



Translation of a translation: How accurate can it be? The difficult process of translating Saadat Hasan Manto's short-stories in Spanish

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Abstract: The Italian expression “traduttore, traditore” (“translator, traitor”) is commonly used to refer to those problems that arise from a bad translation or even the difficulty of the task. It is well known that in the translation process from L1 to L2 some things will not be “equivalents”. This is not only because there is no such thing as a “word by word” translation (Rendall, 1997, p. 161), but also because each language carries a cultural context that becomes particularly evident in idiomatic expressions. According to Pym (2010), when a text is translated, an act of transfer occurs. Even if it is unintentional, translators “will necessarily be using linguistic and cultural knowledge accrued from previous translations, depending on previous transfers, which are themselves responses to previous translations” (Pym, 2010, p. 17). This, specifically in literary translation, seems to be crucial. In this transfer, translators sometimes use footnotes in order to highlight cultural aspects that cannot be fully understood by reading the text alone. This sense, what happens when a translation comes from an already translated text? What if the first translator of a book or literary work does not attend to crucial cultural aspects? What if this translation is the only way to access certain bibliographical resources or authors, ultimately making it the basis for further translations into other languages? How does a translator then use footnotes strategically? These questions arise in the context of Indian literature – specifically, Saadat Hasan Manto's works, originally written in Urdu, a language both geographically and linguistically distant from Spanish. This paper analyses my experience of translating Manto's short stories into Spanish, to make them available to a class of Spanish-speaking university students in Argentina with the goal of expanding the literary canon taught at universities. Being unable to read Urdu myself, I accessed the texts in English and translated them into Spanish in order to teach a college-level class of students who understand neither Urdu nor English. Several cultural aspects needed to be considered in order to produce an accurate translation.

Keywords: localization; transfer; use of footnotes; Saadat Hasan Manto; literary canon in Spanish.



I. Introduction

The translation process involves several procedures that translators perform to produce a new text from an L1 to an L2. In this process, translators must make various decisions in order to achieve a good translation. This implies not only having a solid grasp of both the source language (L1) and the target language (L2) in terms of their grammar, but also considering cultural aspects. Therefore, translating is not a simple activity and requires translators to constantly review their knowledge of both languages.

In this sense, a translation can never be purely literal. There is no truly effective word-for-word translation. That is why translators resort to various strategies to ensure that certain aspects are maintained in the process of transferring a text from one language to another. Translating involves not only selecting the most appropriate lexical items or grammatical structures, but also trying to respect the original meaning. According to Rendall (1997, p. 159): “The translator's task consists in this: to find the intention toward the language into which the work is to be translated, on the basis of which an echo of the original can be awakened in it”.

However, in the complex system of translations, there are occasions when we encounter a text that has already been translated. This is the case with the writer Saadat Hasan Manto. Although his works were originally written in Urdu, the versions accessible in Argentina (both online and in physical format) have already been translated into English. At present there is no available version of his short-stories in Spanish.

Why is this a problem? The literary canon in Argentinian universities is predominantly Eurocentric and ethnocentric. So, in order to expand the canon and showcase different artistic expressions, it is mandatory to provide translations in Spanish (because English, even now, is not universally understood) for a number of authors. The actual canon in Argentina thus misses out on the richness of other literatures. Although in recent years in Latin America some African authors have been incorporated into the university curricula, knowledge of Asian literature remains null or limited to some emblematic authors such as Rabindranath Tagore, Salman Rushdie or the Japanese writer Haruki Murakami.

In order to try to reverse this situation at the Argentine Academy, I taught an online Seminar in 2021 called “Indian film and literature: adaptations of Shakespeare, Partition's narrative and Indian Feminist Theatre”. The Syllabus included Vishal Bhardwaj's trilogy – *Maqbool* (2003), *Omkara* (2006) and *Haider* (2016) – a selection of Manto's short-stories and two plays by Manjula Padmanabhan: *Lights Out* (1984) and *Harvest* (1997). This wide scope and diversity aimed to provide an introductory overview of Indian culture and literature for an audience not necessarily specialized in either Literature or English. For this reason, versions of the films with Spanish subtitles had to be provided (and relevant clarifications made due to errors, such as in the case of *Omkara* in which the word “party” is confused¹) and the translation of the mentioned texts.

In the case of Manto, I selected him for the seminar program because of his importance in Indian literature and cinema. Before reading the texts, I made an introduction about this author. I compared him at the time with the Argentine writer Roberto Arlt, since both were dedicated to

¹ In the subtitles, “party” is translated as “fiesta”, a celebration. But the real translation must be “partido” as “partido político” (political party).

revealing the bitter truths of society, without fear of scorn. Moreover, both were prolific in both narrative and playwriting. I employed that example to bring an understandable point of comparison for Argentine students. In addition, I gave a brief review of Manto's artistic work in which his work as a storyteller, playwright and film screenwriter was highlighted. I also gave emphasis to his political and social concerns, especially regarding the Partition, which he considered abominable and was reflected in his writing.

