Strategies Used in Translating Poetry from English to Arabic: A Contrastive Linguistic Study

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Abstract

This study tries to drive out the stereotype of the untranslatability of poetry. It focuses on the strategies used in translating poetry in order to reach a good product in the target language. In order to carry out this operation which some have called "the art of the impossible", a contrastive linguistic study between English and Arabic versions of Robert Frost's poetry is carried out, and the results of the analysis are taken into account according to the strategies which are going to mentioned.

Keywords: poetry, translation, translation strategies.

ملخـــــص

نحاول من خلال هذه الدراسة طرد الصورة النمطية لاستحالة ترجمة الشعر كما نركز من خلالها على الاستراتيجيات المستخدمة في ترجمة الشعر من أجل الوصول إلى نتاج جيد في اللغة الهدف. من أجل تنفيذ هذه العملية و التي يسميها البعض «فن المستحيل» فإننا سنقوم بدراسة لسانية مقارنة للنسخ العربية و الإنجليزية للشاعر الأمريكي روبرت فروست و النتائج المتحصل عليها ستكون وفقا للاستراتيجيات التي سنشير إليها لاحقا.

كلمات مفتاحية : الشّعر، التّرجمة ، استراتيجيات التّرجمة .

1. Introduction:

Strategies play an essential role in solving translation problems since they are part of translation competence. They lead us to find suitable solutions for translation units. According to Molina & Albir (2002: 508): "paraphrasing can be used to solve problems in the process (this can be reformulation strategy)." Hence, the research questions which have been asked are; Is poetry translatable or untranslatable and if translatable; what are the strategies used in translating poetry. In order to answer this question, we put this hypothesis: In order to overcome the problem of untranslatability of poetry, translators use some strategies to avoid distorting the meaning of the original text. For the sake of confirming the hypothesis, this piece of research focuses on some models of the strategies that have been suggested by some proof translators, and a corpus and its English-Arabic analysis.

2. Some Models of the Strategies used in Translating poetry:

The scholars of language, or translators agree upon two important concepts in translation which are "literal" and "Free" translations respectively. Thus, Hervey and Higgins (2002) and Ghazala (2005) have a classification of translation types through the terms "literal" including; exoticism and calque, and "free" comprising; cultural borrowing, communicative translation, and cultural transplantation. On the other hand, Newmark (1988) distinguishes between Semantic (literal) and communicative (free) translation. However, Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) have seven methods of translation which range from "borrowing" to "adaptation" (borrowing, calque, literal translation, transposition, modulation, equivalence and adaptation). On the other hand, André Lefevere provides us with seven different strategies which are: phonemic translation, literal translation, metrical translation, poetry into prose translation, rhymed translation, blank verse translation. The majority of these strategies suggested by Lefevere focus on some aspects of the language and neglects the others. The last one seems to be the most exhaustive of them all. It is;

2.1. Interpretation:

Here, Lefevere points out versions which means to retain the source language text and to change the form, and to use imitation where the translator preserves the title of the source text and produces a poem of his own. It is the freest type of the strategies used in translating poetry. Applying this strategy, the translator extracts the main concepts of the original poem and recreates it based on his own style (Cited in Bassnet, 2002).

The last strategy, emphasizes on the translation of poetry by understanding it and trying to reserve the title and the content except changing the form and this is the role of the translator who invents a new text in the target language on the basis of the poem he has in the source language.

3. Ghazala Procedures:

Ghazala (2004) suggested some procedures related to English Arabic translation as guidelines to translators and students when he concluded his paper which was centered on prosodic features and effects in translation. These procedures are summarized in:

(1) Reading the source text carefully especially if it were a poem for many times in order to understand it and absorb its meaning through reaching what is behind the lines. This is properly done before starting translation. Here, if stylistic, lexical, or grammatical problems arise; they should be solved first before moving a step forward.

(2) Translating the English poem to Arabic should be done through ignoring sound features completely.

(3) Choosing the best time for considering figures of sound (phonological features) of the original poem like rhyme and rhythm as a general umbrella for common features such as alliteration, consonance, assonance, foot and meter particularly.

(4) Concentration should be on realizing a kind of rhyme or half rhyme then rhythm.

