The Essence of Poetry Translation: Prosodic Features and Their Effect on English-Arabic Translation

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Abstract

The difficulty of translating poetry rises from its specificity because it comprises in its verses all instances of difficulty that exist in a language whether aesthetic, grammatical, linguistic or cultural. Amongst these features, there are the prosodic features: the sounds which play a great role in meaning. Generally, the effect of these sounds is implicit and it is the role of the translator to cater for it in translation. For the sake of knowing the effect of prosodic features in translation, we attempt in this paper to see what the most frequent prosodic features are, the extent to which they affect the transmitted message with emphasis on their role in poetry. This is done through some suggested procedures which may be considered as solutions to problems encountered when translating phonological aspects of poetic texts from English into Arabic.

Keywords: Poetic translation, prosodic feature, their effect on translation.

ملخص

إن صعوبة ترجمة الشعر تنبع من خصوصيته فهو جامع لمقومات جمالية تتجاوز المستوى الإبلاغي إلى المستوى التأثيري، حيث تلعب الموسيقى الإيقاعية، والتي يعود بعضها إلى الأوزان العروضية، وبعضها الآخر مرتبط بالميزات الإيقاعية الصوتية، دورا كبيرا في التأثير على المعنى بطريقة غير مباشرة، وهنا يتجلى دور المترجم الذي يحاول نقل المعنى الشعري بكل تأثيراته الجمالية. ومن أجل معرفة تأثير الميزات العروضية في الترجمة، فإننا سنحاول كشف الميزات العروضية الأكثر شيوعا، وإلى أي مدى تؤثر على فحوى النص المترجم مؤكدين على دورها في الشعر، ومنوهين ببعض الإجراءات المقترحة والتي تعتبر حلولا للمشاكل التي نصادفها عند ترجمة الجوانب الصوتية للنصوص الشعرية من اللغة الإنجليزية إلى اللغة العربية.

كلمات مفتاحية: ترجمة الشعر، الخصائص العروضية، تأثيرها في الترجمة.

Introduction:

The most important question to ask about poetic translation and its relation with prosodic features is whether to translate poetry into poetry or into prose. This raises the importance of prosodic features in poems especially rhymes and meters. Brodsky (1987 in Bonnefoy, 1979: 374) proposes that "meters in verse are kinds of spiritual magnitude for which nothing can be substituted… they cannot be replaced by each other and especially by free verse". This quote points on the preservation of both meter and rhyme when translating poems because the form of a poem is of a great importance for it goes together with the words just as the signifier and signified which change through the passage of time. For instance, if Arabic classical poetry is translated literally it will not have the same impact in the target language as it had in the source language because it will lose a lot of its beauty. However, there are poems which reflect the deep emotions and feelings of the poet an hence they result in emotional effects. In this case, the pragmatic dimension is the most difficult as when the translator cannot capture the semantic meaning in semantic equivalence, he will not be able to define the dynamic equivalence. What matters here is the effect or the impact of prosodic features such as rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, assonance, consonance, chiming, etc. Thus, before highlighting the importance of prosodic features we shall focus on the importance of poetry, the translatability of poetry and the placement of prosodic features in all that by giving some examples of prosodic features and their effect in poems.

1-The Importance of Poetry:

Halperin (2005) says that the importance of poetry is intended to signify the objectives and goals that poets seek to attain through writing their poem. It seeks to celebrate beauty through musicality of sounds. For some poets, there is no purpose in poetry because it is a total freedom; it is the essential language of unity of inspiration. In addition to that, it establishes the notion and practises the culture of different kinds. Without poetry, many noble things would be lacking. Poetry tries to metamorphose the readers into different beings from what they were when they began reading.

Sometimes poetry is used to understand thematically or emotionally difficult subjects. Poetry cannot have a general purpose beyond the self-expression of individual poets since there are some specific subjects which inspire poets such as love and death. The best and most beautiful type of poetry is self expression; it is the sovereign because it expresses what is inside the poet, i.e., his true and sincere feelings.

Walders (2000: 51) claims that poetry can touch us deeply to the extent of feeling what cannot be articulated. Moreover, what cannot be understood by didactic methods of teaching may be understood by a poem. Hence, poetry clarifies what is difficult in easy ways, and the unusual in usual ways because it contains vice and values, time and place, past and present.

