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Translation from Pashto to English: An Analysis of Deforming Tendencies in the English Translation of Abdul Ghani Khan's Poetry

Abstract *Intending to identify that how meaning in the source text has been reproduced in the translated text, the study attempts to investigate deforming tendencies used in the selected poems of Abdul Ghani Khan translated from Pashto into English by Imtiaz Ahmed Sahibzada. Imtiaz Sahibzada has translated 141 poems from the mammoth corpus of Abdul Ghani Khan's Poetry into English and named it The Pilgrim of a Beauty. Using judgmental sampling, ten poems were selected and were analysed in the light of Antoine Berman's (1965) Text Deformation System which includes twelve deforming tendencies. While analysing the translated text in comparison with the source text, deformation in terms of semantics and the syntactic structure was found. Abdul Ghani Khan's poetry translation is considerably deformed, and the translator has little maintained the composition, musicality, and structure of the source text because of different reasons. He has deformed the beauty of the source text poems at the cost of the message due to the use of various deforming tendencies.*

Key Words: Pashto, English, English Translation, Abdul Ghani Khan, Poetry

Introduction

The process of translation is the replacement of the source language by corresponding textual material in the target language. It is a complicated process because whatever is said in one language can be said in another language, but it is difficult and usually not easily reproduced in the target language. According to [Sharma \(2001\)](#), it is now believed that people who understand more than one language can become an interpreter or translator. But this is only half the truth because the experts of translation must have a cultural background and knowledge about the structure of both the source and target languages. The fact that we can provide equivalent in English for each word does not mean that we can properly translate the text. Translation means that we can enter into the mind, the world, and the culture of the speakers or writers and we can express their thoughts not only in parallel with the original but also in a way that is acceptable to the target language [Sharma \(2001\)](#). Linguistically, the process of translation includes studying and understanding the grammatical structure, lexicon, and cultural background of the source language. After discovering the meaning of the source text, the translator re-expresses and reproduced the meaning he/she has absorbed, into the target text in such a way that there is minimal loss in the transformation of the meaning into the translated text ([Raina, 2007](#)).

Different genres have multifarious requirements for translation. If we take poetry, its translation is relaying poetry into another language with its own parameters. Several excellent translated poems contributed greatly to cultural exchange and understanding. It is also true that various good poems lost their essence when translated into another language. This suggests that poems can be translated and also cannot be translated. It looks like self-contradiction, but this is the case with poetry translation. Poetry can be translated as it reflects the sentiments, human pursuits, and general feeling of humanity. People of different cultures can communicate and interact with each other by appreciating each other's poems. The basic conditions for one's translating a poem from the source text into the target text should include his/her proficiency in both languages, cultural backgrounds of both languages, and critical insights about the poet and his/her works. All these conditions are insufficient for an excellent translation unless the translator is full of poetic enthusiasm, inspiration, and imagination. However, due to the differences between the source and target text, it is sometimes

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problematic to perfectly explain the content of a poem in another language, especially when it comes to phrases, metaphors, and allusions that contain double, triple or multiple meanings ([Dickinson, 1997](#)).

Translation is an intellectual activity in which the meaning of the words of a particular linguistic discourse is transferred from one language to another. It is basically the translation of the content of a text from the source text into the target text ([Foster, 1958](#)). Various journals related to translation studies have been created and international professional organizations called the European Translation Studies Community have also been established. Besides, about a dozen encyclopedias have also been written. Translation courses are offered around the world with an international interest in translation ([Bassnett, 2002](#)). The present study attempts to analyse the use of different deforming tendencies in Imtiaz Ahmed Sahibzada's translation of Abdul Ghani Khan's Pashto poetry into English. To reach this objective, the researchers have selected ten poems from the book *The Pilgrim of a Beauty* translated by Imtiaz Ahmed Sahibzada. It is intended to investigate how far the spirit of the source text (the Pashto language) has been reproduced in the target text (the English language). Therefore, the research aims to investigate Antoine Berman's 12 deforming tendencies in Imtiaz Ahmed Sahibzada's translation of Abdul Ghani Khan's Poetry.

