



Structural adjustment in literary translation based on Nida and Taber's framework: a case study of sa'di poem

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Abstract

Poetry is a subcategory of literature which contains aesthetic and rhythmic qualities of language. These are the characteristics of poetry that distinguish it from other types of literature. Therefore, the question that arises in poetry translation is reliance on meaning or form. To resolve the so-called binary, some structural and semantic adjustments have been proposed. In this study, structural adjustments have been investigated in one poem of sa'di. It's required to mention that the present paper is based on Nida and Taber's framework (2003). The aim of this research is to provide an analysis of these adjustments to see whether or not they eliminate misunderstanding in the target audience. In order to do this descriptive, analytical, and qualitative investigation, Persian source text have been compared and contrasted with two English target texts (translators were Clarke (1985) and Wickens (1984)). Source text data have been obtained from *Bustan Sa'di* and target text data have been collected from *A Study of Islamic Texts in English Translation* by Manafi Anari. The results revealed that adjustment of tenses is the most commonly used strategy, the second rank is occupied by numerals, and the least frequent strategies are change in word level and passivization. These findings add substantially to our understanding of strategies adopted by translators of literary texts. Moreover, the present research is utilizable for translators and researchers in the field of translation studies as it exhibits better ways of poetic communication through translation.

Keywords: poetry translation, structural adjustments, semantic adjustments, expansion, reduction, Sa'di poems



1. Introduction

In poetry, rhythm, style, and word choice stimulate the author's feelings and ideas. So, in this regard, a question arises in the mind of the researcher. That is the translatability of literary works and poems in particular. The legitimacy of translating poems into other languages has been a heated debate for a long time. Attempting to translate the essence or meaning of a poem without considering rhythm and word choices can result in the creation of an entirely new poem that is barely based on the original. In attempting to capture both the meaning and form of a poem, translators may choose between fidelity to the original text and adaptation. (Anari, 2009)

Many scholars have done research in this field of study. The first to be mentioned is Catford. In his book, *A linguistic theory of translation* (1965), he considered two kinds of shifts; shift of level and shift of category. Category shift is subdivided into four kinds: structural shift, class shift, rank shift, and intra system shifts. In addition, Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) conducted a research on translation strategies and procedures. They considered direct and oblique translation which included seven procedures. Nida and Taber (2003) proposed making semantic and structural modifications to address the differentiation between meaning and form. They believed that semantic and structural changes were necessary to produce dynamic equivalent which makes same effect on the target reader as on the original reader.

The poems of honorable Iranian poets like Sa'di have been translated into other languages, especially English. However, these poems often undergo a great deal of changes in terms of meaning and structure. A lot of translators just attempt to transfer the meaning of the original poem to the target language. In this case, the translation is more natural which needs some semantic and structural adjustments.

This paper provides a snapshot of adjustments in two translations (by Clarke (1985), Wickens (1984)) of the *Bustan of Sa'di* in order to investigate which types of structural adjustments are applied in translating the content and form of one of his poems. The qualitative approach is used in the present study to analyze the collected data. So in this regard, we try to provide answers to these questions.

Question: What structural adjustments are used in the translation?

Which one is the most frequently applied?

The present research is based on the concept of translation adjustments defined by Nida and Taber (2003). They proposed that two kinds of adjustments occur in translation. One of them semantic adjustment and the other is a structural adjustment (Nida & Taber, 2003). The current research primarily deals with structural adjustments. Literary translation is the subject of this research since this field has been less discussed. This research is done within Nida and Tabor's framework (2003) since this framework was the latest about adjustments.

This research is of great significance. In order to reduce misunderstanding in target audience, in sacred and legal texts, researchers find and analyze adjustments and the results was the improvement of meaning translation. This research intends to perform a similar analysis to see if these adjustments are also effective in translation of poetry. Moreover, this research is of great help to university professors and students in the field of literary translation.

This study was carried out during two months, so we were faced with a time limit. This research examines only one of Sa'di's poems. However, it would be much better if more poems were



examined and researched. Another limitation is related to the poems themselves. Since these poems were composed many centuries ago, sometimes there are differences in printing, and again due to time limitation, this research examines only one of these printings.

