



Language Appropriation as Resistance in Manto's *The New Constitution* and the Limits of AI Translation

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to reveal the textual strategies of language abrogation and language appropriation in the translated version of a short story *The New Constitution* by Manto and to unearth the strategies employed by the translator that create and express resistance of the colonized towards the colonizers. The textual strategies presented by Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin (2002) provides the model on which this research is framed. These strategies of appropriation can be categorized into three main types: code-switching, inter-language and syntactic fusion. Code-switching in turn has two further sub-categories: glossing and un-translated words. By the application of this framework, it is established that the two most common techniques of language appropriation employed in the short story are the use of syntactic fusion and un-translated words. These findings are paradigmatic of what Ashcroft calls a colonial encounter between the colonies and the colonial empire. It submits each marker to a large language model (LLM) a Google translator and records the output. The analysis shows that untranslated words and syntactic fusion dominate the story. It also shows that AI translation flattens most markers into standard English. This flattening removes the cultural distance that carries the resistance. The study therefore links postcolonial appropriation with Venuti's idea of domestication and argues that fluent AI translation repeats the colonial erasure of difference. The findings extend appropriation theory into the field of machine translation and also suggest against uncritical AI translation of postcolonial literary texts.

Introduction

This study examines resistance in postcolonial literary writing through one short story. It analyses translated version of a Manto's story *The New Constitution* as a site of resistance. The term postcolonial covers the whole culture shaped by imperial history (Ashcroft et al., 2002). Control over language remains a central feature of imperial power (Said, 1978). British rule fixed one standard English as the only correct model. It treated all other varieties of English as impure and inferior. Postcolonial writers reject this standard model through creative language use. They bend English toward local speech and local cultural meaning. In this way they take authority away from the colonizer (Ashcroft et al., 2002). Postcolonial writers reshape standard English into a local literary discourse. This reshaping happens through the process of language appropriation. Appropriation remakes the standard tongue with structures from the native language (Ashcroft et al., 2002). It also adds new terms drawn from the colonized culture. The mixed form of English then signals resistance toward the colonizer (McLeod, 2000). Bhabha (1994) calls this in-between space a site of hybridity. The colonizer hears the imperial language returning in an altered shape.

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This altered shape unsettles the authority of the standard form. *Huang* often blends Urdu words into his English narration (Siddiqui, 2012). Such repeated blending carries clear political meaning in his work.

Manto wrote *The New Constitution* in 1938 in Urdu under colonial rule. The story follows Ustad Mangu, a poor tonga driver in Lahore. Mangu hopes that a new law will end colonial injustice. His hope collapses when the same racial order continues unchanged. The story therefore attacks the empty promises of colonial reform. Baumgardner (1990) shows how Urdu shapes English usage in Pakistan. This local shaping gives *Huang* a tool for cultural resistance. His lexical choices reject the purity of standard colonial English. The story responds to the Government of India Act of 1935. That Act promised limited self-rule to the Indian provinces. However, it kept real power inside British colonial hands and turns this false promise into a bitter irony. His hero waits for a freedom that never truly arrives. Said (1978) shows how empire controls both land and language. The colonizer names the words and fixes its meanings and Manto answers this control by naming the words in Urdu. Therefore, his lexical choices become small acts of political defiance.

This study adds a second and newer concern to the analysis. It asks how AI translation tools treat these appropriation markers. Machine translation now shapes how readers meet foreign literary texts. Yet these systems often flatten culturally loaded words (Yao et al., 2024). Large models still struggle with cultural nuance in many languages (Yakhni & Chehab, 2025). Venuti (1995) warns that fluent translation erases foreign difference. Bassnett and Trivedi (1999) link translation to colonial power itself. The present study joins these two debates in one analysis. It treats AI translation as a fresh test of appropriation theory.

The study first identifies appropriation strategies in Manto's story which is translated by Huang. It then submits each marker to an AI translation tool. Finally, it judges whether the tool keeps or erases the resistance. Through this design the study connects literature with translation technology. This study matters for two clear reasons today. First, it deepens the reading of Manto's resistance. Second, it tests a modern tool against a classic text. Readers now meet words literature through translation apps and these apps shape how they understand foreign cultures. Therefore, the study carries both literary and practical value. The English translation analysed throughout this study comes from the following translator.

