
A Comparative Study of Two Persian Translations of Huckleberry Finn's Similes

Sanaz Aghaeipour ¹ , Masoud Rostami ²

1. MA in Translation Studies, English Department, Isfahan (Khorasgan) Branch, Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, Iran

2 .Assistant Professor, English Department, Isfahan (Khorasgan) Branch, Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, Iran

* Corresponding author: Sanaz Aghaeipour

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: *Figurative Language, Simile, Translation Strategy, Perrine's (2007) Theory, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

ABSTRACT

The present research aimed to investigate strategies translators used to render figures of speech such as simile in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. To achieve this aim, 36 similes were analysed and compared with their Persian equivalents. Then, Perrine's (2007) theory was employed to find the applied strategies for rendering simile by the translators. After identifying the applied translation strategies, the analyses were performed to answer the research questions. The translators used five strategies for translating the similes. Omission of the simile, and replacement of the vehicle with a different vehicle are the most frequent strategies for translating the similes. The findings of the present research can be useful for translators, especially the novice ones. They can be aware of the existing problems in translating similes so that they can avoid making the same mistakes in their works.

1. Introduction

The main aim of this research was to investigate the translation strategies used for translating figures of speech, such as simile from English into Persian language. As stated by Bassnett-McGuire (1991), translating is not merely the act of rendering the explicit notion in the sentences, rather it is perceiving the implicit purposes beyond the sentential statements. Accordingly, translators should always follow the translating process meticulously. Kennedy (1979, p. 487) pointed out that a figure of speech may occur when a speaker or writer departs from the typical word denotations due to achieving freshness or leaving emphasis. Britannica (2013) believed that a figure of speech is an intentional act of diverging from literal language to figurative language. Moreover, Arp and Johnson (2012) stated that “a figure of speech is any way of saying something other than the ordinary way” (p. 73). According to Nida (1975), the figurative word is conceptualized as a word used instead of another expression which is not a synonym but has an association of ideas which is normally mediated through a supplementary component (e.g., idioms, similes, and metaphors). Abul Wahid (2017) stated that translating the figurative language requires not only high knowledge of the language and cultures of both source and target language, but also an appropriate selection of translation strategies to convey the meaning clearly.

According to Perrine (2007), similes are creative figures of speech which typically fulfil an aesthetic function. Additionally, similes are a way of talking about something in a surprising way. It is believed that a simile cannot be translated literally given that it may cause misinterpretation in the target language. Holman and Harmon (1995) pointed that simile is one type of using figurative language to indirectly compare two objects. Moreover, Larson (1984) elucidates that there are a multitude of reasons which show why similes are not easily understandable and cannot always be translated literally. First, the image utilized in a simile may not be known in the target language. Second, in some cases, it contains a sort of similarity that is implicitly embedded in the source language and hard to identify for the translators. When the similarity point is not explicitly stated, it might be difficult to interpret the simile. This issue makes it sufficiently troublesome to interpret the simile in order to translate it into the target language. Third, similarity point may be perceived in a different way in one culture than in another one. In other words, the same image taken by the translators may be used with various senses. Literal translation of a simile into a target language could lead to a wrong interpretation or false meaning if the point of similarity is not clearly recognized. Fourth, it is probable that the target language does not make comparison of the type which occur in the source text simile. To overcome this problem in translating similes, especially to avoid wrong, zero, or ambiguous meanings, the translator need to apply tuned translation strategies.

1.1. Research Questions

1. Which strategies did translators use in order to render similes in the novel of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*?
2. Which translation strategies are the most frequently used in translating similes in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*?

1.2. Objectives of the Study

The primary concern in the current study is to investigate the simile in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* to argue for the persuasive effect they have on the audience and, therefore, the importance of the way they are integrated into the target texts. This research compares and analyses the procedure and strategies that is followed and employed by each translator to overcome the challenge of finding the optimal equivalent. Finally, another goal of this research is to explore the most frequent translation strategies used in translating similes in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

1.3. Significance of the Study

The finding of present research can be useful for translators, especially beginners. They can be aware of existing problems in translating figures of speech, so they can avoid committing the same mistakes in their works. The findings of the current study can be used to enrich students' knowledge of translation, especially the students who learn English literature and language. This study therefore can be a reference and comparison for further studies on the same topic. For the researches, this study is a way of applying the ability in evaluating the value of a given translation. For the readers in general, hopefully, this study can be a guide to understand how the researcher analyses the translation strategies applied in the process of translating figurative languages in the aforementioned novel. Finally, the current study can be used as a framework for other critics concerning this type of analysis.

