

## **A STUDY OF THE TRANSLATION BY WIN PE OF METAPHORICAL EXPRESSIONS IN ZAWGYI'S 'STILL WEARING A FLOWER' (*PANN PAN LYET PAR*) POEM**

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### **Abstract**

This research focuses on the translation by *Win Pe (Mya Zin)* of metaphorical expressions in *Zawgyi's 'Still Wearing A Flower' (Pann Pan Lyet Par)*, the tenth of the forty-one stanzas under the title 'Hyacinth's Way' (*Beda Lan*). The entire poem is regarded as a highly metaphorical poetic piece by many scholars and critics, and the selected stanza can be said to be the most famous of all. 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' stanzas appeared in the 'Working People's Daily' at different times from 1989 to 1990. In this paper, the translation procedures the translator uses in rendering the metaphorical expressions in the stanza were studied, based on the theories proposed by Newmark (1988). The study revealed that in translating metaphorical expressions in the stanza, the metaphorical translation procedures of 'reproducing the same image in the target language', 'conversion of metaphor to sense' and 'deletion', are used and the procedure of 'reproducing the same image in the target language' is most common in the translation.

**Keywords** – metaphor, image, object, sense, source language (SL), target language (TL) source text (ST), target text (TT)

### **Introduction**

The nature of translation has been viewed by different scholars differently for many years. Nida (1969), as quoted in Najjar (2012), argues that translation is “producing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style”, while Catford (1965) claims that translation, as a “process, is always uni-directional”, and “the replacement of textual material in one language by equivalent material in another language”.

The translation of literary texts differs from that of non-literary texts. Newmark (1988) proposes that “modern literary translators should continually favour more natural, more colloquial, more easy, more relaxed manners than the original which was not particularly relaxed anyway”. In literary translation, the translatability of poetry has been a debatable issue for many years. Nida (1964) states that in poetic translation, “only rarely can one produce both content and form in a translation, and hence in general the form is usually sacrificed for the sake of the content”. According to Newmark (1988), “in most examples of poetry translation, the translator first decides to choose a target language poetic form as close as that of the source language (henceforth, SL) in which the precise order of the rhyming scheme may have to be dropped though it is part of the form, he then reproduces the figurative meaning, the concrete images of the poem and lastly, the setting or the thought-words”.

According to Newmark (1988), in poetic translation, the translation of metaphors in poems is rather complex as it usually involves cultural aspects, social aspects, geographical

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aspects and aesthetic aspects. In this paper, the translation of metaphors can be dealt with in terms of four factors: definition, elements, types and procedures 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 metaphor may be a single word, a collocation, an idiom, a sentence, a proverb, an allegory and a complete imaginative text”. Again, he describes the following elements of metaphor: image, object and sense. Image is the picture conjured by the metaphor while object is what is described or qualified. Sense is the resemblance or semantic area overlapping object and image. He distinguishes six types of metaphor: dead, cliché, stock, adapted, recent and original metaphors.

Dead metaphors are those “where one is hardly conscious of the image, frequently related to universal terms of space and time” and cliché metaphors are “metaphors that have perhaps temporarily outlived their usefulness and used as a substitute for clear thought”. A stock metaphor is “an established metaphor in which an informal context is effective and concise to cover a physical and/or mental situation both referentially and pragmatically” and adapted metaphors are adapted stock metaphors. A recent metaphor is “a metaphorical neologism often ‘anonymously’ coined” and original metaphors are those “quoted or created by the original writer”. (ibid: 106-112)

Newmark (1988) states seven procedures for metaphor translation which are put in the following order of preference:

- (a) Reproducing the same image in the target language (henceforth, TL)
- (b) Replacing the same image in the source language 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) Producing the same metaphor combined with its sense.

