptations of various Shakespeare's plays into Assamese can be considered to be faithful translations of the source texts. Moreover, adaptation is not an exclusive category that can be discussed outside the discourse of translation studies. Therefore, it is difficult to reject an adaptation to be a distorted representation of the original text and consider it unfaithful.

Domestication in Translation of Shakespeare's Plays into Assamese

Domestication or the elements used in translation which primarily focus on using cultural and linguistic features of the target text are also used in adaptation as well. However, it has been discussed separately by the scholars of translation studies. Domestication has been effectively used in a few Assamese translations of Shakespeare's plays. Padmadhar Chaliha's *Amar Lila* (1919) and Ambikaprasad Goswami's *Tara* (1915) were translated from *Romeo and Juliet* and *Cymbeline* respectively. But they were domesticated by the translators (*Manchalekha*: 114). Commenting on the story of *Amar-Lila*, Pona Mahanta in his book *Western Influence on Modern Assamese Drama* says that it is Indianized or domesticated and recast to a Rajput background with Rajput names for the major characters, although the minor ones sound very much Assamese (Mahanta: 87). He further says that while the author has not tampered with the main stream of the story, he makes certain changes, as he himself admits in his preface, in some situations in order to fit them into the Indianized background (Mahanta: 88).

Nabinchandra Bardalai's *Visad Kahini* (1932) was a translation of *King Lear*. Pona Mahanta says that the translation is incomplete and it is not known if he had finished it or not. Mahanta mentions that the story is placed in an Indianized context, i.e., it is domesticated, but

the translation is literal and even Shakespearean structures and turns of expression are sometimes forced into the Assamese (Mahanta: 91).

A good number of theatre critics have underlined the problems of domesticating or Indianizing Shakespeare's plays, especially while translating them into Assamese. *The Merchant of Venice* was first translated by Atulchandra Hazarika as *Banij Konwar*, published by Chapala Book Stall, Shillong and printed at Lalit Press, Calcutta in 1946. A second edition was published in 1950 by the same publisher. Tarinikanta Bhattacharyya, in the introduction to the play, states that it is difficult to write an adaptation than translating a play from a different language. In this scenario, *The Merchant of Venice* is too difficult to adapt as it portrays the historic hatred between the Jews and Christians, which perhaps made Shylock adopt a special method referring to the famous 'pound of flesh' episode in the play. For Bhattacharyya, an Assamese playwright must keep it in mind that Shylock has many sympathizers and one has to be very careful in portraying the background for racial and religious conflicts in a play. Probably he was talking about the challenges and problems involved in Indianizing/domesticating a text that is adapted/translated from a foreign language. Interestingly, in *Banij Konwar*, English names are substituted with Assamese. So, the Duke of Venice becomes Borfukon, the Prince of Morocco becomes Sindhuraj, the Prince of Arragon becomes Darangi Konwar, Antonio-Amio Kumar, Bassanio-Basanta Kumar, Salanio-Sureswar Rajkhowa, Salarino-Sailadhar Gohain, Salerio-Maheswar Barua, Gratiano-Niranjan Saikia, Lorenzo-Dibakar Borbora, Shylock-Chandanmal Mahajan, Tubal-Todarmal, Launcelot Gobbo- Memera Medhi, Old Gobbo-Bhakatram Barmedhi, Portia-Pratibha Debi, Nerissa-Nirmala and Jessica-Padumi or Padmakumari.

Foreignization in Translation of Shakespeare's Plays into Assamese

Foreignization has been used by a few Assamese translators of Shakespeare's plays. It is, however, not easy to convey the meaning from a source text to the target text convincingly. The linguistic nuances of both the source text and the target text have to be kept in mind. A few plays by Shakespeare have been translated into Assamese using literal, word-for-word translations. This method brings the translation close to foreignization. Translations of *Othello* and *Macbeth* were done by Satya Prasad Barua in 1974 using this method (Pathak: 63). Dayananda Pathak followed the word-for-word method while translating *Measure for Measure* in 2003 (*Western Influence on Modern Assamese Drama*: 63). Phani Talukdar's *Hamlet* and Styaprasad Barua's *Othello* were edited translations of the original plays. The names and backgrounds have been retained the same as the original plays. Both these plays have been broadcast on radio on several occasions. Jogesh Dutta and Kirtikamal Bhuyan edited *Othello* and *King Lear* respectively; these, too, were broadcast on radio. Satyaprasad Barua claims that his translation of *Macbeth*, published by Asam Prakashan Parishad in 1980 was the first word-for-word translation of a Shakespeare play into Assamese (*Natak Aru Abhinay Prasanga*: 192). As part of a project of translating the classics into Assamese, undertaken by Assam Sahitya Sabha in 1999-2000, three Shakespeare plays were translated. The details are as follows: (i) Translation of *Julius Caesar* as *Julius Caesar* into Assamese by Akhil Hazarika; (ii) *The Tempest* as *Dhumuha* by Dr. Ananda Bormudoi; (iii) *Antony and Cleopatra* as *Antony aru*

