**Abstract**

In this paper, the researcher will highlight the problems that arise when translating original metaphors. By problems I mean the inevitable loss of meaning when such metaphors are being translated. Literary works such as poems, drama, short stories and the Holy Qur’an have original metaphors, so translating such metaphors is problematic as the translator may follow one of two routes. The translator either translates the metaphor literary; thus, the naturalness of the translated text will be lost, or they may choose to take the sense of the metaphor and try to find the closest equivalent; adopting this approach, the translator sacrifices the rhetorical aspects and the aesthetic values of these metaphors.

Meanwhile, it’s well-known that literary translation is more difficult than technical translation as he first requires the translator to have some creativity and literary taste to be able to appreciate the aesthetic values of the text. However, translating technical texts need the translator to be knowledgeable in the field they are dealing with.

**Keywords**

Aesthetic values, literary, loss, metaphor, miraculous, Qur’an, rhetoric, rhetorical aspects, scientific, translation

**Review of Literature**

One of the English resources that I depended on in my argument is Peter Newmark’s *A textbook of Translation*. Another Arabic resource is Muhammad Shahin’s *نظريات الترجمة في تدريس الترجمة من العربية إلى اإانجليزية و بالعكس.* Moreover, I found other resources that I could make use of such as Arberry are *The Seven Odes*. I also made use of some resources that talk about the miraculous aspects of the Qur’anic metaphors and how such original metaphors lost their aesthetic values, rhetorical aspects, and thus effects when being translated.

**Limitation of the Study**

Actually, this paper does not go beyond examining translating one type of metaphors which is the original one. It highlights the loss that is inevitable when translating these metaphors. In other words, this paper does not examine other translated metaphors such as dead metaphors, cliché metaphors, stock metaphors, adapted metaphors, or recent metaphors.

It also concentrates on translating original metaphors from Arabic into English from some poems and of some verses of the Holy Qur’an.

Nonetheless, I will mention some cliché metaphors and how successfully they were translated.

**Methodology**

In order to achieve my goal, I adopted one major method which is examining the original metaphors that were translated from Arabic into English and how these metaphors under discussion lost their rhetorical aspects such as the connotations or sound effects when they were subjected to translation. By examining them I mean that I will point at the strong effect of them on the reader which resulted from the rhetoric of them and how the chosen equivalent lost such an effect, and so they are not effective anymore in the source language.

Consequently, after examining such original metaphors which will be mentioned later, he researcher can conclude that the translated metaphors in the target language in most cases if not in all lose their values. To justify this loss, we have to admit that Arabic and English are two different languages and thus different cultures. In other words, what an Arab writer admires may not attract the English reader; the way the Arab creates his/her work loaded with metaphors may not be similar to the English writer.

At the end of my paper, I will recommend some strategies that could be of help when dealing with this type of metaphors. Some of them are transliteration to show the sound effect, explaining the metaphor by pointing at the rhetorical aspects that lead to the strong effect, and finally finding the “closest” equivalent. All of this makes me hope that my paper will be of value in the world of literary translation.

**Discussion**

**What is a metaphor?**

“Metaphor is the imaginative use of a word or a phrase to describe somebody or something as another object in order to show that they have some qualities and to make the description more forceful” *Oxford* *Dictionary*. To clarify the definition, here is an example. “The girl has a heart of a stone.” i.e. the heart of the girl is very hard and emotionless, and to make the message more forceful and influential, the speaker said that the heart of the girl is made of stone.

Each metaphor has three dimensions to look at: the object itself, the image, and the sense where the two meet. (See the following figure):

**object**

**image**

**sense**

**heart**

**stone**

**emotinless**

“The black area of the figure is where the object and the image meet, and it’s the sense which the two share.” [[1]](#footnote-1)

Newmark defines the metaphor as “the transferred sense of a physical word.” (Newmark, 1988: 104)

The definition and the example makes me choose a cliché metaphor which is mentioned in the Holy Qur’an and it was translated without the loss that I want to point at in a another place in the research.

