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Bridging cultures through explicitation: a corpus-based analysis of bilingual literary translations

Muhammad Asim Mahmood^a, Ansa Sattar^a, Muhammad Imran^{b,c}  and Norah Almusharraf^b

^aDepartment of Applied Linguistics, Government College University, Faisalabad, Pakistan; ^bCollege of Humanities and Sciences, Prince Sultan University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; ^cKhazar University, Baku, Azerbaijan

ABSTRACT

This study examines explicitation strategies in translated literary texts to determine their impact on the text's clarity, style, and cultural representation. Focusing on how these shifts affect the explicitation shifts, the study analyzed two modern Urdu novels, *La Hasil* and *Aks*, and their English translations. Using TagAnt and UAM CorpusTool, the study examines approximately 30,000 words of each text to determine the frequency and function of explicitation in the process of constructing the readability and cultural translatability of the target texts. The results show that obligatory explicitation is the most common, further improving coherence and grammatical accuracy while occasionally affecting text-cohesion style. Optional explication, although less typical, enhances stylistic device productivity and, at the same time, restricts the range of interpretation by providing contextual meanings of ambiguous words. However, occasional use of pragmatic explicitation is vital since some relations are culture-bound and, therefore, likely to be unfamiliar to a non-native English readership. Emphasizing the need to balance clarity and fidelity in translation work, it offers insights into translating interlingual literary texts in multinational contexts. Thus, it realizes that translation is an important object of investigation, which corrects and completes the esthetic and cultural density of the source text through explicitation.

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1. Introduction

Translation, a problem-solving and decision-making process, helps translators consciously or unconsciously translate one language (Source Language-SL) to another (Target Language). Therefore, a good translation always conveys the correct meaning of SL to the TL. However, the translation of a literary text is assumed to be a kind of recreation of a text with the same value as the original text version, where the translators involve their creativity to transform the SL to TL effectively (Bezerra, 2012; Tavakoli & Zare, 2024; Munday, 2016). Furthermore, to integrate corpus linguistics methodologies in translation and language research, studies significantly enhance readers' comprehension and understanding of translation processes, language patterns, and interpreting practices (Ahmad et al., 2024; Al-Khatib, 2024; Afzaal et al., 2022). Therefore, in translation studies, corpus linguistics plays an instrumental role in making researchers able to observe and analyze translators' attitudes and behavior during the translation process and also explore the attributes of the translated text. In the meantime, technological advancement has facilitated the data acquisition from extensive and diverse samples and their storage through different online, portable, and electronic formats, addressing the limitation of Corpus-Based Interpreting Studies (CIS) (Tang & Zhang, 2019). Moreover, within this CIS into the translation studies sphere, the emergence and integration of Corpus-Based Translation Studies (CTS) are very significant in providing valuable frameworks for examining translated texts (Mustafa, 2024).

CONTACT Muhammad Imran  mimran@psu.edu.sa  College of Humanities and Sciences, Prince Sultan University, Rafa Street, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; Khazar University, Baku, Azerbaijan

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The current research is a corpus-based analysis that compares and identifies explicitation strategies in Urdu-English transnational literary texts, focuses on explicit meaning, resolves avoidable ambiguities, enhances communicative clarity, and addresses stylistic and cultural issues. Focusing on two modern Urdu novels, *La Hasil* by Umera Ahmad and *Aks* by Itrat Shehzad, this paper analyses obligatory, optional, and pragmatic explicitations. It emphasizes that translation goes beyond simple language conversion, encompassing cultural accommodation, stylistic choices, and conveyance of meaning. Explicitation, clarifying the contextual meanings from the source text, which may not be immediately understandable to the Target text readers, is one of the most commonly used strategies by translators. This strategy is especially useful when dealing with cross-cultural translation as there are often differences in language, culture, and context, which may need elaboration to ensure the reader's understanding and maintain textual coherence.

However, despite the advancement in CIS and CTS, a disparity between the ST and TT while simultaneously interpreting remains apparent in focusing on linguistics patterns (El-Dakhs et al., 2020; Imran et al., 2024). The current research is a corpus-based analysis that compares and identifies explicitation strategies in bilingual transnational literary texts (Al Hammadi et al., 2024). The concept of explicitation is especially important in Urdu-English translations because of the lexical, structural, and stylistic differences between the two languages. Urdu is rich in metaphors, idioms, proverbs, and cultural references that resonate deeply with those familiar with the language (Sattar & Mahmood, 2024). English often requires more contextualization, especially in literary translations where intention and accuracy are vital. Interpreting the poetics and emotions of the original work while maintaining its formal and stylistic qualities and making it equally understandable for the English-speaking reader is a challenge (El-Dakhs, 2017).

While explicitation has been extensively discussed in various studies concerning West European language pairs (Han et al., 2023), the subject remains largely absent from South Asian languages, especially Urdu. The linguistic profile of Pakistan, to some extent, differs from that of other countries where research on explicitation has been conducted because the primary language of the country is Urdu, with the secondary official language, English, being an international language (Shah et al., 2024). The translators working within this context are not only faced with problems of translating literally but also with the cultural implications since most of the Urdu literary texts contain a socio-cultural message.

Based on Klaudy's (2009) classification of obvious shifts into obligatory, optional, and pragmatic explicitations, the study establishes how such shifts affect the translated text. Section of obligatory explicitation refers to the situations where there are grammatical variations between the two languages and which require explanation. Optional explicitation is used by the translator in order to translate an issue better or to emphasize a certain stylistic aspect. Pragmatic explicitation is used to overcome culturally relevant distinctions to make the context-related meanings understandable to the target reader. Within this context, the present research aims to identify how explicitation strategies influence translated texts and the difficulties in translating Urdu-English literary works that differ culturally, linguistically, and stylistically.

