

Postcolonial Translation and the Palestinian Counter Narrative

Dr. Mohammed El Haj Ahmed, Mr. Khalil AlBatsh

Abstract: *This study aims to investigate the role of translation in empowering the counter narrative that people use to resist the colonial narrative. The study attempts to answer this question by examining the role of postcolonial translation in the counter narrative. To achieve the objectives of the study, the researchers use the descriptive analytical approach by analyzing the relationship(s) between postcolonial translation and counter narratives. The researchers adopt the questionnaire as a tool to collect data from the participants. The study reaches several results, the most important of which are: translation is used by the colonizer, on one hand, as a hegemonic tool. It is used by the colonized, on the other hand, to decolonize their culture and narrative. It also reaches the result that the Palestinian narrative and translation have flourished after the rise of education and cultural awareness among Palestinian People.*

Keywords: *Narrative, Nationalism, Palestine, Post colonialism, Translation.*

1. INTRODUCTION

History has been witnessing an ongoing conflict over narratives and the ability to narrate. Colonialism and its implications have disenfranchised the colonized people and deprived them one of their main essential rights: the right to narrate. This means that the narrative of the colonial power dominates the written history and, in a lesser way, the oral history of the nations they (post)colonize. There have been several attempts by the colonized people to resist these narratives and to write down their own ones. These attempts were deemed influential and, in many cases, their performers were assassinated, let alone spending the rest of their lives in jails. Translation is one of the most effective tools that has been used over history to tell the untold story and to affirm the existence of a people who have been deliberately marginalized. This research focuses on the way translation is adopted as a counter narrative discourse tool from a postcolonial perspective.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The relationship between Translation, literature, narrative and counter narrative has intensively been investigated worldwide. However, little focus is allocated to the Palestinian case. After searching Google as well as some other research gates and to the best of my knowledge , there is a severe shortage in topics that address the Palestinian narrative. There are some researchers and writers who focused on the subject such as Edward Said, Mona Baker, Ghassan Kanafani, and Mahmoud Darwish, among others. These writers influence a wide range of writings on this subject of narration; they are individuals and did not constitute the mainstream discourse and/or narrative. The researchers have also found out that Palestinian students, especially MA students, pay little attention to the Palestinian narrative and the tools of counter discourse.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Many writers and scholars from different oppressed communities attempt to approach the relationship between translation and counter narrative to make use of this relationship in their struggle against the colonial power. This research attempts to use the postcolonial translation theory, which is going to be discussed in literature review, to investigate the role of translation in empowering the counter narrative that people can use in resisting the colonial narrative.

This study attempts to fulfil the following two main goals:

- Identifying postcolonial translation within the context of the Palestinian narrative.
- Highlighting the role of postcolonial translation in the Palestinian counter narrative.

4. QUESTIONS OF THE STUDY

The research tries to answer the following two questions:

- 1- What is Postcolonial translation within the context of the Palestinian narrative?
- 2- How can postcolonial translation affect Palestinian counter narrative?

5. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

There is a pressing need among the Palestinian people to tell their story in their own narrative. This necessitates the intensive work at every level in order to let the world know what is happening in Palestine. The academic arena, in which this study takes place, is an important outlet to draw more attention to the counter narrative of the Palestinian people. The significance of this study arises from being one of the few academic studies that focuses on this kind of narrative. This study focuses on the role of postcolonial translation in counter narrative and paves the way for contemporary and future studies that focus on the untold narrative.

6. LITERATURE REVIEW

Bassnett and Trivedi (1999) point out that translation does not happen in vacuum. It is a purposeful, intersectional and intercultural process that goes beyond boundaries. Translation takes place to achieve aims and objectives. It digs deep inside different cultures. Translation, as a field of study, has opposed the main stream notion that portrays translation as inferior and subjected to the original text. However, it is a “highly manipulative activity... it is not an innocent, transparent activity but is highly charged with significance at every stage; it rarely, if ever, involves a relationship of equality between texts, authors or systems” (Bassnett and Trivedi, 1999, p2).

