

The Importance of Figures of Speech in Poetry: A descriptive Study Based on Comparison Between English and Arabic

أهمية الصور البيانية و المحسنات البديعية و دورها في جمالية الشعر : دراسة وصفية مقارنة بين
اللغتين الإنجليزية و العربية

SEKHRI Ouided ¹,

¹ Frères Mentouri6constantine 1 University (Algeria),
widaddoudou92@yahoo.com

Received: 01/12 /2019

Accepted: 18/01 /2021

Published: Mars/2021

الملخص:

يعدّ ترجمة الشعر أحد أهمّ المجالات في دراسات الترجمة و الذي انبثق عنه العديد من المناقشات وأسفر عن العديد من النظريات. و نظرا لأن ترجمة الشعر من الصعوبة بمكان كبير فإنه من الأفضل أن نولي خصائصه اهتماما كبيرا و نركّز عليها دون الالتفات إلى غيرها، وبذلك، فإن هذا البحث يعتبر دراسة لأهمية الصور البيانية والمحسنات البديعية وأثرها في ترجمة الشعر من اللغة الإنجليزية إلى اللغة العربية و مدى قدرة المترجم على المعادلة بين النص المصدر و النص الهدف. و من ثمة تسلط الدراسة الحالية الضوء على خصائص الشعر في كل من اللغتين، كما تعنى بمقارنة كلّ من خصائص اللغتين العربية و الإنجليزية في هذا الجانب مشيرة لمثاليين من اللغة الإنجليزية دون العربية. كما تحاول الدراسة التركيز على دور الصور البيانية والمحسنات البديعية في اكتساء الشعر حلة جميلة و اختلاف ذلك من لغة إلى أخرى متبّعين في ذلك المنهج الوصفي. **كلمات مفتاحية:** المعادلة في الشعر، الصور البيانية، المحسنات البديعية، اللغة العربية، اللغة الإنجليزية.

Abstract

Translation of poetry is one of the most important areas in translation studies. It caused many debates which resulted in fruitful studies and theories. Since the translation of poetry as a whole is very difficult, it seems better to look at its specific characteristics to see which one is of a great importance to pay attention to. The most important elements of poetry which result in problems in translation, and make lot of difficulties are figures of speech. Thus, this paper focuses upon the importance of figures of speech; it sheds light on whether there is equivalence between English and Arabic poetry respectively. In addition, it highlights the characteristics of poetry and their importance in both languages (English and Arabic). At last, it presents two examples in English. So, it follows the descriptive method between English and Arabic at the level of poetics through a comparison.

Keywords: equivalence in poetry, figures of speech, Arabic, English..

Introduction

The problems which raise at the semantic level in poetry result from whether to translate the source text according to what the translator understands or to what the poet means. Further, readers expect to find the characteristics of the source poetic text translated to the target language. In addition, scholars consider it a successful work if the translator renders both style and content. In reality, this means that the translator should not prefer one aspect than the other because all aspects are of equal importance. In translation, doing the opposite makes the translator fail to a great degree. Thus, we are going to focus on the translation of figurative language which is of a great importance in the translation of poetry. In addition, we are going to see the role of figurative language in poetry in particular and its impact on translated versions when dealing with English -Arabic translation of poetry.

1. Equivalence and Poetry Translation

In poetry, the concept of equivalence is difficult to achieve because of the peculiarity of this genre. Hence, if equivalence is achieved at sound pattern it will be somehow lost at the semantic or syntactic level. De Beaugrande (1987, p. 101) and Lefevere (1975, p. 96) prefer the communicative equivalence as it is the one which enables us to know if the translation is successful or not. However, no poetic translation work is complete since there is always loss of meaning compared to the source text. As a result, the translator is always in front of several choices. Jones (1989, p.197) proposes that : “Poetry translation has been named the art of compromises.” This implies that the best solution for translating poetry is multiple translations of the same poem; this may highlight different aspects of the same poem.

Glesne (2010) proposes that the importance of poetry lies behind knowing when to enter into an intuitive imagination and when to disappear into others’ words (Cited in Krisber, 2010, p.36) . The meaning that may be inferred is that poetry has the magic to inform both the writer and the reader who may share a common knowledge background. This latter is, in this case, the sense of intuitive imagination and when to benefit from others’ words by making them yours using a poetic style.

2. Figurative Language

Figurative language is the opposite of literal language. On the one hand, figurative language generally says more than what is written in words. It informs us about the subject and makes us feel it. Poets use it as they use literal language, but it is up to the reader to understand figurative language otherwise it makes no sense. On the other hand, literal language expresses what the words exactly mean (Peters, 2004).

