

# BRIDGING FOR A CRITICAL TURN IN TRANSLATION STUDIES

## Power, hegemony, and empowerment

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The purpose of this critical essay is to meaningfully complicate the classical understanding of translation. In so doing, we, joining some critical translation scholars, contend that translation is not simply linguistic but also political, that translation participates in global hegemony, and that translation can only be partially just or justice-oriented at best. Given this framing, we discuss two interdisciplinary bridges that help us contemplate a critical turn for translation studies. The first bridge explains translation as intercultural communication; we resituate translator as relational and narrative emergent in a process of translation. The second bridge understands translation as critical pedagogy; we focus on the relationship between translators and the translated as a critical site for empowerment. A critical turn for translation that we endorse in this essay directs researchers' and translators' attention toward the politically complex nature of translation and toward minute potentiality for social justice-oriented translation practices.

**Keywords.** Critical approach; Power; Hegemony; Intercultural communication; Critical pedagogy.

“Language follows power,” Maylath (2012, p. 3) teaches his students in his linguistics courses. This is how Maylath opened his president’s address at the 2011 conference of Languages & Cultures Circle of Manitoba & North Dakota. Attention to power in translation studies has been discussed sparsely. For example, Jacquemond’s (1992) germinal work explicates how global translation practices are organized in accordance to the global economy and calls power into



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question in translation studies. Müller (2007) suggests a shift towards “critical translation” (p. 212); he insists that a traditional/classic approach to translation neutralizes or does not take into account the hegemonic nature of languages and that a critical approach is to attend to it more consciously in understanding translation as a political act. This special issue in *connexions* also directs our attention to power. It is entitled, “Translation and International Professional Communication: Building Bridges and Strengthening Skills.” In their call for papers, Drs. Bruce Maylath, Ricardo Muñoz Martín, and Marta Pacheco Pinto explicitly mention power and ethics and write, “Translators . . . operate as mediators to facilitate understanding across global, international, national and local contexts through diverse communication channels” (*connexions • international professional communication journal*, n.d.). Such mediation necessarily brings with it an ethical component, in addition to the necessity for meaning accuracy/linguistic equivalency.

These scholars together seem to point to a critical turn in translation studies. Invoking Müller’s (2007) “critical translation,” we use a “critical turn” to emphasize scholarly attention paid to power, ethics, and hegemony in translation studies. This emphasis is significant because translators are mediators of socially constructed realities that facilitate materialistic consequences for the translated. What ethical responsibilities do translators have? How does ethical mediation look and feel? What skills do translators need to develop to become ethical mediators in the global hegemony of languages? These are just a few questions that beg our attention.

Our interest in this critical turn is found in our hope for (re)imagining translation as a global enterprise for social justice. Freysinger, Shaw, Henderson, and Bialeschki (2013) explain social justice as follows:

a vision of society where the distribution of resources is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure. In this society, individuals are both self-determining and interdependent. Justice involves a sense of one’s own agency and a sense of social responsibility towards others, and for society as a whole. (p. 553)

Orienting toward this vision of social justice, we hope that translation studies takes a critical turn, searching to construct a figure of translators as ethical mediators of/for social justice.

The critical turn we envision in this essay is not mistaken as a departure from the traditional and functionalist approaches to translation studies. Rather, we intend it to mean a productive extension and meaningful complication of translation studies, dialectically situating a critical turn in relation to the instrumentality of translation (Boyden, 2011). Following the lead of Muñoz Martín (2013), we hope to advance an understanding of a critical turn from interdisciplinary perspectives—merging translation studies, namely, with critical intercultural communication studies and critical pedagogy.

## **Critical Framing of Translation**

Situating a critical turn in translation studies requires revisiting how we conceptualize translation. Traditionally, translation is understood as “the replacement of text in a source language by text in a target language *equivalent* in meaning” (Müller, 2007, p. 207). Considering a critical turn, we understand that the classic conceptualization of translation does not fully capture its complexity and contextuality. Translation scholars such as Baker (2006), Gentzler (2002), Jacquemond (1992), Robinson (1997), Tymoczko (2000, 2003, 2007), and Venuti (1993, 1995, 1998, 2000) argue that translation is not simply linguistic but also political. Following their lead, we elaborate on translation as a global and political act.

## **Global Economy**

In *Translation and cultural hegemony: The case of French-Arabic translation*, Jacquemond (1992) argues that translation “takes place in a specific social and historical context that informs and structures it” (p. 139). In other words, translation is a socially and historically situated act; hence, it is political. Jacquemond continues:

A political economy of translation is consequently bound to be set within the general framework of the political economy of intercultural exchange, whose tendencies follow the global trends of international trade. Thus it is no surprise that the global translation flux is predominantly North–North, while South–South translation is almost non-existent and North–South translation is unequal: cultural hegemony confirms, to a great extent, economic hegemony. (p. 139)

That is, Jacquemond (1992) observes that cultural, economic, and political power lies in the Northern hemisphere. Further, global translation behaves as the very lubricant for the circulation of power by making particular information available in particular ways to particular people in the world.

Robinson (1997) succinctly summarizes Jacquemond’s (1992) hypotheses that explain a critical relationship between translation and hegemony. We cite him at length:

1. A dominated culture will invariably translate far more of the hegemonic culture than the latter will of the former.
2. When the hegemonic culture does translate works produced by the dominated culture, those works will be perceived and presented as difficult, mysterious, inscrutable, esoteric and in need of a small cadre of intellectuals to interpret them, while a dominated culture will translate a hegemonic culture’s works accessibly for the masses.
3. A hegemonic culture will only translate those works by authors in a dominated culture that fit the former’s preconceived notions of the latter.
4. Authors in a dominated culture who dream of reaching a large audience will tend to write for translation into a hegemonic language, and this will require some degree of compliance with stereotypes. (Robinson, 1997, p. 1)

These hypotheses point to the significance of examining global translation and how it landscapes the global circulation of power. Given this critical framing of translation, we discuss in what follows a particular language—the English language—and its active roles in the global and political economy of translation.

