

Problems and Procedures of Translating Metaphor in Arabic Poetry into English: A Case Study of Al-Maqaleh's Poem 'To My Mother'

Donia Jaffer Skareeb¹

Waleed Mohammed A. Ahmed^(2,*)

دنيا جعفر سكاريب¹

وليد محمد عبدالله أحمد^(*,2)

Received: Feb. 7, 2025

Revised: Jun. 10, 2025

Accepted: Jun. 23, 2025

© 2026 University of Science and Technology, Sana'a, Yemen. This article can be distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution \(CC BY\) license](#), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

© 2026 جامعة العلوم والتكنولوجيا، صنعاء، اليمن. يمكن إعادة استخدام المادة المنشورة حسب رخصة مؤسسة المشاع الإبداعي من فئة (CC BY) شريطة الاستشهاد بالمؤلف والمجلة.

¹ MA Scholar in Translation, English Department, Faculty of Human and Social Sciences, University of Science and Technology, Sana'a, Yemen

² Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics, English Department, Faculty of Human and Social Sciences, University of Science and Technology, Sana'a, Yemen

*Corresponding author: waleedcms72@yahoo.com; w.alqadasi@ust.edu.ye

Problems and Procedures of Translating Metaphor in Arabic Poetry into English: A Case Study of Al-Maqaleh's Poem 'To My Mother'

Abstract

This study aims to identify problems (losses) in the English translation of metaphors in the Arabic poem 'To My Mother' composed by Al-Maqaleh (1986) and translated by Ghanem (1999), explore procedures followed in translating those metaphors, and show the extent to which the translator has succeeded in using those procedures. The study employed a mixed-methods approach to analyse a corpus of 31 Arabic metaphors and their English translations from the target poem. The qualitative content analysis method was utilized to identify translation problems and procedures and the quantitative method to evaluate the translator's success in employing the procedures for metaphor translation through frequencies and percentages. The findings revealed three types of problems in the translation of metaphors: explicit, implicit and modified. The findings also showed that two translation procedures were employed: literal translation and modulation. Most of metaphors in the poem (51.5%) were translated literally (45.1% successful and 6.4% problematic), while following modulation consistently resulted in losses (48.5%), affecting meaning and/or aesthetic values. Findings indicate that translation success depends on both proper procedure implementation and thorough understanding of Arabic poetic metaphors, particularly modern poetry's symbolic language and unity of the poem.

Keywords: Arabic poetry, metaphor, translation problems (losses), translation procedures.

مشكلات وأساليب ترجمة الاستعارة في الشعر العربي إلى اللغة الإنجليزية: دراسة حالة لقصيدة المقالغ «إلى أمي»

الملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحديد المشكلات (الفاقد) في الترجمة الإنجليزية للاستعارات في قصيدة الشاعر المقالغ (1980) «إلى أمي» المترجمة بواسطة غانم (1999)، واستكشاف الأساليب المتبعة في ترجمة هذه الاستعارات إلى الإنجليزية، وبيان مدى نجاح المترجم في استخدام تلك الأساليب لترجمة هذه الاستعارات، واعتمدت الدراسة منهجا متعدد الأساليب (كمياً ونوعياً)، وتكونت عينة الدراسة من 31 استعارة مستخلصة من القصيدة العربية مع ترجماتها الإنجليزية، وقد استخدم أسلوب تحليل المحتوى لتحديد المشكلات والأساليب التي استخدمت في الترجمة، واستخدمت التكرارات والنسب المئوية في قياس مدى نجاح المترجم في استخدام الأساليب في ترجمة الاستعارة، وكشفت النتائج عن ثلاثة أنواع من المشكلات في ترجمة الاستعارات: الفاقد الصريح، والضمني، والمعدل، وكما أظهرت النتائج استخدام أسلوبين في الترجمة: الترجمة الحرفية والتحوير، وبينت النتائج أنه بترجمة معظم استعارات القصيدة حرفياً (51.5%)، كانت 45.1% منها ناجحة و6.4% فيها إشكال، بينما أدى استخدام التحوير إلى فاقد بنسبة 48.5% أثر إما على المعنى و/ أو القيم الجمالية، وتشير هذه النتائج إلى أن استخدام الأسلوب المناسب يؤدي إلى ترجمة سليمة للاستعارة، في حين أن سوء استخدام أساليب الترجمة الذي قد يعود إلى سوء فهم الاستعارات العربية وخصائص الشعر العربي الحديث المتمثلة في وحدت القصيدة واستخدام الرموز، مما يؤدي إلى فقدان المعنى و/ أو القيمة الجمالية في الترجمة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الشعر العربي، الاستعارة، مشكلات الترجمة (الفاقد)، أساليب الترجمة.

Introduction

Literary texts break the standards of grammar, lexis, semantics and phonology of the language through creative deviation in form and meaning (Ghazala, 2013). By employing figurative language, rhythm, and symbolism, they achieve unique aesthetic and emotional effects (Almanna, 2016; Al-Saidi & Khalaf, 2022). Metaphor is a part of literary texts (Farghal & Mansour, 2020) that is used to express an idea by using words which literally refer to another idea or situation (Newmark, 1988). It is used in poetry to help the reader get the meaning of the poem (Ziadi et al., 2022), by using images to make it deeper, and explain many ideas by using minimum number of words (Al-Jurjani, 1991; Atiq, 1985). According to Ziadi et al. (2022), metaphor expresses the ideas and messages in an aesthetic way.

Translating literary texts, which include metaphor, needs to transfer 'the spirit and manner' to make the target text's (TT) expressions natural (Park, 2009). As the aesthetic effect is one of the main characteristics in literary texts, the translator has to translate the meaning with a focus on the stylistic effect in the target language (TL) (Al-Saidi & Khalaf, 2022). Doing this through the translation of metaphor, the translator can establish contact between the author and the reader of the TT (Park, 2009). For translating metaphorical expressions in the ST, the translator needs to understand their metaphorical meaning very well (Mansoor, 2017). However, using wrong words in translating metaphor causes loss of meaning, and produces misunderstood, unnatural and unclear expressions (Al-Masri, 2009; Hudaib, 2022; Larson, 1997). This creates a problem for the TL reader to understand the figurative language (Hassan, 2011).

