



Eastern University

The Eastern University Journal

A UGC Approved Peer Reviewed National Journal

www.easternuni.edu.bd

Application of Newmark's Strategies in the Translation of Metaphorical Expressions in

Kazi Nazrul Islam's Poems

Shafia Akhter¹

Abstract:

Metaphors are taken to be the most fundamental form of figurative language, carrying the assumption that terms literally connected with one object can be transferred to another object. A writer or speaker uses metaphor more often than not intending to introduce a new object/ concept, offering a more precise meaning, or simply presenting a more poetic effect to his text/speech. The main focus of this study is the translation of metaphors in Kazi Nazrul Islam's poems and the study set out to determine how this particular figure of speech is transferred from source language (SL) text to target language (TL) text. The framework of the study was Newmark's (1988) seven suggested strategies for translating metaphors. The study concluded that out of the seven strategies proposed by Newmark for translating metaphors, the most frequently used strategy was 'reproducing the same image in the target language' and the least used strategy was 'replacing the image in the source language with standard target language image'. Hopefully, this study will be a consideration for future translators to translate metaphorical expressions in any literary text.

Key terms: Kazi Nazrul Islam, metaphor, translation strategy, figurative language

¹ **Assistant Professor**, Department of English, Faculty of Arts, Eastern University, Dhaka.
Email: shafia@easternuni.edu.bd



Eastern University

The Eastern University Journal

A UGC Approved Peer Reviewed National Journal

www.easternuni.edu.bd

Introduction:

Poetry, as widely acknowledged, is the hardest literary text to translate as it requires special perception and attention. Some scholars think that an average translator cannot be fair to the poet when he translates his poetry. Keeping the form and stylistic features of a poem from one language into another without distorting the meaning is difficult to accomplish; moreover, the translator must be able to get the real message and convey it to the target language. He has to be fully aware of the capacity of language to make his message highly effective. The words of the poem surpass their textual denotations; they take new shades of meaning dictated by the poetic context. Mathews (1959) suggests, “to translate a poem whole is to compose another poem. A whole translation will be faithful to the matter, and it will ‘approximate the form’ of the original; and it will have a life of its own, which is the voice of the translator” (cited in Nida, 2000, p.131). Therefore, a translator needs to have knowledge regarding the matter and should know the strategies needed to translate the figurative expressions engraved in the poem. It is very difficult to be truthful while translating poetry as there is no one-to-one equivalent in the source language (SL) to the target language (TL) (Landers, 2001, p.97). Even if the translators achieve the highest level of aptitude in SL, it would be difficult for them to preserve the essence of the original text. Poetry, as literary work, is differentiated from other types of texts due to its frequent use of figurative language, which is intended to arouse sentiment and give an expressive touch to the work. Generally, in these types of figurative language, the formal equivalent is hardly available. Therefore, the translation of figurative language after proper understanding and analysis is very challenging for the translators.

Metaphors, one of the most frequently adopted figurative languages, are abundantly present in every literary text of any language. According to Larson (1998, p.25), a metaphor fulfills an aesthetic function and is usually creative, and it is a way of talking about something in a different way. As metaphors mostly possess local color, therefore it cannot be translated literally since they may cause misinterpretation in other languages. Misinterpretation of the metaphors could happen



Eastern University

The Eastern University Journal

A UGC Approved Peer Reviewed National Journal

www.easternuni.edu.bd

when they have a different point of similarity or image in other languages. In the process of translation, most translators confront difficulties in rendering and transferring the image and sense of metaphors or in selecting suitable strategies for translating the metaphors of the source-language text.

Kazi Nazrul Islam (1899-1976), the National Poet of Bangladesh, is a versatile genius. The mastery of Nazrul can be found in every single genre of literature. His poetic works advocated an extreme spiritual agitation against oppression and despotism and made him known as ‘Rebel Poet’. The subject matter of his writings is love, freedom, and revolution. During his poetic career, Kazi Nazrul Islam wrote novels, novellas, short stories, and essays. He wrote over 2,600 poems and composed about 4000 songs (Huda, 2012). His poetry is branded by ample use of figurative language especially metaphor, which he adopted to produce an aesthetic effect in his poems. Therefore, careful attention must be paid while translating those metaphors from the source text (ST) to the target text (TT)

Based on this situation, it is interesting to identify the strategies applied by translators in translating figures of speech particularly the translation of metaphors from Bengali into English. As we know, the divergences of two language systems may pose translation problems to the translators. Furthermore, two different cultures may use different images in expressing the same thing.