3. Cultural Diversities between English and Arabic

Jakobson (1985, p. 107) placed language between culture and nature; he says: “Language is situated between nature and culture and it serves as a foundation of culture. We may go even further and state that language is THE [his emphasis] necessary and substantial foundation of human culture.” The greatest barrier for translation is culture. In fact, culture is a two-edged word. It may be classical, high, or anthropological. It is the sum of attitudes,

practices, and values that characterise a society. Translation does not deal with two languages in isolation, it is the transmission of one culture from one language to another. Thus, cultural differences are bigger obstacles for the successful translation than linguistic ones. According to Taylor (1958, p. 1), "Culture is the complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities or habits acquired by man as a member of society." This implies that almost everything in the life of human beings is related to culture especially vocabulary which derives its meaning from culture. In this respect, Arabic is related to some cultural and social norms different from those associated with other languages especially English. For that, the differences between Arabic and English often cause greater problems for translators than linguistic differences. Thus, the diversities that occur between Arabic and English cultures may be political, social, or religious (Al Ghussain, 2003). Each of which plays a great role in shaping the thought, the meaning, and the understanding of the language items. British political culture is different from Arab political culture since British institutions follow a given framework. Arab ones, however, follow another way which is different from the British one. Likewise, social culture is different because British customs and traditions are related to Christendom with all its doctrines. This is very distant from Arab traditions and customs which are related to Islam or the Islamic culture. For that, the translator of poetry should pay attention to all these specificities which differentiate one culture from the other because poetry encloses almost all cultural aspects. So, language is like the heart and culture is the body, while translation is the surgeon who is responsible for operating the heart by paying attention to the body. He should not treat the heart in isolation to the body. Along the same line, Shiyab (2006, p. 26) asserts:

One cannot really understand a foreign language without taking into account the culture of which it is a part. This is why translating any text from one language into another yields a particular kind of ambiguity which cannot be clarified unless the intentions of the text-producer within his/her own social, cultural, denotative, connotative, and rhetorical contexts have been accounted for.

Here, the attention is drawn to the understanding of the foreign language which is the result of knowing its culture. As a result, not knowing the culture of either the source language or the target language results in ambiguity or loss of meaning of the original text. In order to lift that ambiguity, it is advisable to account for the intention of the author taking and his social, cultural, denotative, connotative, and rhetorical contexts.

4. Figures of Speech

Chesterton (n.d.) said that: "all slang is metaphor, and all metaphor is poetry". Indeed, the native language is full of idiomatic expressions. In other words, it is based upon figurative meaning and imagery which is used to paint a picture in the readers' mind to help them imagine the person, place or situation that is described. In addition, poetic forms are of a great importance which collaborate to find out a good poem.

Words have several meanings and the poet is the responsible for choosing the words which carry the intended meaning when used with other words. Most significant words may carry several depth of meaning at once. The ways in which the meanings of words (figurative language terms) are used, have been identified by many writers,

authors and poets. Figurative terms imply the use of language to achieve a special effect. Yet, the one that encloses most of the figurative terms that are important in our research is the one provided by Klein (2010) and Chesterton (2008). These are: metaphor, personification, apostrophe, overstatement, understatement, metonymy, etc...

Poetry uses vivid language to generate ideas and evokes the images not only of the visual sense, but also of sensation and emotional as well. Imagery carries depth of meaning which enables the poet to describe the impressions of sight, sound, smell, taste and touch. This may be transferred to the thoughtful reader through imaginative use and combinations of diction. Imagery is the reflection of what is sensuous because the usual language is not sensuous. It is poetry which makes it full of sense. Related images are scattered throughout a work to create a particular mood or tone.

According to Probyn (1989) and as agreed by Klein (2010), Tone and mood are the ways through which a poet reveals his attitudes and feelings, in the style of language or expression of thought used to develop the subject. Certain tones do not only include irony and satire, but may also be loving, condescending, bitter, pitying, fanciful solemn, and a host of other emotions and attitudes. Tone does not stop here, it refers to the overall mood of the poem itself, which pervades the atmosphere and influences the reader's emotional response. Another crucial use of tone is the reference to pitch or to the demeanour of the speaker as interpreted through inflection of the voice. In fact, in poetry this is conveyed through the use of connotation, diction, figures of speech, rhythm and other elements of poetic construction.