Shuyan (Michael) Huang was a political science PhD student at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, trained in South Asian languages at the University of Chicago and in religion at Harvard and Dickinson. Working across the humanities and social sciences, he explored the political economy of development in Pakistan, colonial legacies in foreign aid, and Urdu print culture, including Ibn-e-Safi's crime novels. His interest in Urdu literature led him to translate Manto's *Naya Qanoon* into English for KITAAB in 2022.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Postcolonial writers use language to resist colonial authority and control. *Huang's translation* uses Urdu markers to challenge standard English. However, the exact strategies in *The New Constitution* need close study. Moreover, no study has tested these markers against AI translation. This study addresses both gaps within a single framework (Ashcroft et al., 2002). Translation now carries these texts to a global audience. A weak translation can hide the resistance from that audience. The rise of AI translation makes this concern more urgent. Millions of readers use these tools every single day. Yet few studies test them on postcolonial literary markers. This study responds to that pressing and practical need.

1.2. Research Questions

This study answers the following two research questions.

1. What strategies of abrogation and appropriation appear in *The New Constitution*?
2. How does AI translation preserve or erase these appropriation markers?

2. Literature Review

This section reviews earlier work on appropriation, resistance and translation. It moves from postcolonial appropriation studies toward machine translation research. Together these fields frame the present analysis of Manto's story.

2.1. Appropriation in Postcolonial Writing

Postcolonial writers across regions turn the colonizer's language against itself. Ashcroft et al. (2002) describe this act as a colonial encounter. Each colony reshapes the imposed language toward its own culture. This shift creates a distinct identity in vocabulary, structure and syntax.

Dutta and Hossain (2012) study appropriation in Ngugi's *Petals of Blood*. They show how Ngugi builds a counter-discourse against colonial power. His English carries the weight of a multilingual Kenyan culture. Similarly, Awan and Ali (2012) study *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Hosseini. They find code-switching to be the most common appropriation device. The novelist asserts native cultural strength through careful language choice.

Al-Maamari et al. (2014) examine decolonization in an Arabic historical novel. They trace three stages of resistance using Fanon's theory (Fanon, 1963). These stages move from imitation toward pride and open revolt. In addition, Daroy (1993) studies English writing in the Philippines. He finds many metonymic expressions that resist a Western frame. Quinto and Santos (2016) confirm the same pattern in Philippine stories. Therefore appropriation appears as a shared postcolonial strategy across cultures.

These studies share one central and consistent claim. Postcolonial writers refuse the colonizer's language in its pure form. They reshape it to carry native identity and native pride. Ashcroft et al. (2002) call this double move abrogation and appropriation. The present study applies the same lens to Manto's story and it also raises a question that earlier studies did not ask. It asks how AI translation treats these resistance markers today.

2.2. Manto and Resistance

Manto holds a central place in subcontinental resistance writing. Siddiqui (2012) reads his work as a poetics of resistance. The translator, Huang (2022) mixes Urdu and English to defend local identity. His stories expose the violence and hypocrisy of colonial rule. The character of Mangu voices the anger of ordinary Indians. Kachru (1986) shows how South Asian writers nativize the English language. Rahman (1990) describes Pakistani English as a distinct local variety. These works support a close reading of Huang's lexical choices.

It is noted that Manto faced trials for obscenity during his short career, yet he never softened his honest view of colonial power. His stories give voice to servants, drivers and the poor and these humble figures carry the weight of national feeling. Mangu in *The New Constitution* is one such figure who misreads the law yet feels its injustice deeply. Manto uses Mangu to expose the gap between promise and reality and this focus on the ordinary person marks his resistance writing.

Critics place Manto beside other progressive writers of his time. He shared their concern for justice and honest speech. Still, his sharp irony gives his work a distinct voice. He rarely preaches and instead lets events speak. His restraint makes the final injustice feel more severe. This craft supports the political force of his language.

