

Text-Type Based Assessment of Poetry Translation: A Study of Adequacy in the English Renderings of Häfiz Sonnets

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ABSTRACT

Adequacy of translation, especially in literary genre, has always been the point of concern for translation scholars. This study aimed at investigating the adequacy of translation in one of Häfiz (The greatest mystic poet of Persian literature) sonnets rendered into English by two translators at different points in time. Based on the assessment model proposed by Reiss and in accordance with the text typology she has proposed, this study compared and contrasted each of the translated texts with the source text as well as with the other translated text in a verse-by-verse manner, taking into consideration different extra- and intra-linguistic criteria. The study, after a thorough analysis of different aspects of the translations, highlighted some of the important factors that translators need to utilize in poetry translation in order to produce adequate renderings of an original text. Furthermore, the findings of the study once more verified that a later version of a literary translation, i.e. a retranslation, is closer to the form and meaning of the original text, resulting consequently in a more adequate translation.

Keywords: Literary translation, Adequate translation, Poetic language, Translation assessment, Text typology

1. INTRODUCTION

The question of quality has always been one of the top priorities in discussions about translations (as products) and translation (as an activity). Schäffner believes that the aim of each translation activity is to produce a good translation as a product, i.e. a good target text (TT), and seeks to investigate the criteria based on which one can decide that a target text is a 'good' translation, compared to another, 'bad' or 'poor' translation^[1].

The criteria will be different, depending on the purpose of the assessment and on the theoretical framework which the people, who assess translation quality, choose to apply. House believes that assessing the quality of a translation presumes a translation theory. In other words, different views about translation result in various concepts of translation quality and consequently different ways of assessing such quality^[2].

There have been different approaches toward the quality assessment of translations as products. As for linguistic approaches, the assumption is that translators should follow syntactic structures and semantic-lexical features as closely as possible, making it so important to learn about the exceptional cases where this is impossible. Nevertheless, most recent contrastive studies have perfectly identified the difficulties encountered in such an approach and by avoiding rules and exceptions which bring about problems have embedded functionalist principles in contrastive approaches.

In the first stages of translation studies in Germany, contrastive linguistics played a major role. Translation Studies was normally considered to be belonging to the field of linguistics until Wilss in 1977 published his programmatic book *Übersetzungswissenschaft. Probleme und Methoden* which later was published in English entitled *The Science of Translation. Problems and Methods*.

Katharina Reiss's work in the 1970s is based on the concept of equivalence, but considers the text, rather than the word or sentence, as the level at which communication is achieved and at which equivalence must be sought^[3]. Reiss's functional approach aims primarily to systematize translation evaluation.

Munday reports that Reiss works on Bühler's three-way categorization of the functions of language; namely, *informative/representational* (representing objects and facts), *expressive* (expressing sender's attitude), and *appellative* (making an appeal to text receiver). Reiss links these functions to their

corresponding language 'dimensions' and to the text types or communicative situations where they are used known as *informative*, *expressive* and *operative* and her own proposed forth type named *audio medial* ^[4].

The informative text type attempts to communicate facts such as information, knowledge, opinions, etc. through a logical or referential dimension of language and mainly concentrates on the content or topic in its communication.

The expressive text type, however, seeks 'creative composition' via an aesthetic dimension of language and mostly focuses on the form of the message rather than its content.

The operative text type makes an attempt to make an appeal or request to or make the reader or 'receiver' of the message act in some certain way via the dialogic dimension of language and seeks a way to be more appellative in the process of communication. This type of texts also includes the so-called 'behavioral responses'. Categorizing the texts into these different types must not, of course, make one think that every text falls into just one of these categories. In fact, some texts have more than one function making a hybrid text type.

Reiss believes (as cited in Munday) that "the transmission of the predominant function of the ST is the determining factor by which the TT is judged." ^[3,4]. Reiss, as Munday points out, proposes "specific translation methods according to text type" ^[4,5].

