

Problems in Translating Metaphorical Expressions

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Abstract: *Metaphorical expressions are abundant in culture-bound concepts so much that they are closely and intricately linked with each other embodying associations related to a particular cultural community. Metaphor translation poses the challenges of approaching the text culturally, linguistically or even conceptually. Therefore, translating metaphors do in fact involve a number of factors and not only restricted to the provision of linguistic equivalences of the texts in question. The translator should be crafty enough to identify aspects related to concepts and culture. The chief reason for conducting this paper is to explore the emotive metaphoric conceptualizations that are extremely dominant in Arabic and English. The paper will handle both metaphors of happiness and sadness as present in Arabic poetry and other related genres. The Metaphor Identification Procedures (MIP), proposed by the Pragglejazz group (2007), and Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) were adopted as the framework for analysis. Our findings revealed that there are many cultural similarities and differences between emotive metaphorical concepts in Arabic and English.*

Keywords: *metaphorical expressions, conceptual metaphor, translation patterns, sadness, happiness*

1. INTRODUCTION

Translation is an activity certainly involving two languages and two cultural traditions." (Toury 1978:200). Accordingly, translators have to pay special attention to the question of culture embedded in the source text should they seek to come up with clear and successful transmission of the cultural aspects expressed in the source text into the target text. These problems may vary in scope depending on the cultural and linguistic gap between the two (or more) languages concerned (see Nida 1964:130).

The cultural implications may vary as to include lexical content, syntax, ideologies and ways of life in a given culture. So the first job of the translator in this respect is to weigh all the possible cultural elements interspersed in the source text and give them the required rendering. The aims of the ST will also have implications for translation as well as the intended readership for both the ST and the target text (TT).

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURE IN TRANSLATION

Newmark defines culture as "the way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression" (1988:94). He, therefore, identifying that each language group has its own culturally specific features. He further clearly states that operationally he does "not regard language as a component or feature of culture" (Newmark 1988:95) in direct opposition to the view taken by Vermeer who states that "language is part of a culture" (1989:222). According to Newmark, Vermeer's stance would imply the impossibility to translate whereas for the latter, translating the source language (SL) into a suitable form of TL is part of the translator's role in transcultural communication.

The question of culture is indispensable to considering the implications for translation and, despite the differences in opinion as to whether language is part of culture or not, the two notions appear to be closely interrelated. Discussing the problems of correspondence in translation, Nida confers equal importance to both linguistic and cultural differences between the SL and the TL and concludes that "differences between cultures may cause more severe complications for the translator than do differences in language structure" (Nida, 1964:130). It is further explained that parallels in culture often provide a common understanding despite significant formal shifts in the translation. The cultural implications for translation are thus of significant importance as well as lexical concerns.

According to Lotman's theory "no language can exist unless it is steeped in the context of culture; and no culture can exist which does not have at its centre, the structure of natural language" (Lotman, 1978:211-32). Bassnett (1980: 13-14) underlines the importance of this double consideration when translating by stating that language is "the heart within the body of culture," the survival of both aspects being interdependent. Linguistic notions of transferring meaning are seen as being only part of the translation process; "a whole set of extra-linguistic criteria" must also be considered. As Bassnett further points out, "the translator must tackle the SL text in such a way that the TL version will correspond to the SL version... To attempt to impose the value system of the SL culture onto the TL culture is dangerous ground" (Bassnett, 1980:23). Thus, when translating, it is important to consider not only the lexical impact on the TL reader, but also the manner in which cultural aspects may be perceived and make translating decisions accordingly.

Catford (1965, p. 20) states that translation is the replacement of textual material in one language by equivalent textual material in another language. In this definition, the most important thing is equivalent textual material. Yet, it is still vague in terms of the type of equivalence. Culture is not taken into account.

Nida and Taber (1969) explain the process of translating as, translating consists of reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style. Translation, involving the transposition of thoughts expressed in one language by one social group into the appropriate expression of another group, entails a process of cultural de-coding, re-coding and en-coding. As cultures are increasingly brought into greater contact with one another, it is the cultural aspect of the text that we should take into account.

3. TYPES OF METAPHOR

Translation experts have attempted to identify translation correspondence. The studies conducted by Hiraga(1991), Mandelblit (1995), Schäffner (2004), Kovecses (2005), Al-Zoubi (2006), Al-Hasnawi (2007), Maalej (2008) and Iranmanesh and Kaur (2010) have explored metaphor translation from a cognitive linguistic perspective via addressing either one or more aspects. These studies have made a distinction between similar mapping condition (SMC) and the different mapping condition (DMC) in the sense that the source language (SL) and the target language (TL) in the SMC case used the identical metaphor to conceptualize a particular notion while both SL and TL conceptualize a particular notion using a different metaphor in the DMC case.

