

Tendency of Translating Educationally Valued Texts from Japanese Culture into Bangla Used in Reading Literacy

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ABSTRACT

No previous study has explored why the translators selected children's literature while translating Japanese literature into Bangla. This study aims to identify the tendency of selecting Japanese texts for translation into Bangla¹, which have educationally valued contents. It employed descriptive translation studies approach to prepare a periodized catalog of translated Japanese children's literature in the quantitative section to develop a history. The qualitative part is conducted based on two recent concepts of the sociology of translations: sociology of translation process in functioning and interpreting and sociology of translation as a cultural product. This study reveals that the translators primarily select tales with moral values a child or an adult learns from the societal sectors other than the educational institutions. They intend to circulate those moral values in the target society because the contents are socially apposite and deemed socio-culturally necessary in the target region. *Totto-chan* is analyzed as a cultural product to explore why and to what extent it is circulated. The interpreted texts are used to enhance reading literacy in reading programs. This study establishes a fundamental basis for translation, society and education altogether in the target society focusing on Japanese literature translations. In future, this study could be used as a foundational work in the field of translation studies in Bangladesh.

Key words: Translation Studies, Sociology of Translation, Bangla, Japanese, Tales, Children Literature, *Totto-Chan*, Education, Tales Used For Literacy

INTRODUCTION

Translations have been a familiar form in the Bangla language since the printing press flourished in the 19th century Bengal, however, the discipline for translation studies is yet an unestablished area at advanced studies in the Bangladeshi context. However, a conspicuous attention of the people related to literature has been noticed in the 21st century as a public and social interest towards translations. The answer to the question of "which tendency is observed while translating Japanese literature into Bangla?" is significant in two ways: one, it explores South Asian perspective of translating process, and two, it contributes to the rising concern on translation studies in the Bangladeshi context. The primary hypothesis for the question is— the translators primarily select tales which have educational values. Here, the word "education" refers to two meanings: moral education, which emphasizes on "moral principles and judgements" and "character education," which focuses on "human virtues of intuitiveness and receptivity" (Chazan & Solitis, 2022, pp. 30-32). Recent researchers emphasized that "kindergarten schools can better serve more appropriate aims of moral education by using stories" (Rahim & Rahiem, 2013, p. 454). However, in Bangladesh, moral education begins at primary schools using religious contents.

The secondary hypothesis is— the translators choose those texts as they intend to emphasize on circulating moral values in the target society because the contents are socially pertinent. As there are no previous works focusing on this tendency of selection, this study is basic research, which resolves the literary exchanges between Japan and Bengal² exploring why the Japanese tales or children literature are being interpreted into the target language. The originality of this study also lies in the necessity of establishing translation studies in the target society, here it is Bangladesh, and thus revealing the salient features exist in the translational process. Previously, while developing a discourse on "Indian Literature," Mrinmoy Pramanick theorized that the processes of translation changed with the development of the Bangla language and adjusted "vis à vis social and cultural needs" in the Bengal region (Pramanick, 2015, p. 8), which indicates a need for expanding the Bangla domain by importing foreign literature. In this paper, the social relevance of choosing educationally valued texts refers to a necessity for advancement of humanistic moralities among people. The distribution of the translated texts in book format is closely related to developing early practices of reading among children. As majority of the collections are sold at an average cost, especially the books published by Bangladesh Shishu Academy,

it is obvious that the purpose of producing those books is to circulate within the national territory. I highlight that the circulation is directly related to enhancing reading literacy at a homely environment outside the institutions.

This study is a part of my ongoing PhD dissertation, in which the tendencies of selecting Japanese literature for translation are coined into four categories based on the surveyed quantitative data of about one hundred and twelve books of literary texts between 1856 to 2023: one, tendencies in selecting canonical works, such as *Snow Country*, *Rashomon*, *Norwegian Wood* and others, two, tendencies in selecting works of prominent writers, such as Yasunari Kawabata's works, which were not mentioned by the Nobel Committee, Kenji Miyazawa's works in general, etc., three, selecting educationally valued texts, such as *Totto-chan: The Little Girl at the Window* (later one *Totto-chan*), and children's tales, etc., and four, selecting historically valued texts, for example, the diaries of scholars who traveled to Bengal or India, the memoirs relevant to history of the target society, etc. This paper is designed to present results by showing the quantitative data and the qualitative analysis, for the third tendency. To reach to the inferences, at first, a survey on the books available in the Bangla language is conducted and studied, and then analyzed for further estimations. This paper has two major focuses, one, analysis of the translated tales into Bangla, and two, analyzing *Totto-chan*, which has already received special appreciation for its internationalized educational significance that inspired the world's educational scholars to rethink about the classroom teaching methods.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Supporting Theories and Theoretical Framework

After the culture turn manifested by Lefevere (2017) and Vermeer (1992), the "interdisciplinarity" (Wolf & Fukari, 2007, p. 2) of studying translation moved towards including society in the studying translations. The multidimensional concepts on society and culture by scholars introduced a research area "sociology of translation" (Wolf & Fukari, 2007, p. 6). As Michaela Wolf stated that translation as a social practice is the key of exploring the "functioning" and "interpreting" translation, the methods majorly focus on the sociology of agents, sociology of translating (process), and sociology of cultural product (Wolf & Fukari, 2007, pp. 12–18). Additionally, Heilbron and Sapiro argued, "social conditions in the production process" "determine the circulation" of translation as a product, and inspecting translation as a social product reveals the "international space of translation exchange" (Wolf & Fukari, 2007, p. 17). This paper (as well as the main PhD research) is based on these conceptualized framing of studying translations a process and a cultural product and thus, investigate the social conditions which might have influenced the process and determined the circulation in the target society.