The following verse is taken from Surat Al-Baqarah.

" ثم قست قلوبكم من بعد ذلك فهي كالحجارة أو أشد قسوة ...... " (2:74)

As this metaphor is a cliché one, and as it is almost the same in the two cultures under discussion, the translators: Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan and Dr. Taqi-ud Din Al-Hilali had no difficulty doing their job. The translation in *Interpretation of the Meanings of the Holy Qur’an in the English Language* was “The, after that, your hearts were hardened and become as stones or even worse in hardness…” (2:74)

**Why is a metaphor used?**

The metaphor is used to do two functions: cognitive and aesthetic. By cognitive I mean the necessity of clarifying the qualities of someone or something. When somebody or something is compared to another, the former, then, has some qualities to share with the latter, and so the description of the former becomes clearer. (see the examples above)

When examining metaphors, we should look at different aspects; they are the: the image, the sense, the metaphor itself, the metonym, and the symbol. Below is the description of everyone.

* The image: what we mean by the image is the picture which is drawn in the mind of the reader when they come across the metaphor. Images could be universal; by universal I mean that it can be used in the same sense to give the same connotation in different languages. For instance, when the speaker says to a woman: "أنت وردة" the translator can easily deal with it because such an image is universal and can be translated like “You are a rose”, and both: the Arabic and the English versions carry the same connotation which is showing the beauty of that woman under description. However, the image could by cultural. By cultural I mean that it is specific to one culture but not another; in such a case, the effect that may be created in the minds of the source text’s readers may not be similar to the effect, if there is an effect created, in the minds of the target text’s readers. For example, Al-Mutanabbi, a famous poet in the Abbasid era, says:

الليل و الخيل و البيداء تعرفني و السيف و الرمح و القرطاس و القلم

These things that the poet mentioned in the above line are well-known in the source text’s culture; and they are used to show the strength, brevity, creativity of the speaker. They are nights, horses, the desert, the sword, the spear, papers, and pens or pencils respectively. All know the speaker; this is a culture image that may please the reader and show how creative the poet is; however, it’s not necessarily that they please the target text’s reader.

* The object: By the object we mean what’s being described in the metaphor used.
* The sense: The sense is the resemblance. It’s where the object and the image meet. As when the speaker says “You are a rose”, the sense of the two parts: the addressee and the flower is beauty.
* The metaphor: It’s the figurative word which is used not in its usual situation. For instance, when a Palestinian speaker says: “عيون الأقصى تبكي” that is “The eyes of Al-Aqsa cry” the figurative word here is the word “eyes” as eyes are body organs of people or animals but not of mosques. Thus, this s the figurative use of the word to show how sad the object under discussion is.
* The metonym: It’s a one word image that may replace the object. It includes synecdoche either part of all, or all for part. This appears in the following examples:

Ash-Sharif Ar-Radi, a poet in the Abbasid era, says:

لعمرك ما أهويت كفي لريبة و لا حملتني نحو فاحشة رجلي

و لا قادني سمعي و لا بصري لها و لا دلني رأيي عليها و لا عقلي

He used some body organs like the hand, the leg, his hearing, seeing, hismind and reason. All of such show the part for all synecdoche.

An example of all for part synecdoche is when an Arab speaker says:"سرقوا بيتي" It’s well-known that the house itself is not stolen. In the target language (English) the word stolen is inappropriate; the most appropriate word to be used in translation could be “robbed”. Thus, the word "بيتي" is an all for part synecdoche as what’s meant by the speaker is what the house contains.

* The symbol: It’s a real object that represents a concept such as the “olive bush” which represents peace, and like the lamp which stands for sacrifice.