2. Theoretical Literature Review

According to Oliver (1994, p.101), the simile utilized words such as “like” or “as” in its construction. Therefore, a simile is regarded as an explicit, stated comparison. The relation of the object being compared is clearly stated in Perrine’s definition of simile “the statement of a similarity relation between two entities, essentially different but thought to be alike in one or more respect”.

A simile is easy to be identified by the presence of comparison markers. Perrine (2007) stated that there are available markers that signify the presence of a simile. These markers are as follows:

- a. Verbs: sound like, resemble, look like, seem, act like, remind;
- b. Adjectives: the same as, similar to;
- c. Nouns: some kind of, a sort of;
- d. Prepositions (in comparative phrases): as, like;
- e. Conjunctions (in comparative clauses): as when, as if/though,

Perrine (2007) also elaborated on the fact that simile has a tripartite structure consisting of “topic”, or comparandum, (i.e., the entity described by the simile); “vehicle/image”, or comparatum (i.e., the entity to which the topic is compared), accompanied by a comparison marker; “similarity feature(s)” (i.e., the properties shared by topic and vehicle/image). For Harris (2010), similes are comparisons between two different things that resemble each other in at least one way.

In fact, few studies have been conducted on various strategies used to convey the meaning of similes. Perrine (2007) discussed the nature and function of similes and then classified similes based on specific criteria. She also studied a wide range of similes and illustrated the cause of problems in translation process which are initially rooted from similes. She also referred to strategies that can be applied in the process of translating similes.

Israel et al. (2004) described simile as a figure on its own right, and as an object of study which is distinct from both metaphorical expressions and literal comparisons. In another study, Larson (1984) compared and contrasted simile from metaphor. According to Larsson (1984), a metaphor or simile has four parts including ‘image’, ‘topic’, ‘nonfigurative equivalent’ and ‘point of similarity’. She also classified similes and metaphors into dead and live categories.

One of the most frequently occurring features of figurative language is using simile. Simile has an important role in literary texts. There have not been many studies on this figurative speech, but simile can be traced in a number of beneficial sources though most of them debated it along with metaphor.

In a study, Abrams and Harpham (2012), in their book, defined simile concisely as a figure of thought under the heading of figurative language. Moreover, O’Donoghue (2009) compared simile and metaphor and made an attempt to show that metaphor and simile are different in terms of meaning and also in terms of the way they are processed. According to O’Donoghue (2009), “...these differences are all due to a fundamental bias in the form of the simile towards the terms of the comparison being made” (p. 129).

2.1. Strategies for Translating Similes

According to Perrine (2007), there are six different strategies that can be applied for translating similes. The strategies are (1) literal translation (i.e., retention of the same vehicle), (2) the substitution of the vehicle with a different vehicle, (3) the reduction of the simile, if idiomatic, to its sense, (4) the retention of the same vehicle coupled with explicitation of similarity feature(s), (5) the substitution of the vehicle with a gloss, and (6) the omission of the simile.

Larson (1984) proposed five different ways to translate metaphors of which three can be employed for translating similes. They are (1) substituting a simile of the source language which has the same meaning; (2) maintaining the same simile and explaining its meaning (e.g., the topic and/or point of similarity may also be added); and (3) translating the meaning of the simile without considering the imagery of the embedded metaphor.

2.2. Empirical literature Review

Shamsaefard et al. (2013) conducted a study in which they investigated simile translation strategies in four Persian translations of *Hamlet*. They employed Perrine’s (2007) translation model as a framework for their study. Initially, they collected 85 similes as the data. Then, they analysed and compared the data with their Persian translations to identify the translation methods. After analysis, it was shown that literal translation was the most applicable strategy. The results of their research were critical since they revealed a faithfulness tendency shown by the translators as they preferred literal translation.

