

Translatability of Pun Words in Hafiz's Poetry

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Abstract: *Authentic literary language is distinguished mainly by its rich use of literary devices. Literary devices as integral parts of literary language not only convey meaning but also function as aesthetic elements. Translatability of literary devices is an issue of contention. Addressing the problem of translatability of pun words as a major literary device, the writer investigates the translatability of Hafiz's puns in the two well-known translations of Hafiz's poems by Wilberforce Clarke (1891) and Bicknell (1875). As far as translations of Hafiz's poems are concerned, they are not as eloquent as they should be. Avery and Heath-Stubbs (1952) maintain that the form of Hafiz's poems and the subtleties that they enjoy in Persian have changed a lot in the translated version, to the effect that translated poems "don't make Hafiz his own poet". In this study, the strategies the two translators have used in translating Hafiz's pun words into English are analyzed. Based on the findings of the study, the writer suggests the best strategy for translating pun words. The results demonstrate that to translate denotative as well as connotative meaning can serve the intended author's meaning and this is best done through translating poetry in to prose.*

Key words: *Pun; Pun and translation; poem; Hafiz; translation strategies*

1. Introduction

This article intends to identify the most accurate translations of the pun words and multiplicity of meanings in Hafiz's poems and to determine the successful translators to render the puns he employed. Hafiz became famous in the west through the translations of his poems, so it is important to consider the subtle aesthetic features which are closely tied to the meaning in his poems. Here we choose two well-known translations of Hafiz, the first one is by Wilberforce Clark (1891) and the other is by Bicknell (1875). The interpretations and meaning of couplets and words based on which we assess pun translations are derived from the book "Interpretation of One Hundred Ghazals of Hafiz" by Mohammadali Zibae (1988).

1.1 Statement of the problem

English readers became familiar to Hafiz poems a little late, since the first translations of Hafiz into English were published in eighteenth century. Two centuries later, translators like William Jones, Ghon Nutt, Herman Bicknell, Wilberforce Clarke, Gertrude Lowthian Bell, Walter Leaf, and Arthur J. Arberry, translated Hafiz's poems into English. Herawi (1997) believes that although lots of interpretations of Hafiz is presented, his poems are full of mystery. He uses lots of literary devices such as: simile, metaphor, apostrophe and pun which make his poems somehow untranslatable. For translator there are some problems facing these devices: the first problem is how to understand and interpret his mystical poems with divine message and extralinguistic elements, for example whether the love motif he applies is of earthly love or divine love or both, this is a matter of interpretation. The second problem is how to translate wordplays, that is to say, words with multiple meanings. G signifies gloss translation. For example:

ببوی نافه ای کاخر صبا زان طره بگشاید ز تاب جعد مشکینش چه خون افتاد در دلها

In the above couplet, "جعد" or "tress" means curly hair and can take three different meanings: First one, its denotative meaning, is the perfumed curly hair of the beloved; the second, denotative, meaning is dark curly hair of the beloved and the third, connotative, meaning is the twisted and difficult path of reaching divine beloved or God.

So, the ambiguities and multiple layers of meaning make the understanding of puns difficult. The translator should have a complete mastery over these devices and be an expert in the target and source language to transfer them accurately.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Hafiz and pun translation

Persian poetry cultivation began in the late eighteenth century in England (Yohannan, 1977). Everyone agrees on Hafiz to be the greatest poet of all times. "Of the poetical production of Persian literature, none have a wider circulation or greater celebrity than the lyrical poems of Hafiz. His popularity is spread far beyond the bounds of his own country" (Robinson, 1976, p. 385). Despite Hafiz's fame, his translated poems are not as qualified as they should be. Avery and Heath-Stubbs (1952, p. 15) believe that the form of Hafiz's poem and its subtleties has changed a lot in the translated version and that translated poems that "don't make Hafiz his own poet". Wilberforce Clarke (1891), one of the greatest translators of Hafiz who for the first time translated Hafiz into English prose, claims about Hafiz style:

The style is effulgent, dazzling, finished, concise; the loss of a word is the loss of beauty. It is clear, unaffected, harmonious, displaying great learning, matured knowledge, an intimate acquaintance with the nature (outward and inward) of things, and a certain fascination of expression unequalled by any....In music and eloquence, the strains of Hafiz are without equal in Persian literature (p. xxv).

So, this eloquent style, as stated by Wilberforce Clarke, should be part of his translated poems, which is a rather impossible task for the translator. It is not possible to reproduce the effects of Persian meters (Avery & Heath-Stubbs, 1952). Therefore, keeping meter and rhyme, style and structure and meaning and semantic features all together is very difficult.

