

Application of Larson's Method in English Translations of *The Bustan of Sa'di*

Salar Manafi Anari

Professor, Allameh Tabataba'i University
salarmanafianari@gmail.com

Negar Rezaee Yekta

M.A, Islamic Azad University, South Tehran Branch
negar.yekta55@yahoo.com

Abstract

In this research, different English translations of Sa'di's *Bustan* were studied. An anecdote was selected randomly with its three English translations to identify whether or not the translators have managed to convey the messages of the original poem. The three selected translations were examined according to two of the criteria that Larson (1984) has proposed (accuracy and naturalness) for testing a translation. By accuracy, the researcher intended to see whether, the translators have been successful in rendering the SL text accurately and precisely without radical changes, omission and addition; and by naturalness, it was meant whether the translations sound natural or they contain strange and foreign words. The results of the study show that Edwards has been successful in understanding the main idea of the original poem and conveying it into prose. Clarke's translation is word-for-word and being literal, the natural criterion has been breached in some instances. Wickens's has attempted to transfer the exact meaning of the original to the target text. Among the three translations studied, that of Wickens is considered to be the most accurate one.

Keywords: Poetry, Methods of Translation, Literary Translation, Accuracy, Naturalness

Received: January 2012; Accepted: December 2012

1. Introduction

The word “translation” refers to a wide notion. It includes subcategories such as literary translation, machine translation, interpreting, technical translation, and subtitling.

According to Hermans (2007, p. 77), the standard view is that literary translation is considered a distinctive kind of translation, because it deals with a distinctive kind of text. The theory of text types which classifies texts according to their functions and features, places literary texts in their own class. Text typologies do not agree on what distinguishes literary texts from technical, pragmatic, and ordinary ones. Therefore, this idea strikes the mind that what makes literary texts different from others is not clear.

Schulte (2010, p. 4) states that “literary translation bridges the delicate emotional connections between cultures and languages and furthers the understanding of human beings across national borders. In the act of literary translation, the soul of another culture becomes transparent, and the translation recreates the refined sensibilities of foreign countries and their people through the linguistic, musical, rhythmic, and visual possibilities of the new language.”

Jackson (2003, p. 4) believes that “literary translation differs in many important respects from the kind of translation that is usual in a language class”. He emphasizes the importance of creativity and similarity (but not sameness) in translation of poetry.

According to Bush (in Baker 2001, p. 127), literary translation is “an original subjective activity at the center of a complex network of social and cultural practices”. He states that the imaginative, intellectual writing of the translator must not be lost in translation. Literary translators have to deal with the hierarchies in the definitions of poetry, drama, and prose which constitute

Application of Larson's Method in English...

literature. They are in the order of high culture as opposed to lower types such as scientific fiction and children's fiction. These hierarchies are reflected in both the worth and difficulty of translating literary works.

Bush (in Baker, 2001, p. 127) further maintains that a literary translator is bilingual and bicultural. "Thus, inhabits a landscape which is not mapped by conventional geographies; s/he is at home in the flux that is the reality of contemporary culture, where migration is constant across artificial political boundaries".

Landers (2001, p. 9) asserts that "literary translation entails an unending skein of choices". In other words, the literary translator has to choose among the different words, and these choices make the translation. In his opinion, literary translation is a goal-oriented activity to meet a need in the target literary culture.

2. Translation of Poetry

"Poetry is the most literary of all branches of literature; the most literary because it makes the greatest use of the raw material of literature, which are words" (Deedari & Mansuri, 2006, p. 9).

According to Newmark (1988, p. 164), "poetry presents the thing in order to convey the feeling, in particular, and however concrete the language, each represents something else— a feeling, a behaviour, a view of life as well as itself".

He thinks that all images have universal, cultural, and personal sources so that the translator of poetry cannot transfer the foreign culture to a native equivalent, to help the reader.

Jacobson (in Venuty 2000, p. 118) claims that only poetry is untranslatable. He gives the reason that in translating a text, the meaning is kept and the form

is changed into the target language; but in poetry the structure or form contributes to the construction of the meaning, so it cannot be translated.

Newmark's opinion (1988, p. 165) about translation of poetry is that "a successfully translated poem is always another poem."

