

Conceptual Metaphor in Translation

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Abstract

The present paper employ a cognitive approach to metaphor launched by Lakoff and Johnson's influential book, *Metaphors We Live By*, and adopts the cognitive translation hypothesis proposed by Kovecses (2005). The corpus of the study includes two collections of documentary films entitled *Planet Earth* and *Elegant Universe*, altogether nine hundred minutes, translated by Iran Market Center and Mehr & Sepehr Software Co. respectively. The reasons behind choosing these documentaries are first, similarity of genre (i.e. documentary) and second, diversity of the context under study. The study first identified different instances of conceptual metaphors in English and Persian texts. Then it examined similarities and differences of the conceptual mappings based on comparative literature and explored the translation strategies underlying them and illustrated what a cognitive approach could offer to the description of metaphor in translation. The results obtained from the comparison of linguistic and cultural peculiarities of the metaphorical expressions between the two languages revealed that similarities in metaphorical expressions increase translatability, while differences hinder the translation process.

Key Words: Cognitive approach, conceptual metaphor, mapping

1-Introduction

Metaphor as a feature of language, thought, and communication is still one of the unsolved issues for the scholars who proceed to transfer it from one language and culture into another. Meanwhile, a number of thoughts and approaches, mostly based on a traditional

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understanding of metaphor, have come into existence in order to conquer this fort. Traditional approach to metaphor launched by Aristotle considers metaphor as a “matter of word” and a “mere linguistic expression” (see Lakoff and Johnson, 2003). Aristotle introduced four types of metaphors, namely, “genus for genus, genus for species, species for genus, and analogy” (Matthew, 2001, p. 4). The first three types share a common characteristic under the umbrella called substitution. A diachronic study shows that substitution has received the most attention among scholars studying metaphor. Consequently the scholars have coined a number of translation procedures such as “substitution, paraphrase, and deletion” (see Schaffner, 2004).

With the emergence of the cognitive approach to metaphor widely known by Lakoff and Johnson’s *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), scholars found that substitution could be unproblematic as long as cultures share the same metaphorical concept otherwise, in cases of cross – cultural variations transferring metaphorical expressions could not be clear and unproblematic. For instance, in Persian culture owl is often conceptualized as ominous, however it is a symbol of wisdom in the Western culture. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) took defiance against traditional view and opened a different window against traditional approach to the translation of metaphor.

Their main argument of the cognitive approach is that metaphors are not just decorative elements, but rather, they are basic resources for thought processes in speech community. Based on their theory translatability of metaphor is no longer an individual metaphorical expression found in literature, but more fundamentally seen as “conceptual systems” and experiential process of the source and target languages, since “communication is based on the same conceptual system” (see Lakoff and Johnson, 2003) and considering that each language has a distinct conceptual system, how can different cultures understand or establish communication with each other. Due to this fact it seems that the strategies offered based on traditional approach do not serve for translation of conventional metaphors we live by. Therefore, the cognitive theory of metaphor needs to seek for specific translation patterns to preserve structure and function of the metaphorical concept in the TT. The study has tried to examine how translators

treated with conceptual metaphors in the process of translation, to see how people in the source culture (SC) map their experiences and inscribe them in their language, and to explore how the cross – cultural linguistic affects on conceptual metaphor theory. And even go further to state that the inherent difficulty of metaphor translation is not the absence of an equivalent lexical item in the TL, but it is because of the diversity of cultural conceptualization in communities.

What is gained through this study is the description of different types of strategies which are used for translating conceptual metaphors in English - Persian translation in order to provide helpful guidelines for Persian translation trainees and practicing translators as well as teachers of translation in solving their problems.

2-Research Questions

Metaphor, as a feature of thought, language, and communication, has presented a challenge for translation too. Translatability of metaphor has regularly been of concern to translation scholars who have argued about the problems of transferring metaphor from one language and culture to another. The present paper proposes following question in order to discover the strategies tackle this major hurdle.

- Are there any paradigms or regularities for translation of conceptual metaphors from English to Persian language? In other words, whether translation of conceptual metaphors from English to Persian follows any discernible pattern?

