

**A study of the translation of metaphorical expressions
In Zawgyi's 'This Is Her Way' (မုန်လမ်းပါးလေး) by Win Pe**

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Abstract

This research focuses on the translation by *Win Pe (Mya Zin)* of metaphorical expressions in *Zawgyi's 'This Is Her Way' (မုန်လမ်းပါးလေး)* by *Win Pe*. This is the very first poem of the poem cycle 'Hyacinth Way' (*Beda Lan*) which is regarded as a highly metaphorical poetic piece by many scholars and critics. The translator, *Win Pe* is a prolific author, poet and scholar. He has translated many classical as well as modern Myanmar poems into English. By permission of the original poet, *Zawgyi*, his translations of the series of 'Hyacinth Way' poems appeared in the 'Working People's Daily' at different times from 1989 to 1990. And in the year 2018, the English translation of the whole poem cycle by *Win Pe* was reprinted and issued by 'Sarpay Lawka Literature House' dividing the whole cycle into ten sections in terms of their particular themes. In this paper, the translation procedures the translator uses in rendering the metaphorical expressions in the poem were studied based on the theories proposed by Newmark (1988). The study revealed that in translating metaphorical expressions in the poem, the metaphorical translation procedure of 'reproducing the same image in the target language' and 'the conversions of metaphor to sense' are used and the procedure of the same image in the target language is mainly used in the translation. It was also revealed that effect loss is often inevitable in the tasks of translation.

Keywords – metaphor, image, object, sense, source text (ST), target text (TT)

Introduction

This research focuses on the translation by *Win Pe (Mya Zin)* of metaphorical expressions in *Zawgyi's 'This is her way' (Met-lan-par-lar)* Poem. In fact, it really intends to study the strategies and procedures used by the translator in rendering metaphorical expressions in the poem into English.

The translatability of poetry has been debatable for many years and the translation of metaphors in poems is rather complex as it usually involves cultural aspects, social aspects, geographical aspects, aesthetic aspects and many others, and this nature usually makes

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translators to take a careful balance in rendering metaphors or metaphorical expressions from language to language, culture to culture. Undoubtedly, a study on the translation of the metaphorical expressions in this poem will bring about some good examples of effective strategies and techniques for metaphor translation in future.

The whole poem cycle (*Beda Lan*) is regarded as a highly metaphorical poetic piece by many local as well as some international scholars and critics as it is believed that *Ma Beda* (*Miss Beda*) represents a tough and calm girl or woman who always tries to negotiate and overcome the mental as well as physical obstacles throughout her passage drifting up and down the river. The poem is conveyed in the first person narrative as this narrative reveals *Ma Beda's* perspective towards life and beings as she gets through the hardships in life.

This study is to be interested in three different ways. Firstly, *Zawgyi* was one of a few eminent leaders of modern Myanmar literature. He was a poet, critic, author and scholar. Secondly, the collection of '*Beda Lan*' poems is his most famous poem cycle and it has had a great influence on modern Myanmar literature and has extended its fame abroad to some extent. Thirdly, *Win Pe* is a prolific author, poet, and journalist. He is truly a scholar who has devoted to the progress of Myanmar literature in general, Myanmar poetry in particular. His noted works are 'Emerald Lake' (*Mya-Kan*), *Modern Burmese Poetry and Hyacinth's way (Bada Lan) Poems* Moreover, in his famous book, "*Kabya-Nayi Hnit Na-Mete-Pon*", he also discusses in detail the nature of metaphor as a part which reflects the fact that he is highly skilled at dealing with the task mentioned above. The combination of these reasons deeply encourages the researcher to make an attempt to conduct this study.

Literature Review

The translability of poetry has been a debatable issue for many years and Robert Frost (1874-1963), American critic and poet stated that poetry is what gets lost in translation. Newmark (1988) states that poetry is the most personal and concentrated of the four forms, where the word, as a unit, has greater importance than in any other type of text and the second unit of meaning is usually the line and that the integrity of both the lexical units and the lines has to be preserved within a context of corresponding punctuation, which essentially reproduces the tone of the original and accurate translation of metaphor.

