Exploring Expansion and Reduction Strategies in Two English Translations of Masnavi

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Abstract

The present study aimed to investigate the frequency of the use of two semantic adjustment strategies; namely, expansion and reduction, in the two English translations of book one of *Masnavi.* For this purpose, 300 lines of *Masnavi* by Rumi (2014) along its two corresponding English translations by Nicholson (2004) and Whinfield (2001) were critically analyzed based on Nida and Taber's (2003) theoretical framework. Based on the outcomes of the present study, both translators applied the expansion strategy more than the reduction because poems in *Masnavi* were so condensed and the writer of *Masnavi* applied classic words which were not understandable to the target language readers. Therefore, both translators used expansion strategy to explicate what was implied in the source text and to make a natural and a comprehensible translation to the target text readers.

Keywords: Semantic Adjustment Strategies, Expansion, Reduction, *Masnavi*

1. Introduction

Translation consists of complicated challenges that any translator has to face in all texts, especially in literature; one of them is the problem of translating poetry. Translators use various strategies for translating poetry to keep the content of source text. Manafi Anari (2004) introduces two types of adjustment strategies: semantic and structural. For preserving the content of the source text and maintaining its intended meaning, semantic adjustment strategies are used in translating text (Nida & Taber, 2003). Semantic adjustment strategies are classified into different areas. Expansion and reduction are subcategories of the semantic adjustment strategies (Manafi Anari, 2009).

In translating poetry the translators are faced with some words in the source language which are untranslatable due to the differences between language systems and cultural points of view, a crucial matter that the current study has investigated. There are some words in the source text which a translator maybe cannot find any equivalence for them; moreover, the translator is translating for readers with different cultural and historical backgrounds (Klaudy, 2009, cited in Shirinzadeh & Tengku Mahadi, 2014). To solve these problems, the translators use semantic adjustment strategies in their translations to have an intelligible, natural, and comprehensible translation in their language (Nida & Taber, 2003).

This study is one of the pioneer studies that are intended to answer the question of the extent to which the translators use expansion and reduction strategies in the English translation of *Masnavi* and whether using expansion and reduction in poetry translation will distort the meaning of the original poetry.

Masnavi is an extensive Persian literary work written by Jalal al-Din Muhammad Rumi , who is one of the best Persian Sufi saints and poets that his poems and thoughts have attracted many scholars' attention all over the world and his works have translated into different languages, especially European languages, either completely or selectively (Ebrahimi & Lesan Toosi, 2013). Also, it is one of the most valuable and the most significant works of both Sufism and Persian literature (Savabi Esfahani, 2014). *Masnavi* consists of six books of poetry and many translators have translated it from Persian into English, but for the first time British Scholars translated it from Persian into English in 1881-1934 (Karimnia, Ebrahimzade & Jafari, 2012). The translation of *Masnavi* from Persian to English started with Redhouse in 1881, later other translators like Whinfield in 1887, Wilson in 1910, Nicholson in 1926, and Arberry in 1993 created their own translations (Karimnia, Ebrahimzade & Jafari, 2012). The first full translation of all six books of *Masnavi* was done by Reynold Alleyne Nicholson in 1926-1934 (Karimnia, Ebrahimzade & Jafari, 2012).

2. Literature Review

Poetry translation is an important topic of translation studies; therefore, some scholars such as Connolly (2007, p.170) writes that, "The translation of poetry is generally held to be the most difficult demanding and possibly rewarding form of translation". It is worth to say that poetry has a distinctive characteristic which is different from culture to culture

and genre to genre, so for translating poetry both form and content must be preserved; moreover, form and content cannot be separated (Cudden 1976, cited in Niknasab & Pishbin, 2011).

There are various methods and theories for poetry translation in the translation studies. Lefevere (1975, cited in Bassnett, 2002) explains seven different strategies for translating poetry:

1. Phonemic translation: Reproducing the source language sound in the target language and creating a suitable paraphrase of the sense are related to this method. Lefevere (1975, cited in Bassnet, 2002) mentions that although this method is related to the translation of onomatopoeia, but the result is not satisfactory.

2. Literal translation: This method pays close attention to word for word translation and it eliminates the sense and syntax of the original.

3. Metrical translation: The main criterion is producing the source language meter.

4. Poetry into prose: Lefevere (1975, cited in Bassnett, 2002) expresses that this method ruins the sense, communicative value and syntax of the source language text, but literal or metrical types of translation are retained.