In a recent study on modern European poet-translations, Jacob S.D. Blakesley chiefly focused on two types of sociology of translations: sociology of translators/agents, and

translation as a product based on the extent of circulation (Blakesley, 2018, p. 3). His findings show the comparison and contrast of the trends from the data and inclusion of three case studies shows that the commonness among the translators was they were all prominent poets. However, Blakesley's study does not use the method of sociology of the process, which is the main focus in my study. The findings of this paper that in South Asian perspective, the process of translating tales from Japanese culture is majorly driven by societal fundamentality—humanistic education, would be an addition to the mainstream area of sociology of translation studies.

Previous Studies on Japanese Literature into Bangla Translations

Considering the contents, the only research on the history of Japanese literature into Bangla translations is a paper titled "Japanese literature in India: Translations in Bengali—Problems and Prospects" written by Gita Keeni. This article was published in *East Asian Literature (Japanese, Chinese and Korean)- An Interface with India* edited by P. A. George in 2006 (George, 2006). She assumed the earliest work might be Rabindranath Tagore's translation of a Japanese Haiku (Keeni, 2006, p. 297) in Tagore's travelogue *Japan Jatri*. Unfortunately, she only considered novels, poems and short stories as genres, and included only one collection of tales, which could not be discovered during my survey.

Additionally, Unita Sachidananda's "Japanese Studies in India: Recent Developments and Challenges" explores the undiscovered facts about Japanese literature translations in India and in P. A. George's paper "Indian Translation of Modern/Contemporary Japanese Literary Works: An Appraisal," a small section was included with a subtitle "Translation in Bengali Language," which was primarily based on previous research undertaken by Gita Keeni (George, 2011). In Bangladesh, Lopamudra Malek also contributed to the study on the developments of Haiku in the Bangla language. Precisely, none of those papers present a detailed analysis of Bangla translations; alternatively, each of the Indian researchers succinctly provided presentations on the general situation of Japanese literature studies in Bangla translations. A compilation of Japanese literature in translations titled *Modern Japanese Literature in Translation: A Bibliography* compiled by The International House of Japan Library, published by Kodansha International in 1979, is a pioneering catalog to speculate the percentage of Japanese literature in translations until its publication year. However, it also did not include any collection or interpretation of folktales or children's works interpreted into Bangla (Fujino & The International House of Japan Library, 1979). Clearly, there is a vacuity in exploring the quantitative and qualitative facts in the mentioned genre. Thus, this background establishes the necessity of conducting this proposed research based on the theoretical framework.

3. METHOD

As this study employed translation studies approach, the quantitative part is conducted by preparing a periodized

catalog. The qualitative analysis followed the sociology of translation method, in which sociology of translating and translation as a cultural product are prime focuses. To what extent *Totto-chan* could reach the Bangla readers is explored by conducting a survey using SNS platform. The participation was voluntary, and the responders did not provide any personal information. The target responders were students and teachers related to Bangla literature in Bangladesh. About 140 responses were recorded. The survey result supports the speculation of the percentage of the readers aware of the text. However, the survey could not ensure to reach a big population, instead, the results are for an indication only. To support my hypotheses, two interviews were conducted to acquire intellectual opinions for this paper. The interviewees provided consent to use their insights using their own names in advance and the transcriptions are included in the main PhD dissertation.

Descriptive Translation Studies

Usually, history of translations is about the texts; when and where these were printed by whom are the common concerns as the researchers aim to present a dataset based on the printing details. However, Antony Pym believes that “with what frequency” the translations appeared is a must to become the history some knowledge; as without this point a prepared catalog would only be a dataset of information (Pym, 1996, p. 168). Pym also emphasized that “periodization” of the dataset, instead of alphabetically presented catalog, is more important in producing “substantial knowledge” from the information provided in the catalog (Pym, 1996, p. 171). Based on this concept in the research area of descriptive translation studies, a periodized catalog³ is prepared as a primary dataset and analyzed for results.

Sociology of Translation

The qualitative part of this study engaged sociology of translating while emphasizing the functioning of the text based on Clem Robyn’s idea on translating. Considering both source texts and TTs is his key concern, with which he developed three aspects: “a meta discourse on translation, the selection and distribution of the elements imported through translations, and integration and transformations of elements” (Wolf & Fukari, 2007, pp. 15–16). Among those, this study focuses on the second and third aspect. To understand the circulation process of an educationally valued text, *Totto-chan* is presented as a case study and a survey is conducted online. Additionally, while employing the sociology of translation as cultural products approach, social conditions in the target society explores an acculturation process of the work in the target society. This analysis reveals why the target society encultured the translated work. The social condition identified in this paper as “education” has two meanings: one, humanistic moral values transferred through tales, and two, concept of educating children with multidimensional approach in classrooms.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Quantitative results: folktales as educationally valued texts

The quantitative data proves that the translators preferred to translate tales which contains moral values and cultural elements from the Japanese society. It also shows that there are two specific trends in choosing folktales for Bengali children: tales that represent Japanese culture and tales that provide moral values. There are two major facts functioning in the initiation— one, the wealthy collection of Japanese tales available in public domain, and two, flexibility of the source and target literature as this category usually aims the young readers. The circulation of Japanese literature can be viewed as an acculturational process. This way, it identifies the relevant factors that supported the translational activity.

Among the one hundred and twelve translated books in twelve genres, children’s literature is the highest in number (Table 1). At least twenty books are found consisted of folktales. Two of them are dramatized versions of the folktale Urashima Tarō. Others are picture books or children’s stories. *Totto-chan* is considered a memoir.

The frequency of appearing children’s literature in book format has increased since the 1960s to the 1990s (Figure 1) in a fluctuating manner. However, in recent decades, there is a decrease in the trend. The declining interests is explainable if the number of fiction translations in the 21st century comes into consideration.

Qualitative results: Totto-chan as a cultural product

The sociology of *Totto-chan* shows that its first appearance into Bangla in the 1980s is not because the Bangladeshis began prioritizing translating. Instead, the analysis indicates that it might have resulted from the previous mechanical and technological affairs between the mentioned countries. The differences in two TTs (*Totto-chan*) suggest that Hiroko Kasuya’s version is a literal translation that renders a similar uniqueness to the original. However, Chaity Rahman’s translation is more widely circulated than the other versions due to its fluid language. Perhaps, Chaity Rahman was the first translator to interpret it for its educational values. Bangladeshi educational context and translator’s introduction might have influenced the circulation.