The translation of metaphor can be dealt with in terms of three factors: definition, elements and different approaches to metaphor translation. Newmark (1988) states that metaphor means any figurative expression: the transferred sense of a physical word, the

personification of an abstraction, and the application of a word or collocation to what it does not literally denote, and therefore, all polysemous words and most English phrasal verbs are potentially metaphorical and metaphor may be a single word, a collocation, an idiom, a sentence, a proverb, an allegory, and a complete imaginative text.

In his “A Textbook of Translation”, Newmark (1988) describes the following elements of metaphor:

“Image: the picture conjured by the metaphor which may be universal, cultural, or individual;

Object: what is described or qualified by the metaphor.

Sense: the literal meaning of the metaphor; the resemblance or semantic area overlapping object and image.

Metaphor: the figurative word use, which may be one-word, or extended over any stretch of language from a collection to the whole text.

Metonym: a one-word image which replaces the 'object'. Metonym includes synecdoche.”

Symbol: a type of cultural metonym where a material object represents a concept”.

Newmark (1988) distinguishes six types of metaphor: dead, cliché, stock, adapted, recent and original metaphors, and proposes some translation procedures to deal with these different types of metaphors. He suggests seven procedures for metaphor translation which are put in the following order of preference:

- (a) Reproducing the same image in the TL
- (b) Replacing the same image in the SL with a standard TL image
- (c) Translation of metaphor by simile, retaining the same image
- (d) Translation of metaphor by simile plus sense
- (e) Conversion of metaphor to sense
- (f) Deletion
- (g) Same metaphor combined with its sense.

Materials and Methods

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative as well as quantitative research, based on the theories of elements of metaphor and metaphor types as well as translation procedures proposed by Newmark (1988). For clarity, the source and target texts are given. The metaphorical expressions are collected and categorized. The image and the object as well as the implied meaning of each metaphorical expression are identified. The translation procedures used by the translator are studied. The proportion of the metaphor types and translation procedures are shown in percentage. Finally, the findings are discussed.

Source Text (ST Henceforth)

၁။ မယ့်လမ်းပါလား။

ပန်းနီလာ၊ ဗေဒါ ဆင်သလို
ယဉ်လှတယ် လေး။
စုန်ချည် ဆန်ချည်နဲ့
ဒီချောင်းရေဗေဒါလမ်းမှာ၊
တန်းစီလို့ လေး။

အိုအချင်းကျူရိုးရှင်
မဗေဒါ ပြာလဲ့လန်း၊ ကမ်းကပ်မယ် ပြင်။
စပယ်လှ ပွင့်ဖြူစင်၊ ကမ်းခွင်ကယ်ကျွမ်း။
သူ့လိပ်ပြာခြံအရံနဲ့
သူ့စံရာသူ့ပျော်မွေ့၊ ပြေးတွေ့ချင်စမ်း။ တဲ့

တွေ့ချင်တဲ့ စေတနာရယ်။
ငယ်ကျွမ်းဆွေလွမ်းဝေတေးပေမို့၊
အေးချိုလှတယ်။
လိပ်ပြာကဝတ်ရည်သယ်၊ စပယ်ကမအား။
ပွင့်ဖူးတဝေဝေနဲ့
ဒီချောင်းရေဗေဒါလမ်း၊ မယ့်လမ်းပါလား။

အိုအချင်းကျူရိုးရှင်။
မဗေဒါ ပြာလဲ့လန်း၊ ကမ်းကပ်ပြန်ချင်။
ဟိုအကွေ့မှာလေ
ကိုရင်ဖေ့ ချစ်ရေစင်၊ ပျိုခင်ရဲ့ အနွဲ့။
ပျိုလက်မှာမယ်ဗေဒါက
ပျိုမျက်နှာချစ်အံ့ပုန်းကို၊ ပြုံးကြည့်ချင်တဲ့။ တဲ့

