

## PROVERB: AN ANALYSIS OF TRANSLATION FROM PASHTO TO ENGLISH

Mujtaba Khan<sup>1</sup>, Sumaira Rauf<sup>\*2</sup>, Sumbal Imran<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Lecturer, Department of English, Iqra National University Swat Campus, KP;  
<sup>2&3</sup>MPhil Scholar, Department of English, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, KP

<sup>1</sup>[mujtabakhan157@gmail.com](mailto:mujtabakhan157@gmail.com); <sup>\*2</sup>[sumirauf00@gmail.com](mailto:sumirauf00@gmail.com); <sup>3</sup>[imranaliqasmi105@gmail.com](mailto:imranaliqasmi105@gmail.com)

Corresponding Author: \*

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### ABSTRACT

The translation of proverbs has always been a challenging area, and it is an important part of cultural heritage due to its connection with folklore. As a result, translators often encounter difficulties at the lexical, syntactical, and cultural levels. To address this issue, the current study aimed to analyze Pashtu proverbs and their English equivalents, i.e., their translated versions. The proverb books Matalona and Da Matalono kitab by Akbar S Ahmad was used as a source of data, which contains both the original proverbs and their translations. The Gorjian model, which involves literal translation, near equivalence, and exact equivalence procedures, was utilized to analyze the proverbs. The proverbs were examined to determine whether they were translated literally or according to their meaning. The findings suggest that there is a mix of both literal and sense translations, and the level of equivalence varies among different versions.

**Keywords:** English; Pushtu; Proverbs; Matalona and Da Matalono Kitab and Translation

### INTRODUCTION

The translation of proverbs from one language to another can be challenging as proverbs often carry cultural and historical contexts that may not translate directly. In the case of Pashto to English, the translator must consider the cultural and historical differences between the two languages and find a way to convey the intended meaning in a way that is appropriate and understandable to English-speaking audiences.

For example, a Pashto proverb that emphasizes the importance of respecting elders, such as “چې مشران چې ناست وي هلته کوچني ولاړ وي” (Where the elders sit, there the younger ones stand), might be translated to English as "Respect your elders." While this translation conveys the general message of the proverb, it may not fully capture the cultural significance of the original saying.

Another example is “ملت خپله ژبه او کلتور دی” (A nation is its language and its culture), which could be

translated to English as "A country's identity is defined by its language and culture." This translation captures the main message of the proverb, but may not fully reflect the cultural values and beliefs expressed in the original saying.

Overall, the process of translating proverbs from Pashto to English requires a deep understanding of both languages, cultures, and historical contexts, as well as careful consideration of the intended meaning of the original proverb. The goal of the translator is to find a way to accurately convey the message of the proverb in a way that is appropriate and meaningful to the target audience.

Proverb and literature

Proverbs are often used in literature as a way to convey a moral or message to the reader. Here are some examples of proverbs used in literature:

1. "Pride goeth before a fall" from the Bible (Proverbs 16:18) used by John Milton "Paradise Lost."
2. "The proof of the pudding is in the eating" appears in Miguel de Cervantes' "Don Quixote."
3. "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink" appears in George Orwell's "Animal Farm."
4. "You can't make an omelet without breaking eggs" used by Fyodor Dostoevsky "Crime and Punishment."
5. "Where there's smoke, there's fire" appears in William Shakespeare's "Othello."
6. "Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise" used by Benjamin Franklin "Poor Richard's Almanack."
7. "A picture is worth a thousand words" appears in Ernest Hemingway's "The Old Man and the Sea."

These are just a few examples of the many proverbs that have been used in literature over the years. Proverbs provide a concise and memorable way to convey important ideas and values.