- 1) The TT of an informative text should transmit the full referential or conceptual content of the ST. The translation should be in 'plain prose', without redundancy and with the use of explication when required.
- 2) The TT of an expressive text should transmit the aesthetic and artistic form of the ST. The translation should use the 'identifying' method, with the translator adopting the standpoint of the ST author.
- 3) The TT of an operative text should produce the desired response in the TT receiver. The translation should employ the 'adaptive' method, creating an equivalent effect among TT readers.
- 4) Audio-medial texts require the 'supplementary' method, supplementing written words with visual images and music."

As Munday maintains, Reiss presents a series of intralinguistic and extralinguistic factors by which the 'adequacy' of a translation can be evaluated:

- "1) *Intralinguistic criteria*: semantic, lexical, grammatical and stylistic features
- 2) *Extralinguistic criteria*: situation, subject field, time, place, receiver, sender and 'affective implications' (humour, irony, emotion, etc.)" ^[4,6]

2. Research Question

Based on what was stated above, this study aims at addressing the following question:
To what extent do translators observe 'adequacy' in the translation of poetry from Persian into English?

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Material

As for the material of this study, a sonnet called '*Sad Soul*' (/Xatere Hazin/) by Hafiz as well as its two English translations by Clarke ^[7] and Vahid Dastjerdi ^[8] were selected. To ensure the semantically correct choice of words in translations at lexical level, monolingual dictionaries such as American Heritage Dictionary ^[9], Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary ^[10], Oxford Advanced Learner's dictionary 7th edition ^[11] as well as Dehkhoda Persian dictionary ^[12] and Moin Persian dictionary ^[13] were used.

3.2. Procedure

The translation assessment was based on intralinguistic and extralinguistic criteria of translation proposed by Reiss ^[6], propounding the categorization of text types and the link between these varieties and translation methods. This study was firstly done through the scrutiny of the meaning of the original poem and secondly through a thorough comparison of each of the translations with the source text as well as the other translation. The assessment of the ST and TTs was conducted verse by verse.

4. Data analysis and results

In this section, the two English versions of the Hafez's sonnet were examined in terms of extra- and intra-linguistic criteria proposed by Reiss and each of them was first compared with the original text and

then with the other translation. As far as the scrutiny under intra-linguistic criteria is concerned, the analysis was performed verse by verse, whereas the in extra-linguistic scrutiny the two translations were compared at a global level.

4.1. Extra-linguistic analysis

As far as the subject field of the translation is concerned, the above-mentioned translators have gone through literary translation since the original text is a poem and then, the target texts have both been presented in the form of poetry as well.

There are two translators who were involved in this literary work. The first one, chronologically speaking, is Clarke ^[7] whose mother tongue is English and has translated the poem to be received and read by English speakers. The second translator is Vahid Dastjerdi ^[8] whose mother tongue is Farsi but is a professor of English language and literature and has translated the poem for English speakers as well as Iranians who have an academic background in English language and literature including both professors and students of English.

In terms of the time of translating, the English translation by Clarke ^[7] and that by Vahid Dastjerdi ^[8] have been done in two different centuries with a time interval of 118 years, which suggests the different usages of language by the translators.

As for the place of the translation work, the version proposed by Vahid Dastjerdi, has been done in Iran, the poet and the translator's home country but the version by Clarke has been done in India.

The sender of the text is Hafiz, the well-known mystic Iranian poet of the 14th century. Needless to say that the poet's mother tongue was Farsi, that is the language of the poem.

As for the affective implications of the poem, the poem and consequently its translations try to encourage readers to move towards happiness and leave sorrow to oblivion. The readers are also encouraged to come to an understanding that the saddening problems in the world are part of people's destiny and there is always 'the Good' besides 'the Evil' in each person's life.

4.2. Intra-linguistic analysis

The intra-linguistic analysis of the translations is conducted here verse by verse through which each verse of each translation will, firstly, be compared with the corresponding verse of the original Farsi poem and secondly with that in the other English translation in terms of semantic, lexical, grammatical and stylistic features. In the case of each verse, first the source text (ST) will be presented and the according to the chronological order, the translation by Clarke ^[7] and Vahid Dastjerdi ^[8] will be presented as TT1 and TT2 respectively.

