



Strategies Used in Translating Similes and Metaphors from English into Thai in  
*The Merchant of Venice*

กลยุทธ์ที่ใช้ในการแปลอุปมาและอุปลักษณ์จากภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาไทยในพระราชนิพนธ์แปล  
เรื่อง *เวนิสวานิช*

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**Abstract**

This study aimed to examine the strategies used in translating English similes and metaphors in William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* into the Thai version named *Venice Vanich* by H.M. King Rama VI. There were 56 similes and 81 metaphors extracted from the source text and compared with those in the translation text. To analyze data, the notions of translation strategies of simile proposed by Pierini (2007) and translation strategies of metaphor proposed by Newmark (1981) were employed as the frameworks. Types of strategy used for each simile and metaphor were determined. Then, frequency of the use of each strategy was numerated. According to the findings, in the translation of similes, literal translation is the most frequently used strategy. However, there is no use of replacement of the vehicle with gloss. Apart from those proposed by Pierini (2007), there is another applicable strategy found in this research: translation of simile by metaphor. For the metaphors, all seven strategies proposed by Newmark (1981) are applied while translation of metaphor by simile is the most frequently used strategy. This study can be useful for those who are interested in literary translation as well as scholars and researchers in the field of translation studies.

**Keywords:** Translation strategies, Simile, Metaphor, The Merchant of Venice

**บทคัดย่อ**

งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาการใช้กลยุทธ์ที่ใช้ในการแปลอุปมาและอุปลักษณ์จากภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาไทยในพระราชนิพนธ์แปลในพระบาทสมเด็จพระมงกุฎเกล้าเจ้าอยู่หัวเรื่อง *เวนิสวานิช* ซึ่งแปลจาก *The Merchant of Venice* ของวิลเลียม เชกสเปียร์ โดยคัดกรองอุปมาจำนวน 56 ตัวอย่างและอุปลักษณ์จำนวน 81 ตัวอย่างจากต้นฉบับและนำมาเปรียบเทียบกับฉบับแปล โดยใช้แนวคิดกลวิธีการแปลอุปมาที่เสนอโดย Pierini (2007) และกลวิธีการแปลอุปลักษณ์ที่เสนอโดย Newmark (1981) เป็นกรอบในการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูล ผู้วิจัยระบุประเภทของกลยุทธ์ที่ใช้แปลอุปมาและอุปลักษณ์แต่ละตัวอย่าง แล้วจึงนับค่าความถี่ของการใช้กลยุทธ์แต่ละกลยุทธ์ จากผลการวิจัยพบว่า กลยุทธ์ที่ใช้มากที่สุดในการแปลอุปมาคือการแปลตรงตัว ส่วนกลยุทธ์ที่ไม่มีการใช้เลยได้แก่ การแทนที่สิ่งทีนำมาเปรียบด้วยคำอธิบาย อย่างไรก็ตาม ยังมีอีกหนึ่งกลยุทธ์ที่พบในวิจัยชิ้นนี้นอกเหนือจากที่ Pierini (2007) เสนอไว้ นั่นคือ การแปลอุปมาด้วยอุปลักษณ์ สำหรับการแปลอุปลักษณ์พบว่าผู้แปลใช้กลยุทธ์ทั้ง 7 กลยุทธ์ที่ Newmark (1981) เสนอไว้ โดยกลยุทธ์ที่ใช้มากที่สุดคือการแปลอุปลักษณ์ด้วยอุปมา งานวิจัยนี้จะประโยชน์กับผู้สนใจการแปลวรรณกรรม ตลอดจนนักวิชาการและนักวิจัยด้านการแปล

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## Introduction

Translation plays an important role in transferring one language and culture to another. Among translation studies, literature is, perhaps, more complex and challenging to translate than other text-types (Hariyanto, n.d.) because literary works usually contain an abundance of connotation meaning and figurative devices. Figures of speech are used to make the language more vivid and artistic. Dahayee (2012, p. 168) stated that figures of speech are forms of language frequently used in literature by writers or poets to create aesthetic effects to the audiences and make them understand some concepts more clearly. Two important figures of speech used in almost every language and frequently found in common conversation and various text-types are simile and metaphor. In particular, these two figures of speech are widely used by writers and poets in their literary works to demonstrate the creativity of the writer and the beauty of the language itself.

