

# SIMILE AND THE WAYS OF TRANSLATION

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**Abstract:** This study aims to provide an account of similes in English, which serves as the starting point for an exploration of the problems they can pose when translated into other languages. Central to the research are the concepts of 'translation problem' and 'translation strategy', rooted in the view of translating as a problem-solving process, where the problem identification is followed by decision-making in selecting the appropriate procedure of problem-solving. The two concepts, debated in translation theory, are intended as follows: a 'problem' is constituted by a divergence between the source language - culture and the target language - culture; a 'strategy' is a generalization about typical courses-of-action exhibited by professional translators. Translation strategies are recognized as being universal, namely, independent of the languages involved in the translation process.

**Key words:** concepts, simile, translation, language, derived, general language, word order, syntax.

Translation is regarded as an important means for cross-cultural communication. In most cases, translators have their own phrasing styles to translate original languages to target languages with or without considering whether target readers are able to understand authors' intended and designed meanings, especially similes they use in their novels. For the past decades, publishers in Taiwan have been publishing a mammoth of translated novels from English to Chinese; however, we do not know how much translators' work can help readers really understand foreign cultures and specific thoughts and philosophy elucidated through similes.

## **The object of the research.**

The research object consists of the majority of translation theories, fiction texts, theoretical materials of different researches in the field and other data sources.

## **The methods of investigation.**

During the completion of the given investigation we tried to use the following methods and ways of research: comparative analysis, historical analysis, literary interpretation method and historical analysis, and others.

**Definition.** Simile is a figure of speech used in general language as well as specialized language, in everyday conversation as well as literary, journalistic and promotional texts.

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how much translators' work can help readers really understand foreign cultures and specific thoughts and philosophy elucidated through similes.

The similes found in *The Kite Runner* will be divided into two groups: conventional and original ones, and then the translated similes in Chinese will be labeled in terms of equivalence, calque, new similes and paraphrases. With the discussion of the concept of embodied experience and simile translation, the study hopefully may shed some light on how translators can effectively translate similes from original texts to target texts in order to help readers understand more cross-cultural experiences through reading translated texts.

Translation is the communication of the meaning of a source-language text by means of an equivalent target-language text. Whereas interpreting undoubtedly antedates writing, translation began only after the appearance of written literature; there exist partial translations of the Sumerian Epic of Gilgamesh (ca. 2000 BCE) into Southwest Asian languages of the second millennium BCE.

Translators always risk inappropriate spill-over of source-language idiom and usage into the target-language translation. On the other hand, spill-overs have imported useful source-language calques and loanwords that have enriched the target languages. Indeed, translators have helped substantially to shape the languages into which they have translated.

Due to the demands of business documentation consequent to the Industrial Revolution that began in the mid-18th century, some translation specialties have become formalized, with dedicated schools and professional associations.

Because of the laboriousness of translation, since the 1940s engineers have sought to automate translation (machine translation) or to mechanically aid the human translator (computer-assisted translation).

The rise of the Internet has fostered a world-wide market for translation services and has facilitated language localization.

The word translation derives from the Latin *translatio* (which itself comes from *trans-* and *fero*, together meaning "to carry across" or "to bring across"). The modern Romance languages use words for translation derived from that source and from the alternative Latin *traduco* ("to lead across"). The Germanic (except Dutch) and Slavic languages likewise use calques based on these Latin sources. [7]

The Ancient Greek term for translation, *μετάφρασις* (*metaphrasis*, "a speaking across"), has supplied English with *metaphrase* (a "literal," or "word-for-word," translation) — as contrasted with *paraphrase* ("a saying in other words", from *παράφρασις*, *paraphrasis*). *Metaphrase* corresponds, in one of the more recent terminologies, to "formal equivalence"; and *paraphrase*, to "dynamic equivalence."

Strictly speaking, the concept of *metaphrase* — of "word-for-word translation" — is an imperfect concept, because a given word in a given language often carries more than one meaning; and because a similar given meaning may often be represented in a given language by more than one word.

Nevertheless, "metaphrase" and "paraphrase" may be useful as ideal concepts that mark the extremes in the spectrum of possible approaches to translation.

