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M.A. Thesis

**A Comparative Study of the Translation of Image Metaphors of Color
in the Shahnameh of Ferdowsi**

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To my loving family and husband

Abstract

Metaphors are taken to be the most fundamental form of figurative language, carrying the assumption that terms literally connected with one object can be transferred to another object. A writer/speaker uses metaphor more often than not with the intentions of introducing a new object/concept, offering a more precise meaning, or simply presenting a more poetic effect to his text/speech. The main focus of this study is image metaphors of color in the *Shahnameh* of Ferdowsi. The study set out to determine how this particular figure of speech is rendered by reviewing two English translations of the work. The framework of the study was Newmark's (1988a) seven suggested procedures for translating metaphors. In addition to determining which of these procedures have been applied in the two translations, the study also aimed at discovering whether any new procedures might have been applied. The study also attempted to find out whether any exclusive patterns were observed in each translator's rendering of the discussed items. The study concluded that out of the seven procedures proposed by Newmark for translating metaphors, Warner & Warner (1925) applied five procedures and Davis (2007) applied all seven of the procedures in the translation of image metaphors of color. No new procedure was observed in their translations. The translators' choices of procedures for translating these specific items showed that Warner & Warner had a tendency towards the first procedure which resulted in a literal translation of the particular metaphor, whereas Davis had a tendency towards the other six procedures which all led to explicitation, simplification and the production of a reader-oriented text.

Key terms: the *Shahnameh*, figurative language, metaphor, image metaphor of color, translation procedure

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List of Abbreviations

SL: source language

TL: target language

ST: source text

TT: target text

TT1: target text 1

TT2: target text 2

P1- P7: procedure 1 through procedure 7

WT: wrong translation

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1. Introduction

Translation, as Catford (1965) defines it, is "an act of transference, in which a text from the source language is replaced by its equivalent in the target language" (p.20). Newmark's (1988b, p.5) more modern version of the term is "often, though not by any means always, rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way that the author intended the text."

Even the mere thought of inferring from these two definitions that the task of a translator and the whole translation process is a simple one seems a naïveté on the part of the inexperienced. Any given source text intended for translation, regardless of its text-type, is required to undergo a close reading in order to understand what it is about, and then an analysis from the point of view of the translator. The analysis stage consists of determining the intention of the text - which, according to Newmark (1988a), represents the SL writer's attitude to the subject matter – and also

the style in which it is written. Being attentive to the selected lexicon, the syntax, figures of speech, neologisms, punctuations, names, and many more is a vital role the translator plays in the process of translation. In the case of poetry, apart from all the above features, there is a surplus of sound effects such as rhyme, meter, assonance, alliteration, stress, onomatopoeia. The most common goal among translators is, and always should be, to create the same effect on the target reader as the original writer had intended for his readers. In Nida's own words, "the relationship between receptor and message should be substantially the same as that which existed between the original receptors and the message" (Nida, 1964a, p.159).

Understanding and analyzing figurative language in a text, as mentioned above, is one of the difficult processes in translation. One of these figures of speech is metaphor which is considered by linguists as the most basic, where one object is used to describe another object, and while both objects are essentially disparate entities, but common in one or more attributes.

In the following sections of this chapter, first, the subject being studied will be briefly stated, commencing with a short description of 'metaphor' and its value in everyday language. Then it will be explained why the *Shahnameh* was chosen for studying image metaphors of color, and what obstacles a translator may confront in the process. Afterwards, the significance of the present study will be stated and how its results might be of future help to translators and students of translation. Then the objectives of the study will be briefly stated in order to give the reader an idea of what he may expect of the study and what it may present to him. This will be followed by a series of questions, which will be answered throughout the

study. And finally, several concepts which have been identified as the key terms in this study will be defined.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Metaphor, as first introduced by Aristotle in his *The Poetics*, "is a departure from the literal use of language which serves as a condensed or elliptical simile, in that it involves an implicit comparison between two disparate things" (as cited in Abrams and Harpham, 2005, p.163). The presence of metaphor in everyday speech is inevitable; how else would we be able to describe a new object or event which is not in the realm of our previous knowledge? Imagine traveling to an exotic place and seeing an unfamiliar fruit; the only way to describe this new entity is by resembling it to some object which has similar attributes. Lakoff (1977) believes that metaphor is a matter of thought, not language. In fact, Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p.3) indicate that our "ordinary conceptual system is fundamentally metaphorical in nature". In the realm of translation studies, metaphors are occupants of a vast space, thus many studies have been conducted on the topic of (un)translatability of metaphors and the degree to which they have the capacity to convey the same effect. Translation procedures in this regard have been introduced as to how metaphors can be translated in the most efficient way.