Simile and metaphor are always discussed together since both of them are figurative devices used to make comparison. However, they are used differently. In English, similes are “words or phrases that compare something to something else, using the word *like* or *as*” (Hornby, 2007, p. 1422) while metaphors are “words or phrases used to describe somebody/something else, in a way that is different from its normal use, in order to show that the two things have the same qualities” (Hornby, 2007, p. 963). From the aspect of translation, if the vehicles being compared are similar in the two languages, similes or metaphors are easy to translate. However, metaphors and similes can create problems for translators when the vehicles/images in a source language (SL) are different from those in another target language (TL) or relate to culturally specific words. This can create challenges for translators. They need to find effective options to convey understandable meanings for target receptors.

This study mainly focuses on analyzing the translation strategies used in translating the similes and metaphors expressed in the play *The Merchant of Venice* by William Shakespeare into Thai. *The Merchant of Venice* and its Thai translation, namely *Venice Vanich* by H.M. King Rama VI, were chosen as the materials for analyzing the translation of the selected figures of speech because of the linguistic values of both the source language and the target language texts, the trustworthiness of the writer and the translator, as well as the adequacy of data to be analyzed.

This leads to answering the research question: what strategies are applied by the translator in translating similes and metaphors from English into Thai in *The Merchant of Venice*? To the best of my knowledge, there has been no research that specifically studies the Thai translation of similes and metaphors in *The Merchant of Venice*, one of the most valuable pieces of literature written by Shakespeare who is one of the greatest playwrights in the world. Moreover, its Thai translated version called *Venice Vanich* by H.M. King Rama VI, who had high literary competence and intelligence, is considered one of the pioneer pieces of translation in Thailand. Studying an old translation piece of literary works helps us understand thoughts of people in the past and how the way of thinking has changed. Also, this is a way of learning and disseminating English culture and perspectives hidden in figurative language to Thai people. Furthermore, this study can serve as guidance for translators in translating simile and metaphor in literary works and other types of text.

## Objectives of the Study

To examine the strategies used in translating similes and metaphors from English into Thai in the play *The Merchant of Venice*.



## Methodology

### 1. Materials of the Study

Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* and its Thai translation namely *Venice Vanich* made up the materials of the present study. An electronic version of *The Merchants of Venice* consisting of five acts and twenty scenes was chosen as the original text, and the Thai translation named *Venice Vanich* by H.M. King Rama VI was employed as the target text.

### 2. Procedures of the Study

To carry out this research, the following steps were taken. First, to collect the relevant data, the entire original source text of *The Merchant of Venice* was read thoroughly to extract similes and metaphors. To extract the similes, the researcher observed phrases, clauses, or sentences in the source text to see if there were comparison markers, based on the list of comparison markers proposed by Pierini (2007, p. 27-28) as shown in Table 1. To be more precise, the components of simile, including topics, vehicles, and points of similarity, were identified. For example, in the line 'The crow doth sing as sweetly as **the lark**', there are the comparison marker 'as', the topic 'the crow', the vehicle 'the lark', and point of similarity 'sweetly' indicated. The metaphors were collected based on the model of syntactic construction for identifying the topic of metaphors proposed by Goatly (2011, p. 215) as shown in Table 2. The components of metaphor, including topics, images, and, if any, points of similarity, were identified. For example, the sentence 'Our house is **hell**' is in a copula construction in which the topic 'our house' and the image 'hell' are linked with the verb 'be'.

**Table 1** Simile Comparison Markers

Types of comparison marker	Examples of simile markers
Verbs	<i>seem like, look like, act like, sound like, resemble, remind</i>
Adjectives	<i>similar to, the same as</i>
Nouns	<i>a sort of, some kind of</i>
Preposition (in comparative phrases)	<i>like, as</i>
Conjunction (in comparative clauses)	<i>as if/though, as when</i>
N-like adjectives	<i>native-like proficiency</i>
N-shape adjectives	<i>an L-shaped room</i>
N-style	<i>Star Trek-style command seat</i>
N-type adjectives	<i>terrorist-type offences</i>
N+N	<i>bow tie</i>

**Table 2** Syntactic Construction for Identifying the Topic of Metaphors

Syntactic Construction	Example
Copula	<u>The eye</u> was a <b>raindrop</b>
Apposition	<u>The eye</u> , a <b>raindrop</b>
Genitive	<b>The raindrop</b> of <u>an eye</u>
Noun pre-modifier	The <b>raindrop</b> <u>eye</u>
Compounds	The <u>eye-raindrop</u>
Blends	The <u>reyendrop</u>

**Source:** Goatly (2011, p. 215)

**Note:** Goatly uses the underlined words or phrases for the topic, and the bolded for the vehicle.

Then, to answer the research question, the types of strategy used for each simile and metaphor were determined based on the notions of translation strategies of simile as proposed by Pierini (2007, p. 31) and the list of translation strategies of metaphor proposed by Newmark (1981, pp. 88-91) respectively. In case of having other strategies used by the translator which were not mentioned by Pierini and Newmark, those strategies were identified too. Pierini's (2007, p. 31) six translation strategies of similes and Newmark's (1981, pp. 88-91) seven translation strategies of metaphors are listed below.