A secular icon for the art of translation is the Rosetta Stone. This trilingual (hieroglyphic-Egyptian, demotic-Egyptian, Ancient-Greek) stele became the translator's key to decryption of Egyptian hieroglyphs by Thomas Young, Jean-François Champollion and others. [3]

Since we are dealing with somewhat of a technical subject, we need to define some of terms, so we can understand it clearly.

1. Translate/Translation. If you consult an English dictionary, it will give the definition of the word "translate" as, "to give the sense or equivalent of in another language; change into another language" or "carry over into one's own or another language." Obviously, this definition is too broad and loose when used in the context of the important work of translating God's Word. This definition is almost the same as "interpret" which means to explain in other words. This would accommodate all the loose methods currently being used by liberal "translators" today.

In answering the question "What Is A Translation?" Francis Steele writes, "The liberties taken by many so-called translators is seen in their violation of the limits of true translation in distinction from paraphrase. Any technical definition of 'translation' must emphasize the meticulous accuracy with which such limits must be observed, especially by scholars who profess to believe in scriptural revelation."

He then gives this wonderful definition of the word translate/translation, "A translation should convey as much of the original text in as few words as possible, yet preserve the original atmosphere and emphasis. The translator should strive for the nearest approximation in words, concepts, and cadence. He should scrupulously avoid adding words or ideas not demanded by the text. His job is not to expand or to explain, but to translate and preserve the spirit and force of the original... Not just ideas, but words are important; so also is the emphasis indicated by word order in the sentence" [9]

Brother Wayne Jackson wrote, "A 'translation' is simply the rendition of the original Biblical text (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek) into one's native vernacular. Everyone, unless he reads the Biblical languages is dependent upon a translation" [3]

In the one sense of the word, a "translation" is the act of translating from one language to another; in another sense, it is also used to refer to the end result or the finished product which has been translated. Here is where we also meet the need to define another word which is often used in connection with the second definition of the word "translation"...

Version. This word is defined as, "A translation from one language to another" (F&W 1489) and especially when referring to an updated translation of the Bible. (Although version can also be defined, "A description or account as modified by a particular point of view." This definition would seem to more closely define what most of the modern speech versions is in fact just their author's point of view.) In this sense of the word, there is truly only one "version" which matters, and that is God's Version - His Inspired Word.

However, some of the modern speech versions attempt to use the word "version" in the sense of "revision. They take the good name of an accurate translation and then tack the word "New" in front of it, in order to promote their product. For instance, the NASV sounds like it is a revision of the ASV, but in fact it is a completely new translation and does not follow in the same principles of translation accuracy as the ASV.

Revision. The word revision means exactly what it sounds like, "1. To read or read over so as to correct errors, suggest or make changes...". When one makes a revision of the Bible, he may go back to the original language for comparison and correction, but the major work is to re-read the translation and correct minor errors in the text or bring the text up to date. For instance, the KJV has been revised several times since it was first translated in 1611 to change the spelling of words and to change some of the words which are no longer part of our vocabulary (needs to be done again). However, the major work of translation still stands as accurate as when it was first translated.

Many of the versions which bear the name "Revised" in their titles are actually new translations and go much further than just revising the version which are they are supposed to follow. The RSV is one example of this. It is supposed to be a revision of the KJV. But it is not an accurate revision of the KJV because in many places it changes the very structure and accuracy of the text and teaches error in several passages.

#### The ways of Translation.

There are four basic theories or methods of translation which have been used by those who do the work of translating from the original languages.

1. Literal or Highly Literal. This is where the exact words, word order and syntax are as literally followed and translated into English as possible. Many of the interlinears, such as Berry's Interlinear are examples of this method of translation. Young's Literal Translation is another example of this method of translation.

Even though these are highly accurate to the Greek, yet often times they are difficult to read in English.

Although these are accurate translations, due to word order and syntax they are difficult to read in English. They are best used as tools for those who wish to study the literal English translation alongside the original language.