ကြည့်ချင်တဲ့ စေတနာရယ်။
သနားဖွယ် ချစ်ဖွယ်တေးပေမို့၊ အေးချိုလှတယ်။
ချစ်စနိုးရယ်နဲ့
မြစ်ရိုးကအပြာခြယ်ကို၊ ပျိုနယ်လိုက်လေမလား။
ပွင့်ဖူးတဝေဝေနဲ့
ဒီချောင်းရေဗေဒါလမ်း၊ မယ့်လမ်းပါလား။

အိုအချင်းကျူရိုးရှင်။
မဗေဒါ ပြာလဲ့လန်း၊ ကမ်းကပ်ပြန်ချင်။
ထီးတော်ကတချင်ချင်၊ ကွင်းပြင်ကဘုရား။
နေမင်းညိုချိန်တန်ပေါ့
နိဗ္ဗာန်ကိုစိတ်ကြံကူး၊ ဖူးချင်လျက်သား။ တဲ့

Target Text (TT Henceforth)

1. This is her way

Pretty Hyacinth with a sapphire flower
drifts up and down the tidal creek
along the Hyacinth Way.

Friend Reed-Piper,
Miss Hyacinth blue-bright
prepares to pull to the bank
to meet the riverside childhood friend,
that pure white jasmine with attendant
butterflies so happy in her bower.

Sweet is this wish and song of yearning
for the childhood friends.
Butterflies carry the nectar
and jasmine has no leisure.
Hyacinth Way with flowers galore
is this tidal creek your Way?

Friend Reed-Piper,
Miss Hyacinth blue-bright
wants to pull to the bank again.
There's a lissome girl in that bend,
that young man's pure liquid love.
Held in that maiden's hand,
Hyacinth wishes smilingly to see
the stealthy requiting love in her face.

It's good this wish to see her loved one
and sweet this song of fondness and pity.
But will she follow lovingly
this blue-tinted one of the creek?
Hyacinth Way with flowers galore
is this tidal creek your Way?

Friend Reed-Piper,
Miss Hyacinth blue-bright
wants to pull to the bank again.
The Pagoda htee tinkles,
across the wide plain.
Now that it's time for the sun's browning
let me pray there with Nibbana in mind.

ဖူးချင်တဲ့ စေတနာရယ်။
 နိဗ္ဗိန္ဒာဂီတာတေးပေမို့၊ အေးချိုလှတယ်။
 ကျွတ်ဆုကိုရွယ်၊ လွယ်ပါတော့ အရ။
 ပွင့်ဖူးတဝေဝေနဲ့
 ဒီချောင်းရေဗေဒါလမ်း၊ မယ့်လမ်းသာပေါ့။

It's good this wish to pray at the shrine
 and sweet this song of weariness
 intent on the prize of release,
 bear with the task till you gain.
 Hyacinth Way with flowers galore
 truly, Miss, this is your Way.

ချောင်းရေကဖောင်၊ တောင်လေကသွေး။
 ရွက်လင်းယဉ် မြိုင်မြိုင်နဲ့
 ပန်းတိုင်ကိုပန်းခိုင်ဆိုက်အောင်၊
 အားစိုက်ပါလေး။

The creek is in flood.
 The wind blows from the south.
 Go, you pretty bunch of flowers
 till you reach the goal with sails full.

Analysis

In this poem ‘This is Her Way’ (မယ့်လမ်းပါလား:), there are altogether seven metaphorical expressions. This is a poem in question or that in confirmation in which Hyacinth asks whether the tidal creek in which the worldly attractions are drawing her attention in some way or another is her way of life.

(1) The first metaphorical expression appears in the first line of the poem.