2. Literature review

2-1. Literary translation

The common view is that literary translation represents a distinctive kind of translating because it is concerned with a distinctive kind of text. *Literary translation: Practices* by Peter Bush discussed the issue by declaring: ‘Literary translation is the work of literary translators’, and stressing their skill and worth. The German *Handbuch Translation* distinguished broad text types: informative, appellative and expressive, the typology devised by Karl Bühler (Bühler, 1934). Expressive texts cover narrative, drama and poetry along with film, comic strips and the Bible (Snell-Hornby et al., 1998)

2-2. Poetry translation, Form or content

Each poem has its own formal and stylistic features. According to Anari (2009), sometimes reproduction of linguistic characteristics results in unintelligibility or distortion of meaning. In other words, it is not necessary to translate rhythms and rhymes in poetry; rather, it is of great significance to convey meaning to receptor language. According to Zandian and Yari (2022), translators face a constant struggle between maintaining the intended meaning and adhering to the appropriate form in all types of translation. While the content holds great significance, disregarding the style can lead to a translation that is unclear and difficult to understand. Balancing both the content and form is a challenging endeavor.

2-3. Strategies for poetry translation

Translating poetry is a controversial and challenging issue in translation studies. Among different scholars who have some words on poetry translation, the most influential one is Lefever. He viewed poetry as a unified context in which the form, content and aesthetic issues were closely integrated and all of these had their own special value (Lefever, 1975). Below is a list of his strategies for poetry translation:

1. Phonemic Translation: try to reproduce the source language sound in the target language.
2. Literal Translation: word for word translation.
3. Metrical Translation: try to reproduce the source language meter.
4. Verse to Prose Translation: change poem to text which nullifies the sense and syntax of source text.
5. Rhymed Translation: try to keep the rhyme of the original poem.
6. Blank/free verse translation: try to find just the proper equivalents in the target language.
7. Interpretation: also named version and imitation. Version occurs when the content of source language text is retained but the form is changed. Imitation occurs when the translator produces a new kind of that poem.

2-4. Works done in Iran

Fadaee (2011) conducted a research on the naturalness of translation. To examine the degree of naturalness in translations of Bilingual-Educational story books for elementary and intermediate



levels, 30 books were chosen at random from a total of 139. The Persian translations of these books were then compared to the original English versions, focusing on the naturalness of the translations. The analysis revealed that certain crucial aspects of the translation process were overlooked, resulting in poorly translated passages.

Zandian and Yari (2022) studied semantic and structural adjustment in the translation of the Quran. The scholars compared the English and Arabic renditions of the surah using Nida and Taber's (2003) semantic and structural adjustments as a framework. They discovered that when translating the Az Zariyat surah, the most common adjustments were lexical expansions, with "descriptive equivalent" being the most prevalent type.

2-5. Works done abroad

Sudana and Yadnya (2021) investigated the semantic adjustments in the translation of an English Memorandum of Understanding into Indonesian used as the data source. The data were collected through observation and by using close reading and note-taking techniques. They used the descriptive approach and the theory proposed by Nida (1991). The result showed that the semantic adjustments allow the translator to transfer the message in the SL to the TL appropriately enough. Iqbal, Sadia, and Zahra (2023) conducted a research on structural adjustment in legal translation. That study revealed that to communicate a complete sense and message of the source, the structures of the source text beard various changes during the process of translation. It demonstrated the frequent use of reduction strategy while transferring legal text from English to the Urdu language.

3. Method

3-1. Theoretical framework

Since both meaning and style are essential parts in poetry, it is often necessary to use adjustments. These modifications can be broadly categorized into two types: semantic adjustments and structural adjustments, each of them has sub-categories. (Nida and Taber, 2003)

3-1-1. Semantic adjustments

Semantic adjustment is subdivided into two branches: expansion and reduction. Based on Nida and Taber's theory (2003), expansions can be classified into two main types: syntactic expansions and semantic expansions. Semantic expansions encompass three different forms: classifiers, descriptive equivalence, and semantic restructuring. The most common syntactic expansions are: the identification of the participants in events, identification of objects or events with abstracts, more explicit indication of relationals, and filling out of ellipses (Nida & Taber, 2003).

The translator might have to condense certain expressions to achieve dynamic equivalence in the target language. This process is named reduction. There are seven basic types of reduction, according to Nida and Taber (2003, p. 168): simplification of doublets, reduction of repetitions, omission of specification of participants, loss of conjunction, reduction of formulas, using extensive ellipsis, and simplification of highly repetitious style.

