

# ԼԵԶՎԱԲԱՆՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ

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## ON SOME ISSUES OF TRANSLATING BEAUTY PROVERBS FROM ENGLISH INTO ARMENIAN

*The present paper discusses some of the theoretical arguments concerning the problem of translating beauty proverbs from a source language into a target language. The paper mainly concentrates on the challenges a translator may encounter when attempting to translate the beauty proverbs in the works of the 19<sup>th</sup> century American and British authors into Armenian. Though extralinguistic reality has long been recognized as an essential factor in the process of translation, linguists argue for the linguistic reality claiming that within the linguistic scope of both languages no translation is attainable. The paper attempts to challenge this approach and demonstrate that it is not necessary to be native to understand the central concern of the source language as both literal and semantic translations are able to recreate the precise flavour and tone in the target language.*

**Key words:** *linguistic reality, extra-linguistic reality, source language (SL), target language (TL), source text (ST), word-for-word translation, semantic translation*

Throughout history interpreters have always played a vital role in interlingual communications between different levels of might and between different types of people. Those people were supposed to talk to foreigners on a daily basis. Hence, no real communication could take place without an interpreter. As a result, interpreters have consistently been treated in two extreme ways; as either divine or as ordinary beings.

Being a translator is not an easy task. Rather, it requires more than just transferring the general idea of the source text into a target language. In his lecture Friedrich Schleiermacher stated, “the goal of translating in such a way as the author would have written originally in the language of the translation is not only unattainable but is also futile and empty in itself” /Schleiermacher, 1992: 50/.

The current paper aims not to disagree with the preferences and ideas of Schleiermacher but rather challenge his drastic statement concerning the goal of

translation, which, according to him, cannot be achieved. Why did he consider that goal unattainable, even futile and empty?

Many people would agree that when you read Byron in the Armenian language, the reader does not need to think about its translation as it seems to be originally written in Armenian. The language is so pure, eloquent, majestic and natural. In *The Task of the Translator* Walter Benjamin states that “any translation which intends to perform a transmitting function cannot transmit anything but information”, and wonders whether “the essential substance of a literary work – the unfathomable, the mysterious, the “poetic” – is something that a translator can reproduce only if he is also a poet” /Benjamin, 1923: 15/. Then he goes on with the following statement: “As translation is a mode of its own, the task of the translator, too, may be regarded as distinct and clearly differentiated from the task of the poet” /Benjamin, 1923: 15/.

This entails the question: why does the translator need to be a poet to create something poetic in his/her translation?

In fact, the task of the translator and that of the poet is clear. The former, for instance, compares two languages, finds and demonstrates the differences between them and tries to convey the form and the meaning of the text written in the original language to the other language into which he/she is translating, while the latter creates something new, or even foreign, in his/her familiar language and tries to “translate” it to the audience. Besides, poetry is perceived as an act of originality, in case of which the language acquires new life, whereas translation is realized as something that transfers that originality to another language. However, is it impossible to combine the tasks of the translator and the poet?

We think that the translator is not obliged to be a poet to reproduce mysterious and poetic atmosphere in the translation. He/she is about to do a translation of a work of art only after fully understanding of the material, that is, before translating something, the translator learns the subject, accepts it, sometimes even fancies it. As a result of all this, he/she is undoubtedly capable of feeling each word of the original text while translating it into the target language. And despite the differences between poetry and translation, these two are inseparable, and with the help of them the translator manages to achieve the desired result.

When the author claims that translation is a mode and it cannot transmit anything but information, it seems that the translator is considered to be a machine, deprived of thoughts and emotions, who is merely copying the SL in another language. However, the translator is, first of all, a human being, able to think, to feel and to create. Moreover, he/she is the very reader who observes the above-mentioned “essential substance” in the work, studies it in details and only decides to undertake the task afterwards. Apart from this, the translator occasionally adds various colors in the translation, which simply comes to show that it is certainly not only about transferring information, but also introducing something fresh and unique from the translator’s own reach.