ST: ပန်းနီလာ၊ ဗေဒါ ဆင်သလို
 ယဉ်လှတယ် လေး
 TT: Pretty Hyacinth with a sapphire flower

In the first line of the first poem of the cycle, the original writer introduces his protagonist Hyacinth (*Ma Beda*) as a female in grace using the metaphorical expression ‘ပန်းနီလာ၊ ဗေဒါ ဆင်သလို ယဉ်လှတယ် လေး’ which can in some way be rendered as ‘Hyacinth wearing a blue flower is in grace’. The image ‘flower’ (ပန်း) is a symbol for beauty or grace which is the inseparable part of Hyacinth. In fact, Hyacinth is not wearing a flower; she is having it as part of her body. In a wider sense, the flower refers to the head of a being which signifies the supreme part of that being and this fact is clearly stated in the tenth poem ‘Still Wearing A Flower’ (ပန်းပန်လျက်ပဲ).

In this metaphorical expression, the image is ‘Hyacinth who is in grace as she is wearing a bright blue flower’ and the topic is a graceful female with a flower in her hair. The sense is that both are in grace. This is an extended original metaphor and the translator rendered it literally. The translator uses the procedure of reproducing the same image in the target language.

(2) The second, third and fourth metaphorical expressions appear in the second stanza.

ST: စံပယ်လှ ပွင့်ဖြူစင်၊ ကမ်းခွင်ကငယ်ကျွမ်း။
 သူ့လိပ်ပြာခြံအရံနဲ့
 သူစံရာသူပျော်မွေ့၊ ပြေးတွေ့ချင်စမ်း တဲ့ ။

TT: (Miss Hyacinth blue-bright)
 prepares to pull to the bank
 that pure white jasmine with attendant butterflies
 so happy in her bower

This stanza gives a message to the readership about 'Pure White Jasmine', the childhood friend of Miss Hyacinth, who enjoys her life on the riverside which in depth refers to a world of ease and luxury, which therefore sounds quite different from the world of Hyacinth, the tidal creek which is full of obstacles. The first metaphorical expression here is 'ကမ်းခွင်' which is translated as the riverside. It refers to the upper class atmosphere which is the object of this metaphor whereas the riverside is the image. The sense is that both offer ease and luxury. The second expression 'သူ့လိပ်ပြာခြံအရ' is an extended metaphor. The image is the butterflies around the jasmine tree and flowers that are personified as the human attendants which have become the topic of this metaphor. The pure jasmine is compared to an uptown girl or a lady of nobility or from the upper social class. The sense is that both have to wait upon their masters or mistresses.

The third metaphorical expression is 'စံရာ' is used for the same purpose. It is a single-word metaphor. The topic here is the bower which indicates that the abode where the jasmine enjoys her life is like the private apartment of a princess whereas the image is the riverbank which creates a pleasant shady place for the Jasmine to live. The sense is that both offer the taste of ease and luxury.

These metaphors are used to imply the hard life of Hyacinth that is a contrast to that of Jasmine. This is an original metaphor created by the ST writer. The translator renders these metaphorical expressions literally and for both expressions, the translator uses the procedure of reproducing the same image in the target language.

(3) The fifth metaphorical expression is found in the lines:

ST: ဖူးချင်တဲ့ စေတနာရယ်။
 နိဗ္ဗိန္ဒာဂီတာတေးပေမို့၊ အေးချိုလှတယ်။
 TT: It's good this wish to pray at the shrine
 and sweet this song of weariness

The metaphorical expression in this line is 'နိဗ္ဗိန္ဒာဂီတာတေး' which is translated as 'the song of weariness'. The wish to pray at the shrine is compared to the 'the melodious song of nirvana or Nibbana' or the song of liberation from Samsara. It means that the wish to pray at the shrine is as sweet and cool as the melodious song of nirvana.