**Translating Original Metaphors:**

Some see that translating literary texts needs gifted, talented translators who have literary taste to this job; i.e. a poem needs a poet to translate. They must have literary sense and skills to deal with all aesthetic values of the source text, and this is what makes translating literary texts a hard job. On the other hand, others say that it’s not necessarily to have a poet to translate a poem as the poem could be translated by any translators. Comparing literary texts with scientific texts, there are some differences; for instance, the translator who deals with a literary text is very much concerned about the manner (form); on the other hand, the translator who translates a scientific text is concerned about the matter (subject). Moreover, translating a literary text needs the translator to have literary sense and taste; in contrast, translating a scientific text needs the translator to have good knowledge in the field s/he is translating. Finally, the translator of a literary can work hard to find a suitable substitute in the target language if they are to drop a part of the source text; to drop a metaphor that could be shocking in the target language for example; however, the translator of a scientific text must keep every single word as every word is of a great value.

To clarify my point, let’s look at this example taken from Shakespeare’s sonnet 18

Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?

Thou art more lovely and more temperate.

Fatina al-Na’ib, an Iraqi poet, translated the whole sonnet, and she was able to substitute the words “summer’s day” in her translation to make the metaphor acceptable in the target culture as summer is not very much lovely in the Arab World, for it’s too hot; spring or the last few days of summer are much welcomed. Thus, she says in her translation:

من ذا يقارن حسنك المغري بصيف قد تجلى

و فنون سحرك قد بدت في ناظري أسمى و أغلى

 So, the translator managed while translating the poem and was able to create a wonderful translated text. However, this is not allowed when translated the scientific text.

It’s also worth noting that Arabic has the flexibility to absorb the metaphor and the ability to create a translation with great aesthetic values. However, as we will see later, translating original Arabic metaphors is harder.

**How to recognize a metaphor?**

When the reader or the translator comes across a sentence or a phrase that seem to be illogical, they have to look at it from another corner, for it may have some metaphorical sense.

**Original metaphors**

Original metaphors are those that are created by the source text author whether they are universal, cultural, or subjective. The first example has a cultural metaphor. It’s said by Ali ibn al-Jahm

عيون المها بين الرصافة و الجسر جلبن الهوى من حيث أدري و لا أدري

This line has a cultural metaphor. The poet praises the woman’s eyes and resembles them as the being wide like the eyes of the wild deer. The wide eyes are considered to beautiful and attractive in the Arab culture. It should be translated like this:

The eyes of her which are like the eyes of the wild deer brought love from where I know and I don’t know. However, the problem that appears here is literal translation sacrifices naturalness.

In the following parts I will examine other original metaphors.

The first example is taken from Mahmoud Darwish’s A lover of Palestine. The line under discussion is "عيونك شوكة في القلب" which was translated like: “Your eyes are thorn in the breast” (Al-Messiri, 1970:4-5)

Since I am discussing the loss of meaning, the loss appears here when using the word “breast” in the t.t instead of the wotd “القلب” in the s.t. The word mentioned in the source text is used very appropriately as "القلب" is the place of all emotions. However, the word used in translation “breast” is not appropriate. First, the word “breast” is equivalent to the word “الصدر” in the Arabic. Second, the word “breast” is mostly used in medical context. It’s used to point at a body organ where some diseases are found. The word “breast can be better used in scientific or medical text. No connotations appear when using the word “breast” like those which appear when using the word “heart”. Thus, whenever the word “heart” is mentioned, it’s rings a bell of love and emotions. And since the word “heart” the equivalent of the word “القلب” is available in the target language, it should be used.

Another example is also taken from Mahmoud Darwish’s The Rose and the Dictionary. The line in Arabic is

"ينبت الورد على جرج مقاتل و على جبهة صخر"

This line was translated like “Roses grow only on the wounds of a fighter and on the face of the head.” (Al-Messiri, 1970: 22) Obviously, a big loss of meaning appears here. The word "جبهة" seems to be lost. It has an equivalent in the target language which is English here. It’s the word “forehead”. And also the word ""صخر" is lost. It has an English equivalent which is “rock”. This loss is clear and it can’t be justified. It can be easily translated like “on the forehead of the rock”. This aspect is used and known in English as personification.

