A comparative study of modulation in English translations of Khayyam’s quatrains

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Abstract

During the process of translation, the relatedness of content and form sometimes leads to some changes in semantics or point of view of the original text. This study tries to investigate the instances of modulation occurred in the translation of poetry. To this end, two English translations of Khayyam's quatrains were studied to see what kinds of modulation have been used by the translators and consequently how they have changed the semantics and points of view of the original work; i.e. Khayyam's quatrains. The two translations were studied carefully to identify the instances of modulations occurred.

Keywords: Modulation; Quatrains; Chi-Square; Translation

1. Introduction

Every text conveys a particular ideology and view point of the original writer through which the author expresses his or her opinion of the world, Heylen (1993, p. 5). In case of poetry this view point becomes more significant since the form and the content play an important role in the overall sense produced by the poet. This is what has made poetry translation a challenging task. Since the form of poetry cannot be fully imitated and followed in the process of translating from one language to another, some changes might occur in the semantics as well as point of view of the original poem because the translator should transfer the profusion of emotions, demonstrated by the original poet, as well as the meaning. In such

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process the poem goes under some either obligatory or optional changes which might lead to the changes in semantics or points of view. This is mainly because, as Brini puts it, "each language describes the situation from a different point of view" (Brini, 2000, p. 494), or in Hanna's terms, because people in two different languages "do not think in the same manner, ... their minds work along different lines" (Hanna, 1969, p. 141). In case of poetry this fact seems to manifest itself more clearly for poets, even in the same language, wrap the events differently in their minds thus viewing the same situation from different angles. These changes that occur in points of view or semantics in the process of translation of the original work can be obligatory, which is referred to as "servitude" by Vinay and Darbelnet (as cited in Munday, 2008), where the translators has no choice but to resorting to modulation for the terminological and syntactical system of both languages in question differ. Such modulations can work as the "touchstone of a good translator" who shows mastery over both source and target languages (as cited in Espunya, 2001, p. 547). The changes can also be optional when they fall in the realm of translator's own style, which Vinay and Darbelnet (2008) call "option" which can be separately studied in depth or they can reveal specific choices made by translators in particular translation situation (Hatim & Munday, 2004, p. 240).

Thus there are some troublesome aspects of poetry which might make the translator to do some modulations in order to convey the same situation in the target language hence changing the semantics or point of view of the original work. In what follows first the factors leading to modulation in poetry will be discussed then a brief account of Vinay and Darbelnet's (2008) concept of modulation (as cited in Munday, 2008) and its varieties is given to see in what ways the point of view or semantics in the original poem might change. Following that, examples of modulation occurred in Khayyam's quatrains' translation by Emami and Fitzgerald will be given. And finally the two translations will be compared and the chi-square procedure will be applied to see if there is any significant difference between the two translations.

1.1 Problems of translating poetry

Translators of poetry confront many problems in their task. These problems can be related to the poem’s meaning, form, style, rhyme, rhythm and so forth. Some of the problems of poetry translation are as follows:

1.1.1 Connotative meaning
If we accept that words in different contexts convey different meanings, and that words, in addition to their denotative meaning can carry connotative meanings, poetry is the domain in which we are frequently faced with connotative meanings of words. In other words, most of the words in poetry are used in such a way to convey further meanings so that the emotive effect is intensified. Connotative meanings make the words unique in their particular places and impossible to be substituted by their synonymous words. Thus in translation of such words further information is added in order to reproduce the multiple meanings, and hence the translation is usually longer than the original (Nair, 1991, p. 90).

According to Beaugrande (1978) multiple meaning of a poem should be preserved in the translation to the extent it is possible. The translator should keep the range of possible responses in the translation and not to reduce the reader's dynamic role of interpretation (Hatim & Mason, 1993, p.11). But because of different cultural and linguistic constraints, preserving the multiplicity of meaning of the original poem in the translation is impossible. Moreover, each translator interprets a poem in a different way from others. Then in his or her rendering of it, imposes his or her own personal interpretation on the target readers (11). This different viewing of the original poem could be the reason for the changes that the translators make in semantics and point of view of the original work. Therefore, the translator tries to get the authentic and intent of the author, and then, transfers that intent along with the range of other meanings around the main intent to the extent that is possible.

1.1.2. Content and form

There has been a long debate on the preference of content over form or vice versa in the history of poetry translation. An ideal translation of poetry is the rendering of both content and form without sacrificing one for the sake of the other. But in practice this is not possible and in most translations either content or form has been sacrificed to some restriction, such as the following quatrain of Khayyam:
Emami's translation:

In the palace where Shah Jamshid raised his cup,
The fox has come to rest, and the gazelle has given birth.
And Shah Bahram who hunted the wild ass all his life
Has at last been snared in the wilds by death.