(5) Taking advantage of the Arabic word order flexibility to make any

necessary change till completing target poem through the use of rhyme or near rhyme.

(6) Examining the various synonyms of keywords and rhyme word. No matter if a long expression stands for the original lexical item. The formal expression and words are favoured than the informal expressions especially in poems and formal texts.

(7) Using the change of grammatical classes of words loosely such as replacing a noun by an adjective, a verb with a noun, and an adverb with an adjective in Arabic in order to make some considerable space available to realize some sound features.

(8) Taking advantage of the poetic license in Arabic with due regard to stylistic, lexical, and grammatical changes and especially those which concern abbreviations and short forms of words, with specific reference to vocalization (التشكيل) with the four vocal points: (الفتحة، الضمة، الكسرة، والسكون) where they occur in a text.

(9) Adding new words which are not used in the original easily and quickly, yet they are implied in the original text or derived from the context.

(10) Dropping unnecessary words if the meaning is understood from the context.

These procedures summarize the task of the translator who wants to translate a poem from English into Arabic. Some of them have been discussed before under different labels but the most important is that this model is an applicable one because it is near practice and far from the dreaming theoretical rules which cannot be applied.

4. Method:

The translation parallel language corpora are composed of the poems of the American poet Robert Frost and their translated versions in the Arabic language. This corpus is analyzed linguistically taking into account the features of both the form and content, i.e., the form, the content, the type of the poem, the use of words, tone, and content of both the source and target languages.

5. Translation Analysis and Results:

5.1. Poem: 1:

Original Version (English)	Translated Version (Arabic)
The Road Not Taken	**الطريق الذى لم أسلكه**
Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,	فى خريف الغابة الصـــــراء فجأة طريقى لدربين انشطـــــــر
And sorry I could not travel both	وا لأسفى لم أستطع فيهما معاً السفـــــر
And be one traveler, long I stood	وبمفردى وقفت، طويلاً، أمعن، فى النظـــر
And looked down one as far as I could	ونظرتُ لأحدهما على قدر ما يقوى البصـــر
To where it bent in the undergrowth;	إلى حيث ما ينتهي ولكن يخفي منتهاهُ الشجر
Then took the other, as just as fair,	ولأكونَ منصفا سلكتُ ما اعتقدتُ أنه الدرب ،
And having perhaps the better claim,	القريبُ من نفسى ويحققُ ما يرنو لهُ القلـــبُ
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;	لم يرتادهُ قبلى أحد، تزينه، الخضرةُ ويكسـوهُ العشـــب
Though as for that the passing there	رغم أن الدربِ الأخرَ كان يرنو على القـــرب
Had worn them really about the same,	يشبه، دربى هذا طولا وفى عرض ؟
And both that morning equally lay	كلاهما هذا الصباح مغطى بأوراقِ الشجر
In leaves no step had trodden black.	لم ترتاده، قدم، ولم يمرِ عليه أحدٌ من بشر
Oh, I marked the first for another day!	واحتفظت، لنفسى عليه يومِ، آخرُ للسفـــر
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,	إلا إنى أجهل، أين يذهب بى وأين المستقــر
I doubted if I should ever come back.	وشككت، إنى إليه، سأعودُ يوما، عندما يريد، القدر
I shall be telling this with a sigh	سأحكى قصتى هذه، وفى القلبِ تنهيـــــدة
Somewhere ages and ages hence:	عندما تمرُ السنوات، وأنا فى أرض، بعيـدة
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I	أن طريقين انشطرا فى غابة، فريـــــدة
I took the one less traveled by,	وسلكتُ الدربِ الذى عَبَرَته، أقدام، قليلة
And that has made all the difference.	وهذا ما غيَرَ حياتى لأحققَ أحلاماً جليلــة
	ترجمة حسن حجازي