In addition to these problems, As Alaiee (1973) mentions Hafiz's poems are very difficult to understand even for Persian speaking people. His mystical poems are all full of imagery, allusion, alliteration, pun and other literary devices. Rendering all of its divine themes and mysticism and its poetic subtleties which are partly culture-bound or related to his religion, Islam, or transferring the complex concept of Sufism in another language is a painstaking process. Translators have tried hard to somehow compensate for such an enormous cultural and religious gap in different ways; but none of them were completely successful. Jones (2000,2002) lists some problems for poetry translation which include transferring form, communicating a text which target readers may not be familiar with, finding publishers and so on.

There have been plenty of his poems especially his ghazels, a short lyrical poem, into other languages in prose or verse and literary or free forms. Wilberforce Clarke, whose translations of Hafiz are in prose, declares that: "To render Hafiz in verse, one should be a poet at least equal in power to the author. Even then it would be well nigh impossible to clothe Persian verse with such an English dress as would truly convey its beauties" (1983, p. viii); however, he adds that giving a perfect literal translation of Hafiz is not possible too. This literalness is achieved by not explicating meaning for the reader. As Boase-Beier (2006) states poetry should allow inferences for the reader.

To motivate reader's inferences a poet should use some devices. One of the frequently used devices by poets in this respect is pun. Pun is intentionally using a word with more than one meaning, all of which are applicable or inferred from that specific context. Hafiz, as a great poet uses this device too. The crucial issue for the translators here is how to convey these multi-layered words in another language without spoiling its beauty by explicating. For instance according to Zanganeh, as he stated in the foreword of Poems of Hafiz (Ordoubadian, 2006) the repeated and central theme of love through Hafiz's Divan has two layers of meaning: one is divine and spiritual love and the other is worldly and mundane love. So, the reader of the poem

interprets the poem according to his own knowledge and infers one or both meanings. Every translator transfers these pun words in his own way; this is also true about Hafiz's translations. This deliberate ambiguity should be preserved in translation if it's contextually motivated and it's practical through the use of formal equivalence (Hatim & Munday, 2004).

3. Poetry translation especially Hafiz translation

There has been a bulk of study on the issue of poetry translation and specifically translation of Hafiz's mystical poems and rendering its different literary poetic devices in another language; yet the pun translation in Hafiz poems is almost an intact area for research and few investigations has been done in this topic.

According to Ghaderi (2003) some experts like Jakobson believe that poetry is untranslatable; yet others like I.A.Richards or Ogden reject this idea. He adds that the latter group claim that it is the nonlinguistic and content of the poem which is transferred in poetry translation not the form, so translating poem is possible. Poetry is the most vulnerable type in literary translation(Dad, 1973, p. 31). Dad asserts that the spirit and color of the poem disappears if we render the virtual and non-linguistic language of the poem to a simple one and explicate it, and uses the analogy of a solved riddle for an explicated poem.

Jafari Parsa(1973) believes that it's impossible to translate a poem with all of its crucial and interlinked elements which include: rhythm and rhyme, imagery, the poet's cognition, poetry's area and other elements like social environment, historical era and local dialect of the poem. He adds that a literary translator should be very creative. Creativity in poetry and literary translation has always been emphasized by many experts.

For Newmark (2004) translation of poetry is " creation of a new independent poem" and he believes there are many divergences in a good poetry translation. He then suggests literal translation as a possible solution. If the translator isn't creative in using language, the poetic effect, especially the form, is lost and the intended reader can't enjoy the aesthetic elements embedded in the source text. This creativity, depending on the target text reader or the source text purpose or translator's preferences, involves applying some shifts or changes or even maintaining the source text form.

Jafari Parsa (1973) suggest four essential elements of poetry proposed by I.A.Richards should be transferred in translation which include:1)sense 2) feeling 3) tone 4) Intention. He describes Ezra Pound's approach to poetry translation as being adaptation. So, the translator should feel free to apply any changes for desired effect.

In this respect, in poetry translation, scholars have used different stand points in the cline between literal and free translation. This decision making, to make your way clear, is part of translator's profession. Ghaderi (2003) states that some translators use compensation technique especially in dealing with words with multiple layers of meaning. This characteristic of a word which has more than one meaning other than its literal meaning is called "pun" in literature and is very challenging for translators mostly because it's specific to each language.

These double-meaning words exist in all languages and have been tackled in varying ways by different translators in the course of history. Some only transfer the semantic meaning of the word; while others consider all its possible contextual meanings. In poetry there are more limitations for the translator such as form, rhyme and sense together with the lack of enough space which oblige them to use some techniques such as footnotes for mentioning other layers of meaning of a word. This technique has been used by some translators; while in recent years they've tried not to use footnotes as far as possible.