Munday (2016) argues that postcolonial translation theory discusses the implications of power relations on the process of translation. In an asymmetrical case where there is a colonizer and a colonized, the language of the colonized people is considered inferior and subordinate while the language of the colonizer is considered a superior and powerful. In this sense, translation is used as a hegemonic tool over other languages. He focuses on some crucial terms that largely affect translation within the postcolonial framework including, cultural translation, hybridity and in-betweenness.

Baker (2006) states that narratives are dynamic and can change subtly. This change is due to the daily experiences that people undergo. The narrative hypothesis, for Baker, entails some consequences that affect, and get affected by, the process of narrating our stories. These consequences are related to the daily behavior of people and the change of narratives over history and across different places. Narratives provide us with the possibility to investigate how translation evolves and changes in the process of narrating stories. Narratology and translation make it possible to question unacceptable events over history.

According to Bernaerts et al. (2014), Translation Studies overlaps with narratology studies. The engagement of scholars from translation fields with the field of narratology had an impact on the development of the field of translation in its first stages as an academic field. These two overlapping fields continued to engage and create new intersectional areas between them. Recently, many scholars from translation studies have adopted some narrative methods in studies that they conduct. Translation Studies borrows several concepts and terms from narratology studies to analyze some shifts and turns in the field.

7. METHODOLOGY

7.1. Research Site

This study is carried out in the Gaza Strip, a tiny enclave located in the southern part of Palestine. It is a coastal area that overlooks the Mediterranean Sea. Palestine has been colonized since the beginning of the British Mandate after the World War II. It has then been occupied and colonized by Israel, which was established in 1948 on the wreckage of Palestine. This colonial power has affected and, of course, restricted the process of translation or any other counter narrative. This area is believed to be culturally rich due to its significant location being a linking point between Asia and Africa.

Many civilizations have influenced and affected the Gaza Strip. Every civilization has its own impact on it until recent days. On 02/11/1917, the British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour sent a letter to Walter Rothschild, a leading figure in the British Jewish community in which he expressed his government's willingness to support the Jewish people and give them a homeland in Palestine. This has been known later as “Balfour Declaration”. At the time, Palestine was under the rule of the Ottoman empire (Al Jazeera, 2018).

7.2. Participants

Most of the participants in this study are MA translation and linguistics students studying at the Islamic University of Gaza. They come from different ideological and academic backgrounds. Their ancestors and grandparents are rooted in the history of Palestine. Other participants are from the West Bank and the 1948 occupied lands. All of the participants are university students and researchers in relative fields.

7.3. Tool

The variables of this study are related to postcolonial translation and counter narratives. In this study, the researchers use the questionnaire to collect the information and data for the study. The questionnaire is used because it is a reliable tool that is effectively used due to the covid-19 restrictions. It can rapidly collect information and data from the participants. The questionnaire, which is designed to cover the variables of this study, consists of seven questions whose answer is either 'agree' or 'disagree' or 'I do not know'. See appendix 1.

7.4. Analysis Procedures

To answer the questions of the questionnaire, it was distributed among fifteen participants; ten of them are MA students at the Islamic University of Gaza. Three participants are from the West Bank and two other participants are from the 1948 occupied lands. After receiving the responses of the participants, the researchers will analyze their answers in order to conclude with a number of results and recommendations.

8. DISCUSSION

8.1. Defining Narrative

The definition of narrative that the researchers have adopted is that provided by Baker, Fisher, Bruner, and Gibson (2006). Narratives, within this context, "are public and personal 'stories' that we subscribe to and that guide our behavior". In this way, narratives include the stories that we tell both to ourselves and also to other people. The term 'story' is interchangeably used with the term 'Narrative' (Baker, 2006, p. 19). Other scholars define Narrative from other perspectives. Ewick and Sibley (1995) point out that Narratives are "sequences of statements connected by both a temporal and a moral ordering" (p. 158). These statements should not be approached from a structural point of view, but rather it is better, in this context, to approach them while taking into consideration the power and culture they represent. The ordering of these sentences bears several interpretations in line with the culture and ideology of the interpreter(s). Thus, one sentence may have contrapuntal interpretations. A clear example of this is the Palestinian narrative that resists and opposes the Zionist narrative(s).