**Table 3** Lists of Translation Strategy of Similes and Metaphors

Perini's Translation Strategies of Similes	Newmark's Translation Strategies of Metaphors
1) Literal translation (retention of the same vehicle)	1) Reproducing the same image in the TL
2) Replacement of the vehicle with a different vehicle	2) Replacing the image in the SL with a standard TL image
3) Reduction of the simile, if idiomatic, to its sense	3) Translation of metaphor by simile
4) Retention of the same vehicle plus explicitation of similarity feature(s)	4) Translation of metaphor by simile plus sense
5) Replacement of the vehicle with a gloss	5) Conversion of metaphor to sense
6) Omission of the simile	6) Deletion
	7) Translation of metaphor by the same metaphor combined with sense

## Research Findings

### 1. Translation Strategies of Similes

The analysis shows that among the six strategies proposed by Pierini (2007, p. 31) the translator used five strategies, except replacement of the vehicle with a gloss (S5). Apart from those proposed by Pierini, translation of simile by metaphor (S7) was found in this research and added to the framework. The frequency of translation strategies of similes in *The Merchant of Venice* was tabulated in Table 4.

**Table 4** Frequency of Translation Strategies of Similes

Translation Strategies	Number of similes	Percentage (%)
Literal translation (retention of the same vehicle) (S1)	26	46.43
Replacement of the vehicle with a different vehicle (S2)	10	17.86
Reduction of the simile, if idiomatic, to its sense (S3)	9	16.07
Retention of the same vehicle plus explicitation of similarity feature(s) (S4)	5	8.93
Replacement of the vehicle with a gloss (S5)	0	0
Omission of the simile (S6)	4	7.14
Translating simile by metaphor (S7)*	2	3.57
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100</b>

As indicated in Table 4, literal translation (retention of the same vehicle) (S1) is the strategy used most by the translator with a percentage of 46.43%. Ranked the second-most used strategy, replacement of the vehicle with a different vehicle in the TL (S2) was applied in 10 similes with a



percentage of 17.86%. In addition, reduction of the simile, if idiomatic, to its sense (S3) is the strategy used in 9 similes with a percentage of 16.07%. In addition, retention of the same vehicle plus explicitation of similarity feature(s) (S4) and omission of simile (S6) were used occasionally with a percentage of 8.93% and 7.14% respectively. Furthermore, there is another strategy found in this research: translating simile by metaphor (S7). There are 2 out of 56 similes with a percentage of 3.57% treated using this strategy. However, none of the similes was treated by retention of simile with a gloss (S5).

The following example illustrates the use of literal translation (retention of the same vehicle) (S1) which is the most frequently used by the translator to translate similes.

SL: Some that will evermore peep through their eyes

And laugh like parrots at a bag-piper

TL: บางคนมีแต่สนุกทุกคืนวัน

หัวเราะขันเหมือนนกแก้วแจ้วๆ ไป;

This simile is translated literally because the vehicles are retained in the TL. The comparison marker ‘like’ is translated as ‘เหมือน’ in the TL, and the vehicle ‘parrots’ is translated as ‘นกแก้ว’ (parrot) which retains the same image as in the SL.

## 2. Translation Strategies of Metaphors

Based on Newmark’s (1981, p. 88-91) list of seven strategies to translate metaphors, The analysis shows that all seven strategies were used. The frequency of translation strategies of the metaphors in *The Merchant of Venice* was tabulated below.