5. Rhymed translation: Reproducing the meter and rhyme is in this method.

6. Blank verse translation: By selecting an appropriate structure, some restrictions are related to the translator. But the greater accuracy and a higher degree of literalness are regarded as the result.

7. Interpretation: Lefevere (1975) defines versions in the way that the form is changed, but material of source language is retained. He mentions the matter of imitation when the translator creates his own poem (cited in Bassnett, 2002).

To keep the meaning of texts and to make the translation natural and more comprehensible in the target language, it is essential to create many semantic and structural adjustments. Manafi Anari (2004, p.17) writes that, "A translator may often be obliged to transform the form in order to preserve the content, though it will be much better ... in a form resembling that of the source language". Thus, the translator may apply semantic adjustment strategies to carry the original content, but the stylistic meanings may be loosed. The lack of an appropriate and meaningful equivalence in the languages makes the translators to use semantic adjustment strategies (Kolahi & Goodarzi, 2010).

One of the interesting aspects of translating texts from the source language to the target language is related to the length of a text in the source language which will expand or contract when the text is translated to the target language. The content of the source language may be changed in length and the number of words will be changed when the translators render the source language text to the target language text, so these differences known as text expansion and text contraction (Kolahi & Goodarzi, 2010). Expansion and reduction are subcategories of semantic adjustment strategies (Manafi Anari, 2009). Solhju (cited in Kolahi & Goodarzi, 2010) expresses that in translating a text, adding to the text or contracting it is sometimes essential. Adding or contracting is known as expansion and reduction. Nida and Taber (2003) believe that expansion happens when semantic constituent is distributed over a number of various words. Expansion adjustment is considered as translating one word in the source language by several words in the target language (Nida & Taber, 2003).

There are two types of expansion according to Nida and Taber's (2003, p. 166) categorization: "syntactic (or formal) expansions and lexical (or semantic)". Nida and Taber (2003, p. 167) argue that "there are three kinds of lexical expansions: (1) classifiers, (2) descriptive equivalence, and (3) semantic restructuring". In the following, they are discussed.

1. "Classifiers are relatively common and can be used whenever a borrowed word needs some semantic redundancy attached to it, so that the reader will be able to understand at least something about its form and/ or function" (Nida & Taber, p. 167).

2. Descriptive equivalence takes place when the length of the words in the target text is changed and words are expanded in the target texts. The length of the words in the target text is more than the original text, so using the number of lexical elements for explaining the function and the form of the event and the object are essential (Nida & Taber, 2003).

3. Semantic restructuring happens when some expressions in the original text are so condensed which need considerable expansion in the target language.

To create a dynamic equivalence in the target language, the translator sometimes needs to reduce some expressions in the process of translation. As Nida and Taber (2003, P. 168) point out," reductions are not as numerous as the expansions, nor are they so frequent. And as a result, they are not so important structurally. However, it is just as important to employ the proper reductions as it is to introduce the proper expansions, for both expansions and reductions are based on the same fundamental principles of reproducing the closest natural equivalent." It is worth to mention that, reduction takes place when several words of the source language are translated into fewer words in the target language (Nida & Taber, 2003). During the process of reduction the translator encounters many words which convey the meaning of a phrase in the original text, so s/he deletes one of the few words (Manafi Anari, 2009).

According to Nida and Taber (2003, p.168), there are seven primary types of reduction:

1. "Simplification of doublets". In this type of reduction, the words with the same meaning are reduced to a single word, e.g.," answering, he said, "becomes" he answered";

2." Reduction of repetitions" is a kind of reduction for reducing repeated words, e.g., "verily, verily," must in some languages be reduced to one "verily" for repetition does not convey the same meaning;

3. "Omission of specification of participants", e.g., reduction of the occurrences of a participant frequently used as the subject of so many sentences;'

4. "Loss of conjunctions, when hypotactic structures are reduced to practice ones. Hypotaxis means 'the use of subordinate clauses". Parataxis is 'the placing of the related clause', one after another, without using connecting words.

5. "Reduction of formulas "e.g. using 'to' instead of 'to the extent of' in 'to his capacity'. Reduction of fixed phrase to a shorten one.

6. "Using more extensive ellipses than those commonly used. While some languages need expansion of possible ellipsis; some languages prefer more extensive ellipsis than occurs in the source language texts".

7."Simplification of highly repetitious style often associated with stateliness of form and importance of theme."