## **English Hegemony**

Globally, the English language, as the current lingua franca, privileges the worldview constructed through the English language, simultaneously advancing intercultural and international communication functionally (Sorrells, 2013; Tsuda, 1999, 2010). Such a worldview others and subjugates non-English speaking and non-Western subjects. This global phenomenon is described as “English hegemony” (Pennycook, 1994; Tsuda, 2008a, 2008b, 2010). English hegemony conditions “inequality, injustice, and discrimination in intercultural and international communication” (Tsuda, 2010, p. 248). English hegemony facilitates Westernization and, specifically, USAmericanization (Tsuda, 2008a, 2008b, 2010).

Tsuda (2008b) explains that English hegemony becomes reified as linguistic identity politics in various ways. English hegemony disadvantages and discriminates the speakers of other languages and people “who are not proficient in English” (p. 168). It consequently colonizes “the consciousness of non-English-speakers, causing them to develop linguistic, cultural, and psychological dependency upon . . . English, its culture and people” (p. 168). Thus, English hegemony is “not a purely linguistic matter, but it is directly connected with ‘power,’ namely, ‘who controls the world?’” (Tsuda, 2010, p. 249). English hegemony in global translation requires careful interrogation of knowledge/information production and circulation, the Western gaze, and English education in non-English-speaking countries.

**Knowledge/Information Production and Circulation.** Kaplan (2001) shares a telling reality of the English language and its global effect: “Nearly 85% of all the scientific and technological information in the world today is written and/or abstracted in English” (p. 12). Thinking through this statistic, we become cautious of two primary issues in relation to English hegemony. First, knowledge production is imbued with English hegemony. Scholars who investigate Western domination warn that Eurocentric scholarship has been “understanding” through othering non-Eurocentric subjects by applying Eurocentric theoretical

assumptions (e.g., Bartlett, Iwasaki, Gottlieb, Hall, & Mannell, 2007; Burney, 2012; Miike, 2008; Smith, 1999), while imposing English structures and categorical ways to code observations and realities. See, for example, Denzin's (2005) and Denzin & Lincoln's (2005) characterization of Western research as a "colonial" intellectual enterprise. Because of this colonial nature, "research" is "one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous worlds' vocabulary" (Smith, 1999, p. 1). Second, translation provides the linguistic infrastructure for the global circulation of colonial knowledge and information. Global translation, as characterized by Jacquemond (1992), distributes "Western" research that represents and privileges Western or Western-trained researchers' concerns—often supported by grants and capitalistic drives—voices, and benefits over others'.

**The Western Gaze.** English hegemony in global translation situates the general direction of "gaze" from the West to non-West. In other words, images of the non-West have been constructed through the Western gaze linguistically, intellectually, and ideologically. Said's (1978) *Orientalism*, for example, explains the ways through which the East becomes reified globally through the Western gaze. Through such a manner, the non-West often becomes constructed and represented as exoticized, unfavorable, and profitable/exploitable (Burney, 2012; Krishna, 2009; Loomba, 2005). Relationally, such image constructions of the non-West uphold the images of the West as credible, superior, and valuable (Said, 1978).

**English Education in Non-English-Speaking Countries.** Many non-English-speaking countries have put into place educational policies that foster and promote English among their citizens for intellectual and economic growth, prompted by English hegemony and global translation. English hegemony does not make English hegemonic; it is a human-made global phenomenon. Examining English taught as a second language in various countries helps paint the complex picture of human activities that uphold English hegemony. Such activities include but are not limited to an unquestioned imposition of English in education (Macedo & Bartolomé, 1999) and voluntary political and educational

acquiescence into the hegemony of English (Phillipson, 1992, 2009). “Glocal” adaptations and global pervasiveness of educational programs such as English as a Second Language and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages are not simple accidents; they mirror and perpetuate English hegemony. The global educational availability of English invites unnamed assumptions. Consider how many of us “automatically” use English at international events and meetings (i.e., conferences) and how we attribute credibility to speakers of particular Englishes over the others. Observe how and when, in the history of English hegemony, doctoral programs in English-speaking countries have stopped requiring their students to have second language proficiency. As indicated earlier, there are benefits of English as the global language; however, it is not advisable for us to shy away from critiquing the hegemonic nature of English.

In sum, we contend that, in the global economy of information and translation, not everyone works toward producing and sharing information with equality in mind. Global translation continues to champion and promise the English language to be the globally hegemonic linguistic system of information production and exchange, which has situated a global network of educational policies and practices that uphold English hegemony. Many live in the linguistically translated world and continuously negotiate their translated identities in order for them to be functional and competitive; others live in the world described and understood in their own language while developing their own identities.

Please excuse us for our superficial modification of Jacquemond’s (1992) hypotheses, later summarized by Robinson (1997) below. We acknowledge that more detail work is necessary; however, it effectively captures our argument.

A [non-English-speaking] culture will invariably translate far more of the [English-speaking] culture than the latter will of the former . . . when the [English-speaking] culture does translate works produced by the [non-English speaking] culture, those works will be perceived and presented as difficult, mysterious, inscrutable, esoteric and in need of a small cadre of intellectuals to interpret them, while a [non-English speaking] culture will translate a[n English-

speaking] culture's works accessibly for the masses . . . a[n English-speaking] culture will only translate those works by authors in a [non-English-speaking] culture that fit the former's preconceived notions of the latter . . . [and] authors in a [non-English-speaking] culture who dream of reaching a large audience will tend to write for translation into [the English] language, and this will require some degree of compliance with stereotypes. (Robinson, 1997, pp. 31-32).