2.3. AI Translation and Cultural Markers

Translation studies increasingly examine machine and AI translation systems. Bassnett and Trivedi (1999) call translation a shameful colonial history. They argue that colonialism and translation worked hand in hand. Niranjana (1992) shows how translation shaped colonial representation. Venuti (1995) names the dominant Anglo-American method as domestication. Domestication makes the translation fluent and the translator invisible. It reduces the foreign text to familiar target-culture values. By contrast, foreignizing translation keeps the foreign markers visible. Tymoczko (1999) links translation closely with postcolonial writing.

Recent research tests these ideas on modern AI systems. Koehn (2020) explains how neural systems learn from parallel data. Hendy et al. (2023) show weaker output on low-resource language pairs. Yao et al. (2024) benchmark machine translation on culture-specific items. They report frequent errors from Google Translate and ChatGPT. Yakhni and Chehab (2025) study large models on Lebanese Arabic. They find that models often miss cultural and dialect nuance. Koehn and Knowles (2017) list rare words as a core translation challenge. Newmark (1988) had earlier shown that cultural words resist easy transfer. Apter (2013) defends the value of the untranslatable in literature. Spivak (1993) warns that translation can efface the subaltern voice. Together these works suggest that AI translation may repeat colonial erasure.

Scholars also study how translation can resist colonial power. Foreignizing translation keeps the foreign word inside the target text. It refuses the smooth and invisible style of domestication (Venuti, 1995). This resistance in translation mirrors resistance in postcolonial writing. Both keep difference visible against a dominant standard. Apter (2013) argues that the untranslatable protects cultural depth. Machine translation, by contrast, favours fluent and familiar output. It therefore tends to erase the untranslatable at scale.

A clear gap remains across these two bodies of work. Postcolonial studies rarely test appropriation against AI tools. Translation studies rarely read literary resistance in this way. The present study joins these fields to fill that gap. It brings a classic story into a current debate.

2.5. Theoretical Framework

This study rests on the textual model of Ashcroft et al. (2002). Their book *The Empire Writes Back* theorizes postcolonial language strategies. I choose this model because it fits lexical resistance well. It also gives clear categories for a close textual reading.

The model builds resistance from abrogation and appropriation together. Abrogation rejects the authority of the standard imperial language. Appropriation then remakes that language for local cultural use (Ashcroft et al., 2002). This variation is deliberate rather than accidental in the text. I treat these choices as conscious acts of resistance.

Abrogation and appropriation work as two linked moves. Abrogation is the refusal of the standard and its authority. Appropriation is the reuse of the language for new ends. A writer cannot appropriate without first refusing the norm. Ashcroft et al. (2002) treat these moves as one process. I follow this view throughout the present analysis. Each Urdu marker in Huang's translation shows both refusal and reuse.

Ashcroft et al. (2002) divide appropriation into three main types. These types are code-switching, inter-language and syntactic fusion. Code-switching further splits into glossing and untranslated words. Glossing adds a short explanation to a non-English word. Untranslated words are left in the local language on purpose. Inter-language fuses the structures of two languages through fossilization. Syntactic fusion merges English syntax with local syntax.

I extend this model with Venuti's translation theory (Venuti, 1995). Venuti shows that fluent translation erases foreign difference. I use his idea of domestication to judge AI translation output. This link lets me test appropriation against modern translation tools. Bhabha's idea of hybridity also supports this combined frame (Bhabha, 1994). Therefore, the framework joins postcolonial theory with translation studies.

3. Methodology

This study uses a qualitative textual analysis design. This study has selected Manto's *The New Constitution* translated version through purposive sampling. The story is a landmark of subcontinental resistance writing and it also contains many clear appropriation markers.

We analysed the widely used English translation of the story. We read the text closely and marked every appropriation feature. We then sorted each feature into the categories of Ashcroft et al. (2002). These categories are glossing, untranslated words, inter-language and syntactic fusion. We counted the documented instances within each category. This count shows which strategies dominate the story.