Additionally, the aesthetic value in literary texts is as important as meaning, especially in poetry. As such the translator of the literary texts has to translate the meaning and maintain their aesthetic value as well (Al-Saidi & Khalaf, 2022; Farghal & Mansour, 2020). Applying appropriate procedures will result in good and acceptable translation for the TT reader (Agung, 2016). This study focuses on the problems (losses) in the English translation of Arabic metaphor in the modern Arabic poem 'To My Mother', the procedures used in the translation and the extent to which the translator has succeeded in translating metaphor using such procedures.

Arabic Poetry

Poetry has challenging features, and uses figurative language, rhyme and rhythm which make it different from other kinds of genre (Lahlali & Abu Hatab, 2014). In poetry, the meaning is set complexly, and it involves the poetic features (Al Salem, 2014). This means that poetry is full of meaning, and it uses imagination and figures of speech, namely metaphor (Lahlali & Abu Hatab, 2014). Moreover, it has meter, rhyme and rhythm (Ghazala, 2013).

Arabic poetry is characterized by its new metaphorical uses that amaze the readers and audiences (El Amin, 2017). Further complicating matters are the linguistic differences between classical and modern Arabic poetry (Al Bataineh & Abuhammam, 2024).

Modern Arabic poetry is different from the previous eras' poems (The pre-Islam classic poetry, the early Islamic Era, the Abassid Era, and the Emirates and States Era) in the form of the poem which has become a prose poem (El Amin, 2017). There are many characteristics of the modern Arabic poetry, Yemeni as well, that make it different from other periods; these characteristics involve the ambiguity, use of symbols, and images not just for beauty but as a part of the poem components, and use of language that is close to the normal life speech (Zumar, 1996).

In addition, one of the characteristics of modern Arabic poetry is the unity of the poem; as such, the image cannot be completely understood alone without understanding the whole poem (Enani, 2000). Modern poetry prioritizes unity and subject matter over rhyme (Al Salem, 2014). This shift emerged as some emigrant poets felt rhyme and meter restricted their emotional expression (El Amin, 2017). Common themes in this period include home and country, death and pain, revolution and resistance, with homesickness receiving particular focus, as exemplified by the Yemeni poet Al-Maqaleh's work (Zumar, 1996).

One of the Modern Arabic poetries that the current study focuses on is 'To My Mother'. The poem was composed by Al-Maqaleh (1986) and translated by Ghanem (1999).

Al-Maqaleh is a prominent modern Yemeni poet. He earned both his Master's and Doctoral degrees in Egypt at Ain Shams University. Upon returning to Yemen, he served as a professor of modern and cultural literature at Faculty

of Arts, Sana'a University, Yemen. In addition to his poetry, Al-Maqaleh was known for his critical and theoretical writings on literature. He won the lutes award (Ghanem, 1999). The translator of the poem, Ghanem, is an engineer, gained his Master in Water Resources Development and a PhD in Economics. As a poet and a translator, Ghanem published seven books of Arabic poetry, and two volumes of English translations of Arabic verse (Ghanem, 1999).

Arabic Metaphor

Arabic metaphor, called 'al-istiarah', is derived from the verb 'أعار', and its literal meaning in English is borrowing (Ziadi et al., 2022). It is a simile between two elements, the borrowed to (al-mosta'ar lah) and the borrowed from (al-mosta'ar menh), and one of its elements is deleted and the other is mentioned (Atiq, 1985). The effectiveness of al-istiarah often lies in unexpected comparisons. The meaning at the surface level does not depend on the similarity between things; for example, in the phrase 'يبتلعه المساء' (The evening swallows him), the human ability to swallow is used for the evening, creating a vivid image beyond the literal meaning (Almanna, 2016).

Arabic metaphor is divided into two types: explicit and implicit (Atiq, 1985). Ghazala (2013) used the terms overt and covert metaphor for explicit and implicit metaphor respectively. Overt metaphor occurs when the borrowed from element (image) is mentioned instead of the borrowed to (Atiq, 1985), and stated clearly (Ghazala, 2013). For example, in the expression 'احذر سيفاً بين فكيك', the metaphor is in the word 'سيفاً' which is used instead of the word 'tongue' (the borrowed). The word 'tongue' was deleted and replaced with the word 'sword' (the borrowed from). Covert metaphor is used when the borrowed from, which is the image, is deleted and replaced with one of its features (Atiq, 1985; Ghazala, 2013). For example, 'ضحك المشيب برأسه', the metaphor is in the simile between the grey hair (borrowed to) and a person (borrowed from). The borrowed from word (human being) was deleted and replaced with the word laughed which is a feature of human being.

Semantic and Pragmatic Perspectives of Metaphor

Metaphor can be identified from two perspectives: semantic and pragmatic; semantically, the meaning of the metaphor is falsity; for example, in the sentence (John is a machine), semantically John is a human and cannot be mapped with a machine, whereas pragmatically, may have the meaning of 'John is hard working' (Farghal & Mansour, 2020). Pragmatic meaning

is the speaker meaning (Hassan, 2011), expressed through metaphorical utterances that convey several indirect messages in the text (Farghal & Mansour, 2020) using flouting maxim of quality; in this, the speaker does not mean what he/ she said lexically; it is understood through communicative inference (Grice as cited in Farghal & Mansour, 2020).

According to Newmark (1988), metaphor has two purposes: referential (cognitive) purpose and pragmatic (aesthetic) purpose. Referential purpose "is to describe a mental process or state, a concept, a person, an object, a quality or an action more comprehensively and concisely than is possible in literal or physical language", and pragmatic purpose "is to appeal to the senses, to interest, to clarify 'graphically', to please, to delight, to surprise" (Newmark, 1988, p. 104).

Translation Problems (Losses)

The translation of metaphors in Arabic literary texts into English may encounter fundamental problems (losses), regarding the loss of meaning and aesthetic values (Hassan, 2014). Al-Masri (2009) identified four types of losses which are categorized into meaning losses (explicit losses and modified losses) and aesthetic value losses (implicit losses and complete losses).