This study can help to fill this gap with a corpus-based analysis of explicitation in Urdu-English translated texts. Through the analysis of obligatory, optional, and pragmatic explicitation strategies in translating the selected novels, this research investigates how these strategies affect smoothness, formality and contextual meaning, cohesiveness, and cultural accuracy. These novels are valuable for research as they highlight the delicate connection of language, serving as both a cultural and linguistic semiotic tool and the narrative forms within contemporary Pakistani literature. Both novels are widely read in Pakistan and represent significant examples of modern Urdu storytelling that intricately weave together religious, philosophical, and socio-cultural dimensions. *La Hasil* explores themes of spiritual awakening and moral conflict, while *Aks* delves into psychological trauma and identity construction. These thematic layers pose unique challenges in translation, especially in rendering implicit meanings and cultural references comprehensible to an English-speaking readership. By focusing on these two texts, the study responds to the existing gap in explicitation research within Urdu-English translations, offering insights into how translators navigate the tension between preserving literary style and ensuring interpretive clarity. Moreover, their differences in tone, complexity, and cultural referencing provide a valuable comparative basis for examining explicitation strategies and enriching the discourse on South Asian literary translation practices.

2. Literature review

Translation studies is a developing and rapidly evolving branch of applied linguistics that explores methods and objectives related to the issues of equivalence, comprehensibility, and cultural adaptability of the texts translated from one language to another. One of the main procedures in translation is explicitation, which means making the implicit information from the source text explicit in the target text. Proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet in 1958, this concept means that extra effort is required to produce translations where those terms are ambiguous due to the disparity between related languages. In this way, their work set the ground for the fundamental understanding that, in some cases, the translation needs to be adjusted by design to achieve equivalence across different linguistic systems. In a recent study, Jing and Kanglong (2024) introduced translation and its associated challenges due to technological advancements such as artificial intelligence (AI) tools. Their investigation further examined that the new challenges and tools that AI technology introduces to translation research, suggesting specific topics and approaches for further investigation.

2.1. Explanation of the notion of explicitation in translation studies

Vinay and Darbelnet (1958) emphasized the concept of explicitation for the purpose of making the translation more understandable, particularly when the target language demands more details than the source language. This concept has played a crucial role in guiding translators while translating texts with different structures and belonging to different cultures. Despite emphasizing more realistic aspects of translation, their approach faced criticism for having potential drawbacks in the sphere of literary translation, where the reproduced material is supposed to preserve the atmosphere of the original text.

Building on this, Nida (1964) introduced the concept of ‘dynamic equivalence,’ which focuses on eliciting a similar response from the target audience as the original text does from its readers. He pointed out the importance of the translators’ objective to convey the effect to the target audience that the original text produces to its readers, even if this implies adding supplementary components that were implicit in the source text. This approach has been criticized because, at times, translators prioritize the target reader’s understanding at the expense of the source text’s cultural identity, resulting in over-intellectualization and raising concerns about balancing between clarity and preserving cultural essence. However, Zhang (2024) recently discussed the significance of Corpus-Based studies of explicitation and explained the idea of explicitation from its conceptualization to recent theoretical developments. According to this investigation, corpus-based explicitation has made a significant contribution and occupied the central place among recently utilized methodological innovations.

2.2. Typologies of explicitation

Several scholars have refined the foundational theories associated with explicitation, such as Li and Corbett (2024), in their recently published book presented a comprehensive grounding in the primary theories, challenges, and a wide range of corpus-based applications, topics, and developments in Corpus-Based studies. Moreover, Klaudy (2009) categorized explicitation into three types: Obligatory Explicitation: Necessary adjustments due to structural differences between the ST and TT. Optional Explicitation: Introduced for stylistic or clarity enhancements at the translator’s discretion. Pragmatic Explicitation: Used to clarify culturally specific references, ensuring comprehension by the target audience.

Klaudy’s (2009) classification is particularly useful while dealing with translations from entirely distinct linguistic and cultural contexts, such as Urdu and English, where syntactic and cultural differences demand different strategies. She introduces the Asymmetry Hypothesis, which suggests that explicitation occurs while translating from languages that are less reliant on context, such as Urdu, to those that are highly reliant on it, such as English. This hypothesis serves as a basis for explaining why translators often need to make the implied meaning explicit in English translation. However, it has been criticized for implying a one-way process, overlooking instances where translators deliberately retain implicit meanings to preserve the mood of the source text.

Moratto and Li (2023), in *Advances in Corpus Applications in Literary and Translation Studies*, examined the impact of manipulating coherence and cohesion through explicitation, focusing on how these changes affect translated texts in terms of their readability, which would enable first-time independent readers. She argued that explicitation often enhances 'the reading' or the literal transparency of text at the potential cost of 'redundancy'—changes to the original literary rhythm. This perspective is helpful in discussions about literary translation, as the most significant issue is not only comprehensibility but also the artistic features of the text, as well. Continuing the discussion of explicitation, Becher (2011) identified it as a language manipulation practice as well as a translation decision. To his opinion, explicitation stems from the translator's understanding of the source text and unfolds a conflict between accuracy and the degree of adherence to the stylistic features of the latter. This view contrasts with the extra-linguistic view of explicitation, where each case of explicitation is thus developed by the acculturation strategy of the translator and the requirements of the text.