Verse 1

كي شعر تر انگيزد خاطر كه حزين باشد يك نکته از اين معني گفتيم و همين باشد
/kei ʃe're tær ængizæd xəter ke hæzin bälæd?/
/yek nōkte æz in mæ'ni gōftimō hæmin bälæd/

TT1:

How a verse exciteth afresh the heart that is sorrowful!

A subtlety out of this book, we uttered; and is this very subtlety.

TT2:

How can a sad soul fascinating sonnets sing?

Myriad points lie in the very mystery me bring!

- Analysis:

Both TTs have rendered the first line of this verse perfectly since this line includes a rhetorical question, one which does not need any answer. TT2 has, however, considered it as a question using the correct punctuation mark which is still used in rhetorical questions.

The ST, though having been written in the 14th century, does not read like an old-fashioned verse. In fact, not only does it not read like an old-fashioned text, but also it uses a kind of dynamic language, something which can be used today. This contrasts with TT1 in which a word like 'exciteth', definitely not used in modern English, has been used. This is no point, however, for which to blame the translator since he could not have lived ahead of his own era. The style in TT2, unlike TT1, does not sound old-fashioned for the present period of time.

Also the repetition of /s/ has produced alliteration which is a strong point in poetry. There is another case of alliteration of /m/ in TT2 provided with the words ‘Myriad’, ‘mystery’, and ‘me’. This feature is lacking in TT1 but a case of alliteration of /k/ exists in ST which suggests the similarity of ST and TT2 in this literary feature although the alliterative letters are different in ST and TT2.

The word ‘myriad’ in the second line of TT2 means ‘an extremely large number of something’ which is used in literary contexts. Also, the word ‘subtlety’ means ‘the small but important details or aspects of something’, which is more in line with the meaning of /nokteh/ in Farsi. However the second line of TT1 seems to have focused more on the form of the poem in terms of the word order while that in TT2 is mostly meaning-oriented. In this respect, TT1 seems to have observed the adequacy of the translation more than TT2 since the focus in the translation of the expressive texts, poems to be one of them, is primarily on the ST form.

Another point is about the word /mæ’ni/ in ST which is an indicator of a difficult-to-understand concept in Persian culture and it seems that TT2 has a better choice of word in this regard by translating it into ‘mystery’, which means something that is difficult to understand, rather than ‘book’ in TT1.

Verse 2

صد ملك سليمانم در زیر نگین باشد از لعل تو گر یابم انگشتری زنهار
/æz læ’le tō gær yäbæm ængōʃtæriye zinhär/
/sæd mōlke sōleymänæm dær zire negin bāʃæd /

TT1:

O beloved! If, from thy ruby I gain a ring of protection,
Beneath the order of my seal-ring, will be a hundred countries of Sulaiman.

TT2:

Higher than Solomon sphere shall I come to hold,
With the beggars true, should I find the magic Ring.

- *Analysis:*

The phrase ‘O beloved!’ at the beginning of the first line of this verse in TT1 is a case of addition, which suggests a negativity in translation since such a form does not exist in the ST. Also, the word /zinhär/ in the first line of the ST does not have anything to do with the concept of *protection*; it sounds like the translator of TT1 has assumed it to be an indicator of warning for the sake of protection. In the second line of this verse, the word /sæd/ which means ‘a hundred’ is not a real number for the sake of quantification. This word is just a symbol of a great number/amount, which implies that the translator has gone through a word-for-word translation. The translator of TT2, however, has used *Higher than Solomon sphere*, which does not show any process of quantification. In addition, he has used the phrase ‘magic Ring’ with a capital R, avoiding the use of the word ‘protection’ and implying that this ring is of a special kind. No doubt can be cast on the superiority of the word ‘sphere’ in TT1 over ‘countries’ in TT2 since in Hafiz’s era the Farsi equivalent of the word ‘sphere’ or *territory* was more frequent than that of ‘country’.

There is also a case of alliteration of /s/ in the second line of ST created by the words /sæd/ and /Soleymänæm/ as well as its equivalent in the first line of TT2 in words ‘Solomon’ and ‘sphere’.