Analysis of Translated Folktales

The translators tend to prefer translating folktales from any foreign literature into Bangla to introduce newer contents. As Khagendranath Mitra said, “The Nineteenth century children’s literature is based on translations” (Mitra, 1958, Introduction- cha) in Bangla literary domain. Folktales from any foreign literature into Bangla are still adequately available in the target domain⁴. This category of literature is the most feasible choice to any translator as the source literature usually aims children and the texts mostly belong to the

Table 1. Translated books (112)

Genre	Children's Literature	Novel	Poetry	Short Stories	Others (Memoir, Drama, Science Fiction, Romance, Diary, Essay, Autobiography, Dictionary)
Number of books	31	28	22	15	16

**Figure 1.** The trend of Japanese tales into bangla in book format

public domain. Necessary initiating of the process does not require any formal attainment of copyright process. Targeting the children group and selecting the ethically valued tales for rendering is an intention to reproduce a text that will serve as an educational tool outside educational institution. Since the Nineteenth century, emergence of folklore as a discipline around the world has confirmed the circulation of continental folktales from continent to continent. However, though Japanese folktale has the century-long adaptation history into Bangla, there has been no study on the trends.

This part of the discussion intends to encapsulate the performativity of the factors that speeded up the cultural exchange process via translating Japanese literature into Bangla. In the first kind of trends, “The Tale of Japan’s Birth,” “The Tale of Momotarō,” “The Tale of Ubasuteyama,” “The Tale of Woodcutter,” “Grandfather Hanasaka,” “Why the Water of Sea is Salty,” “Princess Kaguya,” “Princess Hachikatsugi,” “The Tale of Urashima Tarō,” and several other tales are among the culturally representing folktales rendered into Bangla. *Japani Phanus* (Gangapadhyay, 1908), which enlivened the continuous eagerness of the Bangla readers towards Japanese tales over centuries, would merely be discussed by modern translation researchers due to its abruptly adapted version into Bangla. Consequently, these types of adaptations will belong to a medieval gray area between world literature in translation and original writing in the targeted lingual domain and literary domain. Nonetheless, the historical significance of *Japani Phanus* is undeniable as discussed in my ongoing PhD dissertation. Importing Japanese folk literature for the Bengali children and adult readers in the first decade of the Twentieth century can be considered as an influence of early globalization before WWI.

Ahamad Jalal’s *Japani Shishukahini o Chora* (Jalal, 1991) is an appropriate example which contains all of the significances about rendering educationally valued texts. Firstly, the translator followed the Japanese versions for the process. Secondly, the targeted population were mainly

children, and its publication house (Bangladesh Shishu Academy) is a national institution for children. Thirdly, it has the direct influences of both receiving and transmitting around country as he served as a government official in the Ministry of International Affairs, Bangladesh. Fourthly, the culturally representative tales and the rhymes simultaneously deliver humanitarian messages. Among the nine tales, “The Tale of Japan’s Birth,” “The Tale of Momotarō,” “The Tale of Ubasute Mountain,” “The Tale of Woodcutter,” “Grandfather Hanasaka,” “Why the Water of Sea is Salty,” “Princess Kaguya,” and “Princess Hachikatsugi,” the majority of the interpretations contains culturally illustrative literary elements and carry socially accepted moral values derived from the Japanese culture. Distributing these types of ethically valued tales signifies acceptability of Japanese folktales beyond borders due to its originality in containing humanitarian messages.

Functioning of tales

In the case of Japanese literature in Bangla, I speculate that, in translating folktales, the translators are more inquisitive in introducing different contents instead of the specific structural form (tale) only. The more illustrious variety of narratives a culture possesses, the more a translator become captivated by the contents for translation. For instance, “The Tale of Ubasute Mountain” or “Why the Water of Sea is Salty” are the tales which consist of the Japanese original essence with culture-leading elements those are not familiar in Bengal culture. While the Sea of Bengal and a certain portion of hilly terrain surround southern Bengal, the cultural formation of these geographical elements in this area is only hinted at in the Bangla folktales. For example, the tale of Dalim Kumar or the tale of Hiramoon Bird are the most widely known two tales from Bengal. These two stories represent the characteristics of Bangla tales in a very brief structure. Comparing with Japanese tales, these stories are mostly based on the psychological communication among

the characters containing less materialistic elements from the culture, whereas in the Japanese tales, in the successfully translated versions, the culturally representing materialistic elements are skillfully rendered along with the geographically identifying facts. For instance, “Grandfather Hanasaka” contains the originating information such as “Kyushu,” and “Kagoshima,” so that any Bangla reader would be able to accommodate those signifying names in the provided storyline. These characteristics of exerting Japanese situatedness even in the tales makes the stories distinguished among the other tales in the distant geography of Bengal. Needless to say, the educationally significant messages of the stories were fundamental basis of selection. The essence of “The Tale of Ubasute Mountain” unquestionably edifices the reader’s mind of caring for older parents and not abandoning them. In selecting any educationally valued literature, the long-lived tales are the first choices for delivering them to the children.

However, another factor is also important for importing educationally valued literature in folk tales and that is the vacuity of those specific forms of literature in a certain culture, which Even-Johar has already pointed out as the blankness of “literary repertoire” (Even-Zohar, 1990, pp. 45–51). Following his statement for the positioning of translated literature within the literary system, I assert that there is a vacantness of new children’s tales in Bengali society that might have influenced the initiators to translate Japanese folk tales, which are consisted of both culture-leading elements and edifying messages. Several Bengali scholars, like Dinesh Chandra Sen and Upendra Kishor Ray Chowdhury developed rich exploratory history in search of Bangla tales in the Nineteenth and Twentieth century. After their invaluable contribution in finding and compiling them, there is no further scope for newer researchers to discover any significant materialistic stories from the old folk society of those two centuries. Therefore, except for the creative children’s literature in the second half of the Twentieth century, the emptiness created by the century-long, previously explored legendary folk tales originating in Bengal posits the necessity to fill that emptiness with a demanding literary form—stories with popular Japanese tales. General readers prefer newer narratives. Thereby, the created vacuum reminds the initiators to import new tales, preferably with educational values suitable for any reader.