2.3. Explicitation in Urdu-English translations

Urdu language has a fluid structure and relies heavily on cultural context but translation often faces space limitations. The straightforward English language rewrites them with more detail. Obligatory explicitation was identified to be quite frequent in the Urdu-English text translation since the two languages differ dramatically in their grammar structures, as confirmed by Ahmad and Raza (2016). In their case, translating the work also involved paralinguistic adjustments, which, even though they keep the work grammatically fluent, make the translated work sound structured and more formal as compared to the flow of the original Urdu text.

Murtisari (2013) also pointed out that a key function of pragmatic explicitation is to make cultural references specific to the source culture understandable for the readers of the target language. While this kind of explicitation is essential for cultural mediation, it may lead to the trivialization of cultural elements in the source text. For instance, the substitution of culturally valuable terms for English equivalents makes the text more understandable, but, at the same time, it tends to lose much of its cultural value.

In their corpus-based empirical study, Khurshid et al. conducted a study using a genre-specific Urdu-English parallel and comparable corpus (USTC). They analyzed a variety of documents, including academic, legal, and journalistic source texts, and found that translated Urdu texts exhibited a de-simplifying trend contrary to the simplification hypothesis. This study further discussed the variation that was linked to genre conventions and structural features of Urdu. In so doing, the findings of this empirical study highlighted how genre and linguistics typology influence translation outcomes.

The research on explicitation offers a rich picture of how translators mediate between the demands of making the text clear and the demands of maintaining the stylistic features of the source text. Despite its influence, Klaudy's (2009) framework has also been called to receive criticism for exaggerating the unidirectional tendency toward further explicitation. The Asymmetry Hypothesis provides only a general idea about losses in translation. However, the choice in particular translations of the extra-explicit translation as opposed to translation which keeps as many of the subtleties of the first text as possible reflects an on-going debate between the two options.

Blum-Kulka (1986) and Becher (2011) found that explicitation is not only driven by linguistic necessity but also by the choices of interpreters. Their studies show that although explicitation enhances certain features of linguistic equality, it can alter the narrative voice and affect the readers' reception. This raises questions about the extent to which the translator should 'interfere' with the text to improve clarity without compromising the style and cultural essence of the work. Although explicitation in European language pairs has been widely researched, studies on South Asian languages, especially Urdu-English translation, remain limited. Most research is concentrated on obligatory explicitation, while optional and pragmatic explicitations are considered to be of main importance for adjusting culturally rich texts. This gap highlights the need for more extensive research that explores a range of explicitation strategies, particularly how they affect the stylistic features of the source text in literary translation, which is inherently both a cultural and stylistic process.

This study intends to fill these gaps by presenting an experimental, quantitative, and qualitative comparative analysis of the explicitation procedures in Urdu-English literary translations. It examines how

obligatory, optional, and pragmatic explications affect the interpretability and cultural translation of texts. Focusing on contemporary Urdu novels, this research contributes to understanding the difficulties inherent in translating between languages with considerable structural and cultural disparity.

This study uses Klaudy's (2009) framework to investigate the Asymmetry Hypothesis from a South Asian perspective to analyze the occurrence of these predicted patterns in the translated version of *La Hasil* and *Aks*. The study examines whether certain aspects can be left unstated to preserve a more faithful translation for features of the literary register. This approach enriches the scholarly discussions regarding the tactical choices that underlie translations of literatures and provides novel insights into balancing transparency of meaning with the cultural and stylistic relevance in multilingual settings.

3. Methodology

This research adopts a corpus-assisted linguistic analysis method, a model broadly shaped by the foundational work of scholars like Baker and Tognini-Bonelli. They emphasized the empirical value of combining corpus linguistics with qualitative analysis in translation studies to identify the patterns of explicitation in literary bilingual translated works. This approach systematically compares source and target texts by identifying linguistic patterns and contextual shifts in translations. Furthermore, for manual and semi-automated annotation of the explicitation shifts within the texts, the UAM Corpus Tool by Mick O'Donnell has been used to develop the linguistic framework. The researchers developed a tag set based on Klaudy's (2009) typology-obligatory, optional, and pragmatic explicitation and applied this framework to annotate the corpus to study the frequencies and actual examples in the context of Antconc software. This approach allowed the researchers to mark each shift in context, facilitating both frequency analysis and qualitative interpretation. After this practice, the annotated data were analyzed to determine how these types of explicitation contributed to grammatical coherence, stylistic transformation, and cultural accessibility.

It offers a clear picture of the explicitation patterns of the Urdu-English translated texts by integrating TagAnt for lexical and statistical profiling and UAM Corpus Tool for interpretive tagging and visualization. This study further ensured both the depth and breadth of the analysis of translation strategies. Together, these tools provided a robust methodological foundation to explore how explicitation functions in bridging linguistic and cultural gaps in Urdu and English literary translations. This adopted method aims to ascertain whether the trends observed conform to the Asymmetry Hypothesis when translating the implicitness of Urdu into the explicitness of the English language, as proposed by Klaudy (2009).

4. Data analysis

By integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods, this study offers a comprehensive exploration of explicitation strategies, providing insights that are both data-driven and contextually grounded.