Table 14: *The Road Not Taken. (Frost: 1995)*

The rhyme of the Arabic version of the poem is very interesting since it reflects the tradition of Arabic poems even if the translated version does not follow the same pattern that the original version has. The poet- translator succeeded to preserve the form of poetry which makes the reader feel it as it was written in Arabic. It is said; إذا الشعر لم يهززك حين سماعه/ فليس حريا أن يقال له شعرُ which means; if poetry does not make you understand it, feel it, and enjoy it; it cannot be named poetry. The poet-translator has divided the poem into four different stanzas, each one consists of five verses (quintet). The same rhyme is used in each five lines. It seems that the type of the poem in Arabic is the old pattern of writing classical poetry because he preserved the rhyme and the rhythm which is reflected in the use of the metre called in Arabic "بحر الرجز" which makes the listener feel the music done by the rhythm. Both the original and translated versions of this have a simple structure. Yet, they express deep meaning. Thus, the form of the Arabic version is acceptable compared to that of the original. The words of both poems are very expressive because both of them reflect the deepness of both languages; English and Arabic respectively. Despite the fact that the Arabic version is a translation it seems to be an original text (an end in itself). The images which have been used in this poem in both versions are metaphor and personification. The tone of the poem in both versions is serious and straight forward. But, it seems that the poet is upset and very sad. This is seen clearly all over the poem and it is expressed in one word which emphasizes on the sad mood which is the word "sigh" «تنهيدة». The content of both the original and translated versions is clear because of the clarity of the main idea. The title of the poem "The road not taken" which has been translated to الطريق الذي لم أسلكه shows clearly the exact meaning focusing on the confusion of the poet and which way to take. The verses of the Arabic poem are both expressive and impressive because each passage from the four passages reflects an idea which falls under the general idea of the poem; the first passage reflects the puzzlement of the poet and which way to choose. This is shown in the following; فى خريف الغابة الصفراء فجأة طريقى لدربين انشطر، وا لأسفى لم أستطع فيهما معاً السفر، وبمفردى وقفت، طويلاٍ أمعنِ فى النظر، ونظرتُ لأحدهما على قدر ما يقوى

البصر، إلى حيث ما ينتهي ولكن يخفي منتهاهُ الشجر

The second passage summarizes the choice of the way which seems to be nearer to the heart of the poet even if the second is near and resembles the road taken by the poet. This is clearly shown in the passage beneath; ولأكونَ منصفاً سلكتُ ما اعتقدت، أنه الدرب، القريبُ من نفسى ويحققُ ما يرنو لهُ القلب، لم يرتادهُ قبلى أحد، تزينه الخضرةُ ويكسوهُ العشب، رغم أن الدرب الأخرَ كان يرنو على القرب، يشبه دربى هذا طولا وفى عرض ؟

The third passage comprises a kind of description of the both roads and the preservation of the other road for another day because he may return to it. Here, in the last verse the translator has used a word which reflects the tradition of Arab World countries who believe in destiny since it is one of the six main elements that belief is made of in the Islamic religion. This word is "destiny" and it reflects the will of Allah (God). This is shown in the passage below; كلاهما هذا الصباح مغطى بأوراق الشجر، لم ترتاده قدم، ولم يمرُ عليهِ أحدٌ من بشر، واحتفظتُ لنفسى عليه يوم، آخرُ للسفر، إلا إنى أجهل، أين يذهب بي وأين المستقر، وشككت، إنى إليهِ سأعودُ يوماً عندما يريد، القدر

The fourth and last passage summarizes the focal point of the whole poem which has made all the difference in the life of the poet because he traveled the road not taken by all people which was the reason behind changing his life and that makes all the differences. This is expressed hopefully in this passage; سأحكى قصتى هذه وفى القلب تنهيدة، عندما تمرُ السنوات، وأنا فى أرض بعيدة، أن طريقين انشطرا فى غابة فريدة، وسلكتُ الدرب الذى عَبَرَته أقدام قليلة، وهذا ما غيَرَ حياتى لأحققَ أحلاماً جليلة . All in all, the poet translator has succeeded to render this poem because he preserved the meaning which is the most important element in translation in addition to the form which has been submitted to Arabic (target language) rules. This is one of the examples that show the ability of poets to be good translators since they have a good sense of creativity in addition to the use of some strategies such as; cultural transplantation , adaptation, and addition which stands at the rhyme scheme.