In this translation both the form and the content is preserved, while in the following translation by Fitzgerald just the form of quatrains is preserved and we can see modulation having occurred in this translation (the relevant terms are bolded) hence changing the semantics and point of view of the original poem.

Fitzgerald's translation:

They say the lion and the lizard keep
The Courts where Jamshyd gloried and drank deep;
And Bahram, that great hunter—the Wild Ass
Stamps o’er his head, and he lies fast asleep

The form of the original is compatible and coordinate with norms and conventions of the source language and when it is rendered without appropriate modifications and adjustments, it may become incompatible with the norms and conventions of the target language, and hence make the translation nonsense and unnatural. But form cannot be totally sacrificed for the sake of content.

Eugene Nida (1964) believes that translators can rarely reproduce both the content and form of a poem in the translation and generally the form is usually sacrificed for the sake of content. Therefore the translator of poetry is required to create a balance between the content and form in the translated text.

1.1.3. Rhythm and rhyme

Rhythm is referred to the movement or sense of movement. In prose or poetry, it is produced by the arrangement of stressed and unstressed syllables or by the duration of the syllables. Inverse the rhythm is determined by the metrical pattern and it is regular, but in prose its meter may not be regular (Cuddon, 1979, p.574).

Meter is one of the aesthetic aspects of poetry and it plays a significant role in the effect and power of poetry. Therefore, as Nair points out, a loss in the reproduction of rhythm reduces the beauty of the poem and diminishes its impact in the target language (93).

Rhyme is a word that has the same sound or ends with the same sound as another word. Rhyme intensifies the meaning by echoing the same sounds and also binds the lines of a poem together creating a formal unity (Cuddon, 1979, p. 573).
Metrical and rhyming patterns differ from one language to another. According to Nida (1964), in many cases of poetry translation "it is impossible to find an equivalent form in the target language for the original poem." Therefore, "metrical and rhyming structures must always be altered" (p.195). Most of the time, the translators have been observed to have made use of modulation in order to create rhythm and rhyme in their translations.

1.1.4. Style

Each poet has his own manner of composing poetry. Nair, in her article "Translating Poetry: some basic problems" (1991), states that the style of a poet is the essence of his or her poetry and the translator should be able to determine the style of the poet before starting the translation of the poetry. The translator is to decide whether the style used in a poem is "blunt or subtle, hesitant or fluent, sober or paltry, respectful or mocking" (p. 94-95). After determining the poet's style, the translator attempts at reproducing it in the translation. Although the perfect reproduction of style is impossible, a partial reproduction of it can convey something of the essence or the spirit of the original. As in the case of our study we can see that the translators have both reproduced Khayyam's style of composing poem; i.e. in the form of quatrains, while in the sense of images and metaphors used in the originals there are some shifts in the semantics and points of view in both translations.

1.1.5. Musicality in poetry translation

Musicality is a formal feature of poetic language. The choice of words with certain sounds creates a music which affects the reader's or the listener's auditory sense. For instance, Euphony- using agreeable concordant and harmonic sounds- and cacophony- using harsh or discordant sounds are two devices, employed in a literary composition to create poetic effect.

Nair remarks that those technical devices like rhyme, rhythm, meter, alliteration, assonance, repetition and refrain that are used in poetry to create sound effect are almost impossible to be reproduced in the translated text (93). Therefore, in translations of poetry, the musicality of the original is lost in different degrees, especially when the two languages are too distant from each other semantically and syntactically. This is true with the case of English and Persian different sound, lexical and syntactical systems; thus it is no wonder to see some modulations in the translations due to these differences in both languages.

1.1.6. Metaphor

Translation of metaphors is another problem in poetry translation. Metaphor is a poetic device that amplifies the meaning and creates aesthetic effect. Therefore, the reproduction of metaphors in the translation is an important procedure on the part of the translator.

Newmark (1988) argues that some instances reproducing a metaphor of the original text in the translation may confuse or shock the target reader. In this case, the original metaphor, it is to be replaced by a culturally equivalent metaphor, or to be added additional information to make sense for the target reader (p.164). To this end, we can observe Fitzgerald has made so many changes in the translation of metaphors used by Khayyam in his quatrains thus resulting in changes in semantics and point of view.
2. Vinay and Darbelnet's Model

Vinay and Darbelnet (2008) carried out a comparative stylistic analysis of French and English, noticing the differences between the languages and identified two general translation strategies: direct translation (literal translation) and oblique translation (free translation) (as cited in Munday, 2008, p. 57). Direct translation covers three: Borrowing, Calque, and Literal translation. In those cases where literal translation is not possible, Vinay and Darbelnet (2008) say that the strategy of oblique translation must be used (as cited in Munday, 2008, p. 57). This covers four procedures: Transposition, Modulation, Equivalence, and Adaptation. Their model has been applied in many comparative studies of translations to name a few for example Simpson (1975) who studied Samuel Beckett's translation of his own En attendant Godot, which showed that modulation occurs more often than any of other techniques in translation. Another studied carried out by Espunya (2001) working on the Spanish and Catalan translation of the English progressive form. As another example of work, applying this model can be mentioned of Barth (1971) who carried out a statistical study of English translations of three novels. Hanna (1969), Brini (2000) and Molina & Albir (2002) can also be mentioned as some of those who have worked in the same domain.

