The Why and How of Authorial Involvement During Translation: Voices and Experiences of Nepali-English Literary Translators

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to explore author-translator interaction enacted in the translation of literary texts. Set against the poststructuralist approach to authorship and its implied plea for the emancipation of the translator as a reader from an authorial injunction, the paper presents literary translators' voices and experiences of consulting their authors during translation. The qualitative data collected from Nepali-English literary translators through semi-structured interviews were analyzed thematically. Findings reveal a discrepancy between the theoretical questioning of authorship and translation practitioners' desire and necessity to get connected with their authors. Accepting the author's centrality to the text, literary translators seek authorial involvement as a last semantic resort to resolve an interpretive crisis during translation. In accepting authorial authority, translators are equally aware of their translatorial agency. Authors are called upon to play a supportive, rather than a domineering, role to accomplish the translatorial goal.

KEYWORDS: authorship, author-translator interaction, interpretation, literary translation

Introduction

The author-translator relationship has been a fertile ground for debate among translation scholars for some decades, particularly in the wake of poststructuralist thinking. Much of the debate centers around the dynamic, dialectic, and ambivalent relationship between authorship and translatorship (Arrojo 1997; Simeoni 1998; Vanderschelden 1998; Chesterman 2001; Pym 2011; Perteghella 2013; Jansen 2018). The literature shows that translators' relationship with their

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authors is often ambivalent for at least two reasons. Conventional thinking counts translators as a proxy for their authors and hence never in the corridors of power. On the contrary, the mere representative function of translatorship has been put to question by translation scholars espousing poststructuralist and deconstructive viewpoints (Arrojo 1997; Singh 2010; Perteghella 2013). For such scholars, translators are supposed to assume the writerly position while (re)presenting their authors. Translators' dual and paradoxical positions of non-authorship (Pym 2011) and (co)authorship are grounded in the double status of the translated text itself which is at once a representation of the original and a text in its own right (Koster 2002). Translators hence take up the positions of the authorial representative as well as the author, and more importantly, they do so at the same time. The nature of the author-translator relationship has a direct impact on translators' perception of authorship, their position and function, and more crucially their potential interaction with their authors, which is the focus of this study.

The author-translator relationship and the subsequent potential interaction have largely to do with such ontological and epistemological questions as: What constitutes a text? Is a text a self-adequate semiotic entity? What is an author? and who has an epistemic privilege during translation? Answers to these and other questions from different ontological and epistemological perspectives obviously lead to different and often complicated facets of the author-translator relationship and interaction. To take a Romantic and transcendental stance on the text as an expression of the author's intention, for instance, is to conceive the author as a source and to reinforce rather than challenge text-author inseparability. The translator guided by such a Romantic notion of authorship might assume that his/her reading of the text remains incomplete in the absence of interaction with the author, real or imagined. On the other hand, to take a poststructuralist stance on the text as a self-sufficient semiotic entity is to distantiate it from the author. Poststructural thinking deflates and undermines the conventional notion of authorship in its attempt to keep authorial involvement in an interpretive enterprise to the minimum (Barthes 1977; Foucault 1977; Abrams and Harpham 2015), as interaction with the author is not only unnecessary but also unhelpful. It is unnecessary because a text bears only the signature of its author (or better say scriptor), not his/her "passions, humors, feelings and impressions" (Barthes 1977: 147). It is unhelpful because the author's involvement in the interpretive process closes up multiple potential interpretations of a text.

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Furthermore, the author-translator interactional relationship is also shaped by our answer to an epistemological question: Who has an epistemic privilege over the text, particularly during the interpretive act – author or translator? The answer to this question depends fundamentally on how we perceive authorship and translatorship, which in turn affects the nature and dynamics of author-translator interaction during the (re)generation of a text in another language.

Author-translator interaction, hence, offers a fertile ground for investigation. In this respect, it is imperative that we listen to translation practitioners' voices and experiences in light of different theoretical viewpoints so as to unravel the why and how of translators' interaction with their authors. To this end, the present study attempts to answer the following questions:

a) Why do literary translators seek authorial involvement during translation?
b) When and in what circumstances do translators turn to their authors?
c) Do translators experience conflictual relationships with authors?
d) How do they enact translatorial agency during the interaction?

In my attempt to answer these questions, I first discuss the theoretical framework of the poststructuralist stance on authorship and the text, further indicating its implication for author-translator interaction. Then, I outline the methodology adopted to study Nepali-English literary translators' views on authorship and experiences of working with their authors during translation. The data collected through semi-structured interviews with practicing translators are presented and discussed under four broad thematic headings. Finally, the paper ends with an overall conclusion that Nepali-English literary translators' perception of authorship and their interactional relationship with authors largely contradict the poststructuralist project of decentering authorship. Unlike poststructuralists' plea for dislodging the author from the text and granting unrestrained interpretative authority to the reader, literary translators, as the findings show, are inclined to acknowledge the author's centrality to the text. In their experience, authorial involvement in translation can benefit translators by resolving an interpretive crisis, authenticating the interpretations of problematic expressions, and collaborating in the generation of the most appropriate expressions in the target language.