Kazi Nazrul Islam’s Poems and Its Translations

Kazi Nazrul Islam, the most versatile creative brain of the century in terms of Bengali literature, worked almost in all the literary fields. It is indeed a remarkable task to translate all his works into English or any other foreign language. Presently, not more than two hundred of his poems have been translated into English (Huda, 2012). Some of his works appeared in translation into various foreign languages such as English, Persian, Italian, German, Spanish, Chinese, Hindi, Japanese,



Eastern University

The Eastern University Journal

A UGC Approved Peer Reviewed National Journal

www.easternuni.edu.bd

Urdu, Portuguese, Russian, Kazak, Uzbek, Azarbyzan, and so on. Yet, it does not embody the totality of his poetic brilliance.

Nurul Huda, the editor of the book *Poetry of Kazi Nazrul Islam in English Translation* (2012), agrees that the translation of Nazrul's poems is extremely deceptive since the word association and its underlying music have never been satisfactorily reproduced by any translator so far. Choudhury (1994) mentions that Nazrul's poems are untranslatable; they can be paraphrased only as the actual lines are infinitely artful. However, the translation started during the poet's lifetime and most of the poems of *Sanchita* (considered as The Selected Poem of Kazi Nazrul Islam) have been rendered to English. Several renowned translators from around the world have taken initiatives to translate some of the literary works of Nazrul. The list of such translators includes Eminent Professor Kabir Chowdhury, Professor Niaz Zaman, Dr. Sajed Kamal, Subrata Kumar Das, Mohammad Nurul Huda, Dr. Jahangir Tareque, Dr. Omar Faruq, Abdul hakim, Syed Sajjad Hossain, Syed Mujibul Huq, Mustofa Munir, Dr. Nashid Kamal, Dr. Shafiqul Isalm, and so on from Bangladesh. Among the non-native Bengali speakers who translated Nazrul's poems are Professor Winston E. Langley of University of Massachusetts, USA; Dr. Kyoko Niwa, Dr. Kazuo Azuma from Japan, Professor Pabitra Sarkar, former Vice-Chancellor of Rabindra Bharati University, India, Ecudarian Journalist Maria Helena Barrera-Agarwal, and so on (ICNazrul, 2021). Nazrul found the most favorable readership in the former Soviet Union. Botvinnik of Leningard was the first among the soviet translators to introduce Nazrul to the readers in the soviet union and he published an anthology of Nazrul's poems in Russian translation in 1958 (Hossain, 2001).

Definition of Metaphor

It is a figurative expression where an implicit comparison is made among two different subjects. Metaphor is the use of a word or phrase which properly belongs to one object is transferred to another in such a way that a comparison between the objects is implied but not exactly stated. In



Eastern University

The Eastern University Journal

A UGC Approved Peer Reviewed National Journal

www.easternuni.edu.bd

other words, “Metaphor is a figure of speech in which something (A) is identified with something else (B) in order to attribute to A, a quality associated with B” (Quinn, 2006, p. 257). Although always perceived to be a central element of poetry, metaphor has only recently come to be seen as a pervasive presence in all forms of language. Abrams and Harpham (2015) describe “a metaphor as having two parts: tenor and vehicle”. Tenor is the subject that the vehicle illustrates or illuminates, while the vehicle carries the metaphoric word itself. In the example: ‘He is the pillar of the state’. Here a comparison is made between two different objects – ‘He’ (tenor) and ‘pillar’ (vehicle), and it is implied, not clearly expressed with the help of such words as like, so, such, as, etc. Whereas, Larson (1998) points out three elements of a metaphor: topic (the subject that is being compared), image (the subject that is being compared with), and point of similarity (the same characteristic that a topic and an image share).