3-1-2. Structural adjustments

In order to achieve successful and effective communication through translation, translators make different changes in the structure of a text to fit it in the context of the target text; these changes are known as structural adjustments. The concept of structural adjustments is defined by Nida and Taber (2003) in their work *Theory and Practice of Translation*. Manafi Anari (2009, pp.8-9) classifies major areas of this kind of adjustments into some categories:



1. Active ↔ passive
 2. Adjustments of tenses
 3. Singular ↔ plural
 4. Change in the word levels (for example, nouns ↔ verbs)
- 3-2. Data collection

The present research aimed at investigating structural adjustments in two translations of Sa'di's *Bustan* by Clarke (1985) and Wickens (1984). This study is a descriptive, analytical, and qualitative investigation. Data of this study has been analyzed by Nida and Taber's framework (2003). In order to carry out this research, 22 verses of a poem from *Bustan Saadi* was selected and analyzed with two different English translations. These translations were taken from the book *A Study of Islamic Texts in English Translation* by Manafi Anari. The Persian source text and its translations were examined for various types of content and style modifications.

3-3. Data analysis procedure

In this research, word is the unit of analysis and the following procedures were taken to conduct the study: Firstly, a contrastive analysis was conducted on the Persian source text and English translations of *Bustan* against the structural adjustments of Nida and Taber (2003) who used this framework in their study of the Bible. Next, a comprehensive analysis and study of structural adjustments and their subcategories were conducted. To do this analysis, structural adjustments were found in the poems and then they were categorized into different subcategories. The aim of the present study is to find the most and the least common structural adjustments and also find out if they help to convey the meaning better.

4. Results and discussion

4-1. findings and results

In this part, the selected data is analyzed and discussed. Various verses of the original text and their translation have been presented. Data is analyzed by comparing the structure of the original text and the translated text.

Table 1-Structural adjustment (singular → plural)

Number	Source text	Target text by Clarke	Target text by Wickens	Strategy user
1	به درگاه لطف و بزرگیش بر/ بزرگان نهاده بزرگی ز سر	At the Court of His grace and greatness/ The Great Ones have put greatness out of their heads	On the threshold of His grace and greatness/Great Ones doff greatness from their heads	Both
2	مهیا کن روزی مار و مور/ اگر چند بی دست و پایند و زور	He prepares the daily food of the snake and the ant/ Although, they are without hand, and feet, and strength	Purveyor of daily fare to serpent and ant alike/Though they lack hands and feet and strength	Both



3	بشر ماورای جلالش نیافت/بصر منتهای جمالش نیافت	The people discovered not what was beyond His majesty/The vision discovered not the extent of His power	Man has not found what lies beyond His grandeur/ Sight has not found His beauty's term	Clarke
4	زبان آمد از بهر شکر و سپاس / به غیبت نگرداندش حق شناس	The tongue came(from God) for thanks and praise/The grateful one moves it not in slander	The tongue was given for gratitude and thanks / The man who knows what's due will wield it not for slander	Both
5	بین تا یک انگشت از چند بند/به صنع الهی به هم درفکند	Behold one finger, with how many joints /God, by creating, cast together	See how one finger from so many joints /With craftsmanship divine, He casts together	Both
6	تامل کن از بهر رفتار مرد/ که چند استخوان پی زد و وصل کرد	For the sake of man's motion, consider/ Him, who fixed the sinews and placed the articulations of so many bones	Reflect, in order that Man may walk/How many bones He links and joins	Both

This subcategory of structural adjustment deals with numerals, that is singular and plural. Six original verses have been compared and contrasted with translated verses. In all of them, singular nouns in the source text have been changed to plural nouns. But, Clarke has applied this strategy more than Wickens.

Table 2-Structural adjustment (adjustment of tenses)

