THE CONCEPT OF METAPHOR IN THE ENGLISH-ARABIC TRANSLATION

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Abstract: The present study is part of the vast area of translation studies. Its main purpose is to discuss the theoretical concept of metaphor and its role in the translation in process from a linguistic point of view. The use of metaphors allows people to convey special meanings when communicating, regardless if they express themselves verbally or in writing, in all aspects of their lives (religious, creative writing, linguistics, science, etc.). The use of metaphor has been rarely captured in the translation field and is often considered not useful; therefore, this paper will focus on the theoretical importance of metaphors in translation, as a means of rendering the poetic meaning of a word in a literary text and also as a manner of achieving linguistic and semantic equivalence.

Keywords: metaphor, concept, equivalence, translation, conclusion.

1. Introduction

Language is, of course, a complicated phenomenon that changes over time and between cultures. Therefore, a method for performing translations between two languages is only achievable if it accounts for the difficulties of the language, comprising its inclination for being changeable. Indubitably, every language has its own linguistic aspects that may be differ one from the other. These linguistic differences cause essential difficulties in the process of translation. As a result, the linguistic features which are particular in one language must be taken into consideration in the process of translation. For example, Arabic has different linguistic features from English. The Arabic and English translators should be aware of the differences between the two linguistic systems since these differences can cause dilemmas during the translation process. In addition, the concept of equivalence and the figures of speech play an important vital in the translation process, in general, and particularly in literary and religious translations. Hence, the concept of metaphor is, however, a divergent phenomenon. It has played an essential role in the human beings' co-habitation in various important areas, such as literature, philosophy, religion, linguistics, rhetoric and academic disciplines which are involved in the field of knowledge. This has led to the fact that the concept of metaphor is not a "physical object" that can be defined and described easily in an objective. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 3), "Metaphor is for most people a device of the poetic imagination and the rhetorical flourish – a matter of extraordinary rather than ordinary language. Moreover metaphor is typically viewed as a characteristic of language alone, a matter of words rather than thought or action".

Consequently, a metaphor is a concept that is getting more and more serious attention in contemporary translation studies. In earlier works regarding the translation

theory, some theorists such as Dagut (1976), Van den Broeck (1981) and Aphek and Tobin (1984) have shown that some "individual metaphorical" expressions, especially in religious and literary texts cannot be replaced and translated from the source language into another language, a controversial and radical issue which has caused heated debates among the theorists of translation study.

For example, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) have adopted a new view of the metaphor by giving new suggestions about it by researching the fundamentals of it in traditional works. Despite the new developed theories, the study of metaphor in the context of translation studies has not been taken into the consideration by the majority of modern researchers and theorists. Nevertheless, some researchers and theorists in translation studies have attempted to research and discuss the concept of metaphor, but the research in this field is still inadequate. Furthermore, analyzing the study of metaphor in translation from English into Arabic or vice-versa was also inconsistent and was not given considerable attention in translation studies from English into Arabic by researchers, in spite of the of the cultural gap which exists between the English and Arabic languages and countries.

2. Metaphor

Metaphors trigger figurative imagery which enables them to be very effective in transferring meanings (Archer &Cohen, 1998; Ivie, 1999). Feelings such as love, hatred, gladness and melancholy in all type of translations are, of course, described to have been translated metaphorically particularly in the literary text (Kövecses, 2000; Tissari, 2001). Analyzing and describing figurative expressions in a text is one of the most complicated processes in translation. "Figure of speech" is a word or a combination of words meant to indicate a particular emphasis on a perspective or emotion. A writer or speaker can use metaphors more predominantly in their performance in order to introduce new ideas and concepts, giving a more accurate meaning, or showing more of his empathy and/or knowledge towards his work.

Some theorists have discussed the metaphor in both English and Arabic, since many literary works have been translated into Arabic in the ninth century, before any other major European language. Consequently, the study and the analysis of metaphors in Arabic literature emerged long ago and were strongly similar to the English style as they were in the source language (Simawe, 2001). Arabic standard language comprises the use of proverbs to convey the essential morals and traditions that reflect the behavior of persons or society in different circumstances (Al-Krenawi, 2000).

Furthermore, among many other famous Arab scholars of the thirteenth century, Ibn Taimiyah has organized several metaphorical styles in Arabic items (Alturki, 1999). He was researching the possibility of the semantic meanings of certain words and he recognized that some of them can be more effective when they are used metaphorically, while others words can only carry their original meanings.

Another Arabic scholar, Yousef Abu Aldoos (1998) has discussed the terms of "free" and "transferred" metaphor. He proved that there is a new meaning "transferred" to the word metaphor, which opposes the "free" metaphor. He also discussed the metaphor in religious texts and prevalence of persistent metaphors in eloquent Arabic language. Some other scholars confirm the relevance of metaphors when discussing Arabic social attitudes and traditions. For example, they have used the animal and

climate to describe courage and faithfulness. For instance, (1) يلطف الاجواء literally means "he softens the weather", but its metaphorical meaning is actually "he alleviates the tension of current situation" or "he reconciles any two foes" or (2) اتضحت الحقيقائق, which actually means "The facts became clear gradually" is rendered metaphorically as "The dawn of fact started to emerge gradually".