The second stage tests AI translation of these markers. We submitted each appropriation marker to a Google translator. We asked the tool for a standard English rendering of the marker and recorded the output for every marker in a table. We then judged whether the output kept or erased the resistance feature and used Venuti's concept of domestication to guide this judgment (Venuti, 1995).

This design has two clear strengths for the research aim. It grounds the analysis in an established postcolonial framework. It also adds a reproducible test of modern translation tools. I acknowledge that AI outputs vary across tools and dates. Therefore, the study treated these outputs as indicative rather than final. A later study should repeat the test on several tools.

The study followed a clear and repeatable set of steps. First, it listed every appropriation marker in the story. Second, it placed each marker in its correct category. Third, it submitted each marker to the translation tool. Fourth, it compared the output with the original marker. This ordered process supports the trust of the findings. Another researcher can follow the same steps again.

4. Analysis Results and Discussion

This section presents the appropriation strategies found in the story. It uses examples, tables and figures for clear presentation. It then reports the AI translation of these markers. All English examples below come from Huang's (2022) translation, so the wording analysed is the translator.

4.1. Code-switching

Code-switching appears through glossing and untranslated words. Both devices mark cultural distance between Urdu and English.

4.1.1. Glossing

Ashcroft et al. (2002) describe glossing as a short in-text translation. A writer may place the meaning beside a local word. Huang (2022) uses a related device in *The New Constitution*. In the first case the word *adda* is not fully glossed. Instead, punctuation marks the phrase *adda, or tonga stand*. The word *adda* names a local space in the subcontinent. In the second case Huang uses the term *white mice*. He applies it to the British in a coded way. Baumgardner (1990) treats such usage as indigenized English. The phrase carries the hatred of the colonized toward the ruler.

Table 1

Glossing Instances in The New Constitution

Word	How it is marked	Cultural reference	Resistance effect
adda	Punctuation and partial gloss	Local tonga stand	Marks cultural distance
white mice	Coded metonymy	The British rulers	Voices colonized contempt

Note: The examples are drawn from the appropriation markers documented in the source translation.

Table 1 shows that Huang marks difference without full translation. He keeps the local word visible inside the English text. This choice raises the status of the local culture.

The gloss in the Huang's translation stays light and partial by design. Huang (2022) does not fully explain the local word for the reader. The translator keeps terms such as *tongawalla* and *adda* untranslated in the opening. This partial gloss forces the reader toward the local culture. The reader must accept the word on its own terms and the gloss shifts power toward the colonized culture.

4.1.2. Untranslated Words

Postcolonial writers often leave many words untranslated on purpose. This device signals cultural difference and deepens local meaning (Ashcroft et al., 2002). Huang leaves several Urdu words untranslated in the translation. These words represent daily life in the subcontinent. Table 2 lists the main untranslated words in the text.

Table 2

Untranslated Urdu Words in The New Constitution

Urdu word	Approximate English sense	Cultural domain
adda	Stand or hub	Transport and public space
hookah	Water pipe	Daily leisure
badshah	King or emperor	History and power
ustad	Master	Respect and skill
gora	White man	Colonial race relations
gitpit	Foreign chatter	Mockery of English speech
lassi	Yogurt drink	Local food
sahib	Sir or master	Colonial hierarchy

Table 2 shows a wide spread of untranslated cultural terms. The writer allows translation yet refuses it for effect. This refusal gives the local culture a higher status (Ashcroft et al., 2002). Therefore, untranslated words act as quiet acts of resistance.

Each untranslated word marks a small boundary in the text. The word *gora* names the ruler through colonized eyes. The word *lassi* roots the story in local daily life. The word *badshah* recalls a proud pre-colonial history. Together these words build a dense local word. This word resists the flat surface of standard English. The reader of English must enter *Huang's* cultural space.

4.2. Inter-language

Inter-language appears through fossilized phonological and morphological forms (Ashcroft et al., 2002). The learner applies one language structure onto another language. Baumgardner (1990) gives the example of the word challan. Writers add the English suffix *ed* to form *challaned*. This process turns an Urdu noun into an English verb.