One of the most critical research studies on simile translation has been conducted by Perrine (2007) who investigated the translation of English similes into Italian language. To be more specific, the research discussed the translation issues of English similes into Italian. First, the data were collected from various

genres. Next, the collected data were analysed and compared with their translations. After data analysis, the translation difficulties of similes including systematic and cultural problems were identified. Such problems were attributed to the linguistic and cultural gaps. Finally, the research proposed six translation methods of similes including literal translation, replacement, reduction, retention with explicitation, replacement with a gloss and deletion.

In their study, Nguyen and Zuckerman (2012) investigated Vietnamese similes in terms of their structures, rhymes, and semantics. They made an attempt to compare and contrast Vietnamese similes with others such as British ones. Data were collected from various resources. After the analysis, the Vietnamese similes were classified into two major types including meaning similes and rhyme similes. In addition, the results showed that there were shared features between Vietnamese and cockney similes in terms of their rhymes. Ultimately, the study concluded that even though similes were different in various cultures, they might share some features. The significance of this research was that similes can differ while they share some features among different languages and cultures. This can either simplify the translation process or make it more challenging. In another study by Rapi (2014), entitled *Simile in Thomas Hardy's Tess of the D'Urbeville and Their Translation into Albanian*, the similes in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbeville* into Albanian were investigated. First, Rapi (2014) analysed the term of simile and their structures. Then, he analysed the semantic content and stylistic function the translator fulfils in the original text and how it was recreated into Albanian. He conducted it by applying Newmark's theory about metaphor translation to analyse the data. He found that as far as the semantic content was concerned, there were no noticeable difference between simile in the source language and the target language. Mostly the simile on *Tess of the D'Urbeville* novel could be translated by using their direct equivalent in Albanian. However, the translation also manipulated some syntactic structures by giving additional element for naturalness of expression. This journal is a great journal as a reference. Rapi discussed about simile not only from translation aspect but also how the structural of simile and type of simile. He uses several theories as a supporting theory from the latest expert and combines it with Newmark theory. The different between this journal and this study is the theory that being used, Rapi (2014) used Newmark as his main theory on analysing simile, while this study uses Larson theory.

Another study, carried out by Arenales (2010), investigated similes beyond their linguistic domains. In particular, this study investigated similes as a cultural outcome rather than a linguistic product. The researcher discusses the role of culture in constructing the contextual meaning of similes. For instance, the researcher analysed the cultural meaning of the simile "The night came like a great lady, slowly dragging a long black coat studded with diamonds." He explains that the receiver of this simile would require some cultural knowledge to comprehend its implicit meaning. After data analysis, it was shown that culture play a crucial role in the meaning construction and comprehension of similes. Accordingly, the importance of the study of Arenales (2010) was reflected by indicating a link between culture and similes. This indication proposes that similes acquire a cultural meaning which should be considered in the translation.

A thesis written by Yukti (2012) *Translation of English Personification and Simile Expression in John Gingham's The Street Lawyer into Indonesian* analysed the simile and personification applying Larson and Knickerbocker and Reninger theory. The data was taken from John Gingham's *the street lawyer* novel and its Indonesian version. She found 10 personifications and 6 similes on it and mostly similes on that novel were translated by figurative language expression that natural on target language. Compared to this study, thesis by Yukti and this study use the same theories to analyse the data. The scope of her thesis is also almost similar but besides analysing simile she was also interested in analysing the personification.

In another study, Fadaee (2011), investigated the translation techniques of figures of speech in George Orwell's *1984* and *Animal Farm* and their Persian translations based on the Newmark's and Larson's theories of translation. Her study reiterated that a) "theories and techniques of translating figures of speech, such as metaphor and simile are so limited which do not cover translating all types of metaphors and similes" (Newmark, 1988a, p. 57) and b) in Persian language, there has not been any crucial technique for translating the metaphoric language as well as similes, while English techniques are typically employed for the purpose of translating these two figures of speech. Moreover, it was revealed that there is a limited number of publications in relation to figures of speech, particularly regarding the metaphors and similes in both Persian and English languages. This last issue must be considered critically in future studies.