***Totto-chan* as a Cultural Product in Target Society**

After the first appearance of *Totto-chan* (1988), published by Bangla Academy and translated by Hiroko Kasuya, cultural exchange between Bangladesh and Japan entered into a new phase in independent Bangladesh as it was the first literary exchange between these two countries via translation after the cultural agreement took place in 1982. However, during the previous decades, before and after independence, Japan International Corporation Agency (JICA) had a direct engagement in developing the television and radio broadcasting centers. According to the Overseas Technical Cooperation Agency report, there were three different teams dispatched during the 60s (1961, 1964, 1967) from Japan

to Bangladesh (East Pakistan period) to conduct surveys to inaugurate television broadcasting service in East Bengal (then East Pakistan, now Bangladesh) region (Government of Japan Overseas Technical Cooperation Agency, 1973, pp. 1–2). After that, the newly emerged Bangladesh continued focusing on enhancing media coverage facilities by seeking uninterrupted support from JICA in this matter. As a result, we see that JICA recognized the necessities and prolonged the assistance in establishing more advanced infrastructural changes in the region for television and radio (Japan International Corporation Agency, 1979). Finally, in 1980, the national television of Bangladesh started broadcasting color programs (Rahman, 2011). Although this exchange was focused on technological support, it was centered on media and broadcasts. Therefore, it would not be unwise to assume that, later on, the cultural treaty between these two countries led to another interchange via literary translation of *Totto-chan* in the decade.

The media-influence on importing Japanese literature was a more substantial factor to identify than any other influences in the 1990s due to the broadcasting of international programs on BTV. There was also a Japanese serial, *Oshin*, which became popular with the Bangladeshi audience. However, this decade of BTV is known as the golden period of the channel by TV critics. During the 90s in Bangladesh, the media and culture through the national TV channel BTV transformed into a platform that broadcasted international TV series and dramas from all over the world. For instance, several serials were broadcasted over the years during the 90s, such as *MacGyver*, *The Adventures of Sindbad*, *Oshin*, *Alif Laila*, and many more. Thereby, broadcasting *Oshin* was not an unusual act considering the tendency of showing international programs via BTV in the decade. Fundamentally, in the 90s, Bangladesh was experiencing a transformation in media and cultural practice based on the available resources around the society.

Sociology of Totto-chan in Bangladeshi context

There was another continuity in the generational upbringing of the youth after the 1971 liberation war. Previously, Japan’s affairs were handled with the Pakistani government, and later on, it was getting forwarded to the then East Bengal. This scenario changed in newly independent Bangladesh. According to the chairman, M Chowdhury, of the Bangladesh School Textbook Board, the school textbooks appeared with the new objective “to make the younger generation aware of the outer world” (Ali & Chowdhury, 1974, Preface). The children who received a primary education about the outer world became mindful of the contents they were introduced to through the textbooks. While presenting the child living in England, America, Iran, Turkey, and Egypt, Japanese children were the only Asian representation in the textbook written for class five students (Ali & Chowdhury, 1974). Knowing Japanese children’s academic life at such an early age creates a mental setup towards a country’s educational system. The presence of the Japanese content in the primary textbooks is an indication that there was explicit approval from the then Bangladeshi government as the whole curriculum

was approved by the newly independent Bangladesh authority. Therefore, in this context, introducing *Totto-chan*, which was written on the educational experiences the author had during the world war, might be an endeavor to let the Bangla readers know about the Japanese educational system.

The parallel continuation of Japanese presence on diplomatic level and in the inner Bangladeshi society developed the foundation for the next phase of cultural exchange in the immediately next decade. However, the political powerplay in Bangladesh during the 70s resulted into several assassinations such as President Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's assassination in 1975, and another, President Ziaur Rahman's assassination in 1981, who were the leaders of different political parties with different ideologies. Unquestionably, the unstable leadership over a decade in newly independent Bangladesh influenced the mass people, leading the writers to have an ineffectual literary decade. The first Japanese fiction that appeared in the newly emerged country is Ryūnosuke Akutagawa's *Rashōmon* translated by Khaliqzaman Elias (Akutagawa, 1981). Elias expressed that the political unrest might have had an influence on him in translating Akutagawa's work, as those were able to take him to another world of fiction where the instability could not follow⁵. Undeniably, the finesse in depicting a distant society that Akutagawa possesses has alluring ability to transcend a readers' reality into a vignette imaginative sketch. However, the foundation of importing Japanese literature took several significant steps throughout the decade of the 1980s. For instance, the first original text after 1971 appeared in 1985 and was jointly published by the Bangladesh Shishu Academy and Japanese Language School Alumni Association (JALSAA), Dhaka, Bangladesh. The only Japanese-Bangla dictionary also appeared in this decade. These works insinuate that the translation of *Totto-chan* was not an unconnected and sudden outcome; instead, it was the turning point of moving closer to the Japanese market and culture through translation.

