

*In the Name of God*

*The Compassionate*

*The Merciful*



**University of Isfahan  
Faculty of Foreign Language  
Department of English**

**MA Thesis**

**A Relevance Theory Approach to the Persian Translation of  
Metaphoric Expressions in Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet**

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نتایج مطالعات، ابتکارات و  
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With Lots of Respect Dedicated to

My Father and My Mother

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## **Abstract**

Although there are many controversial issues in translation, this research focuses on the translation of metaphorical statements. It intends to examine the applicability of the principles of relevance to the Newmark's translation strategies for translating metaphors and determine efficiency of each strategy; then, decide whether there is a significant relationship between them. Also, it is investigated if there were cases of translating a metaphor by a metonymy.

In order to identify the translation strategies of metaphors, the researcher has used seven strategies proposed by Newmark (1988a), for translating metaphorical statements; then, relevance theory and Gutt's theory of translation were applied to Pazargadi's Persian translation of metaphorical statements found in *Romeo and Juliet* by Shakespeare. The total number of 136 cases were detected and results showed that reproducing the same image is the most frequently used and translating by simile plus sense and using the same metaphor plus sense both are the least frequently used strategies in translating metaphors into Persian and relevance theory is capable of explaining these results. It is also showed a significant relationship between the frequency of the applied translation strategy, its efficiency, and compliance with the principles of relevance, regarding the most and the least frequently used strategies. All the translations using Newmark's proposed strategies for translating metaphors interpretively resemble the original. Finally there were cases of translation of metaphors by converting them to related metonymies. This was a proof for Jakobson's notion that metaphors and metonymies are both figures of equivalence and they are not separated but connected literary figures.

**Keywords:** Relevance Theory, Gutt's theory of translation, Translation of Metaphor in Drama, Metonymy, Interpretive resemblance.

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# **Chapter One**

## **Introduction**

### **1.1. Introduction**

Today, in the era of science and communication, translation is a worldwide issue that opens a broad window through which one can be familiar with other nations' concepts, cultures and literature. Each translation has its own purposes: it could be used for educational system as an aid in learning foreign languages; it could be used as a means for transmitting our culture to another nation, and in short it is a means for communication. Among various definitions of the term is Catford's (1965:20) who believed in translation as "a replacement of textual material in one language by their equivalence in another language." Newmark also in a similar notion defined translation as "a craft consisting in the attempt to replace a written message and/or statement in one language by the same message and/or statement in another language" (Newmark, 1988b: 7). The more recent notion shifted from the code analysis model of translation to

cognitive-linguistic analysis of translation process which puts more emphasis on "dynamic inferential process" of translation (Lui, 2006). Practically, adherence to the more recent model of translation as regard figurative language, which is the language of literary texts, is not an easy task. As the definition emphasizes, figurative language is "a language which doesn't mean what it says" (Hawkes 1986: 1). Thus, departure from literal meaning and inferring the writer's intended meaning is an obstacle in the way of translation. This point is important in the translation of drama, just like other genres, because it has its application of extensive figures of speech and it is prepared for performance so the role of audience becomes very crucial in the success of a dramatic work and accordingly its translation. Thus in translations of drama a translator should consider both the text and the response of the target audience.

Although more than two hundred and fifty different figures of speech are proposed by linguists and literary scholars, some classify all figurative language into two broad groups; metaphor and metonymy. Roman Jakobson has greatly contributed to this classification. He suggests that metaphor and metonymy are modes of "binary opposed polarities" (Hawkes, 1997: 78) and every act of speech behavior, including writing and speaking, is a continuum which leans toward metaphoric or metonymic end (Selden & Widdowson, 1997: 79). According to him, "metaphor is based on a proposed similarity or analogy between literal subject and its metaphorical substitutive", whereas "metonymy is based on a proposed contiguous association between literal subject and its adjacent replacement" (Hawkes, 1997: 77). He found out that both of these are operative in normal speech behavior but under the influence of culture, style or personality, one dominates the other (Adams, 1971: 1113). Jakobson argues that this distinction is applicable not only "at the level of individual