In his study, Moon (2008) examined the semantic aspects of English similes. In effect, the study of Moon (2008) was aimed to clarify how semantic variations and survival of similes in the present English lexicon are formed. The study of Moon (2008) was corpus-based descriptive research that analysed data collected from different resources such as literature, media and other written texts. After analysis, the study unveiled that simile maintenance within the lexicon hinged upon their popular usage and high frequency in novels. Therefore, literary translators should be expected to encounter similes in a high frequency, especially in the case of translating novels.

3. Design of the Study

A descriptive, non-experimental quantitative design was used for this study. In this research, first, the translation process was inspected by analysing different examples in the target language and comparing these translations to the original text to assess the appropriateness of the translated figures of speech. Then, translation procedures were appointed by discussing translator's choices and suggesting the most suitable procedures. To perform this study, figure of speech such as simile was selected as a subject matter, i.e., to identify and analyse the figures of speech, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and their Persian translations were selected as the sources of the subject. This novel was chosen because it was full of figures of speech.

3.1. Materials

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn along with its two Persian translations were selected as the materials of the present study. Mark Twain wrote *Huckleberry Finn* to illustrate "trenchantly the social limitation that American 'civilization' imposes on individual freedom" (Smith, 1998, p. 104). The novel is a critique of social elements, such as romanticism, religion, and racism, which existed in the late- nineteenth century. This novel was chosen because it was full of figurative language. There were several Persian translations of this novel but the most famous ones were the versions translated by Hooshang Pirnazar in 2015 (published by Amirkabir Publications) and Ebrahim Golestan in 2014 (Published by Nashre-Kalagh Publications).

3.2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of the present research was basically associated with the theoretical premises put forward by Perrine. The first step in selecting the similes was finding out their equivalents in Persian. Next, the translation equivalents in the two selected texts were found. Then, the strategies translators used based on Perrine's (2007) model were determined. Finally, they were checked using a panel of experts in the field. Perrine's (2007, p. 31) translation model of similes consists of the following strategies:

1. Literal translation
2. Replacement of the vehicle with a different vehicle
3. Reduction simile, if idiomatic, to its sense
4. Retention of the same vehicle plus explicitation of similarity features
5. Replacement vehicle with a gloss
6. Omission of the simile

In any translation project, the initial decision which translation procedure to adopt, may affect the whole translation process. In the present study, the translation method to analyse the collected data was based on Perrine's (2007) translation simile theory. The rationale behind using Perrine's theory refers to its authentic classification for simile translation strategies.

3.3. Raters

A panel of three raters assessed the quality of the lexical equivalents. The first rater was the researcher herself, who selected and analysed the data. Besides, the researcher has done the evaluation at two separate times in order to increase the intra-rater reliability. The second rater was an English professor who was completely familiar with the same theoretical frame work. The third rater was also an English professor who had a comprehensive dominance on teaching English.

3.4. Data Collection Procedures

To carry out the present research, the following steps were taken. First, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* was chosen as the main data source. The researcher read the novel and compared it with two Persian translations. The source text was wholly skimmed; then, 19 chapters for finding the similes were selected as the data of study by the researcher. Through a sentence contrasting each Source Text-Target Text pair of data of research, instances of simile, as the unit of translations were detected to be analysed. Then, 36 similes were chosen as the representatives of the whole simile items in the novel. The researcher compared similes with their translations in order to identify the strategies adopted by two translators. The comparison and analysis of data were done based on Perrine's (2007) strategies for similes. Through comparing the English and Persian texts, the type of strategy used for each simile was determined. The frequency of the strategies applied in the translation was counted so that the percentage could be presented in the next sub-topic.

3.5. Data Analysis Procedure

According to Perrine's (2007) classification of similes, to answer the first research question which seeks to explore the strategies applied by each translator, the researcher used descriptive, non-experimental statistics. First, the total number of translation strategies applied by both translators was determined; then, the translation strategies applied by each translator were determined as well. At last, the frequency of each translation strategy was calculated.