These modified hypotheses point at ways in which global translation may facilitate English hegemony.

The global effect of English hegemony situated and assisted within the global economy of translation shows no sign of slowing down. Maylath (2013), particularly, identifies a current trend in translation—"less cost and more accuracy." This trend has been taken up in inventing various technological devices and automated services, which promise cost performance by reducing and bypassing human labor. This current trend further promotes English as the most practical language for global information exchange. English, due to its global practicality and political power, will eventually "replace the weaker languages" (Tsuda, 2010, p. 252). English hegemony helps construct the global hierarchy of languages while sustaining English as the most powerful of all.

### **Partially Just at Best**

Joining others (Boyden, 2011; Denzin, 2005; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Freysinger et al., 2013; Jacquemond, 1992; Kaplan 2001; Maylath, 2012, 2013; Müller, 2007; Muñoz Martín, 2013; Robinson, 1997; Smith, 1999; Tsuda, 1999, 2008a, 2008b, 2010), we have been discussing concerns with global translation and English hegemony. However, we readily accept that global translation is necessary for working toward global peace, justice, and intercultural collaboration while facilitating cultural and individual misunderstandings and conflicts, promoting intercultural understandings, and providing global citizens accessibility to various resources, such as economic, intellectual, technological, social, and communicative capitals. That is, global translation is hegemonic and holds

potentiality for becoming counterhegemonic. Since global translation participates in the global economy and the hegemony of languages, it can participate in them differently to oscillate them. Translation can be performed in justice-oriented manners. However, just like other activisms, translation can only be partially just or justice-oriented while it cannot be fully just for everyone.

Here we find that translation is uniquely situated in relation to justice, a concept to which a critical turn of translation studies is directed. Angrosino (2005) explains the typology of justice, conceptualized by traditional moral philosophy. The four different types are 1) commutative justice, 2) distributive justice, 3) legal justice, and 4) social justice. Briefly, Angrosino (2005) discusses commutative justice as “the contractual obligations between individuals involving a strict right and the obligation of restitution” (p. 739). Distributive justice is referred to as “the obligation of a government toward its citizens with regard to its regulation of the burdens and benefits of social life” (p. 739). Legal justice “is related to citizen’s obligation toward the government or society in general” (p. 739). Social justice is “the obligation of all people to apply moral principles to the systems and institution of society” (p. 739).

Theoretically interpreting and critiquing translation in terms of justice, we find translation almost always located within an ethical dilemma in its effects. Translation can only be “justice-oriented,” suspended within a liminal space between justice and injustice due to the economic and hegemonic natures of translation that we have discussed thus far. For example, translating technological information from a developed nation to an underdeveloped nation provides the underdeveloped nation “better” access to global wealth, while still reinforcing global economic power relations (see Jacquemond’s discussion earlier). It participates positively in terms of distributive justice but negatively in terms of social justice. Here is another example: Translating legal documents for accessibility provides people a condition through which they can embody their legal justice; however, such translation predicated upon linguistic accuracy does not help them question and/or challenge culturally unfair documents (e.g., implicit and embedded racism, classism, sexism, homophobia, ableism, xenophobia, etc.). Thus, unjust social practices and assumptions remain

unchallenged. Again, translation helps people access and enact their legal justice while acquiescing to the hidden social injustice.

## **A Critical Turn**

We have demonstrated that the classic definition of translation as a replacement of one language to another, whose quality is evaluated against meaning equivalency (Müller, 2007), does not encompass translation holistically. The classic definition of translation ignores the contextuality of translation. Translation in action in context does more than make linguistic replacements: it participates in global hegemony. Moreover, translation can, at best, be only partially just or justice-oriented but not fully just in many cases. The critical turn that we envision is not an epistemological takeover of the traditional and functionalist approach to translation studies. Rather, it is an axiological shift from the linguistic micro-focus on meaning equivalency to a more holistic approach. In so doing, we call translation scholars and practitioners to carefully understand and meaningfully complicate translation in its complex communicative, social, cultural, economic, political, and global contexts with an eye open for ephemeral and sometimes minute potentiality for justice.

## **Interdisciplinary Potentiality**

In the following, we discuss two interdisciplinary bridges that help us contemplate a critical turn for translation studies—understanding translation *in context*. The first bridge realizes translation as intercultural communication; we use critical intercultural communication studies to resituate translation, or translator in particular. The second bridge understands translation as critical pedagogy; we focus on the relationship between translators and the translated as a critical site for empowerment. Translation studies, critical intercultural communication, and critical pedagogy can benefit from each other. Interdisciplinary work is important as it renders a unique intersection of inquiry beyond disciplinary boundaries. In

order for this current interdisciplinary work to become meaningful, we discuss three premises below.

First, our work is predicated upon a theoretical premise that there exists a global hierarchy of languages, in which each language is situated against other languages and occupies its place relationally. In Jacquemond's (1992) terms, there are hegemonic languages and dominated languages representing hegemonic cultures and dominated cultures, which promote particular flows and directions of global translation and indicate that some people are hegemonic while others are dominated in any translation process. Second, translation by nature participates in the global hierarchy of languages but can be employed in counterhegemonic manners. In other words, translation is not only a receiving end of the global hegemony of languages but is also an active participant in it. This signifies translation's potentiality in challenging global hegemony by participating in it differently. Finally, translation takes place through a face-to-face interpersonal/intercultural communication medium. Thus, for the remainder of this essay, we regret that we exclude translation activities that do not require face-to-face interactions, such as translating a movie without audience inputs. Overall, for our interdisciplinary essay, we understand that translators are face-to-face mediators between speakers of hegemonic languages and speakers of dominated languages who *labor toward* social justice while acknowledging that translation cannot be *fully* socially just. We begin with the first interdisciplinary bridge.