In the first classes I gave a brief historical overview of India, covering certain aspects of the colony and independence. I also described the theater and its influence on cinema. To partly explore the biographical aspect of Manto's life, I suggested to them to watch the movie *Manto* (Das, 2018) which was available on Netflix Argentina at that time (or search for it on some other free platform). Since that movie shows just the pre-independence period and the Partition, it was interesting for the students that they could visualize the serious inner conflict in which Manto was immersed after this event. On the other hand, I also gave them theoretical and critical literature on Manto (Jayakumar, 2016; Panthi, 2015; Usha & Yeshoda Nanjappa, 2019), which we discussed in class.

I also told them how Manto was a victim of censorship for his writings, considered “immoral” or “obscene” for portraying prostitutes or low castes. In addition, he was very critical of certain political and social issues of the time, especially the post-Partition violence between Hindus and Muslims. For this reason he was put on trial on multiple occasions, both before independence and after 1947. He was tried under Section 292 of the *Indian Penal Code* (1860, enacted during the British colony).

In this context, I made the translations of four stories by Saadat Hasan Manto: “*Toba Tek Singh*”, “*Open it!*”, “*Frozen*” and “*Mozel*”. All these short-stories are found in the book *My name is Radha* (2015), translated into English by Muhammad Umar Memon. The uniqueness of these texts provides part of the complexity in the translation. Historical references or references to elements of Indian culture may also be strange to the Argentine public. For this reason, and to avoid falling into Orientalism, certain decisions were made to try to preserve and respect the culture of origin.

The aim of this article is to show how indirect translation can be beneficial to expand the literary canon in Argentina (as long as there is a good intermediate translation). The need to expand the study of other authors, texts or movements is due to the eminently Eurocentric presence that has been observed in the curricula of the Arts degree programs. Although it is understood that the Greco-Roman legacy must be learned, there is also a lack of recognition of other cultures and literatures, especially those of Asia and Africa. Therefore, one of my purposes with this article is not only to show a type of translation, but also to encourage the study of other cultures and literatures in Latin America. On the other hand, I want to try to bridge the linguistic gap that, until now, has limited access to other texts by students of Arts degree. Even today, many Asian and African authors have not been translated into Spanish, but they have been translated into English. Thus, by translating the texts from English into Spanish, access is facilitated for students or novice teachers who do not know the English language. In this way, the aesthetic knowledge of professionals in Literature in Argentina is expanded.

That being said, this article will be organized in different sections that will try to show the process of indirect translation of Manto's short-stories. In section 2, I will give an account of the

theoretical framework that supports my decision to use this type of translation. In addition, the use of footnotes will be defined as well as the dialectal variety used in the translations. Section 3 will address the final outcome of the text and in the fourth section I will refer to the students' reaction to the reading of the final text.

2. Theoretical background

The process of translating a text into another language confers multiple problems. The translation of Manto's stories is an example of this. In the following sections I will give an account of the theoretical decisions made during the process of indirect translation of the selected stories.

2.1. Indirect translation

Firstly, I want to account for the fact of using an intermediate language (English) to be able to translate into a target language (Spanish). This is because in Argentina there are no Urdu versions of those texts or translators of that language (not that I am aware of). Secondly, the translation theory to follow to avoid contradictions or falling into “Orientalisms”. Thirdly, how to explain certain elements of Indian-Pakistani culture and history without interrupting the text too much? And finally, I must decide which linguistic variety of Spanish will be used: can it be translated into the Spanish dialect of Argentina?

I will address all these questions in order. Firstly, the question of using an intermediate language for translation. According to Corrales Alcañiz (2021), this type of translation has had various expressions in the past (and present), but it is linked to negative connotations. This author calls the “translation of a translation” as “indirect translation” (p. 5). Furthermore, she mentions in her research why this type of procedure is used. Corrales Alcañiz (2021, p. 12–13) mentions that the indirect translation has been used due to: lack of knowledge of the original language; lack of translators of the original language; impossibility of obtaining the original text; closeness/distance between languages; most prestigious linguistic variant; the possibility that the intermediate language translation is more suitable; the economic cost of translation; among others.

Precisely, regarding the situation with Manto's texts and why it was decided to use the indirect translation, it should be noted that many of these reasons, cited by Corrales Alcañiz (2021), are what motivated that decision. As I already mentioned in the introduction, it is impossible in Argentina to obtain Manto's books in physical format in a language other than English. Even if the original text in Urdu were obtained, there is no possibility of finding a translator in Argentina who knows both Spanish and Urdu. Even if there were an Urdu-Spanish translator, the cost of his services would surely be astronomical due to the remoteness of both languages. It must also be considered that the English language has become a hegemonic language that is used for various cultural and other activities.