1. Explicit Losses:

Explicit losses refer to the loss of the information at both surface (the verbal sign) and deep (the hidden meaning) levels which affects the meaning and the message of the source text expression and makes the translation unclear and unnatural for the target text reader (Al-Masri, 2009).

2. Modified Losses:

Modified losses are losses caused by a replacement of the source text expression with its equivalent in the target texts, which does not affect the message and the theme; they become serious losses when the source text expression has more implications than its replacement in the target text (Al-Masri, 2009).

3. Implicit Losses:

Implicit losses refer to the loss of text meaning which requires understanding the hidden meaning that the literary text's reader is expected to search for (Bailey as cited in Al-Masri, 2009), and it does not affect the theme or the message, but it causes a serious losing of

pragmatics which means losing metaphor's aesthetic value and the ST's attitude (the implicit value).

4. Complete Losses:

Complete losses refer to deleting the ST's elements in the TT, and they are obvious translation losses (Dickins et al., 2017). They are the result of the complete ignorance and deletion of the linguistic code in the source text. This is a serious loss, a loss of the pragmatic force and the speaker utterance.

Ways of Translating Metaphor

Larson (1997) set several ways to translate metaphor. (1) Metaphor may be kept in translation if it is used and acceptable in the receptor language which keeps the meaning with the metaphorical image; in this case, literal translation does not cause a problem. (2) The metaphorical image could be kept if it is not possible to translate the same metaphor by replacing the metaphor with another metaphor in the receptor language which has the same meaning as the source text metaphor, as long as the metaphor meaning is clearly understood. (3) Metaphor can be translated as a simile by adding the words, like or as, to make the metaphorical image clearer in the target text, because simile is easier to understand. (4) Metaphor can be kept and an explanation for the meaning is added in order not to lose the intended force of metaphor. (5) The meaning of the metaphor may be translated without keeping the metaphorical imagery, which means that sometimes the meaning of the metaphor is translated, and the image of the source text is ignored.

Translation Procedures

This study employed Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) framework which outlines seven translation procedures under two main strategies: Direct translation strategy (i.e., borrowing, calque and literal translation) and oblique translation strategy (i.e., transposition, modulation, equivalence and adaptation).

1. Borrowing:

Borrowing is used to overcome a metalinguistic word such as new technical process, or an unknown concept. It adds the flavor of the ST culture in the translation.

2. Literal Translation:

Literal translation is a word-for-word translation which is a common procedure used for translation between languages from the same family and culture.

3. Calque:

Calque is a type of borrowing in which the translator first borrows the words and then translates them literally one by one; it has two types: lexical and structural. Lexical calque respects TL's syntactic structure. Structural calque introduces a new construction into TT (Alrumayh, 2021).

4. Transposition:

Transposition is to translate with a change in the word class and keep the meaning and message, and it can be two types: obligatory or optional, according to the context of the translation. The obligatory transposition occurs when the translator has to change the word class to make the meaning clear, whereas the optional transposition is found when the translator has the chance to translate the word into the same word class or use transposition.

5. Modulation:

Modulation is to translate with a change in semantics, and it can be either fixed or free; fixed modulation is used when the translator is aware of both SL and TL languages to use the most acceptable expression in the TL, while free modulation is used when modulation is optional.

6. Equivalence or Idiomatic Translation:

In equivalence or idiomatic translation, the situation and meaning are translated using different words and structure and creating an equivalence; it is useful with proverbs and idioms.

7. Adaptation:

In the adaptation procedure, the culture reference of the ST changes into the TT's culture reference.

Previous Studies

Many previous studies have been conducted on the translation of metaphor in literary texts. These studies focused on the translation of metaphor in both English and Arabic literary texts, examining strategies, challenges, and theoretical frameworks.

Translation of Metaphor in English Texts

Several studies were conducted on metaphor translation in literary text by scholars such as Al-Saidi and Khalaf (2022), Park (2009), Hasar and Panahbar (2017), Beke (2022), Chita and Stavrou (2020), and Vakhovska (2021) to explore general principles for maintaining aesthetics, cultural context, and author's intent. The findings revealed that translators often alter metaphorical images, prioritizing meaning over form. Common translation strategies included literal, semantic, free, and faithful translation, with formal, pragmatic, denotative, and connotative equivalence observed. A key finding was that successful metaphor translation requires deep cultural understanding of both source and target texts.

In scientific translation, metaphors often serve informational purposes (Nasser, 2014) with literal translation being the dominant strategy (Ashuja'a et al., 2019). Legal metaphor translation, as examined by Božović (2022), frequently involved omission, while Zheng (2015) highlighted the importance of cognitive, cultural, and contextual factors in business metaphor translation.

Some other studies such as Li (2019), Jianbin (2017), and Hong and Rossi (2021) explored metaphor from cognitive and linguistic perspectives, focusing on metaphor theoretical framework. Relevance theory (Li, 2019) provided a cognitive framework for metaphor understanding, while conceptual metaphor theory (Jianbin, 2017; Mansoor, 2017) emphasized the need for flexible, culturally aware translation approaches, particularly in cross-linguistic contexts like English- Chinese and French- Chinese.

Translation of Metaphor in Arabic Texts

Studies on Arabic metaphor have primarily focused on religious and literary texts. Research on Quranic metaphor (Hamdan, 2019) identified literal translation, paraphrasing, and borrowing as common translation strategies. Meanwhile, Hudaib (2022) examined lexical interference in student translations, revealing challenges in maintaining accuracy.

In literary translation, scholars such as Farghal and Mansour (2020) and Al-Masri (2009) noted cultural losses, semantic discrepancies, and aesthetic compromises in metaphor translation. Strategies such as literal translation and paraphrase were prevalent, but deletions and adaptations sometimes led to reduced cultural fidelity (Al-Masri, 2009). Al-Ansi (2021) reinforced these findings, emphasizing the dominance of literal and paraphrasing techniques.