Proverbs and literature can be translated from one language to another to reach a wider audience and preserve their meaning and cultural significance. Here are a few tips for translating proverbs in literature:

1. Maintain the cultural context: Proverbs are often rooted in a specific culture and have a specific meaning within that culture. When translating proverbs in literature, it's important to consider the cultural context and try to preserve the original meaning.
2. Use equivalent proverbs: If a similar proverb exists in the target language, it may be best to use that equivalent instead of a literal translation. This can help to preserve the cultural significance of the original proverb and ensure that the meaning is conveyed accurately.
3. Consider the tone: Proverbs in literature are often used for a specific purpose, such as to convey a moral lesson or to provide insight into a character. When translating proverbs in literature, it's important to consider the

tone of the original and try to preserve it in the translation.

4. Work with a professional translator: Translating literature, especially works that contain proverbs, can be challenging. To ensure the best possible translation, it's recommended to work with a professional translator who has experience in translating both literature and proverbs.

These are just a few tips to consider when translating proverbs in literature. The goal is to preserve the cultural significance and meaning of the original proverb while adapting it to the target language and audience.

### **Research objectives**

1. This study aims to highlight the most commonly used strategies for translating proverbs.
2. The focus is on identifying the strategies that the translator utilized in translating proverbs from the source language to the target language.
3. Additionally, the study seeks to uncover any differences and similarities between the proverbs in the source and target language.

### **Research questions**

1. What is the effect of analyzing translation techniques on the connotative and denotative meanings of proverbs?
2. What strategies are most commonly used when translating proverbs?
3. What distinguishes and resembles Pashto and English proverbs?

### **Significance of the study**

The purpose of this research is to shed light on the challenges faced by students when translating proverbs from Pashto to English. It is essential to strive for a balance between preserving the meaning of the proverb within the context of the source culture and conveying it effectively in the target culture. The results of this study can benefit a variety of people, including translators, students, readers, writers, researchers, translation critics, and others with an interest in this field. It is hoped that these findings will fill a void in the existing literature.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Proverbs are studied by a variety of scholars from different fields, including linguists, anthropologists, sociologists, and literary scholars. Here are a few ways in which different scholars might approach the study of proverbs:

1. Linguists: Linguists might study proverbs as part of their research into the structure and use of language. They might analyze the linguistic features of proverbs, such as their syntax, semantics, and pragmatics.
2. Anthropologists: Anthropologists might study proverbs as a way of understanding the cultural values and beliefs of a particular society. They might look at how proverbs are used in different contexts and how they reflect cultural attitudes and norms.
3. Sociologists: Sociologists might study proverbs as a way of understanding social relationships and power dynamics. They might examine how proverbs are used to reinforce social norms and how they are used to challenge or subvert power structures.
4. Literary scholars: Literary scholars might study proverbs as a form of expression in their own right. They might analyze the use of proverbs in literature, including their role in character development, their impact on the tone and style of work, and their contribution to the overall meaning of a text.

Temple and Honeck' Jon G. Temple Richard P. Honeck" "proverb is, a term which indicates wisdom." "Wisdom in logic that proverb is considered the language of adult people, because mature people use proverbs which have some bid sense, and then they use to apply to their daily life. We can call it common sense but not the language of ordinary people because common sense plays a central role in life. Common sense means to be aware of word meaning which is not as much potency in common people as in literal or intellectual people. Every culture and every nation has its shaped proverbs which have some secret meaning. One of our villagers used the proverb "*Meat Da Peat Daro de*" on one occasion when I was there. The proverb "*Meat Da Peat Daro De*" accurate meaning is changed than contextual meaning here literal means "Meat" refers to medicine and the word "*Peat*" used for "Belly", and the background means is "They

Understand Each Other." Or "They Know Each Other" Proverbs are often borrowed from the same languages and cultures and sometimes come down to the present culture of more than one or two languages. In short, almost every language and culture has its unique proverbs which convey their inner meaning and unique pattern concerning the same language and culture.