These approaches, which were largely descriptive, focused on how metaphors and metaphorical expressions were treated in actual translations. Al-Zoubi, (2006) declare that since there is a relationship between metaphors and different cultural domains, the translator ought to conduct the conceptual mapping for the TL reader in which the cognitive equivalence in the target culture has to be looked. The task of translation ought to be easier if the SL and the TL cultures conceptualize experience in a similar way (Al-Zoubi, 2006).

In a similar study conducted by Al-hasnawi (2007), it was proposed that the cogno-cultural framework and the cognitive equivalence hypothesis used for translating metaphors based upon the cognitive translation hypothesis (CTH) proposed by Mandelblit (1995) should be used to distinguish between SMC and DMC. The source and target languages in SMC use the same metaphor to conceptualize a domain while the source and target languages in DMC use different metaphors. In an effort to modify Mandelblit's SMC and DMC, Al-hasnawi (2007) have suggested that there are three cognitive mapping conditions for translating metaphors. These three cognitive mapping conditions include:

- Metaphors which have similar mapping conditions,
- Metaphors which have similar mapping conditions but were differently lexically implemented, and
- Metaphors which have different mapping conditions.

The conditions cited above are represented as a range where similar mapping conditions at one end show languages and cultures greatly blended into a whole and sharing the worldwide metaphors that are grounded in a common empirical way. The greater discrepancy between languages shown at the other end of different mapping conditions is due to marked cultural differences. In a similar way, due to the cultural or ethical system of each language with different lexicalisations, they are placed at an intermediate stage demonstrating some differences in the mapping conditions. However, it has been

shown that the first and second results in the conditions are equivalent to the TL metaphor or the TL simile. The third condition reveals that the translator opted for a TL simile, a footnote, paraphrase, explanatory remark or the metaphor is omitted whenever there is a failure in all the other options (Alhasnawi, 2007).

In sum, all the cognitive approaches mentioned above to translate metaphors provide a view on the types of variation that can occur in translation. Reviewing the related literature brought to light the fact that the cognitive metaphor translation as a framework can help studies in the field of metaphor translation particularly in avoiding the confusion the term “metaphor” might cause being used to refer to both the cognitive and the linguistic phenomena. Consequently, the general assumption is that the cognitive strategy for metaphor translation should simplify the whole procedure based upon the fact it raises the awareness of the inventories of cross-domain mapping in SL and TL. This helps in retaining the metaphorical expressions contained in any type of text. Nonetheless, it has been shown that culture can play an important role in the transfer of conceptual metaphor from one conceptual system to another. Based upon the studies mentioned above, the study in hand proposes a combination of translation strategies that would serve as a point of departure for identifying patterns of translation. These methods would be probably reviewed and further refined in the light of metaphor analysis' findings.

4. METAPHORICAL EXPRESSION HISTORICAL REVIEW

Metaphor has been used and appreciated since olden times. Aristotle himself once commented that “the greatest thing, by far, is to be a master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learnt; and it is also a sign of genius...” (as cited in Kittay, 1989, p. 1). Moreover, metaphors found in passages from the celebrated Sumerian *Epic of Gilgamesh* to the Greek plays of Sophocles and Euripides also attest to the long and distinguished history of this trope (Wikipedia). The use of metaphor has been studied as well as celebrated. In their book, *More Than Cool Reason* (1989), George Lakoff and Mark Turner examined the significant role of metaphor in poetry, noting the omnipresence and the potent impact of metaphor in poetry and rhetoric. However, Lakoff and Turner's treatment represents a departure from the idea that metaphor is specific to the realm of literature; several studies have indicated that metaphor is a central property of everyday language as well (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Metaphor translation, on the whole, should be performed on semantic level for all figurative language is typically rich with aesthetic and expressive values. The translator has to work against lots of odds. These are manifest in linguistic, literary, aesthetic, and socio-cultural problems. The linguistic problems include the collocation and obscured syntactic structures. The aesthetic and literary problems are related with the metaphor typical diction, poetic structures and sounds. While the socio-cultural problems arise from the translator's attempt to deal with expressions containing the four major cultural categories: ideas, ecology, behavior, and products.

