Translation of Wordplays in Harry Potter and its Persian Translation

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ABSTRACT

Wordplay is one of the most complex types of literary industry, the translation of which always causes problems for translators. Therefore, knowing its types and ways to deal with this field of translation is very important. Differences in linguistic and spoken structure in languages add to this complexity. Therefore, the translator's knowledge of both the source and target languages is one of the most important points in recognizing and translating the wordplay correctly. Using this literary industry in children's literature requires more vigilance and skill. The present research came to existence with the aim of discovering the most frequently used strategies in three versions of translating of wordplay in J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter and The Chamber of Secrets, into Persian, in light of eight techniques of Delabastita. The study based on Morice's wordplay classification, (meaning play: slang term, proper names, neologism, oddly formed sentences and puns; and sound play: syllabication, spelling rule, rhyme and pun). A corpus, consisting of the Persian versions of this children novel has been compiled. The results gathered from the analysis of data indicated that most frequent used strategies are substitution of the instance of source text wordplay with an instance of target language wordplay; then, the wordplay was translated into a non-wordplay phrase. And the techniques introduction of a wordplay in a textual position where the original text has no wordplay for compensation or any other reason and introduction of new wordplay material which has no apparent precedent or justification in the source text except as a compensatory device are not used at all.

KEY TERMS

Wordplay, Sound Play, Meaning Play

RESEARCH PAPER

1. Introduction

Wordplay and translating wordplay have been the subject of many studies. Nevertheless, there is noticeable variation in what is understood as wordplay, and a concise and unequivocal definition of wordplay has proven to be surprisingly elusive. It is generally agreed that wordplay is something that hinges on double meanings and words or longer lexical units sounding the same or at least somewhat similar. One complicating factor is that wordplay has many embodiments, that is, there are many different ways to create wordplay and to use language playfully. Furthermore, there are many ways to delimit the term itself; some define wordplay very loosely, and others draw a very strict line between certain kinds of wordplay and other language play. Wordplay and the translation of wordplay is a complex subject that has been addressed by various studies. The combination of a single form and multiple meanings created by wordplay makes it challenging to translate. Translating wordplay has even been considered impossible. Delabastita (1993: xi) admits that this subject has not yet received the attention it deserves, and states that several writers have also noted "the need for systematic investigations into wordplay translation". This also holds in a higher degree for the translating from English into Persian considering the differences between their linguistic structures. Apart from all the researches carried out on the subject of translating wordplay, the need for a systematic study that analyzes the strategies for translating wordplay form English into Persian is still felt. The translated versions of Harry Potter in different languages have been investigated by many in order to determine the strategies used by translators in translating the features of language used, from different perspectives. Wordplay is a rhetorical device most often used to heighten the literary value of a given work. This thesis explores wordplay and the translation of wordplay through an analysis of wordplay found in an English novel and its Persian translation. The purpose is to shed light on the problems and solutions found in the data. The study consists of a quantitative analysis and a subsequent discussion on the findings.

As a figure of speech, wordplay has long been considered untranslatable. Delabastita (1993) believes that wordplay has received less than its fair attention most probably due to the preconception of language as a precise medium. The present research is deemed significant as far as the results might open new horizons to the translators of novels regarding the best choice for solving translational problems when dealing with plays on words.Each writer is perfectly known for his/her unique literary style. Therefore, a lack of sensitivity in dealing with wordplays while translating could result in loss of meaning. On the other hand, wordplay is a linguistic device used to create the same comic effect as the original (Delabastita, 1996). As a result, the translator"s lack of familiarity with rhetorical devices might produce such results that would negatively affect the literary value of the work. This research is an empirical study, based on a comparative method of analysis, which investigates the differences between translations of *Harry Potter* and gains its significance from investigating the translation of wordplay in written mode to see whether or not cases of wordplay were treated differently in translating.

To achieve the objective of this study, the research was mainly focused on answering the following research questions:

1.   What are the different wordplay translation strategies taken by the translators in Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets?

2.   What is the frequency of used strategies?

2. Literature Review

While problems in translating Joanne Kathleen Rowling‟s novels are not seriously adfressed, numerous translations of the works appear day by day in many languages. In the first attemts to translate the series, remarkable changes were even made when translating the British English into American English (Chaudhuri, 2000; quoted in Nygren, 2006). While disapproving of this "forced cultural shift" and arguing that the novels be kept in their original language, she beleives that the reason for makimg an American version (published in the States in 1998) was to make the book user-friendly for the American child, sparing him/her any jolt or distress in negotiating alien British terrain. Changes even included the title, so that Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone in Britain became Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone in the USA. There were also vocabulary changes, so that post became mail, lorry became truck, fortnight became two weeks; and going a step further, crumpets became muffins. Besides, colour became color and grey became gray (Nygren,2006).