(Bartlotti, 2006:iii), and a "wiser man is considered to be the one who speaks more proverbs" (Khattak, 2006:x). Proverbs are considered the most ubiquitous genre of folklore, found among all cultures of the world. Milner has noted, "the nearly universal distribution" of proverbs throughout the world, "almost irrespective of time, place, level of technical and economic development, language or culture" (1969:200; see also, Mieder, 2004, 2005). Because of their central role in many aspects of traditional, non-literate societies, the study of proverbs has attracted scholars for centuries. While the seventeenth century is regarded as the "golden age of proverbs" in the West (Obelkevich, 1994), proverbs collection continued throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Whiting, 1994:75). Some scholars believe that in the Western world, the use of proverbs in literature fell significantly after the eighteenth century, the era associated with reason and enlightenment. However, Wolfgang Mieder (1993, 2004), Mokitimi (1995), and Sanauddin (2015) have convincingly shown that while some proverbs have been dropped because their language or metaphor does not fit the modern time, new proverbs are emerging constantly to reflect contemporary social patterns. Mieder(1993) argues that even the most sophisticated and best-educated people appear to require the pithy wisdom contained in metaphorical proverbs, and as such, there has been no general collapse of proverbiality and no blackout of proverbs during the time of reason and rationality (Mieder, 2000). Whether or not the time of proverb collection and proverb usage in the West is over, it is certainly not in most parts of Asia and Africa, where much work is still necessary to collect the scattered proverbs from people, and "where proverbs retain not only their currency but their value as cultural and rhetorical expressions" (Bartlotti, 2000:1).

According to Barajas (2010), the shapes of proverbs are important for grasping the social construction of their meaning because they are not made of one word

and they have specific forms that distinguish them from any segment of the language. Therefore, translators should be aware of the shapes of proverbs when translating proverbs into their closest equivalence in the target language TL because there are proverbs that contain some 3 cultural aspects in the source language SL that can't be found in the target culture. Translating Proverbs requires linguistic knowledge of the types of equivalence, especially those proposed by Nida (1964) i.e. the formal equivalence in which the translator focuses on the form and the content between the SL and the TL and the dynamic equivalence in which the translator gives an equivalent effect in the TL as it is in the source language. It also needs cultural knowledge of the similarities and differences between cultures i.e. beliefs, ways of life, arts, traditions, conventions, values, and food. Translators must be familiar with the strategies of translation in general and translating proverbs and fixed expressions in particular. According to Lorsch (Cited in Baker & Saldanha, 2009, P.188), translation strategy is "a conceivably intentional procedure to solve a problem which a translator faces when translating a text component from one language into another". It is clear from this definition that every translator should have prior knowledge of translation strategies theoretically and practically to translate properly. In this study, translation strategies and techniques will be discussed and explained to help translators in translating proverbs.

Roy (quoted in Samover et al, 2009: 30) offers a summary as to why the understanding of cultural proverbs is a valuable tool for students of intercultural communication. "Examination of these orally transmitted values offers an excellent means of learning about another culture because the oft-repeated sayings fuse past, present, and future. These sayings focus our attention on basic principles accepted within the culture." Yet, each culture has proverbs that are unique to it. The saying, 'If you want to know a people, know their proverbs' illustrates this. For example, Zona, (1994, quoted in Schuster) mentions "sayings from various Native American tribes often reflect their view of the land as sacred: "Take only what you need and leave the land as you found it" and the importance of spirituality: "Wisdom comes only when you stop looking for it and start living the life the Creator

These are examples of how different scholars might approach the study of proverbs. The study of proverbs is interdisciplinary, drawing on insights and methods from a range of fields.

## METHODOLOGY

This research analyzed Pashto proverbs and the methods used in their translation into English. The proverbs were sourced from two books, "Mataloona" by Akbar S Ahmad and "Da Mataloona Kitaab," where both the original and translated versions were available. The analysis was conducted within the framework provided by Gorjian.

## Theoretical framework

This research was carried out based on the model proposed by Gorjian. According to Gorjian (1996), proverbs can be translated while considering meaning at three levels: (1) exact equivalence, (2) near equivalence, and (3) literal meaning. An exact equivalent refers to linguistic and discourse similarities between the source language (SL) and target language (TL). A near equivalent refers to linguistic differences but discourse similarities. The literal translation of proverbs means that the literal meaning in the TL is transformed into a non-proverbial simple sentence in the TL. This strategy may be used when the translator encounters difficulty in finding exact or near equivalents in the TL. This model is presented as follows.