As Ekhtiar claims, "semantics is the major problem in applying a scientific method to literature" (1971, p. 3). He then adds that the relation between lexicology and semantics is a branch of poetics and that a word can have one meaning or different words can have the same meaning. These layers of meanings exist in all languages. For example the pronoun "she" in English has at least 2 levels of meanings: the first is third person singular and the second is its gender which is female. The Farsi equivalent pronoun for both "she" and "he" is "oo" which is not gender-specific. This poses some problems for the translator especially in translation from Farsi to English. In these cases Yohannan (1977) proposes to rely on "external evidence" for identifying gender and he brings the example of "Shiraz's Turk", a character, in Hafiz Divan whose gender is not justified for feminine but some translations used "she" for this character. Some other languages are also gender-specific such as French, in which most of the words are attributed a gender.

Meaning and form are interlinked in poetry. One should consider both to grasp the actual meaning of a poem. In this respect Nida (1964) in his *Towards a Science of Translating* emphasizes the form and content relation in poetry:

In Poetry there is obviously a greater focus of attention upon formal elements than one normally finds in prose. Not that content is necessarily sacrificed in the translation of a poem, but the content is necessarily constricted into certain formal moulds. Only rarely can one reproduce both content and form in a translation, and hence in general the form is usually sacrificed for the sake of the content. On the other hand, a lyric poem translated as prose is not an adequate equivalent of the original. Though it may reproduce the conceptual content, it falls far short of reproducing the emotional intensity

and flavor. However, the translating of some types of poetry by prose may be dictated by important cultural considerations (Cited in Hatim & Munday, 2004, p. 165).

This form versus content debate especially in poetry translation has a long history. Newmark asserts that in poetry two major points should be taken into consideration: the first one is that in poetry form and content contribute to each other and the second point is that the cultural gap between Source language and target language readers should be accounted (2004). He adds that: "The translator has to decide whether the expressive or the aesthetic function of language in a poem or in one place in a poem is more important" (Newmark, 2004, p. 166). This is part of translator's decision making process.

Pun bears two meanings, a closed meaning and a far-fetched one and most often, if not always, the author intends to communicate the second meaning. The translator should be aware of all layers of meaning for example in the following line from Hafiz:

دور دار از خاک و خون دامن چو بر ما بگذری کاندَرین رَه کشته بسیارند قربان شما

"Rah" "رَه" literally means "Path" but connotatively means "the path of love" or "the path which the beloved passes from".

So the translator should have a complete mastery over both languages specially the subtleties of meaning in Persian poetry and he himself should be a poet to perceive aesthetic and conceptual meanings and then transfer it in the most appropriate way.

This can be done by clarifying the meaning of these words.

3. Case studies:

For the purpose of eliciting strategies of the two mentioned translators concerning pun words, first I investigated all possible pun words in Hafiz ghazals and then I compared the translations in terms of denotative and connotative meanings conveyed. In this part, I examine 4 selected couplets of Hafiz ghazals in which there are examples of pun words and the translations of these words is considered carefully in order to find out the successful employed strategies. Wilberforce Clark's translation is literal and prose-like but Bicknell translation is rather free and it is in the form of poetry.

Therefore, first I mention a couplet and its denotative and connotative meanings in that specific couplet, and then I mention both translations with the emphasis on translation of pun words, which we compare to see which one is more successful in the sense that it can convey all its meanings.

First case:

به پوی نَافه ای کاخر صبا زان طَرّه بگشاید ز تاب جعد مشکینش چه خون افتاد در دلها

That, despite this shattered state, is worth many an unshattered (heart)"(1983)

Bicknell's translation:

"Come, deal with me, and strike thy bargain: I have a broken heart to sell,

Which in its ailing state outvalues a hundred thousand which are well"(1965)

In both of these translations just the connotative meaning is transferred. However, explicates the state of being Unshattered to heart but in the second translation it does not. So, here, we can't exactly say which one is more successful, because both of them have some flaws.

Third case:

شکر فروش که عمرش دراز باد چرا تفقدی نکند طوطی شکرخارا

Şkar foroş "شکر فروش" or sugar seller, is a pun word and has got following meanings:

- a) A person who sells sugar (denotative meaning)
- b) The beloved (for the sake of sweet kiss) (connotative meaning)
- c) Divine knowledge

Wilberforce Clark translation:

"The sugar-seller (the murshid , seller of the sugar of divine knowledge)-whose life be long!- why

Maketh he no inquiry of the welfare of the parrot (Hafiz, the disciple) sugar of divine knowledge devouring?"(1983)

Bicknell's translation:

"That sugar-vender (yet, I pray, to live in joy for many a day)

Should ask- what cause prevents?-How speed this parrot who on sugar feeds?"(1965)

As we see Wilberforce Clark could precisely convey almost all layers of meaning, but Bicknell just got the denotative meaning which is less important, so again

Wilberforce Clark's translation is more successful considering pun translations.