Some of the studies have examined the importance of wordplay in teaching and learning in Iran. For instance, Amini (2010) compared Persian and English George Bernard Shaw‟s wordplay in 333 items. The results of the study indicated that translating wordplay to non-wordplay phrases are the most frequent technique. In the other place, Barhaman (2011) did a comparative study of translation wordplay from English into Persian. This study tried to evaluate the translation of wordplay strategies used for dubbed versions and the ones in written translation. The results gathered from the analysis of data indicated that most cases of original puns were replaced by non-puns in the translated versions, in both dubbed movies and written texts. It was also observed that there was no difference between the dubbed versions and written translations regarding the most frequently applied strategy. Panahi (2009) conducted a comparative study on translation strategies of neologisms of Harry Potter and the Order of Phoenix from English into Persian. It evaluated different translation strategies of neologism of the famous novel, "Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets", from English into Persian to find the adopted strategies and to dramatize the frequencies and the percentage of the mentioned strategies in a theoretical framework based on "Descriptive Translation Studies" 's model. The results showed that nine out of eleven of the procedures proposed in Newmark‟s framework as well as four other procedures were used by the six translators and the most frequent translation strategies is transference.

3. Method

This present study adopted a corpus-based methodology to analyze translation procedures. It also seeks to measure, count and compare the translation procedures followed in the wordplay.The scope of the present study is the wordplays which appear in the four chapter of Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets (Rowling, 1999). The study data were collected by analyzing three Persian translations of Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets. The translators can be listed as follows:

- Eslamiyeh (2000)
- Maddani Nejad (2003)
- Eshragh (2001)

Moreover, for determining the study the novelty of lexical units, the following sources were consulted:

- Oxford Dictionary of New Words
- Merriam Webster Dictionary
- Oxford Dictionary

The major reasons behind the selection of Rowling‟s Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets can be discussed here. Firstly, it is replete with wordplay which are the interest of this

study. Secondly, the Harry Potter series have been translated into sixty-six worldwide languages and have been widely accepted in Iran so that it is translated by six translators. Finally, the Harry Potter series enjoy a double faceted readership; that is, it has attracted not only its predetermined audience, children, but also it has amused adults.

4. Results

Figure 1. Frequency of wordplays
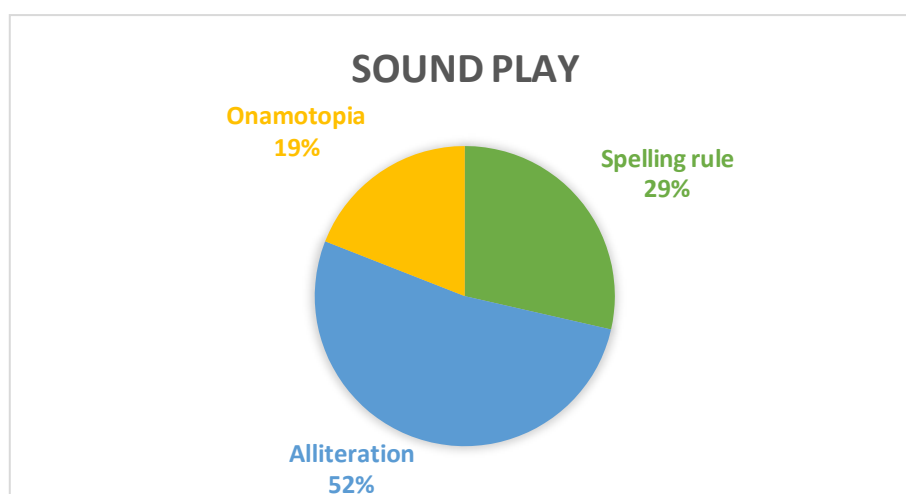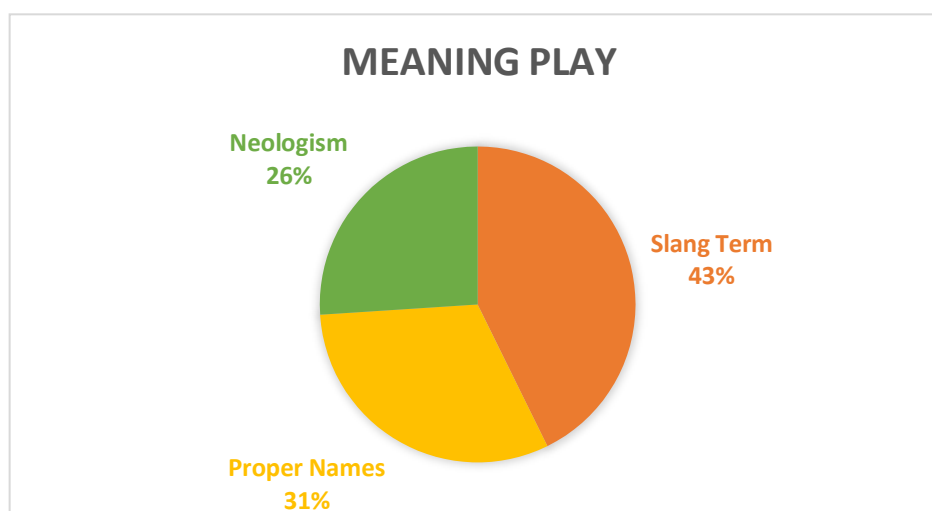