Statement of the Research Problem

Translating poetry from the source language into the target is a difficult job due to various reasons working in the process of translation. The translator not only has the duty to grasp the meaning of the original poem, but also to translate similar feelings into the target text and discover literary and stylistic tools for the audience to sound like a poem as that of the source language. The present study aims at investigating such problems and deformations in the translation of Abdul Ghani Khan's poetry into English.

Significance of the Study

Translation Studies is an evolving field and scholarship which is growing over time. Several Universities around the world offer numerous courses in Translation Studies at different levels including graduate and post-graduate. The present research work attempts to see how meaning in the source text has been reproduced in the target text, specifically, in the analysis of Pashto poetry. It also explores that poetry translation is a creative activity that needs to fulfil various conditions according to the nature of source and target language. The present research work is significant in the sense that it has implications for translators particularly those who are translating Pashto poetry into English. This study will help them make aware of the various deforming tendencies in their translation. The current research work is a contribution to research into Translation Studies in general and to research on the translation of Abdul Ghani Khan's poetry into English in particular.

Research Methodology

During the procedure of translation, a translator practices several approaches to excellently carry the messages from the source text into the target text. The theoretical framework for this research work comes from the essay *Translation and the Trials of the Foreign* proposed by Antoine Berman. This theory includes twelve deforming tendencies that investigate the problems of translating poetic source text into the target text. The twelve deforming tendencies, as defined by Antoine Berman, are rationalization, clarification, expansion, ennoblement, qualitative impoverishment, quantitative impoverishment, destruction of the rhythm, the destruction of underlying networks of signification, the destruction of the linguistic pattern, the destruction of vernacular networks or their exoticization, the destruction of expressions and idioms, the effacement of the superimposition of language. We have taken these tendencies as a tool for the textual analysis, in which the source and target languages, symbol, the meaning of text, structure, discourse as well as the function of the messages contained in the Abdul Ghani Khan's poetry into English are examined. The researchers have used the technique of judgmental sampling, a non-probability technique in which the research samples are chosen based on the researcher's knowledge and professional judgment for the collection of data. The samples chosen for the research study are Pashto poems of Abdul Ghani Khan which are translated by Imtiaz

Ahmed Sahibzada into English. Imtiaz Ahmed Sahibzada has translated 141 poems of Abdul Ghani Khan, but the researchers have taken only ten poems from the translated book *The Pilgrim of a Beauty*.

Literature Review

Translation is an art, science and old practice that has been growing steadily over the past years. The field of translation has created a blocking bond between two languages, civilizations, and cultures. Translators have always played an important role in society. Medieval translators contributed to the advancement and enlargement of modern languages and national identities around those languages. Without the influence made by linguists working throughout the history of translation, we would not be able to understand and comprehend the contextual meanings that exist in a large number of historical scripts (Lebert, 2019). Translation Studies is concerned with transferring the messages from one language into the other. Until now, no agreement has been reached among the linguists as to what establishes a good translation. But the standard of translation depends to a large extent on how the message is delivered successfully from the source text to the target (Naveed, 2018).

There has been an extensive research in the area of the strategies of translation. Yet the definitions presented by various theorists are the point of views and opinions. Theorists agree that translators use strategies once they come across a problem and literal translation does not work. Consequently, different scholars have explored and described many translation strategies from different perspectives (Owji, 2013). Domestication vs foreignization and deforming tendencies are various translation strategies used by the translators. Foreignization and domestication are the two widely used strategies in translation studies that provide essential guidance for understanding translation in both language and culture. American translation theorist Eugene Nida and the Italian scholar L. Venuti used the two terms respectively (Munday, 2001).

