

Hermeneutic Approach to the French Translation of Some Mystical Words of Mantiq al-Tayr of Attar (A Study of Umberto Eco)

Sedigheh Sherkat Moghadam¹
Maryam Akramifard²

Received: 01/08/2020

Accepted: 01/02/2021

Article Type: Research

Abstract

Translation has always been considered as one of the practical means of international culture and literature exchange. What makes the act of translation even more difficult is the existence of some kind of polysemic mystical terms that present numerous mysterious connotations to the reader. The translation becomes more difficult considering that the mystical terms are the terms that hide various mysterious senses inside or they're small phrases that carry other meanings far from their apparent one -the meaning that comes from a spiritual world. In addition, some of them contain a mystical connotation extracted from Koranic or religious stories as well as the thoughts which come from the poet's spiritual inspirations. Thus, finding the meaning of such terms and transferring them to other languages is a difficult task that needs minuteness and expertise; therefore, the translator is obligated to do complete comprehensive research for finding the most relevant equivalent which could transfer the same connotation to other languages.

In this research, we studied the means of analyzing the mystical terms and lexis which were extracted from the Sufis' religious-Islamic thoughts and beliefs. We applied the hermeneutic theories of Umberto Eco, the contemporary Italian hermeneut and philosopher, in this research.

Eco, in his comprehensive researches in the interpretation and translations domain, discusses "the auteur's position" and in the other way "the reader's position", that's why he indicates "the text strategy" and by putting the reader on the above of all text priorities, defines the limits of interpretation. In Eco's viewpoint, the Intra-textual coherence defines the text's interpretation's limits. Therefore, the reader should not impose his expectations on the text and interpret it according to his willingness or try to find and understand the author's intention. Eco believes that the reader completes the act of creating the sense stated by the author, by completing his task of reading.

The main objective of this study is to analyze the process of transferring mystical

¹ Assistant Professor of French Translation Department, Allameh Tabataba'i University (corresponding author); moghadam@atu.ac.ir

² Master of French Translation, Allameh Tabataba'i University;
Akramifard7@gmail.com

terms and symbols in Persian to French translation of *Mantiq al-Tayr* of Farid ud-Din Muhammad b. Ibrahim Attar, translated by two famous French translators, Leili Anvar and Garcin de Tassy, by applying the hermeneutic approach of Umberto Eco and studying their interpretations in the state of “Model Reader”. Eco defines the “Model Reader” as a reader who reads the text consciously and cognitively, such a reader can access the underlying layers of text and adopts a proper interpretation. “The text creates a world in which a reader must know the rules of the game provided by the text in order to enter it in the position of Model Reader, such a reader is familiar with intra-textual structure and principles governing the text so he starts his reading process considering this knowledge.” (Rahimi, 2011: 135) In the analytic section of our study, we analyzed five mystical terms selected from *Mantiq al-Tayr* of Attar: حقیقت [truth], کلام [word], پیر [old], جان [soul], نفس [self], we started our study by indicating two translations of each word then we continued by analyzing the text and its structural challenges to find out if the translator’s interpretation is proper or we can consider it as an overinterpretation, in the final section, we studied different mystical sources to verify if the translators represented the accurate interpretations from the text and terms.

The most significant result of this analytical descriptive study is that these two translators followed all intertextual and intratextuality relations in their reading of the text, thus they had chosen proper equivalences which indicates their great knowledge of Attar poems scheme. Anvar and Tassy with their interpretation from each term, their great knowledge about text’s structure and its influence on the reader, tried to represent a target-oriented and meaning-oriented translation. The translators didn’t make an overinterpretation from mystical terms and they tried to interpret the terms as a Model Reader.

Generally, we consider these two translations as two almost successful translations of *Mantiq al-Tayr*. The translators are familiar with the culture and language of the source text, the Islamic mystic, spiritual culture, and Attar’s views. So, they tried to transfer the accurate sense of each term conveying the mystical and symbolic connotation, to the target text. However, considering the fact that we cannot express mystical notions and connotations in the limited frame of words and sentences, finding and replacing the most exact equivalence for each term is the most difficult task. Consequently, we invite other researchers who are interested in translating mystical literary works, to use their spiritual interpretation as well as their subjective interpretation in their interpretation and translation process.

Keywords: Garcin de Tassy, Hermeneutic, *Mantiq al-Tayr*, Mystic terms, Umberto Eco