Translating Metaphor and Allusion from Persian to English: A Comparative Study of Rumi's the Song of the Reed

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Abstract

Metaphor and allusion are two figures of speech which give the beauty and implicit meaning to exquisite literary works. However, these two figures of speech often cause difficulties and problems for translators. These problems even become more sophisticated and troublesome in perception and translation of poems due to difficulty in keeping both form and content of the poems. The present study aimed at identifying the strategies employed by translators, and determining their frequencies in transferring metaphor and allusion from source text to the target one. Mawlana is a grand poet in the West and many translators have made an attempt to spread his precious philosophical theological knowledge. In this study, Nicholson and Wienfield were chosen among the other translators of Mawlana's [Neynāme] or the Song of the Reed. Then, their translations were analyzed regarding which strategies they used for translating metaphor and allusion. The frameworks for these investigations were based on the models presented by Larson (1984) for translating metaphor and Leppihalme (1997) for transferring allusion. According to the result of this study, it can be concluded that Nicholson and Winfield were both to some extent in favor of literal translation, underscoring the significance of ST status in their minds. This conclusion was drawn by analyzing and considering the most common strategies used for translating these two figures of speech.

Keywords: Figure of speech, metaphor, allusion, translation strategies.

Persian literature with its prominent literary men has a great potency to transfer exquisite knowledge and doctrine around the world. However, to spread knowledge, translation of information is a mandatory task. Translation of poems has been most challenging and controversial issue for any translator. One of the difficulties in translating poems from source text to target text is figurative language which has the essence of style and beauty. If the translator takes them literally, in the target language they will look nonsensical, because it may cause many misinterpretations. Therefore, it is difficult for the target language audience to understand them. Metaphor is a figure of speech which concisely compares two things where one thing is said to be another. In other words, a metaphor is a comparison between two things without the use of "like" or "as." Clearly one of the main necessities to provide a more comprehensive understanding of a poem is the ability to interpret figurative language.

A simple possible way for overcoming such a problem is to analyze metaphor, to write out the propositions which are basic to the comparison. The topic (the thing really being talked about), the image (what is being compared to) and the point of similarity (found in the comments of both propositions) involved should be all included. We should not assume that every metaphor must be translated into a metaphor, or simile in the target language. Larson (1998) proposes that metaphor of one language can also be translated without keeping the metaphorical imagery. A metaphor is translated non-figuratively when the translation does not apply figures of speech.

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According to Perrine 1384 (2006) there are four reasons for significance of figures of speech in literature. First, figurative language affords us imaginative pleasure. Second, it is a way of bringing additional imagery into verse, of making the abstract concrete, of making poetry more sensuous. Third, figures of speech considered as methods for adding emotional intensity to mere informative statement and conveying attitudes along with information. In addition, the last, figures of speech are a means of concentration, a way of saying much in brief compass. Among the foremost poets of Persian literature, Mawlana Jalal al-Din Muhammad Balkhi is renowned for his great intuition, for extensive knowledge, and making proper relationship between his thought and the needs of different communities.

A. Background

In recent years, a great deal of attention is drawn to Mawlana's masterpieces such as Mathnavi Ma'anavi. Most research carried out for studying the transference of Mawlana's literary output—being as remarkable in form as magnificent in content— has been based on the ideological transfer. Papan-Matin (2005) argued about the background of the relationship between Mawlana and Shams. In her article, she investigated the effect of separation and union between the lover and the beloved regarding Mawlana's relationships, on his poems such as "Tale of the Reed". Hokmabadi (2011) believed that Mawlana is an acknowledged master who has used very impressive and sensational poetic methods to teach ordinary people abstruse philosophical-theological concepts which are not only specific to his time but also universal for all time. Since this study was focusing on the figurative language of the source text and the target one, it would be essential to point to some of the works that have been done so far on the translation of figurative language in light of some subcategories such as metaphor and allusion from Persian to English. Aghili and Samakar (2010) investigated the formative elements of versified discourse in the Persian poems and the English versions to arrive at a tentative model of translation analysis for assessing poetic genre in translation process. In some other research which might not be so directly related to the Mawlana, Iranian researchers tried to examine the strategies employed in translation of many Persian poems into English. Zohdi and Rostami Abou Saeedi (2011) investigated Khayyam's quatrains in terms of metaphor and allusion.