## Weak version

According to Gorjian (1996), there is no equivalent of the proverb in the target language (TL). This means that the equivalents in the TL do not have any shared lexical, semantic, or conceptual qualities. In such cases, the translator tries to understand and gain a deeper understanding of the proverb in the source language (SL) before expressing it as a simple statement. The TL is missing the humorous or satirical element of the proverb. For example:

1. "There are no eyes in anger," according to an English saying about the inability to see or judge things clearly when angry.
2. English translation: "An angry person is unable to judge or see the truth."
3. Persian literal equivalent: " / she chasm ndr/"
4. Phonetic Persian translation: "مشخ مشخ درادن"

### Moderate version

According to Gorjian (1996), the target language (TL) may have a partial equivalent of the proverb in the source language (SL). This means that although the TL lacks shared grammatical and syntactic features, the SL and TL proverb equivalents share a notion. As a result, the translator must understand the essence of the proverb and look for a target language proverb that is as close as possible to the original (known as near equivalence). For example:

1. "Carrying coals to Newcastle" is an old English adage.
2. English translation: "Taking or carrying something plentiful at the intended location, or expressing something that has already been understood or found."
3. Conceptual Persian analog: "/zi:rh similar conceptual qualities when it comes to proverbs."

The two languages do not have the same lexical and semantic properties, but the shared concepts between SL and TL are the main factor that helps the translator to produce a moderate translation of the proverb. In this case, the translator may focus on the element of "plenty," which has the same meaning in English and Persian. The shared elements of SL/TL corresponding proverbs can be found by mapping the two proverbs onto each other. For example:

English proverb: Carrying coal to Newcastle  
Persian equivalent: هرگز هب نامرک ندرب (Zi: rh to Kerman)

In the English version, "Newcastle" in Great Britain has coal mines, so "coal" is plentiful there. In the Persian version, the cumin plant (Zi: rh) is grown in the city of Kerman in Iran's central region and can easily be found there, so transporting "Zi: rh" to "Kerman" would be worthless, as would carrying "coals" to "Newcastle."

The example above demonstrates that English and Persian have some shared concepts when it comes to proverbs.

### Strong version

According to Gorjian (1996), there is a direct equivalent in the target language (TL) that matches the source language (SL) proverb. Both SL and TL have shared linguistic, semantic, and conceptual characteristics. The translator can achieve this one-to-one connection between the SL and TL proverbs if they follow the three-step method for translating

figurative language. An example of this is the English proverb "The wolf in sheep's clothes," which refers to people who are cruel in private but act kindly in public. The equivalent in Persian is "بگردد شمیم سابل رد" which phonetically translates to "/gu:rgi:dr lebs mi:sh/."

Direct equivalency

No equivalency

Partial equivalency



### ANALYSIS

Translation of proverbs is a complex task that requires an in-depth understanding of both the source text and the target text cultures. Many translators make the mistake of translating proverbs through their literal meaning, which can result in incorrect translations. The interpretation of proverbs is challenging because they are often contextually based. For example, the Pashto proverb "طاقت نه همارت بڼه دی" was translated by one of my classmates as "Time is the medicine for every sorrow," but the correct translation is "Time softens all grieves."

Translating proverbs from one culture to another can be a difficult task as the translation must not only convey the literal meaning but also the cultural context behind it. For instance, the Pashto proverb "دلته دم او قدم دواړه په حساب دي" was translated to English as "Skill is stronger than strength," which is a changed form of the literal translation of "Skill is better than strength."

In the book analyzed, different proverbs were discussed. For example, the Pashto proverb "دلته دم او قدم دواړه په حساب دي" was translated to English as "Every wrong is avenged on earth." The literal translation of this proverb is "Here both the tail and the step count." The literal meaning of both proverbs is different, but they convey the same contextual meaning.