Based on these theories of metaphor types and metaphor translation procedures, this paper aims to study the translation of metaphorical expressions by Win Pe in *Zawgyi's* ‘Still Wearing A Flower’ (*Pann Pan Lyet Par*). Generally, this stanza can be said to be the most famous of *Zawgyi's* ‘Hyacinth's Way’ (*Beda Lan*) poem cycle which is regarded as a highly metaphorical poetic piece by many scholars and critics as it is believed that *Ma Beda* represents a tough and calm female who always tries to negotiate and overcome the mental as well as physical challenges in her way up and down the river. Naturally, the use of metaphors is common throughout the poem. And the objectives are to study the translation procedures in the translation of metaphorical expressions in the poem, to examine which procedures are dominant in the task of the translation, and to investigate how relevant these procedures are in rendering the metaphorical expressions from language to language, culture to culture.

### 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 translation procedures are shown in percentage. Finally, the findings are discussed.

#### Source Text(henceforth, ST) (Tenth Stanza)

##### ပန်းပန်လျက်ပဲ

ညိုဖြာဖြာလတာပြင့်ခြေရင်း။  
လှိုင်းတက်ရာဗေဒါထက်၊ လှိုင်းသက်ရာဆင်း။

ဆင်းရဲလဲမသက်သာ။  
အုန်းလက်ကြွ ရေပေါလော၊ မျောစုန်လိုလား။  
အဆင်းနဲ့အလာ၊ ဗေဒါမအထွေး။  
အုန်းလက်ကြွ သူ့နံဘေး၊ ဆောင့်ခွဲရသေး။

ဆောင့်ခွဲလဲမသက်သာ။  
နောက်တချီ ဒီတစ်လုံးက၊ ဖုံးလိုက်ပြန်ပါ။  
မြုပ်လေပေါ့ပေါ့မလာ၊ မဗေဒါအလှ။  
တလံကွာလှိုင်းအကြွ၊ ပေါ်လိုက်ပြန်ရ။

ပေါ်ပြန်လဲမသက်သာ။  
ချောင်းအဆွယ်မြောင်းငယ်ထဲက၊ ဘဲထွက်လိုလား။  
ဘဲအုပ်မှာတစရာနှစ်ရာ၊ ဗေဒါကတစ်ပင်တည်း(ထဲ)။  
အယက်အကန်ခံလို၊  
ဗေဒါပျံအံကိုခဲ၊ ပန်းပန်လျက်ပဲ။ ။

#### Target Text(henceforth, TT)

##### STILL WEARNING A FLOWER

At the mudflat's margin of murky blue  
Hyacinth moves up with the waves  
and with the waves descend.

Descent is not without travail.  
A coconut frond comes floating with the tide.  
Descent and drift. The coconut frond  
Hits the Hyacinth girl in the side.

Though hit in the side she finds no rest.  
In a moment a wave has smothered her.  
She goes under and does not rise.  
Then a wave surges and the Hyacinth girl  
comes up an arm's length away.

Coming up brings no respite.  
Ducks emerge from a branch of the creek.  
A hundred ducks and a lone Hyacinth.  
She is jostled and kicked about.  
But Hyacinth just clinches her teeth  
and keeps wearing her flower.

### Findings

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

**Table 1 Metaphorical expressions in the ST**

Source Text	Metaphor Size	Metaphor Type	Image	Object	Implied meaning
<u>ပန်း</u>	single-word	Original	Flower	grace / head	grace or beauty (that arouses pleasure or encouragement) or the top part of a plant or a being
<u>ပန်းပန်လျှက်ပါ</u>	extended	Original	the hyacinth girl	a resilient girl	retaining grace or beauty/ keeping one's head up (still going strong)
<u>လတာပြင်ခြေရင်း</u>	single-word	Dead	Foot (of the mudflat)	human world	environment full of struggles

<u>ဗေဒါမအထွေး</u>	single-word	original	the hyacinth girl	a resilient girl	Hyacinth who is relatively too small and weak (but not spiritually)
<u>ဗေဒါပျံ</u>	single-word	Original	the hyacinth girl	a resilient girl	supremely brilliant hyacinth
<u>အံ့ကိုခဲ</u>	extended	Stock	the hyacinth girl	a resilient girl	being determined (stands boldly or unyieldingly)

