

## A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE TRANSLATION OF METAPHORICAL EXPRESSIONS IN ZAWGYI'S 'BEING BRAVE' (YE KHET THE PA) POEM BY WIN PE AND AH MAY THAR

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### Abstract

This research focuses on the comparative study of the translations by *Win Pe (Mya Zin)* and *Ah May Thar* of metaphorical expressions in *Zawgyi's 'Being Brave' (Ye Khet The Pa)*, the sixth of the forty-one poems under the title 'Hyacinth's Way' (*Beda Lan*). The entire poem 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. On the other hand, *Ah May Thar* is also a well-experienced poetic translator who has translated many Myanmar poems into English. In this paper, the translation procedures the translators use in rendering the metaphorical expressions in the poem were studied comparatively, based on the theories proposed by *Newmark (1988)*. The study revealed that in translating metaphorical expressions in the poem, *Win Pe* used the metaphorical translation procedures of 'reproducing the same image in the target language', and 'conversion of metaphor to sense', and *Ah May Thar* used the procedures of 'reproducing the same image in the target language', 'conversion of metaphor to sense', 'deletion', and 'producing the same metaphor combined with sense' are used and the procedure of 'reproducing the same image in the target language' is most common in the translations.

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

### Introduction

The importance of translation has ever grown during the past few centuries and it has always drawn the attention of many scholars across the world. *Newmark*, as cited in *Munday (2012)*, suggests the following terms and their definitions:

"Communicative translation attempts to produce on its readers an effect as close as possible to that obtained on the readers of the original.

Semantic translation attempts to render as closely as the semantic and synthetic structures of the second language allow, the exact contextual meaning of the original. This allows the reader closer access to the language and customs of the source culture." (*Newmark, 1981*)

According to *Hasson (2011)* stated, "Translation plays an important role in increasing awareness and understanding among diverse cultures and nations. Literary translations in particular help these cultures reach a compromise," and "a literary translation must reflect the imaginative, intellectual and intuitive writing of the author. In fact, literature is distinguished by its aesthetics."

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 (SL henceforth) 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

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setting or the thought-words". He continued that the translation of metaphors in poems is rather complex as it usually involves cultural aspects, social aspects, geographical 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 (TL henceforth)
- (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 comparatively study the translations of metaphorical expressions by *Win Pe* and *Ah May Thar* in *Zawgyi's* 'Being Brave' (*Ye Khet The Pa*) Poem. This poem is the sixth 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 by the translators used in the translation of metaphorical expressions in the poem, to examine which procedures are dominant in each task of the translation, and to compare and contrast their ways of 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 text and the two target texts by the translators 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 translators are studied. *Win Pe* is identified as Translator 1 and *Ah May Thar* as Translator 2 and their translations are identified as Target Text 1 (TT 1 Henceforth) and Target Text 2 (TT 2 henceforth). The proportions of the metaphor translation procedures used by the translators are shown in percentage. Finally, the findings are discussed.

**Source Text(ST henceforth)**

<p>ရဲခဲသည်ပျံ</p> <p>၁</p> <p>မြစ်တန်းမှာတဲ့ လေကြမ်းဆင်။</p> <p>ထန်လိုက်လေ လေမုန်တိုင်း၊ လှိုင်းက ဘောင်ဘင်။</p> <p>တစ်လှိုင်းထွက် တစ်လှိုင်းဝင်၊ ဗေဒါခင် ဖြစ်နဲ့။</p> <p>ရေလှိုင်း ဗလပွေ့နဲ့</p> <p>မုန်တိုင်းလေ ရေတစ်ရိုးမှာ၊ စိုးရွံ့မှာပဲ။</p> <p>၂</p> <p>မြစ်ရိုးမှာတဲ့ မိုးသက်ဆင်။</p> <p>လျှပ်ကြိုးပျံ မိုးသံထစ်၊ မိုး စစ်ဘုရင်။</p>	<p>မိုးညစ်လို့ မြစ်မမြင်၊ ဗေဒါခင် ဖြစ်နဲ့။</p> <p>ရေလှိုင်း ဗလပွေ့နဲ့</p> <p>မိုးသက်လေ ရေတစ်ရိုးမှာ၊ စိုးရွံ့မှာပဲ။</p> <p>၃</p> <p>စိုးမရွံ့ တွန့်မတုန်။</p> <p>မိုးနှင့်လေ ရေရှုပ်ထွေး၊ ရွေးမျှမဖြူ။</p> <p>ဆန်လိုက်ပြန်တုံ၊ စုန်လိုက်ပြန်ရ။</p> <p>ခေါက်ပေါင်း မရေနိုင်လို့</p> <p>ဗေဒါခိုင် သည်မြစ်ထဲ၊ ရဲခဲသည်ပျံ။ ။</p>
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**Target Text 1 (TT 1 henceforth)**