According to L. Venuti translation is certainly domesticating as it presupposes to interpret the source text in such a way that is intelligible and interesting in the given context. Here the author aims to emphasize the linguistic and cultural differences that produce obstacles of comprehensibility and interest through a dual process of assimilation. On the one hand, he observes that the translation decontextualizes the source text by detaching it from its original language and culture. On the other hand, translation simultaneously recontextualizes the source text by constructing another comparable set of contexts in the translating language and culture which can at once be intra-textual and intertextual, interdiscursive and inter-medial, institutional and social /Venuti, 1995/.

What we can conclude is that the opinions vary greatly but what is in common is that there are many things translations cannot make because they are not native to its people and therefore have no symbol in their language. Nevertheless, as can be observed, linguists and theorists put the emphasis mostly on the language of the translation rather than on the social factor.

Various theorists and translators have developed and practiced different kinds of strategies for centuries in order to transfer the source text (ST) into the TL. The German philosopher and theologian, Friedrich Schleiermacher, for instance, distinguished two translation strategies: domesticating and foreignizing, that can be described as “moving the writer toward the reader” and “moving the reader toward the writer” respectively /Schleiermacher, 1992: 42/.

Venuti, for instance, thinks that “domesticating” and “foreignizing” are both moral and social effects by which translation sets up a performative relation both to the source text and to the target language. The author believes that domesticating translation not only validates dominant resources and ideologies, but also expands its dominance over a written text in a different language and culture. Foreignizing translation, in drawing on marginal resources and ideologies, carries the potential to challenge the dominant, as well as the cultural and social hierarchies that structure the receiving situation. It tries to respect the differences of the source text, but because translation is inevitably domesticating in enacting an assimilative process, those differences can be signaled only through the indirect means of deviating from the dominant by employing the marginal. Foreignizing translation is concerned to be effective when it is innovative, when it departs from institutionalized knowledge and practices by stimulating new kinds of thinking and writing, making a difference that is creative. In ethical terms, it is good in turning the asymmetrical relation built by translation into an interrogation of the culture that receives the source text /Venuti, 1995/.

The French translator and writer Antoine Berman, as it can be seen from his paper *Translation and the Trials of the Foreign*, was in favor of the latter. He believed that foreignizing is a strategy that can be taken into account within the framework of the ethics of translation. He described translation as the “trial of the

foreign”. It is the expression used to define one pole of poetic experience in Hölderlin.

For Hölderlin, translating first and foremost means liberating the violence repressed in the work through a series of *intensifications* in the translating language – in other words, accentuating its strangeness /Berman, 2000: 284/. But what does he mean by saying “violence?”

It is surely not about a physical force, but the ambiguities or difficulties existing in the source text that cause inconvenience while translating it into the TL. Many translators, especially reader-oriented ones, try to use even the slightest opportunity to overcome the obstacles of the SL and to make their readers understand every detail of the text and feel more comfortable. On the contrary, the supporters of the opposite viewpoint demonstrate and emphasize the “violence” of the foreign text making the readers come closer to the text. Presumably, by saying “liberating the violence repressed in the work” the author means that it is better not to change the foreign elements of the text as a result of the translation and to preserve everything that occurs in the original text including the unclear thoughts, thus staying faithful to the work. Moreover, the translators are to intensify the violence, reproducing it in the TL and to transfer the very foreignness and strangeness of the original version introducing a new and foreign viewpoint to the readers.

However, according to Berman, the translation should aim to “open up the foreign work to us in its utter foreignness,” which means that the original work has much more importance than the target audience /Berman, 2000: 284/. The translators are not obliged to replace the foreign words and expressions with their equivalents in the TL so that it could be possible for the readers to comprehend the foreign work more easily.

Hence, it can be concluded that Berman’s theory of translation is more about going beyond the translation of meanings. As can be seen, he gives preference to the word-for-word translation. The audience, from his point of view, is moved backwards here, and the source text, with all its strangeness, comes to the fore.

The present paper attempts to challenge the idea that the foreign text should be in its utter foreignness as the translators should not only take into account the original work, but also think of their readers, who may not understand, or even accept the foreignness of the text. Different beauty proverbs and their Armenian translations presented below show best way that makes the translation more applicable.

Among the significant writers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Oscar Wilde, Charlotte Bronte, Jack London, D. H. Lawrence, Theodore Dreiser have been selected.