3-Theoretical Framework

The theoretical assumptions of the present research are associated with conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) put forward by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and cognitive translation hypothesis proposed by Kovecses (2005).

CMT stresses that metaphors are not just decorative element, but rather, basic resource for thought process in speech community. Based on this theory Lakoff and Johnson introduced three general type of conceptual metaphors, namely, Structural Metaphors, Orientational Metaphors, and Ontological Metaphors.

Kovecses (2005) considered four schemes in the translation of metaphors from the SL to the TL as follows:

- similar metaphorical concepts and similar metaphorical expressions
- similar metaphorical concepts but different metaphorical expressions
- different metaphorical concepts but similar metaphorical expressions
- different metaphorical concepts and different metaphorical expression

4-Cognitive Approach

Cognitive Linguistics is a new approach in the field of language studies. It is emerged in the 1970's as a reaction against the traditional view in which "meaning of a word is determined by the language system itself" (Chomsky, 1986, "Generative approach"). According to Reddy (1993) for Cognitive Linguistics, meanings do not exist independently from the people that create and use them (see Lakoff, 1994). On the other hand linguistic forms do not have inherent meaning in themselves. In fact they act as clues in order to activate the meanings which reside in our minds and brains. This "activation of meaning is not necessarily entirely the same in every person, because meaning is based on individual experience as well as collective experience" (Barcelona 1997, p. 9).

Therefore, the most fundamental tenet in this model is "embodiment" (Lakoff 1987; Lakoff and Johnson 1980) which refers to the creation of linguistic categories on the basis of our concrete experiences under the constraints imposed by our bodies.

4-1-Contemporary Approach to Metaphor

Contemporary approach to metaphor can be traced back to Michael Reddy's *The Conduit Metaphor* (see Lakoff, 1994). "Reddy observes that our language about language is structured roughly by the following complex metaphor:" (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003, p. 10).

IDEAS (or MEANINGS) ARE OBJECTS.
LINGUISTIC EXPRESSIONS ARE CONTAINERS.
COMMUNICATION IS SENSING.

In the late 1970s, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson realized that metaphor is primarily conceptual, conventional, and part of the ordinary system of thought and language (see Lakoff, 1994). They found that metaphor was not simply a literary device but rather reflected a process by which we understand much about daily life.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) demonstrated that metaphor have originated directly from life, generated out of our natural experiences, shape not only our communication, but also shape the way we think and act. For instance, in ARGUMENT IS WAR metaphor our language is shaped in the way we view argument as war or as a battle to be won.

“Your claims are *indefensible*.

He *attacked every weak point* in my argument.

His criticisms were *right on target*.

I *demolished* his argument.

I've never *won* an argument with him.

You disagree? Okay, *shoot!*

If you use that *strategy*, he'll *wipe you out*.

He *shot down* all of my arguments” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 4)

4-2-Conceptual Mapping

Conceptual mapping is one of the major problems that cognitive linguists still face. According to Kovecses mapping is “the systematic set of correspondences that exist between constituent elements of the source and the target domain” (Kovecses, 2002, p. 6).

In the case of metaphor it's been argued that a conceptual metaphor consists of source and target domain, in which one domain is understood in terms of another (see Kovecses, 2010).

In its broadest sense, according to Lakoff and Johnson (1980) metaphor is a device with the capacity to structure our conceptual system and provide us with a particular understanding of the world and a way to make sense of our experience. From this standpoint, metaphor is defined as “a cross-domain mapping in the conceptual system” (Lakoff 1994, p. 203); that is, a mapping or set of conceptual correspondences from a source domain (the realm of the physical or more concrete reality) to a target domain (the realm of the abstract reality). For instance LOVE IS A JOURNEY metaphor involves understanding one domain of experience (love) in terms of

a more concrete domain of experience (journey) (see Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, 2003).