**Table 2 Metaphorical expressions in the TT**

Target Text	Metaphor Size	Metaphor Type	Metaphor translation procedures
<u>Flower</u>	single-word	Original	reproducing the same image in the TL
<u>Still wearing a flower</u>	Extended	Original	reproducing the same image in the TL
<u>at the mudflat's margin</u>	single-word	Dead	Conversion of metaphor to sense
<u>the hyacinth girl</u>	single-word	Original	Conversion of metaphor to sense
Hyacinth	single-word	Nil	Deletion
<u>clenches her teeth</u>	Extended	Stock	reproducing the same image in the TL

(1) The first metaphorical expression is the title itself which is also the last line of the poem and the expression ‘ပန်း’ (flower) is also the metaphorical expression:

ST- “ပန်းပန်လျှက်ပါ”

TT- “Still wearing a flower”

The title can be analyzed at two levels: 'word level' and 'extended level'. Firstly, the image ‘ပန်း’ (flower) is a symbol for grace or beauty and the object "grace or resilience (of Hyacinth)" is inferred. The sense is that both need to be retained. In a wider sense, the flower refers to the head

of a being which signifies the supreme part of that being and keeping the head up or down usually conveys special meanings in the world of humans.

As a whole, the metaphorical expression, ‘ပန်းပန်လျှက်ပါ’ (still wearing the flower) is an original metaphor as it is quoted and created by the ST poet at the time of the poem and this expression, through the poem, conveys the sense of Hyacinth remaining unbeaten or holding her head high after the severe attacks one after another. The translator renders this metaphorical expression literally as:

"Still wearing a flower"

The image is clearly mentioned but the object “a human being retaining her grace or holding her head high” is inferred. The sense is the state of still going strong. The translator uses the procedure of reproducing the same image in the target language.

(2) The third metaphorical expression is found in the lines:

ST – လတာပြင့်ခြေရင်း

TT – at the mudflat’s margin of murky blue

The metaphorical expression in this line is ‘ခြေရင်း’ which is translated as ‘margin’. The whole phrase refers to the environment where the Hyacinth girl lives. The image here is the foot of the murky blue mudflat which is the unpleasant environment that Hyacinth gets through and the object which is the large part of our human life which is usually full of struggles is inferred. The sense is that both offer challenges. In the translation of this metaphor, the translator uses the procedure of conversion of metaphor to sense.

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

ST- “အဆင်းနဲ့အလာဗေဒါမအထွေး

အုန်းလက်ကြွေသနံဘေး ဆောင့်ခွဲရသေး”

TT - "The descent and drift. The coconut frond

hits the hyacinth girl in the side.”

The metaphorical expression in the first line is ‘ဗေဒါမအထွေး’ which is translated as ‘the hyacinth girl’. The image is ‘the hyacinth girl’ and the object is a resilience little girl. The sense is that the hyacinth is small while the challenges she has faced are really big. Here, the metaphor is reduced to sense in the TT.

(4) The last metaphors are found in the last line:

ST- “အယက်အကန်ခံလို့

ဗေဒါပျံအံကိုခဲပန်းပန်လျှက်ပဲ”

TT- "She is jostled and kicked about

but Hyacinth just clenches her teeth

and keeps wearing her flower"

The last metaphorical expressions, ‘ဗေဒါဠျံ’ and ‘အံ့ကိုခဲ’ appear in the last line. The noun phrase ‘ဗေဒါဠျံ’ means ‘the brilliant *Beda*’ who is resilient and capable to retain her grace through and after the challenges she has encountered in her way up and down the river. It is translated as ‘Hyacinth’ and the expression ‘ဠျံ’ is deleted in the translation.

The verb phrase ‘အံ့ကိုခဲ’ is literally translated as ‘clenches her teeth’. The image here is ‘Hyacinth clenching her teeth’ is described clearly. It is a collocation which refers to the state of being determined. This expression conveys a message that the hyacinth is quite resolute and able to stand the several severe attacks with courage, resilience and determination. Here, the translator uses the procedure of reproducing the same metaphor.

