

A Comparative Study between Proverbs of the Two Plays of Shakespeare and Their Arabic and Persian Translations: "Eight Translations of Hamlet" and "Four Translations of the Taming of the Shrew"

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Abstract

The present study, using the "descriptive-analytical" method, aims at identifying the methods of communicating the sense of proverbs through linguistic comparisons in order to provide more practical methods in translation of proverbs. Utilizing the Arabic and Persian translations of two Shakespeare's plays "Hamlet" and "The Taming of the Shrew", the authors of this study seek to know how and in what ways and to what extent, the translators have been able to communicate the sense of English proverbs and when and in what ways they have employed literal, free or other types of translation.

The study of Shakespeare's use of proverbs showed that this author used many proverbial similes to illustrate the characters in the play and to have a greater influence on the audience. In case of anti-proverbs, it was found that Shakespeare's conversion of a proverb into an anti-proverb presents a major challenge to translators. Translation of anti-proverb, however, is far more challenging than the proverbial one because of the addition of the humorous dimension to the proverbial features.

Regarding the methods and techniques and viewing the translation of the proverbs in a formalist way, it can be seen that translators have chosen one of the three techniques to meet the challenges of translation, including omission, footnote, and cultural (proverbial) equivalence. About omission, only 6 of the 140 proverbs found in the surveyed data were abandoned untranslated by some translators. This inaccuracy, which may have been intentional or inadvertent, was found in the works only 4 of the 12 translations. Next, footnotes are the methods that some translators

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have used to explain proverbs and the cultural traits in them. Totally, the number of footnotes in Arabic translations exceeds the Persian ones. Most footnotes have deciphered the mystery in the proverbs. As a result, these proverbs have become more explicit than the proverbial ones. On cultural (proverbial) equivalence, it should be noted that this expression refers to a method whereby one proverb from the culture of the target language is found to be used as a proverbial equivalence for the source language. Of all the translations, there are only three cases that have used this technique.

Furthermore, translators' approaches to proverbs were found to be divided into four categories: literal translation, defamiliarization, lexical enhancement, and Arabicism. The dominant approach in Arabic and Persian translations of the proverbs in these two works is the literalist approach and the translation unit is the word. In translating the literary devices (similes, metaphors, and kenning or metonymy) in the proverbs, translators have replaced the literal word from the target language with the word from the source language rather than trying to replace the structure or concept from the target language with that of the source language. Although there have been cases where translators have replaced structure or concept, the number is far below the literal replacement. In defamiliarization approach, the translators have relied on the appeal of the audience rather than emphasizing expressiveness of the concept and have considered the audience's knowledge of rhetoric as a must. It is as if in an unwritten contract, an agreement was reached between the translator and the reader in which the translator merely puts the word's identity in the footnote and transfers them to the target language with the same clothing they were wearing in the source language. It is up to the reader to take on the hassle of communicating with them and removing the feeling of strangeness from their faces. About elongation, although in the Arabic language most of the semantic burden rests on the vocabulary (and a word can be a translation of several English words), there is also a great deal of lexical increase in Arabic translations. What is important in this approach is that female translators have used more words in their translations in comparison to the male ones in both languages (viz. Arabic and Persian). On Arabicism (writing Arabic), it can be said that through viewing one of the Persian proverb dictionaries, it is easy to see that, with the exception of Qur'anic and hadith proverbs, the number of Arabic words used in proverbs is very low. But in the present study, the approach of the Persian translators' [except (Adib, 2006)] to translating English proverbs is in contrast to the approach of the makers of Persian proverbs. These translators have used many Arabic vocabularies and its features, such as the nunation (tanwin), and consequently a greater lexical diversity is found in Persian translations.

In conclusion, the comparison of the methods and approaches used in translations of English proverbs by Arabic translators with those of Persian ones showed that first of all due to their cultural affinity, Arabic and Farsi have a relatively similar proverbial competency in translation. Second, in translating proverbs, translators have inevitably an author-oriented translation to preserve the consistency of text and more adequately mirror the Shakespeare's ideas and expression. Third, they have translated the proverbs with the least cultural change, which has resulted in the domination of the culture of the superior (source) language over the inferior (target) language, that is the superior language imposes its features to the inferior language. However, in some cases the literary richness of the target language has also increased through the creation of new images. Next, in translating

the proverbs, the translators were more committed to the text than to the spirit of the work. This, in some cases, led to the removal of the spirit of humor from the literal body and an adverse impact on the dynamics of the text. In fact, most translators have translated the external language and have regarded the inner language (humor) of the text untranslatable. Finally, the conceptual flaw in the translations is mostly related to the cases where the author has used one or two words of the proverb as the whole one or made changes to the proverb. Therefore, the translator makes no sense due to the lack of knowledge about the whole proverb and inevitably either erase it, or translate it literally. This transfers the ambiguity into the target language. Therefore, in translating the proverbs, dictionary information is not enough and the translator needs encyclopedic knowledge to know the whole proverb.

Keywords: Shakespeare, Proverb, Anti-Proverbs, Translation