Another strategy and method of translation is the notion of deforming tendencies proposed by the well-known French theorist, Antoine Berman. According to him, all kinds of translations partially deformed due to the textual deformation system which does not allow the foreign text to be received as foreign (Kashifa, 2018). Berman believes that every foreignness, i.e., source text should keep its foreignness in the target text. There should be no change in the target text to benefit it because he believes that meaning is conveyed by the form. He says that omission or addition may change the writer's style. He puts forward twelve deforming tendencies that deform a translation. He argues that these deforming tendencies are inherent in the act of translation. They are indispensable to a great extent but must be reduced by the conscious efforts. The present research work is about analysing the use of various deforming tendencies in Imtiaz Ahmad Sahibzada's translation of Abdul Ghani Khan's Pashto poetry into English.

Analysis

The data analysis is presented in two parts: the first part answers how the researchers have investigated all the twelve deforming tendencies in the ten selected poems of Abdul Ghani Khan translated by Imtiaz Ahmad Sahibzada. They have also discovered the impact of those deforming tendencies on the beauty and structure of the target text. The second part answers how the translator has reproduced the messages contain in the source text into the target text.

The deforming tendencies used in the selected poems are discussed as the following:

Rationalization

According to Berman, rationalization mainly affects the sentence structure, simplifying complex sentences, replacing abstract notions with concrete ones in the target language, and rearranging the sequence of various sentences in the source language. This deforming tendency can be found in the target language poems which are discussed as the following:

In the poem Why? (wale - ولى), it is said:

ST: څوک دې ماته ووائى
څه رنگي شيدا شى څوک

PT: tʃok dʒe maʃah wawaɪ
tʃah rangai ʃɪdʒa ʃai tʃok

TT: Someone come and tell me how,
How is it one falls in love?

In this piece of translation, the problem is visible as the translator has modified the structure of the first line. He has vacuously used additional words like (come, and, how) which are not found in the source text. The author of the source text has asked a question from the people in a very simple manner about how someone falls in love. The poet has used balanced words in the couplet to properly convey his message to the readers. On the other hand, the translator has deliberately used additional words to portray the message of the poet to the target language readers, but he has done so where the true structure of the verse is changed.

Clarification

Clarification is another widely used strategy in the present selected poems that refers to a condition in which the translator makes the meaning explicit in the target text which has been kept implicit by the author of the source language. Clarification strategy has widely been used in the Pashto poetry of Abdul Ghani Khan translated into the English language by Imtiaz Ahmad Sahibzada, which are discussed as the following:

Evidence of clarification can be observed in the following couplet of the poem Why? (wale - ولي):

ST: ستوری د غره څوکی ته:
غلی شان بېگا ووی

PT: sṭṭṭrai ḍḍ aṭraṭ tṭṭoke ṭṭ
yalj jaan begaa wawe

TT: Last night, to the mountain peak
Softly spoke the evening star;

This instance of translation is the palpable sample of clarification. The translator has used the word 'evening' (maṣam- ماښام) with the source word 'star' (sṭṭṭrai- ستوری) which does not exist in the original poem. The author of the source text has expressed his state of mind plainly and implicitly, without mentioning the word 'evening' (maṣam- ماښام) in the 3rd couplet of the poem. On the other hand, the translator has clarified the text to clearly express the source text to his target language readers. But this clarification is unacceptable to Berman. He believes that the use of clarification in translation typically leads to a syntactical variation of the texts.

Expansion

Berman believed that any translation is lengthier than the source text, but according to him, this kind of expansion in translation is unacceptable. He believes that such kind of inclusion causes over-translation, which contributes nothing to the target text but abolishes the quality of the text (Vemenhnani, 2018). The tendency of expansion is very conspicuous in Imtiaz Ahmad Sahibzada's translation of Ghani Khan's poems. The researchers have found this tendency in each selected poem of the present research study. For instance, the source text poem Why? (wale- ولي) consists of fourteen lines while the translator has expanded the size of the target text to twenty-four lines. The translator expanded the size of the source text without a specific objective. This phenomenon is term as expansion.