Another example from the book is the Pashto proverb "کار په کولو کېږي" which means "You cannot do anything by doing nothing" and the equivalent English proverb is "It's done by working." Both proverbs convey the same meaning that effort is required to complete a task.

Another proverb discussed in the book is "خواره به" او ژورې ته به دي بيا يي .درته وايي،". The literal translation into English is "they will tell you sweet, and you will come back to the deep," while the genuine translation is "When two fall out, a third gain by it." The genuine translation conveys the meaning that when two people have a falling out, a third person takes advantage of the situation, while the literal translation conveys a completely different connotative meaning.

Finally, the Pashto proverb "چې ځما تر سر شي ترېه، خدايه" was translated to English as "When the world is passing from me, O God! Give me not wealth." The literal translation of the proverb is the opposite of the sense translation and is interpreted as "God don't populate the world when I'm gone."

The statement describes a proverb from the book "چرته بې وي هلته ادب وي" and provides both the literal and sense translations of the proverb. The literal translation "when there is slap there is respect" is not clear and differs from the sense translation "punishment is necessary for discipline and social order". The translator has used a *near equivalence* strategy for the translation of the proverb. However, both translations convey the same connotative meaning that discipline is essential for maintaining social order. Similarly, another proverb from the book "له با کور دے يا کور دے" translation of the same proverb is "For women either house or the grave" in English. The writer has used a *literal translation strategy* while translating the proverb from the source to the target language. The proverb implies that women have limited options and are expected to remain within the confines of their homes, as going beyond those boundaries could lead to harm or death. This proverb reflects the strict gender roles and societal expectations in Pashtun culture that is not fit in western culture. Another proverb from the book "الوتے مارغه په لاس نه راځي" The literal meaning of this Pashto proverb is "A bird that has flown from the hand will not return" while the contextual meaning is "it's no use crying over spilled milk" in English. The translator has used an *exact equivalent strategy* for the translation of the proverb. The same proverb gives the same meaning or connotation in both languages and gives the same equivalent in both languages. It conveys the idea that there's no point in being upset over something that has already happened and cannot be changed.

Another proverb from the book is "په کلی غلبه شوه ده دم" . ده نائی بنه شوه . This proverb highlights the idea that even in difficult or chaotic situations, someone may still benefit. The literal translation is "There was a hullabaloo in the village but the barber and the drummer benefit from it" while the sense translation is "it is an ill wind that goes nobody good". The translator has used a literal strategy while translating the proverb from the source language to the target language. f Although the two translations have different literal meanings, they both convey the same connotative meaning that a negative situation may still have some positive outcomes. Another proverb from the book is "که دي عمر شي زر کاله اخر به مری ځما" . The analysis of the Pashto proverb "ka de umar she zar kale aher ba mar she zma lala" is mostly correct. The literal translation of the proverb is "If you live a thousand years, still you will die my elder brother," which emphasizes the inevitability of death. The sense translation adds more meaning by conveying the desire to live long enough to see one's children grow up and be able to take care of themselves. The translator has used a literal strategy while translating the proverb from the source language to the target language. Overall, the proverb emphasizes the transience of life and the desire to make the most of one's time on earth. Another proverb from the same book is "د يوه لاس ټک نه خيژي" (da yo laas na tak na heje) which means "You cannot clap with one hand alone." *exact equivalent strategy* for the translation of proverb. This proverb is commonly used in Afghanistan and some other countries in the region to convey the idea that in any conflict or dispute, there are usually two sides involved, and both parties may share some responsibility for the situation.