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(De)centering Authorship and its Implication for Author-Translator Interaction

Christiane Nord (2011) points out two semantic facets etymologically associated with the notion of *author*. The first is the designation of the author as a creator, one who brings about something. The second facet designates the author as someone who causes meaning to grow or increase. The first implies authorship "as a kind of creation *ex nihilo*" (Nord 2011: 22), recognizing the author as the originator of a text, the source of meaning. In this formulation, the author claims ethical and legal ownership over meaning inscribed in the text. The second notion, on the other hand, suggests authorship as creation *ex material,* that is, the task of the author is to work on already existent linguistic and cultural materials, rearranging them in new permutations and combinations from a particular point of view (Singh 2010). Authors are thus engaged in the continuous renewal of linguistic and cultural resources in their attempt to (re)generate a text. This understanding of authorship places the author and the translator on the same cline of text production, both serving as agents of textual continuity. The former understanding treats authorship as a fixed point of reference from where meaning originates, and the translator is ideally expected to be in touch with this point of semantic reference to receive meaning. The latter view implies authorship as a transitional point of continuation and growth of text, and the translator, like the author, takes up a (re)generating role. Nord (2011) maintains that over time the author as the agent for the continuation of text was superseded by the romantic notion of the author as a text-originator. The valorization of the author as a creator of a uniquely expressed text is attributed to European Romanticism (Wakabayashi 2011). However, poststructuralists have questioned the validity of this conventional conception of the author as the originator of text, and the controller and regulator of meaning (Abrams and Harpham 2015).

Poststructural engagement with authorship has its roots in Roland Barthes's (1977) seminal 'The Death of the Author' and Michel Foucault's (1977) provocative question 'What is an Author?' Challenging the romantic model of authorship as an expression of individuality and originality, Barthes (1977) advises the reader to dispense with the author. Barthes (ibid.) sees the urgency of dispensing with the author from the text during the meaning elicitation process for at least three reasons: (a) "the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author" (148); (b) "the text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centers of culture" (146); and (c) "it is

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language which speaks, not the author" (143). Barthes reminds us that each event of reading is meaning-potential and the role of the reader is not to passively receive meaning from the text but to actively (re)create it. For poststructuralists, the author is merely a scriptor of the text, not its originator, only a medium of textual continuity. The author's function is to continue, but not to explain the text. More importantly, since the text is a multi-centered and polysemous site, the author does not occupy the center of the site, controlling the "various interpretations that [readers] give to his/her work" and restraining "the text's polysemy" (Ward 2003:165). Rhizomatic in nature, the text is devoid of an ontological center and is ever open to a multitude of unforeseen connections. In Jacques Derrida's (1982:15) speculation, writing involves "a play of forms without a determined and invariable substance", always endlessly deferring any notion of the author's original or final meaning. From the deconstructive position, no text inherits a deep underlying meaning regulated by any authorial agency. The poststructuralists' plea for dislodging the author from the text liberates the reader from the authorial grip and celebrates interpretive liberty. It relegates the author backstage so as to foreground the reader's active role in the meaning-making process.

Foucault's (1977) interrogation of the position of an author in the text provides an additional impetus for the poststructuralist reassessment of authorship. Foucault undermines the authority, authenticity, and individualization of knowledge conventionally ascribed to an author. For Foucault, writing does not insert "a subject into language. Rather, it is primarily concerned with creating an opening where the writing subject endlessly disappears" (1977: 116). Usurped by the reader, the author remains outside the text during the interpretive act, and accordingly holds no authority regarding how to read the text and what to read in it.

The poststructuralist approach to authorship has far-reaching implications for the translation process.Translation as an enactment of reading requires the reader's deep involvement in and intimate interaction with the text (Spivak 2012; Grossman 2010). As an intimate reader, the translator is required to constantly attend to the logical systematicity and rhetoricity of a text, and its exteriority and interiority rather than going beyond the text to access the author's intention. Some translation scholars have taken up this poststructuralist thought to problematize the conventionally romanticized author-translator relationship (e.g. Paz 1992; Arrojo 1997; Venuti 2008; Bhattarai 2010; Singh 2010; Wakabayashi 2011). Referencing the Barthean notion of the