Fourth case:

کس به دور نرگست طرفی نیست از عافیت به که نفروشد مستوری به مستان شما

"Mastan" مستان has got three layers of meaning:

- a) Lovers of God (connotative meaning)
- b) Eyes of beloved (connotative meaning)
- c) Drunken with wine (denotative meaning)

First we examine Wilberforce Clark's translation:

"By the revolution of Thy eye, - none obtained a portion of enjoyment:

Best, that they sell the veil of chastity to the intoxicated ones of_Thine."(1983)

Then Bicknell's translation:

"Aught of good accrues to no one witched by thy narcissus eye:

Ne'er let braggarts vaunt their virtue; if thy drunken orbs are nigh."(1965)

Wilberforce Clark uses the "intoxicated eyes" which is the divine meaning and Bicknell uses "drunken orbs" which is literal meaning. Although both translations fail to convey all meanings, Wilberforce Clark was more successful in transferring the more important connotative meaning.

5. Conclusion

The aesthetic use of wordplays and pun words in poetry especially Hafiz poems is functionally motivated. There is something more beyond the denotative meaning of some words; a mystical, divine meaning which is derived from the wordplays. Translator must have the ability to overcome two important problems which are: understanding the interpretation of these words in the first place and then transferring all these layers of meaning to the target language appropriately. This article investigated how this difficult task can be done successfully and for this purpose I examined two translations of Hafiz ghazals: Wilberforce Clark (1891) and Bicknell (1875) in order to come up with a successful strategy in translating pun words. Wilberforce Clark almost could transfer both the denotative and connotative meanings, by connotative meaning in Hafiz poem; I mean the mystical and divine meaning that is expressed in the form of earthly love. On the other hand, Bicknell's translation almost transferred the denotative meaning and just in some cases the connotative and mystical meaning; the reason inferred by researcher is that he translated in poetic form and he tried to keep the rhythm but he lost the meaning which is important as well.

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A pun is a play on words in which a humorous effect is produced by using a word that suggests two or more meanings or involving words with similar sounds. Here are some examples of puns that may be found in everyday expression: Denial is a river in Egypt. The cyclist was too tired to win the race. Take my wife, please. Her cat is near the computer to keep an eye on the mouse. When my algebra teacher retired, he wasn't ready for the aftermath. Some bunny loves you. Key words: Pun; Pun and translation; poem; Hafiz; translation strategies.

1. Introduction. This article intends to identify the most accurate translations of the pun words and multiplicity of meanings in Hafiz's poems and to determine the successful translators to render the puns he employed. Hafiz became famous in the west through the translations of his poems, so it is important to consider the subtle aesthetic features which are closely tied to the meaning in his poems. Here we choose two well-known translations of Hafiz, the first one is by Wilberforce Clark (1891) and the other is by Bick Those three words that Hafiz exemplifies, that came to me in studying the lives and works of those greats I just mentioned are an important definition and goal of art, and a standard I hold myself to: engage and give. An illustration from a 19th-Century collection of Hafiz's poems shows the poet offering his work to a patron (Credit: Wikipedia). Daniel Ladinsky is a poet and interpreter of mystical poetry who has written several books about Hafiz. His latest book *Darling I Love You: Poems from the Hearts of Our Glorious Mutts and All Our Animal Friends* is published by Penguin. If you would like to comment on this story or anything else you have seen on BBC Culture, head over to our Facebook page or message us on Twitter.

The Poetry of Hafiz of Shiraz. Hafiz in Persian. Over the centuries there have been many attempts to translate the subtleties of Hafiz's Persian verse into English. By all accounts even the best translations have been only partially successful. For those who have the ability to read Persian or modern Farsi, a partial collection of Hafiz, in the original Persian, is available online in PDF file format. [click here to download your copy of this free collection.](#) Comparing Translations. To get an idea of how different translators may emphasize very different aspects of a particular ghazal, [click here](#).

6. Translatability is a relative notion and has to do with the extent to which, despite obvious differences in linguistic structure (grammar, vocabulary, etc.), meaning can still be adequately expressed across languages. Translatability/comprehensibility. 7. Translatability/untranslatability provides an opportunity for translation scholars to express their views on the relationship between language and reality. In most cases that people use words which express the relations between the speaker and the listener according to their respective role. For a mother to say her child 'I'll tell you a story' she would say 'mother will tell child a story'.

23. Grammar The English verb to be has no direct equivalent in Chinese. In an English sentence where to be leads to an adjective 'it is blue'.