Unfortunately, in every translation there is some kind of “loss” due to the inevitable differences between languages. In the case of the Manto stories, it has been hoped that the intermediate translation, done by a noted connoisseur of both languages, has not been subject to so many losses. But, due to my lack of knowledge of Urdu, it was impossible for me to record



such matters and I relied on Professor Memon's work (in his translation from Urdu into English). Therefore, the result of my translation may not be satisfactory because I have not been able to reconstruct issues of the source culture and language.

On the other hand, what is interesting about this type of translation is the fact of combining three cultures and three languages, as Corrales Alcañiz (2021, p. 7) shows in her thesis: culture and language of origin; intermediate culture and language; target culture and language. Then it differentiates the TO (original text) in language A, TT (final text in language B) and TI (intermediate text in language C). The relationship established between them is what results in this indirect translation.

Although at present this procedure has been little researched in translation studies and has a “bad reputation”, it is essential to account for it. According to Corrales Alcañiz (2021, p. 13–14) this “bad reputation” of indirect translation is due to five main reasons:

- a) The possibility of generating a chain of errors in the translation, when the intermediate text (TI) has been subject to misinterpretation. This would lead to a final text (TT) with systematic problems.
- b) Another argument is that the translator may take too many liberties in the process of translating the intermediate text (TI) and, as a result, miss elementary points of the original text (TO).
- c) The third reason is related to the previous one: precisely because it is an intermediate translation, the translator may take too many liberties, which he/she would not do if it were a direct translation.
- d) Corrales Alcañiz's fourth argument refers to the TT translator being negatively influenced in his or her translating decisions by the TI. This is considering an TI with significant errors.
- e) The last argument refers to a problem rooted in ethnocentrism. As Corrales Alcañiz (2021, p. 14, my translation) explains, “indirect translation fosters the power relationship of dominant languages, both “hypercentral”, in this case English, and central, such as French or Spanish, over dominated or peripheral languages (Ringman, 2007; Heilbron, 1999) such as Asian languages like Japanese or Korean”².

2.2. Historical legacies and perceptions

Precisely, the fact that it is not a “prestigious” procedure today does not mean that in another era it was a novel way of translating. During the reign of Alfonso X of Castile, the Wise (1252–1284), a system of indirect translation was developed. The “scriptorium alfonsi” or “Toledo School of Translators” was the original antecedent of a systematised translation system in different languages. According to Ruiz Souza (2004):

² “La traducción indirecta fomenta la relación de poder de los idiomas dominantes tanto ‘hipercentrales’, en este caso, el inglés, como centrales como serían el francés o el español sobre aquellos dominados o periféricos (Ringman 2007; Heilbron 1999) como puede ser el caso de idiomas de Asia como el japonés o el coreano” (Corrales Alcañiz, 2021, p. 14).

Durante el reinado de Alfonso X el Sabio (1252-1284) se desarrolla uno de los periodos culturales más interesantes de la Europa medieval. Bajo su patrocinio se juntaron sabios y traductores cristianos, musulmanes y judíos, en un ambiente dominado por el laicismo y la racionalidad de los proyectos. No se conformaron con la traducción de antiguos tratados o con la realización de compilaciones que recogiesen un sinfín de noticias de autores del pasado, sino que también investigaron, y el soberano mostró su interés por perpetuar y transmitir la ardua tarea realizada mediante la creación de un gran conjunto de obras de carácter científico, jurídico, histórico y literario. Frente a las connotaciones religiosas que hubiera tenido la utilización de la lengua latina, frente a la hebrea y a la árabe como medio de difusión, se optó por utilizar el castellano, lengua vulgar que todos conocían y que por ello sirvió de cohesión a las tres culturas, pues la hicieron suya, y de ahí su éxito futuro imparable.³

Despite the current discredit, indirect translation was a method that had its support and was even, as demonstrated by the Alfonsí scriptorium, a notable success. This brings us to the next problematic point presented at the beginning of this section: what type of translation can we propose, and what theories support what can be done with the current context of Manto's works in Argentina.

2.3. Theoretical approaches to cultural transfer

If a careful reading is carried out on Pym's (2016) treatise on translation, it could be stated that in addition to this indirect translation that Corrales Alcañiz (2021) mentions, there are other figures or theories that can collaborate in this translation. In this way, some translation theories can be mentioned. The first of them is the so-called "Purpose Theory", which establishes that every translation has a purpose: that the target text maintains the same function as the source text (Pym, 2016, p. 58–61).

According to Pym, this theory emerges from two books published in 1984: *Translatorisches Handeln. Theorie und Method* (Translational action. Theory and method) by Justa Holz-Mänttari, and *Grundlegung einer allgemeinen Translationstheorie* (Foundation of a general theory of translation) by Katharina Reiss and Hans Vermeer (Pym, 2016, p. 58). This last book is the one that proposes the theory of *Skopos* ("purpose" in Greek). This postulate is proposed by Vermeer (since Reiss worked with the theory of equivalence) and refers to the fact that each text must follow the "Skopos rule" and be translated in a way that pursues the communicative purpose of the text, instead of just following the source text (Pym, 2016, p. 58).