4.1. Quantitative results

This section is specifically concerned with the number of times explicitation shifts were detected in the translations of *La Hasil* and *Aks*. The overall frequency of obligatory, optional, and pragmatic explicitation types can be given as a percentage of the total word count for each novel using Antconc for analysis. This approach allows for a close comparison of the two texts and identifies the various types of explicitation within each translated text. Quantitative data reveals that the patterns in the use of explicitation types seem to differ between the two novels, which results from the differences in style and culture of the source texts and the translators' choices and priorities. The overall distribution of explicitation shifts is as follows:

4.1.1. Obligatory explicitation

This was the most occurring type in both translations, making approximately 50% (Sattar, 2024) of the total shifts. Dissimilarities in the structure of Urdu can account for this high proportion as a high-context

language and English as a low-context language. Examples include subject-verb agreement, objects, pronouns and usage of articles. In the cases of *LaHasil*, obligatory shifts were especially apparent in the translations of pronouns and articles because of the versatile word order of Urdu, whereas in *Aks*, more explicitation occurrences were observed in the elements of the sentence restructuring for grammatical continuity.

4.1.2. Optional explicitation

Optional explicitation related shifts made up 32% (Sattar, 2024) of the explicitations in *La Hasil*, while in *Aks*, they were 35% (Sattar, 2024). The fact that *Aks* had a higher frequency of explicitation indicated that the translator tried to improve the stylistic coherence of the text, which was done by often providing more detail to an idiomatic phrase or metaphor –to make the intended meaning of the text clearer to readers of English. On the part of *La Hasil*, the employment of explicitation was slightly more controlled, and the translator made use of only a moderate number of such optional explicitations in order to maintain the neutrality of the narrative.

4.1.3. Pragmatic explicitation

While the least common strategy, pragmatic explicitation, contributed to 16% (Sattar, 2024) of the total shift in both novels. This type was mainly used to explain cultural references, including those that may refer to an idiom, a cultural practice, or religious terms unfamiliar to the audience of an English origin. *La Hasil* had somewhat higher shifts owing to the cultural practices and religious beliefs of the locals, whereas *Aks* had fewer shifts as compared to *LaHasil* due to its more universal thematic elements. More details are presented in Table 1 regarding the distribution of explicitation shifts.

4.2. Proportion of obligatory explicitations

A higher percentage of obligatory explicitations (as seen with *Aks*) tells us that many elements in the text will need to be shifted for one reason or another because of the grammar or structure of the two different languages.

4.2.1. Translation influence

Shifting to text 2, translators might expect more lexical difficulties and concentrate on correct work and punctuation. They have to be extremely concerned with the so-called false friends, the lexico-grammatical realizations that have no direct translations in the target language, first, to be ready to shift as to their syntactic roles, second, to adapt the means used for signaling such function in the target language.

4.2.2. Proportion of optional explicitations

More optional explicitations mean signaling that changes might be required in order to make the text more familiar or easy to understand for the targeted readership, as was the case of *La Hasil*.

4.2.3. Translation influence

This result suggests that translators may have to become more commentarial, adding or modifying aspects to sustain the interest of the readers but without deviating from the intent of passing on information. The given approach is most helpful when the writer treats an open, easily readable translation as the requisite for capturing the heart of the work.

Table 1. Distribution of explicitation shifts in *La Hasil* and *Aks*.

Novel title	Total word count	Obligatory shifts	Obligatory %	Optional shifts	Optional %	Pragmatic shifts	Pragmatic %
<i>La Hasil</i>	37,908	120	0.32%	165	0.44%	39	0.10%
<i>Aks</i>	29,403	81	0.28%	60	0.20%	15	0.05%
Overall Total	67,311	201	0.30%	225	0.33%	54	0.08%

The source texts show the nature of the texts that authors work with by presenting an example of engagement with the source texts.

4.3. Adapting cultural references

4.3.1. Pragmatic explicitation

This share of pragmatic explicitations proved that strategic adaptations regarding cultural contexts were equally required for both novels.

4.3.2. Translation influence

This underlined the question of translation as a process that needs to consider the cultural aspect of translated text. Translators may use these perceptions to anticipate difficulties in translating cultural references, idioms, or any other cultural feature.

It can help translators balance the cultural content of the source text by making this content recognizable and understandable for the target readership.

4.4. Informing translation strategy4.4.1. Balancing literal and interpretive approaches

The setting of obligatory and optional explicitations indicates that some/many of the texts, particularly the more formally structured ones, may necessitate a translated text that mirrors *Aks* because of structural demands, while others allow a translator a more flexible, text-congruent approach, as with *La Hasil*.

4.4.2. Translation influence

The translator of a specific text can choose whether to stick closer to the source text to convey the text's structure as accurately as possible or the translator paraphrase to give the final translation a more idiomatic sound. Hence, it may affect decisions concerning the composition of the sentence, the words used, and the manner of delivery.

4.5. Preparation and acquaintance of translators

4.5.1. Focus on specific challenges

In this regard, these results can be incorporated into training programs for conveying the kind of tasks that a translator is likely to encounter. That is why texts similar to *Aks* can be applied to teach translators how to work with obligatory explicitations and texts like *La Hasil* – to develop the ability to consider the question of clarity vs. loyalty to the original.

4.5.2. Tailoring approach to genre and audience

It is important to adjust the kinds of explicitation based on the text, author, or reader, depending on how it will be received. It would be more appropriate in the process of translating literary works, whereas rigid adherence may be advisable for translating technical texts.

4.5.3. The overall impact on the translation practice

The analysis of explicitation types can also be perceptive: knowing the existing types of explicitation, translators can predict which aspects of the text will be necessary to focus on during translation. Thus, it directs for translation intervention strategy that maintains the translated work close to the original but easy to understand and interest the targeted audience.

Understanding the distribution of different types of explicitation can increase the level of source text invariance while providing readers with more relevant information in the target language. This, in turn, can result in better interpretations that align with the source material and meet the expectations of the new readers.

