ENGLISH AND ARMENIAN BIBLICAL PROVERBS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF CONTRASTIVE STYLISTICS

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This paper attempts to present an in-depth analysis of the translation strategies adopted for biblical proverbs with the aim of highlighting the similarities and dissimilarities of source and target languages.

Keywords: Bible, biblical proverbs, contrastive study, stylistic devices, equivalence, contrastive stylistics.

The Bible is widely recognized as the “Greatest Book” ever written. It is one of the richest and inexhaustible sources of outstanding proverbs. Originating in ancient times, biblical proverbs have accompanied people in their immemorial existence, enriching and enhancing their imaginative thinking as well as the national language. Accordingly, studying biblical proverbs in English and Armenian is remarkable not only on the basis of linguistic significance – as they form an integral part of world literary heritage – but also on the basis of discovering the language habits, religion, and culture behind the contrasted languages.

The Book of Proverbs is one of the Wisdom Books of Hebrew Scripture, and it is stated at the beginning of the book that the primary purpose of proverbs is to teach people to be wise and live a godly life through the fear of the Lord. It is noteworthy that the phrase “the fear of the Lord” is the focal point of the topic, and each line in the book breathes this message, emphasizing the mission of the proverbs. Indeed, wisdom comes in many forms, including proverbs and figurative language. In spite of different patterning, each expression is a gift – a gift embroidered with God’s wisdom.

Archer Taylor, a renowned paremiologist, wrote a concise seminal work entitled *The Proverb*, in which he states that only “an incommunicable quality tells us this sentence is proverbial and that one is not” [4, p. 156]. A biblical

English and Armenian translations replicate the same situation as in the original with relevant structures. In terms of translation techniques, fits nicely concretization, transferring the pronoun “themselves” into a phrase “իբր անձը.”

The message of the proverb signifies that Christians should not focus on leadership but rather accept the spirit of Jesus and live in harmony and peace.

Ellipsis or gapping – It refers to the omission of a technically required lexical element in the second part of the binary structure. The word or phrase can be omitted without losing the sense of the sentence since the missing part is implicitly understood from the initial element. On the general level, two types of ellipsis are frequently used in biblical proverbs: nominal ellipsis and verbal ellipsis. *Nominal* ellipsis typically involves an omission of a noun headword. *Verbal* one concerns ellipsis within the verbal group [2, p. 231]. This device is to be found in a number of biblical proverbs containing parallel structures as can be seen in the following example:

- “*A wise child loves discipline, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.*” [1, Pr 13:1]
«*Խելացի որդին հնազանդ է հորը, բայց անհնազանդ որդին կորստեան պիտի մատնուի:*» [5, Առակ 13:1]

In the above example, “a scoffer” is an elliptical nominal group. It is an elliptical noun phrase as the word “scoffer” presents an omission of noun headword. In the English version, the subject “child” is present in the first part of the sentence, whilst it is absent, yet tacitly understood, in the subsequent conjoin. It is noteworthy to mention that in the Armenian translation, the word “child” is paraphrased as “որդի” in the second independent clause of the proverb. The emergence of the noun “որդի” in Armenian translation is of great significance. This noun has acquired a value of a term over time. In ancient times it was mainly used as a word of neutral gender implying both masculine and feminine genders (son/daughter). This tradition passed on from generation to generation; so this approach is still relevant and is commonly used throughout the Bible. The word “որդի” became a term in the 5th century; beyond contextual usage, it means “son” (2.someone who replaces the son, 3.descendants, generation). It is astoundingly interesting that the noun “որդի” makes 46 derivatives: որդեակ, բարիորդութիւն, որդեցիք, քեռորդի, etc. [6, p. 74]. This word (with its derivative “որդեակ”) is found in the Bible for more than 3000 times.

Apart from this, the verbal negation in the English analytical construction (“does not listen”) is transferred derivationally (morphologically) with the negative prefix “ան-un” in the adjective “անհնազանդ”. Such kinds of markers are usually referred to as instances of “morphological negation,” specifically “prefixal negation” in the given sentence.