expression in language but also at the level of larger patterns of discourse as well" (Scholes, 1977: 20). Therefore, metaphor and metonymy are two ways in which all discourses may take place; it includes both literary text and its translation. Traditionally, metaphor which is the focus of this research is seen as a type of figurative language. Hawkes (1986) defines metaphor as a term which "refers to a particular set of linguistic processes whereby aspect of one object are 'carried over' or transferred to another object, so that the second object is spoken as if it were the first" (Hawkes, 1986: 1). Since cognition made its way through linguistics, recent definitions of metaphor become more complicated. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) claim that metaphors are ubiquitous in everyday use of language and that "metaphor in language is based on conventional mappings between conceptual domains in thought, which can account for numerous conventionally metaphorical linguistic expressions" (Steen, 2008: 215).

One way to approach metaphor is through cognitive dimension, which is developed by Sperber and Wilson (1995) and is called Relevance Theory. It has shifted the attention from the text to mental process involved in interpretation of communication. Relevance theory is a theory of communication and argues that "human information processing automatically aims at maximal relevance or the greatest contextual effect for the smallest processing effort" (Leezenberg, 2001:111). It is applied to translation by Gutt (1991) who views translation as an act of communication in "cause and effect" terms and gives the process of inference a central position. A successful translation, then, must "guide the target reader towards making appropriate inferences" (Hatim & Munday, 2004: 57-58), which entails a process of decision-making in translation.

In the next chapter of this study, we first introduce metaphor and its different definitions. Then comes a short history of translation and we

explain the relevance theory in detail. Finally, Gutt's theory of translation, which is the focus of our study, is presented. The metaphorical expressions used in this study are collected from *Romeo and Juliet* by Shakespeare with Pazargadi's translation of these expressions. Due to Pazargadi's familiarity with translation strategies as well as works of Shakespeare such as *Romeo and Juliet*, his translation is preferred to be used for the purpose of this study.

## **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

As time goes on, translation procedure becomes a more complicated activity than Aristotle's time and the translation problems become more complicated too. First of all, in understanding the source text, a translator should explore the related context, along with the linguistic signs (Doherty, 2002: 2). There are times when we are suspect whether a "translation really says the same as the original." This occurs when dictionary meaning of a word differs from the writer's intended meaning or the word refers to a wide range of meaning for which there is no correspondence in other languages (Doherty, 2002: 5). It must be recognized that "the same sentence may be true for one speaker at one place and false at another time, or for another speaker or at different place" (Kittay, 1987: 98).

To handle these kinds of problems, each translation theorist formulates her/his own principles of translation; however, there is no universally accepted principle that is applicable to all types of text or different genres. Savory (1957: 49) lists a series of contradictory principles such as follows: A translation must give the words or ideas of the original. A translation should read like an original work or like a translation. A translation should reflect the style of the original or that of the translator. A translation should read as a contemporary of the original or of the



translator. A translation may add to or omit from the original or never do that. A translation of verse should be in prose or in verse (cited in Gutt 1991: 127). It is hoped that these paradoxes are resolved when translators apply the principle of relevance theory to their process of translation.

Among all translation problems, the translation of metaphorical statements is a real challenge. Because of the indeterminacy in the nature of metaphorical statements, even the same metaphors may have different or conflicting readings and interpretations. Sometimes the image used in the metaphor is not known in the target language, or the point of similarity is hard to find or the point of similarity is understood differently in the target language. Even if the same image is used in both languages, there could be difference in the frequency of their use (Larson, 1984: 251). As metaphor is the most significant problem in translation, as mentioned by Newmark (1988a: 9), and its important role in literature it is under our focus in this study.

The importance of metaphor is in its usage. We need metaphors to go from the known to the new things. As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) pointed out people often use metaphors to talk about abstract things by use of more concrete things. With metaphors, we can convey much more ideas through implication and connotation, than through literal language (Knowles & Moon, 2006: 11). In the case of literary use an unexpected metaphoric comparison can "surprise the reader" and provide the reader with "pleasure and insight at the same time" (Steen, 1994: 27). The crucial points that are mentioned above about metaphorical use and its wide usage in both everyday language and literature make us give a special attention to the way it is processed and interpreted and also to the way it is translated into other languages. Due to the contradictory principles in translation and variety of procedures in translating metaphors, this paper hopes to propose

a unified account on translation and justifies the translator's decision making.