Verse 3

شاید که چو وایبني خیر تو در این باشد غمناک نباید بود از طعن حسود اي دل
/ghæmnäk næbäyæd bu:d æz tæ’ne hæsu:d ey del/
/ʃäyæd ke tʃō väbini xeire tō dær in bāʃæd /

TT1:

O heart! On account of the calumny of the envious, it is not proper to be sorrowful:
When thou lookest well it is possible that, in this, is thy good.

TT2:

The rival’s spear ignore, and hurt not thy heart;
In ways apart, may it rest a rewarding thing.

- Analysis:

The first line of this verse in TT1 has a direct addressee just like the ST, i.e. form has been taken into account, whereas this address has been made implicitly in the first line of TT2. The important point in the same line is that in Hafiz's poem, /hæsud/ does not mean 'a person who simply envies another' but rather 'a person who is a rival for another in absorbing the love, to be more precise, the divine love. So, considering this idea, it should be admitted that TT2 has a much better choice of word.

A problem with TT1 in this case and in some other cases as it is evident from the form of translation is that some lines are too wordy and lengthy while we can easily perceive that TT2 has kept a constant length of lines just like the ST, i.e. a problem of formal style.

Likewise, in TT1 we can see the usage of some words such as 'thou' and 'lookest' which do not read naturally in today's English even for native speakers. However, as it was mentioned previously, the poem must have read fluently in the 19th century. But this justification may provide TT2 with a shortcoming because of using 'thy' in the present era.

There is also a case of alliteration of /h/ in the first line of TT2 created by words 'hurt' and 'heart'.

Another point about ST is that there is a point of possibility expressed by /ǣyæd/. TT1 has used the phrase 'it is possible' to convey this meaning whereas TT2 has used 'may' for the same purpose which is a more concise equivalent.

Furthermore, the translator of TT2 has applied subject-verb inversion in the second line of this verse which is more compatible with poetic style.

Verse 4

هرکو نکند فهمي زين کلک خیال انگيز نقشش بحرام ار خود صورتگر چین باشد
/hær ku nækōnæd fæhmi zin kelke xiäləngiz/
/næghʃæɪ bə hæräm ær xōd surætgære tʃin bəshæd/

TT1:

Who understandeth not this reed, image raising
Let his form, move not, if he himself be the painter of Chin.

TT2:

This fancy Pen one who falls short to figure out,
Fake be his works, though a Chinese painter being.

- Analysis:

The word /kelk/ in Farsi means 'a tall plant like grass with a hollow stem that grows in or near water' as well as 'an instrument like a pen for calligraphy or painting delicate images which is made from that plant', which has been meant by the ST. This has been rendered in an absolutely wrong way by the translator of TT1 as he has considered it to be the kind of plant mentioned above. But the translator of TT2 has recognized the right sense of this word and translated it correctly by rendering the word as a *capitalized Pen*.

No doubt can be cast over the wrong usage of the word *Chin* in TT1 as compared with *Chinese* in TT2.

The word /ær/ used in the ST can be interpreted in two ways in Persian: It can be the contracted form of /ægær/ which is the equivalent of 'if' in English when it is used to set a condition. It can also be used as the contraction of /ægærtʃe/ which is a discourse marker of contrast. Taking into account the meaning of the second line of this verse, a reader of the poem who has a good command of both Persian and English, as it is true about both translators of this sonnet, can (and should be able to) identify the fact that /ær/ in this verse marks a contrast rather than set a condition. This is a semantic issue which the translator of TT1 has failed to notice since he has used 'if', a condition marker, but the translator of TT2 has recognized it perfectly well by using a contrast marker, i.e. 'though'.

Verse 5

جام مي و خون دل هر يك به کسی دادند در دایره قسمت اوضاع چنین باشد
/jæme mei ō xu:ne del hær yek bə kæsi dādænd/
/dær dəyereye ghesmæt ōzä' tʃōnin bəʃæd /

TT1:

The cup of wine and the blood of the heart each, they gave to each one:

In the action of destiny's circle, thus it is.

TT2:

Ruby wine and ruined heart ain't on one man bestowed,
In the cycle of Lot, will it reveal real meaning.