- “The ox knows its owner and the donkey its master’s crib.” [1, Isaiah 1:3]
«Եզր իր տիրոջն է ճանաչում, եւ էշը իր տիրոջ մուրրը:» [5, Եսայի 1:3]

The given verse highlights an example of verbal ellipses. English and Armenian translations can be considered equivalents as the verb “know – ճանաչել” is omitted in the subsequent part of both sentences but it is still implicitly suggested. It is worth mentioning that in Armenian fully or partially omitted predicate is always compensated with a punctuation mark (`,`), corresponding to the English colon (:).

The verse claims that people should highly appreciate what God has done for them sacrificing his Son.

Repetition – As a syntactical stylistic device repetition is a recurrence of the same word, word combination, or phrase two and more times. According to the place occupied in a sentence/utterance, repetition is classified into several types [2, pp. 211-215]:

Anaphora – Repetition of the same word or a whole phrase at the beginning of two or more successive sentences. The function of anaphora is not only to emphasize the repeated unit but also to make the nonrepeated part foregrounded:

- “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven... Blessed are those who mourn... Blessed are the meek...” [1, Matt 5:3-11]
«Երանի՛ հոգով աղքատներին, որովհետեւ նրանցն է երկնքի արքայութիւնը: Երանի՛ սգավորներին,... Երանի՛ հեղերին...» [5, Մատթ. 5:3-11]

The repeated construction of the given verse is “blessed are...,” the Armenian equivalent of which here is «Երանի՛». Obviously, these phrases are not completely equivalent but the Armenian lexical unit “Երանի՛” implying shades of subjunctive mood makes the utterance much closer to the target receptor. The transformation of indicative mood into subjunctive consequently yields to the change of word arrangement in the native language that goes in harmony with the inversion of word order in the source language; nominal part of compound nominal predicate stands in preposition to the linking verb due to emphatic stress (to be blessed - blessed are...), letting alone the

postposition of the subject in relation to the predicate. A “handful” use of the device helps to achieve a stylistic effect. The emphasis also embroiders the sentence with rhyme.

The message of the given proverb is that God blesses those who rejoice in God’s Kingdom and purify their hearts. People’s hearts should be plain and tranquil enough to embrace the reign of God.

Anadiplosis – The end of one clause (sentence) is repeated at the beginning of the following one:

- “*So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own.*” [1, Matt 6:34]

«Այսուհետեւ հոգ մի՛ արե՛ք վաղընայ մասին, որովհետեւ վաղընայ օրը իր մասին կը հոգայ:» [5, Մատթ. 6:34]

The anadiplosis found in the English version (“tomorrow”) is preserved in the Armenian translation which ensures maximum transmission of meaning and function of the English verse. These words of Jesus imply that excessive anxiety cannot improve people’s life. When people trust in God, they do not need to be unduly worried about the coming day. In such cases, Armenians who consider God as a mediator and regulator of worldly life usually say: «Լույսը կբացվի, բարին էլ՝ հետը:» (The morning light will bring good.), «Առաջ Աստված:» (God ahead of us).

Epanalepsis – In this figure of speech the beginning of a clause or sentence is respectively repeated at the end of that same clause or sentence as illustrated in the following verse:

- “*The good person out of the good treasure of the heart produces good, and the evil person out of evil treasure produces evil; for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks.*” [1, Luke 6:45]

«Բարի մարդը իր սրտի բարի զանձերից բարին է բխեցնում, իսկ չար մարդը՝ չարն է բխեցնում. որովհետեւ սրտի աւելցուկից է, որ խօսում է նրա բերանը:» [5, Ղկ 6:45]

The repetition of the successive clauses with slightly different wording encodes the message “what it is like to be a good and evil person.”

This proverb points out the principles of distinguishing good from wicked. One can discern whether a person is good or evil from the intentions of his/her speech.