According to Savory (1968, p.75), many of the experts agree on impossibility of the "adequate translation of a poem". He believes that characteristics which distinguish poetry from prose are not translatable. For example poets pay attention to sounds as well as words in writing poetry, but sounds are often changed in translation. Additionally, translators cannot produce the same aural effect in different languages (p. 78).

Many scholars have tried to define the difficulties of translating poetry. Shelley (cited in Bassnett, 1998, p. 58) posits that:

It were as wise to cast a violet into a crucible that you might discover the formal principle of its colour and odour, as to seek to transfuse from one language into another the creations of a poet. The plant must spring again from its seed, or it will bear no flower and this is the burthen of the Babel. (Shelley, 1820)

Bassnett (1998) points out that Shelley's remark is sometimes taken as an example of impossibility of translation. She believes that subjecting a flower to scientific analysis to determine the basis of its scent and colour is as absurd as trying and rendering a poem written in one language into another. But Shelley's description of the difficulties of the translation process can be read from another point of view. Shelley refers to change and new growth. There is no loss and decay in this simile.

Augusto de Campos (cited in Bassnett, 1998, pp. 58-59), the Brazilian poet and translator thinks that poetry does not belong to a particular language or culture: "Poetry by definition does not have a homeland; or rather it has a

Application of Larson's Method in English...

greater homeland". Bassnett (ibid.) believes that if a text does not belong to a culture, "then the translator has right to help in its transfer across linguistic frontiers".

In translating poetry, Newmark (1988) believes that at first the translator chooses a TL poetic form (ballad, blank verse, quatrain, etc) close to that of the source language. The rhyming scheme may be dropped despite its importance as a part of form. Then he reproduces the figurative meaning. At last, the translator works on the setting, using different methods of sound-effect to transfer the same impact. "Emotionally, different sounds create different meanings based on the common sounds of the human throat" (p.165).

According to Newmark (1988), giving priority to content or manner depends not only on the values of the specific poem, but also on the theory of poetry which the translator considers. So, a general theory of poetic translation is not possible. "Deliberately, or intuitively, 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". (pp 165-66)

Lefevere (cited in Bassnett, 2002) describes seven different strategies for translating poetry:

- (1) Phonemic translation: In this method, the SL sound is reproduced in the TL as well as producing an appropriate paraphrase of the sense. Lefevere discusses that although this method works well in the translation of onomatopoeia, the result is clumsy and lacks sense.
- (2) Literal translation: Emphasis on word-for-word translation causes distortion of the sense and syntax of the original.
- (3) Metrical translation: The reproduction of the SL metere is the main criterion. Lefevere (cited in Bassnett, 2002) maintains that in this method, the focus is on one aspect of the SL text.

- (4) Poetry into prose: Lefevere declares that this method makes distortion of the sense, communicative value and syntax of the SL text, but not as much as literal or metrical types of translation.
- (5) Rhymed translation: Meter and rhyme are reproduced in this strategy; Lefevere believes that the product is a 'caricature' of Catullus.
- (6) Blank verse translation: By choosing the structure, some restrictions are imposed on the translator. But the result involves the greater accuracy and a higher degree of literalness.
- (7) Interpretation: Lefevere explains versions where the form is changed, but the substance of the SL text is kept; he further writes about imitations where the translator produces his own poem and retains 'only title and point of departure' of the source text. (p. 84)

3. Research Question

1. Which one of the English translations of the *Bustan* is the most, and which one is the least, accurate and natural according to Larson's model?

4. Methodology

4.1. Materials

One anecdote of the *Bustan*, the masterpiece of Sa'di, has been selected randomly. Three different English translations of the *Bustan* carried out by Wickens (1974), Edwards (1911), and Clarke (1985) were analyzed and examined to evaluate the quality of translations. The dates within the parentheses indicate the year when the translations were published.