The second research question aimed to find out the most strategies the translators used. Therefore, the translation strategies applied by translators were detected and classified according to different strategies stated by Perrine (2007). The frequency of each translation strategy was calculated in Persian translation to show the most frequently used strategies and hence to determine the most pervasive translation method. To classify the strategies applied by the translators, the researcher herself was the coder.

3.5. Examples of Translation Similes

Examples of Applied Techniques in Translation Similes in the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

Omission of the simile by Hoshang Pirnazar

His hat was laying on the floor; an old black slouch with the top caved in, like a lid.

Reduction of simile, if idiomatic to its sense by Hoshang Pirnazar

Then they tucked the old man into a beautiful room, and the night sometime he got powerful thirsty and clumb out onto the porch-roof and slid down a stanchion and traded his new coat for a jug of forty-rod, and clumb back again and had a good old time; and towards daylight he crawled out again, drunk as a fiddler, and rolled off the porch and broke his left arm in two places and was most froze to death when some body found him after sun-up.

Replacement of the vehicle with a different vehicle by Hoshang Pirnazar

I reckon r shook like a leaf, and I didn't know hardly what to do

Literal translation by Hoshang Pirnazar

Another one was a young lady with her hair all combed up straight to the top of her head, and knotted there in front of a comb like a chair-back, and she was crying into a hand kerchief and had a dead bird laying on its back in her other hand with its heel up, and underneath the picture it said "I shall Never Hear Thy sweet chirrup More Alas

Replacement vehicle with a gloss by Hoshang Pirnazar

Boggs comes a-tearing along on his horse, whooping and yelling like an Injun, and singing out- "Cler the track, that. I'm on the waw- path, and the price uv coffins is a gwyne to raise".

Omission of the simile by Ebrahim Golestan

His hat was laying on the floor; an old black slouch with the top caved in, like a lid.

Replacement of the vehicle with a different vehicle by Ebrahim Golestan

Then they tucked the old man into a beautiful room, and the night sometime he got powerful thirsty and clumb out onto the porch-roof and slid down a stanchion and traded his new coat for a jug of forty-rod, and clumb back again and had a good old time; and towards daylight he crawled out again, drunk as a fiddler, and rolled off the porch and broke his left arm in two places and was most froze to death when some body found him after sun-up.

Literal translation by Ebrahim Golestan

I reckon r shook like a leaf, and I didn't know hardly what to do

Replacement vehicle with a gloss by Ebrahim Golestan

Boggs comes a-tearing along on his horse, whooping and yelling like an Injun, and singing out- "Cler the track, that. I'm on the waw- path, and the price uv coffins is a gwyne to raise".

Reduction of simile, if idiomatic to its sense Ebrahim Golestan

but pretty soon he struggled up astraddle and grabbed the bridle, a reeling this way and that; and the next minute he sprung up and dropped the bridle and stood; and the horse a going like a house afire too.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows the frequency and percentage of strategies used for translation of similes. These strategies include literal translation, replacement of the vehicle with a different vehicle, reduction of simile if idiomatic to its sense, replacement of vehicle with a gloss, and omission of the simile. Moreover, Table 2 shows that the most frequent techniques for translating similes are literal translation (54.16 %), omission of

the simile (26.38 %), and replacement of the vehicle with a different vehicle (13.88 %).

Table 1. *Results of Frequency and Percentage of Simile Translation Strategies by Ebrahim Golestan and Hooshang Pirnazar*

Category	<i>Techniques of translation</i>	<i>E.Golestan</i>	<i>E.Golestan</i>	<i>H.Pirnazar</i>	<i>H.Pirnazar</i>
		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
A	<i>Literal translation</i>	13	36.11	26	72.22
B	<i>Replacement of the vehicle with a different vehicle</i>	3	8.33	7	19.44
C	<i>Reduction of simile, if idiomatic to its sense</i>	1	2.77	1	2.77
D	<i>Retention of the same vehicle plus explicitation of similarity features</i>	0	0	0	0
E	<i>Replacement of vehicle with a gloss</i>	1	2.77	1	2.77
F	<i>Omission of the simile</i>	18	50	1	2.77
	<i>Total</i>	36	100	36	100