B. Translation of poetry:

As Vahid (2004) held "contrary to some critics' argument that poetry "loses" in translation or poetry is "untranslatable", there are others with the opposite perspective that it can be preserved, illustrated and illuminated if a good job is done, because poetry is in large part found again and re-created by the translator. So the being creative, proficient and competent in both ST and TT could be very helpful devices for translators to encounter with the difficulties in keeping form and content. It should be considered that translation of poetry can serve as a medium making cultures converge with each other. Thus, it is essential for a translator to be aware of linguistic, social, and cultural aspects of the source language and the target language.

C. Metaphor:

Metaphor provokes the unique human creativity to transmit ideas through the manipulation of language. Metaphor is one of the significant features in every literature, indeed. It may seem too absurd to say something but mean something else. But in every form of our communication, the figurative language is being used, to convey our intention more vivid and with more power. Newmark (1998, p. 292) states there are three functions of metaphor, namely:

1. It is used to describe entities (objects or person), events, qualities and concepts or states of mind more comprehensively, concisely, vividly and in a more complex way, than using literal language.

2. It is sometimes used to please aesthetically, to entertain, to amuse and often to draw attention to a technical and "physical" subject;

3. It is also used to indicate a resemblance between two more or less disparate objects.

⬜ Strategies for translating metaphor

The main focus of this study is on five strategies for translating metaphor as presented by Larson (1984, p. 254) below:

1. The metaphor may be kept if the receptor language permits.
2. A metaphor may be translated as a simile.
3. A metaphor of the receptor language which has the same meaning may be substituted.
4. The metaphor may be kept and the meaning explained (that is, the topic/or point of similarity be added).

5. The meaning of the metaphor may be translated without keeping the metaphorical imagery.

D. Allusion:

According to Perrine (2006, p. 676) "allusions are a means of reinforcing the emotion or the ideas of one's own work with the emotion or idea of another work or occasion."As Leppihalme (1997) believed that translating allusion is a troublesome task since cultural barrier can prevent the grasp the meaning of an allusion. Cultural differences between the source text(ST) and the target text (TT) must be considered in translation process because they occur in two distinct situations and cultures, and each has a specific function and an audience of its own(Snell-Hornby 1990).

☐ Strategies for translating allusion

This research investigates transference of allusion based on Leppihalme (1997, p. 79) strategies for translating the proper name allusions:

i. Retention of the name:
a.   Using the name as such.
b.   Using the name, adding some guidance.
c.   Using the name, adding a detailed explanation, for instance, a footnote.

ii. Replacement of the name by another:
a.   Replacing the name by another SL name.
b.   Replacing the name by a TL name

iii. Omission of the name:
iv. Omitting the name, but transferring the sense by other means, for instance by a common noun.
v. Omitting the name and the allusion together.

In addition, nine strategies for the translation of key-phrase allusions are proposed by Leppihalme (1997, p. 82) as follows:

i.   Use of a standard translation,
ii.   Minimum change, that is, a literal translation, without regard to connotative or contextual meaning,
iii.   Extra allusive guidance added in the text,
iv.   The use of footnotes, endnotes, translator's notes and other explicit explanations not supplied in the text but explicitly given as additional information,
v.   Stimulated familiarity or internal marking, that is, the addition of intra-allusive allusion,
vi.   Replacement by a TL item,
vii.   Reduction of the allusion to sense by rephrasing,
viii.   Re-creation, using a fusion of techniques: creative construction of a passage which hints at the connotations of the allusion or other special effects created by it,
ix.   Omission of the allusion

II. Methodology

A. Materials

The materials used for this research was the Persian text of Mawlana's "The Song of the Reed" and its two English translations, one by Whin field and the other by Nicholson. The Nicholson's translation was borrowed from his masterpiece, the book "*Lover's secret told in talk of the other*" and the Whin field translation was extracted from Winfield's precious book" *Teachings of Rumi, The Spiritual Couplets of MaulanaJalalu-'d-din Muhammad i Rumi*". The original text consists of 18 distiches, and so do its English translations. In total seven metaphors and four allusions were identified in the Persian poem according to what has been mentioned in the grand book "*Sharhe Kabire Anghravi bar Masnavi Ma'anavi*" translated by Esmat Sattarzade.

B. Procedure

First, the metaphors and allusions were identified in the Persian text; then its translations were examined for the corresponding metaphors and allusions. In the final step, the strategies employed by the translators were investigated based on the frameworks presented by Larson (1984) and Leppihalme (1997) for translating metaphors and allusions, respectively.