Statement of the Problem

The translation of Arabic metaphor into English in literary texts, particularly poetry, often results in problems (losses), both in meaning and aesthetic value, which may be due to inadequate translation procedures. While metaphor serves as a crucial literary device that conveys both semantic meaning and artistic effect (Abas et al., 2024; Al-Saidi & Khalaf, 2022; Hong & Rossi, 2021), translators frequently prioritize superficial meaning over aesthetic and pragmatic subtleties, leading to either explicit semantic losses or implicit cultural and stylistic losses (Al-Masri, 2009; Hamdan, 2019; Hudaib, 2022).

Although prior research has examined metaphor translation in Arabic novels and stories (e.g., Farghal & Mansour, 2020), and in poetry between various language pairs such as Arabic to Indonesian (Abas et al., 2024) and Arabic to English (Al Salem, 2014); however, little research has addressed the specific problems (losses) at both semantic and pragmatic levels of translating poetic metaphors and the procedures employed in translation. This study attempts to bridge this gap by seeking answers to these questions: 1. What are the problems (losses) in the English translation of metaphor in the Arabic poem 'To My Mother'; 2. What procedures were used in translating metaphor in the Arabic poem 'To My Mother' into English; and 3. To what extent has the translator succeeded in using those procedures to translate metaphor in the Arabic poem 'To My Mother' into English?

Methodology

Study Design

This research adopted a mixed-method approach which integrates both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. The study examined metaphor translation problems (losses) and the procedures qualitatively through the analysis of the ST and TT metaphors, using a content analysis checklist. To display the extent to which the translator has succeeded in using certain procedures to translate the Arabic metaphor in the poem into English, all the translated metaphors were analyzed quantitatively by means of using the frequency and percentage.

The Corpus of the Study

This case study focuses on a single modern Arabic poem, *To My Mother*, by Al-Maqaleh (1986), and the English translation of the poem by Ghanem (1999). The corpus for this study consists of the original Arabic poem (42

lines), which has 31 metaphors within 22 lines, and their English translations. A thorough analysis of both texts involved identifying all metaphors in the source text and examining their corresponding translations in the target text to assess the accuracy of metaphor translation to identify problems (losses), the procedures followed in the translation and translator's success in employing such translation procedures.

Data Collection Instrument

The study data were gathered through a content analysis checklist developed based on Reiss's (1981) functional text typology, Atiq's (1985) model of analyzing the Arabic metaphors, Larson's (1997) ways of translation, Al-Masri's (2009) types of losses, and Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) model of procedures.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

Validity

In the validation stage, first, the content analysis checklist of the Arabic expressions selected from the ST poem was reviewed by an expert in the field of Arabic language to ensure that these expressions contain metaphors. Based on the validator's comments, modification was made on the selected metaphor expressions. Then the modified checklist was given to seven experts in the field of translation, and applied linguistics to find out whether the checklist would help the researchers identify the type of metaphor, the way of translating Arabic metaphor, the problems (losses) in the translation of metaphors in the TT and the procedures followed in the translation of metaphors. A copy of the ST poem, its translation, the model of the way of translating metaphor, the model of types of translation losses, and the model of the translation procedures followed were attached with the validation letter. Based on the feedback received from validators, necessary modifications were made to improve the checklist.

Reliability

For reliability, five metaphors were purposely chosen by the main researcher (different types of metaphor with different types of losses in the translation of metaphor, and the procedures followed in the translation), and analyzed using certain models: Atiq's (1985) types of metaphor, Larson's (1997) ways of translating metaphor, Al-Masri (2009) types of losses, and Vinay and Darblent's (1995) procedures. To ensure the reliability of the data analysis,

two independent professors were requested to assess the accuracy of the analysis done by the main researcher, then the analysis was approved by the two professors with very limited comments provided by one of them.

Data Analysis Procedures

To systematically analyze the poem and identify metaphor translation problems (losses) and procedures, the study employed the content analysis checklist, based on Reiss's (1981) functional text typology, which views poetry as a highly expressive text that requires preservation of both meaning and aesthetic value in translation. To analyze the Arabic metaphors in the source text, Atiq's (1985) categorization of covert and overt metaphors was employed. This involved identifying the borrowed to and the borrowed from, and the semantic and pragmatic implications of each metaphor. To investigate the translation of the poetic Arabic metaphor in the modern Arabic poem, a line-by-line analysis was employed. To find out the meaning of Arabic and English words and their synonyms, the researchers used 'Dict Box' Dictionary. Larson's (1997) approach to metaphor translation provided a systematic way to identify the way of translating the metaphor to compare the ST and TT and find the differences.

To answer the first research question 'What are the problems (losses) in English translation of metaphor in the Arabic poem 'To My Mother'? the study focused on identifying losses in the TT. Al-Masri's (2009) model of loss (implicit, explicit, modified, and complete) was applied to determine the nature and extent of these losses, whether they affected meaning or aesthetic dimensions.

To address the second research question 'What procedures were used in translating metaphor in the Arabic poem 'To My Mother' into English?', the study employed Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) model of translation procedures (borrowing, literal translation, calque, transposition, modulation, equivalence, and adaptation).

To address the third research question, 'To what extent has the translator succeeded in using the procedures to translate metaphor in the Arabic poem 'To My Mother' into English?', the frequency and percentage are provided for all translated metaphors, the procedures employed, and metaphors that were translated with problems (various types of losses) and those translated with no problems

Findings and Discussion

Findings and Discussion Related to the First Question

The analysis of metaphor in the translation of the poem revealed three types of problems (losses): Explicit, implicit and modified. These losses are presented in Tables (1), (2) and (3).

- Explicit Losses:

Table (1) presents the explicit losses in the translation of metaphor in the Arabic poem 'To My Mother' into English.