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death of the author, Rosemary Arrojo conceives an author as "a mere limit, or a guest that may, or may not, be invited to the reader's productive reading act" (1997: 23). Being a guest, no author can occupy the text as his/her permanent dwelling and cannot exert his/her authority over the reader. On this point, Govinda Raj Bhattarai contends that poststructuralism has freed the translator from the state of perpetual subordination to the author and with this "the translator looks at the world boldly as if he were newly given emancipation from all obligations and bondages" (2010: 24). The translator is thus relieved from the subservient position in view of the fact that neither the author nor the translator originates "the diverse linguistic and cultural materials" (Venuti 2008: 13) deployed in the text. Lawrence Venuti's view echoes Barthes's poststructuralist thinking that the author "can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. His power is only to mix writings" (1977: 146). Authors, seen from this perspective, are no longer originators of texts, nor do they hold the reins of meaning inscribed in the text that the translator is supposed to carry across languages. Since meaning is always unstable (Perteghella 2013), the treatment of the author as a locus of meaning is inherently problematic. By extension, meaning-generating power and freedom both rest with the translator as a reader.

Poststructuralists thus problematize and undermine or subvert the author as the source, controller, and regulator of meaning, and the translator as its recipient, whose reading is conventionally expected to be anchored in the author's experience, vision and intention. The radical questioning of authorship is motivated by at least two reasons: (a) to treat the source text rather than its author as the principal locus of meaning and to advocate the text-centered or text-grounded reading in translation, and (b) to grant greater agency to the translator as an interpreter and reduce his/her interpretive dependency on the author. The plea for decentering authorship distantiates the translator from the author and undermines the interactional relationship between them.

By and large, translation scholars working within a poststructural and deconstructive critical framework aim to decenter the primacy of the author and foreground the role of the translator as a reader in the meaning-making process, further deeming the potential interactional relationship between translator and author almost irrelevant. Recognition of the translator as an independent interpreter of the text might be felt imperative to keep the text open-ended, as Barthes (1977) advises, and to safeguard the translator's interpretation of text from the "hegemonic univocality"

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(Vieira 2002: 95) of the author. This subversive move, according to Andrew Chesterman, is geared toward raising "the translator from the position of the submissive object to the emancipated subject" (2001: 161-62).

At the same time, there exists a substantial body of literature pointing out translation practitioners' tendency to maintain close ties with their authors. A quick survey of the literature signals a gap between scholars' theoretical stance and translation practitioners' views and behavior with regard to the role of the author in the interpretation of the source text and the transfer of its meanings to the target language (see Simeoni 1998; Vanderschelden 1998; Heller 2016; Jansen 2018). Pointing to a discrepancy between the theoretical attempt to disempower authors and translators' acceptance of authorial centrality, Daniel Simeoni states that "the more vocal calls for translatorial emancipation have not originated in the ranks of translators as such, but among peripheral observers" (1998:12). In Simeoni's observation, literary translators have a tendency to accept authorial centrality to the text. Simeoni further acknowledges translatorial subservience as "the default attitude of translators" which is the accumulated outcome of the translator's mindset called *habitus* (1998: 8). The translator's habitus constitutes the translator's internalization and enactment of voluntary servitude to authorship. Studies carried out by Isabelle Vanderschelden (1998) and Hanne Jansen (2018) also have a similar conclusion, reporting that translators usually make every possible effort to remain close to their authors while interpreting the text and regard their intimacy with the authors as an unavoidable aspect of the translation process. Likewise, Chesterman (2001) maintains that the translator's fidelity to the author is not only an ethical imperative but also indispensable for minimizing the potential misunderstanding yielded by language barriers.

The discrepancy between poststructuralist thinking on translation, and translators' practice is worthy of study for the reason that poststructural thinking has traversed a wider range of disciplines of humanities and social sciences (Roman 2001; Williams 2005), and its influence on literary translation cannot be gainsaid. Some translation scholars, as mentioned above, taking up the poststructuralist position have questioned authorship and advocated translatorial emancipation from an authorial injunction. In this respect, the potential implications of such a theoretically-oriented subversive attempt for translation practice need to be weighed against translation practitioners' voices and experiences.

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Methodological Framework

As we saw in the preceding sections, translation scholarship remains divided on the central questions about the author's position in the text and his/her interpretative role during translation. Likewise, translation practitioners seem ambivalent about the role of their authors in the translation process. With this in mind, the present study aims to explore and understand literary translators' views on and experiences of involving their authors during translation. To this end, the study adopted the participant-oriented research methodology which, in the words of Gabriela Saldanha and Sharon O'Brien, pays "more attention to translators as human agents in the translation process" (2013:150). Underpinned by the constructivist worldview that privileges "multiple participant meanings" (Creswell 2009: 6) and "the individual perspective, personal constructs, negotiated meanings, [and] definitions of situations" (Cohen et al. 2018: 99), the study employed a phenomenological approach to describing Nepali-English literary translators' lived experiences of consulting their authors during the rendition of Nepali literary texts into English or vice versa. Interpretive and subjective in nature, the phenomenological approach is "interested in gaining insights from personal experiences" (Saldanha and O'Brien 2013: 16). Informed by this approach, I used the qualitative semi-structured interview as a data collection tool for its flexibility, depth, and space for interactivity while allowing the researcher to focus on study questions . Interview themes included whether and for what reason translators consulted their authors, the potential conflict of wills between translators and authors, and the enactment of translatorial agency during the interaction with authors.