4.2. Procedure

At first, the researcher read the original poetry. After comprehending the meaning, the three selected English translations were read completely for several times. Then, different translations were juxtaposed with the Persian text, hemistich by hemistich. Then, the translations were evaluated based on the criteria proposed by Larson (1984). Larson gives three criteria for testing a translation. "The translator wants to be sure his translation is accurate, clear, and natural." (p. 485). Accuracy means lack of addition, and omission in translation. Or sometimes translators make mistakes and the meaning is changed. So a careful check for accuracy proved necessary. Being sure of the naturalness of translation was another reason for examination. The translator needs to check if the natural idiomatic forms of the target language have been used or not. Are the grammatical forms used in translation the ones which are used normally? Does the translation seem natural to the speakers of the language or does it seem foreign? Does it sound a translation or an original? It needs to be noticed that this study has been limited to evaluating accuracy and naturalness. The clarity of the translation has not been discussed by the researcher. Therefore, it is one of the delimitations of this study.

5. Findings (Analysis and Evaluation)

In this section different translations of the following anecdote are contrasted, and every translation is described with respect to accuracy and naturalness according to Larson (1984). Thus, three randomly selected translations are analyzed to weigh up their weak and strong points.

5.1. Chapter one of the *Bustan*: On justice, management and good judgment.

yeki az buzurgān-e ahl-e tamiz
hekāyat kunad zibn-e Abdul Aziz
ke boudash negini dar angushtari
forou māndeh dar qimatash mushtari
be shab gufti az jerm giti forouz
dori boud az roshanā'ī I be rouz
qaḍā rā dar āmad yeki khushk sāl
ke shod badr-e simāy-e mardom helāl
chu dar mardom ārām-o quwat nadid
khud āsoudeh boudan morowat nadid
chu binad kasi zahr dar kām-e khalq
keyash begozarad āb-e nooshin be halq
befarmoud beforoukhtandash be sim
ke rahm āmadash bar gharib-o yatim
be yek hafte naqdash be tārārj dād
be darvish-o meskin-o mohtāj dād
fetādand dar wey malāmat kunān
ke digar be dastat nayāyad chunān
shanidam ke miguft-o bārān-e dam'
forou midawidash be āriḍ chu sham'
ke zisht ast pirāye bar shahryār
del-e shahri az natawāni fekār
marā shāyad angushtari bi negin
nashāyad del-e khalqi andouhgin
khonuk ānke āsāyesh mard-o zan

Application of Larson's Method in English...

gozinad bar ārāyesh-e khishtan
nakardand raghbat honar parvarān
be shādy-e khish az gham-e digarān

Foroughi (1998, p. 150)

Translations

Edwards:

The story is told of Abdul Aziz that he had a pearl of great beauty and value set in a ring. Shortly after, a severe draught occurred, causing distress among the people. Moved by compassion, the king ordered the pearl to be sold and the money that it fetched to be given to the poor. Someone chided him for doing this, saying: "Never again will such a stone come into thy hands."

Weeping, the king replied: "Ugly is an ornament upon the person of a king when the hearts of his people are distressed by want. Better for me a stoneless ring than a sorrowing people."

Happy is he who sets the ease of others above his own. The virtuous desire not their own pleasure at the expense of others.

Clarke:

One of the great ones, possessed of discretion,

Tells a story of the son of king 'Abdu-l-'Aziz.

Saying: – he had a ring-stone set in a ring,

In respect to the value of which, the (court) jeweller was confounded.

At night, thou wouldst say it is the orb, world-illuminating;

A glittering star it was, in light like the day.

By chance, a drought-year occurred,

When the full-moon of the face of men became the new-moon.
When he saw not ease and strength in man,
He considered it not manliness to be himself at ease.
When a person sees poison in the jaws of men,
How will the sweet water pass to his throat?
He ordered: they sold the ring-stone for silver
Because pity came to him, on account of the poor and orphan.
He gave its value, in spoil, in one week:
He gave to the poor, and needy, and necessitous.
Those reproach-making fell on him,
Saying: – “such a ring will not again come to thy hand.”
I heard that he said, and the rain of tears
Ran down, like wax, on his cheeks –
As follows: – “ugly is the ornament on a monarch,
The heart of a citizen afflicted with powerlessness.”
“A ring, without a stone, is fit for me;
The heart of a sorrowful populace is not fit for me.”
Happy is that one, who, the ease of man and woman,
Prefers to his own ease.
The cherishers of skill displayed not desire
For their own pleasure (acquired) from the grief of others.

