

Abstract 12

Translating Concrete Poems

Jayamal de Silva

Assistant Lecturer, Department of Linguistics, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka

jayamaldesilva91@gmail.com

Poems are not merely things that are read but also things that are seen. The visual appearance of a poem is given more attention than that of a prose and quite rightly poets tend to get more use of it. A type of poetry in which the visual appearance, mainly the shape plays a significant role is concrete or shape poems where the words are arranged on the page in a way that mimics or reinforces the poem's meaning. This study is an examination on the translation of concrete poems. Concrete poems translated by the students reading Translation Methods at the University of Kelaniya have been used as the primary sources. The content of the original has been maintained in all the translations selected for the study, depicting that it is the most easily translated and the most important element of a concrete poem. As far as the formal elements are concerned, shape is adjudged the most significant element of a concrete poem since its meaning is mostly conveyed through it, than through other elements. This appears to be the stand point of the most of the translators as well since the shape of the original is maintained in most of the translations and other formal elements notably the rhyming scheme (where available) has been sacrificed in the attempt of reproducing the content of the original in the target language. The general opinion that the formal elements of a poem are usually sacrificed for the sake of the content remains valid here with the reason for sacrificing the rhyming scheme (where available) being the emphasis on the content. However, sacrificing the shape which is also a formal element has been preferred only rarely. Thus, translating the content of the original along with its shape is identified as the most preferred way of translating a concrete poem.

Key words: content, formal elements, sacrificing, shape, visuality