Actually, this device often benefits from having different wording, as the slight change can make it feel more natural. It is worth mentioning that the

stylistic effect provided by epanalepsis is effectively intensified by the use of antithetic parallelism (meaning contrasted or opposite parallel).

Even though the “out of evil treasure” part is missing in the Armenian translation, it is still considered a case of epanalepsis as the key phrases are preserved.

Polyptoton – Repetition of the same word with the same meaning, but in different forms:

- “Do not judge, so that you may not be judged.” [1, Matt 7:1]

«Մի՛ դատէք, որ Աստուծոյ չդատուէք:» [5, Մատթ. 7:1]

In this proverb, the polyptoton is used in the form of active and passive verbs to designate the realization of a single action by one and to the other. It brings strong emphasis to the subject under discussion. The wordings of the sentence are tied together in such a way that they denote the same reciprocal relationship. In the Armenian translation, the performer of the action is added for concretization (Աստուծոյ – by God). This proverb commonly circulates in daily speech of both English and Armenian speakers with slight variations: “Do not judge, or you too will be judged.”- «Մի՛ դատիր, որ չդատվես»:

2. In addition to the above-adduced syntactical parallel constructions, other types of expressive means and stylistic devices can be found in the Bible:

Climax or gradation – A figure of speech in which the homogeneous parts of a sentence are arranged in ascending order which secures a gradual increase in significance or emotional tension in the utterance [2, p. 219], as in:

- “But one is tempted by one’s own desire, being lured and enticed by it; then, when that desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and that sin, when it is fully grown, gives birth to death.” [1, James 1:14-15]

«Իրաքանչիւր յորձուով է՝ հրապուրուելով եւ խաբուելով իր ցանկութիւններից: Այնուհետեւ ցանկութիւնը, յղանալով, մեղք է ծնում, եւ մեղքը, հասունանալով, մահ է ծնում:» [5, Յակոբ 1:14-15]

The successive unit of both English and Armenian translations is recognized as more powerful than the previous one (“it gives birth to sin; gives birth to death” – «մեղք է ծնում, մահ է ծնում»). The gradual increase in significance is maintained logically. The logical climax is based on the relative importance of the constituent parts considered from the standpoint of the concepts manifested in them. The verse consists of parallel constructions with lexical repetition (“gives birth to - ծնում է”). Apart from this, the English verse is fragmented in Armenian, being translated as two independent sentences.

Due to the use of climax, the verse is endowed with impressiveness and dynamism.

Simile – One of the most common literary devices used throughout the Bible, particularly in the book of Proverbs. It is a statement that demonstrates similarities between two things or people. Simile is often confused with an ordinary comparison. Comparison “weighs” two objects belonging to one class of things to establish the degree of their resemblance or difference. Simile is a type of metaphor that compares seemingly unrelated things typically using the words “like” or “as” [2, p. 167]. Simile excludes all the properties of the given objects except one which is common to them, as illustrated in the below-adduced proverb:

- “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver.” [1, Pr 25:11]
«Պատշաճ ստուած իմաստուն խօսքերը նման են սարդիկնոյ շարուած ոսկի խնձորի:» [5, Առակ 25:11]

The simile takes natural phenomenon that everyone recognizes as good (“a word fitly spoken - պատշաճ ստուած իմաստուն խօսքերը”) then gives a spiritual judgment based on wisdom (apples of gold in a setting of silver - սարդիկնոյ շարուած ոսկի խնձորի). English and Armenian versions with quite similar wording are equivalent in meaning but diverge in particular features (such as the word “silver” is translated as «սարդիկն»- “carnelian”). It is of urgent necessity to mention that in the seventeenth century, an Armenian writer wrote that in India the *lal* or *balas* — ruby would dispel all dark emotions and create cheerful ones instead. The carnelian was powdered and drank in a potion for this purpose. Carnelian was also thought to provide the wearer with protection from any injury from falling houses or walls. This writer stated that “no man who wore a carnelian was ever found in a collapsed house or beneath a fallen wall” [7].