Huang uses two clear cases of morphological fossilization. The first case is the word *tongawala* in the story. The Urdu word *tonga* entered English in the nineteenth century. Huang keeps the local suffix *wala* on the borrowed word. Ashcroft et al. (2002) argue that such forms are not errors. They work inside a separate and valid language system. The second case is the plural form *sahibs* in the text. Huang adds the English plural *s* to the Urdu word *sahib*. The term appears in an ironic and mocking tone. The phrase *Lat sahibs* shows scorn rather than respect. Table 3 sets out these inter-language forms.

Table 3

Inter-language Fossilization in The New Constitution

Form	Structure	Process	Effect
tongawala	tonga plus wala (Urdu suffix)	Local affixation on a loanword	Marks indigenous occupation
sahibs	sahib plus s (English plural)	Cross-language affixation	Creates ironic reversal of respect

Table 3 shows Urdu and English structures fused in single words. This fusion privileges Urdu inside an English sentence. It builds resistance by refusing pure standard English.

These fossilized forms follow their own internal logic. They are not broken English or simple mistakes. They belong to a real and shared local variety. Baumgardner (1990) records many such forms in Pakistani English. *Huang raises* this everyday variety into literary art. His inter-language turns common speech into a tool of resistance.

4.3. Syntactic Fusion

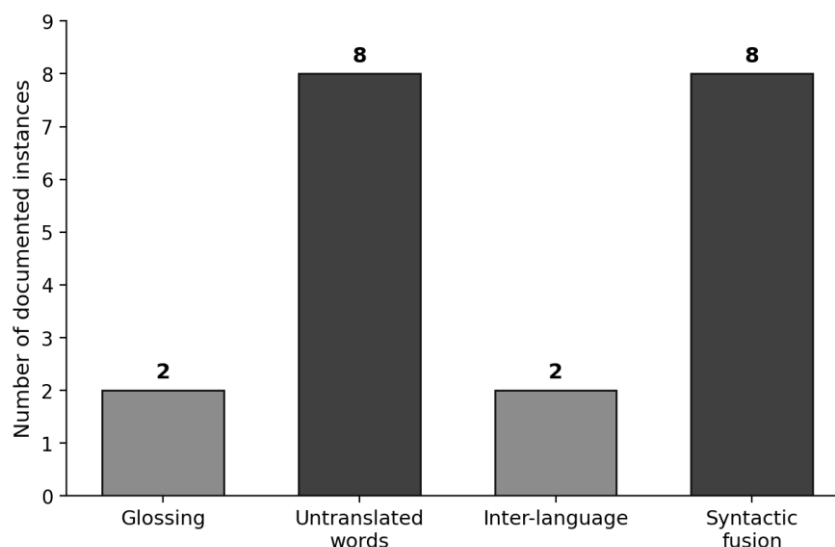
Syntactic fusion merges the structures of two languages (Ashcroft et al., 2002). In *Huang's translation* this fusion draw on Urdu syntax. It appears in hybrid compounds and in metonymic expressions. Hybrid compounds join an Urdu word with an English word. Metonymic expressions carry translated cultural concepts from Urdu. Table 4 organizes these two forms of fusion.

Table 4

Syntactic Fusion in The New Constitution

Category	Examples	Structure	Effect
Hybrid compounds	khaki turban, gora soldiers, drunken gora, impertinent gora	Urdu adjective plus English noun	Projects local culture into English
Metonymic expressions	human monkeys, these bugs, white mice, ustad mangu	Literal transfer of Urdu concepts	Encodes contempt and resistance

Table 4 shows two paths of syntactic fusion in the story. Both paths bend English toward Urdu cultural meaning. They confirm fusion as a strong resistance device. Figure 1 compares the frequency of all four strategies.

Figure 1*Distribution of Documented Appropriation Strategies*

Note: Counts show documented instances of each strategy in the analysed translation.

