Translating Lexical Items of Shakespeare's *Sonnets* in the Light of Skopos Theory

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Abstract:

Translating Shakespeare is an extremely challenging task because of the special nature and distinctive style of his language. The *Sonnets* has many unique characteristics that may obstacle translators from rendering the intended meaning into Arabic with high accuracy owing to its poetic nature. This is a functional-linguistic study that delves into the problems of rendering lexical items in four translations of two sonnets and how the four translators in question succeed in fulfilling the intended skopos and consequently overcome the lexical translation problems for the sake of obtaining the intended function of the translation in the target culture.

Key words: Shakespeare, *Sonnets*, Skopos Theory, Lexical Items.

1- Introduction:

Translation is not about words; it is about what words are about. Meaning is not words in itself but rather in relation to other words, that is, no meaning within the mere lexical item rather within the whole texture of words since "a text is a string of words and a writer has to encode the ideational meaning into, and the reader to decode the meaning from, words" (Coulthard, 1994, p. 9). Coulthard (1994) also sheds light on the problem saying:

> Problems arise because word meanings are not fully fixed; rather, words derive some of their meaning from the context in which they appear. Indeed, it is one of the fascinating features of texts that they can alter quite significantly the accepted (i.e. dictionary definition) meanings of words… Words are sometimes used in meanings not even recognized in any dictionary. (pp. 9-10)

In this sense, rendering lexical items is not easy as it seems especially with lexical items which have no exact equivalents in the target language. Humboldt proposes the problem as follows:

> It has repeatedly been observed and verified by both experience and research that no word in one language is completely equivalent to a word in another, if one disregards those expressions that designates purely physical objects... Each language expresses a concept somewhat differently, placing the nuance in each instance one step higher or lower on the ladder of perceptions. (Schutle & Biguenet, 1992, p. 55)

In his "*On Language and Words*", Schopenhauer's presents the problems indicating that there is no sameness between the single lexical items but meaning is produced in terms of their relation to each other. He points out that "not every word in one language has an exact equivalent in another. Thus, not all concepts that are expressed through the words of one language are exactly the same as the ones that are expressed through the words of another. (Schutle & Biguenet, 1992, p. 32). Wentworth put the same idea in his "Essay on Translated Verse" (1685) quoted by Lefevere (1992) as follows:

> Words in one language elegantly used

Will hardly in another be excused,

And some that Rome admired in Caesar's Time

May neither suit our Genius nor our Clime.

Thé genuine Sense, intelligibly told,

Shows a Translator both discreet and bold.

Excursions are inexpiably bad,

And 'tis much safer to leave out than add.

Abstruse and mystic thoughts you must express

With painful care but seeming easiness,

For truth shines brightest through the plainest dress. (pp. 45-45)

The reason for such problems springs from the difference between cultures of the source and target languages. In other words, when two cultures have deep differences, for example, in beliefs, social organizations, cultural and scientific views, or morality agreat dealof words of the one language cannot be even remotely paralleled in the other. Hence, the difference between cultures "may either be cooperatively and tolerantly accepted, or give rise to misunderstanding and conflict, and even to dominance, exclusion and oppression of the less powerful" (Van Dijik, 1997, p. 21). Moreover, Functionalists view the concept of culture differently as a form of behavior. In this perspective, Nord (1997) indicates that:

> Culture is whatever one has to know, master or feel in order to judge whether or not a particular form of behaviour shown by members of a community in their various roles conforms to general expectations, and in order to behave in this community in accordance with general expectations unless one is prepared to bear the consequences of unaccepted behaviour. (p. 33)

By the same token, Nord (1997) sheds light on Vermeer's view concerning culture:

> Vermeer places special emphasis on the following features of the definition: its dynamic qualities (focusing on human action and behaviour), its comprehensiveness (conceiving culture as a complex system determining any human action or behaviour, including language) and the fact that it may be used as a starting point for a descriptive as well as explicative or prescriptive approach to culture-specificity. (p. 33)

Hence, the main concern should be spotted on the norms and conventions of a culture where any individual member of a society should be acquainted with the whole context of norms and conventions in order to be like everybody in his own society. That is, each cultural phenomenon is

dictated to have a position in a complicated system of values where it is evaluated, and each individual,as a member, coordinates in a space-time system. If there is an acceptance, action across culture or communication across culture barriers should take into consideration cultural differences regarding communicative situations, evaluation and behavior. Hence, a culture-specific phenomenon shouldto be existing in a specific shape or function in only one of the two compared cultures. It does not mean that the phenomenon exists merely in that specifc culture but the very phenomenon could be recognized in other cultures different from these two in question. Accordingly, translation is a mean of comparison between cultures in order to fulfil the skopos intended. In this sense,Nord (1997) argues:

> Translating means comparing cultures. Translators interpret source-culture phenomena in the light of their own culture-specific knowledge of that culture. ... There can be no neutral standpoint for comparison. Everything we observe as being different from our own culture is, for us, specific to the other culture. The concepts of our own culture will thus be the touchstones for the perception of otherness. Further, our attention tends to focus on phenomena that are either different from our own culture (where we had

expected similarity) or similar to our own culture

(where difference had been expected). (p. 34)

The comparison between texts is of great importance as it gives the translator the ability to check for the accuracy of meaning by a careful comparison with the source text where some of the problems may be come to the surface such as something omitted, something added, a different meaning, a zero meaning, that is, the form used just doesn't communicate any meaning at all. In this sense, Lefevere, from the hand, presents the solution for rendering lexical items of no TL equivalents. He (1992) indicates that "if translators want to really translate items belonging to the original's Universe of Discourse that do not exist in their own, they will have to 'coin new expressions'" (p. 47). On the other hand, Hawkes (1972) offers another solution saying:

> Each culture obviously has words by means of which it
>
> can refer to the objects which confront it; hence the
>
> vocabulary of a language reflects faithfully the material
>
> aspects of its culture. A group of people who had never
>
> had the experience of seeing or hearing of a
>
> refrigerator would be compelled to invent or borrow a
>
> suitable word when they were introduced to one, and

would have to find a way of including that word in the

language. (p. 82)

In this sense, words are not actions or events in themselves and their

meaning is a result of conventions' employment. Words mean nothing in

their own but mean everything by their usage. Translators, thus, should go

beyond the mere use of lexical items in order to grasp the spirit of the

source language. Schopenhauer refuses literalness where translators distort

the intended meaning because of their "limited intellectual abilities" as

they "always use the words only in the sense of the approximate equivalent

in the mother tongue, and they always maintain those expressions and

sentences peculiar to the mother tongue" (Schutle & Biguenet, 1992, p. 34).

Schopenhauer also provides the solution by considering words as "signs"

should not transaferred by "word-for-word rendering" but by "melting

down" and "recasting" (Schutle & Biguenet, 1992, p. 35).

Appropriateness of the selection of words is the most important element

to render words adequately, that is, "the selection of descriptive terms and

other lexical items treated by participants as appropriate to, and hence

indicative of, their understandings of the situation they are in"(Van Dijk,

1997, p. 99). The appropriate selection for words represents linguistic and

cultural problems and in return pragmatic ones since differences and

discrepancies between cultures could provoke more serious complications for the translator than do those in language structure". Most difficulty is translating the lexical items of Shakespeare, especially the poetic like the sonnets, where shades of meaning are pervasive in all his works which is an obstacle for any translator.

It should be noticed that poetry is measured by what is heard not what is written and accordingly the sound is more vital than the written letter. Words in poetry have rich life unlimited to their lexical denotations but exceeding to a more abundant life in their context. In short, all these beats used to produce specific images in a special context. When translating poetry, the translator should not commit to the number of words or measures as every language has its own distinct characteristics.In this perspective, commenting on Shakespeare's usage of allusions, Amel Amin-Zaki (1994) says:

> Shakespeare's frequent references to classical Greek
> and Roman figures, particularly the Pagan gods,
> present a distinct problem for the Arabic translator.
> Here the fear is not so much that an audience might be
> offended by the allusions, but that such allusions would
> be lost upon an Arab audience which has no cultural

affinity to these characters and may be wholly unfamiliar with them. (p. 229)

The sonnets, for examples, like the case in any literary work, should include long introductions, explanatory annotations, and footnotes for the sake of the sonnet's understanding and appreciation. The language of Shakespeare is very special and the sonnets refer to events or circumstances of ancient centuries and grasping modern English can't be sufficient to understand it wholly. Shedding light on the use of footnotes, Nida (1964) says:

One may be justified in retaining a more or less literal equivalent in the text, and explaining it in a footnote … basically, in a translated text footnotes have two principal functions: (1) to correct linguistic and cultural discrepancies … (2) to add information which may be generally useful in understanding the historical and cultural background of the document in question. (pp. 238-39)

Certainly, footnoting helps to compensate for the inevitable loss of meaning as long as the text is read not performed but in dramatic texts it became a useless method in plays in theatre, for example, when being performed and most probably ends up with a truncated message. Hence, the

purpose of the study is to present a comparative analysis of rendering the lexical Items in four Arabic translations of the Shakespearean *Sonnets* in the light of Skopos theory: Badr Tawfeeq's (1988), Kamal Abou-Deeb's (2010), Tawfeeq Ali Mansour's (2011), and Mohammed Enani's (2016). The next part of the study is to be dedicated to explore how the mere lexical items such as cultural words, classical allusions, literary devices, historical references, Shakespeare's words of differnet vague senses and variant shades of meaning, different spelling of the same word in the different copies of the *Sonnets*, Shakespeare's coined expressions, etc. have been transferred in the four Arabic versions under study. The aim is show how the four translators provide solutions to overcome the linguistic, cultural and pragmatic translation problems in their endeavors to fulfill the Skopos intended.