This research was motivated by the following question:
- Do Nicholson and Whinfeild use different semantic adjustment strategies for translating *Masnavi* into English?

3. Method

For the purpose of this study, Book 1 out of the 6 books of *Masnavi* by Maulana Jalalu-D-Din Muhammad Balkhi (2014) along with its two English translations, one by Reynold Alleyne Nicholson (2004), and the other one by Edward Henry Whinfield (2001) which both of them were famous translators and authors were selected as the corpus of the study. The unit of analysis was *Masnavi's* verses. More specifically, these books were used:

1. *Masnavi* by Mawlana Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Balkhi (2014)
2. *The Mathnawi of Jalaluddin Rumi by* Reynold Alleyne Nicholson (2004)
3. *Masnavi i ma'niavi:Teaching of Rumi. The spiritual couplets of Maulana Jalaluddin Muhammad Rumi* by Edward Henry Whinfield (2001)

3.1 Theoretical Framework

Because the purpose of this study was to explore expansion and reduction strategies, Nida and Taber's (2003) lexical expansion and reduction strategies could be useful in discussing the extent to which whether the translators have applied these strategies in their translations. Moreover, Nida and Taber (2003) classify expansion and reduction into different subcategories and this classification is useful in translating poetry.

3.2 Procedures

To account for semantic adjustment strategies in the body of the translated text, data were collected based on three main materials, one Persian original text with its two English translations. After finding different English translations of *Masnavi's* poem, the researchers tried their best to compare the original poems to their English translations, following generally three steps:

1. Reading each original Persian poem critically and focusing on each line. In every line the researchers paid attention to the word's English equivalence to find out whether the translator could catch the meaning of the whole line or not.

2. Checking each line's translation in English version regarding the application of Nida and Taber's (2003) lexical expansion and reduction strategies. In the number of cases in which more than one strategy was identified, all the applied strategies were considered and their frequencies were counted.

3. Calculating the frequency of expansion and reduction strategies and representing conclusions. In this step the researchers considered three types of frequencies to arrive at the final result. First of all, they calculated the frequency counts of expansion and reduction strategies of all the poems. Then, the researchers calculated the frequency counts of expansion and reduction strategies by each translator and finally they calculated the frequency counts of each used strategy for all 300 lines.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

After applying Nida and Taber's (2003) lexical expansion and reduction strategies as the corpus of the present study, following results were obtained. Three figures below illustrate the extent to which each translator has utilized these strategies in his translations.
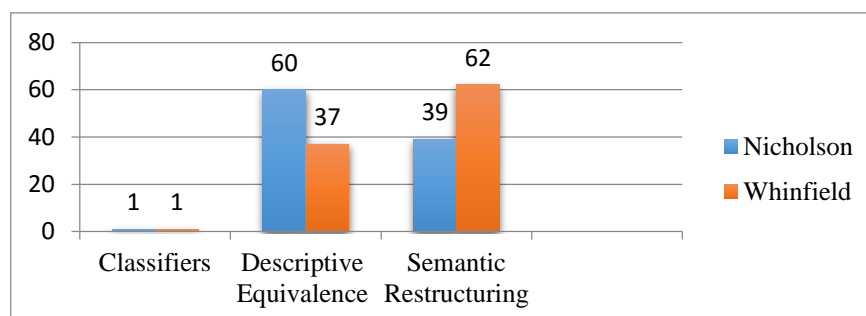