Within the Palestinian context, Narrative has been one of the popular and powerful tools of resistance, especially after the Nakba in 1948. Leading Palestinian figures such as Ghassan Kanafani, Edward Said, Mahmoud Darwish and Jabra, among others, have continued to influence the flow of Palestinian Narratives even after their physical death. Narrative in Palestine takes several forms including translation, novels, short stories, criticism, (re)writing- to mention but a few.

8.2. The Postcolonial Translation Theory

Translation Studies has seen a wave of growth and development in the second half of the twentieth century. In the 1950s, Translation Studies witnessed the 'linguistic turn' which was followed by the 'cultural turn' in the 1980s and then the 'power turn' by the advent of the 21st century. These three turns have dramatically and historically affected the way postcolonial, cultural and translation studies approach various issues and concepts. The Linguistic Turn, for example, focuses on the form and makes language as a priority. Thus, verbal and functional equivalents were emphasized. In the 1970s, translation was intensively used by deconstructionists to question the restriction of the linguistic turn and to (re)construct alternatives. Consequently, translation studies departed from "limitations of Formalist roots, scientific approach and dualistic epistemological assumptions." (Gentzler, 1990, p. 145).

In the 1980s, the world celebrated the flourish of cultural studies, which prompted translation studies to focus on the cultural differences between target and source texts as well as the way in which the

culture of the target text receives translated texts. This has situated the translator as a mediator between two or more languages. Thus, subjectivity and manipulation took place and influenced the hegemony of one culture/ language over other cultures/ languages. It was then that many issues were involved within the scope of cultural and translation studies; including, orientalism, imperialism, ethnicity and globalization. This has constantly impacted postcolonial translation, which started to look at the asymmetrical power relations that emerge between a ‘stronger’ culture and another ‘weaker’ one. Postcolonial translation resists and “challenges the traditional, normalized concepts about translating.” (Liu, 2007, p. 135). This motivates postcolonial translation to construct the ‘power turn’ at the beginning of the 21st century.

The notion of equivalence and dynamic equivalence in particular seems to be different in Niranjana's *Sitting Translation* (1992) where she uses the term ‘interpellation’ to refer to the “subjection of a given people by the discourse of the colonizers, depicting an inferior view of that people”. She disapproves using the earlier assumptions of translation where it was supposed to be only about rendering words while the meaning is fixed. Niranjana (1992) called for “a strategy of discarding the power of the colonizer's language. In other words, she called for resistance through re-translation.”(Niranjana, 1992, p. 66).

8.3. Translation, Postcolonialism and the Palestinian Narrative

Within the last decades, there has been a growing relationship between translation, postcolonialism and the rise of Palestinian narrative. Translation, within the postcolonial perspective, is a two-edged sword that can be used by both the colonizer and the colonized. The colonizers, on the one hand, manipulate translation to spread their hegemonic discourse(s) across other languages and cultures. This results in the rich production of works written by the colonial language. The colonized, on the other hand, use translation as a tool to spread their counter narrative. The Palestinian case is a clear example. The Palestinian narrative has flourished since the renaissance of the translation of Palestinian narrative from, and to, Arabic language.

Translation in the Arab world flourished with the rise of Arab nationalism in the 19th century. Arab world, at the time, was considered one nation that speaks one language: the Arabic language. One of the consequences of colonialism is the division of the Arab world and the westernization of its culture. In the second half of the 20th century, imperialism was at its height. The translation from and into Arabic focused on the English language and excluded other languages. Works in the Hebrew language, for example, were not translated into Arabic unless they recognize the rights of the Palestinian people. This illustrates the way language can be a tool of resistance as well as a tool of domination (Herthani, 2017).