5. Forms of English and Arabic Poetry

5.1. English Poetry Forms

This is the arrangement or method used to convey the content like; free verse, ballad, haiku, etc. According to Chaparral poets (n.d.), Klein (2010) and Krisber (2010), there are some forms which are specific to English and others to other languages. These are as follows:

- Open

A poetic free form which is not regular in some elements as rhyme, line strength and metrical form.

- Closed

A poetic form subject which has a fixed structure and pattern.

- Blank Verse

Unrhymed iambic pentameter. Shakespearian plays are written in this form.

- Free Verse

The lines which do not have a rule or a given pattern or structure. It is up to the poet to determine the variables as what fits each poem.

- Couplet

A pair of lines which is generally rhymed; it is the shortest stanza.

- Quatrain

A four-line stanza, or a grouping of four-line verse.

- Fixed Form

It is a poem following a given pattern of meter, rhyme, scheme, stanza form, and refrain form.

-Ballad

It is a narrative poem written in a series of quatrains where iambic tetrameter alternates with iambic trimeter. It deals with popular legends, and it is suitable for singing. There are two types of Ballad:

- Folk Ballads

They are of unknown origin and they generally lack an artistic finish. They are taken from popular legends and human experience.

- Literary Ballad

It is a way of combining the nature of epic and lyric poetry.

- Ballade

It is a French form of poetry which consists of three, seven, or eight-line stanzas and no more than three recurrent rhymes are used with an identical refrain after each stanza.

- Concrete Poetry

It concerns the poems that are printed on the page forming a recognizable outline that is related to the subject which intends to convey or extend the meaning of the words. The essence of concrete poetry lies behind its appearance on the page rather than the meaning of words.

- Epigram

It is a satirical couplet or quatrain that carries an aphoristic humorous thought or event.

- Epitaph

It is a brief statement and especially a poem that is found in the memory of someone deceased used as a tombstone inscription. But, nowadays it has lost its intention of funeral as it is often humorous and witty.

- Limerick

It is a humorous form of five verses of which lines one, two, and five have three feet and lines three and four are of two feet.

- Lyric

Its name is derived from the Greek word for lyre. It is originally designed to be sung. It is the most frequently modern form which is used where an emotional element predominates. In fact, lyric poems evoke the recall of similar emotional experiences in the reader's mind.

- Ode

According to Hirshfiel (2010; Cited in Krisber, 2010, p. 47), the ode is a stanzaic form of poetry that is more complex than the lyric with intricate rhyme scheme and irregular number

of lines. Its style is marked to be of intense expression of an elevated thought praising a person or a subject.

- Sonnet

It is a fourteen-line poem in iambic pentameter with a prescribed rhyme scheme. Its subject was traditionally love and it is generally found in English. The well-known and famous variations of the sonnet are:

- *Shakespearian Sonnet*

A style of sonnet used by Shakespeare with a rhyme of abab cdcd efef gg.

- *Italian (Petrarchan) Sonnet*

A form of sonnet made popular by Petrarch with a rhyme scheme of abba cdecde or cd cdcd.

- *Sonnet Sequence*

It is a series of sonnets in which there is a noticeable unifying theme, while each retains its structural independence. All Shakespeare's sonnets were part of a sequence (Klein, 2010).

Thus, from what preceded, we may say that these are not all the types of poems that exist in the English language for we have only confined with those that are related to our research.

5.2. Arabic Poetry

According to Scott (2009, p.2), Classical Arabic poetry is famous for the use of one of the sixteen meters that were put by the grammarian Al Khalil in the eighth century. These latter were based upon a quantitative system just as in old Greek and Latin poetry which is in turn based upon syllable weight. In fact, it is a system that uses patterns such as the foot which comprises the syllables based on their length, tone, and stress. The classical Arabic poetry system resembles the iambic pentameter in English poetry, where a pair of syllables comprising a weak- strong sequence are found within each foot. The meter in Arabic poetry is composed of two basic units which are named watid ('peg') and sabab ('cord') which compose two syllables each. The combination of watid and sabab makes the different feet (tafa'il) of a line that characterises each meter and distinguishes it from other meters. The number of feet varies from two to four in order to compose the hemistich 'half line of a verse'. The line of verse in Arabic is called bayt (house) and consists of two hemistiches. Indeed, sabab and watid represent movement and silent letters respectively. A movement letter is a consonant or a semi-vowel and a short vowel.