Examining the original metaphors mentioned in the Holy Qur’an, here are some examples.

The first example is the following verse:

" مثل الذين كفروا بربهم أعمالهم **كرماد** اشتدت به الريح في يوم عاصف ...." سورة إبراهيم: 18

The translation is:

“The parable of those who disbelieved in their Lord is that their works are as **ashes**, …” Ibrahim: 18

The word under discussion is "رماد". It carries a specific connotation since its linguistic composition has an aim related to its meaning. It’s composed of cvcvvc. The distribution of vowels makes the word easily pronounced. It’s not heavily said as if to indicate that since word is light and it’s easily pronounced but not heavy and difficult to be pronounced, it’s equal to the deeds of unbelievers whose deeds weigh the weight nothing in the Dooms Day. This word could be appropriately translated in terms of finding the suitable equivalent which is “ashes”, but it doesn’t have the same linguistic aspect. the English equivalent has this structure ?vcvc. it is heavier than the Arabic word when pronunciation. The way it’s pronounced, the Arabic word in the source text, expresses its intended shadow.

The other original metaphor is in this verse.

"و الذين كفروا أعمالهم كسراب بقيعة يحسبه الظمآن ماء حتى اذا جاءه لم يجده شيئا و وجد الله عنده فوفاه حسابه و الله سريع الحساب\* أو **كظلمات** في بحر لجي يغشاه موج من فوقه موج من فوقه سحاب ظلمات بعضها فوق بعض إذا أخرج يده لم يكد يراها و من لم يجعل الله له نورا فما له من نور" النور: 40

The translation is:

“Or (the state of a disbeliever) is like the **darkness** in a vast deep sea, ….” An-Nur: 40

The example which is under examination is "ظلمات". This word has a very special connotation; it’s used in its appropriate place; the meaning behind this use in specific can’t be achieved through using any other word or even by using the same word but in singular form as "ظلمة".

This verse talks about the unbelievers’ deeds. They think that their deeds will be accepted. However, Allah says in a unique way that such deeds won’t be accepted.

The explanation gives a scientific connotation. The researches discover that in the vast deep sea البحر اللجي"” the spectrum is analyzed into seven colors: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and purple. So, after ten meters red will disappear; and it will be substituted by black. After 30 meters, a new stage of darkness will come; that is orange will disappear. After 50 meters, yellow will disappear. Thus, the deeper you go, colors of spectrum disappears and changed into black. That’s why the word in the original text "ظلمات" is appropriately used to indicate different layers of darkness.

The sense of this word is like is like as a layer of darkness leads to another, their bad deeds follow each other and lead to each other. The more deeds they do without the right guidance, the darker such deeds will be in the Dooms Day.

The miraculous aspect of such a word is not achieved through using the word “darkness” which used in the translated text in *The Interpretation of the Meanings of the Noble Qur’an*. The word “darkness” neither expresses nor does it carry the same connotation. The word "ظلمات" is not appropriately substituted by “darkness”.

Another example is the word "نسلخ" in the following verse:

" و آية لهم الليل **نسلخ** منه النهار فإذا هم مظلمون" يس 37

 The translation is:

 “ And a sign for them is the night. We **withdraw** therefrom the day,…” Ya-Sin: 37

The word "نسلخ" is intentionally used. In this verse, the daylight is compared with the skin of a goat. When the butcher strips the skin of a goat, for instance, he does that smoothly; as he does that, he pulls something, the kin, to let something else appear, the flesh. Thus, the specific use of the word "نسلخ" is to indicate that the daylight which is like the skin of a goat is smoothly and slowly removed to let darkness which is like the flesh appears gradually. It’s well-know that darkness doesn’t come suddenly, rather; it comes gradually as if the daylight is really stripped.