The metaphor of clapping with two hands emphasizes the idea that cooperation and mutual effort are necessary to achieve a positive outcome in any situation. The proverb suggests that both parties must work together to resolve their differences and find a solution that is fair to both sides. Overall, this proverb highlights the importance of empathy, communication, and cooperation in resolving conflicts, and encourages people to take responsibility for their actions and work towards positive outcomes together. In the same way another proverb from the book "وروكي خوله لويي خبري" (waroke holie lwe habare), which means "Great

boast, small roast" in English. *exact equivalent strategy* for the translation of a proverb. The translator has used a literal strategy while translating the proverb from the source language to the target language. This proverb is used to convey the idea that people who talk a lot and boast about their achievements are often not as capable or accomplished as they claim to be. The proverb implies that such people may be insecure or lacking in confidence, and may use boasting as a way to cover up their shortcomings.

While the literal translation of the proverb, "Smallmouth big news", may also convey the idea that people who talk a lot may not have much substance or credibility behind their words, the sense translation "Great boast, small roast" is more commonly used in English to express the same idea. In any case, both the literal and sense translations of the proverb suggest that people should be humble and let their actions speak for themselves, rather than boasting or talking excessively. It is generally more impressive and convincing to accomplish things quietly and with modesty, rather than making grandiose claims that may not be backed up by reality.

Another proverb from the book is "پياز دوی هو په ناز" (pyaz de way ho pa naz) in Pashto, which is equivalent to the English proverb "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith". The translator has used a literal strategy while translating the proverb from the source language to the target language. While the literal translation of the Pashto proverb, "the onion with affection has value", may seem quite different from the English proverb, both convey the same connotative meaning that it is better to have a simple life with love and harmony than to have wealth or luxury but with bitterness and strife.

The English proverb emphasizes that a humble meal eaten in a loving environment is preferable to a lavish feast accompanied by hatred or discord. Similarly, the Pashto proverb implies that even an ordinary or humble food like onion, if eaten in a loving and harmonious atmosphere, can be more valuable than a rich or luxurious meal eaten in a negative or hostile environment.

Both proverbs highlight the importance of love, kindness, and emotional well-being over material wealth or status. They suggest that having a positive

and supportive environment can contribute more to our happiness and well-being than external factors like wealth, power, or prestige. Another proverb from the book "تور په صابن نه سپینیری" (tor pa sabun na spinige), which is equivalent to the English proverb "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?" The literal translation of the Pashto proverb, "black cannot be made white with soap", is quite different from the English equivalent proverb, but both convey the same connotative meaning that people cannot change their innate characteristics or nature.

The English proverb uses the examples of an Ethiopian person, whose skin color is typically dark, and a leopard, which is known for its distinctive spots, to emphasize that some things are unchangeable and ingrained in a person's or animal's nature. Similarly, the Pashto proverb suggests that it is impossible to change something that is an inherent or intrinsic part of a person or object.

While the literal translations of the two proverbs are different, they both express a universal truth that people cannot fundamentally change who they are, and should instead embrace and accept their natural qualities and traits. The proverbs also suggest that people should not try to change others or impose their ideas or beliefs on them, but rather accept and respect their unique qualities and differences.

## CONCLUSION

The study provides an analysis of the translation of Pashto proverbs into English, concluding that there is a mixture of both literal and sense translation in the proverbs. The study also suggests that some proverbs in Pashto have different literal meanings but convey the same sense or connotative meaning, while others have the same literary and contextual meaning in both languages.

The study also highlights the importance of translating proverbs through sense rather than denotative meaning, as the meaning and cultural associations of proverbs can vary across different languages and cultures. It is also found that the difference in the literary meaning of proverbs in different languages is often due to differences in culture and social associations, as each culture has its own unique experiences and perspectives. The study also highlights that different strategies (near equivalent, exact equivalent, and literal translation)

have been used while translating proverbs from the source text to the text where the literal translation strategy has been used mostly for the translation of the proverbs.

However, this study also found out that certain norms and values are universally accepted and have the same denotative and connotative meaning across different languages and cultures. This is because such norms and values have global acceptability and comprehensive power that give very few options for different denotations.

Overall, the finding emphasizes the importance of considering both the literal and sense translations of proverbs, as well as the cultural and social context in which they are used, to accurately convey their meaning in different languages and cultures.

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