According to this theory, the purpose of my translation of Manto's texts was to be able to show literary texts that addressed the Partition, respecting the intentionality of the text. This is within the framework of being able to assume that the intermediate translation obtained was of

³ "During the reign of Alfonso X The Wise (1252-1284), one of the most interesting cultural periods of medieval Europe was developed. Under his patronage, Christian, Muslim, and Jewish scholars and translators came together, in an environment dominated by secularism and the rationality of the projects. They were not satisfied with the translation of old treaties or with the creation of compilations that collected endless news from authors of the past, but they also investigated, and the sovereign showed his interest in perpetuating and transmitting the arduous task carried out through the creation of a large set of works of a scientific, legal, historical, and literary nature. Faced with the religious connotations that the use of the Latin language would have had, compared to Hebrew and Arabic as a means of dissemination, it was decided to use Spanish, a vulgar language that everyone knew and that therefore served as cohesion to the three cultures, because they made it their own, and hence their unstoppable future success (...)" (Ruiz Souza, 2004, my translation).

good quality, considering who was in charge of that translation: a renowned researcher and translator from Urdu to English. Professor Muhammad Umar Memon (1939–2018) was “a UW–Madison professor who was an internationally renowned scholar of the Urdu language and literature” (University of Wisconsin–Madison⁴. Accessed online September 28, 2024). In this sense, my purpose in the translation was to focus on the themes present in the texts (Partition, gender issues, historical context, etc.) and to make a brief review of the culture. Since I do not know Urdu and I cannot be sure that the English translation maintains the stylistic aspects of Manto’s writing, I did not delve into this issue, due to my own linguistic limitations.

On the other hand, there are “Descriptive Theories” that define that in every translation a series of “displacements” occur from one culture to another. Pym (2016) mentions several theorists who were engaged in developing this form of translation. First, he cites the work of Gideon Toury, *Descriptive Translation Studies* (1995). This theory emphasizes discovering how translation occurs, whatever the outcome of that process.

This translational proposal is based on several theorists and their postulates. In addition to Toury (1995), Pym mentions Jan Mukařovský who tries to elucidate what is the historical role of translation and focuses on literary translations (Pym, 2016, p. 88). Secondly, one can cite the works of the Czech Jiří Levý and the Slovaks František Miko and Anton Popovič. These scholars sought to determine the fundamental principles of literary translation (Pym, 2016, p. 89). They determine that a series of “translations shifts” occur between the source text and the target text.

The importance of this translation theory lies precisely in being able to investigate the ways of translating, in focusing on the cultural-contextual issue of the texts (both the source text and the target text). The latter is what the Israeli theorist Itamar Even-Zohar focused on. He defined cultures as “polysystems”, i.e. large complex systems (Pym, 2016, p. 90).

Obviously there are two cultures that are going to suffer these displacements to the target culture of Argentine Spanish. It should be noted that in the English translations of Manto’s texts, some expressions or words specific to the culture of origin were preserved. Some of those examples are: “*khangar*” (Manto, 2015, p. 90); some phrases in Urdu (Manto, 2015, p. 210–212); “*jaani*” (Manto, 2015, p. 270); “*saiyaan*” (Manto, 2015, p. 272); “*kirpan*” (Manto, 2015, p. 273); “*dupatta*” (Manto, 2015, p. 277); “*Abbaji*” (Manto, 2015, p. 277); “*shalwar*” (Manto, 2015, p. 279).

In these cases, Professor Memon decided not to translate the original word and resorted to a common technique called “loan” or “transfer” (Aguilar Laguerce, 2015, p. 6; Orozco Jutorán, 2013, p. 243–245). This occurs in texts in which, due to various situations, it is preferred to maintain expressions in the language of origin, either due to the impossibility of translation or to maintain the culture of origin. In the case of those words or expressions, what can be done? It should be noted that the destination culture (in this case, Argentina) is largely unaware of issues related to Indian and Pakistani culture. Or, when they are mentioned, it is always with some degree of Orientalism. How do I avoid this harmful practice in translation?

⁴ Information available online at: <https://alc.wisc.edu/staff/memon-muhammad/>. Last accessed online on February 6th, 2025.

2.4. Footnotes as paratextual strategies

That question led me to think about the use of so-called “footnotes”. Regarding this issue, it must be clarified that their use should not be excessive. If we consider the “efficiency” of writing a text, an excessive use of “footnotes” interrupts reading too much and makes it difficult. So how to use them? According to Ukušová (2021):

As regards the definition of translator’s footnote, Henry (2002, 230) considers it to be an allographic paratext, i.e. written by a third party who is therefore neither the author of the book nor a character of the book. The defining criteria that clearly sets it apart from a general footnote is that it appears only in the translated text (a text written in a different language than the language of the original work). The task of this third party is to transfer the original text into a different linguistic, cultural, geographic or even temporal context with the use of footnotes (p. 52).