The quantitative data reveals a higher incidence of obligatory explicates in both novels, while optional explication plays a significant part in stylistic adaptation, particularly in *Aks*. However, these figures alone are insufficient to reveal how these shifts affect the text readability and the culture involved in translation. The following qualitative analysis expands upon such improvements by analyzing concrete

examples where such numerical trends play out in specific translation decisions that impact the textual narration and cultural factors.

5. Qualitative results

The qualitative analysis presented in this section draws directly on the annotated data generated through the UAM CorpusTool, which was instrumental in identifying and categorizing explicitation shifts across the translated texts. Using Klaudy's (2009) framework as the annotation scheme, the UAM CorpusTool enabled the researchers to code and visualize patterns of obligatory, optional, and pragmatic explicitation in both novels. The annotations were then examined in-depth to assess how these shifts influenced grammatical clarity, stylistic coherence, and cultural accessibility in the translated versions. Examples discussed below were selected from this tagged corpus, providing an evidence-based foundation for the following qualitative interpretations.

5.1. Obligatory explicitation and grammatical coherence

Obligatory explicitation became important since the grammar of Urdu and English is quite different. Some of the matters explained were subject-verb agreement, article use, and revisions of sentences to English grammatical standards.

- **Example from *La Hasil*:** The phrase 'یہ کر دیا' ('yeh kar diya') was translated as 'he did this,' making the implicit subject 'he' explicit in the English translation. This shift ensured grammatical coherence but also introduced a syntactic rigidity not present in the original. The Urdu source text's flexibility in implying the subject was lost subtly changes the narrative flow.
- **Example from *Aks*:** Consider the Urdu sentence 'نماز پڑھنے گئی' ('Namaz parhne gayi'), which translates literally to 'went to pray.' In English, this might be expanded to 'she went to perform her prayers' to clarify that 'namaz' refers to the specific act of Islamic prayer. Urdu speakers would understand this cultural reference without further detail, but explicitation in English provides necessary context for readers who may not share the same cultural background. This shift adds clarity but also makes the translation slightly more explicit than the original.

On the one hand, obligatory explicitation fulfills its role of providing necessary grammatical information in translated text; on the other hand, its manifestation is rather influential in giving the translated text the corresponding stylistic coloring. For example, English has pronouns and articles that are not necessarily used like Urdu because of its flexible word order; it may become more fluent, but adding all these things to English may give it a more formal look and feel. This may disrupt the flow of the story and develop a rigidity that opposes those qualities that can be associated with the original. They can alter the reader's relationship with the text making the translation seem less personal or immediate. Thus, readers of the English version may not experience the same reactions as the original readers, highlighting the translation tradeoff between close adherence to the source and the conveyance of stylistic nuances.

5.2. Optional explicitation and stylistic adaptation

Optional explicitation gave an opportunity to the translators to explain metaphors, idioms, and other ambiguous passages, which English readers do not properly comprehend.

- **Example from *Aks*:** The phrase 'زمین کو سب کچھ دے دیا' ('zameen ko sab kuch de diya'), literally 'gave everything to the land,' was translated as 'she gave everything to the land, including her hopes and dreams.' This amendment was designed to increase the emotional appeal of the target audience. However, it made the interpretation significantly more limited because it provided a definite meaning rather than the original, which allowed for broader interpretations.

- Example from *La Hasil*: In translating the expression 'تھک کر بیٹھ گئی' ('thak kar baith gayi'), the translator rendered it as 'she sank to the ground, exhausted.' This optional explicitation provided a stylistic feature, which enhanced the impact of the imagery for English readers. The decision served to denote the state of emotion, although it made the text to be translated contain more depth than the text being translated.

5.3. Pragmatic explicitation and cultural accessibility

In an attempt to overcome these barriers, pragmatic explicitation was utilized to break down the cultural differences by providing information that might be understandable in the context where the original meaning of the phrase would be different, or the term used would be unfamiliar to the readers, with English as their second language. The translators decided to work sometimes by including as much extra information as needed and sometimes by translating certain cultural terms literally to the translation.

- Example from *La Hasil*: The term 'دعوت' ('Dawat') was translated as 'religious invitation to a feast,' providing essential cultural context for readers unfamiliar with Islamic customs. This change made sure that such a meaning was easily understandable, though it came with the added danger of overemphasizing the cultural implications of the term.
- Example from *Aks*: In cases where the formal dress was mentioned, translators decided to keep the original term like 'shalwar kameez,' it is explained in a footnote that it means a suit. This strategy worked in a way whereby the translated text remained culturally specific to the original culture, but at the same time, the reader was not lost.

6. Impact of explicitation shifts on translation quality

The qualitative analysis revealed both positive and negative effects of explicitation shifts on the target texts, as mentioned in the following Table 2:

- Positive effects: Low readability and inter-sentential connectedness were raised by explicitation, which in turn fixed the grammatical issues ensuring that the translations are in compliance with English grammatical standards. Other changes carried out in terms of stylistic choices also provided the text with a more appealing and emotionally charged orientation for the readers of English.
- Negative effects: Optional explicitation, when applied frequently, sometimes diminished the interpretive richness and transformed the artistic or narrative nature of the text. As for the pragmatic explicitation, the danger of cultural reduction was observed since some terms or concepts could not be translated at all.

Table 2. Examples of obligatory, optional, and pragmatic explicitation.