5.2. Poem: 2 :

Original Version (English)	Translated Version (Arabic)
Acquainted with the night	**تلاقيت مع الليل !**
I have been one acquainted with the night. I have walked out in rain - and back in rain.	ذات مرة تلاقيتُ مع الليل وأنا وحيد . خرجتُ فى المطر——وعدتُ فى المطر . متجاوزاً ضوءَ المدينةِ البعيـــــــد.
I have outwalked the furthest city light. I have looked down the saddest city lane. I have passed by the watchman on his beat And dropped my eyes, unwilling to explain.	نظرتُ هناك على ذاك الطريقِ الحزين . ماراً بالحارس فى نوبة حراسته الليليـــــة ووقع ببصري على ما أودُ أن لا يستبين .
I have stood still and stopped the sound of feet When far away an interrupted cry Came over houses from another street, But not to call me back or say good-bye; And further still at an unearthly height, One luminary clock against the sky	وقفت ساكناً وأسكَتُ صوتِ خطاي الرتيب من على البعد قاطعتني صرخـــــــــــــةٌ آتيةٌ من المنازل , من شـارع قريـــــــــب لم تقل لى عُــــــــــــــد أو إلى لقاء وعلى البعد فى نورها العلوي تقف فى سكون ساعةٌ مضيئةٌ تواجـــــــــــــه السماء
Proclaimed the time was neither wrong nor right. I have been one acquainted with the night.	معلنةً أن الوقتِ لم يكن خطأً أو صواب . وتلاقيتُ ذات مرة مع الليل وكان لقـــــاء . **ترجمة حسن حجازي**

Table 28 : *Acquainted with the Night.* (Untermeyer: 268)

This poem follows the rhyme scheme of "tersa rima" where the poem is written in three lines stanza having the same rhyme scheme. The first stanza is ABA, the second is BCB, the third is CDC, and the fourth and last is composed of two line following the DD rhyme scheme. Concerning the rhyme, this poem it is written in iambic pen-

tameter where each line has ten syllables and each unstressed syllable is followed by a stressed syllable as in; "I have been one ac-quaint-ed with the night ." It seems that this is one of the very difficult ways Frost used to organize the lines of his poem. Yet, it is a very important way of organization since the steady rhythm of this iambic poem is like the steady rhythm of the footsteps of the poet on the pavement when he walks around at night. The rhyme of the Arabic version follows the same pattern of the English version since the poet-translator has used the same rhyme scheme in the first and the third lines within a stanza, but he has not linked by the stanzas in using the same rhyme of the first stanza second line in the first and third lines of the following stanza. In addition, he did not rhyme the two last lines of the poem using the same rhyme. The structural pattern is complicated in both versions because the poet is echoing the past while moving in circle like the moon meaning that he started from a given point and returned to it. The sound of this poem reflects the poet's loneliness and the darkness of the environment he is in. This is clearly seen in the word "one" which represents loneliness and other words which come at the end of lines and which represent external rhymes, and alliteration at the same time such as; "night," "light," "bye," "sky," "height," and "right." The Arabic version follows the same path because there is the same spirit of emphasizing on the same things the poet of the original poem emphasized on such as; وحيد، البعيد/ حزين، يستبين/الرتيب قريب ... The words which have been used by the poet are very simple but they are really expressive and more significant than those of the translated version. This may be seen in the repetition of words such as; " walked out in rain ,and back in rain" and "I was one acquainted with the night." The words of the Arabic version on the other hand, are not as expressive as the original but they have their deep impact on the reader's ear which is delighted. The images used by the poet are metaphor which is present in the first line when the poet says "I was one acquainted with the night" meaning that he met depression. Also metaphor is used in the third line when he outwalks the city lights. Metaphor is also used in the "luminary clock" which stands for the moon, i.e., the moon is compared to a clock. The

moon is the biggest image in the poem which is symbol for how the natural world prevails over civilization. In the line 13, the poet uses personification when saying that the moon "proclaims was neither wrong nor right". The poet finished his poem by a refrain which he used to open the poem "I have been one acquainted with the night." The same images are used in the Arabic version because the translator has focused on transmitting both the meaning and the form at the same time from the source language to the target language. The translator used some strategies like free translation which include; adaptation, imitation, compensation, and in some parts explicitation. All these resulted in the good form and meaning of the Arabic version and its elevated style. The tone of the poem is serious and sad. This is shown in the psychic of the poet who was lonely in the night. As if he resigned all human beings all the world and acquainted the night alone. The same tone is duplicated in the Arabic version by the translator who respected the rules of the target language and benefited from his creativity. The content of the poem is mythical, but it is clear since it reflects the psychic state of the poet. The Arabic version of the poem is very expressive since it reflects the rhetoric and eloquence of both English and Arabic poetry. The first one is clearly seen in preserving the content, i.e., the meaning of the original poem written in the English language, while the second is represented in the way of expressing ideas without affecting the rules that govern the Arabic language. In short, the translator has succeeded to translate this poem "Acquainted With the Night."