Number	Source text	Target text by Clarke	Target text by Wickens	Strategy user
1	عزیزی که هرگز درش سر بتافت /به هر در که شد هیچ عزت نیافت	A king such that whosoever turned away from his head from His door/ Found not any respect at the doors to which he went	Glorious One! Whoever turns from His door his head/To whatever door he goes , he finds no glory	Wickens
2	وگر خشم گیرد ز کردار زشت/چو باز آمدی ماجرا درنوشت	And, though He becomes angry at bad conduct/ When thou didst return, He	Does He wax wroth at ugly deeds?/If you relent, He crosses out what's gone	Wickens



		cancelled the past circumstance		
3	به درگاه لطف و بزرگیش بر/ بزرگان نهاده بزرگی ز سر	At the Court of His grace and greatness/ The Great Ones have put greatness out of their heads	On the threshold of His grace and greatness/Great Ones doff greatness from their heads	Wickens
4	نه ادراک درکنه ذاتش رسید/نه فکرت به غور صفتاش رسید	Genius reaches not to the substance of His nature/ Thought reaches not to the profundity of His qualities	Perception never plumbed His essence/ Reflection never reached His attributes' abyss	Clarke
5	خلاف پیمبر کسی ره گزید/که هرگز به منزل نخواهد رسید	That person, who chooses the way opposite to the Prophet/ Will never arrive at the stage(of his journey)	That man chose a contrary road to the Messenger's/ Who will never reach the stage-post	Clarke
6	زبان آمد از بهر شکر و سپاس / به غیبت نگرداندش حق شناس	The tongue came for thanks and praise/ The grateful one moves it not for slander	The tongue was given for gratitude and thanks/ The man who knows what's due will wield it not for slander	Wickens
7	ببین تا یک انگشت از چند بند/به صنع الهی به هم درفکند	Behold one finger, with how many joints/ God, by creating, cast together	See how one finger from so many joints/ With craftsmanship divine, He casts together	Both
8	تامل کن از بهر رفتار مرد/ که چند استخوان پی زد و وصل کرد	For the sake of man's motion, consider/ Him, who fixed the sinews and placed the articulations of so many bones	Reflect, in order that Man may walk/ How many bones He links and joins	Wickens
9	تو را آنکه چشم و دهان داد و گوش/اگر عاقلی در خلافش مکوش	He, who gave thee eye and mouth, and ear/ If thou art wise, strive not in opposition to Him	As to the One who gave you eyes and mouth and ears/ If you're intelligent, to thwart Him you'll not strive	Wickens



The second subcategory of structural adjustments is about altering tenses. In the present research, 9 verses have been investigated; in most of the cases, simple past has been replaced by simple present. Unlike the previous strategy, this one is more observable in the translation by Wickens. Nevertheless, this does not cause any problem in terms of meaning, because the poet's intention is to give general advice which can be correctly expressed by simple present tense. This indicates that the translator has thoroughly understood the meaning of poetry.

Table 3-Structural adjustment (change in the word levels)

Number	Source text	Target text by Clarke	Target text by Wickens	Strategy user
1	مهیبا کن روزی مار و مور/اگر چند بی دست و پایند و زور	He prepares the daily food of the snake and the ant/ Although, they are without hand, and feet, and strength	Purveyor of daily fare to serpent and ant alike/Though they lack hands and feet and strength	Clarke
2	تامل کن از بهر رفتار مرد/ که چند استخوان پی زد و وصل کرد	For the sake of man's motion, consider/ Him, who fixed the sinews and placed the articulations of so many bones	Reflect, in order that Man may walk/How many bones He links and joins	Wickens
3	از آن سجده بر آدمی سخت نیست/ که در صلب او مهره یک لخت نیست	Prostration is not difficult for a man, on that account/ That, the joint in his back-bone is not of one piece	Again, it is not for Man to make prostration/Since in his back he has no vertebra all in one piece	Wickens
4	بهایم به رو اندر افتاده خوار/تو همچون الف بر قدمها سوار	The wild beasts, with the countenance downcast, are contemptible/ Thou. Alif-like, art a rider on thy feet	The beasts are fallen low upon their face/While you like alif ride high on your legs	Wickens

The third subcategory is changing word levels; for instance, a noun in the source text is replaced by a verb in the target text. This is mostly visible in the translation of Wickens; on the other hand, Clarke has more preserved the same word levels as the source text. Changing a noun to verb makes the verse longer, this also makes the poem look like prose and lose its rhythm.