Source text (Urdu)	Target text (English)	Type of explicitation	Explanation of the shift's impact
وہ اب ایک ایک چیز کے پاس جا کر بیٹھے اسے چھو کر اسے اپنا خراج پیش کر رہی تھی۔	She touched each one as if honouring it.	Pragmatic	The translation adds a cultural nuance, making it more understandable for an English-speaking audience.
کچھ لوگ کتنے خوش قسمت ہوتے ہیں۔ ہرچھو چیز ان کے مقدر میں لکھ دیجاتی ہے۔	How lucky some people are, she thought to herself. They come into the world with no worries and leave it having had the best that life has to offer.	Obligatory	The translator explicates the general sentiments, aligning with English grammatical norms and making the emotional tone clear.
آہستہ آہستہ گھر میں فاقوں کی نوبت آئے لگی۔	Catherine was faced with the prospect of eviction and starvation.	Optional	The shift enriches the narrative, providing additional context for the reader that enhances the gravity of the situation.
یہ نئی ذمہ داری ایک بڑی مصیبت ہی لگ رہی تھی۔	This additional responsibility was not to her liking.	Optional	Adds clarity by adjusting the tone, making the discomfort more explicit in the target language.
چھوٹی موٹی غلط فہمیوں پر اس طرح ریا کیٹ نہیں کرنا چاہیے۔	One cannot go through life resenting everything and holding on to petty grudges.	Obligatory	The translator adjusts the sentence to conform to English grammatical structure, making the implicit explicit.

These qualitative examples demonstrate that, although cultural specificities require clearer translation, complete clarity is just as damaging. Obligatory explicitation seems to achieve necessary grammatical accuracy while, at the same time, may result in stiffness; optional explicitation allows for stylistic changes, which at times may transform the original flavor of the text. Pragmatic explicitation appears to be highly effective in solving cultural disparities but corresponds to distortion of culture when it comes to metaphorical representation. Given these challenges, these observations explain the discourses on the strategic behaviors that translators consider.

The results of this research work do support the Asymmetry Hypothesis, more so, the obligatory explicitation while translating from Urdu to English. This, we believe, lends support to the view that there are structural differences between high-context and low-context languages, which suggests that there has to be proactivity in terms of expounding when translating between the two. All the same, optional and pragmatic explicitation strategies identified in the study differ from the more established models, and the overall cultural richness of Urdu necessitates a more elaborate form of analysis than previously proposed. Cultural adaptation, as stated by Vinay and Darbelnet (1958), seems to be the most important parameter, but at the same time, the necessity for a more relative application of the model in cultures other than European becomes evident.

In sum, although the obligatory explicitation choices are important for translating the literal meaning of the text in the target language, they introduce a certain formal distance in the text's reading experience from the original Urdu storytelling manner. Other times, such a shift is required for syntactic reasons in the English language, and it weakens the first-person immediacy of the source text, so the empathic narrating voice is recalibrated for an English audience. It exhausts such nuances that state the problem for translators that is always in front of them, namely in how far they come to terms with the aim of striving for clarity on one hand and maintaining the atmosphere which is set by the author, on the other hand. These observations indicate that the reader in translation may have a markedly different experience due to the linguistic constraints of the target language as well as the translator's interpretative decision.

6.1. Impact and implications of explicitation shifts

This section investigates the general effects of the explicitation shifts on the target text in relation to translation quality, readability, stylistic characteristics, and cultural aspect. The quantitative results are combined with the qualitative data to make conclusions regarding the extent and implications of the methodological decisions made in *La Hasil* and *Aks*.

6.1.1. Readability level and grammatic cohesion level shifts

This paper revealed that shifts, especially obligatory shifts, were more involved in transforming the texts' complexity for the sake of better readability and the realization of grammatical connections in the translation process. These shifts were useful in aligning the text to English syntax, thus making the translation more easily understandable to the majority of English readers.

6.1.2. Examples from both novels. Due to the statistical prevalence of obligatory explicitation in the English translation for specifying the subjects, articles, and verb forms, the grammatical aspects of English have been enhanced. This was especially necessary given the fact that the language of the source text, Urdu, relied heavily on context in the transmission of text meaning. The adaptations required the translations to meet the expectations of English readers, who expect explicit grammatical markers.

However, these changes also had a downside: Although they enhanced cohesiveness and good readability, they at times gave the translation a structured feel rather than the natural syntactic structure.

6.1.3. Effects on the style and coherence

This form of explicitation interfered irregularly with the stylistic structure of the translated texts. While letting the translators use certain linguistic tools to translate the meaning of an expression literally and

to explain colloquial expressions or to add emphatic meaning, there stood a risk of changing the pitch of the story through over-explanation.

In the novel *La Hasil*, the translation preferred optional explicitation to include commentary aspects missing in the original. This added descriptive elements to the story while changing the mood slightly to be slightly more expository and sometimes didactic.

In the novel *Aks*, however, the translator tended to be more moderate with regard to the style and included fewer rhetorical embellishments, thus providing a more accurate copy of the original. However, this approach sometimes rendered certain expressions ambiguous to the target audience, who probably would have appreciated more background information on the subject. The specification of the patterns demonstrated that the employment of optional explicitation increases the artistic hedonistic appeal while controllably decreasing the esthetic vagueness of the source text.

6.1.4. Culture for affordability and inclusion

Due to the requirement of rendering culturally specific references intelligible to readers with limited exposure to the particular culture, pragmatic explicitation also played an important role. This strategy helped translate culturally grounded notions of beliefs, cultural tendencies, and conventional costumes by using additional descriptions or culturally familiar terms with glossary notes.

6.1.5. Examples from both novels. For the second type, pragmatic explicitation was used more often in the translation of *La Hasil* because this novel describes specific Islamic cultural practices that are unfamiliar to most readers. *Aks* had fewer pragmatic explicitations, given that it had more universal themes, but whenever necessary for accurate connotations culturally, this strategy was adopted. It was also crucial to bear in mind that pragmatic explicitation at times left no room for interpretation and might lead to the oversimplification of cultural features and, therefore, to the loss of some of the cultural depth of the source text. The difficulty for translators was deciding between offering enough context to comprehend and maintaining enough cultural meaning.