**Being Brave**

The wind is wild on the straight stretch of river

The storm is intense, the waves rough.

Miss Hyacinth's lot is to suffer the waves sweeping in and out.

Tumultuous waves and the storm raging, Hyacinth should be afraid.

Heavy rain threatens along the river.

String lightning flies, thunder roars.

**Target Text 2 (TT 2 henceforth)**

**Had Braved**

Along the line of the creek, the wind has started blasting about,

What a fierce storm with waves rolling over!

With one wave after another coming in and out: Miss *Beda*, with all the water, billowing about her in the raging storm, wind and water

She's going to fear for sure.

Along the line of the creek, a torrent of rains has started,

Lightening flashed, and thunder crashed

As if the rain warrior king in a fit has darted:

It is the warlord rain.

Miss Hyacinth's lot is poor visibility  
on the river in murky rain.

Tumultuous waves and wind-bringing rain,  
Hyacinth should be afraid.

No trembling and no nervousness.  
Though rain is confounded with wind  
there's not the slightest fear.

If she goes upstream, downstream  
she comes.

So many times up and down this river,  
Hyacinth flower is brave.

Unseeing the creek, Miss *Beda*

For the outburst of rains has it covered,

In the raging storm, wind and water

She's going to fear for sure.

Never fearing, never recoiling, never trembling,

The rain, wind and water, not a bit do they bother

Has always been rising up, always down creek  
ebbing,

The trips hither, countless in number,

Had always braved this creek, the bunch of *Beda*

### Findings

There are five metaphorical expressions in the poem. The setting is the tidal creek which is full of heavy downpours, fierce winds and raucous soundscapes of nature. It can make anyone in it feel small indeed.

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

ST: ရေလှိုင်းဗလပွန်နဲ့

မုန်တိုင်းလေရေတစ်ရိုးမှာ၊ စိုးရွံ့မှာပဲ။

TT 1: Tumultuous waves and the storm raging,

Hyacinth should be afraid.

TT 2: With all the water, billowing about her in the raging

Storm, wind and water

She's going to fear for sure.

The metaphorical expression in this line is 'စိုးရွံ့မှာပဲ' which is translated as 'Hyacinth should be afraid' by *Win Pe* and 'She's going to fear for sure.' *Ah May Thar*. Hyacinth is personified as a human being and she is compared to a young woman or a woman who is facing dangers or threats.

In this metaphorical expression, the image is Hyacinth and the object is a human being. The sense is that they would feel fear when facing dangers or threats. This is an extended metaphor. Both translators render it literally and use the procedure of producing the same image in the target language. But their ways of choosing words and expressions are found to be different.

(2) The second metaphorical expression appears in the last line of the first stanza of the poem.

ST: လျှပ်ကြိုးပျံ မိုးသံထစ်၊ မိုးစစ်ဘုရင်။

TT 1: String lighting flies, thunder roars.

It is the warlord rain.

TT 2: Lightening flashed, and thunder crashed

As if the rain warrior king in a fit has darted:

The metaphorical expression in this line is ‘မိုးစစ်ဘုရင်’ which is translated as ‘the warlord rain’ by *Win Pe* and “the rain warrior king” by *Ah May Thar*. The rain is personified as a human being and compared to a warlord or warrior king who is roaring and threatening.