As already mentioned, the general role of translator’s footnotes is to supply additional information to the text. Toledano Buendía (2013, 157) further distinguishes two main types of translator’s footnotes based on their functions: translator’s footnotes with informative/explanatory function – providing necessary information to ensure a perfect understanding of the source text; and translator’s footnotes with performative function – explanation conveying translator’s comments, opinions or judgement (p. 53).

In this way, although the use of “footnotes” is common in translation, they should not be overused either. Perhaps they should be used only for those expressions that do not have a translation into Spanish or to explain certain contexts or concepts that the Argentine reader is unaware of Indian-Pakistani history or culture.

2.5. Dialect choice and localization in Spanish

Finally, there is the question of the dialect variety in which to translate. Spanish is a language spoken by approximately 500 million people, making it the second most spoken language behind Mandarin Chinese (Fernández Vitores, 2023). It has official status in 22 countries, namely: Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Venezuela, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Cuba, Equatorial Guinea, and Spain (ABC Editorial, 2021). Each of these countries has dialect variants, not only as a country but also by region. In Argentina, there are different variants of some expressions that are the product of hybridization and miscegenation with languages of indigenous peoples. So, it can be said that there are a multiplicity of dialectal varieties of Spanish.

Then it must be understood that, as in other languages, there is a “standard language” (although this terminology is under discussion due to the elitist and Eurocentric connotations it carries) and dialect varieties. This is important to know in order to define how to translate the text. In River Plate Spanish, there are notable differences with respect to Peninsular Spanish

(Spain). Not only in its phonetics (seseo⁵, yeísmo⁶), but also in lexical issues (*lunfardo*⁷ or words derived from languages of native peoples) or grammatical (in Argentina the 2nd person singular pronoun “vos” is used, which modifies the verb conjugation). Now, what is the trend according to this?

An example of using the dialect variety of the country or region is in teaching Spanish as a second language. According to the thesis of González Blanco:

Una de las primeras cuestiones sobre las que tenemos que decidir en la enseñanza del español como L2 es, precisamente, qué variedad enseñar. Para tomar esta decisión, tendremos en cuenta cuál es la variedad del profesor, cuál es la finalidad que se plantean los alumnos o si la enseñanza se produce en un contexto homosiglótico o heterosiglótico. Todo ello nos permitirá elegir la variedad que seguiremos en nuestra enseñanza, que se convertirá en variedad preferente.

Sin embargo, dado el mundo globalizado en el que vivimos, caracterizado tanto por la movilidad como por el uso de redes sociales, es conveniente que nuestros alumnos conozcan también otras variedades, aunque sea de forma pasiva, lo que les va a permitir comprender a más hablantes de manera más eficaz. Si, además, nuestros alumnos, por razones de trabajo o de ocio, van a estar en contacto con una variedad determinada, parece conveniente que intentemos dotarles de los instrumentos necesarios para poder moverse con comodidad en ella, aunque no sea la de su modelo productivo⁸ (González Blanco, 2018, p. 6).

On the other hand, in Argentina, Professor Aldo Rubén Pricco, a specialist in Greco-Latin theatre, also supports the use of the River Plate variety. In his analysis of the classic translations of the Plautine comedy *Miles Gloriosus* (a study present in both the 2012 book and his dissertation recorded on YouTube in 2023), he states that they all use a type of standard language, close to peninsular Spanish. Therefore, many of the jokes or puns are strange to the Argentine reader or public. For this reason, Pricco proposes:

La búsqueda de una especificidad lingüística puede facilitar el consumo del componente fónico si la cultura teatral de destino es la argentina, lo que orienta hacia tácticas de verosimilización que incluyan el oído medio del espectador de nuestro país como variable de diseño de una traducción. De allí la inclusión en nuestra traducción de diversas formas

⁵ “Seseo” refers to the phoneme that is used in Argentina for the graphemes “s”, “c”, and “z”. In Spain, there is a difference between “s” and “z” / “c” (when this last one – “c” – it is accompanied by the vowels “e” / “i”, because with “a”, “o”, and “u”, its phoneme is /k/). While the “s” is represented with the phoneme: /s-/, the “z/c” group is represented by /θ/. In Argentina, the phoneme is /s/ for all the graphemes mentioned. That is called “seseo”.

⁶ “Yeísmo” is the name for the phenomenon that occurs in certain variants of Spanish, such as that of Argentina, in which a single phoneme is used for two different graphemes. This is the case of the graphemes “ll” and “y”, which, in Rio de la Plata Spanish, sound like /j/. It is a voiced palatal fricative phoneme.