In this metaphorical expression, the image is the wish to pray at the shrine and the topic is the melodious song of nirvana. The sense is that both are sweet and cool. This is an extended original metaphor and the translator rendered it literally. The translator uses the procedure of reducing to sense in the target language.

(4) The sixth metaphorical expression is found in the following line:

ST: ကျွတ်ဆုကိုရွယ်၊ လွယ်ပါတော့ အရ။

TT : intent on the prize of release,

Bear with the task till you gain.

The metaphorical expression in this line is ‘ကျွတ်ဆု’ which is translated as ‘the prize of release. Liberation from Samsara is compared to a prize.

In this metaphorical expression, the image is the prize of release from the struggles in the tidal creek and the topic is the liberation from the Samsara. The sense is that both are desired for. This is an extended original metaphor and the translator rendered it literally. The translator uses the procedure of reducing to sense in the target language.

(5) The last metaphor is found in the last stanza:

ST: ရွက်လင်းယဉ် မြိုင်မြိုင်နဲ့
ပန်းတိုင်ကိုပန်းခိုင်ဆိုက်အောင်၊ အားစိုက်ပါလေး။

TT: Go, you pretty bunch of flowers

till you reach the goal with sails full.

The metaphorical expression in this line is ‘ရွက်လင်းယဉ် မြိုင်မြိုင်နဲ့’ which is translated as ‘with sails full’. The fleshy, glossy green and strap shaped leaves of the hyacinth are compared to the sails of a boat or ship.

In this metaphorical expression, the image is the sails of a boat or ship and the topic is the fleshy, glossy green and strap shaped leaves of the hyacinth. The sense is that both can catch the wind to move forward. This is an extended original metaphor and the translator rendered it literally. The translator uses the procedure of reproducing the same image in the target language.

Findings and discussion

In the stanza studied, seven metaphors are detected in terms of metaphor types categorized by Newmark (1988).

Table 1 Metaphorical expressions in the ST

No	Source Text	Metaphor Size	Metaphor Type	Image	Object	Sense
1	ပန်းနီလာ၊ ဗေဒါ ဆင်သလို	Extended	Original	Hyacinth wearing a flower	A female In grace	Hyacinth wearing a flower is in grace.
2	ကမ်းခွင်	Single- word	Original	Riverside	The upper class	A perfect atmosphere
3	လိပ်ပြာခြံအရံ	Single- word	Stock	her butterfly attendants	Human attendants	The life of Jasmine is complete with attendants
4	စံရာ	Single- word	Original	Bowel	The private apartment of a lady	A grand pleasant dwelling
5	နိမ္မိန္ဒာ ဂီတာတေး	Extended	Cliché	this song of weariness	The song of liberation from troubles of human life	The sense of liberation from Samsara
6	ကျွတ်ဆု	Extended	Cliché	the prize	the release	great value
7	ရွက်လင်းယဉ် မြိုင်မြိုင်နဲ့	Extended	Original	full sails	a bunch of leaves and flowers	the ability to catch wind

Table 2 Metaphorical expressions in the TT

No	Target Text	Metaphor Size	Metaphor Type	Metaphor translation procedures
1	Pretty Hyacinth with a sapphire flower	Extended	Original	Reproducing the same image in the TL
2	Riverside	Single-word	Original	Reproducing the same image in the TL
3	attendant butterflies	Single-word	Stock	Reproducing the same image in the TL
4	Bower	Single-word	Original	Reproducing the same image in the TL
5	this song of weariness	Extended	Original	Reducing to sense
6	the prize of release	Extended	Original	Reproducing the same image in the TL
7	with sails full	Extended	Original	Reproducing the same image in the TL

There are altogether seven metaphorical expressions in this study and it is found that most of them are original metaphors which are created or quoted by the original poet. Besides, they include universal, cultural and subjective or personal metaphorical expressions.