Oscar Wilde spoke about beauty and its concept a great many times in his famous work “The picture of Dorian Grey” (Wilde, 1890). Here are the examples and their translations into Armenian (Ուայլդ, 2012):

1. *Beauty, real beauty, ends where an intellectual expression begins.* (p. 5)  
Գեղեցկությունը, իսկական գեղեցկությունը անհեղանում է այնպեղ, որպեղ հայտնվում է ոգեղնչվածությունը: (էջ 8)
2. *We have lost the abstract sense of beauty.* (p. 19)  
Մենք կորցրել ենք գեղեցկության վերացական զգացողությունը: (էջ 21)
3. *Genius lasts longer than Beauty.* (p. 20)  
Հանճարն ավելի հարարն է, քան գեղեցկությունը: (էջ 22)
4. *Beauty is a form of Genius – is higher indeed, than Genius, as it needs no explanation.* (p. 35)  
Գեղեցկությունը հանճարի ձևերից մեկն է, նույնիսկ ավելի բարձր, քան հանճարը, որովհեղան բացարման կարիք չունի: (էջ 35)
5. *To be beauty is the wonder of wonders.* (p. 35)  
Գեղեցկությունը հրաշքների հրաշքն է: (էջ 36)
6. *When your youth goes, your beauty will go with it.* (p. 36)  
Երիտասարդությունը անցնում է, նրա հեղան անցնում է նաև գեղեցկությունը: (էջ 36)
7. *I am jealous of everything whose beauty does not die.* (p. 43)  
Ես նախանճում եմ ամեն ինչի, որի գեղեցկությունը անմահ է: (էջ 42)
8. *Pathos left you unmoved, but beauty, mere beauty, could fill your eyes with tears.* (p. 59)  
Վիշտր չի հուղում, բայց գեղեցկությունը, միայն գեղեցկությունը կարող է լցնել Ձեր աչքերը արցունքով: (էջ 72)
9. *If the elements of beauty are real, the whole thing simply appeals to our sense of dramatic effect.* (p. 115)  
Եթե գեղեցկությունը իսկական է, ապա դրամարիղմը ուղղակի կլանում է մեր զգացմունքները: (էջ 145)

As can be seen in the following examples, all the proverbs have been translated semantically but it is obvious that the central concern of the source language is conveyed in the meanings of the proverbs of the target language translation which means that this semantic translation attempts to recreate the precise flavor and tone. If we try to translate the example (3) literally it would be «Հանճարը ավելի երկար է տևում քան գեղեցկությունը» which, does not have the same impact on the reader as it has in the source language. As is believed, proverbs have been and remain one of the most powerful and effective instruments for the transmission of culture, social morality. In terms of the quality of translation it is not always possible to use the first direct nominative meaning of the word as it is in dictionary while translating a complex phrase or a piece of verbal creativity.

Theodore Dreiser, in his turn, also spoke about beauty in his famous works “The Financier” (1912) and “The Genius” (1915):

10. *Wealth, in the beginning, had seemed the only goal, to which had been added the beauty of women. (p. 252)*

Կանացի գեղեցկությունը պեղք է շրջապատված լինի այն ամենով, ինչ գեղեցիկ է կյանքում: (Դրայզեր, 1968, էջ 229)

11. *For great beauty was great art. (p. 252)*

Մեծ գեղեցկության համար կա միայն մի արժանի ֆոն՝ մեծ արվեստը: (էջ 229)

Here is an example of generalization, the SL proverb with a narrower meaning was translated into TL with a wider meaning:

12. *To think that beauty should blossom for a little while and disappear forever seemed sad. (p. 183)*

Տխուր է մտածել, որ գեղեցկությունը մի պահ ծաղկում է, ասպարհմիջոց անհետանում: (էջ 231)

Almost all the proverbs mentioned above were translated into Armenian transferring their main meaning, because they don't have their equivalents.

The next examples reveal the nature of word-for-word translation. In fact, the literal translation is risky as it can make sentences excessively explanatory and long because some of the structures that reflect the original text and its unique style are not complied with the rules of conventional speech or writing in the “proper” way. Nevertheless, word-for-word translation is also beautiful if it maintains the functional and dynamic equivalence of the original work. Here are some examples of literal translation taken from “Jane Eyre” (1847) by Charlotte Bronte.