Ennoblement

Ennoblement refers to the deforming tendency when the translator produces text which is more refined and elegant as compared to the source text. Ennoblement can be observed in the following couplet of the poem *Letter from Fariddon's Mother* (ḍḍfariḍḍoonḍḍ moor xaṭ- دفریدوندمور خط):

ST: دا ثبوت د شاه دمینی . دا زاری ده د غلام:

PT: ḍḍa saboṭ ḍḍ jah ḍḍ mjne- ḍḍa zarj ḍḍah ḍḍ yulaam

TT: And an emperor's proof of love;
An entreaty of the slave;

Here the translator has offered the simple text in a more refined and stylish mode by using the target text word 'emperor' (fahenṣah- شاپنشاہ) for the source word (jah-شاه). According to Collins English dictionary, an emperor is a man who rules an empire or is the head of the state in an empire. Ghani Khan has used the word (jah – شاه) in a style which is simple and without embellishment. However, the translator has translated the word in a way that does not carry the precise meaning to the target language readers.

Qualitative Impoverishment

Qualitative impoverishment tendency ensues when the translator changes or replaces expressions and words with their target language equivalents that reduce their lavishness and musicality. Another example of qualitative impoverishment can be seen in the following couplet of the poem My Palace (zamaamahal-زمامحل):

ST: د سیند د سپینو شگو نه می جوړ کرلو محل
دې ټول خرگی جهان ورته حبران حبران کتل

PP: دځا sɛndə dɔ spjno ʃago a me dʒoɪ kɪalu mahal
dɔe ʈol xarge dʒahaan wartah heraan heraan kaʈal

TT: From the white sands of the river,
I a palace slowly built
The world in great amazement saw
Looked on in disbelief

In this instance of translation, Ghani Khan has composed every word of the couplet in a balance and artful manner. This poem is considered the masterpiece of Ghani Khan's poetry. On the other hand, the translator has shown negligence while translating this poem. He has destroyed the elegance and richness of the poem. He has skipped certain words of the source couplet which contain considerable worth and importance. For instance, the translator does not translate the source words (ʈolxarge- تولخرگی) which convey significant meaning to the readers. The translator should be cognizant of the importance of these words as it contains richness and musicality in the source couplet of the poem.

Quantitative Impoverishment

Quantitative impoverishment is the deforming tendency that refers to when the translator sometimes replaces various synonyms with just one word or single expression in the target language. This deforming is rarely found in the selected poems of this research work. The researcher has found this deformation in the following couplet of the poem My Palace (zamaamahal-زمامحل):

ST: د سیند د سپینو شگو نه می جوړ کرلو محل
دې ټول خرگی جهان ورته حبران حبران کتل

PP: دځا sɛndə dɔ spjno ʃago a me dʒoɪ kɪalu mahal
dɔe ʈol xarge dʒahaan wartah heraan heraan kaʈal

TT: From the white sands of the river
I a palace slowly built
The world in great amazement saw
Looked on in disbelief

In this instance of translation, there is an obvious example of quantitative impoverishment. The author of the source text has used three different synonyms in the second line of the couplet to create an aesthetic sense and get the attention of the source text readers but the translator has created confusion for the readers as he provided a single word 'world' for the source text various synonyms (ʈolxargedʒahaan- تولخرگیجهان). Though his words get the language, there is a lexical loss in terms of violation of translation. The author of the source text has used three different words. Most of the words give different meanings and sense to the source text readers. The author of the source text has suitably managed his words and created a balance in the couplet.

The Destruction of the Rhythms

According to Antoine Berman, the rhythm of the source text would be ruined if punctuations and word order were distorted. In poetry translation, it is very difficult to maintain the pattern of word order and punctuations of the source text in a target text. Rhythm is noteworthy because it is a central part of style in languages. It is evident that rhythm plays a dynamic and significant role in different meters and feet in English poetry such as iambic pentameter, trochaic tetrameter, etc. The destruction of the rhythms can be observed in almost every poem selected for the present research study. It can be seen in the following couplet of the poem Nageen (nagjnah-نگينه) :