To identify potential participants, I consulted *A Dictionary of Translators* (Bhattarai 2018) which lists as many as 600 Nepalese translators, living and dead, working between Nepali and other national and international languages, English being the major one. I contacted the potential participants by phone, asking for their willingness to contribute to the study. Altogether eight translators working between the English and Nepali languages showed their willingness and were finalized as key participants. The selected translators had the experience of rendering at least one literary book from Nepali into English or vice versa and had some form of access, physical or virtual or both, to their authors. However, their accessibility to authors did not necessarily mean

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that they consulted their authors during translation. In principle, authorial consultation was presumed to be a matter of individual choice rather than translatorial obligation.

The translators in this study differed in terms of, among others, source languages they were working from. At the time of the interviews, four of the translators worked from both Nepali (i.e., their mother tongue) and English (i.e., their second language), whereas three of them had only the experience of rendering Nepali literary texts into English. There was one translator who rendered from English into Nepali only. Table 1 presents details of interviewees in terms of gender, years of translation experience, and direction of translation.

Table 1: Details of the interviewees

Translator	Gender	Translation experience	Direction of translation
Translator 1	Male	3 years	From Nepali into English and vice versa
Translator 2	Male	2 years	From Nepali into English and vice versa
Translator 3	Female	5 years	From Nepali into English and vice versa
Translator 4	Male	3 years	From English into Nepali
Translator 5	Male	4 years	From Nepali into English and vice versa
Translator 6	Male	8 years	From Nepali into English
Translator 7	Female	4 years	From Nepali into English
Translator 8	Male	7 years	From Nepali into English

After arranging the date and time of the interview, I shared the interview themes with each participant over the phone so that they could contemplate the issues in-depth before the actual interview. The participants were interviewed online via voice call on Facebook in June 2020. The virtual interview was preferred to the face-to-face meeting due to the COVID-19 outbreak. The

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interviews, which were conducted in English, normally lasted from half an hour to 45 minutes. The audio-recorded interviews were transcribed, supplemented by notes and reflections, and coded for analysis. The participants were de-identified as Translator 1, Translator 2…, and Translator 8 to ensure their anonymity. The interview data were analyzed employing a priori coding scheme developed on the basis of the theoretical constructs related to the research questions and the analysis of a small portion of the collected data (Riazi 2016). The segments of the data were assigned to appropriate codes based on which four broad themes were generated. The data were interpreted in light of the constructs such as, among others, the author as an originator, controller and regulator of meaning, the translator's fidelity to the author, decentring of authorship, and a plea for translatorial emancipation derived from the literature (Barthes 1977; Foucault 1977; Arrojo 1997; Simeoni 1998; Jansen 2018) reviewed in the preceding section.

Translators' Interpretive Crisis and Authorial Involvement

Why do you consult your author during translation? For this central question, there was a virtually unanimous response from the translators participating in this study. The experience of interpretive crisis, i.e., the sense of "failure to convey the meaning accurately" (Wakabayashi 2011: 100), and the resulting impulse to consult authors emerged as one of the recurrent themes in the interviews. Each translator recounted a certain sense of doubt, uncertainty, confusion, and failure in the interpretation of certain source expressions and rhetorical strategies. At such an indecisive juncture, translators tend to seek authorial involvement in the hope of resolving the interpretive crisis they face.

Where possible all translators sought some help from their authors during translation, particularly in the interpretation of problematic expressions which comprised historical and mythological allusions, wordplay, obscure references, and other incalcitrant expressions.

Recounting their experiences, each of the translators highlighted facilitative functions of face-to-face or virtual interaction with the author before and during translation. As recounted, authorial involvement is "informative" (Translator 2), "enlightening" (Translator 4), "of great help in understanding the implied meaning" (Translator 5), and instrumental in "clearing up uncertainties and ensuring better interpretation" (Translator 6). The following representative voices

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demonstrate how author-translator interaction has the potential to contribute to the translation process:

> There were many occasions when I felt that my translation had come to a halt while translating Nepali short stories into English due to several contextually incomprehensible expressions. Consulting the writers was the most straightforward solution (Translator 8).

> Asking the author what she actually meant by a particular term has helped me not only to better understand the context but at times to ensure my understanding of the text (Translator 3).

These accounts suggest that when translators fall into a trap of seemingly uninterpretable signifiers, they invoke their authors. In other words, translators usually seek authorial support to overcome certain semantic hurdles during translation. Authorial support is thus likely to ease as well as expedite the translation process, thereby further ensuring the quality of the translation product.

