

THE CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF PERSIAN PUN (CASE STUDY: PUN TRANSLATION IN RUMI'S BOOK- MASNAVI)

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ABSTRACT

Wordplay comprises the creative use of language in the form of e.g. rhyme, alliteration, play with grammar, etc. An additional type of wordplay is the pun, which is the form of wordplay that will be focused on in this thesis. The pun is a complex and diverse phenomenon, which is evident from the terminological and conceptual inconsistency, and different works and publications on the subject tend to show this matter. The terms 'pun' and 'wordplay' are in many cases used interchangeably, and in the words of Dirk Delabastita, an influential scholar on the field, 'there is not even a consensus as to how the term pun should be understood. The rich cultural connotation behind puns and the distinctive features of pun such as form, meaning, sound create great problem for the translators. To tackle the problem, the present study attempted to apply Delabastita's strategies (1996) for translating pun in Rumi's poems from Persian to English. In order to conduct the study, the puns were extracted and analyzed with the English version translated by Nicholson (2004). The result of the study indicated that four out of eight strategies proposed by Delabastita were applied by Nicholson and pun to non-pun was the most frequently used strategy.

Keywords: poem, pun, translation.

INTRODUCTION

Translation is a complicated process and translation in literature is more challenging because, translators have to preserve both meaning and form of poetry. Pun is one of those items that is hard to be preserved in translating poetry and it has a long history in human writing as Coleridge (1969) stated that "the use of puns flourished in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries when direct and formal combats of wit were a favorite pastime of the courtly and accomplished (p.250). According to Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2010) pun is defined as "the use of word in such a way as to suggest two or more meanings or different associations, or the use of two or more words of the same or nearly the same sound with different meanings, so as to produce a humorous effect". Nash (1985) defines it as "we take punning for a tawdry and facetious thing, one of the less profound forms of humor, but that is the prejudice of our time, a pun maybe profoundly serious, or charged with photos" (p.137). Chiaro (1992) explained that "the term word play includes every conceivable way in which language is used with the intent to amuse" (p.20). Lederer (1981) defined punning as the trick of combining two or more ideas within a single word or expression. He added that punning challenges us to apply the greatest possible pressure per square syllable of language.

Dirk Delabastita offers an operational and comprehensive definition of the pun:

Wordplay is the general name indicating the various textual phenomenon in

which certain features inherent in the structure of language used are exploited in such a way as to establish a communicatively significant, (near) simultaneous confrontation of at least two linguistic structure with more or less dissimilar meaning (signified) and more or less similar (signifiers) (Delabastita, 1993, p.57).

In this definition, it is stated that the pun is based on the confrontation of the linguistic forms that are formally similar, but have different meanings (Delabastita, 1993, p.58). Crisafulli (1996, p.261) stated that “pun can be defined as creating meaningful associations between words that are similar in form but different in meaning”.

There are not many people who have not heard the name of Jalal al-Din Mohammad Rumi, who is one of the best poets that his poems have attracted many people and scholars in the world. His works were translated in many languages by many scholars but for the first time it was translated by British scholars from Persian to English. The translation of Masnavi from Persian to English started with Redhouse in 1881, later other translators like Whinfield in 1887, Wilson in 1910, Nicholson in 1926 and Arberry in 1993 created their own translations (Karimnia, Ebrahimzade and Jafari, 2012). Reynold Alleyne Nicholson translated all six books of Masnavi from Persian to English.

This study is one of the pioneer studies that are intended to answer the question of what the translators do when they face to pun in poems and what is the most common strategy among translators for translating pun from Persian to English.

Types of pun

Puns have been divided into various types by different scholars. Firstly, based on formal identity, which according to Gottlieb (1997) can be presented as: homonymy, homophony, homography, and paronymy (p.210).

1. Homonymy: words that are the same in written and pronunciation but different in meaning. Like: *bear (to carry) – bear(the animal)*
2. Homophony: Richards (1985) referred to homophony as “sound alike but are written differently and often have different meaning” (p.130). Like: reed-read
3. Homography: it happens when words have different pronunciation and different meaning but same written. Words such as: lead /led/ - lead /lid/.
4. Paronymy: refers to words that have a slight difference in spelling and pronunciation. For example, adding in salt/ insult to injury.