Figure 1. Expansion types used by Nicholson and Whinfield

As Figure 1 shown, it is observed that both translators have applied "Descriptive equivalence" and " Semantic restructuring" more than other types of expansion. Both translators have used a small number of "Classifiers". As result reveals, Nicholson has used "Descriptive equivalence" more than Whinfield and "Semantic restructuring" applied by Whinfield is more than Nicholson.
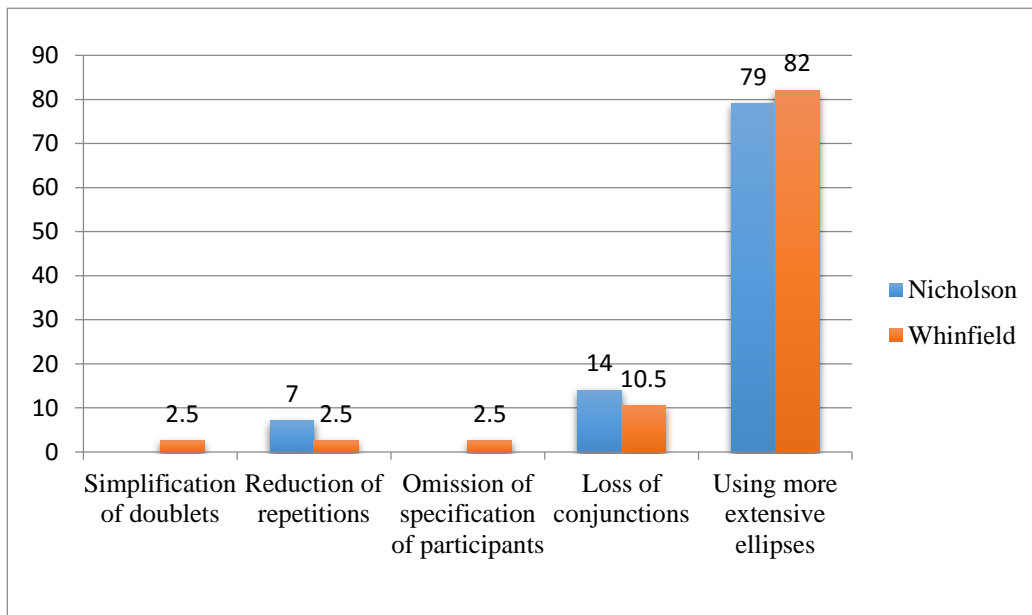

Figure 2. Reduction types used by Nicholson and Whinfield

As illustrated in Figure 2, Nicholson has applied three strategies of reduction, including "Reduction of repetitions"," Loss of conjunctions", and "Using more extensive ellipses". On the other hand, Whinfield has applied five strategies of reduction. Concerning the number of reductions, both translators have used a high percentage of ellipses and this indicates that both of them have omitted the source text words. No use of "Reduction of formulas" and "Simplification of highly repetitious style" was detected by the translators in the selected corpus of the study. The following chart shows overall usage of expansion and reduction strategies by the two translators.
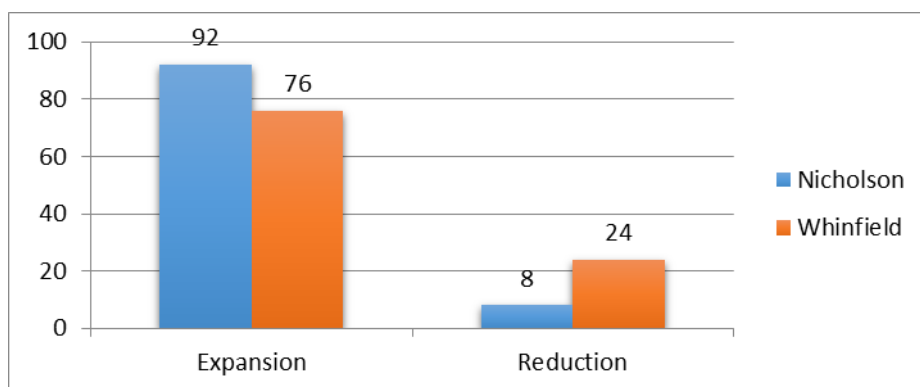

Figure 3. The distribution of the total expansion and reduction strategies

 As Figure 3 is demonstrated, both translators have used a high percentage of expansion. As the results show, Nicholson has applied expansion strategy more than Whinfield and reduction strategy has been used more in Whinfield's translation.

Generally, three hundred verses were analyzed, but, here in this section, some examples of expansion and reduction strategies extracted from *Masnavi* are discussed. It is worth to say that, "Reduction of formulas" and "Simplification of highly repetitious style", the fifth and seventh sub-category of reduction strategy, were not observed in this study.

4.1 Lexical expansion

In the following, some examples for the observed types of lexical expansion and reduction strategies have been given.

4.1.1 Classifiers

ST: اندر آ در سایه ی **نخل** امید

    [ændær][ä][dær][säyeh][ye][nækhle][omid]

TT1: Come into the shade of the **palm-tree** of hope.

TT2: But seek refuge under the **palm-trees** of the 'Truth'.

By using this type of expansion, the translators have used "palm-tree" for "نخل"/Nakhl/ to make explicit what was implicit in the target text. The translators have mentioned that "نخل"/Nakhl/ is a kind of tree growing in the warm climates which is not understandable to the target text readers. Therefore, by using this type of expansion the target text readers will understand the meaning of "نخل"/Nakhl/ and they will know "نخل" /Nakhl/is a kind of tree.