In spite of that, Serio (2009: 1) proposes that poetry makes us aware of shared cultural history and goes deeper in the human soul. In addition to that, poetry provides linguists with the rules that govern the language since it is one instance for understanding the language.

Thus, poetry enables us to see the instants of reality in its nature and in its imaginary and spiritual continuation which helps stamp ideas in the minds of people.

2-Prosodic Features of the English Poetry:

There are plenty of features which characterize poetry, or what is called by some; poetic devices. In what follows, we are just going to focus on prosodic features, i.e., the features which are related to sound system (phonology).

2-1 Prosody:

According to Ghazala (2004: 119), prosody is: "The art of versification regarding sound features in poetry in general." So, it is the art that studies how sounds are related in poetic verses.

2-2 The Sounds of Words:

Words are arranged to achieve specific kinds of effects, called sound devices. The different deliberate arrangements of words according to their sound pattern have been identified by Klein (2010), Probyn (1989) and Ghazala (2004) in the following.

2-2-1 Alliteration:

It is a kind of initial rhyme. It is the repeated consonant sounds at the beginning of words, on the same or adjacent line in English. For instance; <u>f</u>ast and <u>f</u>urious. In Arabic, it occurs at the end of words; it becomes a kind of rhyme; it is called (السجع) e.g. في وقع خطاك على الصلب وإلى العشب (Ibid).

2-2-2 Assonance:

It is a half alliteration that occurs in a repeated vowel sound in the words that are placed near each other, usually on the same adjacent line. It should be in words that are accented and stressed rather than those which are not stressed in English. However, in Arabic it is not as clear as it is in English. (سجع الصوائت) e.g. R<u>o</u>se and s<u>o</u>le/s<u>ou</u>l) (Ibid).

2-2-3 Consonance:

It is a half-rhyme of consonant sounds at the end of words placed near each other usually on the same or adjacent line. It produces a pleasant sound of near-rhyme. For example; c<u>ool</u> s<u>oul</u>. In Arabic, it is similar to alliteration; it is called (سجع الصوامت) (Probyn, 1989).

2-2-4 Chiming:

It is words similar in spelling and near to each other in pronunciation. These words have a kind of alliteration between them. They are thought to be identical in meaning, but in reality they are not. It is called in Arabic (تآلف اللفظ و المعنى) e.g. <u>men</u> and <u>mice</u> (Op.Cit).

2-2-5 Cacophony:

It is a discordant unpleasant, harsh sound which carries disorder and results in the difficulty of pronunciation. For example; My sti<u>ck</u> finger cli<u>ck</u> with a sni<u>ck</u>er (Probyn, 1989).

2-2-6 Euphony:

It is a series of musically pleasant sound which conveys a sense of harmony and beauty to the language. For instance; a bird came down the walk

2-2-7 Onomatopoeia:

The words that resemble the noise they make. For instance; if we say; In hear the steady <u>tick</u> of the word hall clock. The word tick sounds like the action of the clock. (محاكاة الصوت للمعنى).

2-2-8 Repetition:

It is the intended reuse of words and phrases for effect especially in speech. Parallelism, which are the longer phrases that have different key words, is also used. This is a central part in poetry. For example; I was glad; so very, very glad.

2-2-9 Rhyme:

This is the device most associated with poetry by the general public. It means words which have different beginning sounds, but whose endings sound are alike, including the final vowel sound and the sounds of the consonants following it, are said to rhyme. It is a kind of a phonetic echo or matching sound at the end of poetic verses. As an illustration; t<u>ime</u>, sl<u>ime</u>, m<u>ime</u>. This is what we call in Arabic (القافية).

2-2-9-1 Types of Rhyme:

2-2-9-1-1 Double Rhymes:

It includes the last two syllables. For example; rev<u>ival</u>, arr<u>ival</u>, surv<u>ival</u>.

2-2-9-1-2 Triple Rhymes:

It includes the final three syllables. For instance; gr<u>eenery</u>, mach<u>inery</u>, and sc<u>enery</u>. If the final consonants are the only sounds of words which are the same, but the initial consonants and the vowel sounds are different the rhyme is called slant rhyme or half rhyme as in sou<u>l</u>, oi<u>l</u>, fou<u>l</u>. When this appears in the middle of a line this is called consonance as mentioned before.