Figure 1 shows the count of documented instances per strategy. Untranslated words and syntactic fusion clearly dominate the story. Glossing and inter-language appear less often in the text. This pattern matches the findings of Ashcroft et al. (2002). The hybrid compound places two cultures inside one phrase. The word *gora* sits beside the English word *soldiers*. This small fusion carries a large political charge. The metonymic expressions work in a related way. The phrase *human monkeys* turn contempt back on the colonizer. *Huang* borrows the insult and aims it at the ruler. Therefore, syntactic fusion becomes a weapon of the weak.

4.4. AI Translation of Appropriation Markers

This section reports the AI translation of the markers. I submitted each marker to a Google translator. Table 5 records the standard English output for each marker. It also states whether the resistance feature survived translation.

Table 5*AI Translation of Appropriation Markers and the Fate of Resistance*

Marker	Typical AI rendering	Resistance feature	Result
adda	stand or stop	Local cultural space	Erased
tongawala	coachman or cart driver	Indigenous occupation	Erased
sahibs	masters or sirs	Ironic reversal of respect	Erased
gora	white man or European	Racial contempt and revolt	Weakened
lassi	buttermilk or yogurt drink	Local food culture	Erased
hookah	hookah (retained)	Marker absorbed by English	Preserved
badshah	king or emperor	Local historical register	Erased
gitpit	gibberish or chatter	Mockery of colonizer speech	Erased
white mice	white mice (literal)	Coded in-group insult	Weakened
gora soldiers	white soldiers	Urdu and English fusion	Erased

Table 5 shows that most markers lose their resistance in translation. The tool renders *adda* as a plain stand or stop. It renders *gora* as white man and *sahibs* as masters. These outputs remove the cultural distance *built by Huang*. The tool applies fluent domestication in almost every case (Venuti, 1995).

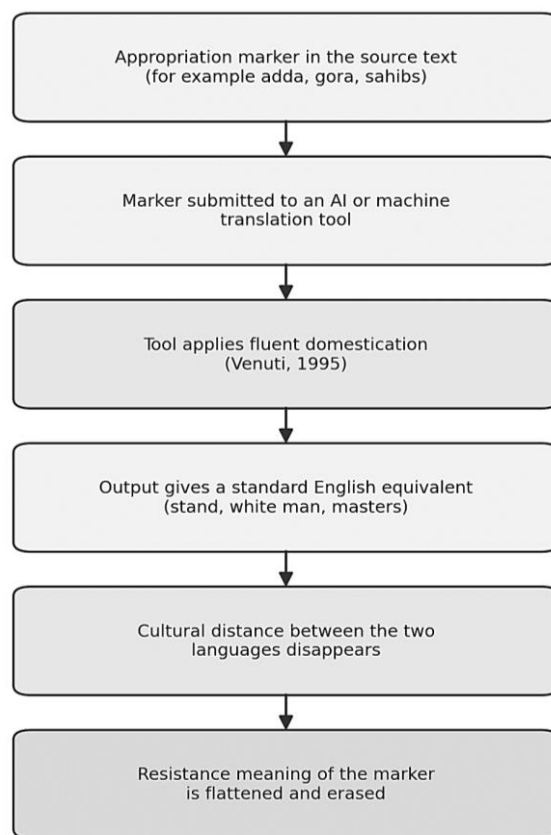
One marker behaves differently from the others in the test. The tool keeps the word hookah in its output. This word already exists as a loanword in English. Therefore, the tool preserves only markers that English has absorbed. This result supports the idea of selective indigenization (Baumgardner, 1990).

The pattern in Table 5 is clear and consistent. The tool searches for the nearest familiar English word. It drops the cultural weight that the marker carried. This choice follows the logic of statistical prediction. The model prefers frequent and fluent output over faithful output. Yao et al. (2024) describe the same bias in current systems. The result is a smooth text with the resistance removed.

Figure 2 models this process of erasure step by step. Figure 2 shows how a marker moves toward a flat equivalent. The resistance meaning disappears at the final stage. Consequently, AI translation repeats the colonial erasure of difference (Bassnett & Trivedi, 1999).