The function of metaphor in literature is twofold. The first, and more practical function is to allow the reader a greater understanding of the concept, object, or character being described. This is done by comparing it to an item that may be more familiar to the reader. The second function is purely artistic: to create an image that is beautiful or profound or otherwise produces the effect that the writer desires. For these reasons, writers have used the metaphor since the earliest recorded stories. Newmark (1988, p.88) explains that ‘the main and one serious purpose of metaphor is to describe an entity and event or quality more comprehensively and concisely and in a more complex way than is possible by using literal language’. Therefore, the correct understanding of any metaphor depends on the correct identification of the topic, image, and point of similarity. Hence, appropriate strategies are to be employed by translators to translate metaphors in a literary text.

Newmark’s Suggested Strategies for Translating Metaphors

Newmark (1988, pp. 88-93) recommends the following seven strategies for translating metaphors which have been widely adopted by translators and researchers:

1. Reproducing the same image in the TL (This is the best way to translate stock metaphors)



Eastern University

The Eastern University Journal

A UGC Approved Peer Reviewed National Journal

www.easternuni.edu.bd

2. Replace the image in the SL with a standard TL image. (It is used when no image corresponds exactly to the one in the SL and which does not clash with the target language culture.)
3. Translation of metaphor by simile. (This strategy modifies an emotive metaphorical expression to suit the TL if that context is not as emotive as the SL.)
4. Translation of simile by simile plus sense
5. Conversion of metaphor to sense (This is a strategy where the image of the SL is reduced to its sense and rewritten to suit the TL)
6. Deletion (it is used when the metaphor is redundant)
7. Same metaphor combined with a sense

Data Collection and analysis

The required data in this study which are in the form of metaphors were collected from thirty selected poems of Kazi Nazrul Islam from the book titled *Sanchita*. The English translation of the poems was taken from the book titled *Poetry of Kazi Nazrul Islam in English Translation* (2012) and the translation of selected poems was done by Professor Kabir Chowdhury.

After the collection of data from these thirty poems, the data were recorded, classified, and analyzed descriptively. First, the analysis was on the strategies applied in translating Bengali metaphors into English. The metaphors in the source text were compared to the translated equivalences in English based on Newmark's (1988) strategies for translating metaphors. Through comparing the Bengali and English texts, the type of strategy used for each metaphor was determined. The frequency of the strategies applied in the translation was counted so that finally the percentage could be presented.

Several metaphoric expressions together with their English translations are given below to see how practical the strategies suggested by Newmark (1988) are in translating Bengali metaphors in Nazrul's poems under this study. Based on the data analysis, the researcher finds 152 instances



of metaphor in the selected thirty poems of Nazrul. The frequency and percentage of translation strategies in translating metaphors is presented in the table below:

The Translation Strategies Used in Translating Metaphors

No.	Newmark's Translation Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
1	Reproducing the same image in the TL	64	42.10
2	Replace the image in the SL with a standard TL image	6	3.94
3	Translation of metaphor by simile	18	11.84
4	Translation of metaphor (or simile) by simile plus sense (or occasionally a metaphor plus sense)	11	7.23
5	Conversion of metaphor to sense	19	12.5
6	Deletion	22	14.47
7	Same metaphor combined with a sense	12	8
	Total	=152	=100

'Reproducing the same image in TL' seems to be the most frequently used translation strategy by the translator in translating the metaphors from Bengali to English with a total number of 64 instances (42.10%). This is followed by the strategy of 'deletion' with 22 instances (14.47%), 'Conversion of metaphor to sense' with 19 instances (12.5%), 'Translation of metaphor by simile' with 18 instances (11.84%). The least used strategy of Newmark in translating metaphors are 'Translation of metaphor (or simile) by simile plus sense (or occasionally a metaphor plus sense)' with 11 instances (7.23%), 'Same metaphor combined with a sense' with 11 instances (7.23%), and 'Replace the image in the SL (source language) with a standard TL (target language) image'



Eastern University

The Eastern University Journal

A UGC Approved Peer Reviewed National Journal

www.easternuni.edu.bd

which includes only 6 instances (3.94%). Some examples of the Bengali metaphors translated to English are as follows:

1. Translation Strategy: Reproducing the same image in TL

Example 1:

SL: □□□□ □□□□ □□ □□□□ □□□□□□ □□□□ |
□□□ □□□□□□□□ □□□□ □□□□ □□□□

TL: Bright as the crimson sun in the lap of dawn
rocks a radiant full moon in mother Amina's bosom.