As Table 1 shows, on the one hand, the most frequently translation strategy used by Ebrahim Golestan is ‘omission of the simile’. ‘Replacement of vehicle with a gloss’ and ‘reduction of simile, if idiomatic to its sense’ are the least frequently translation strategies used by Ebrahim Golestan. On the other hand, ‘literal translation’ is the most frequently simile translation strategy used by Hooshang Pirnazar. ‘Omission of the simile’, ‘replacement of vehicle with a gloss’, and ‘reduction of simile if idiomatic to its sense’ are the least translation strategies used by Hooshang Pirnazar.

Table 2. *Total Frequency and Percentage of Simile Translation Strategies*

<i>Category</i>	<i>Techniques of Translation</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
A	<i>Literal translation</i>	39	54.16
B	<i>Replacement of the vehicle with a different vehicle</i>	10	13.88
C	<i>Reduction of simile, if idiomatic to its sense</i>	2	2.77
D	<i>Retention of the same vehicle plus explicitation of similarity features</i>	0	0
E	<i>Replacement of vehicle with a gloss</i>	2	2.77
F	<i>Omission of the simile</i>	19	26.38
	<i>Total</i>	72	100

In total, ‘literal translation’ is the most frequently simile translation strategy used by these two translators. ‘Reduction of simile, if idiomatic to its sense’ and ‘replacement of vehicle with a gloss’ are the least frequently simile translation strategies.

5. Conclusion

The present study aimed to assess the quality of Persian translations of Mark Twain’s novel in terms of simile translation. Assessing the translation quality of Mark Twain’s novel recognized the problematic area including translation procedures in this particular translation, and frequency of each translation strategy.

This research revealed what problems and difficulties a literary translator faced with and what he could render as translation strategies in the process of translation. Regarding the results of Golestan and Pirnazar’s translations, the study showed that the simile strategies used by the translators are already effective because while doing the research, the intended meaning of the translated similes could be easily grasped. Pirnazar translated the text with more details than Golestan; in other words, Golestan omitted some sentences. At the end, although studies like this are not enough to reduce all the problems of a literary translation, it contributes to having a better understanding of translation procedure and accordingly a better translation.

6. References

1. Abdul Wahid, P. R. (2017). Translation of Figurative Language from English to Malay: An Analysis of the Translation of the Harry Potter Series. *Proceedings of Research World International Conference*. 978-93-86083-34-0.
2. Barathayomi, M.Hum, W. (2015). The Translation of Similes in Andrea Hirata's The Rainbow Troops. *TELL – US Journal*, 1(2).
3. H. Hilman, E., Ardiyanti, K., Yusuf Pelawi, B. (2013). Translation of Similes in F.Scott Fitzgerald's Novel "The Great Gatsby". *Jurnal Ilmu dan Budaya, Edisi Khusus Prodi Sastra Inggris*, 1.
4. Hartono, R. (2012). *Translation Problems of Idioms and Figurative Languages from English into Indonesian*.
5. Hazwani Wan Ramli, W. N. (2014). *The Translation of Simile in the Hunger Games Novel: Translation Strategies*
6. Listiani, H. (2015). An Analysis of Figurative Language Found on the Song Lyric by Taylor Swift's "Speak Now" Album.
7. Masroor, F. Pourmohammadi, M. (2016). Problems in Translating Figures of Speech: A Review of Persian Translations of Harry Potter Series. *International Journal of English Language & Translation Studies*, 4(4).
8. Nashi M Alshammari, J. (2016). Analyzing Arabic Translation Methods of English Similes: A Case Study of *the Old Man and the Sea* by Ernest Hemingway. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 6(3), 485-494.
9. Shamsaeefard, M., Falahati Qadimi Fumani, M. R., Nemati, A. (2013). Strategies for Translation of Similes in Four Different Persian Translations of *Hamlet*. *Linguistics and Literature Studies*, 1(3), 164-168