This decade of importing Japan-related culturally important contents could be identified as a golden period when the standalone piece of work, *Totto-chan*, was translated and published in Bangladesh. During this decade, the interchange process between these two countries expanded well. *Totto-chan* became famous around the world by the immediate next year of its publication. It is certain that it holds the popularity that crossed national borders. Therefore, it was comparatively a dependable choice for transmitting it further into another language. Translating this book has several literary contributions to the Bangla domain: one, in genre, an autobiographical writing focusing on the childhood; two, in contents, viewing the learning process from the child's viewpoint; and three, the first endeavor of translating literature from source literature as a standalone piece. Unfortunately, the credit for translating the first narrative from the original goes to a Japanese citizen Hiroko Kasuya, the translator of *Totto-chan*. To date, there are at least three versions translated by three different translators available in Bangla including Hiroko Kasuya's translation. Among the other two translators, Mousumi Bhowmik's interpretation is published

in India, and Chaity Rahman translated it in Bangladesh. However, due to the socio-cultural intermingling perspective of Bangladesh and West Bengal, the Indian Bangla books are available in Bangladeshi market. Therefore, to the Bangladeshi readers, all of the three Bangla versions are accessible. According to Mousumi Bhowmik, when she was planning to translate it for the second time in Bangla after Hiroko Kasuya's work, Kasuya's version became out of print by then (Kuroyanagi, 1981/2017, Preface- Bangla Onubad Prosonge). Hence, it has not been a literal translation. Instead, she avoided several sentences in several chapters and in several sections, summarized the ideas and interpreted the texts. Thereby, Mousumi Bhowmik's work can only be referred to for circulation in the target society, targeting the mass population, instead of being referred to as a textbook for advanced studies. For this reason, the following discussion is prepared on analyzing four books: the original book in Japanese by Tetsuko Kuroyanagi, Dorothy Briton's English version as a secondary source, and two target texts (TTs)— Hiroko Kasuya's translation and Chaity Rahman's work.

Alterations of Totto-chan to Bangla literary domain

In this section, I discuss the alterations between the sources and TTs. As Mousumi Bhowmik's work is more discursive from the Japanese as well as the secondary source, I choose Chaity Rahman's work for a comparative discussion. *Totto-chan* sets a milestone of establishing Japan-Bangladesh affairs via literary exchanges as it engaged agents⁶ from both countries. However, the following analysis shows variations or originalities in the translated texts. It indicates that the fluidity in the target text's language might be a reason for the wide circulation of the product.

Between Hiroko Kasuya's work and Chaity Rahman's work, Kasuya's rendering is closer to the original as it was interpreted from the Japanese source. Alternatively, Chaity's work is also a faithful rendering of the secondary source (Dorothy Briton's). However, Dorothy's work influences the sentence structures and interpretation of a few words. For instance, the title of the 36th chapter is "Sengakuji" in the original work (Kuroyanagi, 1981/1984) and Dorothy rendered it as "The Forty-seven Ronin," (Kuroyanagi, 1981/1982) which is the same in Chaity's interpretation. On the contrary, Hiroko Kasuya continued to keep the proper nouns as the original names. Translating the proper nouns does not carry the name-related cultural elements. Therefore, a Bangla reader might not get the Japanese references through the textual elements in Chaity's interpretation. Furthermore, a translator always takes freedom in choosing alternative words, which might change the original meaning of the narrative in several description. While adding Maruyama sensei's name to the title (Kuroyanagi, 1981/2019), Chaity Rahman sincerely followed the secondary version. When reading this chapter, a reader might get an indication that the chapter is designed to introduce the name character. On the contrary, the original only had the temple's name as a title which led to get to know Maruyama sensei while visiting the temple *Sengakuji*.

Kasuya's interpretation followed the lingual formation of the original. Hiroko Kasuya faithfully maintained a literal translation process for the interpretation. Therefore, there are merely a few contents found that are not interpreted in target text. For instance, in previously mentioned Chapter "Sengakuji," Hiroko also interpreted the phonetic description of the Chinese poetry narrated in the original, which is left out in Dorothy Briton's English rendering, which is the source for Chaity's work. (In general ST refers to Source Text, and TT refers to Target Text in the following analysis)

Primary Source Text (PST1): Tetsuko Kuroyanagi's Text
 へタという、見たところが、まず、小林先生とは、違っていたけど、それよりも、時々、ベンケイシクシク 夜 河をわたるといふ詩吟を、みんなに聞かせるところが、とても違っていた。本当は、鞭声 肅肅 夜 河を過たる。

のだけれど、トットちゃん達は、弁慶が、シクシクと泣きながら、夜、川を渡っていく時の歌だと信じていた。丸山先生のベンケイ シクシクは有名だった。(Kuroyanagi, 1981/1984, p. 170)

Target Text (TT1): Translation of PST: Hiroko Kasuya's translation into Bangla

সে মাঝে মাঝে [] শিগিন (চীনা কবিতা) আবৃত্তি করে ক্লাসের সবাইকে শোনাতো। এ-ক্ষেত্রেও সে ছিন্দো ভিন্ন। সে আবৃত্তি করতো, 'বেনসেই (চামুকের আওয়াজ) শুকুশুকু (নীচের নিশাপে) ইয়াক কাওয়াও ওয়াতাক (রাতের নদী পার করে), তবে অজাননা বেনসেই'-কে 'বেনকেই' আর 'শুকুশুকু'-কে 'শিকুশিকু' কনতো। এং তারা মনে করতে এটা হচ্ছে [] সামুরাই বেনকেইর করলভাবে কেঁদে কেঁদে রাতে নদী পার হওয়ার সময়ের গান। মারুইয়ামা স্যারের বেনকেইর করল গান কারো অজানা ছিলো না।

(Kuroyanagi, 1981/1988, pp. 99-100)

Personal translation of TT1 (TTT1) for analysis

He often recites [] *Shigin* (Chinese poems) to the class. He was different in it too. He used to recite "Bensei (sound of whip) shukushuku (silently) yoru kawa wo wataru (crossing the river at night)." However, Tottochan and others heard 'bensei' as 'benkei' and 'shukushuku' as 'shikushiku.' And they used to think that this was sad song of the [] Benkei Samurai who crossed the river at night crying. There was no one who did not know about Maruyama sensei's benkei song.

Secondary Source Text (SST): Translation of PST in English by Dorothy Briton

He not only looked quite different from Mr. Kobayashi, but he used to recite classical Chinese-style poems in solemn voice. (Kuroyanagi, 1981/1982, p. 112)

TTT 2: Translation of PST: Chaity Rahman's translation in Bangla

তধু দেখতেই কোবায়শি মসাইয়ের থেকে আলাদা নন, তিনি কবিতাও বলতেন আলাদারকম। তিনি খাটি চীনা কবিতা আবৃত্তি করতেন।

(Kuroyanagi, 1981/2019, p. 148)

Personal translation of TT (TTT2) for analysis

Not only he was different from Kobayashi sensei, but also his reciting was different. He used to recite Chinese poems.