- *Analysis:*

The first line of this verse has gone through a word-for-word translation, which indicates that the writer has stuck to the form of the poem. However, such observation of the form has completely ruined the meaning the original text has been meaning to transfer. In fact, /jäme mey/ has a positive connotation while /xune del/ has a negative connotation representing trouble and sadness. In other words, a word like /xun/, meaning blood in English, is not the same as the red liquid in the vessels of body but rather the problems and sadness experienced by the Man, and this is something that TT2 represents very well using *ruined heart*. The same problem lies in the translation of /jäme mey/ which is the symbol of happiness and refers to the wine itself rather than the cup containing the wine. In this respect TT1 has the same problem beginning the line with *the cup of wine*, where *cup* is emphasized, while in TT2 *wine* carries the main focus. There is, however, an ambiguous point in the translation of the second line in TT2 where *Lot* has been capitalized since one of the meanings of *lot* is 'destiny' and there is no point in attracting attention to this word by capitalizing it.

As far as the second line of the verse is concerned, both translators seem to have rendered the meaning perfectly well. In both cases 'it' refers to the whole meaning of the first line. However, TT2 has a better poetic style since it has gone through subject-verb inversion.

Verse 6

کاین شاهد بازاری وان پرده نشین باشد در کار گلاب و گل حکم ازلی این بود
/dær käre gōlābō gōl hōkme æzæli in bud/
/kin jāhede bāzāri vān pærdeneʃin bājæd /

TT1:

In the matter of rose-water and of the rose, the decree of eternity without beginning was this:
"That that should be the lovely one of the bazar; and that this should be the sitter behind the veil."

TT2:

Veiled are buds, but roses within people's sight;
That is Providence, to which everything must cling.

- *Analysis:*

The translator of TT2 has translated the lines conversely translating the second line before the first line. If we consider the word /jāhed/ in the second line of the ST, according to monolingual Persian dictionaries, it has several meanings including 'a person who sees others and confirms something' as well as 'an attractive and good-looking person'. This word is in accompany with another word /pardehneʃin/ which means '(a person who is) hidden'. Without any doubt, these two words are the opposite of each other, that is to say /jāhed/ in this context means 'a person who sees others and confirms something'. This meaning has been well rendered in TT2. On the contrary, the translator of TT1 has gone through a word-for-word translation keeping the translated text away from what the poet has meant. Furthermore, the first translation is too wordy and lengthy compared with the ST and TT2, a stylistic problem in this translated version. One example can illustrate these points. For example, /hokme æzæli/ in Persian has been translated word-for-word and in a lengthy manner in TT1, while TT2 has used *Providence*, capitalized in order to attract the reader's attention, which is shorter and more precise than its parallel phrase in TT1.

Another problem with regard to the translation of the second line of this verse is that the poet has used the conjunction /va/ to link two opposite items in the same line. The word /va/ in Farsi normally means 'and' but in literary texts and old texts, poets and writers sometimes used to use it when they meant 'but'. Since this conjunction links two opposite cases, it definitely means 'but', suggesting that the translator of TT1 has been absolutely mistaken translating it as 'and'. On the contrary, the translator of TT2 has transferred this opposition perfectly well by translating /va/ to 'but'.

Verse 7

آن نیست که حافظ را رندی بشد از خاطر
کاین سابقه پیشین تا روز پسین باشد
/än nist ke Häfez rä rendi bešōd æz xäter/
/kin säbegheye pišin tä ruze päsin bälæd /

TT1:

It is not that from Hafiz's heart profligacy should depart:
For, till the last of time will be that custom of first of time.

TT2:

Desiring truth, 'tis why Hafiz never deserts:
Primordial grace on him will last to Reckoning!

- *Analysis:*

The word /rendi/ in Farsi is nowadays used in relation with money affairs and materialism and has a negative connotation, but in Hafiz's era the word used to have a positive connotation meaning 'cleverness' as well as 'seeking the truth of affairs, e.g. true love which Hafiz believed to be people's love towards God. Therefore, not only is the translation of the first line of this verse in TT1 not adequate, but also it is wrong in the sense that the usage of the word 'profligacy', which means 'the state of being wasteful in using money, time, materials, etc.', has ruined the sense meant by Hafiz; needless to say that the translator of TT2 has well translated this line using 'desiring truth' as an equivalent for the aforementioned word.