### Discussion

There are four original metaphors, a stock metaphor and a dead metaphor in this study. It is found that the metaphor sizes as well as the metaphor types except in the case of ‘ဗေဒါဠျံ’ are found to be retained in the TT. Moreover, they are translated mostly literally except in the cases of ‘ဗေဒါမအထွေး’ and ‘ဗေဒါဠျံ’. The metaphor translation procedures used by the translator are ‘reproducing the same image’, ‘reducing to sense’ and ‘deletion’. In terms of percentage, the procedure of ‘reproducing the same image’ is 50%, that of ‘reducing to sense’ 33.33% and that of ‘deletion’ 16.67%. The metaphor translation procedure mainly involved here is reproducing the same image in the TL.

**Table 3 Proportion of metaphor translation procedures involved**

Procedures	Frequency	Percentage
Reproducing the same image in the TL	3	50%
Conversion of metaphor to sense	2	33.33%
Deletion	1	14.67%

It is found that the most preferred procedure constitutes 50% while the least preferred procedures constitute the other 50%.

Out of the six metaphorical expressions, the expression, ‘အံ့ကိုခဲ’ (clenches her teeth) is common in both cultures. It involves a stable, metaphorical meaning in both cultures. 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”. But for the rest, the metaphorical meanings may not be clearly fixed. Firstly, ‘wearing a flower or flowers is quite typical for Myanmar women and they usually wear flowers to add grace or beauty to themselves or to have pleasure. The expression, “Still wearing a flower” means that one is still with grace which can be inferred that one is still keeping her head up. But ‘wearing a flower’ may not be usual in most cultures. So this sense may not be easily grasped in those cultures. Despite this fact, it is found that its metaphorical meaning can be inferred from the context in the poem. This is also contingent with Newmark’s argument that as original metaphors are created or quoted by the SL writer, they should be translated literally whether they are universal, cultural or

obscurely subjective. Secondly, the expression, ‘ခြေရင်း’ is translated as ‘margin’ and this seems to be quite sufficient for the readers to get the intended meaning on the surface. But when moving to a deeper level, ‘the expression ‘ခြေရင်း’ often refers to a place that is inferior in Myanmar and therefore, it is culture-specific. Thirdly, the expression ‘ဗေဒါမအထွေး’ conveys the meanings of being female and being very young or tiny or delicate or even being weak. At this point, the original writer tends to use that expression to give the message that Hyacinth really deserves the most sympathy as she keeps continually facing much bigger and stronger enemies. On the one hand, Hyacinth is to be pitied. On the other hand, she is tough and brave enough to take up the challenges and overcome them. Therefore, it appears to be quite difficult to render this expression. Here, the translator simply renders this as ‘the hyacinth girl’. Moreover, the expression, ‘အထွေး’ also indicates a sense of endearment in Myanmar. Obviously, the translated expression, ‘the hyacinth girl’ cannot cover all these senses. In other words, the translated expression, ‘girl’ cannot fully convey the meaning of the expression, ‘အထွေး’ which is culture-specific. In the case of ‘ဗေဒါပျံ’, the expression ‘ပျံ’ which conveys a sense of being supreme is not translated but again, its general meaning can be inferred from the context. According to Newmark, “a deletion of metaphor can be justified empirically only on the ground that the metaphor’s function is being fulfilled elsewhere in the text”. But if the original writer uses it as a culture-specific word, there is effect loss.

### Conclusion

Specifically, this study focuses on the translation of metaphor which plays a crucial role in literary translation, especially in poetic translation.

This poem 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. Almost all the sizes of metaphorical expressions remain the same in the ST. 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 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”.

The metaphorical translation procedures of 'reproducing the same image in the TL', 'reducing to sense' and 'deletion' are found to be used in the translation and the procedure of 'reproducing the same image in the TL' is most common in the translation. In the tasks of translation of metaphorical expressions, effect loss is often inevitable.

This study is conducted only for one stanza of Hyacinth Way (*Beda Lan*) poem cycle and it is believed that a study of all forty-one *Beda Lan* stanzas 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 translations and to contribute to the pedagogic field of poetic translation, especially the translation of metaphors.

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