The qualitative examples also demonstrate how far and in which way translators can go around the loop of clarity and cultural specificity. Obligatory explicitation sometimes guarantees grammatical accuracy but at the same time can contribute to inflexibility, while optional explicitation provides some esthetic advantage with a risk of distorting the authors' intention. This paper has demonstrated that pragmatic explicitation intervenes effectively in culture-sharing yet contains the danger of distorting intricate cultural clues. These observations lead to the following discussion presented in [Table 3](#) on the strategic decision-making challenges that translators encounter in the course of addressing these issues.

7. Critical analysis

7.1. Obligatory explicitation

Despite the need for obligatory explicitation for such structural targets to be realized, they do so at the cost of a more rigid target text. This rigidity can damage literary translation because the dynamics and artistic value, which entice the reader, are of paramount importance. For instance, formal diction, which comes from the obligatory switches in *Aks*, may seem off-putting to readers familiar with the dynamic fluidity of the original Urdu. However, there is the need to meet the grammatical accuracy and simultaneously maintain the flow and tone of the original Story.

7.2. Optional explicitation

As with any value-added practice, there is the option to amplify a work with explicitation: it is a double-edged sword. At best, it offers additional clarifications that help the reader create a deeper interpretation of the text; at worst, and probably more often than not, it interferes with a text's delicate equilibrium where the function of ambiguity is often what makes literature rich and intriguing. In *La Hasil*, cases were found where the so-called free shifts that contributed to adding descriptive meaning disrupted the original text's monotonous and reflective mood. This implies that translators need to consider

Table 3. Summary of positive and negative effects of explicitation on translation quality.

Explicitation type	Positive effects	Negative effects	Examples of impact	Mitigation strategies
Obligatory	Essential for achieving grammatical coherence in the target language, ensuring that translations adhere to the syntactic norms and structural requirements of the target language. It prevents ambiguity that could arise due to structural differences between languages	Often leads to a more rigid and less fluid translation, potentially impacting the artistic and literary value of the text. The added elements can disrupt the natural flow, making the translation feel more verbose and less engaging	In the translation of <i>Aks</i> , the addition of articles and syntactic adjustments ensured accuracy but sometimes resulted in overly formal or stiff expressions that lacked the fluidity of the original Urdu prose.	Emphasize minimalistic adjustments to maintain the fluidity of the original text. Where possible, retain stylistic nuances by only adding elements strictly necessary for grammatical clarity. This approach preserves the literary style while maintaining structural correctness.
Optional	Can enrich the target text by adding stylistic elements that enhance readability and provide a more nuanced understanding of the source text. This can be particularly effective for maintaining the poetic or narrative style of the original work	Risks introducing elements that were not intended by the original author, potentially shifting the tone or focus of the text. The tendency to over-clarify can undermine the subtlety and ambiguity that characterize the source text	In LaHasil, optional explicitation added descriptive details that enriched scenes, making them more vivid for the English-speaking audience. However, this sometimes led to a shift in focus from the subtle emotional undertones of the original to a more explicit description.	Strive for a balance between clarity and retaining the original text's implicit meanings. Optional explicitation should be used sparingly, ensuring that any added information aligns closely with the original text's tone and intention. Peer reviews or feedback from native speakers can help ensure that stylistic enhancements are well-received without altering the text's core essence.
Pragmatic	Facilitates cultural adaptation, making the target text more accessible by bridging cultural gaps. This is particularly beneficial when the source text includes references, idioms, or expressions that may be unfamiliar to the target audience	May lead to a loss of cultural specificity, erasing nuances that give the source text its unique flavor. Over-adaptation can make the translation feel generic or disconnected from its cultural roots.	Pragmatic shifts in both <i>Aks</i> and LaHasil included adaptations of culturally specific references like traditional Pakistani greetings and social norms, making them more relatable to an English-speaking audience. However, this sometimes led to a simplification of cultural contexts, reducing the richness of the original cultural expressions.	Consider using footnotes or brief parenthetical explanations to retain cultural nuances while still ensuring the text is understandable to the target audience. This allows readers to gain insight into the original cultural context without sacrificing readability. Additionally, consulting cultural experts can help determine which elements can be adapted and which should be preserved for authenticity.

the importance of extra information and the probability of providing too much information. A leap to explicitness can distort some aspects of the interaction and strip some layers that readers can gain from the text.

7.3. Pragmatic explicitation

Pragmatic explicitation is intended to help people overcome cultural differences and translate individual texts to readers unfamiliar with the foreign culture. However, it weakens the cultural differences characteristic of certain literary works. For instance, replacing Pakistani cultural-specific terms with more universal referents may run into the danger of obliterating the socio-cultural vibrancy of Pakistani existence within the novels. Pragmatic explicitations are helpful when time and space do not allow the translator to follow a strict word-for-word translation; however, the use of pragmatic explicitation hinders the translator from providing the reader with a flavorful and bold text. Therefore, one has to assess the importance of cultural references and judge whether it is more beneficial to translate certain features or maintain them for the sake of the accuracy of the adaptation.

The combined results identify the differences in quantitative and qualitative approaches that can contribute to revealing the general characteristics of explicitation strategies in translation. The locations of obligatory explicitation show the structural changes that must take place for grammatical acceptability, and the qualitative data indicate how such changes affect the tone and readability of the translated text.