The usage of 'the last of time' and 'first of time' in TT1 in comparison with, respectively, capitalized 'Reckoning' and 'Primordial' in TT2 is just too wordy considering the fact that the words used in TT2 do exist in English. What is more, the capitalized 'Reckoning' leads English readers to noticing that there is something special in the sense of this word, i.e. it refers to a specific day, the Day of Judgment.

Finally, it is crucial to mention a point which is related to the whole process of assessment. As far as the rhyme of the poem is concerned, the rhyme of sonnets in Persian (ST) is established at the end of the first line of the first verse and all the second verses of the sonnet. Since 'adequacy' deals with the orientation of TT with the norms of the source language, it is evidently observable that only TT2 has the same rhyme pattern as the ST.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

The purpose of this study, as mentioned previously, was to determine the extent of 'adequacy' in the translation of poetry from Persian into English. The word 'adequacy' is a reminiscent of the notion Toury has introduced. Toury introduces the concept of norms in translation and defines them as "the translation of general values or ideas shared by a community - as to what is right or wrong, adequate or inadequate – into performance instructions appropriate for and applicable to particular situations" ^[14]. He (as cited in Munday) maintains that there are different kinds of norms at different stages of the translation process, and argues that it is possible for the translators to be affected by the source language norms or those of the target language or culture. If the translation process, he believes, moves towards the source text, the translation product will be adequate. On the other hand, if the translation process moves towards the norms in the target language, the result will be an acceptable TT. It should be borne in mind, however, that adequacy, and even acceptability of translations are not absolute concepts; rather, they lie on a continuum ^[14,4].

The model of assessment applied in this study was that of Reiss which makes a comparison between an ST and its relevant TT(s) based on a series of extra- and intra-linguistic criteria. Considering this model and the notion of norms introduced in translation studies by Toury, it is evident that Clarke's translation mostly sticks to the form of the original poem while Vahid's translation, besides observing the form, tries to convey the meaning of the original text so that the poem will be understandable to English speakers. One of the features that shows Vahid's translation has also taken the form into account, not just the meaning, is the rhyme he has produced in his translation at the end of the first line of the first verse and all the second lines of other verses, something that cannot be observed in Clarke's version. In other words, Vahid has tried to conserve both form and meaning through the correct application of word choice as well as the internal and end rhymes of the poem whereas, in some verses, Clarke has observed the form at the expense of the meaning. Based on the above discussion, it can be claimed that Vahid's translation is more 'adequate' than Clarke's.

It can be concluded that there are some factors, as they were found in TT2, which help translators observe 'adequacy' in the translation of poems:

First of all, in order for a translation of a poem to be 'adequate', translators must pay attention to both the form and the meaning of the translation product and must not sacrifice one of these aspects at the expense of the other. One thing they should bear in mind, however, is that they should express the meaning in a way that is understandable for target readers.

Secondly, if translators want to produce 'adequate' TTs, they should not produce wordy texts. In fact, translations need to be close to STs in terms of the number of words.

Another factor is that translators must disambiguate the correct sense of words in a specific context in order to avoid using the wrong equivalent.

Also, arriving at a clear understanding of the discourse relationships among the components of the ST, e.g. contrast, is necessary for translators to select the correct discourse marker and not to ruin the intended meaning of the ST producer.

These factors have undoubtedly been followed by the second translator, Vahid Dastjerdi, in 2009 after a time interval of 118 years from the first version done by Clarke, leading to the fact that the second translation has preserved both the form and the meaning of the source text better than the first one. This is in line with what has been referred to as 'Retranslation Hypothesis', a notion proposed by the French translation scholar, Antoine Berman about literary translation. As it has been cited in Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies, edited by Baker and Saldanha, Berman believes that translation is an 'incomplete' act which seeks completion by the means of retranslations. According to Baker and Saldanha, Berman's completion means "the success of translation in getting closer to the source text and in representing the encounter between the translator and the language of the original."^[15]

The aforementioned issues indicate that Vahid's translation^[8], a version which has been done after Clarke's translation^[7], can be considered as a retranslation of the same source text that has resulted in a target text closer to the original text by Häfiz. In other words, Vahid's translation is more adequate.

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