2.1. Modulation

According to Munday (2008, p. 57), it changes the semantics and point of view of the SL. It is a "shift in cognitive category" (Molina & Albir, 2002, p. 499) which can occur not only on the word level but also on the phrase, clause and sentence level (Barth, 1971, p. 41). Vinay and Darbelnet (2008) defining the term say that "In principle, we could say that generally modulation articulates the contrast between two languages faced with the same situation but two different modes of thinking by exposing this divergence in expression form" (as cited in Espunya, 2001, p. 546). It can be either obligatory or optional, though linked to preferred structures of the two languages: e.g., the reversal of terms in 'Take it easy': سخت نگیر [Don't take it hard].

Vinay and Darbelnet (2008) believe a translator is justified to use modulation when a literal translation would end in an 'unsuitable, awkward and unidiomatic' translation in TL. Vinay and Darbelnet (2008) place much store by modulation as 'the touchstone of a good translator', whereas transposition 'simply shows a very good command of the target language' (as cited in Munday 2008, p. 57). Modulation is considered to be "the supreme translation technique" by Espunya (2001, p. 547) and at the level of message is subdivided along the following lines:
- abstract for concrete, e.g. to sleep in the open: در هوای پا Zhu (آزاد) خوابیدن [to sleep in open air]
- cause-effect, e.g. You are quite a stranger: من مدتی است که ما را ندیده‌ام [I have not seen you for a long time]
- part-whole, e.g. Synecdoche: خدمات [metonymy]
- part-another part, e.g. He read the book from cover to cover: کتاب را صفحه به صفحه خواند [He read the book page to page]
- reversal of terms, e.g. hope and fear: امتحان دادن [fear and hope]; to take an exam: سخت نگیر [Don't take it hard].
- negation of opposite, e.g. Take it easy: است [Don't take it hard].
- active to passive (and vice versa): e.g. They were examined: آنها را آزمایش کردند [They examined them].
- space for time, e.g. Here, we define the term: اکثری اصطلاح را تعیین می‌کنیم [Now, we define the term].
- rethinking of intervals and limits (in space and time), e.g. I come back in a minute: من چند دقیقه دیگر برمی‌گردم [I return in a few minutes].
- change of symbol (including fixed and new metaphors), e.g. He is as strong as a horse: او مثل رستم قوی است [He is as strong as Rostam].
3. Methodology

In order to identify the cases where modulation has occurred, all Khayyam’s quatrains and its two English translations by Emami and Fitzgerald were carefully studied. Based on Vinay and Darbelnet's (2008) classification of modulation (as cited in Munday, 2008), each instance of modulation was identified comparing the original quatrains with their translation. This was carried out separately for each translation. Then the total number of modulation in each category was calculated, so was done for the total number of modulations in each translation. It was observed that out of 96 quatrains translated by Fitzgerald, 69 quatrains contained modulation and out of 72 quatrains done by Emami 57 contained modulation. For the case of the study the 45 quatrains which were translated by both translators (since there were some quatrains which were not translated by both translators) were selected. Afterwards the chi-square procedure was performed to see whether the difference in frequency in the two translations is significant or not.

4. Modulations in English Translation of Khayyam’s Quatrains

Out of the 45 quatrains, translated by both translators, it was found that 39 of the quatrains translated by Fitzgerald contained modulation, and 36 by Emami. Some examples where modulation had taken place, due to the factors discussed above in the translations, are given below:

1)  

Emami’s translation:

Alas! The journal of my youth has all been subscribed  
And the fresh greenness of my life has become grey winter  
As for the state people call youth…  
I don’t remember how it arrived or when it ended.

Fitzgerald’s translation:

Alas, that spring should vanish with the rose!  
That youth sweet-scented manuscript should close!  
The nightingale that in the branches sang  
Ah, whence, and whither flown again, who knows!
2) Emami's translation:
In the palace where Shah Jamshid raised his cup,
The fox has come to rest, and the gazelle has given birth.
And Shah Bahram who hunted the wild ass all his life
Has at last been snared in the wilds by death.

Fitzgerald's translation:
They say the lion and the lizard keep
The Courts where Jamshyd gloried and drank deep;
And Bahram, that great hunter—the Wild Ass
Stamps o' er his head, and he lies fast asleep.