Analysis of interviews further reveals that author-translator interaction offers three-fold benefits for translators: it validates the translator's decision; it safeguards the translator from making a wrong decision, and it expedites the translation process. For these translators, consultation with their authors served two purposes. First, when they had no idea what specific expressions meant in the given contexts, they had their authors interpret the problematic expressions for them. This type of consultation has a prescriptive function. Second, they consulted their authors to confirm the accuracy and appropriateness of their interpretations of problematic expressions and the target options they had chosen for source interpretations. Here consultation has a confirmatory function.

The translators' impulse to consult their authors is in accord with the findings reported by previous studies (see Simeoni 1998; Vanderschelden 1998; Chesterman, 2001; Heller 2016; Jansen 2018). The literature shows that translators and translation scholars alike have recognized the value of translator-author interaction during the translation process. In an interview with Rainer Schulte, Breon Mitchell, for example, asserts that personal contact with the author allows the translator to have "direct access to meaning. And although the results often affect only a few specific details in a text, the overall effect in terms of accuracy is often telling" (2012: 22). Mitchell further warns that failure to unearth the meaning of the source text is sure to harm the

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life of the translated text (ibid.). Highlighting the benefit of the translator's dialogue with the author, Patrick Hersant references Italo Calvino's recommendation for dialogic interaction that "emerges out of the translator's questions to the author" (2017: 94). Hersant (ibid.) reminds us that Calvino's recommendation for authorial involvement in translation stems from his experience as one of the most translated authors as well as a prominent translator himself. Relatedly, the confirmatory function of translator-author interaction identified in this study corroborates Mackenzie's (1998) observation that the translators working with their authors can confirm or reject their choices more easily, and are therefore likely to make decisions faster than the translators working on their own. In this regard, Translator (1) can be a case in point. While translating a Nepali short story into English, this translator, as he narrated, grappled with a dilemma of whether to render the Nepali word *sipahi* as 'soldier' or 'recruit'. He further narrated, "I was not sure which one of the meanings the author was actually referring to in the story. So I wrote both English words separated by a slash and asked him to choose one for me."

The practice of the translators interviewed for this study appears to be guided by the notion that meaning emanates from and is ultimately sustained by the author. This practice runs counter to the poststructuralist credo that meaning emanates exclusively from the text and is sustained by its readers only, since the author only precedes but does not originate the text (Barthes 1977). Taking up the Derridian deconstructive move, Edwin Gentzler (2010) points out the impossibility of the translator-as-reader locating *pure* and definite meaning behind and beyond the textual world. On the contrary, the translators in this study showed a willingness to be in communication with their authors. This indicates the translators' belief that there resides the author in and behind the text, in some way controlling textual meaning. The underlying assumption of their interpretive efforts is that meaning dwells in both textual and authorial worlds, and not all meanings can be extracted from the textual world alone. What remains hidden or not clearly articulated in the text can be recovered with the help of the author. The interviewed translators' voices and experiences also mirror the crux of a Romantic or transcendental interpretative approach advocated by Friedrich Schleiermacher (2012) and George Steiner (2012) that brings the author to the fore, suggesting that the text is but a means to arrive at the authorial meaning or intention. The transcendental approach expects the translator-as-reader to enter the text so as to arrive at the author's intention, albeit not necessarily at the cost of textual meaning (Koster 2002).

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The translators' urge to consult their authors also finds its answer partly in Chesterman's (2001) ethics of representation, and partly in Simeoni's (1998) conception of a translator as a reporter of authorial voice. Complying with the ethics of representation, Translator 8, for example, reiterated his responsibility to re-express the author's intention as truly as possible. This view was echoed by other translators who also pointed out the ethical imperative (Chesterman 2001) to represent their authors accurately. It is this imperative, in their views, that necessitates translators to maintain a dialogic relationship with their authors whenever doubts and uncertainties creep into their reading of source elements and selection of target options. Likewise, in agreement with Simeoni's (1998) view, each translator acted as the reporter of the author's voice articulated in and through the text. In doing so, they turned to authors when they felt the voice in the text was not distinctly audible to communicate the intended meaning. Hence, it could be argued that listening to the author is integral to the translation process.

The Author Only as a Last Resort

The second issue concerned when and in what circumstances authors are called upon to resolve an interpretive crisis. Regarding this, the author only as last resort was noted as a pertinent theme. In all cases, the interviewees reported relying on authors as only one of several translation resources, others being textual resources (e.g. dictionaries), online resources (e.g. Wikipedia), and human resources (e.g. colleagues). This suggests that translators seek authorial involvement, specifically when other resources at their disposal fail to solve textual problems, as evident in the following translator's behavior: "When dictionaries are less helpful, I speak to the writer herself to better understand the ideas behind the expressions" (Translator 7). Translator 2 recounted a similar experience as, "while translating my professor's Nepali essays into English, I couldn't find English equivalents of some Nepali idiomatic expressions in Nepali-English dictionaries. Then I consulted him by phone." Likewise, Translator 3 stated, "I do a lot of research by consulting dictionaries, and even asking my colleagues before turning to the author."