Figure 2. Frequency of kinds of Sound Play
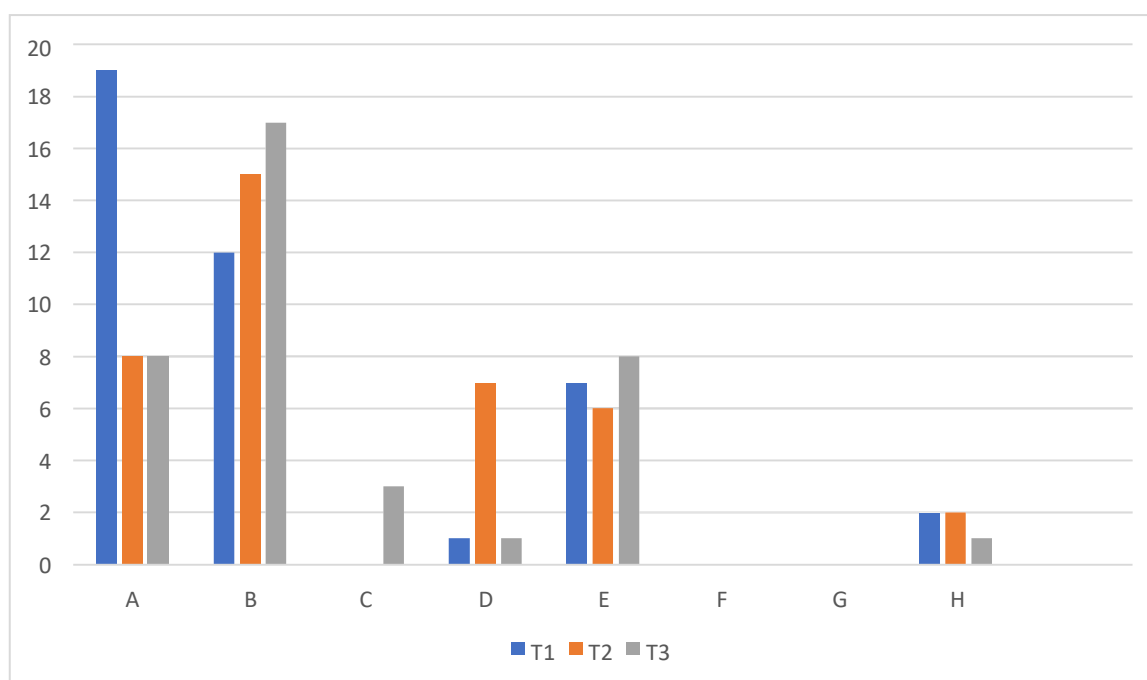
Figure 3. Frequency of kinds of Meaning Play

Figure 4. Frequency of kinds of Translation Procedures

As the figure4. shows, strategy "A" (Substitution of the instance of source text wordplay with an instance of target language wordplay) is the most applied strategy in translating wordplay and strategy "B" (The wordplay was translated into a non-wordplay phrase) gained the second rank. The "F" (Introduction of a wordplay in a textual position where the original text has no wordplay for compensation or any other reason) and "G" (Introduction of new wordplay material which has no apparent precedent or justification in the source text except as a compensatory device) strategies are not used at all. Most of the translators used "A" and "B" for translating wordplay and this could be the result of their unawareness about the other strategies. In this research no example of syllabication, pun, assonance, consonance and oddly-formed sentences has been found. This could be the result

of nature of language and the cultural differences between two languages and also the addressed of the book who are children and the text should be understandable for them.