ST: عجيبه نصيب زما:
د ژړا کور بني خدا

PT: ?adʒɪbah nasib zmaa

ɖə ʒaɖaa kur ʒe xandʒaa

TT: Oh how very fortunate,

Is Ghani in his old age

In a home of tears, laughter

BT: How very fortunate I am,

In a home of tears, laughter

In this instance of translation, there is a palpable example of the destruction of the rhythms. The translator has completely changed the pattern of words and added some additional words which destroyed the rhythm of the source couplet and created confusion for the target text readers. The translator has offered the sentence 'Is Ghani in his old age' which does not exist in the source couplet of the poem. The translator has provided the sentence to make his translation more attractive and unique as compared to the source text. Therefore, this addition destroyed the pattern and rhythm of the source couplet which the author of the original poem composed in a poetic style.

The Destruction of the Underlying Networks of Signification

The deforming tendency refers to the words which may not be important as individual words, but they created a web in the text and have brought conformity to the text. If these significant underlying networks of words are not translated correctly, the destruction of the underlying networks of signification is inevitable (Kashifa, 2018). One of the conspicuous examples of this tendency can be observed in the following couplet of the poem Shandana (ʃandʒanah-شاندانه):

ST: وه يو ذره د نور وه

شوه درياب كي ده خپشت دويه

PT: awh jaw zarah ɖə noor wah

ʃwah ɖarjaab ke ɖə hxeʃtɖobah

TT: A drop of moonlight

Drowned in beauty's moonlight waters;

There is an obvious deformation in terms of the destruction of underlying networks of signification. The author of the source text has composed the couplet with the best selection of underlying words which gives the sense to a source text readers about the poet's feelings and emotions. On the other hand, the translator does not care about such underlying networks of the source text. For instance, the translator has not translated the source text words such as (awh-وه) and (wah-وه). These words give hidden but important meaning to the source text while the translator did not translate these words, which leads to the destruction of the underlying network of signification.

The Destruction of the Linguistic Pattern

From Berman's point of view, various translation techniques, namely rationalization, expansion, and clarification are used by the translator which destroys the constructions and pattern of the original text even though the target text is linguistically homogenous. There is a lack of coherence in meaning

because the systematicity of the source language has been destroyed. The destruction of the linguistic pattern can be seen in the following couplet of the poem *Bahram Khan* (bahraamxan-بهرام خان):

ST: نځيني وي بابا! اوس ورته گوره خاندۀ خاندۀ:
دا ستا د امېدونو ستا د ويني بناپېرے

PT: nagjine we baba! Os wartah gorah xaandjah xaandjah
da staa da omedoonoo staa da wjne saaperai

TT: And to me Nageen cried out,
“Baba! Watch him as he plays!
This fairy prince who’s moulded,
Of your hopes and of your dreams;
And watching him, let laughter
Fill your soul, and ease your mind.”

Here in this piece of translation, the translator has used the strategies of rationalization and expansion due to which he has lost the coherence in his target text translation. For instance, the translator has used an additional line ‘as he plays’ which is not found in the source couplet. The translator has used these words to well express the poet’s point of view and make his translation attractive but he has destroyed the linguistic pattern of the source couplet. The translator should simply translate the source couplet to avoid incoherence and the destruction of the linguistic pattern in his translation. Furthermore, in the fourth line of his translation, the translator has used an additional sentence ‘Fill your soul, and ease your mind’ which is not found in the source couplet. He has needlessly expanded the size of the source couplet which created confusion for the target text readers. Moreover, the translator has used the double inverted commas in his translation which does not exist in the source couplet of the poem. The translator has used these inverted commas which became the cause of incoherence in the target text and also created confusion for the target text readers. This is a deformation of rationalization. As a result, the translator has deformed the structure and coherence of the source couplet, which leads to the destruction of the linguistic pattern.