In the TT1, while comparing Kobayashi sensei and Maruyama sensei, Hiroko Kasuya has rendered the singing style differences from PST in 'Sengakuji' chapter. She also transferred the word [] *Shigin* (Chinese poems) and [] Benkei Samurai with very detail description. Surprisingly, Dorothy Briton skipped the whole section in his first edition (1982) and later editions (SST). The influences mentioned in the first paragraph of this chapter declares the distinctive teaching style of Kobayashi sensei and Maruyama sensei with Chinese poem recital habits emphasizing on both Eastern

and Western influences on their ideals. On the contrary, leaving out Chinese influence part by keeping only Kobayashi sensei's European influences gives an impression of not having idiosyncratic features in them. Therefore, as Chaity Rahman followed Dorothy's edition as primary source, she transferred only the European practices of Kobayashi sensei (TTT2), which gives the similar expression of Dorothy's edition. Here, Chaity Rahman's rendering is discursive in transferring the uniqueness of the Japanese version as her is a translation of translation. Regarding the linguistic differences or affinities, the language of the two Bangla versions is moderately unique in different ways. For instance, the first few lines of the Hiroko's interpretation are somewhat complex if we consider the target readers are mass people.

Chaity Rahman adhered to Dorothy Briton's translation, but she also included additional descriptions to help readers to grasp the Japanese context. Such as, she added "You need to return the ticket to the ticket checker at the gate" as an additional explanation as in Bangladesh, people do not need to return the tickets on local trains (Kuroyanagi, 1981/2019, 1). However, this does not change the original context of the why Tottochan finds the ticket an invaluable one. Instead, it helps a reader understanding the context of why the ticket is invaluable to Tottochan. In the immediate description, Chaity Rahman added another sentence which is not found in PST or SST. This sentence enhances the understandability of the context of how the ticket becomes precious to Tottochan by stating: "A big box full of precious tickets!" (Kuroyanagi, 1981/2019, 1). These inclusions in an expanding explaining manner magnify the indicated emotion of the protagonist which is not even narrated explicitly by the original author like Chaity Rahman did. Moreover, using the simple sentence structures in the TT indicates the possible readers' society, which could be mass people, as target readers. After the first edition in 2018, Dunduvi published the second edition in 2019 which affirms the maximum sale of the book within the two years. Due to the dependency on secondary source, Chaity Rahman's translation reflected Briton's interpretation in many ways. Translation of translation is always an unsteady work due to the distance between the original and the latest TT. Hence, the readability of Chaity Rahman's translation is more spontaneous than Hiroko Kasuya's interpretation. It was perhaps due to the foreignization of the ST in Hiroko Kasuya's TT. She applied literal translation methods to make the foreign contents visible even at the linguistic level.

Circulation: results on recent readers

To explore the percentage of the readers, who are related to Bangla language and literature, I have conducted an online survey on social media platform (Facebook) using a google form. Among 140 responses, 45.70% of the respondents are aware of the *Totto-chan*. And only the 35.30% of them have read the book. The target responders of this online survey are among the Bangla literature related individuals including teachers, researchers, and students. Among the participants, 55% of the respondents are students, while the teachers are 21.4%. There are also 19.30% of respondents from various

sectors. The rest of the participants are researchers. Despite the fact that it has been translated by three different translators over decades and considering the availability of other foreign literary texts simultaneously, the percentage of the people who read the book is not displeasing. While Hiroko Kasuya's work was closer to the original, it was eventually out of print and unavailable in the libraries, and it may never have been reprinted. Whereas Chaity Rahman's works played a role in circulating the literature at a secondary level through reprinting.

Considering educationally valued contents in foreign literature, we could argue that this is not the first instance of introducing a foreign literature that is significant for radical education. There is another book, *Apnake Bochi Sir – Barbiana School Theke* (1986), translated by Salil Biswas from *Letter to a Teacher by School of Barbiana*, with at least three reprints (in 1996, 2002, and 2007) published by Baulmon Prokashon, Kolkata, available on Bangla domain. According to the preface of the translation work, the translator emphasized on listening to the eight students of the Barbiana School as the people who suffered a lot in getting education under national education system compared with a universal system and who allegedly criticizes the system for depriving the masses of their needs and the translator believed that people must read this book (Biswas, 2019). Getting reprinted over decades affirms the necessity of awareness for a suitable education system management in the Bengal region. However, the availability of published goods in wider range became more accessible in the Twenty First century as the number of land ports between India and Bangladesh increased in the first decade of the century (Bangladesh Land Port Authority, n.d.); for example, the Petrapole-Benapole port situated in the western Bangladesh is the largest land port in South Asia. Importing books from West Bengal was more difficult in previous years than the recent years. Therefore, the chances of availability of Salil Biswas's translation on reforming education system in Bangladesh was lower than Mousumi Bhowmik's Translation of *Totto-chan*. The continued expressions for educational changes at an administrative level through translating educationally valued literary texts is not a precipitous occurrence in Bengal region. The urging demands for a better system often led the translators to initiate translating relevant literature for the target society to insinuate possible ways for the proposed reformation in the system.

There are other contributions *Totto-chan* has made to Bangla literary domain, such as, in genre. Although autobiographical works are familiar among the writers, most of the autobiographic writings are based on the adult-life or the life after youth. Therefore, autobiography of a child about her childhood presents a different aspect in Bangla literary domain. However, there are still no such autobiographical works on childhood available from a Bengali perspective, even in the Twenty First century. Bangladeshi literary history begins after the 1947 partition; and from 1971 onward, Bangladeshi literature showed a noticeable sphere in producing masterpieces in the 1970s. Amid these years in general, writers like Selina Hossain, Selina Hossain, Akhteruzzaman Elias, Showkat Ali, Showkat Osman, and several others have created their

prominent works later in 1980s. The contents and themes were commonly based on liberation war, middle class societal crisis, and relevant reforming demands for the society. Considering the absence of children in fiction or autobiography, *Totto-chan* might have been a preferable alternative as it already achieved an international fame. The inference is that the international popularity of this book might also have influenced the initiation.