## **Translation as Intercultural Communication**

Sorrells and Sekimoto (2015) state that language is constitutive of our identity, relationship, culture, communication, ideology, and power. Tsuda (2008b) explains that non-English speakers develop some sort of inferiority associated with their cultural/linguistic identity in the context of English hegemony. Norton (1997) asserts that linguistic code-switching, such as language learners speaking a language other than their own, is not a succession of simple linear linguistic replacements; it is a site of their identity construction and negotiation. Norton (1997) writes,

Every time language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information with their interlocutors; they are also constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to their social world. They are, in other words, engaged in [cultural] identity construction and negotiation. (p. 410)

Taken together, translators and the translated negotiate their cultural identity constructions while participating in the global hegemony of languages. Thus, translation is intercultural communication.

Translating one language to another is necessarily predicated upon multiple simultaneous (re)negotiations of cultural identities of translators and the translated from a particular language to another within particular social contexts that are situated particularly within linguistic, historical, economic, and ideological politics of power. As is evident here, detailed attention paid to contextuality and particularity of translation is important in thinking of a critical turn in translation studies. Epistemological attention to complex contextual particularity sheds light on the political nature of translation and helps us examine how the macro-political structures become reified at the meso- and micro- levels of translation practices.

Understanding critical intercultural communication, Sorrells (2010) poses three questions to ponder:

1. Who benefits materially and symbolically from existing relations of power and who is served by how we make sense of inequitable power arrangements?
2. How are current inequities linked to colonial, postcolonial and imperial conditions?
3. What role can each of us play within our spheres of influences to challenge inequities and create a more socially just world? (p. 173)

Responding to these questions, we envision a critical turn in translation studies with hope/potentiality located on the “who” of translating—translators’ critical selfhood. Before we do that, we would like to take a brief moment to introduce critical intercultural communication.

Critical intercultural communication studies interrogates and critiques various systems of power (Halualani & Nakayama, 2010; Sorrells, 2013) in message production and consumption at various temporal contexts and in the macro-/meso-/micro-layers of human experience (Alexander et al., 2014a, 2014b, 2014c; Sorrells, 2010), orienting toward social justice in everyday communication (Alexander et al., 2014a, 2014b, 2014c; Kudo, Motohashi, Enomoto, Kataoka, & Yajima, 2011; Sorrells & Sekimoto, 2015). A critical turn strengthens areas of translation research and practices that fail to scrutinize the complex and power-laden nature of translation (see, for example, Melton, 2008; Nord, 1997; Reiss, 2000). Critical intercultural communication studies privileges communicative contexts and people's lived experiences and accounts over concepts and theories (Halualani & Nakayama, 2010). However, in contemplating a critical turn in translation studies, we highlight two theoretically significant entries in critical intercultural communication. They are reflexive selfhood and dialogical relationship (Hummel & Toyosaki, 2015; Toyosaki & Pensoneau-Conway, 2013).

**Reflexive selfhood.** Critical intercultural communication scholars (Fassett & Warren, 2007; Hummel & Toyosaki, 2015) understand selfhood as a site of critical labor toward social justice. Being socially constructed, selfhood is a narrative construction that relies on linguistic and communicative codes in rendering itself. This narrativity signifies its temporal movement as narration moves from the past, comes to be uttered at the present, and signals the future of the self (Schrag, 1986, 1997); selfhood is a temporal construct. This temporality suggests that selfhood is always narrative-becoming, a constant state of renewing/redefining and changing/shifting. Hence, while it may *appear* stable in homeostasis at times, selfhood is, in reality, always unstable (Toyosaki & Pensoneau-Conway, 2013), constantly renewing and changing itself. This nature of unstable selfhood renders transformative potentiality; we are changing constantly and can be transformative intentionally.

Selfhood is not simply a receiving end of social conditionings of its narrativity and temporality but also a transformative agent of those social

conditionings; it can respond to those social conditionings by narrating differently and transforming itself while participating in the temporal contexts (Schrag, 1986). Considering selfhood this way, critical intercultural communication scholars discuss the significance of “reflexivity.” In a simple sense, reflexivity is “a back-and-forth process of thinking about how we act, why we act, what that means, who it enables, who it hurts, and so forth” (Warren & Fassett, 2011, p. 46). It challenges people to “be more fully conscious of the ideology, culture, and politics” (Hertz, 1997, p. viii) in their own selfhood-making. Being reflexive is a conscious action that helps people recognize that they are historical, socio-cultural, economic, and political beings situated in a particular time and place.

What does reflexive selfhood do for translation studies and translators? Reflexive selfhood challenges the notion and practice of translation free of contexts. That is, a particular translator has come to have a particular professional job that requires him/her to speak the particular languages situated within the global hegemony of languages at this particular time and in/for this particular world. Translators who (1) narrate their cultural identity, (2) situate their cultural identity in history, and (3) see their cultural identity as a site of possible transformation, can no longer see their professions as merely replacing text in one language with the text of another. Here their professional identity and cultural identity become blurred. Reflexive translators can evaluate their professional and cultural identities—blurred in their reflexive selfhood—in their contexts of ideological wars, power relations, global economy, English hegemony, and so on. Reflexive translators come to know how their cultural identities are implicated in the process of translating and world-making; that is, participating in the global hegemony of languages, global economy, global circulation of knowledge. In narrating their coming to know, reflexive translators can identify both the good and the bad and that which sits between.