Moreover, many arguments regarding the concept of metaphor have emerged especially in the West, which have underlined new perceptions about metaphors, but they have not yielded noticeable changes or additional interpretations, in the view of Arabic scholars (Simawe, 2001). On the other hand, most of the people who are living and speaking Arabic language still consider the concept of metaphor merely as a decoration and something extraordinary that is relinquished, while in the majority of Western cultures, the overuse of the metaphor is a sign of cognitive and linguistic mastering of the figurative language and is specific to the highly educated level of speakers and/or writers. For instance, (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, Lakoff, 1993) among many scholars have proven that English is a metaphorical language, because of the intense usage of metaphors in English. Particularly in literary works, this has had a long history, and anyone can, of course, find them in all fields of specialty. Nevertheless, at this stage of theoretical concepts, one cannot recognize which language – Arabic or English – is more metaphorical, or to what extent, what purpose, or which metaphorical usage is more divergent. Simawe (2001) has considered that it is important to introduce the cultural, historical and linguistic aspects into a nation's language.

2.1. The concept of metaphor

Metaphor, as has been defined by the Merriam Webster online dictionary, is derivationally and "etymologically" from Greek, from "metapherein" meaning to transfer and namely from "meta-", meaning: over, beyond, after and "pherein", meaning "to bear". Heated debates among linguistic scholars have emerged as they sought to discover the differences between analyzing a metaphor as a rhetorical "device" or researching it as a conceptual process of controlling strategy which should be embraced by language itself. This question can be answered through the following view: the conceptual perspective of metaphors stipulates that a metaphor is "fundamentally conceptual". This concludes that what can be traditionally referred to as a metaphor, such as the word "mountain" in this sentence: "I meet with the mountain", (meaning a powerful, steady man), the conceptual theory indicates that the "mountain" was used in the source text to convey a conceptual meaning in the target text. Authors or writers may also use metaphor for any rhetorical figures of speech in order to obtain their intended objectives by means of harmony, interconnection, association and comparison.

Could we find a conceptual metaphor that can exist in all language systems and culture aspects? This is a quite difficult question to answer, especially given that there are more than 4,000 languages spoken and written nowadays around the world, and each language has its own complicated linguistic layers. As a result, scholars and linguists have discussed this complicated issue regarding certain conceptual metaphors that one can encounter within a language and then examine whether the same metaphors can be used in other languages. In case they do exist, one can compose a presupposition that they can be expressed and that they are changeable,

and then, one can either apply or deny the use of these metaphors across languages. When we have the same conceptual metaphor regardless the type of context that existed in any two different languages, then a new question will emerge: Why are these conceptual metaphors found in such unrelated languages, from a linguistic and cultural point of view? So, this is one of the most motivated reasons to enhance the cognitive linguistic insights of metaphors and make the concept of metaphor play the essential role in the translation process and in academic writing as well.

Another significant thought concerning the conceptual theory of metaphor is how an individual chooses to use a conceptual metaphor in his daily language. The metaphor can, for instance, be a lexical item like the word "hand" in "the hand of development authorities is very wise", and it can, of course, also take the form of expressions that are not traditionally related to the concept of metaphor, such as "idiomatic expressions". For example, the expression "dead-end" in the following sentence "they are facing a dead end in their love relationship". Both items "hand' and "dead end" discharge the same basic function of conceptual metaphor.

2.2. Literal equivalence of metaphor

Hoffman (1985) has mentioned that functional methods and metaphors are identifiable, meaning that the same patterns and standards which have been adopted to analyze grammatical categories can also be applied to metaphors. However, the perception that there is a "mind-free" reproducer reality has motivated aforementioned translation scholars to the insights that a metaphor is a replacement, or a "colour" of reality (Croft 1988, and Menacere 1992) which includes a more basic "literal" reality; other scholars such as (Vinay and Darbelnet) have argued that such a concept is called non-metaphorical or basic or even literal equivalence. From a translator's point of view, when one cannot translate the metaphor as it is, to avoid either omission or translation errors, one can override this "decorative trap" of metaphors and directly provide the literal sense, but, of course, not a word for word translation such as: (1) حقل المعرفة (area of knowledge), (2) تحرك المياه الراكده (influx of still water), (3) في نهاية المطاف (at the end of the day), طعنه من الخلف (4) and يحاول التثبت بالحياة (trying to keep hold of life) and (4) طعنه من الخلف (stab in the back).

Furthermore, Nida has discussed and supported the method of translating the metaphorical item whether they are words or phrases into "non-metaphors" where "non-metaphors" represent the real sense and can offer a reasonable substitute. Following Nida's approach, one can take the adjective "big" where by rendering it through a conceptual metaphor our comprehensive cogitation of dealing with "physical objects" can be reflected.