Table 4-Structural adjustment (active ↔ passive)

Number	Source text	Target text by Clarke	Target text by Wickens	Strategy user
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1	به امرش وجود از عدم نقش بیست/که داند جز او کردن از نیست هست	By His order, He pourtrayed existence from non-existence/Who, except Him, knows how to make the existing from the non- existing?	At His command, Both from non- existence, existence took design/Who can make being from non-being, save Him?
2	مپندار سعدی که راه صفا/توان رفت جز بر پی مصطفی	Oh Sa'di think not that the path of purity/ One can travel, except behind the Chosen One	Think not, Sa'di, Wickens that the road of serenity/Can be travelled save in the chosen One's footsteps
3	کرم کن که فردا که دیوان نهند/منازل به مقدار احسان دهند	Practise liberality that to- morrow when they place the account-book/ They may give thee dignities, according to the extent of thy beneficences	Practise liberality, Wickens for tomorrow, when Court is held/Stations will be given in accord with beneficence

The last subcategory is changing active voice to passive or vice versa. This strategy has been mostly used by Wickens. In all of the above-mentioned examples, active voice of original text has been replaced by passive in translation. This is a rather common practice since in Persian active voice is preferred, but in English passive voice is prevalent.

4-2. Discussion

The results reveal that structural adjustment is commonplace in translation. From the above 22 cases, 9 examples are allocated to adjustment of tenses, so that's the most frequent category and the least frequent is for change in word levels. The results of the present study are in line with Zandian and Yari (2022) who found the adjustment of tenses the most frequently used in the translation of Az Zariyat Surah.

In most of the analyzed cases, structural adjustment does not cause grave misunderstanding of the content. Translators sometimes choose to make a variation but in other cases, they are obliged to do that. In this way, they adjust the structure in order to accord it with the linguistic features of the receptor language. The following graph reveals the amount of structural adjustments.

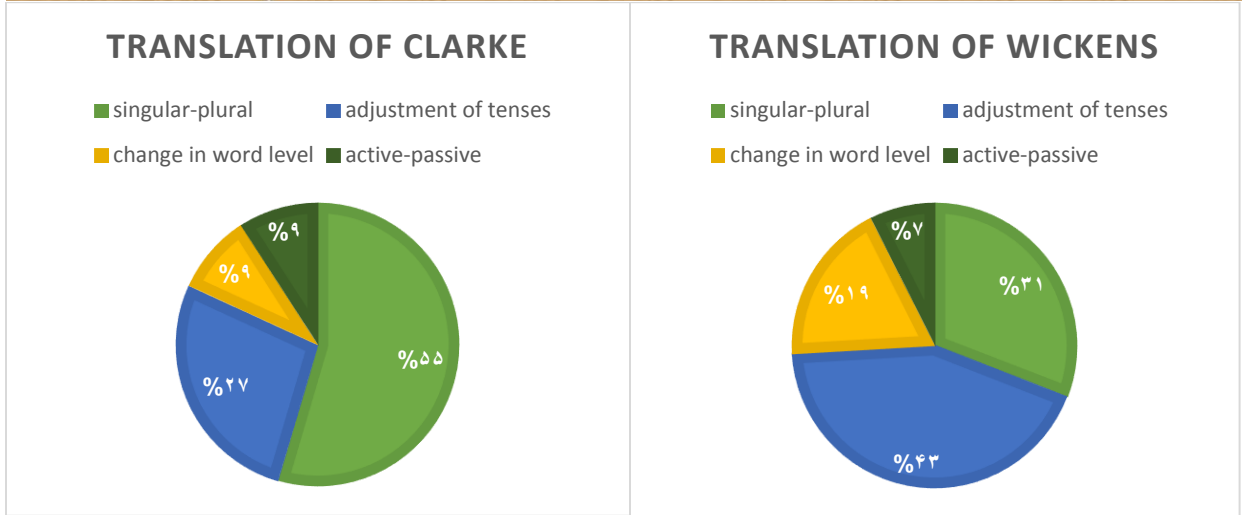


Figure (1) strategies usage percentage

As illustrated in these 2 graphs, Wickens has used change in word level much more than Clarke. On the other hand, Clarke has used more changes of singular-plural.

5. Conclusion

This study set out to determine which structural adjustment is prevalent in the translation of *Bustan* by examining the work of two translators. The present article states that to convey the full meaning and message of a source text, its structure undergoes several changes during translation.

Every language has its own structure, thus a great deal of changes occur inevitably in translation. In some cases, these changes are absolutely necessary due to the linguistic standards of target language. By the use of these adjustments, the translation is smoother; however, in some cases, they are inutile and make target text out of rhythm.

One of the most significant findings to emerge from this study is that adjustment of tenses is the most frequent, the second frequent subcategory is numerals, and the least frequent subcategories are change in word level and passivization. The current findings add substantially to our understanding of strategies adopted by translators of literary texts.



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