However, this reflexive labor should not be an isolated and individual act when it comes to social justice. It needs to be dialogically relational. Ontologically speaking, it is so because selfhood is always already dialogical and relational. Toyosaki and Pensoneau-Conway (2013) explain, “Our being is both social (in relationship with others) and fluid (capable of changing at any moment), and

always already intersubjective” (p. 565). The condition of intersubjectivity renders self and other as coemergents. Thus, the idea that one can think of one’s own identity alone and in isolation is a false consciousness. The labor of reflexivity should not be confined within any one individual, particularly when thinking of reflexivity and its potential in social justice. We are reminded that, in considering social justice, “individuals are both self-determining and interdependent. Justice involves a sense of one’s own agency and a sense of social responsibility towards others, and for society as a whole” (Freysinger, et al., 2013, p. 553).

**Dialogical relationship.** Fassett and Warren (2007), Hummel and Toyosaki (2015), Norris and Sawyer (2012), and Toyosaki and Pensoneau-Conway (2013) understand a dialogical relationship as a concept and practice that challenges power politics through collaboratively negotiating realities through relating with others. We become excited in conceptualizing dialogical translation, exploring its implications on critical translation studies, and reframing a “professional” relationship between translators and the translated. Dialogue here should not be understood simply as two people chatting. As Sorrells (2013) articulates, dialogue functions “as an entry point into intercultural praxis” (p. 19), “a process of critical, reflective thinking and acting . . . that enables us to navigate the complex and challenging intercultural spaces we inhabit interpersonally, communally, and globally.” (p. 15). Thus, being dialogical is the condition for relationship building in interpersonal/intercultural contexts. According to Deturk (2010), dialogue can create a space for the marginalized to be heard by the privileged, connect cultural groups of people and “foster mutual understanding and even collective action” (pp. 578-579), and “interrupt relations of domination” (p. 578).

What does it mean to build a translator-translated relationship dialogically? The classic definition of translation does not take into account a dialogical, relational emergence of professional/cultural identity constructions and negotiations that takes place between translators and the translated. Translators’ professional/cultural identities emerge in relations with professional/cultural identities of the translated in the particular context of translation in the context of the global hegemony of languages and global economy. So do professional/

cultural identity constructions and negotiations of the translated. Professional/cultural identities of translators and the translated coemerge intersubjectively in the global hegemony of languages, rendering the politics of both the speakers of hegemonic languages as well as the spoken-about within hegemonic languages. In this political context of identity construction and negotiation, a dialogical relationship can be utilized to challenge the political nature of translation. A dialogical translator-translated relationship creates a space for the speaker of dominated languages to be heard by the speakers of hegemonic languages (translators included). This potentially fosters “mutual understanding” of how translation is situated in the global hegemony of languages, and leads to a greater awareness of, and effort to challenge, the privileges that hegemonic language speakers are granted. Thus, an effort can be made to embody collective and relationally organic action to engage a translator’s own professional and cultural identity constructions and negotiations more ethically than remaining blind to power relations between hegemonic language speakers and dominated language speakers.

### **Translation as Critical Pedagogy**

Translation, as we have argued thus far, is simultaneously hegemonic and holds potentiality for being counterhegemonic and partially just in practice. In other words, translation perpetuates the global hegemony of languages; while doing so, translation can make the global hegemony of languages visible, demystify it, and challenge it from within. The relationships between translators and the translated locally function locally as a site both for perpetuation and challenge. Here we are reminded of educational critique: education schools students of various identities in order to uphold the values and practices of the dominant and mainstream (Delpit, 1995; Macedo & Bartolomé, 1999; McLaren, 1999; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012; Warren, 2003). We use pedagogy in order to metaphorically situate the relationship between translators and the translated with that of teachers and students/the taught. We acknowledge that they are not identical in practice and thus are metaphorical. However, we believe that critical pedagogy—as a collection

of educational critiques of and responses to education as a practice of domination known—informs our call for a critical turn in translation studies with attention paid to the relationship between translators and the translated.

In particular, Freire's (1970) educational critique is useful for understanding the translated and translator relationship in the global hegemony of languages. In order to create a frame for a critique against the global hegemony of languages, we apply Freire's critical pedagogy from his germinal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, to translation practices. Here we take a small detour in order to introduce critical pedagogy. Paulo Freire, Brazilian educational scholar, is recognized as the philosophical founder of critical pedagogy. Freire writes:

Education as the practice of freedom—as opposed to education as the practice of domination—denies that [people are] abstract, isolated, independent, and unattached to the world; it also denies that the world exists as a reality apart from [people]. (p. 69)

Invoking critical pedagogy, Peter McLaren, Henry A. Giroux, bell hooks, and Ira Shor have been engaging critical pedagogy in order to transform neoliberal US American education—see, for example, McLaren's (2001) revolutionary pedagogy, hooks' (1994) education as the practice of freedom, and Shor's (1992) empowering education.