⁷ “Lunfardo” is a type of slang typical of the Buenos Aires area (where it originated but later spread to the entire country). It is a mixture of Italian, German, Spanish, and native languages. The result of this is a speech that, in its origins, was used by the lower classes and the underworld, but that is now used by all the inhabitants of Argentina.

⁸ One of the first questions we have to decide on when teaching Spanish as an L2 is, precisely, what variety to teach. To make this decision, we will take into account the variety of the teacher, what the students’ goal is, or whether the teaching occurs in a homosiglottic or heterosiglottic context. All of this will allow us to choose the variety that we will follow in our teaching, which will become the preferred variety. However, given the globalised world in which we live, characterized by both mobility and the use of social networks, it is convenient for our students to also learn about other varieties, even if passively, which will allow them to understand more speakers more effectively. If, in addition, our students, for reasons of work or leisure, are going to be in contact with a certain variety, it seems convenient that we try to provide them with the necessary instruments to be able to move comfortably in it, even if it is not that of their productive model (González Blanco, 2018, p. 6, my translation).

del voseo⁹, incluso con su variante regional litoral que registra caídas de sibilantes y vibrantes finales, como así también modelos de ideologemas frecuentes en el discurso de los medios¹⁰ (Pricco, 2012, p. 420).

Then, Pricco proposes a series of translations adapted to the River Plate variant, not only of the dialogues, but also of the names of the characters. This translation choice is also stylistic. It tries to use the target culture (in this case, Argentina) to reduce the temporal-spatial distance (and, obviously, also linguistic) between the Plautine texts and the present day.

These changes, although novel, may not be entirely necessary for a translation of Manto's stories. Character names and certain words that have remained in their native language are likely to remain so. So how to translate Manto into Spanish using an intermediate language like English?

3. Final product: how to translate Saadat Hasan Manto's short-stories in Argentina

So, how did the final version of Manto's translation into Spanish turn out? Firstly, it was defined that the variety to be used would be Argentine Spanish, given that the audience to whom the reading of these texts would be directed is from that country. Therefore, the most logical choice, supported by the works of Pricco (2012) and González Blanco (2018), was to opt for that particular dialect. For this reason, the “voseo” (second person singular in informal contexts) and “usted” (second person singular in formal contexts) are used, and the conjugation of the verbs is modified by the use of those personal pronouns. Table I shows some examples of how it was translated into the Rioplatense variant of Spanish.

Table I: Translation of the second person singular and verbs conjugation

Intermediate Text (English)	Final Text (Spanish)
Perhaps he meant to say: You're the Muslims' God, had you been the God of the Sikhs you would surely have heard my plea. (<i>Toba Tek Singh</i> . Manto, 2015, p. 212).	Quizás el significado de esto era: “¡[Usted] Es el Dios de los musulmanes! ¡Si fuera el Dios de los sikhs, seguramente me habría escuchado!” (Molina Concha, 2021). In the case of the second person of Rio de la Plata Spanish, there is a formal variant (usted) and an informal one (vos). Since the text refers to a deity, the formal variant was chosen in order to be respectful.
As she lay dying, Sakina's mother had urged him, 'Don't worry about me. Just grab Sakina and run! (<i>Open it!</i> . Manto, 2015, p. 277).	Antes de cerrar los ojos para siempre, la madre de Sakina le había instado: “No te preocupes por mí, corré , llevate a Sakina de una vez...” (Molina Concha, 2021). The verbs are conjugated with the second person singular informal “vos”.
I swear by Wahe Guru, you're one awesome woman! (<i>Frozen</i> . Manto, 2015, p. 270).	¡Lo juro por Wahe Guru, sos una mujer increíble! (Molina Concha, 2021).

Source: Author (2025)¹¹

⁹ “Voseo” is the use of the pronoun “vos” instead of “tú” in the 2nd person singular.

¹⁰ “The search for a linguistic specificity can facilitate the consumption of the phonic component if the target theatre culture is Argentine, which guides towards verisimilitude tactics that include the middle ear of the viewer of our country as a design variable of a translation. Hence the inclusion in our translation of various forms of voseo, even with its coastal regional variant that registers falls of sibilants and vibrating endings, as well as models of ideologemas frequent in media discourse” (Pricco, 2012, p. 420, my translation).

¹¹ Own elaboration based on the intermediate text of Manto cited in the bibliography and my translation into Spanish.

Secondly, the obvious decisions about correctly translating metaphors or expressions from English to Spanish are noted. That is, review the idioms typical of English and look for their correct counterpart in Argentine Spanish. This is to maintain consistency with respect to the variety chosen to translate.