The proverb reveals how vital it is to select the right time to speak. Golden apples are beautiful indeed. But in “a setting of silver” they become even more opulent and valuable. In the same way, a suitable time chosen to speak can make the speech more pleasant and influential. Both in English and Armenian, sayings and phrases related to the concept of “gold” are rife. The Armenian folk counterpart-phrase of the given proverb sounds more concise: «ոսկի խոսքեր.»

Litotes – A lexico-syntactical stylistic device which joins two negations to provide a positive evaluation or assertion. The distinctiveness of litotes lies in its typical “double negative” formula and in its function to express only a

positive sentiment [2, p. 246]. The following proverb perfectly reflects the use of litotes:

- *“For God is not unjust; he will not overlook your work and the love that you showed for his sake.”* [1, Heb 6:10]

«Անարդար չէ Աստուած, որ մոռանայ ձեր գործերը եւ սէրը, որ ցույց տուեցիք իր անունով:» [5, Եբր 6:10]

The underlined litotes in source and target languages are structurally adequate: verbal negation with negative particles (“not – չէ”) is intertwined with derivative prefixes (“un-աւն”). But it should be pointed out that the English version comprises another syntactic negation being rendered into mother tongue not verbally but lexically; the verb “մոռանալ” inherits a shade of negative meaning despite the absence of any negative marker. As can be seen, Armenian and English versions are structurally dissimilar with different lexical units. From this perspective, the Armenian translation is much closer to the original Hebrew sentence, which, if translated literally into English, will sound as follows: “Not for unjust (is) God to forget the work of you and the love that you have shown toward the name of Him.”

This device here functions as a way to affirm God’s positive trait: righteousness, as opposed to humans.

Hyperbole – A figure of speech that creates an emphatic effect through exaggeration or overstatement [2, p. 176]. This device is of frequent occurrence both in the Old and the New Testaments:

- *“If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life maimed or lame than to have two hands or two feet and to be thrown into the eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into the hell of fire.”* [1, Matt 18:8-9]

«Եթէ քո ձեռքը կամ ոտքը քեզ գայթակդեցնում է, կտրի՛ր այն եւ դէ՛ն գցիր քեզնից. լաւ է, որ դու մէկ ձեռքով կամ կաղ մտնես կեանք, քան երկու ձեռք ու երկու ոտք ունենաս եւ յաւիտենական կրակի մէջ ընկնես: Եւ եթէ քո աչքն է գայթակդեցնում քեզ, հանի՛ր այն եւ դէ՛ն գցիր քեզնից. լաւ է, որ դու միականի մտնես կեանք, քան երկու աչք ունենաս եւ ընկնես գեհենի կրակը:» [5, Մատթ. 18:8-9]

The hyperbole used in these statements operates in several ways. Firstly, exaggerating some actions, it draws the reader’s attention. Secondly, it causes the reader to reflect on the true intentions of Jesus’ words. Of course, Jesus’

illustrations of “cutting off a hand/foot or tearing out an eye” should not be taken literally; He accentuates the importance of salvation. The emphasis is on removing temptation and avoiding sin at all costs. People usually tend to excuse their sins, that is why the hyperbole here plays a key role to sharpen the reader’s ability to make a logical assessment. Consideration must be given to significantly diverse verbs used in English and Armenian translations: to stumble (to trip) – զայթակղեցնել (to tempt). These verbs are used to convey the meaning of the verb “to sin” which actually can be found in the original Hebrew version of this proverb.

Metonymy – A literary device in which an object or idea is replaced with something related to it instead of stating what is literally meant. It is important to emphasize that a relation between ideas or objects is based not on identification or resemblance, but on some other kinds of association connecting the two concepts [2, pp. 144-145]. The following example will best illustrate the essence of this definition:

- *“Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue lasts only a moment.” [1, Pr 12:19]*

«Ճշմարտախոս շուրթերը հավերժ հաստատ կմնան, քայց ստախոս լեզուն միայն մի վայրկեան կտևէ»: [5, Առակ 12:19]

There are two metonyms here – lips and tongue. These metonyms are used in language-in-action, i.e. they are contextual or genuine ones; they represent one of the most common types of metonyms (a concrete thing used instead of an abstract notion). In this case, they become symbols of substituted notions.