5. Conclusion

With respect to the first question, **what are the different wordplay translation procedures taken by the translators in Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets?** the observations indicate that six out of eight the procedures proposed in Delabastita''s (1996) framework were used by three translators.

Technique 'A' denotes substitution of the instance of source text wordplay with an instance of target language wordplay.

Technique 'B' is employed when the wordplay is translated into a non-wordplay phrase.

Technique 'C' pertains to substitution of the wordplay with a wordplay related rhetorical device (e.g. repetition, irony).

Technique 'D' refers to the omission of the text portion containing wordplay.

Technique 'E' signifies implementing literal rendering of the source text wordplay in the target language.

Technique 'F' concerns introduction of a wordplay in a textual position where the original text has no wordplay for compensation or any other reason. It is noteworthy that the Persian Language lacks a clear definition and an appropriate classification of wordplay. Thus, the translated texts were separately studied to see if they disclosed any playful linguistic delicacies. The linguistic subtleties that had no original English equivalents were deemed to be cases of technique 'F'.

Technique 'G' refers to introduction of new wordplay material which has no apparent precedent or justification in the source text except as a compensatory device. The present research found no such case.

Technique 'H' is explanation of the wordplay in the paratext – footnotes, endnotes or introductions.

The second question, **what is the frequency of used strategies?** was answered based on the results derived from final data quantification. In general, a total of 38 cases of wordplay were detected including 17 meaning plays and 21 sound plays. The collected data was further analyzed to determine the technique(s) applied to each case of wordplay. The techniques used to deal with these instances are as follows:

Table 1. Frequency of Each Procedure by Each Translators

Technique Translators	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
T1	19	12	0	1	4	0	0	2
T2	8	15	0	7	6	0	0	2
T3	8	17	3	1	8	0	0	1
Total	35	44	3	9	18	0	0	5

According to the table 1.:

Technique „A'' which applied by T1. 50% of the cases, whereas T2. and T3. applied 21.05%.

Technique „B'' is applied by T1. 31.5%, T2. 39.4% and by T3. 44.7%.

Technique „C'' was not used by T1. and T2. but T3. applied 7.8%.

Technique „D'' is applied by T1 2.6%, T2 18.4% and T3 2.6%.

Technique „E'' is applied by T1. 10.5%, T2. 15.7% and T3. 21.05%.

Techniques „F'' and „G'' were not found in this case study.

Technique „H'' is applied by T1. 5.2%, T2. 5.2% and T3 2.6%.

According to the above table and the Figure 4. these conclusions are found:

The T1 used 5.26% of Technique „A‟ in translating spelling rule, 10.52% alliteration, 10.52% onomatopoeia, 26.31 % slang terms, 26.31% proper names, and 21.05 % neologism; 41.66% of Technique „B‟ in translating spelling rule,41.66 % alliteration, 8.33% onomatopoeia, and 8.33% slang terms; 100% of Technique „D‟ in translating onomatopoeia; 100% of Technique „E‟ in translating alliteration. And she used 50% of Technique „H‟ in translating proper names, and 50 % neologism.

The T2 used 12.5% of Technique „A‟ in translating spelling rule, 12.5% in alliteration, 50% in onomatopoeia, 12.5% proper names, and12.5 % neologism; 26.66% of Technique „B‟ in translating spelling rule, 40% in alliteration and 33.33% slang terms; 25.57% of Technique „D‟ in translating spelling rule,14.28% in alliteration, 14.28% slang terms, 2857% proper names, and 14.28 % neologism; 50% of Technique „E‟ in translating alliteration, 16.66% proper names, and 33.33% neologism. And he used 100% of Technique „H‟ in translating proper names.

The T3 used 25% of Technique „A‟ in translating alliteration, 37.5% in onomatopoeia, 12.5% proper names, and 25% neologism.; 35.29% of Technique „B‟ in translating spelling rule, 47.05% in alliteration, and 17.64% slang terms; 100% of Technique „C‟ in translating slang terms; 100% of Technique „D‟ in translating onomatopoeia; 12.5% of Technique „E‟ in translating alliteration, 62.5% proper names, and 25% neologism. And he used 100% of Technique „H‟ in translating neologism.

The result of this study implies that while there are some strategies that are more useful and common in translating wordplay in children's fantasy novels, there are other strategies that are used rarely or not used at all. The awareness of translator about this point can lead to a better translation and their work will be a better product as well. They can examine other strategies in translating wordplay that may give better results. Also the teachers who are teaching translation to their students can inform their students about the commonality of these strategies in order to help them select the best strategy for translating wordplay in children literature in their near future. It also could be useful for syllabus designers who design translators training courses and materials.

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