C. Data Analysis

Eighteen lines of the original poem were compared and contrasted with its English translations in terms of metaphors and allusions. Henceforth, the followings were applied:

WT= Whinfield translation
NT= Nicholson translation
Strategy for metaphor=strategy employed by the translator for translating metaphor.
Strategy for allusion= strategy employed by the translator for translating allusion.

beshno 'azney chon hekāyatmikonad'azjodāyihāshekāyatmikonad
Metaphor: Beshno 'az*ney*chon hekāyatmikonad
Meaning: perfect man, Mawlana himself, real lover, "Mohammad" the prophet's holy pen for writing Quran
Literal translation: reed, flute

(NT): Listen to this <u>reed</u> how it complains:
It is telling a tale of separations.

Strategy for metaphor: literal translation plus keeping metaphor and the meaning of the metaphor has been conveyed by adding note.

(WT): HEARKEN to the <u>reed-flute</u>, how it complains,
Lamenting its banishment from its home

Strategy for metaphor: literal translation plus keeping metaphor but without any explanation about the main meaning of metaphor.

kaz<u>neyestān</u>tāmarābebride'and
'aznafirammardozannālide'and
Metaphor: kaz*neyestān*ta marābebride'and
Meaning: the spiritual world where it dwelt in the state of pre-existence
Literal translation: reed bed
(NT): Saying, "Ever since I was parted from the <u>reed-bed</u>,
Man and woman have moaned in (unison with) my lament.

Strategy for metaphor: literal translation of the metaphor but meaning of metaphor is transferred by adding explanation in the note part.

(WT): Ever since they tore me from my <u>osier bed</u>,
My plaintive notes have moved men and women to tears.

Strategy for metaphor: partial literal translation of the metaphor by translating*neyestan*as osier bed but osier is somehow different in meaning, comparing with reed.

serre man 'aznāleye man durnist
likcheshmo gush rā 'ānnurnist

Metaphor1: likcheshmo gush rā 'ān**nur**nist meaning: intuition and wisdom
Literal translation: light
(NT): My secret is not far from my plaint,
But ear and eye lack <u>the light</u> (whereby it should be apprehended).

Strategy for metaphor: literal translation plus keeping metaphor without explaining about the meaning of metaphor.

(WT): My secrets are not alien from my plaintive notes,
Yet <u>they are not manifest to the sensual eye and ear</u>.

Strategy for metaphor: omission

'ātash 'ast in bāngenāyonistbād
harke in 'ātashnadāradnistbād
Metaphor1: ātash 'ast in bāngenāyonistbād/ harke in **'ātash**nadāradnistbād
Meaning: lover's whine, flame of extreme love. Literal meaning: fire

(NT): This plaint of the flute is fire, not mere air.
Let him who lacks this <u>fire</u> be accounted dead!

Strategy for metaphor: literal translation plus keeping metaphor and main meaning of metaphor is transferred by adding explanation at the note part

(WT): This noise of the reed is fire, it is not wind:
Whoso hath not this <u>fire</u>, may he be naught!

Strategy for metaphor: literal translation

'ātashe 'eshgh 'astkandarneyfetād
jusheshe 'eshghastkandarmeyfetād
Metaphor 1: **'ātashe**'eshgh 'astkandarneyfetād Meaning: flame of extreme love
Literal translation: fire
Metaphor2: jusheshe 'eshgh 'astkandar**mey**fetād
Meaning: human's soul Literal translation: wine
(NT):'Tis the <u>fire of Love</u> that is in the reed,
'Tis the fervour of Love that is in the<u> wine</u>

Strategy for metaphor1: literal translation and keeping metaphor
Strategy for metaphor 2: literal translation (meaning has been translated) without retaining the metaphor

(WT): Tis the <u>fire of love</u> that inspires the flute,
Tis the ferment of love that possesses the<u> wine</u>

Strategy for metaphor1: literal translation and keeping metaphor
Strategy for metaphor 2: literal translation (meaning has been translated) without retaining the metaphor.

neyharifeharke 'azyāriborid
pardehāyashpardehāyemādarid
Allusion 1: **pardeh**ā**yem**ā**darid**

Meaning: removing sensual "veils" that come between us and the object of our quest (God) Literal meaning: to tear the veils.

(NT): The reed is the comrade of everyone who has been parted from a friend:
<u>Its strains pierced our hearts</u>.