2-2-9-1-3 Near Rhyme:

It is when the final vowel sounds are the same, but the final consonant sounds are slightly different. The following words illustrate that; fa<u>me</u>, poe<u>m</u>, rhy<u>me</u>.

2-2-9-1-4 Sight Rhymes:

Also called eye rhymes, it means words which are spelled the same, but pronounced differently such as; enou<u>gh</u>, cou<u>gh</u>, trou<u>gh</u>, and bou<u>gh</u>.

2-2-10 Rhythm:

In spite of the unawareness of the definition of rhythm, nearly everyone responds that it is the organization of verbal stresses or speech rhythm into a regular pattern of accented syllables separated by unaccented syllables. Rhythm is of a great importance in poetry since it distinguishes it from prose. The best example that illustrates rhythm is; i THOUGHT i SAW a PUSsy CAT while the stressed syllables are the ones written in capital letters. This is sometimes referred to as meter. Rhythm is called (الإيقاع) in Arabic (Ibid.)

2-2-11 Metre:

It is the organization of voice patterns by focusing on stresses of the frequency of repetition per line of verse. Poetry is organized according to the division of each line into *feet* [6]. It is called in Arabic (البحر)

T.S Eliot (1972 in Probyn 1989 : 19) says: "There is no escape from metre, there is only mastery." Poetry and songs are famous for their metrical rhythm which is the recurrence of regular rhythmic unit in a line of poetry. Because of the importance of metrical rhythm, the poet needs to master it very well as posited by Eliot.

2-2-11-1. Types of Metre in Anglo-Saxon Poetry:

Probyn (1989) proposes that there are three basic types of metre in Anglo-Saxon poetry, as we will see.

2-2-11-1-1 Accentual Metre:

It is poetry in which the number of syllables, but not accents, per a line is variable. In each half-line of Anglo-Saxon poetry there are always two stressed syllables, for that in each verse four syllables are stressed.

2-2-11-1-2 Syllabic Metre:

In this type of meter, there is a fixed number of syllables per a line yet the number of accents is variable.

2-2-11-1-3 Accentual-syllabic Metre:

It is the third type of metre which is a combination of the two first types. It has dominated English poetry for the last four hundred years. It is characterized by a regular pattern of the number both syllables and stresses in each line.

2-2-12 Feet:

Probyn (Ibid.) proposes that the feet is a metric unit which embraces a specific arrangement of strong and weak stresses. The most common metric is the iambic which consists of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed one as in the word "reverse". It is worth mentioning that stressed syllables are marked with an accent mark and unstressed ones are labeled with a dash. Moreover, metrical feet may be as long as three syllables and are divided by slashes. The following table shows the types of metrical feet:

Pattern	Name	Example
/	Iamb/ Iambic	Invite
/ -	Trochee/ Trochaic	Deadline
- /	Anapest/Anapestic	To the beach
/ - -	Dactyl/Dactylic	Frequently
/ /	Spondee/ Spondaic	True blue

Table1*: Types of Metrical Feet (Ibid)*

Meter is measured by the number of feet in a line. A line with five feet is called in Greek language parameter. Thus, a line which is composed of five lines is known as "iambic parameter". This latter is the most common metrical form in English poetry, and the one favoured by Shakespeare, for example the most common line length are:

Monometer: one foot, Diameter: two feet, Trimeter: three feet, Tetrameter: four feet, Pentameter: five feet, Hexameter: six feet, Heptameter: seven feet, Octameter: eight feet.

2-2-13 Beat:

Ghazala (2004) claims that a beat is the stressed syllable in a foot or the crucial rhythmic unit. It is called in Arabic (شطر التفعيلة المشدد)

2-2-14 Off-Beat:

It is the unstressed syllable in a foot. It is called in Arabic; شعر) (التفعيلة المخففة) .(2004)

2-2-15 Tone/Stress/Pitch:

These three describe the levels of the voice, known in Arabic as (النغمة والنبر "الشدة" و طبقة الصوت).

2-2-16 Scansion/scanning (تقطيع شعري)

3- Some Translation Procedures

Ghazala (2004) suggested some procedures as guidelines to translators and students when he concluded his paper which was centered on *prosodic features and effects in translation.* These procedures are summarized in:

Reading the source text carefully, especially if it were a poem for many times in order to understand it and absorb its meaning through reaching what is behind the lines. This is properly done before starting translation. Yet, if stylistic, lexical, or grammatical problems arise; they should be solved through adaptation first before moving a step forward.