5.3. Poem: 3 :

Original Version (English)	Translated Version (Arabic)
Revelation	بـــوح
We make ourselves a place apart	نحن نصنع أنفسنـــــــــــــــــــا مكاناً منفرداً
Behind light words that tease and flout,	خلف الكلمات المضيئـــــــــــة التي تغيظ وتهزأ
But oh, the agitated heart	لكن آه، فالقلب هائج حتى يجدنا شخص ما، حقا
Till someone find us really out.	بعيد

Tis pity if the case require	إن من المؤســـــف أن تستلزم القضية (أو كما
(Or so we say) that in the end	نقـــــــــــــــول ذلك)
We speak the literal to inspire	إننا في النهاية نتكلم حرفياً لكي نلهم فهم الصديق
The understanding of a friend.	
But so with all, from babes that play	لكن مع كل ذلك،
At hide-and-seek to God afar,	من الأطفال الذين يلعبون الاستخفاء إلى الربانيين
So all who hide too well away	كلهم يخفون أنفســـــــــــــــهم جيداً
Must speak and tell us where they are.	وعليهم أن يتحدثوا ليخبرونا أين هم الآن .

Table 29: *Revelation.* (Untermeyer: 154)

  The poem follows the "ab ab cd cd ef ef." rhyme scheme which is an end rhyme. In other words, it is composed of three quatrains (stanzas composed of four lines); each first and third lines and third and fourth lines from each stanza rhyme together. The number of lines in the original poem are twelve. On the contrary, they are nine in the Arabic version. The words used in the English version are simple. Its words are expressive because the poet wants to transmit a valuable message which is keeping secrets and not being able to reveal them or to talk loosely with others either because we are ashamed or we are afraid to lose some close friends. The words used in the Arabic version are very shallow and prosaic. Thus, the proof translator should present his piece of translation in a good form which is not the case here. The whole poem reflects the meaning of one word "revelation" which summarizes and makes the reader feel the poem from the beginning till the end. The image which is used is a metaphor in the first line; "Behind light words that tease and flout," which reflects the use of tease and flout with the words which have worn the cloths of human beings. The same thing can be said about the Arabic version. The tone of the poem is straight and sad because it describes the feeling of the poet which make him

suspicious about giving confidence to other people, about treating them naturally or using fake faces as they do, about revealing everything we know or keeping some secrets in our hearts till we die. The same tone is duplicated in the Arabic version giving the reader the same feeling of the original version of the poem. The content of the poem is ambiguous to some extent since the idea which the poet wants to transmit to the readers may be adapted according to the feeling of each person, his personality, and his way of thinking. The Arabic version, on the other hand, is not as expressive as the original version because the poet used very pedestrian phrases and sentence structures which do not reflect the abundance, and beauty of the Arabic language's rhetorical meaning and the eloquence of its words as it is undisputed and unquestionable that it is the language of eloquence.

6. Results:

In sum, the most important strategies provided by scholars are not totally applies. Some translators focus on the easiest ones which provide us with a literal translation which is most of the times meaningless. Others, try to do a creative work which is not enough in the domain of translation. Thus, the results we can get from this piece of research are:

6.1. Poetic translation is different from other types of translation. So, it needs careful attention.

6.2. There should be a unified model of the strategies used in translating poetry.

6.3. Translating poetry to a verse form is better than prose.

6.4. Poetry translation is an art.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the strategies which are used in the translation of poetry and the ones which seem more appropriate than others is the model of Ghazala (2004) which seems to be more practical than theo-retical. In addition, to some complementary strategies which have not been mentioned here, but they are of a great usefulness. Thus, it is worth saying that there is no unified model on which translators may

depend especially that strategies are dynamic and change continuously. So, there is always a need for an exhaustive model which covers all problems encountered in translating poetry which is the key to other cultures.

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