It is self-evident that dealing with literary texts involve much more complexity than handling other types of work. This fact is attributable to the dichotomous nature of the literary genre which involves aesthetic and expressive values. The aesthetic dimension sheds light on the beauty of the figurative language whereas the expressive levels the writer's modes of artistic and appreciative thinking. Apart from all types of figurative language, metaphorical expressions call for specific treatment in translating or the whole outcome will turn out to be a heap of trash. The difficult job that ever faces the translator is the adequate transmission of these artistic values from the source language into the target one.

Metaphorical expressions, compared to other types of expressions stand quite distinctly as enjoying artistic merits of which other genres are bereft. They are greatly culture-bound; the thing which makes their rendering greatly tough. A larger part of them is directly entrenched into the nation's legacy with direct connection with history. So the translator has to contrive against immense socio-cultural and historic powers. Therefore, it is more than a translation as such.

In consideration of translation problems that translators have to exercise patience over, Newmark (1982) finds that in linguistic, literary, aesthetic and socio-cultural problems forms the central part of the intricacy. To have a better grasp of the operation involved in translating metaphorical expression, let's consider each element in isolation.

5. LINGUISTIC PROBLEMS

As far as this subtitle is concerned, two central points shall be focused on, namely collocation and obscured syntactical structures. According to Cambridge Dictionary online, collocation is defined as “a word or phrase that is often used with another word or phrase, in a way that sounds correct to people who have spoken the language all their lives, but might not be expected from the meaning: In the phrase “a hard frost”, “hard” is a collocation of “frost” and “strong” would not sound natural.” Collocation is not simply a matter of association of ideas. For, although milk is white, we should not often say “white milk”, though the expression “white paint” is common enough. Some of Porzig’s examples seem more concerned with association of ideas. How often is “lick” actually collocated with “tongue”? More importantly, although collocation is very largely determined by meaning, it is sometimes idiosyncratic and cannot easily be predicted in terms of the meaning of the associated words. One example is Porzig’s “blond” with “hair”. For we should not talk about “a blond door” or “blond dress”, even if their colors are exactly like that of blond hair. Similarly “rancid” occurs only with “bacon” and “butter”, and “addled” with “brains” and “eggs” in spite of the fact that English has the terms “rotten” and “bad” and that “milk” never collocates with “rancid” but only with “sour “. Similar examples are found in Arabic:

- خلفالناقة .

xilf-u ?al-nāqa

(the breast of the she-camel)

- ضرعالبقرة .

dir^ʕ-u ?al-baqara

(the breast of the cow)

- ثديالمرأة .

θady-u?al-mar?a

(the breast of the woman)

Guided by the above definition, the word 'collocation' as used here refers to words or word groups with which a word or words may typically combine. The combination may be syntagmatic or horizontal, like make a mistake and not do a mistake. Something to remember is in different languages the collocates tend to be different. The Sudanese Colloquial Arabic for *crossing the street* is *cutting* the street.

The other class of collocation is pragmatic or vertical. This consists of words belonging to the same semantic field or be semantic opposite. Different from the first class, the collocates in this class may be the same for several languages. Land, sea, air are exactly the same *asard, bahar, hwa*

6. METAPHORICAL EXPRESSIONS

Metaphorical expressions, as the second factor, as already being defined in this study, they simply refer to any constructions evoking visual, sounds, touch, etc.. Intentionally, the writer does not use the term metaphor in the sub-heading since it has different meaning for some people. What is generally known as (traditional) metaphor, for example, is not the same as metaphor meant by Newmark.

Newmark stipulated certain steps to be taken before thinking of grasping the very meaning of *metaphor*. The understanding of these terms is prerequisite to understanding metaphor: object, image, sense, metaphor, and metonym. Object, called also topic, is the item which is described by the metaphor. Image refers to the item in terms of which the object is described. It is also called vehicle. The next term, sense, refers to the point of similarity between aspects of the objects and the image. Metaphor here means the word(s) taken from the image. And finally, metonym refers to one-word image which replace the object, which is in many cases figurative but not metaphorical.

Newmark (1981: 88-91) suggests seven procedures to translate metaphors in general. The first one is reproducing the same image in the TL if the image has comparable frequency and currency in the appropriate register. This procedure is usually used for one-word metaphor, e.g. ray of hope. Ray of hope can be simply translated into بارقة أمل

The second procedure is replacing images in the SL with a standard TL image within the constraints of TL cultures. The English metaphor 'my life hangs on a thread', with this procedure, can be translated into Arabic *حياتي معلقة بخيط*

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