The *Shahnameh*, which is the basis of this study, enjoys many metaphorical expressions, but what is of significance here is only the image metaphor of color. Ferdowsi tends to use many color-denoting terms in his descriptions of scenes of triumph and defeat, birth and death, joy and grief, etc. Some of his applications of image metaphors of color may seem rather unfamiliar to the English reader, as they may be either objects normally not

available in the English language, or if available, not recognizable by every English reader. Keeping in mind that the typical translator is required to render the meaning of the ST into the TT in the way that the author intended the text, the translator of this work may confront some limitations, as he is translating poetry. He is expected to decide whether the expressive or the aesthetic function of language in the poem is of more significance.

1.3. Significance of the Study

The fact that Ferdowsi is one of the most eminent figures in the history of Persian literature is an undeniable matter known to all Persian speakers, as well as the bitter truth that although the *Shahnameh* is considered by literary critics as great a masterpiece as Homer's *Iliad* and Dante's *Divine Comedy*, but the 'less academic' class of people worldwide would not recognize this literary work. Ferdowsi's life-long endeavor and dedication to preserve the national identity, language and heritage of his homeland put him in great hardship during his lifetime, but won him fame and honor, as he himself had predicted when he wrote:

*I've reached the end of this great history
And all the land will fill with talk of me
I shall not die, these seeds I've sown will save
My name and reputation from the grave
And men of sense and wisdom will proclaim,
When I have gone, my praises and my fame.*

Davis (2007)

Therefore, it seems that this great work of art should be introduced to a wider international population, not solely for its aesthetics, but also for the

sake of its content on the Persian ancient civilization and culture. Numerous studies can be conducted on various aspects of the *Shahnameh*, including comparative studies on the translation of its many literary devices.

The main focus of this study is, of course, image metaphors of color and how they are translated into English with a minimum loss of the effect of the ST. Although much research has been performed on the matter of metaphors in linguistics, translation studies, and recently in cognitive sciences, but as far as the author has investigated, not much has been conducted on image metaphors, particularly those which represent a certain color. Innumerable studies have also been carried out on the *Shahnameh* by literary and translation scholars, including studies on the metaphors present in this masterpiece, but once again, no studies have been performed on image metaphors of color in this specific literary piece. Therefore, the present study will aim at addressing this matter, with the aim of determining how this issue is generally tackled in translation, and whether or not any new procedures are evident in the two selected English translations. The significance of the occurrence or non-occurrence of any pattern(s) exclusive to each translator will also be discussed.

1.4. Objectives

This study aims at discussing image metaphors of color in the *Shahnameh* and their corresponding expressions in two English translations produced by Warner & Warner (1925) and Davis (2007). The main focus is to determine which translation procedures have been applied by each translator, with Newmark's (1988a) seven translation procedures proposed on translating metaphors as the framework for this study. The results will

ultimately identify the translation procedures involved in translating image metaphors of color and also their frequency of occurrence in the case of each translator. Another goal of the present study is to discover whether any procedures, other than those introduced by Newmark, have been applied by the translators. If any new procedures are identified, they will be introduced. The study also aims at determining whether any specific patterns were observed in each translator's options.

1.5. Research Questions

1. Which of the translation procedures introduced by Newmark (1988a) for translating metaphors have been applied in the translation of image metaphors of color in the two English translations of the *Shahnameh* by Warner & Warner (1925) and Davis (2007)?
2. Are any new procedure(s), other than those of Newmark, applied by the two translators? What is the significance of the occurrence or non-occurrence of any new procedure(s)?
3. Do the procedures applied by each translator in rendering image metaphors of color show any specific pattern(s) which are exclusive to that particular translator? What is the significance of the occurrence or non-occurrence of specific pattern(s) in translating image metaphors of color in the *Shahnameh*?