Table1: Explicit losses in the translation of metaphors

Line No.	ST	Transliteration	Lit translation	TT by Ghanem (1999)
25	المُشْرِدِينَ	Almusharadeena	the homeless	the wanderers
32	غَرَقَى بِدُمْعِهَا	gharqa be dame'eha	drowning in her tears	drowned in their tears
40	تنهش وجهك الأشواك والصخور	tanhashu wajhaki- la'shuaku wa assukhuru	The thorns and the rocks snap your face	Your face torn by thorns and rocks

Table (1) shows that in the translation of the poem, some metaphors lost their meaning in the TT at the surface (semantic) and deep (pragmatic) levels and have other meanings or became meaningless words. This could be due to ignoring the unity of the poem and translating each metaphor in isolation as in the case of metaphor in lines no 25 (lit: the homeless) and no 32 (lit: drowning in her tears). One of the characteristics of modern Arabic poems is the unity of the poem in which the images as well as the metaphors of the poem are related to each other and cannot be understood in isolation (Zumar, 1996; Enani, 2000). Another reason for the loss of meaning was likely to be the misunderstanding of the line that contains metaphor and the pronoun reference for metaphor as in the case of the translation of metaphor line no 32 (lit: drowning in her tears), while translating metaphor in literary texts needs a solid knowledge and understanding for the metaphor in the text (Park, 2009). Similarly, translating the active sound into passive as in the case of the translation of metaphor line no 40 (lit: The thorns and the rocks snap your face), and showing the result of an image which is not literally true can cause such a loss. Changing the words in the translation causes different mental images (Almanna & Al-Shehari, 2019) and different meaning as in the case of metaphor line no 25.

- Implicit Losses:

Table (2) presents the implicit losses in the translation of metaphor in the Arabic poem 'To My Mother' into English.

Table 2: Implicit losses in the translation of metaphors

Line No.	ST	Transliteration	Lit translation	TT
34	تَتَطْفِي حُزْنًا	tantafi huznan	burn out sadly	blurred by your sadness
34	مَشَاعِلُ النُّجُومِ	masha'ail annojome	the flambeaus of stars	The glow of the stars

The implicit loss is the loss of the aesthetic value and the deep meaning that attract the reader (Al-Masri, 2009). The meaning of the previous metaphors was translated, but the aesthetic value was ignored as in the case of the translation of metaphors shown in Table (2) in line no 34 (lit: burn out sadly; the flambeaus of stars), while there was a chance to keep the aesthetic value with the meaning in the translation of the metaphor (lit: blurred by your sadness) as it was provided by the suggested translation '*sadly put off*'. This way destroys the aesthetic value of the meaning (Hamdan, 2019), while the images in the modern poetries are part of the poem (Zumar, 1996).

- Modified Losses:

Table (3) presents the modified losses in the translation of metaphor in the Arabic poem 'To My Mother' into English.

Table 3: Modified losses in the translation of metaphors

Line No.	ST	Transliteration	Lit translation	TT by Ghanem (1999)
1	يَذْبَحُنِي صَوْتُكَ	yathbahuny sawtuke	Your voice slaughters me	Your voice crushes me
36				Your voice destroys me
2	بَقَايَا النُّورِ	baqaia - annor	remains of the light	remains of light
9	ارْتَحَلَ النَّهَارُ	wartahala annaharu	And the day migrated	The day is gone
14	تَهَشَّمَتْ	tahashamat	It smashed	Broken
17	لِلْعَيُونِ الْغَائِبَةِ	lil oyoni al gha'aibate	the absent eyes	the absent face

Table 3: Continued

Line No.	ST	Transliteration	Lit translation	TT by Ghanem (1999)
18	لِلْبَسَامَاتِ الْغَارِيَةِ	lel basamatel gharebate	For the sunset smiles	For the faraway smiles
28	يُسْرِسِبُ الصَّوْتُ	yusarsibu assawtu	voice trickles	voice flows
29	يُلْقِي سَحَابَةً	yulqi sahabatan	It throws a cloud	Drawing a cloud
31	تَسْتَيْقِظُ الثَّلُوجُ	tastaiquedu atholoju	the snow wakes up	The snows rise
35	شُعْلَةُ الْهُمُومِ	sho'alatul humome	the flame of worries	the flames of woe
42	تَشْرَبُ	tashrabu	Drinks	Swallowing

Table (3) shows that many ST metaphors lost part of their meanings or implicature, but the aesthetic value was kept in the TT. Most of such losses happened because of replacing the ST metaphor word with words in the TT that do not have exactly the same meaning and the same effects while according to Almann and Al-Shehari (2019) changing the semantic word causes losing part of the meaning as in the case of the metaphors lines no 1 (lit: Your voice slaughters me), no 9 (lit: And the day migrated) no 14 (lit: It smashed), no 18 (lit: the absent eyes), no 17 (lit: For the sunset smiles) , no 29 (lit: It throws a cloud), no 31 (lit: the snow wakes up), no 35 (lit: the flame of worries), and no 42(lit: drinks). Another reason for the loss was that the image of the metaphor has a symbol that referred to other meanings in the SL, but did not refer to the same other meanings in the TL. For instance, the metaphor in line no 2 (lit: remains of the light), the word (lit: light) which refers to the happiness and calmness in this line in Arabic does not refer to the same meaning in English. Translating such a word literally caused a modified loss. Besides, the normal language used in the poem and metaphor causes difficulties in understanding them and finding an equivalent in the TL as in the metaphor in line no 28 (lit: voice trickles). According to Zumar (1996), modern Arabic poems are characterized by using symbols and language close to the normal life speech.

Findings and Discussion Related to the Second Research Question

By examining the TT, the specific procedures used to translate metaphors were identified and discussed. The analysis of procedures employed in the translation of metaphors revealed two types of procedures: Literal translation and modulation. These procedures are presented in Tables (4) and (5).

- Literal Translation:

Table (4) presents the first procedure (i.e., literal translation) employed in the translation of metaphor in the Arabic poem 'To My Mother' into English.