**Freire's educational critiques and critical pedagogy.** Freire's (1970) educational critique is aimed at a predominant and neoliberal education paradigm, which he calls the “banking” concept of education. In this metaphor, Freire critiques education as an institutionalized social practice where teachers deposit knowledge into students. In such educational practices, students are deemed to exist as entities that are capable of only “receiving, filing, and storing the deposit” (p. 53). Freire claims that such education oppresses and dehumanizes students, as it cannot view students as fully human, capable of their own agency and voice. Freire, discussing social oppression and its influence on education, understands both oppressors and the oppressed as dehumanized. Obviously, oppressors do

dehumanize the oppressed through their participation in social oppression. For Freire, oppressors are also dehumanized through their oppressing Others because it constrains ways to realize their humanity fully in/through their living. *Banking* education fails to challenge social oppression because it legitimizes institutionalized and oppressive knowledge without questioning and renders students to be voiceless agents. Teachers, in banking education, function as silent, acquiescent, and complicit—government-licensed—mediators who uphold the status quo of social oppression.

Freire's collection of transnational work during the 1960s and 1970s helped mark this critical shift in understanding education and reimagining education as a practice of freedom and hope. He sees that one site for such reimagining is the labor of reconstructing the teacher-student relationship and its classroom potential through live interactions between teachers and students. In the educational system that Freire critiques, a dichotomous relation exists between teachers and their students; teachers are subjects who speak and act while students are passive objects who are spoken to or about and acted upon. There is a one-way relationship that is power-driven. Freire retheorizes the relationship, while viewing both teachers and students as active learners/teachers for each other; that is to say, participating in collaborative knowing—teaching and learning from each other. For Freire, teachers and their students need to be understood as human beings with experience and knowledge, meaning their backgrounds—economic, political, historical, educational, etc.—matter in the learning/teaching process. Freire empowers the students as knowing, agentic subjects, and this new understanding of *student* and *teacher* transforms classroom interactions.

Considering a critical turn for translation studies, what can we learn from Freire's (1970) educational critiques and critical pedagogy? First, just as banking education upholds social oppression through teaching, the classic definition of translation—one text to another—fails to recognize its participation in upholding the global hegemony of languages.

Second, in the classic understanding of what translation is as a profession, translators are deemed, similar to banking teachers, to function as silent, acquiescent, and complicit mediators that reproduce the status quo because the

classic approach explicitly focuses on meaning equivalency and is not intended to engage social problems and structures in which translation takes place. Continuing on the metaphor of banking as education, we can see translation as currency exchange. Regulations and rates of currency exchange are not neutral in the global market. Some translators rebut by saying that they have nothing to do with the regulations and rates, and that they just exchange as directed or trained. We agree somewhat; however, thinking so unreflexively does not accomplish anything but to uphold the status quo.

Third, hegemonic language speakers and dominated language speakers are both dehumanized in global translation in the context of the global hegemony of languages. This is so because they come to understand others and to be understood within the limitations of politically, economically, and culturally driven flows and directions of global information circulations (Jacquemond, 1992). Sure, there are many pros to global translation; however, we have to remember that language does follow power (Maylath, 2012). So, critical pedagogy asks to whom those pros are directed, how, and at whose expense. We certainly agree with the instrumentality of global translation (Boyden, 2011) for cross-cultural understandings and managing cultural conflicts, and we understand that we cannot eliminate the global hegemony of languages overnight or forever; however, this does not keep us off the hook from keeping on trying to find minute ways to study and challenge it.

Finally, critical pedagogy encourages us to explore the critical potentiality of translator-translated relationship—both professional and cultural—in order to explore minute ways in which we can interrogate, question, and possibly challenge the global hegemony of languages and its byproducts, ranging from the macro-level of global political and economic consequences to the micro-level of identity politics of speakers of various languages. Translation studies, much as critical pedagogy has already been retheorized, can retheorize the translator-translated relationship that can potentially humanize and empower all participants in translation, dehumanized and implicated by the global hegemony of languages.

**Empowering translation.** One successor to Freire’s critical pedagogy, Ira Shor (1992), explores a teacher-student relationship that *empowers* both educational participants through their interactions. We believe that translation studies can borrow at least a part of Shor’s idea of empowering education in order to commence theorizing what empowering translation may be like. In his *Empowering education: Critical teaching for social change*, Shor characterizes empowering education as “a critical-democratic pedagogy for self and social change,” that is, “a student-centered program for multicultural democracy in school and society” (p. 15). Invoking Shor, empowering translation is a democratic, translated-centered approach for social change. Shor offers the eleven values/characteristics that invite, promote, and possibly situate such education within and from a teacher-student relationship. Those values/characteristics are participatory, affective, problem-posing, situated, multicultural, dialogic, desocializing, democratic, researching, interdisciplinary, and activist. Below, we look at each of the eleven values and their implications for translation studies.

The first value is participatory. In empowering education, students’ active participation “is essential to gain knowledge and develop intelligence” (Shor, 1992, p. 17). Shor explains how he, as an—inspiring—empowering pedagogue, engages this value in his classrooms:

To help myself and the students develop participatory habits, I begin teaching from the students’ situation and from their understanding of the subject matter . . . [S]tudents should start out by questioning the material and the process of schooling. (p. 27)

Translation studies can benefit from his approach to this value and focuses on *participation* in translation. Borrowing from Shor, empowering translation starts with translators trying to understand the contexts of translation into which they are about to enter from the perspectives of the translated. Valuing the participation from the translated, translators make a space for the translated to “question . . . the material [to be translated] and the process of [translating itself]” (Shor, 1992, p. 27).