The Destruction of the Vernacular Networks

The destruction of the vernacular networks is the deforming tendency that refers to when the translator translates a narrative according to its style and register. If the translator has not translated the formal into formal and informal into informal, he/she will destroy the vernacular networks. The destruction of vernacular networks can be observed in the following couplet of the poem Khayyam (خيام-xajjaam):

ST: انسان پلار دے د سبا، هم بچے دے د پرون

PP: insaan plaar dae da sbaa, hum batfe dae da paron

TT: Man is sire of tomorrow,
And offspring of yesterday;

In this piece of translation, the translator has used formal target text word ‘sire’ for the source text word (plaar-پلار) which is used informally in the Pashto language. While the translator has used the formal target text word ‘sire’ which means a reverent form of address, for somebody of high social status, especially a King. Therefore, the translator needs to be careful about such vernacular networks, if not so, then the translator will not carry the original message of the source text author.

The Destruction of Expressions and Idioms

Berman believes that expressions and idioms should be preserved in the translation as much as possible. The researcher has selected ten poems for the analysis of the present research study but did not find the deformation of expressions and idioms. The translation of the selected poems is a literal

translation and the translator has conformed and preserved the expressions and idioms in his translation.

The Effacement of the Superimposition of Languages

It is the deforming tendency when the translator erases traces of other languages that co-exist in the source text. Berman believes that the bilingual/multilingual nature of the source text should be reflected in the target text. We can observe this deforming tendency in the following couplet of the source poem Shandana (شاندانه-*Jandānah*):

ST: دا د هغې خوب تعبير دے
چي وه ما او تا ليدلے

PT: $d\alpha\alpha\ d\alpha\ haye\ xob\ t\alpha?bjr\ d\alpha\alpha$
 $t\alpha\ w\alpha\ ma\ aw\ t\alpha\ ljd\alpha\alpha\ lai$
TT: Spilt on an ocean of eternal love;
The meaning of the dreams
We dreamt together;

In this piece of translation, the translator has translated the Urdu language word (تعبير-*tābjr*) into the target text in a style in which he translated the rest of the source poem. There is no reflection of the Urdu language in his translation as he did not provide any clue in his translation. This leads to the deformation of the effacement of the superimposition of language.

After analyzing the textual data, it was found that expansion, destruction of the rhythms, rationalization, and ennoblement were among the most commonly used deforming tendencies. The researchers observe that the tendency of expansion was a very conspicuous and most repeatedly used strategy in the ten selected poems of the present research study. The translator has additionally expanded the size of every poem as well as the length of couplets to present the target text more 'elegant' and 'refined'. There has been an impact of the deforming tendencies on the structure and beauty of the target text. The translator has deformed the beauty and structure of the source text poems due to the use of various deforming tendencies. The translator has used the strategies of the destruction of the rhythms, destruction of the underlying networks of signification, rationalization, etc due to which the actual beauty and structure of the source poems have been destroyed. The translator has deformed the source text author's word choice, word order, and rhythm of the couplets. The translator has used the strategy of literal translation to faithfully transfer the true meaning and sense of the source text. He has done his best to convey the true message of the poet, but despite that, he fails to completely transfer the actual sense and meaning of the author of the source text. This means that when poetry is translated from one language to another, the true meaning and sense of poetry is lost. It has been concluded that everything in the original language of the source poem is difficult to translate, as all languages have their own indigenous culture, traditions, local colour, dialects, a linguistic pattern which are sometimes difficult to translate and the true sense of the poet gets lost in translation.

Conclusion

The current research study aims to investigate the various deforming tendencies in the ten selected poems of Abdul Ghani Khan's poetry translated into English by Imtiaz Ahmad Sahibzada. During the investigation, the researcher has paid close consideration to the meaning and sense of the Pashto translated words to observe the possible aspects of deforming tendencies such as nature, impact, and background, etc. Furthermore, the purpose of this study is to understand how the structure of the words from the source language has been changed to fix the target language by adopting various deforming tendencies such as expansion, clarification, and rationalization, etc. The present research study reveals that the translator has done his best to convey the meaning of various source text terms, expressions, and images into the target language as much as possible, but he has little maintained the original musicality, composition, and structure of the source text. This is considered as one of the

major complications in poetry translation because source text verses are complex to translate and therefore, cannot be preserved in translation. All these efforts lead to deforming the source text structures as well as meaning.

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