There is a metaphor in the above SL data. The phrase ‘□□□ □□□□□□□□ □□□□ □□□□’ is translated into ‘a radiant full moon’ in TL. Considering the context of the poem, the poet compares Prophet Mohammad (SWT) as ‘a a radiant full moon’. Here the translator has reproduced the same metaphor and its image in English. If we compare the point of similarity, the TL metaphor has the same kind of comparison as the SL does. Thus the entire sentence seems comprehensible in English translation.

Example 2:

SL: □□□ □□□□□□□□□□, □□□□□□□□□, □□□□□,
□□□-□□□□□□□□ □□□ □□□□□, □□□ □□□□□□□□□□, □□□□ □□□□□□□,
□□□□ □□□□□□□, □□□□ □□□□□□ □□□□□□□□!

TL: I am irresponsible, cruel and arrogant,
I am the king of the great upheaval,
I am cyclone, I am destruction,
I am the great fear, the curse of the universe

In the above translation, ‘□□□-□□□□□□□□ □□□ □□□□□□, □□□ □□□□□□□□□’ is translated into ‘I am the king of the great upheaval, I am cyclone’. The strategy of translation applied here is ‘reproducing the same image in TL’ (N1) and Newmark (1988) suggested that this strategy fits well with one-word metaphors. Likewise, the metaphor used here is one word that is



Eastern University

The Eastern University Journal

A UGC Approved Peer Reviewed National Journal

www.easternuni.edu.bd

‘□□□□□□□’ (cyclone). The two parts of metaphor are easily distinguishable in the above example. ‘□□□ (I)’ is the tenor and ‘□□□□□□□ (cyclone)’ is the vehicle; but the comparison is implied, not clearly stated with a marker of comparison. Thus, the translator very carefully reproduced the same image in the TL text as that of the SL text.

Example 3:

SL: □□□□ □□□□□-□□□□ নভ -চর

TL: We are flying birds with outstretched wings

The above two examples are taken from the poem ‘□□□□□□ □□□’ (A Mountain Song). The source language metaphor ‘□□□□□-□□□□’ is translated into metaphor ‘flying birds’ in the target language. It is based on the strategy of translation stated by Newmark (1988) that is ‘reproducing the same image in TL’.

2. Translation Strategy: Replace the image in the SL with a standard TL image

Example 4:

SL: □□□□□ □□□□ □□□□□□ □□□□, □□□□ □□□□□!

TL: With clouds criest thou, O my crested cuckoo!

Here the poet Kazi Nazrul Islam compares his beloved with □□□□□ (chatoki). According to *Bangla Academy Bengali-English Dictionary*, the word ‘chatoki’ means a type of female bird renowned in poetic imagination as taking no other drink except rain-water, and which being always thirsty, longs very much for rains. This bird ‘চাতকী (chatoki)’ is widely mentioned in ancient Indian poetry. According to Indian mythology, it has a beak atop its head and it waits for rains to quench its thirst and only drinks raindrops. In the poem ‘গোপন প্রিয়া’ (The Secret Lover), Poet Nazrul used ‘চাতকী (chatoki)’ as a metaphor for deep yearning for something.

While translating the sentence, the translator has replaced this metaphor ‘চাতকী (chatoki)’ with another image, which is, ‘crest’ d cuckoo’. In Newmark’s terms (1988, p.109), by replacing the SL image of ‘চাতকী (chatoki)’ with the TL image of ‘crested cuckoo’ the translator achieves



Eastern University

The Eastern University Journal

A UGC Approved Peer Reviewed National Journal

www.easternuni.edu.bd

communicative equivalence, since the only part of the ST meaning that is rendered is the event that maintains the correspondence to the TL reader's understanding of the identical message. Similarly, Nida (1964) opines that the impact here cannot be the same due to the difference in the cultural settings of ST and TT readers. However, using a standard equivalent in the TL can raise the level of satisfaction with target language readers and a type of equivalent effect has been achieved.