13. *Tastes mostly differ and beauty is of little consequence, or something of that sort. (p. 248)*

Ճաշակները տարբեր են լինում. Գեղեցկությունը առանձին նշանակություն չունի, կամ նման մի բան: (Բրոնտե, 1988, էջ 149)

14. *Most true is that ‘beauty is in the eye of the gazer’. (p. 331)*

In this case the author uses general proverb about beauty which was translated into Armenian with its equivalent:

Շատ ճիշտ է այն առածը, որ ասում է՝ Սրտով սիրածը սիրուն կլինի: (էջ 199)

15. *Perfect beauty is a strong expression. (p. 694)*

Կատարյալ գեղեցկությունը ուժեղ արտահայտություն է: (էջ 418)

Another proverb about beauty from “Lady Chatterly’s lover” by D. H. Lawrence (1928).

16. *The warm, live beauty of contact is so much deeper than the beauty of vision. (p. 182)*

Շիման տաք, կենդանի գեղեցկությունը շատ ավելի խորն է, քան տեսիլքի գեղեցկությունը: (Լորենս, 2014, էջ 242)

17. *Beauty is the only master to serve.* (p. 172)

Գեղեցկությունն է այն միակ տերը, որին պետք է ծառայել: (էջ 345)

18. *Let beauty be your end.* (p. 172)

Թող գեղեցկությունը լինի ձեր նպատակը: (էջ 346)

19. *Beauty is the handmaiden of love.* (p. 173)

Գեղեցկությունը սիրո սպասուհին է: (էջ 346)

Being a famous American novelist and journalist Jack London also addressed the topic of beauty in his famous work “Martin Eden” (1909):

20. *Beauty is alive and everlasting.* (p. 69)

Գեղեցկությունը հավիտենական է և միշտ կենդանի: (Լոնդոն, 1966, էջ 143)

21. *You lose sight of beauty by being so practical.* (p. 72)

Դուք դադարում եք հասկանալու գեղեցկությունը՝ ձեր այդ գործնական մտրեցման պատճառով: (էջ 148)

22. *Beauty has significance, but I never knew its significance before. I just accepted beauty as something meaningless, as something that was just beautiful without rhyme.* (p. 72)

Գեղեցկությունը իր նշանակությունը ունի, բայց ես մինչև այժմ չէի զգում այդ նշանակությունը: Գեղեցիկը դուր էր գալիս ինձ պարզապես նրա համար, որ նա գեղեցիկ է, ուրիշ ոչինչ: (էջ 149)

23. *Love beauty for its own sake.* (p. 172)

Սիրեցեք գեղեցկությունը հենց գեղեցկության սիրուն: (էջ 345)

These proverbs also have been translated through literal translation.

Proverbs are one of the challenges translators face when translating from one language to another. There are many languages listed in the world and every single language is a unique system and each population has its own way of communicating and expressing its own messages and sometimes translation can be a hard trap for a translator.

Speaking about “good quality of translation” sometimes, it is necessary to accept that translation is not an exact science and translators can also decide what style of translation is most appropriate in the given context. It is also possible that the author of the source text makes different mistakes concerning grammar and the wrong use of terms and vocabulary and this can lead to various contradictions in TL. Facing this the translator can also correct this mistake in ST translation.

Another factor is the grammatical, lexico-semantic and syntactical peculiarities of both languages. Sometimes, the source text can be so confusing

and contain so many clauses that it would practically be impossible to imply the same text within the scope of the grammar in the TL.

And it is also important to note the rhetorical, pragmatic and cultural issues which may arise from differences between cultural references, i.e. whatever is socially accepted in one culture and society can totally be unacceptable for another.

These are the main factors which may give rise to problems in translating a text from a SL into a TL. These are the problems that lead theorists and translators to different theoretical arguments. As for proverbs, they are interesting, important and complex. That is why there are so many different ways of analyzing them: the personal, formal, religious, literary, practical, cultural and cognitive views. These views achieve various goals which provide us with different information.