4-3-Translation of Metaphor

Translation as an activity has existed for many centuries, but translation studies as a discipline is relatively new and still evolving. Translating metaphor from one language and culture to another one has been always one of the controversial issues among the scholars trying to tackle this major hurdle. Meanwhile, many efforts have been made in translation studies to present acceptable strategies for translation of metaphor. According to Schaffner “most authors agree that the image in the ST cannot always be retained in the TT”, thus several translation procedures such as “substitution (metaphor into different metaphor), paraphrase (metaphor into sense), or deletion have been suggested as alternative solutions to the ideal of reproducing the metaphor intact” (2004, p. 1256).

Snell – Hornby (1995) sees metaphor translation as a cultural issue in translation.

She pointed out that, since metaphor is not made of just one text or word translatability of metaphor cannot be decided by a set of abstract rules. According to her “different cultures and languages have different ways of conceptualizing and creating symbols, and thus, metaphoric meanings are particular to each culture” (1995, p. 56). For example, in the Persian expression ‘HE IS A BULL’ the bull is used in the sense that he is stupid. However, in India, bull is sacred and has positive connotations.

Interest in the area of cross – cultural variation came to be applied to metaphor translation by scholars like Nili Mandelblit (1995), Zoltan Kovecses (2002), and Christina Schaffner (2004). Mandelblit (1995) offered cross – cultural analyses and presented two schemas for the translation of metaphors as follows:

- a) Similar mapping conditions between the SL and the TL
- b) Different mapping conditions between the SL and the TL

Kovecses (2002) believed that there are two dimensions of metaphor variation, namely, the cross – cultural dimension and the within – cultural dimension, accordingly in 2005 he offered four schemes for metaphor translation as follows:

- a) Similar metaphorical concepts and similar metaphorical expression
- b) Similar metaphorical concepts but different metaphorical expression
- c) Different metaphorical concepts but similar metaphorical expression
- d) Different metaphorical concepts and different metaphorical expression

Schaffner's contribution (2004) reflected on the implications of a cognitive approach to political discourse between two distinct languages, namely, English and German. However, she presented four schemes for translation but stressed that the obtained result was not the ultimate prescription to translation of conceptual metaphors.

- a) One conceptual metaphor commonly used both in English and German
- b) Conceptual metaphors may be culture – specific at a more specific level, but culture overlapping (or maybe universal) at a more abstract level
- c) Different perspectives and/or aspects of a common conceptual metaphor are made explicit in the texts
- d) Different linguistic manifestations point to different conceptualizations.

5-Materials and procedure

As mentioned earlier the corpus of the study is limited to two collections of documentary films which are nine hundred minutes altogether. The first one is a set of eleven DVDs entitled Planet Earth produced by BBC discovery channel, directed by Vanessa Berlowitz, and translated by Iran Market Center and the second one is a set of five DVDs entitled *ELEGANT UNIVERS* produced by Educational Foundation of The U.S Department of Energy Fostering Science and Security, directed by David Hickman, and translated by Mehr & Sepehr Softwares Co.

The present paper at first discovered and classified different kinds of conceptual metaphors of the source and the target texts based on Lakoff and Johnson's categorization.

Then explored the strategies used for translation of the identified instances through a sentence by sentence comparison of the two

texts based on the most outstanding cognitive hypotheses translation, namely, Kovecses's model. Finally the study analyzed more than six hundred sentences to find a convincing answer to the mentioned question. Since discussion of the all instances is beyond the capacity of this paper, I bring some of the examples to cover our discussion.

5-1-Instances of different conceptual metaphors under the study

5-1-1- Structural Metaphor

Lakoff and Johnson define structural metaphors as "cases where one concept is metaphorically structured in terms of another" (1980, p.14).

- ❖ The moment *has arrived* for *their* first flight

لحظه اولین پرواز جوجه‌ها فرا رسیده است.