2. Formal Equivalence, Form-Oriented or Modified Literal. This is where the actual words are translated and then adjusted slightly in order and syntax to conform to the target language. This method respects the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures. It focuses on the form or the very words of the text and translates them. It is based upon the philosophy that each and every word of the text is important and carries a meaning of its own which is possible to express in another language.

This method involves a single process whereby the words are directly translated from the original to the target language. The emphasis is given to translating the words and the various parts of speech as

closely as is possible without distorting the meaning. This means that nouns are translated as nouns, verbs as verbs, articles as articles, adverbs as adverbs and adjectives as adjectives. Close attention is given to grammar so that tenses, moods, numbers and persons are translated as closely as possible.

This method is sometimes recognized (and criticized) as the word-for-word method of translation. It is the most accurate of all methods of translation in versions which are readily available. Because of these translator's respect for each word, when they added English words which did not correspond to a Greek word, they italicized these words, so that the reader could know that these words were supplied by the translators. This type of honesty and ethical responsibility cannot be found in the modern-speech versions today.

3. Functional Equivalence, Context-Oriented, Idiomatic or Dynamic Equivalence. This method of translation departs from the formal equivalence method in two areas:

(1) It is concerned with the thought of the writer, (as if they knew!) and

(2) The reaction of the translated message by the person reading it (as if they could predict it). It is based on the underlying theory that communication takes place, not in word form, but in sentence form or that the sentence is the smallest unit of communication. (Although we recognize that the definition of words must be considered in their context, this does not mean that words have no meaning of themselves or do not communicate themselves. Just yell "Fire" real loud in a crowded place sometime and see if a single word can communicate. Or whisper "Shop" or "Sale" to a woman and see what happens next).

This method of translation is defended by such men as Eugene A. Nida and Charles R. Taber in a book entitled *The Theory and Practice of Translation*. In contrasting what they term the "new focus" (Dynamic Equivalence) and the "old focus" (Formal Equivalence) they write, "The new focus...has shifted from the form of the message to the response of the receptor. Therefore, what one must determine is the response of the receptor to the translated message. The response must then be compared with the way in which the original receptors presumably reacted to the message when it was given in its original setting" .

In order to achieve this result they go through a three step process which involves:

(1) Analyzing what they think the inspired writer meant;

(2) Transferring the thought to the target language; and

(3) Restructuring it to fit what they think the person reading it will understand. This last step involves a number of subjective judgments and decisions based upon emotions, attitudes and even doctrinal bias. The result is more interpretation than translation.

The fundamental difference between Formal Equivalence and Dynamic Equivalence is that FE is a word-for-word translation (which derives doctrine from God's Word) while DE is a thought translation which allows the translator's doctrine to determine what he thinks the Word of God should say. Needless

to say, we reject the Dynamic Equivalence approach to translation as being an accurate or valid method of translation.

4. Paraphrase or Unduly Free. This method is hardly worthy of being called a method of translation, since it is not concerned with the words or sometimes not even the meaning of the original. It is so loose that it will allow excess words, whole sentences or even paragraphs to be inserted into the text without any justification other than the paraphraser's belief that he is producing a product which is easier to understand than the Word of God. Most are nothing but commentaries and very poor ones at that, since they are packed with the false doctrines of the author of such works.

Further, some of them include words and thoughts which are vulgar and disrespectful of the dignity which should befit the Word of God. Such liberties are taken in this method that even liberal scholars do not recognize this as a valid or accurate method of translation. Neither should we!

While we recognize that there is a place for paraphrasing and commenting upon the Scriptures, honesty demands that we call it a commentary or a paraphrase of the Scriptures rather than trying to pass it off as the Word of God in a more readable or understandable form.

**Conclusion.** The translation of similes is also complex, posing various types of problems. To solve them, the translator needs to take into account macro factors, such as genre and readership, as well as micro factors, such as type, structure and function of the simile, its relevance to the message, and lastly, the resources available in the target language.

One last remark on creative similes: they tend to be translated literally. When they occur in literary texts, however, in complex figurative structures consisting of more similes or a mix of metaphors and similes, we observe some omission, addition or change in their translation.

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