3) Emami's translation:
Each tuft of grass that you see by a stream
Be careful not to step contemptuously on the grass
For it may be have grown from the dust of a tulip-faced maid

Fitzgerald's translation:
And this delightful Herb whose tender green
Fledges the River’s lip on which we lean
Ah lean upon it lightly! For who knows
From what once lovely lip it springs unseen
Table 1. Modulations in Fitzgerald's translation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Edward Fitzgerald</th>
<th>Observed frequency</th>
<th>Expected frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract – concrete and vice versa</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cause-effect and vice versa</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-whole and vice versa</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-another part and vice versa</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reversal of terms</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negation of the opposites</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active-passive and vice versa</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space-time and vice versa</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rethinking of intervals</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change of symbols</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Modulations in Emami’s translation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modulation</th>
<th>Observed frequency</th>
<th>Expected frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract-concrete and vice versa</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cause-effect and vice versa</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-whole and vice versa</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-another part and vice versa</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reversal of terms</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negation of the opposites</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active-passive and vice versa</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space-time and vice versa</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rethinking of intervals</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change of symbols</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it is observed in the above tables the frequency of modulations in Emami’s translation is higher than that of Fitzgerald. The tables also reveal that part-whole modulation enjoys the highest frequency done by both translators. This is while cause-effect and part-another part modulation stand in the second and third place respectively in terms of frequency in both translations. The tables also shows that translators have used fewer modulations in cases of reversal of terms, negation of the opposites, active passive, rethinking of intervals and change of symbols. Of course, it should be mentioned that there was no instance of rethinking of intervals in Fitzgerald's translation. This is the same with change of symbols in Emami’s translation.

4.1. Chi-square analysis of modulation in English translation of Khayyam’s quatrains

To see if the differences in frequency is significant or not, chi square procedure was performed. The results are as follows:
Table 3: Chi-square analysis in Fitzgerald's translation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Observed Frequency</th>
<th>Expected Frequency</th>
<th>Chi-Square</th>
<th>Degree of freedom</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract-concrete</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>69.831</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cause-effect</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part whole</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part another part</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reversal of terms</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negation of opposite</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active to passive</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space for time</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rethinking of intervals</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change of symbol</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it is shown the chi-square is (69.831) and Df (degree of freedom) is (8), so the null hypothesis which states that the frequency of variables is equal for Fitzgerald’s translation is rejected by the degree of significance of (0.000) at 0.05 level. In other words the frequency of variables is different in Fitzgerald’s translation.

Table 4: Chi-square analysis in Emami’s translation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Observed Frequency</th>
<th>Expected Frequency</th>
<th>Chi-Square</th>
<th>Degree of freedom</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract-concrete</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>80.64</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cause-effect</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part whole</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part another part</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reversal of terms</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negation of the opposite</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active to passive</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space for time</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rethinking of intervals</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change of symbol</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it is shown the chi-square is (80.64) and Df (degree of freedom) is (8), so the null hypothesis which states that the frequency of variables is equal for Emami’s translation is rejected by the degree of significance of (0.000) at 0.05 level. In other words the frequency of variables is different in Emami’s translation.
In order to see if the difference in frequency is significant between Emami and Fitzgerald's translation as whole another chi-square was performed as follows:

Table 5: Chi-square analysis in Emami and Fitzgerald's translations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Translator</th>
<th>Observed frequency</th>
<th>Expected frequency</th>
<th>Chi-square</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Edward Fitzgerald</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karim Emami</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.741</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it is observed the chi-square is (0.11) and Df (degree of freedom) is (1), so the null hypothesis which states that the frequency of variables is equal for both translators is accepted by the degree of significance of (0.741) at 0.05 level; in other words the frequency of variables is equal in both translations.

5. Conclusion

The analysis of modulation in English translations of Khayyam's quatrains done by Fitzgerald and Emami revealed that translators have changed the point of view and semantics of the original work almost to the same extent. More over applying chi-square procedure showed that the frequency of variables was different for each translation separately while it was equal for both translations as a whole. In sum this study, being comparative in nature, might explain the process of translation as it is partly a comparative stylistics. It can also be of benefit to students since it helps them identify characteristics distinguishing their mother tongue from a foreign one (in our case English and Persian) hence to perceive the phenomenon that each language has a specific richness and people in different languages express situations differently since their minds and form realities differently. Moreover, the statistical data showing different points of view languages have would be of great interest to both linguists and translators. Our results show that other studies done in the same field with same focus on modulation (see for example, Brini, 2000; Molina & Albir, 2002; Barth 1971; Espunya 2001) have almost the same conclusion that the differences between languages on the one hand, and translators' own style on the other hand, lead to changes in semantics and points of view which itself is the result of different people in different languages viewing world and the concepts within it differently.

References