Translating an English poem into Arabic should be done through ignoring sound features completely when the focus is on sense.

Choosing the best time for considering figures of sound (phonological features) of the original poem like rhyme and rhythm as a general umbrella for common features such as alliteration, consonance, assonance, foot and meter particularly.

Concentration should be on realizing a kind of rhyme or half rhyme then rhythm.

Taking advantage of the Arabic word order flexibility to make any necessary change till completing target poem through the use of rhyme or near rhyme.

Examining the various synonyms of keywords and rhyme word. No matter if a long expression stands for the original lexical item. The formal expression and words are favoured than the informal expressions especially in poems and formal texts.

Using the change of grammatical classes of words loosely such as replacing in Arabic a noun by an adjective, a verb with a noun, and an adverb with an adjective in order to make some considerable space available to realize some sound features.

Taking advantage of the poetic license in Arabic with due regard to stylistic, lexical, and grammatical changes, especially those which concern abbreviations and short forms of words, with specific reference to vocalization (التشكيل) with the four vocal points: (الفتحة، الضمة، الكسرة والسكون) where they occur in a text.

Adding new words which are not used in the original easily and quickly. These words are implied in the original text or derived from the context.

Dropping unnecessary words if the meaning is understood from the context.

These procedures summarize the task of the translator who wants to translate a poem from English into Arabic. Some of these procedures have been discussed under different labels, but the most important is that this model is an applicable one because it is near practice and far from the theoretical rules which cannot be applied.

4- Example of Poems Including Prosodic Features
4-1 Poem1

Lucy	لوسي
She dwelt among the untrodden ways.	قد عاشت بين الطرقات البهيمه
Beside the springs of Dove,	عند ينابيع اليمامه
A Maid whom there were none to praise	عذراء ما أحد مدحها بكلمه
And very few to love:	وما أحبها إلا له
A violet by a mossy stone	بنفسجة بجوار حجرة طحلبية
Half hidden from the eye!	عن العبون متخفيه!
Fair as a star, when only one	جميلة كنجمة اؤلؤيه
Is shining in the sky.	وحدها في السماء متحليه
She lived unknown, and few could know	مجهولة عاشت، وقلة عرفت
When Lucy ceased to be;	حين اختفت لوسي وحياتها انطفأت
But she is in her grave, and oh,	لكنها في قبرها، يا ويلتي
The difference to me!	شتان ما بين حياتها لي والموت!

(Wordsworth From Brumfit and
Carter (eds.):1986)

Concerning the above Arabic translation; it gives great importance to rhythm and rhyme. This is done with due reference to the meaning and by making and equilibrium between form and meaning. Thus, the translator has used in his translation three main procedures which are: changing normal word order as in: When Lucy ceased to be; حين اختفت لوسي وحياتها انطفأت the translator here used: حياتها انطفأت instead of انطفأت حياتها . The second procedure is the use of synonymy and this is done through the use of synonymy is short and more expressive words as in: using متجلية which is the equivalent of shinning in this context instead of لامعة أو ساطعة .The third and last procedure that is used by the translator is expansion. This implies that the translator uses two or more words as equivalents to one word in the original version. This is exemplified in: 'the difference to me' which has been translated into: شتان ما بين حياتها والموت! . All these procedures are followed by the translator in order to get a good translation because if the translator did not use these procedures, the target language version, Arabic in this case, will lose its beauty and hence will be considered as a bad translation.

The rhyme of this poem follows the pattern of (a b a b) . However, in Arabic, the rhyme of modern Arabic poetry which is stanzaic is used. This implies that each stanza has a given rhyme which is different from the others.