In this metaphorical expression, the image is the warlord and the object is the rain. The sense is that they typically roar thunderously. This is an extended metaphor and the translator rendered it literally. The translators use the procedure of producing the same image in the target language. However, the translator 2 uses the procedure of word for word translation by translating each word separately and following the source text quite closely whereas the translator 1 tends to use the communicative translation, focusing on the target text and trying to leave the readership in peace.

(3) The third metaphorical expression appears in the third line of the second stanza.

ST: မိုးညစ်လို့ မြစ်မမြင်၊ ဗေဒါခင် ဖြစ်နဲ့။

TT 1: Miss Hyacinth's lot is poor visibility  
on the river in murky rain.

TT 2: Unseeing the creek, Miss *Beda*

For the outburst of rains has it covered,

The metaphorical expression in this line is ‘ဗေဒါခင် ဖြစ်နဲ့’. It is translated as ‘Miss Hyacinth's lot’ by Translator 1 whereas it is deleted in translation by Translator 2. Hyacinth is personified as a human being who is having hard times in life.

In this metaphorical expression, the image is Hyacinth and the object is a human. The sense is that they are brave. This is an extended metaphor and Translator 1 rendered it literally. The translator uses the procedure of producing the same image in the target language.

(4) The fourth and fifth metaphorical expression appears in the last lines of the first stanza.

ST: စိုးမရွံ့ တွန့်မတုန်။

မိုးနှင့်လေရေရှုပ်ထွေး၊ ရွေးမျှမဖြူ။

TT 1: No trembling and no nervousness.

Though rain is confounded with wind  
there's not the slightest fear.

TT 2: Never fearing, never recoiling, never trembling,

The rain, wind and water, not a bit do they bother

The metaphorical expressions in these lines are ‘စိုးမရွံ့ တွန့်မတုန်’ and ‘ရွေးမျှမဖြူ’ which are translated by the translator 1 as ‘no trembling and no nervousness’ and ‘(there’s) not the slightest fear’ respectively and by the translator 2 as ‘never fearing and never recoiling’ and ‘never trembling/ not a bit do they bother’ respectively. It means that despite the fierce landscapes and raucous soundscapes, Hyacinth remains unaffected and she is personified as a fearless human being. In this metaphorical expression, the image is Hyacinth and the object is a daring human being. The sense is that they are confident. The former ‘စိုးမရွံ့ တွန့်မတုန်’ is an extended metaphor. Both translators rendered it almost literally and used the procedure of producing the same image in the target language for this. To be specific, the translator 1 tends to maintain both the form and content of the original text, in the meanwhile clearly conveying the message of the source text. On the other hand, in the translation of the translator 2, though the translator tries to retain the content and form of the ST, there will probably be some confusion for the readership as he overtranslates the expressions in the TT. The latter ‘ရွေးမျှမဖြူ’ is also an extended metaphor which means ‘with no ounce of fear’. This is a cliché metaphor and for this, the translator 1 uses the procedure of reducing to sense, trying to communicate the target reader whereas the translator 2 seems to make the message unclear by undertranslating the given metaphorical expression.

(5) The fifth metaphorical expression appears in the last line of the first stanza of the poem.

ST: ခေါက်ပေါင်းမရေနိုင်လို့  
ဗေဒါနိုင် သည်မြစ်ထဲ၊ ရဲခွဲသည်ပျံ။

TT 1: (If she goes upstream, downstream she comes.)

So many times up and down this river,  
Hyacinth flower is brave.

TT 2: (Has always been rising up, always downcreek ebbing,)

The trips hither, countless in number,  
Has always braved this creek, the bunch of *Beda*

The metaphorical expression here is ‘ဗေဒါနိုင် သည်မြစ်ထဲ၊ ရဲခွဲသည်ပျံ’ which is translated as ‘So many times up and down this river, Hyacinth flower is brave’ by the translator 1 and ‘Has always braved this creek, the bunch of *Beda*’. Hyacinth has gone through such dangers and threats many times as she has gone upstream and downstream in this tidal creek for a long.