### **1.3. Significance of the study**

An important aspect in translation studies seems to be exploring the process through which the translators render their versions. One of the most challenging areas in translating task seems to be identifying the most effective translation strategies, especially, in translating figures such as metaphor. Innumerable studies have been carried out related to the translation of metaphors, but it is still one of the most problematic issues in the area of translation studies. Since metaphor occupies a wide part of every language with various versions, it is open to debate and as far as the author has investigated, no general and world-accepted procedure for translating metaphorical statements has been suggested yet. Whereas the crucial role of decisions made by the translators are known to everyone, there is a need to explore this process and see if there is a way to study these decisions other than the subjective perspectives.

Relevance Theory seems to serve this purpose efficiently. Although many scholars criticize Gutt's notion of relevance in translation theory for its subjective nature and inadequacy of presenting the translator with various guidelines (Smith, 2002), this study is hoped to apply his notion effectively. The significance of this study lies also in suggesting criteria for judgments about the most effective translation strategies, by highlighting the role of the principles of relevance. It can also be useful for the translators in making decisions about their choice of translation strategy with regard to translating metaphors.

## **1.4. Objectives**

The relevance theory approach to translation is a general framework which helps translators to make right decisions in order to render translation as effectively as possible. This is more evident in controversial literary fields such as metaphoric terms which, purposefully, have implicatures and concepts behind the surface meaning, and cause extensive debates on choosing the best translation. One way to handle problems of metaphorical translation is to identify translation strategies which are optimally effective. To this end, the present thesis is going to apply relevance theory's principles to the Persian translation of metaphoric expressions of *Romeo and Juliet* by Shakespeare and attempts to explain efficiencies or deficiencies of strategies which Pazargadi has applied in translating them based on seven procedures proposed by Newmark (1988a) for translating metaphorical statements. It also intends to provide an explanatory framework for translators to make the most effective decisions about their choice of translation strategies in translating metaphors. In addition, it seeks to figure out the possibility of translating metaphors of the source text into metonymies in target text, based on what Jakobson (1971) argued about the interrelationship of metaphors and metonymies. Finally it tries to explore whether any specific pattern is observed between strategies with high frequency of use and preserving the principles of relevance theory in the process of translation.

## **1.5. Research Questions**

1- Can relevance theory be applicable practically to the translation of metaphoric terms and justify the efficient or deficient strategies applied by

the translators in translating metaphoric expression in the Persian translation of *Romeo and Juliet* by Shakespeare?

2- Can relevance theory provide additional strategies in translating metaphors other than those applied by the translators? If yes, can the newly found translation strategy be substituting metonymy for metaphor?

3- Is there any relationship between high frequency of applied translation strategies and adherence to the principle of relevance theory?

### **1.6. Definition of key terms**

1. Translation: "Translation is a craft consisting in the attempt to replace a written message and/or statement in one language by the same message and/or statement in another language" (Newmark, 1988: 7).

2. Relevance theory: it is a theory of communication which argues that "human information processing automatically aims at maximal relevance or the greatest cognitive effect for the smallest processing effort" (Leezenberg, 2001: 111).

3. Drama: It is a "form of composition designed for performance in the theater, in which actors take the role of the characters, perform the indicated action, and utter the written dialogue" (Abrams, 1999: 69).

4. Interpretive use: "In interpretive use the thought belongs originally to someone other than the speaker and the speaker intends his/her utterance to accurately represent the original thought" (Smith, 2002: 108).

5. Metaphor: "refers to a particular set of linguistic processes whereby aspect of one object are 'carried over' or transferred to another object, so that the second object is spoken as if it were the first" ( Hawkes, 1986: 1).

6. Metonymy: "It is a figure of speech which involves the replacement of one word with another with which it is associated" (Al-Sharafi, 2004: 36).