Secondly, puns can also be divided into horizontal and vertical based on the presence of their component parts (Delabastita, 1996, p.128).

1. Horizontal: it is triggered into action by the employment of the contextual setting to ignore the pun (Delabastita, 1996, p.129).
2. Vertical: A pun is vertical when the meaning of it is exposed in one glimpse (Gottlieb 1997, p.186).

The above mentioned types of pun were in English we have different classification of pun in Persian as follows:

1. Jenase- Tam: it refers to words that are similar in written and pronunciation but they are different in meaning. This case is in English as well.



*Eshgh Shuri Dar Nahade Ma Nahad
Jane Ma Dar Buteyeh Soda Nahad*

2. Jenase Naqese: it classifies into three types:
- Jenase Naqese Ekhtelafi:** it occurs when two words are different in initial, middle or final letter. For example:

*Tang Ast Khaneh Ma Ra Nang Ast Ey Baradar
Bar Jaye Ma Biganeh Nang Ast Ey Baradar*

- Jenase naqese Harekati:** when two words are similar in consonants and different in meaning and vowel. Such as:

*In Cheh Zhazh Ast & Foshar
Panbei Dar Dahane Khod Feshar*

- Jenase Naqese Afzayeshi:** when two words are different in meaning and number of letters in the way that one word has an additional letter in the initial, middle or the final. For instance:

*Vaqt Ast Ta Barge Safar Bar Barch Babdim
Del Bar Obur Az Sade Khar & Khareh Bandim*



From the above definition of puns in both Persian and English language, it is obvious that the structure of pun in both languages is different from each other. The Persian version of pun was selected for extracting the poems.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is very little study in field of pun, that are follows:

In an article titled “*a contrastive analysis of translation of puns in Alice adventures in wonderful*”, Mohammadisalari, Behtaj & Moienzade (2014) after proposing the difficulties that puns create in the translation of literary texts, they applied Delabastita's strategies for translating puns from English to Persian. These strategies applied in three Persian translated version. The result of study indicated that six out of eight strategies proposed by Delabastita were applied by Persian translators and pun to non-pun was the most frequent strategy.

Koochacki (2016) sought to find the translatability of pun based on Delabastita's model in English translation of Sa'di's Ghazals. 92 Ghazals along with their two target versions were compiled. After data analysis based on Delabastita's model and considering the result from the two selected statistical systems of traditional and SPSS in the study, it was found that the two Iranian translators have applied eight different strategies included in Delabastita's model. Finally, the applicability of Delabastita's (1996) model was proved in English translation Sa'di's Ghazals.

In another study, Sadeqpour (2013) investigate the translatability of pun in hafiz's poetry, and the most accurate translation of pun words. Doing this by two well-known translation of Hafiz's poems Wilberforce Clarke (1891) and Bicknell (1875). In this study the strategies that the two translators used for translating pun were analyzed. Based on the finding of this study the best strategy for translation of pun proposed by writer. The results of this study showed that to translate denotative as well as connotative meaning can serve the intended author's meaning.

TRANSLATION

Translation is a problematic enterprise that is one of the most important aspects in learning English. The English term "Translation" as Munday (2012) states, "first attested in around 1340, derives either from Old French translation or more directly from the Latin translation ('transporting'), itself coming from the participle of the verb transferre ('to carry over')" (p.8). While, translation studies as an academic subject is new and according to Munday (2012) four elements make translation more prominent: firstly, rising demands for translation. Secondly, increasing number of conferences, books and journals in the field of translation in many languages such as: *Target* (the Netherlands in 1989). Thirdly, growing of publications which need to general and analytical instruments such as: *introducing translation studies* (munday, 2001/2008). Finally, prospering of international organization.

A large number of translation scholars have discussed translation; some other definitions are as follows:

Catford (1965) defines it as "the replacement of textual material in one language (source language) by the equivalent textual material in another language (target language)" (p.20). in contrast to Catford who focused on written product, Jacobson (1959-2000) introduced new categorizations that did not limit to verbal language. First, intralingual translation, that means paraphrasing. for example, translation from old Persian to modern Persian, it occurs in one language. Second, interlingual translation, or translation proper. It is bilingual and it occurs between 2 languages such as translating from English to Persian. Third, intersemiotic translation or transmutation and it occurs when a written text translates into a music or film.