The second value is affective. It is important for empowering pedagogues to affirm students, while encouraging students' positive emotions in their learning/teaching process that help them obtain critical awareness. For Shor (1992), "critical thought is simultaneously a cognitive and affective activity" (p. 23). He explains:

An empowering educator seeks a positive relationship between feeling and thought . . . In a participatory class where authority is mutual, some positive affects which support student learning include cooperativeness, curiosity, humor, hope, responsibility, respect, attentiveness, openness, and concerns about society. (p. 24)

Shor's (1992) empowering education challenges the orthodox education of objective knowing and signals the importance of personal and emotional knowing combined with cognitive knowing in order to critically engage in socially constructed and *lived* realities. Interrogating their own emotional engagements, empowering translators actively invites emotional responses from the translated in order for them to understand in personally proximate and emotional manners how the global hegemony of languages is experienced by the translated in the context of translating. From this (inter)personal place, translators can engage in more personalized critiques of the hegemonic nature of their translating more self-reflexively while (re)narrating and relating their professional/cultural identities in context with the translated.

The third value is problem-posing. Shor (1992) understands that empowering education, contrasted against the idea that teachers are curriculum decision-making agents, is to "diversify subject matter and use students' thought and speech as the basis for developing critical understanding of personal experience, unequal conditions in society, and existing knowledge" (pp. 32-33). That is, building on the first two values discussed thus far, empowering education requires students' problem-posing in collaboratively deciding the class curriculum and contents. Empowering translation as well asks the translated to voice their concerns and issues that they experience while being translated in the social

contexts when and where they are being translated. In this way, translators can actively look for inputs and collaboration from the translated in order to understand contextual problems that translators may be blinded from their lack of contextual knowledge about the time, the place, the political landscape—i.e., the global hegemony of languages—and, most importantly, the translated. Such participation from the translated helps translators modify and, sometimes, challenge their context-free, ahistorical, and linguistic-based professional training and render translation *in context* empowering the translated in the process of translating.

The fourth value is situated. Shor (1992) explains that empowering teachers “situate . . . learning in the themes, knowledge, cultures, conditions, and idioms of students” (p. 44). What does it mean for translation to be situated in “the themes, knowledge, cultures, conditions, and idioms of” the translated? Situated translation privileges the lived experiences of the translated over the comprehension of the speakers of the target language while both are important. This shift signals that translators need to develop ethnographic skills in order to understand not only languages but also culturally/personally specific, situated meanings, codes, and speeches that the translated use while expressing their thoughts and explaining their lived experiences. Being situated, empowering translation also needs to reflect and take the concerns of the translated into account while translators make particular decisions while translating them.

The previous values culminate in the fifth value. They bring the condition of empowering education, which is multicultural. Shor (1992) understands that empowering education develops organically from the classroom climate where students can share their lived experiences and concerns in their own culturally authentic words, expressions, and speeches and through their culturally authentic perceptual processes. Hence, when and if students share their voices with each other, teaching is always already multicultural, which renders a condition for empowering education to be collaboratively explored, experimented, and experienced. Empowering translation, similarly, can be envisioned only in a translating climate where the translated feel welcomed and free to share with their translators in their own culturally authentic ways their concerns about the

particular contexts in which translation takes place and their lived experiences on being translated by their translators in the contexts. Their culturally authentic sharing of their concerns and experiences renders the translation process necessarily culturally diverse, which conditions a possibility of empowering translation to emerge/be labored because the multicultural condition helps translators to do situated translation for the translated.

The sixth value is dialogic. Shor (1992) explains that dialogue is a student-centered process of discussion during which teachers facilitate students' democratic participations while they themselves take part in the discussion as dialogical participants. In this process, students and teachers collaboratively develop their critical thinking about the problems posed. (We will visit Shor's idea of democratic shortly). In empowering translation, translators can be understood as active participants in the dialogical process with the translated in order to understand the context of their translating—ranging from texts to people (i.e., the translated) in source languages—while playing a facilitator role for the democratic dialogue between and among those who participate in the translation—translators themselves included.

The seventh value is desocializing, which:

refers to questioning the social behaviors and experiences in school and daily life that make us into the people we are. It involves critically examining learned behavior, received values, familiar language, habitual perceptions, existing knowledge and power relations, and traditional discourse in class and out. (Shor, 1992, p. 114)

Contrasted against the banking education, empowering education suggests that both teachers and students reflexively question their taken-for-granted perceptions and behaviors in their personal, social, and educational contexts. Empowering translation similarly challenges the currency-exchange translation when translators and the translated collaboratively question their own socialization as translators and the translated in their own translator-translated relationships. That is, translators and the translated, through their dialogic

engagements, challenge their own “learned behavior, received values, familiar language, habitual perceptions, existing knowledge and power relations, and traditional discourse” (Shor, 1992, p. 114) regarding what it means to translate others and be translated by others in the global hegemony of languages and global economy.

The eighth value is democratic. By democratic, Shor (1992) means that empowering education privileges students’ participation as an essential element of teaching over standardized and imposed educational curricula and structures. That is, Shor sees that empowering education is for and by educational participants. As a result, educational participants, becoming democratic, become accountable for their own teaching/learning. Empowering translation can also be democratic when translators privilege active participations from the translated in the process of translating. For this to happen, translators have to develop a set of skills that help them utilize their formalized training and the instrumentality of translation simultaneously questioning—or desocializing—them in their translating in order to democratize their translation procedures and appreciate active participations from the translated.

The ninth value is researching. Shor (1992) explains, “Research implies detailed investigation, an extensive exploration of subject matter, thought, and language. Because the critical-democratic classroom involves in-depth scrutiny, it defines students as active researchers who make meaning, not as passive receivers of knowledge” (p. 169). For Shor, research activities vary from self-reflection and casual information gathering about the cultural backgrounds of educational participants to more elaborated examination of a particular subject—i.e., history—that has emerged from classroom interactions. In empowering education, both teachers and students are active researchers that drive their critical and democratic learning. Empowering translation, likewise, asks translators and the translated to engage in various research projects, being accountable and responsible for their own and collaborative empowerment.