Table 4: Literal translation procedure

Line No.	Arabic metaphor	Literal translation	The Translation by Ghanem (1999)	The way of translation	Transfer of metaphor from ST to TT	
					Meaning	Aesthetic value
1	قادما	Coming	Your voice, coming	ST's metaphor was kept	Transferred	Transferred
2	يسلب	It robs	it robs		Transferred	Transferred
2	بقايا النور	remains of the light	The remains of light		Partially transferred	Transferred
3	يمنع السكون	It prevents the calmness	It prevents tranquility		Transferred	Transferred
12	تبكي	is crying	Crying		Transferred	Transferred
19	شواطئ الحياة	beaches of the life	shores of life		Transferred	Transferred
25	قوافل	caravans	Caravans		Transferred	Transferred
28	الصوت الحزين	The sad voice	The melancholy voice		Transferred	Transferred
29	سحابة من الدموع	a cloud of the tears	a cloud of tears		Transferred	Transferred
32	غرقى بدمعها	Drowned in her tears	drowned in their tears		ST's metaphor was replaced	Changed

Table 4: Continued

Line No.	Arabic metaphor	Literal translation	The Translation by Ghanem (1999)	The way of translation	Transfer of metaphor from ST to TT	
					Meaning	Aesthetic value
32	أشعة المنام	The sails of sleep	sails of sleep	ST's metaphor was kept	Transferred	Transferred
36	قادما	coming	Coming		Transferred	Transferred
36	يسحقني	It crushes me	crushes me		Transferred	Transferred
38	ينثرني	It scatters me	It scatters		Transferred	Transferred
42	كئيبية الجدران	the depressed walls	gloomy walls		Transferred	Transferred
42	الدموع والبكاء	drink the tears	tears and cries		Transferred	Transferred

To keep the same metaphor in the translation and transfer the same image using the same words in the TL, literal translation procedure was followed in translating many metaphors. By following this procedure, some of those metaphors as shown in Table (4) were translated successfully such as the metaphors in lines no 1 (lit: coming), no 2 (lit: it robs), no 19 (lit: beaches of the life), no 29 (a cloud of tears), and no 42 (lit: drink the tears). Such metaphors belong to modern Arabic poetries that have creative and new metaphors (El Amin, 2017) which are acceptable in the TT. However, Larson (1997) noted that literal procedure can be used in translating metaphor if its meaning and the image are acceptable in the TT. By following this procedure, a few metaphors have translation problems in transferring the whole meaning, as the case of metaphor in line no 2 (lit: The remains of light), because the metaphor was not acceptable in the TT. Moreover, a few metaphors were translated literally without considering the whole idea of the line and poem as the metaphor in line no 32 (lit: The sails of sleep). This resulted in misunderstood words as translating metaphor literally often makes it misunderstood or has no meaning in the TL, and costs losing the meaning of metaphor (Hudaib, 2022).

- Modulation:

Table (5) presents the second procedure (i.e., modulation) employed in the translation of metaphor in the Arabic poem 'To My Mother' into English.

Table 5: Modulation procedure

Line No.	Arabic metaphor	Literal translation	The Translation by Ghanem (1999)	The way of translation	Transfer of metaphor from ST to TT	
					Meaning	Aesthetic value
1	يذبحني صوتك	Your voice slaughters me	Your voice, crushes me	ST's metaphor was replaced	Partially transferred	Transferred
9	ارتحل النهار	And the day migrated	The day is gone		Partially transferred	Transferred
14	تهشمت	It smashed	Broken		Partially transferred	Transferred
17	للعيون الغائبة	the absent eyes	absent face		Partially transferred	Transferred
18	للبسمة الغاربة	the sunset smiles	faraway smiles		Partially transferred	Transferred
25	المشردين	the homeless	Wanderers		Changed	Was not transferred
28	يسررب الصوت	voice trickles	The melancholy voice flows		Partially transferred	Transferred
29	يلقي سحابة	It throws a cloud	Drawing a cloud		Partially transferred	Transferred
31	تستيقظ الثلوج	the snow wakes up	The snows rise		Partially transferred	Transferred
34	تنطفئ حزنا	burn out sadly	The glow of stars is blurred		ST's metaphor meaning was translated	Transferred
34	مشاعل النجوم	the flambeaus of stars	The glow of stars	Transferred		Was not transferred
35	شعلة الهموم	the flame of worries	the flames of woe	ST's metaphor was replaced	Partially transferred	Transferred
36	يذبحني صوتك	Your voice slaughters me	Destroys		Partially transferred	Transferred
40	تنهش وجهك الاشواك والصخور	The thorns and the rocks snap your face	Your face torn by thorns and rocks		Changed	Was not transferred
42	الجدران تشرب	walls drink	Walls swallowing		Partially transferred	Transferred

Table (5) shows that many metaphors were translated following modulation. With modulation, two ways were followed: a) replacing the ST metaphor's

word with another word in the TT and b) translating the meaning of the ST’s metaphor and ignoring the image in the TT. Following the first way, some of ST’s metaphor meanings were not completely transferred such as metaphors in lines no 1 (lit: Your voice slaughters me), no 9 (lit: And the day migrated), no 14 (lit: It smashed), and no 42 (lit: Walls drink). This way needs to keep the atmosphere of the ST’s metaphor (Hassan, 2014) and use a word with the same meaning in the TL (Farghal & Mansour, 2020). Furthermore, a few metaphors lost their meaning at the surface and deep levels of meaning in the TT, which could be due to the translation of the active sound into passive, showing the result of an image which is not literally true as in the case of metaphor in line no 40 (lit: The thorns and the rocks snap your face). Following the second way, which is translating the meaning, a few metaphors lost their aesthetic value in the TT as in the case of metaphors in line no 34 (lit: burn out sadly) and (lit: the flambeaus of stars).

Findings and Discussion Related to the Third Question

Table 6: Frequency and percentage of translated metaphors and procedures

No.	Procedure	Translation with Problems (Losses)			Translation with no Problems (Losses)		Total		
		Type	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
1	Literal translation	Explicit	1	3.2					
		Implicit	0	0	6.4	14	45.1	16	51.5
		Modified	1	3.2					
2	Modulation	Explicit	2	6.5					
		Implicit	2	6.5	48.5	0	0	15	48.5
		Modified	11	35.5					
Total			17	54.9		14	45.1	31	100%

Table (6) shows that 54.9% of metaphor translations in the poem encountered problems (losses), primarily due to the utilization of two procedures: literal translation (6.4% of losses- 3.2% explicit and 3.2% modified) and modulation (48.5% of losses- 35.5% modified, 6.5% explicit, and 6.5% implicit). In contrast, 45.1% of ST metaphors were translated successfully without loss, all through literal translation, maintaining both meaning and aesthetic value. Overall, 51.5% of metaphors were translated literally (45.1% successful, 6.4% problematic), while following modulation consistently resulted in losses (48.5%), affecting either meaning or aesthetic values.