**Table 5** Frequency of Translation Strategies of Metaphors

Translation Strategies	Number of Metaphors	Percentage (%)
Reproducing the same image in the TL (M1)	20	24.69
Replacing the image in the SL with a standard TL image (M2)	4	4.94
Translation of metaphor by simile (M3)	26	32.10
Translation of metaphor by simile plus sense (M4)	6	7.41
Conversion of metaphor to sense (M5)	16	19.75
Deletion (M6)	5	6.17
Translation of metaphor by the same metaphor combined with sense (M7)	4	4.94
<b>Total</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>100</b>

The data shows that the strategy used most by the translator is translation of metaphor by simile (M3) with a percentage of 32.10%. The lesser most frequently used strategy is reproducing the same image in the TL (M1) with a percentage of 24.69%. Not much less than M1, 16 out of 81 metaphors were treated using conversion of metaphor to sense (M5) with a percentage of 19.75%. Meanwhile, 6 metaphors were translated by simile plus sense (S4) with a percentage of 7.41%. Other 5 metaphors were translated by deletion (M6) with a percentage of 6.17%. The two least-used strategies were replacing the image in the SL with a standard TL image (M2) and translation of metaphor by the same metaphor combined with sense (M7), with a percentage of 4.94% each.



The following example illustrates the use of translation of metaphor by simile (M3) which is the most frequently used by the translator.

- SL: Marry, God forbid! the boy was the very staff of my age, my very prop.  
TL: โอ๊ย! อนิจจา! เด็กคนนั้นมันเป็นเหมือนไม้เท้าของข้าเจ้า, เป็นเครื่องค้ำจุนเที่ยวขอรับ,

In this dialogue, Gobbo talks about his son, Launcelot, and compares him to ‘the staff’ which means “a long stick used as a support when walking or climbing” (Hornby, 2007, p. 1488). The metaphor ‘the boy was the very staff of my age’ is translated as ‘เด็กคนนั้นมันเป็นเหมือนไม้เท้าของข้าเจ้า’ (the boy is **like** my staff). The comparison marker ‘เหมือน’ is added in the TL. Therefore, the metaphor is translated by converting to a simile.

### Discussion

The findings show that among the six strategies proposed by Pierini to translate simile, the strategy used most by the translator is literal translation (retention of the same vehicle) (S1). This is in accordance with the previous studies conducted by Sripodoke (2014, p. 119) and Shamsaefard et al. (2013, p. 167) though they analyze different source texts and different pairs of language. This finding indicates that the translator tried to retain the form and meaning of the similes as much as possible. A possible factor influencing literal translation is that most of the vehicles in the SL are common and universal, not too culturally specific; Thai readers can understand them easily.

The translator also translated similes using other strategies which are more flexible and free than literal translation (S1). Ten similes were translated by replacement with a different vehicle in the TL (S2). The following example shows the translation of simile using S2.

- SL: The motions of his spirit are dull as night  
And his affections dark as Erebus:  
TL: มโนหนักมืดมัวเหมือนราตรี,  
และดวงใจย่อมดำสกปรกราวนรก:

In this simile, the vehicle in the SL is replaced by a different vehicle in the TL. The vehicle ‘Erebus’ is translated as นรก (hell). This indicating that some vehicles in the SL similes are too culturally specific and unknown by the TL readers. The translator tried to find other vehicles better known and familiar to Thais, affecting non-equivalence. This also shows that the English and Thai languages have some distinctive differences in terms of environments and worldviews. Thus, this generates difficulties in interpretation of similes.

In addition, reduction of the simile, if idiomatic, to its sense (S3) is the strategy used in 9 similes. This shows that the translator tried to make the similes more understandable to readers and generated naturalness in the target text. Besides, retention of the same vehicle plus explicitation of similarity feature(s) (S4) and omission of simile (S6) were used occasionally. This indicates that adding too many explanations may interrupt readers while omitting too many similes may reduce the aesthetic quality of the source text, which should not be happened in translation.

Another strategy newly found in this research was translating simile by metaphor (S7) since Pierini (2007) did not include this strategy in her model. The translator changed the simile into a copula construction without the use of a comparison marker. A few similes were treated using this strategy. This indicates that simile and metaphor can be used interchangeably, but comparative figurative sense still remains. This finding is in line with Zohdi & Saeedi (2011, p. 1130) as they found that some similes in Omar Khayyam’s quatrains were translated from Persian to English by using a metaphor. Also, this finding



is further than what Shamsaeefard et al. (2013, p. 166) found in their study conducted to examine the strategies used in four Persian translations of similes in *Hamlet*. Apart from those strategies proposed by Pierini, Shamsaeefard et al. (2013, p. 166) found some strategies applied by the translators such as changing the simile to a declarative sentence, conveying the sense of the simile, changing the simile to an adjective, and changing the simile to a noun phrase, which were categorized in Other. This shows that some other strategies may be applied to translate similes. The strategy of translation of simile by metaphor found in this research can help fulfill Pierini's model to be more comprehensive and efficient for translation of similes from English into Thai.