In this metaphorical expression, the image is Hyacinth and the object is a brave human being who remains calm and able in difficult situations as he has experienced the ups and downs in life many times. The sense is that they are experienced and therefore brave. This is an extended metaphor and the translators use the procedure of reproducing the same image in the target language.

## Discussion

In the poem studied, there are altogether six metaphorical expressions detected in terms of metaphor types categorized by Newmark (1988) and it is found that four of them are original metaphors which are created or quoted by the original poet. And they include universal, cultural and subjective or personal metaphorical expressions. Again, there are one stock metaphor and one cliché. Three out of six metaphorical expressions are extended metaphors and the rest are single-word metaphors. All metaphor sizes are retained in the TT 1 but in TT 2, all become extended metaphors.

**Table 1 Metaphorical expressions in the ST**

No	Source Text	Metaphor Size	Metaphor Type	Image	Object	Sense
1	စိုးရွံ့မှာပဲ	Single-word	Original	Hyacinth who has to go through the storms and the huge waves in the tidal creek	A human who has to come across the threatening obstacles in his or her way of life	Both will be threatened and frightened
2	မိုးစစ်ဘုရင်	Single-word	Stock	the warlord	the stormy rain	Both are roaring and threatening
3	မိုးညစ်လို့ မြစ်မမြင်၊ ဗေဒါခင် ဖြစ်နဲ့	Extended	Original	Hyacinth's poor way of life	A human in bad circumstances	The pitifulness of human existence
4	စိုးမရွံ့ တွန်းမတုန်	Extended	Original	Hyacinth who is not afraid of the heavy rain and the roaring thunders at all	A human who is not afraid of the threats and dangers in life	Both are quite brave.
5	ရွေးမျှမဖြို	Single-word	Cliché	Hyacinth who has no ounce of fear	a human who cannot be stopped for anything	They are quite brave.
6	ရဲခဲသည်ပဲ	Single-word	Original	Hyacinth who has no ounce of fear is brave	A human who cannot be stopped for anything is brave	Being brave

**Table 2 Metaphorical expressions in the TT 1**

No	Target Text	Metaphor Size	Metaphor Type	Metaphor translation procedures
1	should be afraid	Single-word	Original	Reproducing the same image in the TL
2	the warlord rain.	Single-word	Stock	Reproducing the same image in the TL
3	Miss Hyacinth's lot is poor visibility	Extended	Original	Reproducing the same image in the TL
4	No trembling and no nervousness	Extended	Original	Reproducing the same image in the TL
5	there's not the slightest fear	Single- word	Stock	Conversion of metaphor to sense
6	Hyacinth is brave	Single- word	Original	Reproducing the same image in the TL

**Table 2 Metaphorical expressions in the TT 2**

No	Target Text	Metaphor Size	Metaphor Type	Metaphor translation procedures
1	going to fear for sure	Extended	Original	Reproducing the same image in the TL
2	the rain warrior king	Extended	Stock	Reproducing the same image in the TL
3	Unseeing the creek, Miss Beda —	Nil	Nil	Deletion
4	Never fearing, never recoiling	Extended	Original	Producing the same metaphor with sense
5	never trembling/ not a bit do they bother	Extended	Original	Conversion of metaphor to sense
6	(Hyacinth) Has always braved this creek	Extended	Original	Reproducing the same image in the TL

In TT 1, all the metaphor types except in the case of ‘ရွေးမျှမဖြို’ (there’s not an ounce of fear) are found to be retained. In TT 2, there are changes in the types of metaphors. In the case of ‘ရွေးမျှမဖြို’ (there’s not an ounce of fear) turns to original and in the third metaphorical expression ‘မိုးညစ်လို့ မြစ်မမြင်၊ ဗေဒါခင် ဖြစ်နဲ့’, the expression ‘ဗေဒါခင် ဖြစ်နဲ့’ (the poor lot of Hyacinth) is not translated.