Educational values of the book in Bangladesh

Considering its developing country status, Bangladesh has taken many initiatives for upgrading the education system in several ways, such as infrastructures, managements, and increasing the skills of the teachers by providing necessary trainings and workshops. However, improvement of the education system has remained a key concern for the government as well as international organizations. Predominantly, the projects conducted by the government and non-government organizations (NGO) have been in the education sector. Literacy and development are two major concerns for changing a nation's concurrent situation. The literacy rate has never crossed the margin of 50% before 2011. Therefore, the focus on developing the education sector has been increasingly receiving attention of the nation's lead investigators through national and international projects. Not only are the government's steps to introduce multilingual education in relevant areas like CHT observed, but other autonomous projects like Alor Pathshala have also come along with the government's projects to enhance literacy⁷.

For instance, "better performance of the teachers of non-state schools" (Alam, 2000), or education as a fundamental human right (Mujeri, 2010), or success in "non-formal education program" (Nath et al., 1999), or development of libraries for education (Hossain, 1983) and several other focuses received scholarly attention since the independence of Bangladesh. These academic topics and results indicate that there is a very consistent motivation for developing the education sector in Bangladesh. However, the other necessary radiances are also found in the societal practices, such as, discussions on this topic via round table meetings, or publishing books, or conducting individual projects etc. This side of the expedient defiance among the mass people is hardly mentioned in the highly academic discussions as the target of this practices majorly aimed the regular people for the edification. For example, publishing book about the experiences of foreign school education system for reading purposes. Even with these continuous academic and non-academic efforts, however, the disparity between the best education system in the world and Bangladesh still exists. Translating *Totto-chan* in the 1980s might have been a wise choice due to its international popularity; however, interpreting in 2018 for the third time unequivocally stands for the significance it carries forward with its unique and radical teaching environment through the Tomoe School in post WWII Japan. In her preface, Chaity Rahman explained why the parents, teachers, and students must read it. She also compares between the Bangladeshi education system and the Tomoe School from *Totto-chan*. The twenty-page long

prelude is more of a comparative study than an introduction, attempting to determine the socio-cultural relevance of introducing it for the third time by comparing the education systems of two countries (Rahman, 2019).

Japan holds its exceptional position in schooling at an early age till secondary education where all students receive the equal teaching resources. For this reason, considering Japan's model for primary level education has been a preference among the civil society when discussing improvements. After entering the Twenty First century, this point of view was directed toward an academic approach. In 2007, Muhammad Faridul Alam published his research on why Bangladesh should take lessons for improving the education system, a project he conducted at Tsukuba University, while observing the Japanese system closely (Alam, 2007). In his book, he elaborately discussed about how education enhances Japanese economic growth, alternatively coined as development, by identifying Japan's homogenous general education at ordinary primary schools and multiple paths of higher-level education separated by profession and gender. He finally endorses that Japanese model's replications for Bangladesh might be the best option to adopt in (Alam, 2007, pp. 80–90).

Later in a compilation, a foreign Bangladeshi resident in Japan, Tanjina Yeasmin, shared her experience as a mother of a child, who had experienced Japanese schooling for a long time (Yeasmin, 2019, pp. 11-58). In that compilation, experience of a foreign Bangladeshi resident in Netherlands was also included, along with a narrative from Bangladeshi citizen experienced in Bangladesh. Inscribing lived experiences by referring to Japanese schooling is an expedient manner of awakening mass interest in changing the national education system. These previous academic and non-academic endeavors, by presenting Japan as a model structure for a reformation of Bangladeshi primary education system, affirm the ineluctability of changing contemporary education policies in the target country. Hence, the initiation of presenting *Totto-chan* for the third time fulfills the opportunity of knowing the core encouraging factors for a radical education system to ameliorate the Bangladeshi system. Here lies the literary importance of introducing appropriate educational methods for preschoolers and primary schoolers.

Tomoe Gakuen School has been discussed for fundamental educational methods around the world. Perhaps this is the most discussed and translated text from Japan after WWII. Although it was written in the 1980s, the teaching methods narrated in this book adopted by the Headmaster Kobayashi and second Headmaster Maruyama are still models for the Twenty First century generation. Focusing on the psychological needs, Rianna and others identified the need for security of a physically challenged child along with the self-esteem needs encouraged by these two mentioned teachers, and also the researchers endorse that “the result of the study can be followed up with principal leaders of researchers in terms of sociological aspects” (Sumampouw et al., 2019, p. 889). They agreed, “As for world education, especially for teachers, this research can also be used as an additional reference to meet the adequacy of pedagogic, especially scientific needs” (Sumampouw et al., 2019, p. 889). Though,

other researchers, like Melfita and others, concede that the intermingling relationship between the students described in the fiction was fundamentally founded in the children's personalities via teaching of certain educational values by Headmaster Kobayashi (Melfita et al., 2020). These researchers also asserted the literary formation of the plot, which has a sequential educating method that influenced the awareness of children's educational values (Melfita et al., 2020). In particular, the unique method applied by Headmaster Kobayashi raises awareness of differences in abilities possessed by students, which later developed an adequate level of self-confidence, led to the developing communication skill between them, and finally helped them achieve something they wished (Melfita et al., 2020). These fundamental consequential steps for a teacher at the primary level of education are not familiar to the Bangladeshi primary system. The availability of this book unboxed the chances of thinking about the defiance against putative norms among the people of civil society. Therefore, to attenuate the dissimilarities and abnormalities in primary education method present in Bangladeshi parents, teachers and institutions, the attempt to interpret it for the third time even from a secondary source was unarguably a wise step with prescience.