The word "نسلخ" is translated as “withdraw”; the word in the target text means in Arabic something completely different from "نسلخ"; it means "ينسحب" Thus, the word “withdraw” doesn’t carry all those rhetorical aspects nor does it have all those shadows of meanings.

One more example is the word "اشتعل" in the following verse:

"قال رب إني وهن العظم مني و **اشتعل** الرأس شيبا ...." مريم: 4

The translation is:

“…….., and grey hair has **spread** on my head, …”

First, we have to look at the Arabic linguistic composition of the word. These consonants which are separated by short vowels indicate the sound of fire /štæ3æl/. However, the word under discussion was translated as “spread”. Why doesn’t the translated word carry the same connotations or the same rhetorical aspects? It carries neither because of the following reasons: First, the word “spread” doesn’t have that effective sound effect as the original word. Second, the word in the source text indicates that white hair covers all the head as when fire starts it leaves nothing without being burnt. So, the hair of the speaker completely changed into white once part of it starts to change exactly like the fire. However, the word spread, doesn’t indicate that. As white hair spread according to the target text, it could cover all or part of the head. Third, fire is fast. Once it started, it burns everything in front of it quickly; in contrast, “spread” is not necessarily have the same speed. Fourth, the word "اشتعل" implies fire which shadows the word light. On the other hand, the word “spread” doesn’t imply light. As a result, the word used as a substitute for the original word doesn’t carry any of the rhetorical aspects implied in the source text.

An example is taken from *Surat Al-Baqarah*

"الذي جعل لكم الارض **فراشا**" البقرة: 22

The translation is:

“Who has made the earth a **resting place** for you, …” Al-Baqara: 22

The word "فراشا" was translated to be “a resting place for you”. However, the translation doesn’t give the shadows of the word "فراشا". The word in the Arabic text means something like soft but hard that you can use to sleep on. It’s neither very soft nor very hard. However, the words “resting place” do not give similar connotations. “Resting place” are too general and far from "فراشا".

The Arabic word "فراشا" indicates a different level from the ground. Thus, when the verse says "الارض فراشا", it indicates that land is higher than what surrounds it as seas and oceans. Can the translated words give these connotayions????

**Conclusion:**

Consequently, after examining some translated original metaphors, I can conclude that translating original metaphors will sacrifice the rhetorical aspects of them. In most cases, if not in all, the translated metaphors will not have the same aesthetic values available in the source text metaphor which are implied by using only one single word.

Finally, time has come to admit that the most difficult job is the job of translators who have to translate literary texts. Some conditions should be available; first, they have to be very fluent the two languages that they are dealing with, and they have to be ready to pay a tremendous effort searching for the most appropriate equivalent in the target text that could carry most of the aesthetic values carried in the source text metaphors.

"فحياة المصطلح الأدبي مرهونة برصيده الموجود في الحياة، و من هنا فإن الترجمة ترتبط بالبنية الثقافية بأكملها"[[2]](#footnote-2)

**Work Cited:**

The English References:

* + - Al-Messiri, Abdul Wahab. *A lover from Palestine and Other Poems*. Washington D.C: Kalorama Station, 1970
		- Newmark, Peter. *A Textbook of Translation*. U.K: Prentice Hall International, 1988
		- *Interpretation o the Meaning of the Noble Qur’an*. Ed. 17. Riyadh: Dar-us-Salam. 1997

The Arabic References:

* + - شاهين، محمد. *نظريات الترجمة و تطبيقاتها في تدريس الترجمة العربية إلى الإنجليزية و بالعكس*. عمان: مكتبة دار الثقافة للنشر و التوزيع، 1998
		- الحمداني، إياد عبد الودود عثمان. *التصوير المجازي - أنماطه و دلالاته- في مشاهد يوم القيامة في القرآن*. بغداد: دار الشؤون الثقافية العامة، 2004
1. A Textbook of Translation: 105 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. التصوير المجازي –أنماطه و دلالاته-في مشاهد القيامة في القرآن: 19 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)