4-2 Poem 2

	السكون
Calm	

Calm is the morn without a sound,	السكون صبح دون ضجيج
Calm as to suit a calmer grief, And only thro' the faded leaf	سكون يوازي الحزن الشديد
	من خلال ورقة ذابله
The chestnut pattering to the ground:	تربت الكستناء على البابسه
Calm and deep peace on this high wold,	هدوء وسكينة عظيمة على ذي التلة العالية
And on these dews that drench the furze.	على قطرات الندى هذه تبلل الجولق الشوكيه
And all the silvery gossamers	ولعابات الشمس الفضيه
That twinkle into green and gold:	تتلألأ بالأخضر وذهبيه
Calm and still light on yon great plain	هدوء ونور ساكن على سهولك العظيمه
That sweeps with all its autumn bowers,	ينحرف بعرائشه الخريفيه
And crowded farms and lessening towers,	ومزارعه المزدحمة بروحه المضمحله
To mingle with the bounding main:	لتتمازج مع البحار المحاذيه
Calm and deep peace in this wide air,	سكون وهدوء عميق في هذا الفضاء الواسع
These leaves that redden to the fall;	تلك الأوراق التي تحمر حتى السقوط الدامع
And in my heart, if calm at all,	وفي قلبي، لو كان هنالك شيء
If any calm, a calm despair:	لو كان هدوء لكان يأس هادئ
Calm on the seas, and silver sleep,	سكون على البحار، والنوم الفضي
And waves that sway themselves in rest,	وأمواج تؤرجح نفسها بارتياح شجي
And dead calm in that noble breast	وهدوء الميت نام في ذاك الصدر النقي
Which heaves but with the heaving deep	يتنهد التنهد العميق القوي
(Tennyson From Carter and Long: 1987)	

The translation of this poem is not like the previous one since this poem has not been translated into Arabic in a good manner. Thus, there is a big problem in trying to match the rhyme of this poem in the Arabic language. The rhyme of the Arabic version seems to be forced since it is not as fluent as the English version. The first verse comprises the word 'sound' which should be translated to صوت . Yet, it has been translated to ضجيج which does not express the same meaning and does not achieve the rhyme of the first stanza of the poem. The word: plain is translated to Arabic by using the plural for m which is سهول instead of سهل which portrays the convenience of rhyme. The equivalent of the word 'plain' in Arabic is followed by its adjective and if it is not turned into the plural feminine form, it will not fit the rhyme. In spite of giving the whole importance to rhyme and rhythm, the meaning has been given more importance. Here, there is another version which shows that the priority is given to prosody which produces a perfect poem in terms of all the prosodic features and especially (rhyme and rhythm) and whose prosodic features resemble those of classical Arabic but which is in the form of free verse (الشعر الحر)

إن السكون صبيحة دون الصخب

ما مثله إلا الأسى يا للعجب

من بين أوراق ذوت منها و حسب

الكستناء على الثرى انهالت بضرب

سكن رهيب في السهول العاليات

وعلى الندى قد بل شوك الرتمات

ونسيج شمس فضة بتموجات

بالأخضر الذهبي هن ملألآت

يا للسكون و نور سهلك أهدل

بخريفه و عرائش تتسهّل

ومزارع مكتظة و بروحه تتآكل

لتعانق البحر الذي يتمايل

هذه السكينة في الفضاء أرحبت

تلك الوريقات ذوت حتى هوت

لو كان شيء مهجتي فيها حوت

لو كان فالقنوط و قد صمت

اليمّ هذي والكرى من فضة

والموج مرتاح شجي الرقصة

وسكينة أبدية في ذلك الصدر الفتي

وتنهّد أناته في حسرة

This version sounds more appropriated to the Arabic language since it used some classical or frozen and very formal words such as: قنوط، أسى، اليم، مهجة In addition, it focuses on making the meaning of the Arabic version clear for the readers through adding some words which do not exist in the original English text such as: أناته في حسرة This version is also noted for deviation of language norms of spelling some words in order to fit poetic standards (poetic license).such as: **هن** ملاَلاَت instead of هي ملاَلأة in order to replace the inanimate by the animate.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, it may be noted that prosodic features are of great importance in poetry especially for its meaning. In effect, they represent the form or the external shape of any piece of writing in translation, particularly poetry where both sounds and sense are significant. Thus, prosodic features may cause difficulties in translation yet, they are translatable. However, some deviations and changes are allowed in order to come out with a version that is accepted in the target language. In spite, of the difficulty of translating prosodic features and reserving the same impact in the target language and its reader, translators still try to render prosodic features by following the translation procedures that have been mentioned earlier. So, prosodic features should be given great importance in the translation of poetry with a special focus on rhyme and rhythm respectively.

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