Wickens:

A leading figure among the men of discernment
Tells of Ibn ‘Abdal’Aziz
That he had a stone set in a ring,
One to confound a jeweller for value

Application of Larson's Method in English...

At night, you'd have called it the world-lighting globe,
By day a pearl in brightness.
By fate a year of drought befell,
Men's full mooned countenances all turned to crescents.
Seeing in men no ease or strength,
He judged it not manly himself to be at rest
(When a person sees poison in mankind's palate,
How shall sweet-water pass his gullet?)
The stone he ordered sold for silver,
Having compassion on stranger and orphan.
In one week he despoiled its cash-value,
Giving to the poor, the wretched, and the needy
Then the chiders fell upon him,
Saying: 'it's like you will not get again!'
I've heard he said, a rain of tears
Coursing down his cheeks like wax:
'Adornment ill becomes a prince
When impotence troubles the heart of the citizen;
A ring without a stone becomes me well,
But there's nothing becoming in a grieving people's heart!'
Happy the one who chooses men and women's comfort
Before his own adorning:
The virtue-cherishers have not desired
Their own joy at the cost of other's sorrow!

Comments

1. Edwards' Translation

Edwards is successful in transferring the general meaning of the source text, but not the exact meaning of that. His translation is so free that he has omitted some hemistiches or even he has translated some idioms to a word instead of finding an appropriate equivalent in the target language.

In the first couplet, “yeki as buzurgān-e ahl-e tamiz” has been deleted completely. The word “negin” has been rendered into “pearl” while “the pearl” has been used in the next couplet. “forou māndeh dar qimatash mushtari” has been translated freely with referring to the attribute of being valuable. The third couplet, “be shab gufti az jerm giti forouz dori boud az roshanā’i be rouz” has been reduced with pointing to “the beauty” of this pearl. The translator has deleted the metaphor in the hemistich “ke shod badr-e simāy-e mardom helāl” and it has been changed into “causing distress among the people”. It can be said that the accuracy of the translation has been breached apparently. “chu dar mardom ārām-o quwat nadid” has been omitted. Also the next couplet, “chu binad kasi zahr dar kām-e khalq keyash begozarad āb-e nooshin be halq” has not been translated to the target language. In the seventh couplet, “gharib-o yatim” has been ignored and deleted. In the next couplet, “darvish-o meskin-o mohtāj” has been reduced to “the poor”, without using any other synonyms. The tenth couplet “shanidam ke miguft-o bārān-e dam‘ forou midawidash be āriḍ chu sham’” has been translated into “weeping, the king replied”. Indeed, the simile of “bārān-e dam’” has been overlooked and just the interpretation of the couplet “weeping” has been conveyed. Moreover, the phrase of “bārān-e dam’” includes a metaphor that has been lost in the translation. Accordingly, breaching the accuracy of translation is evident.

2. Clarke's Translation

Clarke has tried to convey the exact meaning of the source text in his translation. To some extent he is successful. But in some cases he has used word-for-word translation, and in some others changed the meaning of the words.

The term “king” has been added to the second hemistich. In the third couplet “dori boud az roshanā'i be rouz” has been changed to “a glittering star it was, in light like the day”. The word “dor” signifies “pearl” not “star”. In the hemistich “ke shod badr-e simāy-e mardom helāl” the word “helāl” has been translated to “the new-moon”. Although “the new-moon” is in the form of crescent, the word “crescent” is the right equivalent for “helāl”. The term “kām” in the hemistich “chu binad kasi zahr dar kām-e khalq” stands for “mouth”, but the translator has used the literal translation of “jaw” that seems unnatural. In the hemistich “be yek hafteh naqdash be tārāj dād” the expression “be tārāj dād” means “he gave it for free” or “he donated it”. The meaning has been changed in the translation. It shows that the translator did not get the meaning of the original and has rendered it literally to “in spoil”. Thus, the accuracy has been violated in this case. The word “in the hemistich “gozinad bar ārāyesh-e khishtan” has been conveyed with a different meaning. Clarke has translated it to the word “ease” by mistake. “The cherishers of skill” is a literal translation for the word “honar parvarān”. Edwards' choice, the virtuous, is more acceptable.