Scott (2009) adds that a silent vowel is represented by sukun which creates a long vowel or an isolated consonant. In fact, a sabab is composed of one movement letter then a silent letter or two movement letters. For example, fii ('in') is a sabab composed of the movement letter f followed by the silent long vowel i. However, watid is composed of two movement letters and a silent letter in between or two movement letters preceded by a silent letter. For example, 'alaa ('on') is a watid with ' and l as the movement letters and the final a is the silent letter. These letters may be understood in terms of vowels (v) and consonants (c). Movement letters are always CV which is a short syllable. Thus, a movement letter followed by silent letters results in CVV, CVC, or CVVC.

Circle	Meter		
I.	<i>tawiil</i>	PK PKK PK PKK	<i>fa' uulunmafaa' iilunfa' uulunmafaa' iilun</i>
	<i>basiit</i>	KKP KP KKP (KP)	<i>mustaf'ilunfaa' ilunmustaf'ilunfaa' ilun</i>
	<i>madiid</i>	KPK KP KPK (KP)	<i>faa'ilaatunfaa' ilunfaa' ilaatun</i>
II.	<i>waafir</i>	PLK PLKPLK	<i>mufaa'alatunmufaa' alatunfa' uulun</i>
	<i>kaamil</i>	LKP LKP (LKP)	<i>mutafaa' ilunmutafaa' ilunmutafaa' ilun</i>
III.	<i>hazaj</i>	PKK PKKPKK	<i>mufaa'iilunmufaa'iilunmufaa'iilun</i>
	<i>rajaz</i>	KKP KKP (KKP)	<i>mustaf'ilunmustaf'ilunmustaf'ilun</i>
	<i>ramal</i>	KPK KPK (KPK)	<i>faa'ilaatunfaa' ilaatunfaa' ilun</i>
IV.	<i>munsarih</i>	KKP KKQ KKP	<i>mustaf'ilunmaf' uulaatumustaf'ilun</i>
	<i>khafiif</i>	KPK KQK (KPK)	<i>faa'ilaatunmustaf'ilunfaa' ilaatun</i>
	<i>muqtadab</i>	KKQ KKP	<i>maf' uulaatumustaf'ilun</i>
	<i>mujtaath</i>	KQK KPK	<i>mustaf'ilunfaa' ilaatun</i>
	<i>mudaari'</i>	PKK QKK	<i>mufaa' iilunfaa' ilaatun</i>
	<i>sarii'</i>	KKP KKP KKQ	<i>mustaf'ilunmustaf'ilunmaf' uulaatu</i>
V.	<i>mutaqaarib</i>	PK PKPKPK	<i>fa' uulunfa' uulunfa' uulunfa' uulun</i>
	<i>mutadaarik</i>	KP PKPK (KP)	<i>faa' ilunfaa' ilunfaa' ilunfaa' ilun</i>

Table 2: The Sixteen Meters of Arabic Poetry Put by Al-Khalil (Scott, 2009, p. 10)

Arabic meter has changed and took another road that led to the imitation of Western poetry especially British and American. In fact, it has been free from the sixteen meters that were put by Al-Khalil; it has looked for new patterns especially after the need for rendering Western poetry and the mixture of cultures. So, Arabic meter changed radically and followed the new trends. In addition, even nowadays the people who listen to the poet get impressed by free verse, blank verse, strophic and other types that our ear feels at ease when listening to them. This is due to the fact that they give more freedom to the poet to choose the meter, the rhyme, the theme in order to bring new subjects and new ways of looking at the same thing.

6. Examples of Figurative Language in Poetry

6.1. The Rose Family

The rose is a rose,
And was always a rose.
But the theory now goes
That the apple's a rose,
And the pear is, and so's
The plum, I suppose.
The dear only knows
What will next prove a rose.

You, of course, are a rose -
But were always a rose.

This poem is one of the most difficult poems of Frost since it focuses on the word rose which represents different connotations and symbolises many things all at once. Frost deftly pokes fun at the idea of an apple or a pear becoming a rose as the result of scientific assignments. However, he draws upon the rich literary tradition of using roses as a metaphor for female beauty.

Unlikely, additions to the rose family do not dilute the value and beauty of a true rose, his poem says. Just as the true beauty of the object of the poet's affection is not altered. The familiar and affectionate tone of the poem enhances the idea that the poet is reassuring his lover that his allegiance will not stray despite the arrival of these new "roses."