Strategy for allusion: allusion is retained by a creative construction of a passage which hints at the connotations of the allusion (recreation)

(WT): The flute is the confidant of all unhappy lovers;
Yea, <u>its strains lay bare my inmost secrets</u>

Strategy for allusion: allusion is retained by a creative construction of a passage which hints at the connotations of the allusion (recreation)

neyhadiserāheporkhunmikonad
ghesehāye ʼeshghemajnunmikonad
Allusion1: *rāheporkhun*
Meaning: the dangerous way for approaching to love
Literal translation: bloody way
(NT): The reed tells of the Way full of blood
And recounts stories of the passion of Majnún

Strategy for allusion: allusion is transferred by literal translation, without regard to connotative or contextual meaning

(WT): The flute tells the tale of love‟sbloodstainedpath ,
It recounts the story of Majnun‟s love toils

Strategy for allusion: allusion is transferred by literal translation, without regard to connotative or contextual meaning.

harkejozmāhize ʼābash sir shod
harke bi ruzistruzashdir shod
Metaphor1: *māhi*
Meaning: real lover Literal translation: fish
Metaphor 2: *ʼāb*
Meaning: love toward God
Literal translation: water

(NT): Except the fish, everyone becomes sated with water;
Whoever is without daily bread finds the day long.
Strategy for metaphor1: Literal translation plus meaning explained and keeping metaphor
Strategy for metaphor2: Literal translation plus meaning explained and keeping metaphor
(WT): But all who are not fish are soon tired of water;
And they who lack daily bread find the day very long
Strategy for metaphor1: litral translation and keeping metaphor
Strategy for metaphor2: litral translation and keeping metaphor

darnayābadhālepokhtehichkhām
passokhankotāhbāyadvassalām
Allusion1: **pokhte**
Meaning: sage man Literal meaning: ripe
Allusion2: *khām*Meaning: immature Literal translation: raw
(NT): None that is raw understands the state of the ripe:
Therefore my words must be brief. Farewell!

Strategy for allusion1: allusion is transferred by literal translation, without mentioning its connotative or contextual meaning
Strategy for allusion2: allusion is transferred by literal translation, without mentioning its connotative or contextual meaning

(WT): So the "Raw" comprehend not the state of the "Ripe:"
Therefore it behoves me to shorten my discourse.

Strategy for allusion1: allusion is transferred by translator's notes which are explicitly given as additional information.

Strategy for allusion2: allusion is transferred by translator's notes which are explicitly given as additional information.

Table 1: Strategies Employed by Each Translator in Translating Metaphor

Strategy	NT	WT	Total
Different metaphor with same meaning			
Literal translation (keeping the metaphor)	2	5	7
Literal translation + meaning explained	5		5
Meaning translated without metaphor	1	1	2
Tr. by a metaphor with different meaning			
omission		1	1
Wrong meaning translated			
Literal translation + addition of another metaphor			
Partial literal translation		1	1
Total	8	8	16

Table 2: Strategies Employed by Each Translator in translating allusion

Strategy	NT	WT	Total
Use of a standard translation			
Minimum change (literal translation)	3	1	4
Extra allusive guidance added in the text			
The use of footnotes, endnotes		2	2
the addition of intra-allusive allusion			
Replacement by a TL item			
Reduction			
Re-creation	1	1	2
Omission of the allusion			
Total	4	4	8

III.   Conclusion

This study was done in order to analyze the strategies employed in the English translations of Mawlana's the "Song of the Reed" in terms of metaphor and allusion. The source text consisted of 18 distiches, and so did its English translations. In total, seven metaphors and four allusions were identified in the original Persian poem. As mentioned above two frameworks were presented one by Larson (1984) for translating metaphor and the other by Leppihalme (1997) for transferring allusion. Therefore, analysis and examination of the collected data were based on these two models. It should be noted that these two figures of speech endow the poems with both stylistic beauty and indirect meaning; hence, translating from ST to TT has been a troublesome and controversial task for both translators. By considering this fact and comparing the translations of Nicholson and Winfield, it could be concluded that:

1) In translating metaphor the most common used method by Nicholson was Literal translation by retaining metaphors plus meaning explained at the note part, as translator's interpretation to help the TT readers. It showed some kind of fidelity toward ST that Nicholson tried to preserve it.

2) In Winfield's translation, the most applied strategy for transferring metaphor was literal translation. In this case, fidelity could be observed too, but the TT readers might have difficulty in understanding the implicit meaning of the metaphors.

3) The common method for transferring allusion in Nicholson's translation was literal translation without regarding connotative and contextual meaning of the allusion. In Wien field's translation, however, the use of endnotes for explaining the allusions could help the TT readers in their perception.

4) According to the findings of this investigation, we could conclude that not only Nicholson but also Wien field were both to some extent literal translators in such a way that ST had a significant status in their minds.

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