8.4. Narratives in and of Translation

In a paper titled *Narratives in and of Translation*, Mona Baker denounces the claim that the discourses we use in translation and culture are not obviously manipulative. She points out that this “attempt to explain away the politics of language and translation by portraying a world in which cultural misunderstanding is unintended [and] innocent.”(Baker, 2005, p. 4). She argues that the solution to this problem is the vital role of translators as well as translation in mediating cultural conflicts, especially within the context of the current global upheavals that occupy the world. Baker asserts how the ideology and culture of the translator can affect the way (s)he approaches cultural differences and diversities (Baker, 2005).

In other words, Narrative cannot be unbiased unless translators and translation are not biased. It is also important to illustrate that the power of narrative results in the power of translation. This can tell about the reason why the Palestinian narrative has long been marginalized and ostracized; it is because the Israeli narrative was exported to the world by the more powerful party; that is the Israeli colonial power. The Palestinian people decided to tell their own narrative(s) to the world after they have been de-narrativized. In this respect, many Palestinian works about narrative were translated to many languages, including English. Ghassan Kanafani and Mourid Barghouti are clear examples. Moreover, there have been an increasing focus on the Palestinian narrative within western and global graduate and postgraduate programs.

8.5. Results of the Study

The study reaches many important results. This is based on the responses of the participants of the study. These results are as follows:

1. Translation plays a vital role in the empowerment of different narratives. It intersects with contemporary and interdisciplinary fields such as culture, literature, ideology, globalization and history, among others.
2. Translation is used by the colonizer, on the one hand, as a hegemonic tool. It is also used by the colonized, on the other hand, to decolonize their culture and narrative.
3. Narrative, in the contemporary context, is a clear evidence of existence. Wherever there is a narrative, there is a nation.
4. The Palestinian narrative and translation have flourished after the rise of education and cultural awareness among the Palestinian People.

9. CONCLUSION

There is a growing need to explore, and also analyze, the relationship between translation and narrative. This relationship is dynamic due to the constant changes and developments in different disciplines that intersect with the two fields. This study opens the floor for other researchers interested in the Palestinian narrative to add more to the subject. The answer of the question of the power of narrative and the role of translation is relative as this relation differs from one language and culture to other languages and cultures.

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APPENDIX 1: THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Question	I agree	I don't agree	I don't know
There is a strong relation between translation and narrative within the Palestinian context.			
Translation can be used positively and negatively.			
Narrative is affected by power, ideological and cultural domination.			
There is a growing focus on the Palestinian narrative among global programs.			
Narrative should be separated from history and culture.			
Cultural awareness is not important to empower the narrative of the oppressed.			
Counter narrative is counter resistance.			
Narrative affects power relations			
Translation is a major tool of counter narrative.			
Students play a role in empowering narratives.			

AUTHORS' BIOGRAPHY



Dr. Mohammed El Haj Ahmed, is an associate professor of translation at the Islamic University of Gaza. He obtained his BA in English language and literature at the IUG in 1988, his MA in Applied Linguistics at the University of Khartoum in 1995, and his Ph.D. in Translation Studies at the University of Salford, UK, in 2009. Since 1997 Dr. El Haj Ahmed has been involved in teaching, supervising and publishing several papers on Translation and Interpreting. He also served as the head of the English Department from 2017-2019.



Mr. Khalil Al Batsh, is an academic writer and researcher in Postcolonial, literary and cultural studies. He has been an English teacher at the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education since 2019. He obtained his BA in English literature in 2018 and a Master degree in translation in 2022. He also obtained a higher diploma in public policies and strategic thinking from Masarat, Palestine in 2019.

Citation: Dr. Mohammed El Haj Ahmed & Mr. Khalil AlBatsh. "Postcolonial Translation and the Palestinian Counter Narrative" *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature (IJSELL)*, vol 10, no. 2, 2022, pp. 25-30. doi: <https://doi.org/10.20431/2347-3134.1002003>.

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