Cleopatra by Pona Mahanta. These were published in the same year 2001. 'Asam Sahitya Sabhar Prakasanar Barnanamulak Talika', a descriptive catalogue of books published by the Asam Sahitya Sabha, prepared by Satish Chandra Choudhury and published by Dr. Paramananda Rajbongshi, General Secretary, Asam Sahitya Sabha in 2012, records only three English plays translated into Assamese. Pona Mahanta, in the translator's note to *Antony and Cleopatra* says that he has not tried to Indianize any element of the text. Therefore many sentences, expressions might look odd. Occasionally he has taken recourse to simplification, but that too, without going too far from the original. This is a literal translation, not adaptation or rendition. In the translator's note to *Dharmuha*, Dr Ananda Bormudoi has mentioned that he has translated *The Tempest* edited by A. W. Verity. He has not added any new element to the text. He believes he has not been able to retain the flavour of poetry and songs used in the original play. Further, he states that he has tried to translate the text word-for-word. But he has also taken adequate care in translating the text keeping the performance aspect in mind as many translated plays in Assamese have been successfully staged.

Asam Prakashan Parishad has translated two Shakespeare plays. A literal, word-for-word translation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* was done by Satyaprasad Barua and published by Asam Prakashan Parishad in 1980. The original title was retained. In his introductory note to the translation, Chandraprasad Saikia states that translating literature is a difficult task. More difficult is the translation of epics. Especially, when one has to translate a verse-drama one needs to be careful in combining expressions with feelings, retaining rhythm, implication/pragmatics etc.

Another translation of *Macbeth* was done by Jibanath Hazarika, former Principal, D. K. D. College, Dergaon, and posthumously published by Purbanchal Prakash, Guwahati in 2009. Dr. Hiren Gohain, in his comment on translation of the text has mentioned that the author has been able to convey the meaning and the poetic rhythm of the text in Assamese to a great extent. He, however, believes that it is impossible to retain the richness and nuances especially *byanjana* (implied or indicative meaning) of the source language in the target text. For him, the real flavour can only be found in the original text. He further suggests that a few difficult words should be glossed for convenience of the readers. (Gohain; Jibanath Hazarika's *Macbeth*: 6)

Translation of *Measure for Measure* with the same name was done by Dr. Dayananda Pathak and published by Lawyer's Book Stall in 2003. In his preface to the translation, Pathak says that his earlier translations of Shakespeare plays namely *Romeo and Juliet*, *Julius Caesar* and *Hamlet* were adaptations/renditions (*marmanubad*). But *Measure for Measure* has been translated using word-for-word method keeping in mind the stage-worthiness of the play.

A translation of *Macbeth* was done by Pradip Saikia, and published by Bani Mandir in 2004. In *Anubadakar Ekashar*, i.e., a few words by the translator, Saikia mentions that his *Macbeth* is not a literal translation of the original text. He says that a theatre group called Rangmahal staged *Macbeth* on 8, 9 and 10 April at the District Library, Nagaon for which he had translated and therefore he had to adopt a method that catered him translate according to the need of the contemporary stage. In *Prakashakar Ekalam*, i.e., 'a few words by the publisher', Utpal

Hazarika of Bani Mandir says that only original writings in a language are not sufficient to enrich literature and culture of a society. Translation helps the readers have glimpses of world literature which is, otherwise, difficult to get access to, due to geographical separation and linguistic differences.

In another translation of *Hamlet* as *Hamlet*, Amritjyoti Mahanta has used prose translation. He justifies this method in his introduction to the text that this has been done to facilitate the actors who would perform it on stage. He, however, believes that it is difficult to retain the flavour of the Source Text while translating *Hamlet* as the original language, society and time are alien to the readers. He mentions that it is impossible to translate (a) 'pun'.

It is a matter of convenience that a few translators have taken recourse to foreignization while translating Shakespeare's plays into Assamese. It helps reproduce the effect of the source text and its linguistic as well as cultural contexts. The translators face the challenge of being faithful to the original text while translating it into another language. For a good number of translators, foreignization is an effective strategy that helps them minimize the gap between the source text and the target text.

Conclusion

From the above discussion, it is evident that the translators have adopted multiple methods in translating the plays by Shakespeare into Assamese. Using adaptation, domestication, foreignization, word-for-word translation etc., the translators have underlined the possibilities of exploring multiple effective methods and tools in translation. Although adaptation as a method of translation has been questioned by a few critics, it has also been frequently used by the translators to translate Shakespeare's plays into Assamese. There are difficulties in translating Shakespeare's plays into the regional languages of India. However, the translators have the freedom to choose their own methods while translating the texts. As there are no definite ways in which the source texts can be translated into target texts, the translators take recourse to multiple methods, using adaptation, domestication, foreignization etc as per their convenience keeping the cultural locations of both the source texts and target texts in mind. While translating Shakespeare's plays into Assamese, the translators have focused more on telling stories, expressing ideas and sharing knowledge than confining themselves to the technical aspects of translation. Adaptation, domestication and foreignization are used only as means to facilitate the process of introducing Shakespeare to the Assamese readers, with an aim to familiarize them with the greatest tragedies and comedies of the Elizabethan England.

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