If we are to translate this poem to the Arabic language, we may understand it in the usual way; this will be misleading to the reader since the word which is "rose" has different connotations that no one knows except the poet. Moreover, all the other opinions about the poem are just based upon assumptions. Thus, if we translate the word "rose" into "وردة" it will not be appropriate to use this word throughout the whole poem. The translator, in this case, should be very vigilant about the translation of this poem and creative in terms of preserving its rhyme and rhythm. In spite of this, if we consider the rose meaning a woman and use a rose instead of it as a metaphor we may understand it better. Thus, metaphor is just one of the difficult figures of speech that a translator should pay attention to.

6.2. The Silken Tent

She is as in a field a silken tent
At midday when the sunny summer breeze
Has dried the dew and all its ropes relent,
So that in guys it gently sways at ease,
And its supporting central cedar pole,
That is its pinnacle to heavenward
And signifies the sureness of the soul,
Seems to owe naught to any single cord,
But strictly held by none, is loosely bound
By countless silken ties of love and thought
To everything on earth the compass round,
And only by one's going slightly taut
In the capriciousness of summer air
Is of the slightest bondage made aware.

This poem is a tribute to the kind of women who become proud, tight, and beautiful because of her loving and thoughtful ties to others even if she is providing a heaven of privacy and emotional protection. The silken tent is a symbol of not only beauty, but also dignity and free movement. The ties to others are what keeps her erect.

The poem, here, reflects a kind of analogy since the poet compares a woman and her feelings to other people with a tent with its silken ties. This is done through

the use of some imagery in representing the tent being bound by the ties of love and thought that there are ties “To everything on earth the compass round,” “Earth is the right place for love”.

The translation of this poem into Arabic needs a great expertise in the domain of literary works, especially being creative to transmit the same meaning. This may be done through using the different strategies suggested by scholars in translation studies respecting figures of speech. This poem is based upon a kind of metaphor and simile because it compares between the silken tent and a woman. Thus, trying to make this picture in the Arabic language needs great efforts. These efforts result from the role of figures of speech which influence the understanding of readers either they were source language readers or target language readers.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, figures of speech are of a great importance in the translation of poetry because they focus on the elements that make the poem vivid and full of life. These latter are the ones responsible for making a beautiful painting. If the translator uses his paintbrush faithfully and effectively through knowing how to choose colours, i.e., figures of speech, he will come out with a sublime painting that attracts the interest of all the readers and impresses the audience of the target language. However, if the translator uses his paintbrush in a bad way through mixing colours altogether, this results in a bad picture that may be considered as a useless and invaluable piece to throw away. Thus, figures of speech are the colours that give our translation a good shape, a beautiful appearance, and a perfect image.

References

- Al-Ghussain, R. A. (2003). *Areas of Cultural and Linguistic Difficulty in English/Arabic Translation (PhD. Thesis)*. Durham: University of Durham.
- Chesterton, G. K. (2008). *Figures of Speech. Writing Effectively*. London: The Bookman.
- Chesterton, G. K. Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved November 29, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/gilbert_k_chesterton_156967
- Chaparral Poets, (n.d.). Chaparralpoets.org. Retrieved November 29, 2019, from chaparralpoets.org. Web site: <https://www.chaparralpoets.org/devices.pdf>
- De Beaugrande, W. U. Dressler (1987). *Introduction to Text Linguistics*. London: Longman.
- Jones, F. R. (1989). On Aboriginal Sufferance: A Process Model of Poetic Translating, *Target 1* (2): pp 99-183.
- Jakobson, R. (1985). *Selected Writings*, Vol. 7. Gruyter.
- Klein, J. L. (2010). *Poetry*. New York : Office of Curriculum Standards, and Academic Engagements.
- Krisber, L. (ed.) . (2010). *Poetry and Education: Possibilities and Practices*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lefevere, A. (1975). *Translating Poetry: seven strategies and a blueprint*. Assen: Van Gorcum.
- Peters, W. (2004). Detection and Characterization of Figurative Language Use in WordNet. PhD thesis, Sheffield: University of Sheffield.
- Probyn. C. T. (1989). *English Poetry*. London: York Press.
- Scott, H. (2009). *Meter of Classical Arabic Poetry*, In Pegs, Cords, & Ghuls (eds.). College Haverford.
- Shyiab, S. (2006). *A Textbook of Translation: Theoretical and Practical Implications*. Antwerp: Said M. Shyiab&Garant Publishers.
- Taylor, E. (1958). *Primitive Culture: Research into the Development of Methodology, Religion, Art and Custom*. Gloucester: Mass.
- Watson, W. R. (2006) *Studies in Poetry*. Georgia: Watson Educational Services.