3. Translation strategy: Translation of metaphor by simile.

Example 5:

SL: আখ-□□□□ □□□ □□□□□ □□□□□ □□□□□ □□□□-দল ।

TL: Wherefrom hungry millions emerge,

Sucked dry like sugarcane,

Bereft of their juices.

The Bengali expression above has a figurative language that belongs to metaphor. Here, we notice that a comparison has been made between two different subjects - '□□□□□ □□□□-দল (Hungry human being)' is the tenor and 'আখ-□□□□ (grinding sugar cane)' is the vehicle, and comparison in the Bengali sentence is implied, not clearly stated with the help of such words as like, so, such, as, etc. While translating the metaphor of this sentence, the translator transformed the metaphor into a simile retaining the same image. In a simile, a comparison is made between two different things ('hungry millions' and 'sugarcane'), and it is made explicit ('sucked dry') with the use of a word of comparison – 'like'.

Example 6:

SL: □□□ □□□□ তব □□□□□, □□□□□□□!

□□□□ □□□□□□ □□, ও □□□□ □□□□□-□□□□□ □□□□□।

TL: I knew your secretiveness, clever girl.

You did not know that our cheeks were red like pomegranates,

There is a metaphor in the above SL data. Considering the context of the poem, the poet makes an implied comparison between two different things – '□□□□ (cheeks)' and '□□□□□-□□□□



(pomegranate seeds)’. In the translated version, the translator reproduced by transferring the metaphor into a simile. The comparison between ‘□□□□ (cheeks)’ and ‘□□□□□-□□□□ (pomegranate seeds)’ has been made explicit (cheeks were red like pomegranates) with the word of comparison – ‘like’. Therefore, it is clear that the TL sentence has a simile in it. The translator has successfully retained the image.

4. Translation strategy: Translation of Metaphor by simile plus sense

Example 7:

SL: □□□ □□□□□□ □□□ □□□□ অস –□□□ □□□ □□□□
□□□□ □□□□□ □□□□ □□□□ □□□□□□□□ □□□□□ □□□□□

TL: Who’s forlorn and lost beloved are you?
Quietly disappearing like the morning dew
Rousing fond longing in the heart of the homeless.

In the above example, we get a metaphorical expression. Here ‘□□□□□□ □□□’ has been compared with ‘the morning dew’, but the comparison is not formally stated. This metaphor is translated into simile plus sense only in the target language and its metaphorical aspect is not preserved. Thus the Bengali metaphorical expression becomes quite clear to the TT readers.

5. Translation Strategy: Conversion of metaphor to sense

Example 8:

SL: □□□□ □□□□ আজ □□□□ □□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□ গড় □□□□
জগৎ □□□□□ □□□□□□□ □□□□, □□□□□□ যত □□□□□-

TL: The gold-hungry monsters have dug
deep invincible moats all around,
the world today is a prison sound
with cruel gangsters working as sentinel

Here we get two examples of metaphor. One is ‘জগৎ □□□□□ □□□□□□□ □□□□’ translated as ‘The world today is a prison’ – here the resemblance between ‘world’ and ‘prison’ is felt so



Eastern University

The Eastern University Journal

A UGC Approved Peer Reviewed National Journal

www.easternuni.edu.bd

close in the speaker's mind that one thing is as it was identified with the other. Another example of metaphor is 'rich people' have been compared with 'hungry monster'. This metaphor is translated into its sense only in the target language.

6. Translation strategy: Deletion

Example 9:

SL: আমি সৃষ্টি-আমি ধ্বংস, আমি বাসস্থান আমি মৃত্যু,
আমি গৃহ, আমি কবর, আমি শেষ,
আমি সৃষ্টি, আমি ধ্বংস, আমি বাসস্থান, আমি মৃত্যু,
আমি গৃহ, আমি কবর

TL: I am creation, I am destruction,
I am habitation, I am the grave-yard,
I am the end, the end of the night.