Table 2: Translation of idiomatic expressions to Argentinian Spanish

Intermediate Text (English)	Final Text (Spanish)
The latter smiled. ‘But I know the Hindustoras’ language. They are absolute rascals —these Hindustanis. They strut around (<i>Tob Tek Singh</i> . Manto, 2015, p. 208).	El otro sonrió: “Conozco el idioma de esos “indosmier... Son unos terribles chantas esos indostaníes. Van canchereando por todas partes ” (Molina Concha, 2021).
When he woke up in the morning it was never without the feeling that his body had been thrashed all night long (Mozel. Manto, 2015, p. 89).	Cuando se despertó por la mañana, tenía la sensación de que su cuerpo había sido apaleado durante toda la noche (Molina Concha, 2021).
He slapped her big, fleshy bottom , jerked his head and said to himself, “ I’m going nuts ” (<i>Frozen</i> . Manto, 2015, p. 270).	Le dio un chirlo en el traste grande y carnoso, sacudió la cabeza y dijo: “ Me estoy pirando ” (Molina Concha, 2021).

Source: Author (2025)¹²

It should be clarified that, in the case of some expressions of the Argentine dialect, the Dictionary of Americanisms was used. This official source often determined the lexical entry to be used, especially when the intermediate text provided a colloquial expression.

Third, what happened to the phrases or words preserved in the original language in the intermediate translation? Before making any decision, other texts by Manto were reviewed, but with a different translator: Khalid Hasan was another translator of Manto's works for Penguin Books. Hasan is another renowned Urdu to English translator. He, like Memon, preserves the original Urdu expressions in the texts. Therefore, it was decided to do the same: preserve those expressions, but use the footnotes to explain them to the Argentine public. Even so, this resource was used on rare occasions.

In line with Purpose Theory's emphasis on maintaining the function of the original, footnotes were used to ensure readers grasp the cultural context without diminishing Manto's stylistic essence. This is the case of words like *dupatta*, *salwar*, *kirpan*, *kes*, *Mohalla*, among others. In these footnotes, certain cultural issues about these words were briefly explained for the Argentine reader. For the phrases in “Toba Tek Singh” that are a speech of the character, they were kept as they appear in the intermediate text, although the words that appeared in English were translated, for example: “Upar de gurgur de aynks de be-dhyaana de mungvde daal aaf of Pakistan government” (Manto, 2015, p. 2011) to “Upar de gurgur de aynks de be-dhyaana de mungvde daal aaf de Gobierno de Pakistán” (Molina Concha, 2021, p. 3). On the other hand, it was decided not to use footnotes to explain the historical context or issues related to the religious diversity of India, since these topics were addressed with various theoretical materials or didactic sheets.

Some examples are:

¹² Idem as previous note.

Salwar es el nombre que reciben los pantalones sueltos tipo babuchas que usan las mujeres en India.

Kirpan: es un arma simbólica parecida a un puñal que portan los Sikks ortodoxos justamente como un símbolo de la lucha contra la opresión y la injusticia.

Una dupatta es un largo velo que se usa para cubrir la cabeza y hombros (Molina Concha, 2021, N. de la traductora)¹³.

Although the text presented to the students of that seminar in 2021 did not contain so many footnotes to avoid excessive interruption when reading, it is understood that for another type of reader, these explanations are extremely necessary. In the case of opting to attempt a translation and publication of the complete book (or just the four stories already mentioned) *My name is Radha* (2015), there is obviously a need not only for a glossary but an appendix at the end of the book or each story explaining crucial issues of Indian and Pakistani culture and history.

So, it could be said that the final product of the indirect translation combined the use of an Argentine dialect plus the use of footnotes carefully chosen so as not to clutter the text with them. This is because the use of footnotes should not be excessive so as not to constantly interrupt the reading of the main text. Many expressions that were preserved in the original language were integrated into the text without using italic formatting. However, they were explained in class, e.g. *Abbaji*, *saiyaan*, *jaani*. Although these expressions in Prof. Memon's translation are in italics, I preferred to integrate them into the text to avoid “strangeness” for the reader or to give a sense of exaggerated “exoticism”.

On the other hand, the lexical choices of what is considered the intermediate translator, Professor Memon, were maintained regarding the words found in the source language. This decision was due to respecting the linguistic and stylistic decisions that appear in the intermediate text and that keep the culture of origin present and respected in the story. In this way, an attempt was made to offer an indirect translation into Spanish that considered the culture of origin and the validity of the intermediate translation by a specialist on the subject.

4. Students' reaction to the translated text

Many of the translated materials that reach the student of Literature (I say this from my own experience in my academic career) are in a peninsular dialect or in an attempt at “neutral Spanish” (the definition of which still raises, even today, various debates). It must be said that, in Spanish as in other languages, there is a “colonialist” and “ethnocentric” issue that has made the conception of variants more prestigious than others endure over time. For this reason, many literary translations are in peninsular Spanish or in a “neutral Spanish”, far from the Argentinian reality.

¹³ “Salwar is the name given to the loose slipper-like pants worn by women in India.