The common strand running through these and other responses is that authorial involvement is envisaged only as a last recourse to overcome textual problems. This observation is substantiated by the fact that none of the interviewees reported consulting their authors prior to the extensive

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use of dictionaries, multiple rounds of reading of the source text, and sharing problems with their colleagues. It thus suggests that the author serves as a hermeneutic agent who constitutes and regulates the meaning lying hidden in and behind the text. However, this agent is called upon for help only when other resources, human and nonhuman, are felt inadequate or unhelpful in the interpretation of problematic parts of the source text. Accordingly, the author can be perceived as the most reliable semantic anchor to which the translator clings when he/she loses the track of interpretation or his/her understanding of the text begins to falter, and when other available resources are felt inadequate to excavate the authorial intention from the text.

Irrespective of poststructuralists' plea for distantiating the author from the text, translators in the study acknowledged the author as probably the most trusted source of meaning. This perception of authorship reflects many translation scholars' views and practitioners' experiences (e.g. Halkin and Yaakov 1983; Mezei 1989; Simeoni 1998; Schulte 2003; Jansen 2018). Take, for example, Hillel Halkin and Zichron Yaakov who count the author as "an authoritative source to elucidate any difficulties in the original, one that unlike dictionaries, friends, or [the translator's] own fallible intuition can be considered totally reliable" (1983: 74). Likewise, in an interview with Schulte (2003:1), Breon Mitchell, a German translator, shares his experience of turning to the author as a last resort, as "I try first to do as much work as I can to avoid unnecessary questions and leave only those that I actually have real difficulty in figuring out." Recounting the process of translating English literary essays into Nepali, Translator 4 shared a similar experience, "during translation, I often underlined unclear and vague expressions or structures and wrote on the margin 'To ask the Author.'" This translator's behavior accords with Jansen's (2018: 4) finding that the majority of translators contact their authors "either mainly or only when necessary to solve specific and practical problems and fix misunderstandings." Hence, moving away from poststructuralists' subversive enterprise to divest the author of a privileged position (Foucault 1977), the participant translators were not willing to accept the demise of authorial authority. There can be two possible reasons for counting authors as the most reliable source of interpretation. First, translators seem to assume the author as the originator of the text and the authority of what the text embodies and communicates to the reader. Second, with this assumption in mind, translators are driven by the ultimate desire to enter the author's interiority so as to access his/her intentions harbored in, but not clearly articulated through the text.

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Conflictual Relationship between Authorship and Translatorship

I also probed into the potential conflict of wills between translators and their authors. Some of the responses signaled the conflictual dimension of author-translator interaction particularly when authors try to restrict translatorial agency. The implication is that author-translator interaction is not always unproblematic, unequivocal, and does not necessarily yield satisfactory fruition. Drawing on their experiences, three of the translators (Translator 4, Translator 5, and Translator 6) were vocal about unhelpful interaction with some of their authors, particularly when the authors were unduly demanding, doubtful of translators' ability, and/or tried to have the upper hand in decision-making. One translator recounted the experience of working with a well-known Nepali poet with some proficiency in English:

> Normally, I've benefitted from my authors. But I remember a Nepali poet with a working knowledge of English, not competent enough to grasp its literary subtitles. He'd not often understand what I was trying to convey and cast doubts on my choice of English words. He'd often say 'I didn't mean that', and would suggest his own interpretation that often differed from the textual meaning (Translator 6).

This translator's experience points to two facets of author-translator interaction. First, authorial involvement during translation can be debilitating when the author attempts to speak *louder and more than* the text, or when the authorial intention eclipses rather than supplements textual meaning. Second, whether the interaction will be facilitating or debilitating is largely subject to how the author perceives his/her role in relation to the role of the translator and the author's working knowledge of the target language. It seems, for instance, that the author with target language knowledge is more likely to intervene and interfere in the translatorial function than one with no such knowledge. In an equally critical vein, another translator signaled a conflictual relationship with one of his authors: "I remember one writer. He acted as an editor, often ruling out my choices. It's difficult to work with such writers who keep suggesting different alternatives" (Translator 6). Translator 6 further recounted how that author often imposed his decision mainly from the authorial position, considering that the translator's job is to accept what

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the author thinks right. These narratives are clearly indicative of the fact that translators might perceive inordinate authorial involvement as a threat to their translatorial liberty and creative agency. Additionally, it is further indicated that authors' temptation to exercise their power on translators minimizes dialogic interaction, discounts translators' desire and ability to generate meaning from the text, and imposes authors' monological meaning on them.