2- The Analysis:

This sonnet under study is the first of seventheenth sonnets (1-17) which handle the necessity of reproduction where the poet advices the handsome boy to conquer his self-love or ego and perform his duty for nature and mankind by giving birth to somene looks like him for the sake of his eternity "in order to be able to perpetuate his name and his memory"(Paul, 1997, p. 35). In lines (5), the word "***contracted***" implies an

engagment between two persons but here it is between the boy and himself. This represents a linguistic translation problemaccording to the Skopos theory. The four Arab translators transferred these lines as follows:

But thou contracted to thine owne bright eyes,

Feed'st thy lights flame with selfe substantiall fewell, (Burrow, 2002, p.

383; S. 1, L: 5-6)

بدر:

أما و انت مشدود إلي ذات عينيك الوضاءتين ،

(Tawfeek, 1988, p. تغذي شعلة ضوئهما بوقود من صميم نفسك ،

17)

منصور:

ولكنك مختال فخور   بنضرة أعينك اللامعة

(Mansour, 2011, p. تضيف لشعلتك الساطعة   وقودا يغذي ذاتيتك

45)

كمال :

و لكن أراك نذرت لعينيك ، لامعتين كنجم المساء ،

(Aboudeeb, 2010, p. هواك ، فصرت تغذي بزيتك شعلتك اللاهبه

132)

عناني:

لكنك لا تعشق إلا لمعة عينيك كأنك خاطب وهج ضيائك

(Enani, 2016, p. 95)   و تغذي أنوارك بالشمع المنصهر بذاتك

As seen above, Enani translates the word " contracted" as "خاطب" meaning "engaged or pledged in marriage" which is in agreement with Paul's (1997) explanation: "'contracted' means 'pledged' or 'committed' and the line: "contracted to thine own bright eyes" means "committed to the worship of your own beauty"(p. 36). Mansour translates it as "مختال فخور " where he has added two synonymous words for the sake of music only without any attention to the intended meaning. Tawfeek and Aboudeeb translate the word respectively as "مشدود إلي" and "نذرت" which are not adequate in this context. Hence, Enan's is the most adequate choice which is in accordance with Paul's (1997) paraphrase: "But you have pledged yourself to the beauty of your own bright eyes, and are maintaining the glory of your beauty with you own personal resources"(p. 36).

In line (6), there is a condensed hidden image of the molten wax because wax is the fuel used by candles in nourishing the light they send which represents a linguistic problem according to the skopos theory when being handled by the translators. Enani translates the phrase "*with selfe substantiall fewell*" as " بالشمع المنصهر بذات" where he has used the

"explication" approach by adding the word "الشمع" meaning "candles" which is not stated openly in the source text. On the other hand, Mansour and Tawfeek translated the phrase respectively as "وقودا يغذي ذاتيتك" and "بوقود من صميم نفسك" where they adhere to the literal approach in their translation. Aboudeeb translates it as " بزيتك" which is closer to the intended meaning. In short, Enani's translation is in accordance with Larsen's (2014): "he nourishes his flame of life by burning up the substance of himself as fuel" (p. 34). In this sense, the four translators have done their best to present adequate translations especially that of Aboudeeb and Enani. It is obvious that Enani's is the most adequate translation as it fulfills the intended skopos by overcoming the linguistic translation problems, and thus, achieving the ineter-textual coherence or fidelity between the two texts.

Furthermore, Shakespeare in sonnet (14) explains that he somehow is conversant with astrology but not exercising future-telling. Owing to his limited knowledge of astrology, and by staring at the eyes of his beloved boy, this makes him able to find a fixed fact, ie. if his beloved doesn't give existence to a child, he will extinguish both the beauty and the truth. By the same token, Paul (1997) argues:

> The poet is no astrologer predicting the future by watching the stars. The beautiful eyes of his friend are the stars by watching and studying which he can predict that truth and beauty would perish in this world if his friend were not to beget a son to embody and thus continue the truth and beauty which are at present in the friend's possession. (p. 62)

The real problem here in translating this sonnet lies in the word "***truth***" which always means faithfulness "**الإخلاص**", especially in the phrase "***true love***" meaning "**الحب المخلص**" or "**الحبيب المخلص**" which describes here the beloved young boy. In the rest of the sonnets, it is obvious that the beloved boy will be accused of infidelity and some shortcomings, not specified by the poet, but denying his faithfulness. In the early poetry of Shakespeare, the association of beauty and truth is familiar as in his poem "*The Phoenix and the Turtle*". The full name is "*turtle dove*" which is an example of fidelity and faithfulness and this binomial differs with the Romanticists where Keats indicates that beauty is truth and truth is beauty, and this is the most important lesson anyone should learn. By the same token, Paul (1997) says:

It is really fantastic that Shakespeare should identify truth and beauty with his friend, and think his friend to be an embodiment of the aggregate of truth and beauty in this world. His friend is in his eyes an epitome of truth and beauty. And did not the poet, John Keats, say two hundred years later: "*Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty*". (p. 64)

Hence, translating such words represents text-specific and cultural translation problems according to the Skopos theory. The Arab translators under study transferred this word as follows:

But from thine eies my knowledge I deriue,

And constant stars in them I read such art

As truth and beautie shal together thriue

If from thy selfe, to store thou wouldst conuert: *(Burrow, 2002, p. 409; S. 14, L: 9-12)*

بدر:

لكني أستقي معرفتي من خلال عينيك ،

فهي النجوم الوفية التي أجمع منها معرفتي

حيث تزهر الحقيقة والجمال معا

لو أنك تحولت في حياتك عن اختزان نفسك

(Tawfeek, 1988, p. 30)

منصور:

ولكنني أستمد المعارف   من ضوء عيونك اللامعة

فهي كمثل النجوم الثوابت   أقرأ فيها تلك الفنون

ففيها الحقيقة فيها الجمال   وفيها ازدهار وفيها حياة

إذ أنت غيرت من نظرتك   لتصبح خصبا بميلاد طفل   **Mansour, 2011, p.**

(71)

كمال:

... فأنا بصار أجني معرفتي

من الق الأنجم في عينيك ، ومن آلاء أو آيات ،

في غورهما . وأرى أنك والحسن وكل حقائق هذا الكون ، وما أبصر أو لست ارى

تزدهرون إذا أقصيت العين عن النفس وخزنت بذور حياة .   **(Aboudeeb, 2010, p.**

135)

عناني:

لكني من عينيك هنا أعرف كل الطالع

فهما نجمان من الأفلاك الثابتة وفيها أقرأ هذا الواقع:

أي إن جمال المرء وطبع الإخلاص سيزدهران

لو حولت مسارك عن ذاتك كي تبني ذخرا للإنسان   **(Enani, 2016, p. 109)**

As the translations show, Tawfeek and Mansour translate the word "truth" as "الحقيقة" where they have translated it literally as it is without any changes without any seek to retain the intended meaning. Aboudeeb

translates it as "حقائق" where he has rendered it literally and changed it from the singular to the plural form. Hence, this literal translation of the previous three translators distorts the intended meaning. Enani translates it as " طبع الإخلاص" where he has rendered it hermeneutically by adding his word "طبع" meaning "**nature**" according to Al-Mawrid Arabic-English Dictionary. Hence, the four translators have made every effort to render the word in adequate translations. Enani's is the most adequate translation as it fulfills the skopos intended where he properly overcomes the text-specific and cultural translation problems and, in return, maintains the inter-textual coherence between the source text and the translatum.

3- Conclusion:

Meaning is not words in itself but in relation to other words, that is, no meaning within the mere lexical item rather within the whole texture of words. English and Arabic words have not accurate equivalents in the other language and sometimes the meaning of these words in the two languages may correlate in specific contexts and may not correlate in others. Consequently, translating words to produce the apparent meaning is an "illusion" where equivalence is certainly farfetched. In this sense, it has been found that the translation of Enani is the adequate because he manages to fulfill the intended skopos by overcoming the linguistic, cultural, pragmatic and text-specific translation problems. In addition,

translating the sonnets doesn't depend on neither rendering the sole lexical item nor the context of the same sonnet but sometimes it further depends on the whole group of sonnets. Moreover, handling these problems require a good translator of well-acquaintance and experience in order to reach the proper meaning for the intended skopos i.e. the intended function of the translation in the target culture.

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ملخص البحث:

إن ترجمة شكسبير مهمة شاقة للغاية بسبب الطبيعة الخاصة والأسلوب المميز للغته. تتميز السونيتات بالعديد من الخصائص الفريدة التي قد تمنع المترجمين من ترجمة المعنى المقصود إلى اللغة العربية بدقة عالية بسبب طبيعتها الشعرية. هذه دراسة لغوية وظيفية تتعمق في مشاكل ترجمة المفردات المعجمية لأربع ترجمات خاصة بسونيتين وكيف نجح المترجمون الأربعة المعنيون في تحقيق الغرض المقصود وبالتالي التغلب على المشاكل المعجمية أثناء الترجمة أملاً في إدراك المهمة المقصودة للترجمة في الثقافة الهدف.

الكلمات المفتاحية: شكسبير، السونيتات، نظرية الغرض، المفردات المعجمية