Nida and Taber (1969, p.12) are significant scholars in translation studies who state that "translating consists of reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message".

Munday (2012) disputed that in the field of language the concept of translation may refer to several meaning. First of all, it can refer to the field of translation in general. Second, it can refer to the product, and the last one is the process of translating that involves a translator who changes original written text (ST) into another language of a TT.

Schjoldager (2008, p.19) also stated that "A translation is a text that express what another text has expressed in another language".

Translatability and untranslatability of pun in poem

There have been many studies on the issue of poetry but translation of pun in Rumi's poems is a subject that a few investigations have been done in this topic. Some scholars believe that poems are untranslatable, for example, Reiss believed that "In translation, puns and other kinds of play with language will have to be ignored to a great extent so as to keep the content



invariant” (2000, p.169). Jacobson (1959) is also believe that poetry is untranslatable and claims that all cognitive experiences can be conveyed in any existing language, and when there was a deficiency_ terminology may be qualified and amplified by loanwords or loan-translation, neologisms or semantic shifts, and finally, by circumlocutions, he has to admit that poetry, over which the pun regions, _ by definition is untranslatable (p.238). In contrast, others reject this idea and state in poetry translation nonlinguistic and content of the poem is transferred not form, so translating is possible in this case. According to Newmark (1988, p.217) puns are most easily translated if they are based on Graeco-latinisms that have near-equivalence in the source and target languages, particularly if they simply contrast the material and the figurative sense of the words.

Meaning and form are interlinked in poetry. Translator should consider both in order to reader grasp the actual meaning of a poem. In this respect Nida (1964) emphasizes the form and content relation in poetry:

In poetry there is obviously a greater focus of attention upon formal elements than one normally finds in prose. Not that content is necessarily sacrificed in the translation of a poem, but the content is necessarily constricted into certain formal moulds. Only rarely can one reproduce both content and form in a translation, and hence in general the form is usually sacrificed for the sake of the content. One the other hand, a lyric poem translated as prose is not an adequate equivalence of the original. Though it may reproduce the conceptual content, it falls far short of reproducing the emotional intensity and flavor. However, the translating of some types of poetry by prose may be dictated by important cultural consideration (Cited in Hatim & Munday, 2004, p.165).



The translation of pun has always been a hard nut to crack, because the double meaning of puns are always the combined effect of phonological and semantic features, which can hardly be kept when transplanted into another language, especially those belonging to different families. The voices advocating the untranslatability of puns are not weak in the field of translation studies (Redfern, 1984, p.2).

From what was mentioned above, it can be found that, any attempt to translate puns is doomed to fail.

Strategies for pun translation

From what was said above, we concluded that translation of poem is possible. Based on this, different theorists offered different strategy for translation of pun.

As de Vries & Verhij (1997, p.72) proposed the following strategies for translating the pun occurred in Bible:

- a) Pun by pun
- b) Pun to rhetorical device-including alliteration, assonance and rhyme
- c) Transliteration-literal translation of words
- d) Compensation- in adjacent text fragment

One of those scholars who offered different strategies for translating pun and believed that translation of pun has great importance in poetry was Newmark (1988). He introduced the following strategies:

- a. If the aim of the pun is just to raise laughter, it can sometimes be compensated by another pun or word with a different but associated meaning.
- b. Puns created by punning poets are most difficult to translate, since they are limited by meter. In such case pun has to be sacrificed.
- c. When the two senses of the pun are more important than the medium, they can sometimes be translated by reproducing the two senses in an incongruous way.
- d. Finally, where a pun is used in a SL text to illustrate a language, or a slip of the tongue or the sense is more important than the witticism, it has to be transferred, translated (in both senses) and usually explained.

Among those theorists who suggested strategies for translating pun, some literary tactics were stated by Weissbrod (1996, p.46, 221) which are follows:

- a. Employing all stylistics levels and historical strata accessible in the target language, even if they have no parallel in the source text.
- b. Changing one or more of meaning(s) of the original pun so that they can be censored again into one word or words similar in form or sound.
- c. Changing which includes the use of any type of pun in the target text for a source text pun.