Table 3 Proportion of metaphor types involved

Metaphor Types	Frequency		Percentage	
	ST	TT	ST	TT
Original	4	6	57.1%	85.7%
Cliché	2	nil	28.6%	0%
Stock	1	1	14.3%	14.3%
Total	7	7	100%	100%

Table 4 Proportion of metaphor translation procedures involved

Procedures	Frequency	Percentage
Reproducing the same image in the TL	6	85.7%
Conversion of metaphor to sense	1	14.35
Total	7	100%

The statistics mentioned above will reflect the discussion of findings below.

There are four original metaphors, two cliché metaphors and one stock metaphor in the ST. When they are transferred to TT, there are six metaphors and one stock metaphor and there is no cliché metaphor any longer. In the TT, five out of seven metaphorical expressions are extended metaphors and the rest are single-word metaphors. All the metaphors are retained in size. Again, all the metaphor types except in the case of ‘နိဗ္ဗိန္ဒာဂီတာတေး’ (the song of weariness) and ‘ကျွတ်ဆု’ (the prize of release) are found to be retained in the TT.

Out of the seven metaphorical expressions in the poem, there are two cliché metaphors which are ‘နိဗ္ဗိန္ဒာဂီတာတေး’ (the song of weariness) and ‘ကျွတ်ဆု’ (the prize of release) which can be directly translated as ‘the song of Nirvana (Nibbana)’, and ‘the prize of liberation from Samsara’. These expressions are cultural metaphors and their referential meanings are difficult to be retained in the TT. These expressions are difficult to be transferred to the ST and their metaphorical meanings may not be clearly fixed. When rendering them into TT, the former is reduced to sense and the latter is translated by reproducing the same image in the TT. Moreover, they become original metaphorical expressions. Secondly, there is one stock metaphorical expression which is ‘လိပ်ပြာခြံအရံ’ (butterfly attendants). It is found to be translated rather literally and neatly. In the other sense, they are somewhat universal and the literal translation cannot affect their referential as well as pragmatic purpose very much. The translator uses the procedure of reproducing the same image in the TT and the procedure involved here tends to be congruous with Newmark’s proposal that “the first and most satisfying procedure for translating a stock metaphor is to reproduce the same image in the TL, provided it has comparable frequency and currency in the appropriate TL register”.

Finally, the translator translates all the original metaphorical expressions using the procedure of retaining the same image in the TT. This is also contingent with Newmark’s argument that “as original metaphors are created or quoted by the SL writer, they should be translated neat and literally whether they are universal, cultural or obscurely subjective”.

Conclusion

Specifically, this study focuses on the translation of metaphor which plays a crucial role in literary translation, especially in poetic translation. The poem cycle has a reputation of being highly metaphorical and it is found that the metaphorical expressions are

significantly involved in conveying the message of the original poem. In this poem, all the sizes of metaphorical expressions remain the same in the ST and two cliché metaphors in the ST becomes original ones. This is partly because they are culture-specific, and partly because of the translating strategies of the translator. Most of the metaphors involved are found to be original ones and in translating them, the translator uses the procedure of reproducing the same image in the TL. Obviously, the translator tends to care not to affect the original ST images. For this, Newmark (1988) suggests, “original metaphors contain the core of an important writer's message, his personality, and his comment on life, and they may have a more or less cultural element, and these have to be translated neat”. Moreover, the rest are translated by using the same procedure.

It is therefore found that only the metaphorical translation procedure of 'reproducing the same image in the TL' is found to be used in the translation. In the tasks of the translation of metaphorical expressions, effect loss is often inevitable.

This study is conducted only for the very first poem of Hyacinth Way (*Beda Lan*) poem cycle and it is believed that a study of all forty-one *Beda Lan* poems will ensure a deeper insight into the study of poems of the same kind and convey more comprehensive results.

This research is carried out with the sincere belief to offer some useful suggestions for poetic translation tasks in general, as well as for metaphorical translations in particular, to discover the difficulties and problems in poetic translation, especially in the translation of metaphors.

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