Altogether, these outcomes point toward the hypothesis that the translators must equally but selectively choose the style and culture of translation as well as orientation toward the readers.

Tables 2 and 3 have drawn a more complex picture of the strategies of explicitation in Urdu-English translated literary texts, examining the cases found in LaHasil and Aks. The results concern the advantageous and disadvantageous aspects of explicitation in the framework of the translation process. The most common of them, obligatory explicitation, indisputably helps to maintain grammatical cohesion and readability and to adapt to the structural requirements of English. It is, however, done at the expense of the style; often, the translation is too neat and formal to be overly rigid, a quality which, in turn, tends to slightly blunt the sheer spontaneity and implied layers of meaning of the original Urdu text.

Although optional explicitation can cause new rhetorical problems and provide potentialities for improving stylistic distinctiveness, it is worth noticing them. This makes it possible for the translators to introduce English readers to dead-on metaphors and great idiomatic expressions while at the same time also tending to reduce the interpretive possibilities. Such a shift can result in oversimplification, displacing the ambiguity and flexibility that define much of Urdu literary endeavor. In such cases, the translation loses all the overtones that it can hold in the target language and becomes the work of the translator and not of the translation.

Probably the least often described approach, pragmatic explicitation plays a key role in overcoming cultural differences. This approach helps translators put glossaries in better context when explaining meaning to non-native audiences, but such an approach has an inherent danger of compromising complex cultural meanings to simplified or generic levels. This kind of reductionism can rob a work of much of its cultural value as contained in the original source making the reading experience less engaging, especially where they lack adequate understanding of the cultural background of the source material.

The present investigation adds to the existing knowledge about explicitation in translation in expanding the applicability of the theoretical model of Klaudy (2009) for the Urdu-English translations. Thus, while the Asymmetry Hypothesis offers a helpful framework for analyzing obligatory shifts, the part played by optional or pragmatically motivated explicitation in these translations further implies that other and subtler cultural transfer features must be blended into existing typologies. Such findings call for elaborating the assumptions of explicitation theories to meet the shared objectives and the considerations that writing South Asian literary translations raises.

8. Conclusion

This study critically underscores translators' inherent tensions: the concern to make identifiable innovations that can be reconciled with the preservation of clear meaning and popular appeal with increased expressiveness. The given approach is found to have the kind of implications in which practice overrides stylistic features, where the creativity of the original may be sacrificed for the sake of a quite apparent literal message and where the translated text may seem clearer but less intricate. While some degree of explicitation may be required for the texts to be meaningful and interesting to target audiences, there is a danger of effacing the nuances of a source text in the process.

Such findings demand a more conscious and impartial attitude to explicitation, that translators will acknowledge the pros and cons and make decisions regarding the prescription of the target language and the cultural/artistic implications of the source text. Subsequent studies should focus on educating translators as to how to operate in such contexts; scientifically, the ensemble should extend to other literature types to cover a wider span of tasks in multilingual translation. In sum, this paper becomes a small contribution to the conversation in translation studies, especially stressing the aspect of decision-making that can ensure the values of the source text and the literariness of the translated work while translating into a new language and culture.

For future implications, this current study helps cooperate with speakers of the source and target languages, allowing for detecting in what cases their shift may influence the sense or stylistics of the translation. This could help ensure that obligatory shifts are applied accurately without being overdone. Therefore, the tentative sensitization of the target audience toward the source culture may inform the degrees of pragmatic explicitation. Thus, certain cultural references remain the best-added values for the

more culturally sensitive readership, while the general reader may prefer certain subtle changes. Moreover, brief annotations or glossaries of culturally sensitive words can help the reader retain the cultural context. They play an important role in promoting the successful combination of valuable cultural experience and usable design.

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Authors' contribution

CRediT: **Muhammad Asim Mahmood**: Conceptualization, Data curation, Project administration, Supervision, Validation, Writing – review & editing; **Ansa Sattar**: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Methodology, Writing – original draft; **Muhammad Imran**: Formal analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Resources, Software, Validation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing; **Norah Almusharraf**: Formal analysis, Methodology, Resources, Validation, Visualization, Writing – review & editing.

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About the authors

Muhammad Asim Mahmood is the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Government College University, Faisalabad, Pakistan. A distinguished academic and researcher, he has made significant contributions to applied linguistics, corpus linguistics, and translation studies. With a strong background in interdisciplinary research, he has supervised numerous postgraduate theses and published extensively in national and international journals.

Ansa Sattar is a Lecturer in the Department of Applied Linguistics at Government College University, Faisalabad, Pakistan. She holds a PhD in Applied Linguistics and specializes in translation studies. Her research focuses on corpus-based translation, genre-specific linguistic analysis, and Urdu-English translation dynamics. She has coauthored scholarly work on semantic change in Urdu and contributed to translation universal studies.

Muhammad Imran, PhD from the School of Foreign Languages, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, China, is a researcher in the Educational Research Lab at the College of Humanities and Sciences at Prince Sultan University and an adjunct faculty in the Department of English Language and Literature at Khazar University, Azerbaijan. His research interests include digital literacy, language education technologies, AI and English language teaching and learning, and machine translation.

Norah Almusharraf, PhD from Buffalo University, USA, is a Vice Dean, Associate Professor, and Leader of the Education Research Lab at Prince Sultan University in Saudi Arabia. She is among the leading researchers in the Middle East in Language Education. Her research interests include foreign language teaching instructional design, educational technology, and change management.

ORCID

Muhammad Imran  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8754-2157>

Data availability statement

The data will be available on request.

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