Finally, Delabastita (1996, p.134), discussed a more comprehensive list composed of eight translation strategies for dealing with pun:

1. Pun to pun: the SL pun is translated by a TL pun, which may be different from the original one in terms of semantic structure, formal structure or lexical function.
2. Pun to non-pun: the translator may choose a non-pun phrase to convey the ST pun. By applying this strategy, he may be able to preserve both senses of the ST pun in a non-punning conjunction. He may either choose one of the senses at the cost of suppressing the other.
3. Pun to related rhetorical device: the ST pun is replaced by other rhetorical devices such as rhyme, alliteration, irony, repetition, paradox, or referential vagueness etc with the aim of creating the effect of the ST pun.
4. Pun to zero: the translator may simply delete the ST pun in his translation.
5. Pun ST=pun TT: the translator is able to reproduce the ST pun without any change to its form and semantic content.
6. Non-pun to pun: in this case, the translator uses a pun to translate the ST material that does not contain any wordplay. This way the translator compensates for any instances of loss of ST puns elsewhere in the TT.
7. Zero to pun: this strategy is also a kind of compensation. It differs from strategy number six in that it adds completely new material to the text that contains wordplay.
8. Editorial techniques: whenever the ST pun cannot be translated and the translator wants to explain the ST pun to the reader, he uses footnotes for this purpose.

METHODOLOGY

In order to fulfill the aim of this study, researcher found the Persian version of *Masnavi* which consists of six books. In addition to original material, the translated version of *Masnavi* by

Nicholson (2004) was also gathered. Then the following steps were taken to collect and to analyze the required data. After reading books, 100 poems were extracted. Each pun was compared to its translation, then the researchers categorize them into eight strategies which introduced by Delabastita (1996). After all, descriptive statistics including frequency and percentage were provided for each strategy. It should be noted that three kinds of pun were selected for the aim of this study.

Corpus

The first two books of *Masnavi* written by Jalal al-din Mohammad Rumi were selected for the aim of present study. One hundred poems were extracted from these two books for analyzing. The unit of analysis was *Masnavi's* verses.

DATA ANALYSIS

The result has shown that from 100 selected puns, 90 out of 100 puns were translated based on pun to non-pun strategy, 5 puns based on pun to pun strategy, 3 puns based on pun to zero strategy and 2 puns based on non-pun to pun strategy. Other strategies were not used by the translator. Figure 1 shows the frequency of each strategy.