Gozzi (1999) has indicated that the "conventional dualistic" mode of awareness is imperfect, since many words or expressions can mostly be substituted and accepted as literal, whereas they have metaphorical roots. The argumentation concerning what is literal and what creates metaphorical language has spawned some heated debates in the field of linguistics. According to some theorists literal language can be, therefore, described as standard language, while metaphorical language can be described as non-standard.

Katz (1998: 20) has indicated that "normal language might be mediated by a set of rules (language modules) that makes minimal contact with general cognitive structures, whereas non-standard language requires input from the more general (i.e. not

language-specific) cognitive system". As a matter of fact, the essential issue of knowing and dealing with the boundaries of literal language from those of the metaphorical ones is considered as difficult a task for authors and translators alike. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) have claimed a new view called the "experientialist" approach. This approach puts an end to the misconception regarding the 'truth' by underlining that truth is not the output of the interaction in accordance with the cultures and traditions, but is more related to a personal set of rules, behaviors and experiences. According to them, both literal and figurative languages are adequate equivalences for expressing 'truths.'

2.3. Translation and metaphor

According to Newmark (1988:104) "whilst the central problem of translation is the overall choice of a translation method for a text, the most important particular problem is the translation of metaphor". The importance of metaphor is resulted from its role as an important feature of the language. Obviously, translation is the process of transferring written or spoken language through adequate equivalence in a written or spoken target language. Larson has indicated in her book: "Meaning-based translation" (1998) that translating metaphors and similes are generally analogous.

From the controversy of scholars over the translation of metaphor, one can derive many irreconcilable points of view. Dagut (1976; 1980) has indicated that there are features and strategies of metaphor which give reasons for paying extra attention to the discussion the theory of translation of metaphors.

Mason (1982) has rejected this view, considering that the use of metaphors represents an indicator of cultural differences between two given languages, thus there is no need for producing a new theory for metaphors in translation. Mason (1982: 149) has also claimed that there are, of course, metaphors "which are not at all, or not directly translatable". She adds that there are some metaphorical expressions which cannot be shifted literally into another language. She continues to state that these are simply differences between the culture of the source language and that of the target language and has nothing to do with the characteristic of the metaphor itself. In spite of all the controversies Mason manages to stir, she does not make a clear distinction of metaphorical expressions and how they should be translated; she only recommends that metaphors in translation should be dealt with in isolation, meaning each of its elements must be taken into consideration and translated in accordance with its cultural implications, without neglecting the context provided by the entire text. The following examples will show the obvious differences between English and Arabic cultures and their metaphorical usages: (1) يتبنى طريقا واضحً literally means "he is on the right way" and the English metaphorical meaning is "to keep a straight path", (2) يزرع الفتنه literally means he gossips, while the English metaphor is "to sow division between them", (3) القرار بأيديهم الان literally means 'they have right to decide now", but English translates metaphorically as "the ball is in their court now" and (4) تزوج بامرأه ثانيه (literally means "he got marriage with another woman" and the English metaphor reads as "to take her place'.

Dagut (1987) has criticized Mason's justification that the concept of metaphor can only function interdisciplinarily when studied individually, since that it is hard to have clear principles and strategies concerning the translation of metaphors. In addition, Dagut (1987:82) has suggested that "the establishment of the general principle that, in

relation to any target text, every source text metaphor occupies a position on a gradient of translatability (ranging from completely untranslatable to literally translatable) determined by its cultural and lexical resonances and the extent to which these can be reproduced in the target language". Dagut has claimed that the reason behind his study for establishing a translation of metaphor theory results from the concept of "translatability" and the interaction with the theory of metaphor. Therefore, this interaction indicates that literary translation of metaphor is quite different from other metaphors' translation, since they are not found arbitrarily and they also leave the impression of aesthetic sense in the text they appear in.

Reiterating Simawe's view (2001) in relation to metaphor, according to which it is important to introduce the cultural, historical and linguistic aspects into a nation's language, one can use existing approaches to lexical (Dejica, 2008) or cultural items (Dejica, 2013) in translation to deal with translation problems arising from the use of metaphors in texts.

3. Conclusions

The paper has presented a discussion of the trends and patterns of understanding and applying the concept of metaphor to different subjects that may interfere with the perspective of metaphors in the translation theory. The study aimed to unravel the perspective of considering the metaphor as a conceptual process, by presenting its merits as it is still considered an eccentric expression of linguistics. The paper has ventured to imply principles and characterizations of metaphors and their fundamental tradition in the translation theory. It proves that different traditions and human beings' kinds of behavior have determined the evolution of metaphor in literary texts. The concept of metaphor requires a comprehensive understanding and needs to be understood first in order to obtain the intended metaphorical meaning.

I agree with Lakoff who stated that metaphor is not merely a means to name or express objects, feelings, etc., but it also conveys the manner in which the person uses it or thinks of it. As metaphors are part of language, it would be appropriate to consider them as living organisms which pass from a user to another, from a language into another, constantly changing; constantly trying to keep up with their "authors".

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