In the ST of the given example 'time' as an abstraction is viewed as a moving object and 'birds' as animate beings are standing still. In this case the concept of time is structured according to motion and space, and we understand time in terms of physical objects because of background condition. The metaphor of this expression is much more specific, namely, TIME IS A MOVING OBJECT. In the TT we have the same metaphor as the ST, but lexical implementations are different from those of the ST. As you see 'جوجه‌ها' is explicitated in the Persian text, as a result of that, this expression follows the second strategy of the Kovecses's typologies, namely,

- b) Similar metaphorical concepts but different metaphorical expressions
- ❖ Neither can *afford a lapse* in concentration, the injured *loser* may not survive

هیچکدام قادر به برهم زدن تمرکز دیگری نیست، بازنده زخمی زنده نمی‌ماند.

In the ST of the given example, structuralizing the concept of 'lapse' in terms of a valuable commodity and the concept of 'life' in terms of a gambling game imply two conceptual metaphors, namely, MISTAKE IS A VALUABLE COMMODITY and LIFE IS A GAMBLING GAME. In the TT lexical implementations are different from those of the ST. Since conceptual manipulating in the Persian culture comparing to English culture is of limitations

translating the phrase ‘afford a lapse’ literally into ‘برهم زدن’ is invented an ontological metaphor. Because the concept of ‘تمرکز’ is viewed as an object which could be disturb. But, in the second part of the expression there is the same metaphor as the ST as if the translator has copied the original in the TT. Consequently, this expression is classified respectively into the third and first categories of the Kovecses’s typologies, namely,

- c) Different metaphorical concepts but similar metaphorical expression
- a) Similar metaphorical concepts and similar metaphorical expression

❖ Despite the harsh conditions, life *flourishes* here *in* isolation

علی رغم شرایط سخت اقلیمی آن، در اینجا زندگی درانزوا نشو و نما دارد.

In the given example there are two conceptual metaphors. As you see the concept of 'life' is structuralized in terms of garden and the metaphor is LIFE IS GARDEN. And the concept of ‘isolation’ is viewed as a container within which there is life as objects. The second one implies an ontological metaphor. In the TT the translator has copied the original and reproduced the same image in the TT. Thus, this expression is classified into the first category of the Kovecses’s typologies, namely,

- a) Similar metaphorical concepts and similar metaphorical expression

❖ They *spend* their days underground

آنها روزهایشان را در زیر زمین سپری می کنند.

In the ST of the given example the concept of ‘time’ is viewed as a valuable commodity and a limited resource, thus we understand and experience time as the kind of thing that can be spent or saved. In the TT the translator has copied the original and reproduced the same image in the TT. Thus this expression seeks a translation strategy which is not categorized in Kovecses’s typologies, namely,

- e) Translation of CM into non – metaphor

❖ In the darkness the table turn

در تاریکی ورق بر می گردد

In the ST of the given example the concept of 'life' is conceptualized in terms of a gambling game and the metaphor is LIFE IS A GAMBLING GAME. In the TT because of cross – cultural variations lexical implementation is different from that of the ST. In fact in the TT a domestication strategy is occurred. Thus, it follows the second category of the Kovecses's typologies, namely,

- b) Similar metaphorical concepts but different metaphorical expressions

5-1-2- Ontological Metaphor

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980) Ontological Metaphors are metaphors in which an abstraction (i.e. an activity, emotion, an idea, etc.) is viewed as something concrete such as an entity, an object, a substance, a container, or a person.

- ❖ The walruses sense that they are *in danger*

گرازهای دریایی احساس خطر می کنند.

In the ST of the given example 'danger' is viewed as a CONTAINER with a bounding surface and in – out orientation in which there are walruses. In the TT translation has been worked out literally and carries no CM. Consequently, this expression seeks a translation strategy other than the Kovecses's typologies, namely,

- e) Translation of conceptual metaphor into non – metaphor

- ❖ The *eerie silence* here is only broken in spring

سکوت دهشتناک اینجا فقط در بهار شکسته می شود

In the given example the concept of 'silence' is viewed as something concrete and allows us to identify a particular aspect of it. In the TT there is a copy of original and the dictionary translation of the ST. Consequently, this example follows the first strategy of the Kovecses's typologies, namely,

- a) Similar metaphorical concepts and similar metaphorical expressions

- ❖ These dolphins *have taken on an ever tougher challenge*

دولفین ها وارد سخت ترین چالش زندگی شان می شوند

In the ST of the given example viewing the concept of 'challenge' as an object, allows us to identify a particular aspect of it. In the TT