Kirpan: is a symbolic dagger-like weapon carried by orthodox Sikhs as a symbol of the struggle against oppression and injustice.

A dupatta is a long veil worn to cover the head and shoulders” (my translation from various theoretical materials or didactic sheets).

The closest to an Argentine dialect comes from some authors, such as Roberto Arlt (1900–1942) who made “lunfardo” a style in Argentine narrative and drama (at a time when it was not common). The final result of the translation of Manto's texts not only resorts to Argentinian dialectal expressions (because in the intermediate English version colloquial or informal expressions or phrases are used), but also to a different conjugation by using the personal pronouns “vos” and “usted”.

Although at the beginning the students read the text with surprise and even a certain degree of comicality because of the use of certain expressions, the truth is that it was easier for them to understand the text translated in this way. For example, the fact of using an expression such as “*cancherear*” and not “*pavonearse*” (which, although it is a word that a person with a wide vocabulary may know, is not so well known by the rest of the population as it is an expression not commonly used in Argentina) showed them exactly the meaning that, in its English version, is intended to be given in that excerpt.

According to what the students expressed, reading was greatly facilitated by using this dialectal variety. Also, stylistically, it made them understand even more the mood of the characters or define the climax of the story. Thus, although there are details that I still believe can be improved, the preliminary result of this first attempt at translation into Rioplatense dialect has been successful. Another proof that this type of adaptation can be done and achieve a good effect are the translations of Professor Aldo Pricco. His work with the Plautine comedy and the adaptation of the dialogues not only into Voseo but also into Argentine expressions has shown that a good product can be obtained that is accessible to the general public. Precisely, this type of translation is focused on being accessible to everyone, regardless of their linguistic knowledge.

On the other hand, Manto's stories deeply moved the seminary students and they regretted that there was no Spanish translation of his complete works. Beyond the obvious temporal distance, they were able to understand the situation portrayed by the author and evidenced the need to know other Indian and Pakistani authors.

5. Conclusions

In this process in which a Literature Professor becomes a translator for her students, various situations were reviewed. On the one hand, although indirect translation has been questioned over time, it is very useful when the original is not available or the language of origin is unknown, as has been my case with Urdu. Although this particular translation was made for that seminar in 2021, it is likely that I intend to continue the work of translating Manto's texts, in order to resume the task of continuing to expand the literary canon in Argentina.

Secondly, not every indirect translation can be correct. This may be due to several causes. One of them is obviously due to the fact that the intermediate translation is not of good quality or done by a specialist in the subject. The other cause is given by the target translation, which may be of poor quality if it does not respect issues of the intermediate text or the culture of origin. In the case of Manto's translations, the two versions consulted come from experts in Urdu and English. Therefore, I could be confident in my decisions regarding the lexicological and grammatical choices I incorporated into the final text. Although the final version in Argentine Spanish may have flaws or



be improved, it is believed that a version that respects the culture of origin and its intermediate translation has been offered. Possibly, to overcome these problems, it would be advisable to reproduce the medieval “scriptorium alfonsí” with specialists in Urdu (and in English, as an intermediate language of communication). Through this type of collaborative work, a better type of translation would be achieved that takes into account the author’s stylistic choices in the source language and translates them into the best expression in the target language. This would further preserve the true spirit of Manto. If in the future, direct Urdu–Spanish translators become available, it would be interesting to compare their translations to this indirect one.

In summary, indirect translation is useful and convenient in those cases where the source language is unknown and a specialised translator cannot be used. Now, in this process, you have to investigate who has done the translation and if they are a renowned person in that field so you can trust their skills. In addition, it is also emphasised that the correct use of footnotes can help the reader understand issues of the culture of origin that, due to the temporal-spatial distance, may be incomprehensible to the target audience. But this problem arises with any literary text from another era or culture that is approached. It is common in university literature classrooms that there is a distance between reader and work (and author). For this reason, we always try to remedy this problem with an adequate explanation of the historical context, the literary movement (or school or generation, depending on the author).

However, this translation “worked” because it was accompanied by teachers. It is understood that, if we want to continue with this project and expand the repertoire, many modifications must be made. If in the target text of this version few footnotes were used so as not to interrupt the reading too much, in future translations, I believe it is necessary to incorporate a brief explanation of each text, as well as a glossary. Also, although the intermediate translation was used in this version, it would be much better to work together with Urdu and Spanish specialists in order to obtain a better product.

I would also like to emphasize that, according to Skopos theory, this translation fulfilled the proposed purpose: that is, to achieve the communicative objective and for the texts to be understood by the students. Also, according to the descriptive theory, I tried to make a correct shift between cultures, at least between what the intermediate text proposed to be adapted to the Argentine culture and dialectal variety. Either way, in circumstances where direct translation is unfeasible, well-researched indirect translation – grounded in trust of the intermediary translator’s expertise and a commitment to cultural fidelity – can still serve valuable pedagogical and cultural purposes.

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