In the above stanza, the researcher found ten metaphors in the ST. In the target text, the translator deleted five metaphors and translated five metaphors. According to Newmark, "if the metaphor is redundant or otiose, there is a case for its deletion, together with its sense component. A decision of this nature can be made only after the translator has weighed up what he thinks more important and what less important in the text in relation to its intention" (1988, p.91). Therefore, it is assumed that the translator thought the metaphors to be less important and the TT readers can understand the context of the poem without the translation of the metaphors – 'আমি সৃষ্টি-আমি ধ্বংস (*I am flame*)', 'আমি বাসস্থান আমি মৃত্যু (*jamadagni sagnika*)', 'আমি গৃহ (*Yajna*)', 'আমি সৃষ্টি আমি ধ্বংস (*I am a priest*)', 'আমি কবর (*I am the fire*).

7. Translation strategy: Same metaphor combined with sense

Example 10:

SL: আমি সৃষ্টি আমি ধ্বংস আমি বাসস্থান আমি মৃত্যু পথ,
আমি গৃহ আমি কবর আমি শেষ রথ ।



Eastern University

The Eastern University Journal

A UGC Approved Peer Reviewed National Journal

www.easternuni.edu.bd

TL: Never did the past stop me in my forward march.

My chariot has always moved ahead

brushing aside all obstacles and barriers.

According to the context of the poem, the poet compares his ‘forwarding march’ with the moving of the ‘chariot’. The poet says that his past cannot stop him from moving forward and taking on new challenges. With a new aspiration, he is moving forward. Therefore, he compares himself with ‘চরিত্র রথ (chariot)’. To make the metaphor understandable to the TT reader, the translator added an annotation, that is, the Bengali sentence ‘চরিত্র নতুন গতিতে চলেছে চরিত্র রথ (My chariot moves in a new speed) has been translated as ‘My chariot has always moved ahead brushing aside all obstacles and barriers’. According to Newmark (1988), this strategy is usually adopted by a translator who wants to ensure that the transferred image of the metaphor will be understood by the TT reader.

Conclusion:

Based on this study, the strategies suggested by Newmark (1988) seem to be practical in the translation of Bengali metaphors. As metaphors are cultural-specific, they cannot be transferred intact from a source language (SL) to a target language (TL) and in most cases, their originality, cultural background, or richness of the source language is lost while translating them. Therefore, the translators should be very particular in applying suitable strategies when translating metaphors, otherwise, it may lead to misunderstanding to the target reader. So as translators, they should read and do some research to apply the best strategies. In addition, the translator would also encounter problems in providing the same interpretation in the target language that comprises the same meaning as in the source language. Thus, it depends on the translators whether they want to preserve the form or render the meaning by changing the form as long as the meaning is conveyed to the target readers.



Eastern University

The Eastern University Journal

A UGC Approved Peer Reviewed National Journal

www.easternuni.edu.bd

References

- Abrams, M.H. & Harpham, G. G. (2015). *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. (11th ed.). Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning
- Hossain, K. A. (2001). Nazrul in World Languages. *Nazrul Institute Journal*, vol. 6, pp.62-69.
- Huda, M.N. (2012) (Ed.). *Poetry of Kazi Nazrul Islam in English Translation*. Dhaka: Nazrul Institute.
- Huda, M. N. (2001). *Nazrul's Aesthetics and Other Aspects*. Dhaka: Nazrul Institute.
- Landers, C.E. (2001). *Literary Translation: A Practical Guide*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- Larson, M.L. (1998). *Meaning Based Translation: A Guide To Cross Language Equivalence*. (2nd ed.). New York: University Press of America.
- Newmark, P. (1988). *A Textbook of Translation*. New York: Prentice-Hall.
- Nida, E. (2000). Principles of Correspondence. In L, Venuti (Ed.), *Translation Studies Reader* (pp.126-140). London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.
- Quinn, E. (2006). *A Dictionary of Literary and Thematic Terms*. (2nd ed.). New York: Facts on File.