1.6. Definition of Key Terms

1. **The *Shahnameh*:** a Persian epic in verse created by the renowned Iranian poet, Ferdowsi

2. Figurative language: a conspicuous departure from what competent users of a language apprehend as the standard meaning of words, or else the standard order of words, in order to achieve some special meaning or effect (Abrams and Harpham, 2005)

3. Metaphor: a figure of speech which describes an object/entity in terms of the attribute(s) of another object/entity

4. Image metaphor of color: image metaphor is a term introduced by Lakoff (1977) as a type of metaphor which maps one conventional mental image onto another; hence, in an image metaphor of color, it is the representative color of the image which is being mapped.

5. Translation procedures: procedures (also known as strategies or techniques) used for translating sentences and the smaller units of language

Chapter Two Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

In the broadest sense, figures of speech are devices used in both spoken and written language so as to achieve a special effect or a meaning diverged from its standard or literal usage. They are combinations of words whose meaning cannot be determined by examination of the meanings of the words that make it up. Also defined by the Merriam-Webster online dictionary, a figure of speech is "a form of expression used to convey meaning or heighten effect often by comparing or identifying one thing with another that has a meaning or connotation familiar to the reader or listener."

Figures of speech have been categorized by different sources, each presenting a unique division. For instance, scholars of classical Western rhetoric have divided figures of speech in two main categories, i.e.

schemes and tropes, where each is again subdivided. Not all these figures are used so frequently in spoken and written language; 'metaphor', however, is one of the most fundamental figures of speech. As Hawkes (1972, p.2) points out, "the other figures tend to be versions of metaphor's prototype", particularly the following three main traditional categories:

1. *Simile*, which in general, because of the presence of 'like' or 'as' in its structure, involves a more visually inclined relationship between its elements than metaphor. In fact, "it is sometimes assumed that simile is metaphor's poor relation, offering only the 'bare bones' of the transferring process" (ibid, p.3). The following is an example by T.E. Hulme (as cited in Hawkes, 1972, p.3):

*I walked abroad
And saw the ruddy moon lean over a hedge
Like a red-faced farmer.*

2. *Synecdoche*, which is etymologically from Greek *synekdechesthai*, meaning 'to receive jointly'. Here, a part of something is carried over to stand in place of the whole thing, or vice versa, as in 'twenty summers' for twenty years, or 'ten hands' for ten men (ibid, p.4).

3. *Metonymy*, from the Greek word *metonymia* (meta meaning 'change' and onoma meaning 'name'), is the transference of the name of a thing to take the place of something else with which it is associated, for example 'The White House' for the President of the United States (ibid).

Metaphor, which is the general focus of this study, will be defined more elaborately in the next section of this chapter, followed by its different types as classified by different linguists, and the most common theories which have been developed on this subject. Metaphors of color,

which are the specific focus of the study, will be defined and exemplified through both English and Persian examples. The third section of the present chapter is allocated to the translation of metaphors based on the framework provided by Newmark (1988a). The last section discusses the significance of the *Shahnameh* in the world of literature and its various English translations.

2.2. Metaphor

Metaphor, as stated in the Merriam Webster online dictionary, is etymologically from Greek, from *metapherein*, meaning 'to transfer' and from *meta-* + *pherein*, meaning 'to bear'. It is defined by the same source as "a figure of speech, in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them." One of Shakespeare's most famous and oft-quoted lines, '*All the world's a stage*', is an example of a metaphor, where he indicates that 'the world' and 'stage' are analogous.

According to Richards (1936), a metaphor consists of two parts, *tenor* and *vehicle*, also introduced as *object* and *image* by Newmark (1988a), respectively. The tenor is the term to which attributes are ascribed and the vehicle is the term from which attributes are borrowed. The properties of the vehicle which apply to the tenor in a given metaphor are named *grounds* of a metaphor, also known as the *sense* of a metaphor. Therefore, in the example given above, 'the world' is the tenor or object, and 'stage' is the vehicle or image. The ground of this metaphor is more apparent when the next two lines are added:

All the world's a stage

And all the men and women are merely players,