It is common knowledge that translation is indispensable for the growth of information, knowledge and ideas. In fact, it is necessary for the productive communication between different cultures. The efficient and empathetic translation requires highly skillful translators who possess not only deep understanding of the academic field but also have deep pragmatic and cultural knowledge that enables them to transmit the ST into a TL in a proper way both taking into account the original work, and also thinking of their readers, who may not understand, or even accept the foreignness of the text.

It is obvious that the translator often encounters many problems while translating a text which is not only complicated in its linguistic realm but also in terms of social and pragmatic perception. Nevertheless, based on the examples and the vast linguistic legacy that has been and still is being translated one can say that translated texts are also beautiful and pure as they maintain the functional and dynamic equivalence of the original work, e.g. reading Shakespeare or Byron the reader does not even think about the original work since the language of the translation is pure, eloquent, majestic and truly Armenian.

Taking into account these points it can be stated that the translation goal is attainable when the translator does make every effort not to go beyond the ST and make a change at every small opportunity.

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**Ո. ՀԱՐՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՅԱՆ – Գեղեցկության մասին անգլերեն ասացվածքների հայերեն թարգմանության որոշ խնդիրների շուրջ.** – Սույն հոդվածում քննարկվում են տեսական փաստարկներ, որոնք վերաբերում են գեղեցկության ասացվածքների՝ սկզբնաղբյուրից թիրախ լեզվում արված թարգմանության խնդրին: Աշխատանքում հիմնականում խոսվում է այն խնդրահարույց դժվարությունների մասին, որոնց թարգմանիչը կարող է բախվել, երբ փորձում է թարգմանել գեղեցկության մասին ասացվածքները հայերեն 19-րդ դարի ամերիկացի և բրիտանացի հեղինակների ստեղծագործություններում:

Թեև արտալեզվական իրականությունը վաղուց արդեն ճանաչվել է որպես թարգմանության գործընթացում էական գործոն, լեզվաբանները վիճում են լեզվական իրականության շուրջ՝ պնդելով, որ երկու լեզուների լեզվական տիրույթում ոչ մի թարգմանություն ճշգրտորեն հասանելի չէ: Սույն հոդվածի միջոցով փորձ է արվում վիճարկել այս մոտեցումը և ցույց տալ, որ պարտադիր չէ լինել լեզուն կրող՝ բնօրինակ տեքստը հասկանալու համար, քանի որ բնօրինակ տեքստի՝ և՛ բառացի, և՛ իմաստային թարգմանությունները թիրախային լեզվում նույնպես կարող են վերստեղծել նույն իմաստը:

**Քանայի բաներ.** լեզվական իրականություն, արտալեզվական իրականություն, բնօրինակ տեքստ, թիրախային լեզու, բառացի թարգմանություն, իմաստային թարգմանություն

**Р. АРУТЮНЯН – О некоторых проблемах перевода пословиц о красоте с английского на армянский.** – В данной статье обсуждаются некоторые аргументы, касающиеся проблемы перевода пословиц красоты с исходного языка на целевой язык. Основное внимание в статье уделяется трудностям, с которыми может столкнуться переводчик при попытке перевести пословицы о красоте в произведениях американских и британских авторов XIX века на армянский язык. Несмотря на то, что внелингвистическая реальность уже давно признана важным фактором в процессе перевода, теоретики-лингвисты спорят о языковой реальности, утверждая, что в пределах лингвистической сферы обоих языков точный перевод не всегда возможен. В настоящей статье предпринята попытка оспорить этот подход и продемонстрировать, что нет необходимости быть носителем языка, чтобы понимать главную проблему исходного языка, поскольку как буквальные, так и семантические переводы способны воссоздать общую тональность оригинального текста в целевом языке.

**Ключевые слова:** лингвистическая реальность, внелингвистическая реальность, исходный язык, оригинальный текст, целевой язык, буквальный перевод, семантический перевод

Ներկայացվել է՝ 04.11.2019

Երաշխավորվել է ԵՊՀ Անգլիական բանասիրության ամբիոնի կողմից  
Ընդունվել է տպագրության՝ 20.11.2019