The tenth value is interdisciplinary. Shor (1992) says, “Crossing disciplinary lines deploys multiple approaches and bodies of knowledge” (p. 185) and “a critical-interdisciplinary teacher also draws on themes and texts from

student culture as well as from academic disciplines” (p. 186). Interdisciplinary ways of knowing help educational participants better understand problems posed in class, meaningfully interpret complex behaviors, and also effectively express their own ideas in equally interdisciplinary ways. In empowering translation, translators and the translated draw on “multiple approaches and bodies of knowledge” (p. 185) in order to collaboratively engage in their translation process. For instance, they utilize interdisciplinary knowledge—i.e., histories, politics, cultural studies, economics, etc.—to examine the experiences of the translated. Translators should not understand the translated only from their translation-specific perspective. Critical-interdisciplinary translators supplement their specialization in translation with other disciplines to understand the translated more holistically.

The eleventh value is activist. Shor (1992) states:

Critical pedagogy is activist in its questioning of the status quo, in its participatory methods, and in its insistence that knowledge is not fixed but is constantly changing. More than just dynamic and filled with contending perspectives, critical knowledge offers a chance to rethink experience and society. (p. 189)

In empowering education, teachers and students take an active role in their critical knowing process; they desocialize themselves while posing “knowledge and history as unfinished and transformable” (Shor, 1992, p. 189). Empowering translation as well requires both translators and the translated to actively participate in their translating processes. For instance, they research and act on their world-making process reflexively, while understanding, questioning, and possibly transforming social, economic, and political conditions in which their translation takes place, such as the global hegemony of languages and its material consequences (see Jacquemond’s [1992] hypotheses). Translators and the translated may not challenge the global structure; however, by engaging in these characteristics of empowering translation, they may challenge it in minute ways through and within

their translating processes and, as a result, dialogically and relationally participate in the global structure differently.

Thus far, we have visited Shor's (1992) eleven values of empowering education. We see these values as instructive in thinking of and envisioning a critical turn for translation studies and practices. We have done so because we think that translation is an integral part of the global economy and the global hegemony of languages, that translation can potentially dehumanize the translated, and that the linguistic-based translation studies alone cannot account for the global effects of translation and how they hinge upon other global structures. In order to confront translation's global effects on the research and professional fronts of translation studies, what we have proposed above is to empower translation that challenges the dehumanizing nature of translation. We envision that a critical turn of translation studies is to confront and possibly remedy the dehumanizing effects of global translation in minute ways by understanding and theorizing the translator-translated relationship as a site of critical labor.

The eleven values of empowering education that we borrowed to begin theorizing empowering translation signal some ways through which translation researchers and practitioners can challenge their taken-for-granted understanding of translation and start seeing translation from different and hopefully critical perspectives. Thus, we do not propose these eleven values as necessary conditions upon which empowering translation can only be theorized, built, and practiced. Instead, we see them as reference points or conversation starters for us to open up and pioneer different spaces in the field of translation studies. We are sure that some conversations along these lines have already begun. In that case, by writing this essay, we join and energize those conversations that have already been taking place. We hope that these eleven values of empowering translation are productive entry points for us to collectively contemplate our—interdisciplinary—critical turn for translation studies.

## Opening the Space

We understand a critical turn of translation studies to be a productive extension of the current research of translation. We readily agree on the importance of meaning equivalency in, and instrumentality of global translation. Invoking critical intercultural communication, a critical turn dialectically examines the political and social nature of global translation by studying translation in context with special attention paid to its particularity. In so doing, we advocate studying professional/cultural blurred identity constructions and negotiations of translators and the translated in particular contexts with particular political backdrops of the particular translation. Further, assisted by critical pedagogy, we see a translator-translated relationship as an essential site for critical labor that helps us interrogate and challenge, in minute ways, the global hegemony of languages by humanizing their subjectivities that have been dehumanized by it.

The final point we would like to make before we close this essay is to urge that translation studies pay close attention to voices that derive at the site where a translation happens in a particular context beyond issues of meaning equivalency and the instrumentality of translation. How do translation participants—both translators and the translated—experience hegemonic and dominated languages? How does the politics of hegemonic and dominated languages act in professional and cultural identity constructions and negotiations of translators and the translated during their face-to-face interactions? How does the global hegemony of languages materialize their bodies and feelings? Opening our translation studies to include such interpersonal and intercultural communication research in order to study human lived experiences during translation at the site of translation is going to be beneficial for both translation studies and the field of intercultural communication. Such a critical turn of translation studies also helps advance critical pedagogy as the politics of languages has so far been undertheorized, and much critical pedagogy research is predicated upon monolingual contexts.

In order to open up translation studies, we propose a few ideas. The process through which translation researchers theorize the critical turn needs to be justice-oriented. The critical turn ought to be a ground-up movement rather than

a top-down enforcement. It is important to engender research that reveals often-hidden voices from the professional fields—translation trainers, translators in the field, the translated, government officials who need translating services, and so on. Research that explores their lived experiences and feelings of translation processes, instead of the effectiveness of translation, is important in learning multiple emerging voices in the field. Related to the notion of hidden voices, translation researchers need to cultivate spaces—conferences, focus-groups, special journal volumes, etc.—in order to collaboratively labor toward theorizing and actualizing the critical turn for translation studies. Orienting translation studies toward social justice is a grand task. And we—translation scholars, critical intercultural communication scholars, and critical pedagogues—together can embark on this tri-disciplinary journey because translation is a gatekeeping apparatus for the global economy of information and intercultural exchanges. We need to make a critical turn in translation studies because we can do better at participating in making a more democratic global community. ■

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