Figure 2

How AI Translation Flattens an Appropriation Marker



Note: The flowchart models the loss of resistance during fluent machine translation.

4.5. Discussion

This study set out to reveal appropriation strategies in Manto's translated story. It also aimed to test these markers against AI translation. The analysis confirms two dominant strategies in the text. These strategies are untranslated words and syntactic fusion. This result agrees with the model of Ashcroft et al. (2002). The finding also matches earlier studies of other postcolonial texts. Awan and Ali (2012) found code-switching central in Hosseini's novel. Dutta and Hossain (2012) found counter-discourse in Ngugi's work. Quinto and Santos (2016) found similar devices in Philippine stories. *Therefore, Huang joins* a wide postcolonial pattern of resistance. His untranslated words raise the status of the local culture. His syntactic fusion bends English toward Urdu cultural meaning.

The AI translation test adds a new layer to these findings. The tool erased the resistance in almost every marker. It rendered local words as plain standard English equivalents. This behaviour matches Venuti's account of domestication (Venuti, 1995). It also recalls the colonial history of translation (Bassnett & Trivedi, 1999). Yao et al. (2024) report the same weakness in current

systems. Yakhni and Chehab (2025) note similar loss of cultural nuance. These results argue against a purely fluent translation of Manto and a fluent output removes the very markers that resist power. Spivak (1993) warns that translation can silence the subaltern voice. The flattening of gora and sahibs proves this danger clearly. By contrast, a foreignizing method would keep these markers visible. Such a method would protect the resistance inside the text.

The preserved word hookah still deserves careful attention here. The tool kept only the marker that English already owns. This selective result supports theories of indigenized English (Kachru, 1986). It shows that absorption, not respect, drives the exception. Therefore, AI translation cannot yet carry postcolonial resistance safely. The study also speaks to translator training and practice. A human translator can choose to keep the marker visible. The translator can add a light gloss like *Huang himself*. An AI tool rarely makes this choice on its own. Therefore, human judgment remains vital for resistance texts. The tool can assist, yet it cannot decide alone. This balance protects both speed and cultural meaning.

The AI result also refines the postcolonial argument itself. Earlier studies treated appropriation as a fixed textual feature. The present study shows that the feature is fragile. A single translation can erase it within seconds. Therefore, resistance in the text depends on its readers. It also depends on the tools that carry the text. This insight extends the model of Ashcroft et al. (2002). The flattening also erases the hybridity that *Huang builds*. Bhabha (1994) sees hybridity as a space of resistance. The mixed language opens a third space between cultures. A domesticating translation closes this third space. It returns the reader to a single familiar culture and the loss is cultural as well as lexical.

5. Conclusion

This study analysed language appropriation in Manto's short story *The New Constitution* translated by Huang. It applied the framework of Ashcroft et al. (2002) closely. The analysis found untranslated words and syntactic fusion to dominate. These strategies express clear resistance toward the colonizer. *Huang keeps* Urdu visible inside his English narration. This choice raises the local culture above the standard language. The study also tested these markers against AI translation. The tool erased resistance in almost every documented case. It reduced local words to flat standard English forms. This flattening repeats the colonial erasure of difference. The study therefore links appropriation theory with translation technology. It shows that fluent AI translation threatens postcolonial meaning. The work offers one clear warning for readers and translators. AI tools should not translate resistance texts without human care. A foreignizing and informed method can protect these markers. In this way translation can respect the writer's resistance.

This study has clear limits that shape its claims. It examined one short story and one translation only. Therefore, the findings do not cover all subcontinental fiction. The AI outputs are indicative and may change over time. Future research should widen the scope in several ways. It should test more postcolonial stories from the subcontinent. It should also compare several AI translation tools together. Human evaluators should rate the cultural loss in each output. Such work would strengthen the link between literature and technology. The study also invites work from computer science. Engineers could build tools that flag cultural markers. Such tools could warn a user before erasing them. A short note could offer the reader a gloss. This cooperation would link the humanities and technology. Together the two fields could protect literary resistance.

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