Discussions

The abovementioned results with analyses indicate that preferences in selecting educationally valued texts are not random initiations, instead, they are reflections of social relevance in the target society. The cultural dynamics and national interests toward Japan in the 1980s and the 1990s influenced the translation process of *Totto-chan* and other tales. Furthermore, the differences in transferring cultural elements, such as keeping the original nouns or interpreting them, also exist in the linguistic patterns in the TTs. However, this study does not focus on the quality of translation based on in-text translation styles. In its place, it connects society and culture through the works as product of culture in the target region and shows how the target readers or people are interconnected in the best possible way.

The vacuity in the target literary domain indicates that there is space where a translated text will likely receive attention like creative writings do. This feature also raises a question about the creative literary productivity of children's literature in the target society. In the mentioned decades, in the 1980s and the 1990s, Bangladesh was experiencing a rising publication house scenario considering the periods. The popular Sheba Prokashoni⁸ reached the furthest periphery of the country by this time. Teen literature and thrillers for adults became popular among the young generation. Nonetheless, as the relation between product and agents is a different topic, this study only aimed at product and culture, and vacuity is interpreted as a materialistic necessity of such products by the readers.

A relevant discussion arises about reproducing a dictionary for a targeted language, Bangla, as it is a work of translation. Despite producing a dictionary being a form of language standardization in a society, it could be said that translating it was an intended activity to foster the Japanese

language itself in a foreign country. Translating a dictionary quickened the process of translating Japanese literature a step ahead by encouraging the translators to choose the original source instead of secondary sources. It also asserted the noticeable position of the language in a foreign country. However, Even-Zohar believed that “the very principles of selecting the works to be translated are determined by the situation governing the (home) poly-system: the texts are chosen according to their compatibility with the new approaches and the supposedly innovative role they may assume within the target literature” (Even-Zohar, 1990, p. 47). Therefore, it can be said that interpreting dictionaries for escalating a particular language learning in Bangladesh was created by a factor that, in the upcoming years, people and students would be a more appropriate target group. The dictionary would serve as a prime need, and thus, from 1988 to 2017, this dictionary had six reprints, which implies that the Japanese language learning is expanding.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to specify the tendency of translating Japanese children’s literature into Bangla employing concepts of descriptive translation studies, the sociology of translating process as a social activity, and the sociology of translation as a cultural product. To fulfill the aim, a research question of “What is the tendency of translating Japanese children’s literature into Bangla?” is projected. After preparing a quantitative section as a periodized catalog, the functioning and interpreting of the translated texts, social conditions, and circulation in the target society are explored to reveal the acculturation space of cultural exchanges between Japan and Bangladesh.

The principal contribution of this study is to give the connection of translation, education, and society a fundamental basis from a South Asian perspective and to provide experiential data for Japanese literature translations to support it. This study showed an interconnected network between societal factors, translation, and the importation of Japanese literature in the children’s literature genre. Thus, the target readers, children, and teenagers, benefit from repeated personal reading, which enhances their reading literacy. This research also analyzed *Totto-chan* as a product and its social conditions. It confirms the connectivity of the circulation and its role in the target society as a cultural product to assure literacy through homely reading. Accordingly, this study contributes to the field of translation studies that having moral and social values in children’s literature is the fundamental essence the translators focus on while interpreting Japanese literature into Bangla, and it functions more effectively when the translators transfer the source cultural vibes into the TTs. Reading literacy of the target readers is directly connected with the dynamics of translational activity and social realities.

Therefore, this study’s quantitative data and qualitative analyses combined to form a concise study of its own category. A central strength of this diversified research design is that it accommodates various methods to study a single area, and, thus, develop existing linkages with one another based on a single foreign literary translation— Japanese literature.

However, the limitation of the study is that it cannot confirm the actual number of translated tales; instead, it is based on the least possible number of books. And thus, it also suggests that the factual number of tales might be explored later. Nonetheless, the abovementioned critical results of the process and the cultural product, an undeniable fact in South Asian perspectives, remain necessary to explore the Bangladeshi translational system in the future. Future education programs on homely education in the target region could use these findings to implement newer projects to enhance reading literacy using translations. This research mainly aimed to reach people academically or commercially related to the literary field, translation studies, and education. The implications of the combined methods and results will also be helpful to those who intend to establish translation studies as a discipline at the advanced studies level in Bangladesh.

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END NOTES

1. The language is known as Bengali; however, the state language of Bangladesh is called Bangla.
2. In this paper, the word Bengal refers to a geologically undivided Bengal area which was divided into East and West Bengal in 1947, and the East Bengal became Bangladesh in 1971.
3. The catalog is included as an integral part (history of Japanese translations) of the ongoing PhD dissertation titled “Developments of Japanese Literature in the Bangla Language in Bangladesh: History and Trends” and the dataset for tales is excerpted from the dissertation to show the results in this paper.
4. For example, Alor Pathshala (School of Enlightenment) is an online book reading program. In the e-library, books on translated tales from China, Korea, England, France, Italy, Russia, Poland, and Japan are available for free reading. <https://alorpathshala.org/books?sort=title>.
5. Elias, Khaliqzaman. Interview. Conducted by Tiasha Chakma on December 2, 2021, for the ongoing PhD research.
6. Here, agents refer to the translators, publishers, patrons, etc. identified in system theory of translation.
7. The tendency of selecting works of prominent writers is analyzed and discussed in the main ongoing PhD dissertation, which was previously published in *Journal of East-West Thought* in March 2022 issue available at <http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12680/f1881s17j>. How adapted tale becomes an educational tool is a primary focus in the paper. The adapted tale is rewritten in a setting of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), Bangladesh.
8. The popularity of Sheba Prokashoni is a common knowledge in Bangla domain, Bangladesh. However, Partha Sanjay narrated the popularity of Sheba

Prokashoni's books in translations in his reminisce in "Kazi da ebong Sheba Prokashoni" (Kazi and Sheba Prokashoni) essay in an online platform. Retrieved on November 15, 2023, from <https://www.dw.com/bn/কাজীদা-এবং-সবো-প্রকাশনী/a-47335047>

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