The metaphor translation procedures used by Translator 1 are ‘reproducing the same image’ and ‘reducing to sense in the TT’. The metaphor translation procedure mainly involved here is reproducing the same image in the TL. Translator 2 uses the procedures of ‘reproducing the same image’, ‘reducing to sense in the TT’, ‘deletion’ and ‘producing the same metaphor combined with sense’.

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

Procedures	Translator 1		Translator 2	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Reproducing the same image in the TL	5	83.33%	3	50%
Replacing the same image in the source language with a standard TL image	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Translation of metaphor by simile, retaining the same image	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Translation of metaphor by simile plus sense	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Conversion of metaphor to sense	1	16.67%	1	16.67%
Deletion	Nil	Nil	1	16.67%
Producing the same metaphor with sense	Nil	Nil	1	16.67%
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>100%</b>

It is found that in TT 1, the most preferred procedure constitutes 83.33% while the less preferred procedure constitutes the other 16.66% whereas in TT 2, the most preferred procedure constitutes 50% while the third least preferred procedure constitutes another 50% These statistics will reflect the discussion of findings below.

Out of the six metaphorical expressions in the poem, there is one cliché metaphor ‘ရွေးမျှမငြို’ (there’s not the slightest fear) which can be directly translated as “with no ounce of fear’. Both translators reduce it to sense but in different ways. It is cultural and difficult to be transferred to the ST and their metaphorical meanings may not be clearly fixed. But on the other hand, it can be said to be universal and the version of ‘ounce of fear’ is likely to have a stronger emotional impact than a functional equivalent. Secondly, there is one stock metaphorical expressions which is ‘မိုးစစ်ဘုရင်’ (the warlord rain). Both translators use the procedure of reproducing the same image in the TL but again in the different ways. According to Newmark (1988), “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”. In the case of the metaphorical expression ‘ဗေဒါခင် ဖြစ်နဲ’ (the poor lot of Hyacinth), Translator 1 reproduces the same image in the TL while the deletion procedure is used in TT 2. But this expression is important part of the poem’s message which stresses the fact that the protagonist is facing great challenges and so there is definitely effect loss in the translation.

In rendering the original metaphorical expression ‘စိုးရွံ့မှာဝဲ’, both translators use the procedure of reproducing the same image in the TL, but in TT 2, it is translated as “going to fear for sure’ which will lead to deviation from its meaning in the ST. In dealing with the expression ‘စိုးမရွံ့ တွန့်မတုန်’, Translator 1 translates it as ‘no trembling and no nervousness’ whereas it is translated as ‘never fearing, never recoiling’ which again leads to deviation in meaning. When translating the last metaphorical expression ‘ရဲခွဲသည့်ဝါ’, Translator 1 translates it neat while Translator 2 makes some addition to the translation.

To sum up, the procedures used by Translator 1 tend to be more congruent with the requirements of the theory than those used by Translator 2. The former translates all original metaphorical expressions using the procedure of retaining the same image in the TT but the latter unnecessarily deletes one original metaphor in the translation.

## Conclusion

Generally, this study focuses on the translation of metaphor which plays a crucial role in literary translation, especially in poetic translation. Specifically, this paper studies the different approaches used by two translators in rendering the metaphorical expressions in the poem ‘Being Brave’ (*Ye Khet The Pa*) in which 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 TT 1 but there are some changes in TT 2. Most of the metaphors involved are found to be original ones and in translating them, the translators use the procedure of reproducing the same image in the TL though there are some problems in the TT 2.

It is found that most of the metaphors in ST are original ones and the procedure of ‘reproducing the same image in the TL’ is most common in the translations though the percentages are quite different. Newmark (1988) described that original should be translated neat and literally whether they are universal, cultural or obscurely subjective as they are created or quoted by the SL writer. It can be implied that deviation from this will have an impact on the translation.

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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