Using the two translation procedures (literary translation and modulation), the translator has succeeded to some extent in translating the metaphor in the Arabic poem 'To My Mother'. For instance, literal translation was satisfactory in translating (45.1%) of metaphors in the poem, where the metaphor's images are new and not related to a culture, one characteristic of modern Arabic poetry (El Amin, 2017). According to Newmark (2001) when there is an equivalent in the TT, literal translation is the best procedure that can be employed. This procedure assists in maintaining the ST's metaphor meaning and the aesthetic value. However, specific translation procedures can contribute to the loss of meaning and aesthetic value in metaphors (Al Salem, 2014). Literal translation procedure was not acceptable in translating (3.2%) of metaphors with symbols, which refer to other meanings in Arabic, causing a modified loss. Similarly, this procedure was not acceptable in translating (3.2%) of metaphors following word by word translation without understanding the idea of the whole poem and the related ideas of the lines, which caused an explicit loss, while metaphor in literary texts needs to be understood well before translating it (Park, 2009).

In contrast, modulation was not an acceptable procedure in translating metaphor as the words used in the TT do not have the exact meaning or effects, which caused modified losses in (35.5%) of metaphors although the aesthetic value of metaphors was maintained. Other words used in the TT were not synonyms or near synonyms of the ST's metaphor, which caused losing the whole meaning of (6.5%) metaphors. By following the way of translating just the meaning of (6.5%) metaphors have implicit losses.

Conclusions, Implications and Future Research Directions

This study explored the translation problems (losses), procedures employed in translation and the extent to which the translator has succeeded in rendering metaphors from the modern Arabic poem «To My Mother» into English, addressing a gap in research on Arabic poetic metaphor translation. The analysis of data revealed three main types of translation losses (explicit, implicit, and modified) and demonstrated how specific procedures such as literal translation and modulation affect metaphor preservation. While literal translation proved useful for translating metaphors, its effectiveness depended on thorough contextual understanding of the poem. Modulation showed potential for maintaining meaning and aesthetic value when target language equivalents properly conveyed source-text connotations. However,

the study's limitation to a single poem suggests the need for broader research with more extensive corpora to enhance the generalizability of findings.

The findings offer valuable insights for translation practice, particularly highlighting how translators' unfamiliarity with modern Arabic poetry's distinctive features, including symbolic unity and lexical cohesion, can lead to losses. The study highlights that successful metaphor translation requires not only linguistic accuracy but also deep cultural and contextual awareness of both source and target texts to preserve both semantic meaning and aesthetic value. Future research can expand the corpus to include more poetic works, compare traditional and modern Arabic poetry's translation problems, and explore additional literary devices beyond metaphor. This study ultimately emphasizes the complexity of Arabic-English poetic translation and advocates for more specific, culturally sensitive approaches to bridge linguistic and artistic gaps in literary translation.

Authors' Contributions

DS developed the introduction and literature review. DS and WMAA developed the problem statement, and research objectives, as well as designed the research methodology. DS collected and analyzed the data. Both authors contributed to the interpretation of the results, highlighted the conclusions and recommendations, and read and approved the final manuscript.

AI Assistance Disclosure

The authors used DeepSeek for paraphrasing and editing portions of the introduction, literature review and conclusion. The AI was used solely for improving text fluency, clarity, and academic tone. All ideas, interpretations, data analysis, and conclusions remain the authors' responsibility.

References

- Abas, A. S., Ahmad, L. T., & Mu'izzuddin, M. (2024). Analysis of Arabic translation in Mahmoud Darwis poetry: Personification and metaphor. *Al-Ittijah: Jurnal Keilmuan dan Kependidikan Bahasa Arab*, 16(2), 94-108. <https://doi.org/10.32678/alittijah.v16i2.10316>
- Agung, I. (2016). Translation procedures in translating religious terms. *Linguistika*, 23(45), 197-206.
- Al Bataineh, K. B., & Abuhammam, E. A. (2024). The treatment of nature in the classical and modern Arabic poetry: A stylistic study. *Kurdish Studies*, 12(2), 2082-2092.

- Al Salem, M. (2014). *The translation of metaphor from Arabic to English in selected poems of Mahmoud Darwish with a focus on linguistic issues* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Leeds, Leeds].
- Al-Ansi, R. (2021). *Analysis of stylistic devices in the English translation of the hostage by Zaid Mutee Dammaj* [Master's thesis, Yemen Academy for Graduate Studies, Sana'a].
- Al-Jurjani, A. (1991). *Asrar al-Balagha* [Rhetoric's secrets]. Jeddah, Saudi Arabia / Cairo, Egypt: Dar al-Madani li-l-Nashr.
- Almanna, A. (2016). *The Routledge course in translation annotation*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Almanna, A., & Al-Shehari, K. (2019). *The Arabic-English translator as photographer: A linguistic account*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Al-Maqaleh, A. A. (1986). *Diwan Abdulaziz Al-Maqaleh* [The collected poems of Abdulaziz Al-Maqaleh]. Beirut: Dar al-Awda.
- Al-Masri, H. (2009). Translation and cultural equivalence: A study of translation losses in Arabic literary texts. *Journal of Universal Language*, 10(1), 7-44. <https://doi.org/10.22425/jul.2009.10.1.7>
- Alrumayh, A. (2021). *Translation strategies and procedures of in-flight magazines of Gulf airlines* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Leeds, Leeds].
- Al-Saidi, A. H., & Khalaf, A. S. (2022). Investigating the aesthetic effect in the Arabic translations of Gibran's the prophet. *International Journal of Asia Pacific Studies*, 18(1), 125–149. <https://doi.org/10.21315/ijaps2022.18.1.6>
- Ashuja'a, A. A., Almatari, S. M., & Alward, A. S. (2019). Exploring strategies of translating metaphor from English into Arabic with reference to scientific texts. *International Journal of Comparative Literature & Translation Studies*, 7(3), 26-38. <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijclts.v.7n.3p.26>
- Atiq, A. A. (1985). *Alam al-ma'ani* [The world of meanings]. Beirut: Dar al-Nahda al-Arabiya.
- Beke, M. K. T. (2022). *The Indonesian translation of figurative language in Funke's Inkheart: A study of equivalence and strategies* [Master's thesis, Universitas Sanata Dharma, Yogyakarta].
- Božović, P. (2022). How are metaphors rendered in legal translation? A corpus-based study of the European Court of Human Rights judgments. *The Journal of Specialised Translation*, (38), 277–297. <https://doi.org/10.26034/cm.jostrans.2022.092>
- Chita, A. & Stavrou, C. (2020). The metaphor in literature and the effect on translation. *Nordic Journal of English Studies*, 19(S2), 117-142. <https://doi.org/10.35360/njes.562>