‘چالش زندگی’ is viewed as a container with a bounding surface and an in – out orientation. Therefore, this expression is classified into the second category of the Kovecses's typologies, namely,

- b) Similar metaphorical concepts but different metaphorical expressions or lexical implementations

These rare creatures are usually very shy but they *drop* their guard when they Gelados are around ❖

این حیوانات نادر، با وجود خجالتی بودن وقتی جلادها در اطرافشان هستند، احتیاط را به کنار می-زنند.

In the ST of the given expression the concept of ‘caution’ is conceptualized in terms of something concrete (guard). As you know the animals have no equipments to be armed with, therefore it could be realized through conceptualizing an experience in terms of another. In TT the lexical implementations are different from those of the ST. Here the concept of ‘احتیاط’ is viewed as something concrete could be referred to. Thus, this expression follows the second strategy of the Kovecses’s typologies, namely,

- b) Similar metaphorical concepts but different metaphorical expressions or lexical implementations
- ❖ To *cement* their relationship the male steps out with his female

پنگوئن نر برای محکم کردن پیوندشان با زوجه اش بیرون می‌رود.

In the ST the concept of ‘relationship’ and its equivalent in the TT are viewed as objects, thus both languages carry the same metaphor. Since manipulating in the Persian culture is of limitation lexical implementation in the TT is different from that of the ST. Consequently, this expression is classified into the second category of the Kovecses's typologies, namely,

- b) Similar metaphorical concepts but different metaphorical expressions or lexical implementations

5-1-3- Orientational Metaphor

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980) orientational metaphors give spatial orientation to concepts. Kovecses (2010) points out that orientational metaphors deal with basic human spatial orientations, such as up-down, center-periphery, and the like.

- ❖ Well, that was a very ingenious scenario that *arose* naturally within *string theory*

این یک سناریوی خیلی هوشمندانه بود که در درون تئوری استرینگ به طور طبیعی رشد کرده بود.

The given example carries two different conceptual metaphors. Viewing the concept of 'scenario' as an object, and giving spatial orientation to it implies an orientational metaphor. The second one is an ontological metaphor, because the concept of 'theory' is viewed as a container in which there is a scenario. In the TT as a result of differences in lexical items there is just one ontological metaphor and the translator tendency towards reproducing the same image resulted in foreignization strategy in the TT. Here «تئوری استرینگ» as an abstraction is viewed as a container within which there is an entity called «سناریو». Consequently, this expression is classified into fourth and second strategies of the Kovecses's typologies, namely,

- e) Translation of conceptual metaphor into non - metaphor
- b) Similar metaphorical concepts but different metaphorical expressions or lexical implementations

❖ But their greatest test *lies ahead*

اما بزرگترین آزمون آنها در پیش است.

In the given example the concept of 'greatest test' is given a spatial orientation and the conceptual metaphor is much more specific, namely, FORESEEABLE FUTURE EVENTS ARE AHEAD. In the TT we have the same metaphor as the ST, but lexical implementation is different from that of the ST. As you see the phrase 'lies ahead' as a figurative speech is translated literally into 'در پیش است', consequently this expression follows the second strategy of the Kovecses's typologies, namely,

- b) Similar metaphorical concepts but different metaphorical expressions or lexical implementations

❖ It's flowers are full of liquid making them irresistible

گل‌های این درخت سرشار از مایعی است که مقاومت این حیوانات را بالا می‌برد.

In the given example ST is a literal expression and carries no metaphor. But, in the TT because of different lexical implementations the concept of 'مقاومت' is given a spatial orientation. Therefore, this expression seeks for a translation strategy different from Kovecses's typologies, namely,

f) Translation of non – metaphor into conceptual metaphor

❖ Temperature *plummet*

دما تنزل یا فته است.