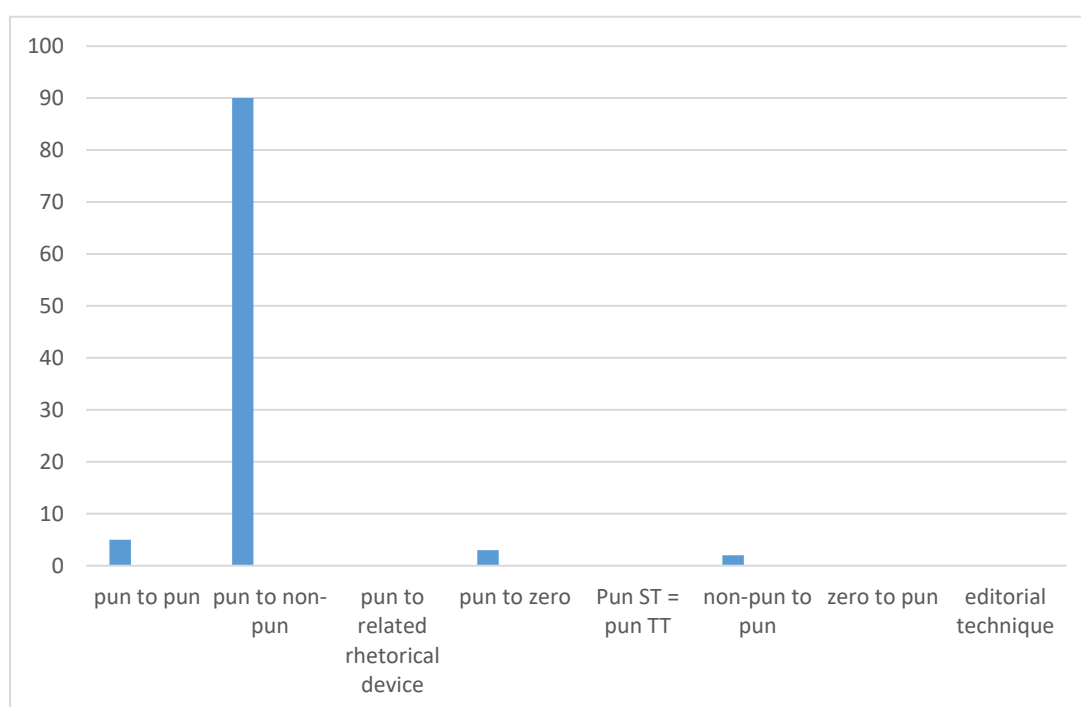


Figure 1: the frequency of Delabastita's strategies for translating pun from Persian to English based on percentage

As you can see in figure 1 and 2, the most frequently used strategy in translating pun from Persian to English is pun to non-pun. As it was said before the structure of pun in Persian is different from what is in English, so, the result may be the consequence of this dissimilarity.



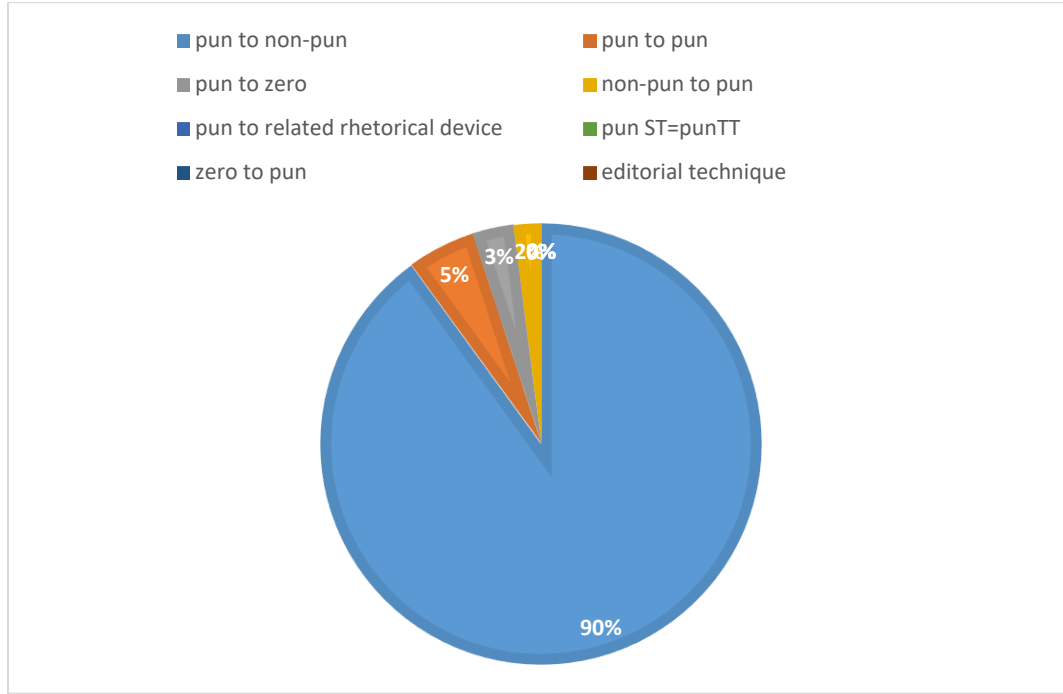


Figure 2: frequency of pun in Delabastita's strategy

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Poetry is a form of literature that uses aesthetic and rhythmic qualities of language that one of them is pun. Translation of pun is a challenging task because, translator should know the structure of pun in the source text and then transferring these puns to the target language appropriately. This article investigated how this difficult task can be done successfully and to fulfill this purpose, researcher examined Nicholson's translation of Masnavi. As you can see in figure 2, the most frequently used strategy by Nicholson translation was pun to non-pun. It means that most of the times Nicholson was failed to translate source pun to target pun and we can attribute this to differences between both source and target structure of pun.

Further study

Another interesting area of investigation in literary translation is the translation of simile, which is one of the literary devices used for aesthetic purposes in poems

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