4.1.2 Descriptive Equivalence

ST: روح او سیمرغ بس **عالی طواف**

    [ruhe][u][simorghe][bæs][äli][tæväf]

TT1: His spirit is the Simurgh **that circles exceedingly high**

TT2: His spirit is as a **soaring on high**

In the above example, it can be seen that both translators have used expansion strategy. Nicholson has applied" Circles exceedingly high" for the Persian word" عالی طواف / äli tæväf /and Whinfield has applied" Soaring on high". Therefore, both translators have applied several words in the target text instead of that condensed word of the original text to clarify the meaning of the word to the target text readers.

4.1.3 Semantic Restructuring

ST: ظاهر آن ره دارد و این بی رهی   موسی و فرعون **معنی را رهی**

    [Musä][væ][feroun][mæni][rä][ræhi]

    [zähər][än][ræh][däræd][o][in][bi][ræhi]

TT1: Moses and Pharaoh were **servants of reality**,

    Outwardly the former keeps the way, while the latter has lost the way.

TT2: Verily, both Moses and Pharaoh **walked in the right way**,

    Though seemingly the one did so, and the other not.

The meaning of "معنی را رهی" / mæni rä ræhi /is implied in the source text, so the translators have used semantic restructuring strategy."Reality" and "the right way" are the implied meaning of this phrase which the original author has intended. Both translators have understood the implied meaning of this phrase and have expanded it by restructuring it in the target text. Moreover, they have explicated the implied meaning. Nicholson has used" servants of reality" and Whinfield has used" walked in the right way" for this phrase. Thus, the translators have made clear what was ambiguous to the target text readers. In this example, both translators transfer the meaning of the source text to the target text as accurately as possible.

4.2 Lexical Reduction

4.2.1 Simplification of Doublets

ST: کرد ویران خانه بهر **گنج زر**

    [kærd][virän][khäne][bæhre][gænje][zær]

TT1: Ruined the house for the sake of **the golden treasure**

TT2: Has destroyed its house to find the hidden **treasure**

In this type of reduction, Whinfield has utilized "Treasure" for" گنج زر / gænje zær/ and has reduced it, whereas Nicholson has translated it into "the golden treasure" and has not used any reduction. In this example, while the source text writer has used two words in the original text which was " گنج زر / gænje zær/, but the translator has reduced these two words to one word in the target text.

4.2.2 Reduction of Repetitions

ST: **حیله کرد** انسان و **حیله اش** دام بود

    [hile][kærd][ensän][væ][hile][æsh][däm][bud]

TT1: Man **devised**, and his **device** was snare

TT2: Man **plans a stratagem** and thereby snares himself

    The source text author has repeated the Persian word" حیله/ hile /two times in the original text, but the second translator has omitted one of these words in his translation .Therefore, the length of the text has changed in the target language. In this example, Nicholson has translated " حیله"/hile/ two times based on the intention of the original text author, but Whinfield has used one word instead of two words and he has utilized" plans a stratagem" for " حیله " / hile/.

Thus, by reducing these words in the target text the translation was shorten than the original, also the beauty of the source text has not transferred in the target text.

4.2.3 Omission of Specification of Participants

ST: صحت این حس زمعموری تن   **صحت** آن حس زتخریب بدن   [sehhæte][in][hes][ze][mæmurie][tæn]
[sehhæte][än][hes][ze][tækhribe][bædæn]

TT1: The **health** of the former arises from the flourishing state of the body;

The **health** of the latter arises from the ruin of the body.

TT2:_ **The health of** the former arises from tending the body,

That of the latter from mortifying the flesh.

The application of "Omission of specification of participants" is evident in this translation. In this type of reduction, the second translator has omitted the subject of the second hemistiches. The subject of the first and the second hemistiches was "The health", but Whinfield has omitted the subject of the second hemistiches. In fact, he has not translated this word in the second hemistiches. The original text author has used "صحت"/ sehhæt/ in the first and the second hemistiches for the beauty and rhythm of the poem, but Whinfield has omitted it in the target text and he has reduced the beauty of the Persian poem in the target text.