In the ST of the given example the concept of ‘temperature’ is given a spatial orientation and the conceptual metaphor is much more specific, namely, LESS IS DOWN. In the TT translation has been worked out literally with no metaphor. Consequently, this expression is classified into a translation strategy other than Kovecses’s typologies, namely,

e) Translation of conceptual metaphor to non – metaphor

❖ Now the sun barely appears *above the horizon*

اینک خورشید بی پرده از فراز افق پدیدار می شود

In the ST of the given example the concept of ‘horizon’ is given a spatial orientation. In the TT we have a copy of the original. Consequently, this expression is classified into the first category of the Kovecses's typologies, namely,

a) Similar metaphorical concepts and similar metaphorical expressions or lexical implementations

❖ Farther down still the blackness is completed

با پایین رفتن، بیشتر تاریکی مطلق حاکم می شود.

Source text of the given example is a literal expression and carries no conceptual metaphor. In the TT the clause ‘تاریکی مطلق حاکم می شود’ implies an orientational metaphor, namely, HAVING CONTROL IS UP. The more going down the more we drown into the darkness and darkness dominates on us. Consequently, this expression search for a translation strategy different from those of the Kovecses's, namely,

f) Translation of non – conceptual metaphor into conceptual metaphor

6-Discussion and Conclusion

Translation as an activity is as old as Babel myth, but translation studies are constantly flourishing by new research methods. Cognitive approach to translation of conceptual metaphor is the one that can provide new insights for translation Studies too. The

analysis of more than six hundred metaphorical expressions in both source and target languages shows that conceptual metaphors can be translated and translatability is high especially when two languages share the same conceptual metaphor. In other words similarities in the metaphorical images make translation easier while differences hinder the translation process. This finding arises from the fact that every experience could be universal which does not change from one place to another or cultural which is occurred at the specific level and grounded within the distinct community. The main finding of this paper could be attributed to the important role of translators especially when they are involved in micro – contextual levels such as the translatability of cultural specific items. Although the given examples in this paper indicates a comprehensive knowledge of the translators about conceptual metaphor but, the analysis of the whole corpus reveals another side of the coin. It seems that the translators are of less or even no knowledge to cognitive approach; and their shortcoming do not allow them to seek for specific patterns in their way of translating conceptual metaphor. Lack of cognitive knowledge and carelessness towards cross – cultural variations resulted in reproducing the ST images in the TT.

Many of examples under the study suggest that most often the original metaphorical structure is preserved and the translators have tendency to translate in terms of dictionary meaning resulted in the creation of synonymic expression.

In the cases that the translators have adopted the SL norms in the TT foreignization has occurred and the adopted items are not incompatible with the TL linguistic and literary norms. In the cases that SL metaphor is being replaced by more corresponding TL metaphor the original one is domesticated. These finding can be assigned to the translators' objective views in which the translators search for inherent meaning of the concepts. While, in translation of micro – contextual items the translator needs to benefit from both the objective and the subjective factors in order to have a metaphorical comprehension of the concept. Based on Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual theory (1980) it would be very strange in a dictionary to see 'love' as senses of 'journey'. Therefore, in translation of conceptual metaphor the whole systems of concepts including linguistics, sociolinguistics, psychological aspects, and

other aspects of figurative language under the umbrella called contextual factors should be taken into consideration. Inattention to the context weakens or even disturbs translation of conceptual metaphor. Whether the translators of the respective corpus intentionally or unintentionally have taken account contextual factors in translation of noticeable amount of expressions, the few examples discussed and presented here indicate that translatability is high when translation involves more than a single type of information. What I propose here is that the translators of the conceptual metaphors are required to have a comprehensive knowledge concerning cognitive approach and a more creative process is required for translation of conceptual metaphor.

To sum up, in this article, I present the explore strategies being used in translation of the respective corpus as follows

- a) Similar metaphorical concepts and similar metaphorical expression
- b) Similar metaphorical concepts but different metaphorical expression
- c) Different metaphorical concepts but similar metaphorical expression
- d) Different metaphorical concepts and different metaphorical expression
- e) Translation of conceptual metaphor into non – metaphor
- f) Translation of non – metaphor into conceptual metaphor

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