3. Wickens' Translation

Wickens translation is more accurate and acceptable in comparison with two previous translations, despite having weaknesses. The name of “Abdul Aziz” has not been expressed correctly. “Abdol Aziz” is more acceptable than “Abdal

Aziz". In the sixth couplet "chu binad kasi zahr dar kām-e khalq" the word "kām" has been rendered literally to "palate", though "kām" in this context implies mouth. Using "palate" is strange and unnatural. Neither Clarke nor Wickens could realize the intended meaning of this word. In the next hemistich, "halq" means "throat", but the literal translation of Wickens has changed the meaning. The expression "be tārāj raft" has been reproduced literally and the meaning has been lost in Wickens' translation (despoiled), just like Clarke's translation. "Despoil" means 'steal something valuable from a place' whereas it is not the accurate meaning of the original expression.

6. Conclusion

Edwards has been successful in understanding and presenting the general meaning of the source text, although his translation is not an exact one. He has used the free way of translating and sufficed to transfer the theme of the anecdote. His translation demonstrates that he has comprehended the meaning deeply in the majority of cases and mistakes are seldom found in his product in terms of sense. But his translation has the problem of deletion and he has omitted the hemistiches or words in many cases. In terms of naturalness, Edwards has prepared an acceptable translation. It lacks foreign or strange words. In fact, he has domesticated his translation and the concepts that were related to the culture of the source text have been removed. Clarke's translation is word-for-word and being literal, the naturalness criterion has been breached in some instances. It can be said that his translation is more accurate than Edwards' translation, but in terms of naturalness he has not been very successful. For the literalists, who believe in literal translation of poetry, Clark's translation can be considered as a good translation, as he has translated all the linguistic elements and has attempted to preserve the style of the

Application of Larson's Method in English...

original as far as possible. Wickens has been successful in conveying the exact meaning of the source text in the target text. There is no addition and deletion in his product and in response to the research question his translation is the most accurate, and that of Edwards is the least accurate. Wickens' translation is smooth, clear and in a natural English language as far as poetry translation is concerned.

References

- Bassnett, S. (1998). Transplanting the seed: Poetry and translation. In S. Bassnett, & A. Lefevere (Eds.), *Constructing cultures: Essays on literary translation* (57-75). Great Britain: Cromwell Press.
- Bassnett, S. (2002). *Translation studies*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Bush, P. (2001). Literary Translation. In M. Baker (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of translation studies* (pp. 127-130). London and New York: Routledge.
- Clarke, H. W. (2004). *The Bustan of Sa'di*. Tehran: Paykefarhang.
- Deedari, R., & Mansouri, M. (2006). *Understanding literary elements*. Tehran: Rahnama Press.
- Edwards, A. H. (1911). *The Bustan of Sa'di*. London: John Murray.
- Hermans, T. (2007). Literary translation. In P. Kuhiwczak & K. Littau (Eds.), *A companion to translation studies* (77-91). Great Britain: Cromwell Press Ltd.
- Jacobson, R. (1959). On linguistic aspects of translation. In Venuti (2000). *The translation studies reader* (pp. 113-118). London and New York: Routledge.
- Jackson, R. (2003). From translation to imitation. Retrieved February 24, 2009, From <http://www.utc.edu/Academic/English/pm/ontrans.htm>.

- Landers, C. E. (2001). *Literary translation: A practical guide*. New Jersey University Press: Multilingual Maters.
- Larson, M. L. (1984). *Meaning-based translation: A guide to cross-language equivalence*. New York and London: University Press of America.
- Newmark, P. (1988). *A Textbook of translation*. New York and London: Prentice Hall.
- Savory, T. (1968). *The art of translation*. Boston: the Writers, Inc.
- Schulte, R. (2010). What is Literary Translation?. Retrieved June 15, 2010, from <http://www.utdallas.edu/alta/about/literary-translation>
- Wickens, G. M. (2006). *The Bustan of Sa'di*. Tehran: Ghalam Publishing House.
- Foroughi, M. A. (1998). *Kullyāt-e Sa'di*. Tehran, Behāzd Publications.