4.2.4 Loss of Conjunctions

ST: چون بسی ابلیس آدم روی هست   **پس** به هر دستی نشاید داد دست

[chun][bæsi][eblisə][ädæm][ruy][hæst]

[pæs][be][hær][dæsti][næshäyæd][däd][dæst]

TT1: Since there is many a devil that has the face of Adam

It is not well to give your hand to every hand

TT2: As there are many demon's with men's faces

It is wrong to join hand with every one

In the above example, the translators have omitted the subordinate clause in the target text while the source text author has applied it in the source text. Subordinate clause is used in the languages for connecting the texts. In this translation, the translators have connected two hemistiches one after another without using any connecting words. Both translators have omitted "Then"   for "پس"/ pæs /in the source text.

4.2.5 Using More Extensive Ellipses than Those Commonly Used

ST: **جان همه** روز از لگدکوب خیال

[jän][hæme][ruz][æz][lægadkube][khiyäl]

TT1: All day long from the buffets of imagination

TT2: Then our souls are a prey to divers him.

By using this type of expansion, the meaning and the beauty of the source text have reduced in the target text, so the target text readers have not understood the real meaning of the poem in the target language. Both translators have utilized this type of expansion in their translations. In the first translation, Nicholson has omitted "جان" in his translation and in the second translation, Whinfield has omitted" روز " / ruz/.

The outcomes of the present research findings were in accordance with Manafi Anari (2011) which studied the frequency of lexical expansion, reduction, and correspondence in the four English translations of some poems of *Hafeiz*. Manafi Anari analyzed English translations of *Hafiz* based on Nida and Taber's (1969) lexical expansion and reduction strategies. In his article, he asserted that lexical expansion has been the most frequently strategy used and the lexical reduction as the least one.

The results of this study were consistent with those of Shirinzadeh and Tengku Mahadi (2014) who investigated using expansion strategies in making untranslatable areas of poetry translatable: *Sa'di's Bustan* as a case in point. They selected *Sa'di's Bustan* which was translated by Clarke as the corpus of the study and analyzed one hundred verses of his poetry. The study showed that the translator used expansion wherein he made some semantic and structural adjustments in his translation to make those untranslatable parts translatable and create a natural, intelligible and understandable translation in the target language. The results of the present study and this article have been similar in the way that in both research the most frequently used expansion strategy were descriptive equivalence and semantic restructuring and classifiers as the least frequently used strategy.

5. Conclusion

One of the more significant findings to emerge from this study is that, both translators have used expansion strategy more than reduction, however; expansion strategy was more frequent in Nicholson's translation, while Whinfield has used more reduction strategy in contrast with Nicholson. Moreover, Nicholson has used more "Descriptive equivalence"; whereas, Whinfield has employed more "Semantic restructuring" in the translation of *Masnavi*. According to the seven strategies which were mentioned by Lefevere (1975, cited in Bassnett, 2002), the researchers

came to the point that Nicholson has used literal translation that this method pays close attention to the word for word translation, so Nicholson has expanded and has described the source language words which were unfamiliar to the target language readers to make the translation of poem intelligible and natural for them and he has used less reduction to preserve the meaning and beauty of Persian poem. On the other hand, based on Lefevere's (1975, cited in Bassnett, 2002) strategies, Whinfield has used an interpretation strategy that in this method the form is changed, but material of the source language is retained. Therefore, Whinfield has applied semantic restructuring in the way that he has changed the form of the Persian poem and has interpreted its meaning to make a readable translation to the target language reader, but he has used more reduction in his translation that this feature reduces the beauty of Persian poem.

Both translators have used expansion strategy to express the meaning of the source language in the target language because *Masnavi's* lines were so condensed and the writer of *Masnavi* has applied classic words which were not understandable to the target text reader, so it needed expansion strategy. Thus, translating classic poems requires a deep lexical and cultural knowledge of the source language and the target language, it means that the translator needs to be familiar with not only the vocabulary of the source language, but also he must be aware of the culture of the source language to transfer both the meaning and the beauty of the poem from the source language to the target language.

The research has also shown that both translators have applied different types of reduction, but" Using more extensive ellipses than those commonly used" was more than other types of reduction, so using this type of reduction reduces the beauty and the meaning of the source poem in the target language. As a result, because some parts of the poems are untranslatable, so the impact of translated poem and creating the same feeling on the target reader is not similar to the source reader because the linguistic system, socio-cultural standards, and poetical characteristics of two languages are different.

Considering the results of the present study and other studies in the field, it can be concluded that the translators attempted to translate as clear as possible and they have explicated what was implied in the source text, also they have clarified the meaning of the source text to the target readers by using expansion strategy. The other point was that translators have tended to have their translations explicit free of any obscurity, and comprehensible for the readers.

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