However, neither of the similes was treated by retention of simile with a gloss (S5). The translator may have considered that a gloss would interrupt the text and found it inapplicable for the play, so he avoided using this strategy. This is in line with the notion regarding translation of drama noted by Newmark, stating that a drama translator has to respect the source text: "he cannot gloss, explain puns or ambiguities, or cultural references, nor transcribe words for the sake of local color" (Newmark, 1988, p. 172).

For metaphors, the findings show that among the seven strategies for translating metaphors proposed by Newmark (1981, p. 88-91), the strategy used most by the translator is translation of metaphor by simile (M3). This indicates that the translator tried to make the comparison between two different things more clearly understood. This also proves that simile and metaphor can be used interchangeably. In addition, translating metaphors using similes from English into Thai shows a great resourcefulness of the translator and a plenty of comparison markers in the Thai language that facilitate the translator to have many options to deal with the translation of metaphors.

The second-most frequently used strategy is reproducing the same image in the TL (M1) as shown in the following example.

SL: if thou be Launcelot, thou art mine own flesh and blood.

TL: และถ้านายเป็นลานซล็อตลาก็ ข้าเจ้าสบถได้ทีเดียวว่าเป็นเลือดเนื้อของข้า

In this metaphor, the image 'mine own flesh and blood' is translated as เลือดเนื้อของข้าเอง (my own flesh and blood) which retains the same image as that in the SL. This illustrates that the translator tried to render the image with respect to the SL. This also reveals that the English and Thai languages share some universal concepts in common.

Not much less than M1, 16 out of 81 metaphors were treated using conversion of metaphor to sense (M5), showing that many culture-specific concepts unknown by Thai readers were applied in the SL and they were made more understandable by the translator. This indicates that acceptability of readership was emphasized by the translator. This is in line with a part of the findings in the research carried out by Yanbo (2011, p. 43), who studied the translations of metaphors from Chinese into English in Qian Zhongshu's *Fortress Besieged* by Jeanne Kelly and Nathan K. Mao, noting that the main factors influencing the translator's decision on his use of translation strategies are the purpose of translation and acceptability of readership.

However, there are two little-used strategies: replacing the image in the SL with a standard TL image (M2) and translation of metaphor by the same metaphor combined with sense (M7). There were just 4 metaphors treated using M2, indicating that some images of the SL could not quite convey the meaning successfully into Thai, and the translator tried to find images that seem more familiar to Thai readers. Other 4 metaphors were translated by M7. This shows that adding some explanation to the TL text may interrupt the story, and due to the text being a play, it should not be tediously written. This is



also because the translator intended to translate the play in the form of a Thai octa meter poem. Thus, there is a limitation to the number of syllables in each line which should contain eight or nine syllables.

The researcher expects this study to be useful for those interested in plays translation, translation scholars and researchers in the field of translation studies. Translators can benefit from this research as it provides them guidance in dealing with simile and metaphor. In addition, scholars and researchers can benefit from the results of this research as it reveals the strategies adopted by the translator in translating simile and metaphor and generates an effective model for further research on the translation of simile and metaphor in other literary texts as well as other text-types.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysis shows that there are six strategies applied in translating similes: five strategies as proposed by Pierini (2007, p. 31) including literal translation (retention of the same vehicle) (S1); replacement of the vehicle with a different vehicle (S2); reduction of the simile, if idiomatic, to its sense (S3); retention of the same vehicle plus explicitation of similarity feature(s) (S4), and; omission of the simile (S6), plus one potential strategy found in this research which is translation of simile by metaphor (S7). The most frequently used strategy is S1 where 26 out of 56 similes in the SL used universal concepts as the vehicles that can be easily understood, interpreted, and transferred into Thai. However, none of the similes in this research was translated by replacement of vehicle with gloss (S5). In addition, the translator used all seven strategies as proposed by Newmark (1981, p. 88-91) in translating metaphors, including reproducing the same image in the TL (M1); replacing the image in the SL with a standard TL image (M2); translation of metaphor by simile (M3); translation of metaphor by simile plus sense (M4); conversion of metaphor to sense (M5); deletion (M6), and; translation of metaphor by the same metaphor combined with sense (M7). M3 is the most frequently used by the translator where 26 of 81 metaphors were translated by simile to make the comparisons in the figurative expressions more explicitly recognizable and understood by TL readers.

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