Depending on its nature, authorial involvement can hence be facilitating or debilitating for the translation process. In this regard, Hersant's (2017) discussion of different modes of author-translator collaboration can be helpful. Hersant identifies six different modes of collaboration between author and translator ranging from the author taking control over the translation process to giving absolute freedom to the translator. Between these two extremes lie other layers of collaboration such as informal discussion with the author and back-and-forth exchanges between them. The translator's seeking help from the author can be regarded as a lenient form of authorial involvement materialized mainly at the translator's initiative and request. All translators in the study avoided the two extremes of authorial involvement, i.e. working under total authorial control and working freely without any form of authorial involvement. None of the translators had the experience of working directly under the author, and nor did they prefer this mode of translation, with the implication that this might eclipse translatorial freedom and jeopardize a healthy and productive author-translator working relationship. They seemed to be in favor of working with rather than working under authors, and accordingly, their collaboration was limited to face-to-face or virtual informal discussion.

All interviewed translators reported experiencing some form of conflict between their author's will to exercise authorial power and their own will to exercise translatorial agency. As recounted, sometimes the conflict was moderate and even productive leading to a better-negotiated option, while other times the conflict escalated to the point of jeopardizing the author-translator working relationship. This finding resonates with the findings by Judy Wakabayashi (2011) and Hersant (2017). Authors' skepticism of their translators' interpretative honesty and generative capacity was noted as one of the causes of a conflictual relationship between author-function and translator-function. With such skeptical authors, translators are likely to have a conflictual relationship, and interaction between them is unlikely to contribute to the translation process. A conflict is sure to arise when both translator and author try to have the upper hand in the

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interpretation of the source expression and the selection of the target expression that best matches it. Moreover, author-translator interaction might not be fruitful when both parties are unaware of or are unwilling to acknowledge each other's strengths and limitations and fail to recognize the complementary role that each party can play in the interpretation of the source text and its (re)creation in the target language.

Mutual Subservience of Translatorship and Authorship

The final issue explored was the enactment of translatorial agency while consulting the author. This issue was informed by Simeoni's view that translatorial subservience is "the default attitude of translators" (1998: 7-8). It implies that translators are subject to authorial power and knowledge, and accordingly lack the capacity to act purposefully. It thus seems logical for poststructuralists to call for reappraising the literary translator as "a subjective (and subversive) participant" (Perteghella 2013: 202) actively engaged in meaning-generating and meaning-proliferation processes. Needless to reiterate, an inordinate inclination towards or undue dependence on authors during translation weakens translatorial agency. Almost all translators in the study demonstrated awareness of this reality and, rather than merely acting as submissive objects, they exhibited a relatively high degree of agency. Regarding this, one interviewee said, "After preparing the first draft of each essay, I'd sit with the author to work out the solutions to problematic expressions" (Translator 2). This translator's behavior is the paradigmatic example of how translators avail themselves of their authors strategically.

Consultation with authors can be interpreted as one of the strategies deliberately deployed by translators to compensate for their limited linguistic and cultural resources in the meaning-generating process. Translator 4 can be a case in point who reported his tendency to seek the author's help only when dictionaries at his disposal failed to supply him with the required information, and when consultation with his colleagues did not come to fruition. The strategic deployment of authors as one of several semiotic resources reveals translators' capacity to act purposively (Palumbo 2009) as per their needs. Furthermore, these translators did not show a tendency to accept their authors' suggestions uncritically, which has also been indicated elsewhere in this paper. Translator 7, for instance, shared her habit of interpreting the words

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suggested by the author in relation to the contexts and looking them up in dictionaries to ensure their accuracy and appropriateness. These representative voices suggest that translators tend to weigh the interpretations as well as target options suggested by their authors before making a final decision. This type of strategically motivated interaction addresses the poststructuralist anxiety about the author exerting his/her authority over the translator.

The translators in this study were found to instigate dialogic interaction with their authors in their endeavor to navigate and negotiate translation problems. It was translators who took charge of the translation process, regulated the process and decided when to consult their authors for what purpose. During the interaction, the author-function was largely confined to that of a conveyer of information at the initiative and request of the translator. This means that if Simeoni's (1998) postulate of subservience as a default situation of translatorship is true, it is equally true for authorship. On the surface, the translator seems to be subservient to the author when the former seeks the latter's help to resolve specific textual problems. In fact, deep down the translator and the author are in mutual subservience to each other in this interactional relationship. When the translator consults the author, the latter is in service of the former. To rephrase, the translator employs the author as a means to achieving the translatorial goal.