The phrase “truthful lips” portrays a man who always speaks the truth. “A lying tongue” characterizes a person who often uses his tongue to tell lies. The proverb implies that God guards those who speak only the truth. Under His blessing, they will endure evermore. And the verdict of God will definitely show how short-term the glory of the “lying tongue” is. Both the English and Armenians frequently use a saying which perfectly illustrates the message of the given proverb: “a lie has short legs” – «ստի ոտքը կարճ է».

It can be inferred from the above-mentioned that the Bible is flooded with various types of parallelism and pervasive use of figures of speech that make the biblical proverbial genre poetically and rhetorically crafted.

To sum up, it can be stated that the translation of biblical proverbs is tricky posing many difficulties. They are translated for different cultures, for

different readers. So, the translator should fill the aesthetic gap between the two cultures and convey their original unique architecture.

The proverb is an art of national cognition. From this perspective, the contrastive study offers invaluable repertoires of translation equivalence. English and Armenian versions of biblical proverbs are mainly considered as cases of dynamic and partial equivalence.

Rendering the biblical proverbs, translators have applied a multitude of options available for translation, among which various types of transformations predominate. However, any choice portrays the translator as an agent of cultural modification and change. Although in the majority of cases English and Armenian translations do not match, the stylistic value of proverbs is well-preserved and the pragmatic aspect is compensated by substituting some foreign concepts with culturally relevant ones. Quite many parallel proverbial units of biblical origin differ in grammatical structure, or semantic characteristics, expressed in a familiar and understandable pattern specific to national identity, the way of thinking, cultural norms, and assumptions. This is due to linguistic reasons (different language systems), and extralinguistic ones (intercultural differences). Conversely, numerous proverbs of biblical origin find their semantic equivalence beyond biblical frames — in a number of other phraseological units that commonly circulate in the daily speech of Armenian (in some cases English) speakers.

Hence, the Holy Bible has made a strong influence on the languages and maintained its trace in the Armenian and English phraseologies. In general, Armenian shows a slightly more intensive use of Holy Scripture than English which, apparently, is connected with cultural and historical reasons.

**ԱՆԳԼԵՐԵՆ ԵՎ ՀԱՅԵՐԵՆ ԱՍՏՎԱԾԱՇՆՉՅԱՆ ԱՌԱԾՆԵՐԸ
ԶՈՒԳԱԴՐԱԿԱՆ ՈՃԱԳԻՏՈՒԹՅԱՆ ԴԻՏԱՆԿՅՈՒՆԻՑ
Հովհաննիսյան Ա. Ս., Պապոյան Մ. Մ.**

Սույն հոդվածի շրջանակներում փորձ է արվում աստվածաշնչյան առածների թարգմանական ռազմավարությունների խորքային վերլուծությամբ ուրվագծել սկզբնաղբյուր և թիրախ լեզուների ընդհանրությունները և տարբերությունները:

Բանալի բառեր. Աստվածաշունչ, աստվածաշնչյան առածներ, զուգադրական քննություն, ոճական հնարներ, համարժեքություն, զուգադրական ոճագիտություն:

АНГЛИЙСКИЕ И АРМЯНСКИЕ БИБЛЕЙСКИЕ ПОСЛОВИЦЫ НА ОСНОВЕ КОНТРАСТИВНОЙ СТИЛИСТИКИ

Оганесян А. С., Папоян М. М.

В данной статье делается попытка определить стратегии перевода библейских пословиц с целью выявления общих и отличительных характеристик двух сопоставляемых языков.

Ключевые слова: Библия, библейские пословицы, контрастивный анализ, стилистические приёмы, эквивалентность, контрастивная стилистика.

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