- Dickins, J., Hervey, S., & Higgins, I. (2017). *Thinking Arabic translation a course in translation method: Arabic to English* (2nd ed.). London and New York: Routledge.
- El Amin, M. (2017). Conceptual metaphors of love in 'Happy New Year' —a poem by Suad Al Sabah. *US-China Foreign Language*, 15(9), 582-592.
- Enani, M. (2000). *Fan Al tarjamah [Translation Art]* (5th ed.). Egypt: Longman.
- Farghal, M., & Mansour, R. (2020). Translating Arabic metaphorical expressions into English: Mahfouz's morning and evening talk as an example. *International Journal of Arabic-English Studies*, 20(1), 105-124. <https://doi.org/10.33806/ijaes2000.20.1.6>
- Ghanem, S. M. A. (1999). *Modern poetry from the land of Sheba*. UAE: Ministry of Information and Culture
- Ghazala, H. S. (2013). *A textbook of literary translation*. Jeddah, Saudi Arabia: Konooz Al-Marifa Company for Printing and Publishing.
- Hamdan, M. I. (2019). Translating Quranic metaphor into English. *Journal of Language Studies*, 2(3), 79–97. <https://doi.org/10.25130/jls.2.3.5>
- Hasar, R. V., Panahbar, E. (2017). Metaphor in translation: cognitive perspectives on Omar Khayyam's poetry as rendered into English and Kurdish. *Acta Linguistica Asiatica*, 7(2), 19–36. <https://doi.org/10.4312/ala.7.2.19-36>
- Hassan, B. A. (2011). *Literary translation: Aspects of pragmatic meaning*. Newcastle upon Tyne, England: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Hassan, B. A. (2014). *Between English and Arabic: A practical course in translation*. Newcastle upon Tyne, England: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Hong, W., & Rossi, C. (2021). The cognitive turn in metaphor translation studies: A critical overview. *Journal of Translation Studies*, 5(2) 83-115.
- Hudaib, A. (2022). *Lexical interference problems that undergraduate students majoring in English encounter when translating Arabic texts into English* [Master's thesis, Middle East University: Amman].
- Jianbin, C. (2017). The research between cognitive linguistics and metaphor translation. In X. Wang & L. Zhu (Eds.), *International Conference on Literature, Linguistics and Arts (ICLLA 2017)* (pp. 5–9). Francis Academic Press.
- Lahlali, E. & Abu Hatab, W. (2014). *Advanced English-Arabic Translation: A practical guide*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780748677962>
- Larson, M. (1997). *Meaning-based translation: A guide to cross language equivalence* (2nd ed.). New York: University Press of America.

- Li, X. (2019). Research on metaphor translation from the perspective of relevance theory. In X. Zhu (Ed.), *International Linguistics, Education and Literature Conference (ILELC 2019)* (pp. 193–196). Francis Academic Press.
- Mansoor, K. (2017). The concept of metaphor in the English-Arabic translation. *Professional Communication and Translation Studies*, (10), 155-162. <https://doi.org/10.59168/PJIT8991>
- Nasser, L. A. (2014). The translation of English scientific metaphorical expressions into Arabic. *Adab Al-Rafidayn Journal*, 70, 25-42. <https://doi.org/10.33899/radab.1970.163385>
- Newmark, P. (1988). *A textbook of translation*. New York: Prentice Hall.
- Newmark, P. (2001). *Approaches to translation*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- Park, O. (2009). The issue of metaphor in literary translation: Focusing on the analysis of a short story translation. *Journal of Language & Translation*, 10(1), 155-175. <https://doi.org/10.22425/jul.2009.10.1.155>
- Reiss, K. (1981). Type, kind and individuality of text: Decision making in translation. *Poetics Today*, 2(4), 121-131. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1772491>
- Vakhovska, O. (2021). Subjectivity in metaphor translation: a case for Russian translation of English metaphors of depressive emotions. *Cognition, Communication, Discourse*, (23), 99-117. <https://doi.org/10.26565/2218-2926-2021-23-07>
- Vinay, J. P., & Darbelnet, J. (1995). *Comparative stylistics of French and English: A methodology for translation* (Vol. 11). Amsterdam / Philadelphia: John Benjamin's Publishing
- Zheng, J. (2015). Translation of metaphors in business English from a cognitive perspective. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 5(2), 132-138. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v5n2p132>
- Ziadi, A., Dib, M., & Baghli, A. (2022). A contrastive study of English and Arabic metaphor in Emily Dickinson's and Sulimane Djuadi's poems. *Semiotics Journal*, 17(2), 1030-1042.
- Zumar, A. Q. (1996). *Zawahir uslubiyah fi al-shi'r al-hadith fi al-Yaman* [Stylistic phenomena in modern poetry in Yemen]. Sana'a: Wizarat al-Thaqafah wa-al-Siyahah.