Author-translator interaction and their mutual subservience can also be interpreted and understood from a Lacanian poststructuralist perspective. The Lacanian argument holds that "knowledge cannot be located in any particular subject but is, in fact, intersubjective" (Dylan 2006: 199). Accordingly, each participant in the transaction and execution of knowledge supposes that the other party possesses it. This phenomenon of the other subject supposed to know was also discerned in the author-translator interaction analyzed in this study. Authors entrusted translators with the task of translating, with the supposition that their translators possessed what they lacked. By doing so, authors deemed their dependency on their translators inevitable for their "new birth in the new tongue" (Nida 1964:233). It is only the translator who can extend the author's creative work across languages and ensure its "potentially eternal afterlife" (Benjamin 2000: 17). Conversely, translators reported some form of dependency on their authors during translation, which indicates their assumption that meaning emanates, is sustained and even regulated by authors. As discussed in the preceding sections, each of the translators brought his/her problems and uncertainties to the author by supposing that the author

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possessed special knowledge of the text, and specifically the solutions to interpretation problems. This points to the fact that the author's supposition that the translator knows how to carry the text across linguistic borders initiates the translation process, and that the translator's supposition that the author knows more about the text instigates author-translator interaction. Hence, these suppositions seem to be integral to the overall translation process contributing to constructive and formative author-translator interaction. Conversely, when one supposes the other *not* to be in possession of textual knowledge, the author-translator relationship is threatened, and the translation process is likely to be disrupted, as we saw above in the case of some of the translators' conflictual relationships with their authors. Following the Lacanian notion of decentralization and the intersubjectivity of knowledge, it can be argued that the author and the translator can serve as potential loci of textual knowledge/meaning for each other. The paradox of dialogic interaction between author and translator is that each assumes the subject position in relation to the other.

Conclusion

This paper is an attempt to explore the dimensions and dynamics of author-translator interaction from the perspectives of Nepali-English literary translators. The interview findings point to a discrepancy between the poststructuralist plea for translatorial emancipation and Nepali-English literary translators' behaviors, corroborating the findings of previous studies (Simeoni 1998; Wakabayashi 2011; Jansen 2018). Unlike scholarly voices aiming to undermine authorial authority, translators, as the findings show, tend to acknowledge the privileged position of the author in the text as a source and regulator of meaning. Authorial involvement is sought to resolve the translator's interpretive crisis. This finding contradicts the poststructuralist enterprise to dislodge the author from the text to grant the ultimate interpretive authority to the translator as a reader.

The findings also indicate that authorial involvement during translation can have debilitating effects, specifically when the author fails to recognize and appreciate the translator's role and agency by imposing his/her meaning on the translator. One of the more significant findings to emerge from this study is that the translator's interpretative dependency on the author does not

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necessarily weaken translatorial agency. If practiced carefully and judiciously with critical awareness, the translator's interaction with the author strengthens his/her role as an interpreter and (re)creator of the text, contributing to his/her confidence in the transfer of meaning. The translator's consultation with the author is strategically motivated with an awareness of when to consult the author for what purpose. The translator's interpretive dependency on the author hence does not necessarily imply that the translator accepts the author's injunction uncritically. Moreover, the assumption that the translator is subservient to the author holds only a partial truth, as the author is called upon to contribute to the translation process at the active and conscious initiative of the translator. During interaction, the translator takes the role of active and relentless text digger and text (re)writer, while the author's role is limited largely to that of an informant. Since while being served, the author is also serving the translator, there is mutual subservience to each other. In other words, one becomes a subject while being subjected to the knowledge and power of the other to overcome each other's limitations. This mutual dependency between author and translator in the construction of meaning aligns to a large extent with poststructuralist thinking that there is no one center of meaning. During the translation process, meaning is often constructed jointly in the locus of author-translator intersubjectivity through dialogic interaction. In this interpretive enterprise, each participant seems to exercise his/her epistemic privilege over the other, which further underscores the dynamic, and often ambivalent, nature of author-translator interaction.

This study has also shown that the translator perceives himself/herself neither as a neutral conduit for the author's thoughts and intention as is conventionally assumed, nor as a text (re-)producer completely emancipated from authorial authority, as poststructuralists advocate. In practice, translators at once appear to be subservient and critical to their authors depending on their interpretative needs. Notwithstanding all this, translators' acceptance of authorial centrality to the text suggests their unwillingness to conceive authorship in poststructuralist terms. Unlike the poststructuralist treatment of the author as an outsider or guest to the text, translators largely conceive the author as a source of meaning as well as a participant assisting them in the extraction of meaning from the source text.

The findings are expected to narrow the gap between the poststructuralist stance on authorship and translators' pragmatic needs of involving their authors in the translation process. Informed by

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these findings, translation instructors and trainers can develop an author-translator interaction framework incorporating facilitative functions of authorial involvement, as well as recognizing its potential hindrance to the translatorial function. Translation practitioners can engage in their work informed by the different dimensions of author-translator interaction identified in this study, such as the author as an authentic source of meaning, the author as a last resort in resolving the interpretive crisis, and the author as a collaborator in the construction of meaning. The author's informed engagement in translation activity can contribute to both the translation process and product.

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