# A Sound Symbolic Study of Translation of Onomatopoeia in Children's Literature: The Case of " Tintin"

**Mehdi Zolfagharian [1] , Alireza Ameri [2]***
[1] Faculty of Persian Literature and Foreign Languages Islamic Azad University South Tehran Branch
[2] Faculty of Persian Literature and Foreign Languages Islamic Azad University South Tehran Branch

## Abstract

As onomatopoeic words or expressions are attractive, the users of languages in the fields of religion, literature, music, education, linguistics, trade, and so forth wish to utilize them in their utterances. They are more effective and imaginative than the simple words. Onomatopoeic words or expressions attach us to the real nature and to our inner senses. This study aims at familiarity with onomatopoeia, its translation, and usage by bringing pure studies on onomatopoeia into practice, and drawing a map of verbal onomatopoeic utterances in the nature more objectively. It also wishes to pave the way in future for providing onomatopoeic dictionaries and other reference books. To do so, it has primarily followed a library research by which the researcher gathered information through legitimate references and heuristically and qualitatively analyzed it. The pertinent instrumentation comprised in content analysis of Tintin's story books in English language, and first and second translations in Persian language each in four volumes via Hinton et al.'s model of sound symbolism, semi-structured interview, and inter-rated coding with 10 readers and a publisher. Data analysis shows that Persian translations of onomatopoeias are phonetically and culturally adaptable to the original texts.

**Keywords:** Onomatopoeia; Sound symbolism; Interjection; Culture; Children's literature.

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

There are a lot of fields in the human life which have utilized onomatopoeic words or expressions such as religion, literature- novels, poetry, drama-, music, education, linguistics, and so forth:

### 1.1.1 Onomatopoeia in religion

Seyyedi and Akhlaghi, in their study of onomatopoeia in Qur'an, found that "among 114Surahs and 77701 words, there are just 9 onomatopoeic words in Qur'an" (Seyyedi, H. and Akhlaghi, E. 2013, p. 1).

### 1.1.2 Onomatopoeia in literature

Poets try to create and utilize new onomatopoeia to make their poems more attractive. Novelists write onomatopoeic novels to introduce fantasy through tangible world as in Harry Potter written by Joanne Kathleen Rowling. So do the authors of comic strips as Herget in 'Adventures of Tintin'.

*Corresponding Author's Email:
a_ameri@azad.ac.ir

### 1.1.3 Onomatopoeia in music

This study aims to show the importance of "a kind of music education which develops harmoniously both listening and performance" (Somigli, P. 2009, p. 1). Musicians mimic onomatopoeic sounds by using their musical instruments such as the sounds of birds, animals, humans, and inanimate sources (Masui, T. 2002, p. 1).

### 1.1.4 Onomatopoeia in education

"This suggests that sound symbolism can facilitate word learning regardless of the language the children are learning." ( Kantartzis, K. et al. 2008, p. 1).

### 1.1.5 Onomatopoeia in linguistics

There are onomatopoeic words, expressions, or interjections which speak of our inner sense to understand the nature of nature. "There are a number of expressions in Swedish and other languages, which describes the songs of different birds (Abelin, A. 2011, p. 1).

### 1.2 Statement of the problem

The real problem prompting this research has been absence of an in-depth appreciation of onomatopoeia by readers, translators, and even researcher as an indispensable element of the texts that require bona fide consideration. Whether there is an inner awareness of understanding onomatopoeic words and expressions among Persian speakers, there are few studies on awareness of onomatopoeia. There is less knowledge on differences and similarities of onomatopoeic words between languages especially Persian and English ones from translation point of view. Sometimes translators omit translation of onomatopoeic words, or merge them into a sentence; by which they destroy the nuances of the original language.

### 1.3 Purpose of the study

This study aims at familiarity with onomatopoeia, its translation, and its usage. It also wishes to pave the way in future for providing onomatopoeic dictionaries and other reference books. It also aims to bring pure studies on onomatopoeia into practice, and draw a map of verbal onomatopoeic utterances in the nature more objectively. It is supposed that there is a relation between form and meaning; the question is whether the same relation holds true in the target text, too? If so, Hinton, et al.'s model will be useful in translation of onomatopoeia.

### 1.4 Significance of the study

More knowledge on onomatopoeic words and phrases will result in more understanding. In fact, by onomatopoeia, one can touch the nature audio-visually. Onomatopoeia may be presumed as the origin of every speakers' language expressively, emotionally, and imitatively.

The analyses in this study can provide a basis for writing dictionaries: monolingual in English, Persian or other languages; bilingual in Persian-English, English-Persian, or other languages.

### 1.5 Research questions

The following questions have been addressed by this study:

1. How does culture affect the translation of onomatopoeia phonetically in children's literature?
2. How does culture affect the translation of onomatopoeia morphographically in children's literature?
3. Is Hinton, et al.'s a comprehensive model for translation of onomatopoeia?

### 1.6 Limitations and delimitations of the study

**1.6.1 Limitations**: There are no specific sources on onomatopoeia, such as dictionaries or academic studies on onomatopoeia in Persian language, or bilingually. This study could not enjoy a language laboratory for onomatopoeic experiments. Otherwise, the research would have taken another route. Furthermore, there was no exact rule for selecting the interjectional onomatopoeic words from long lists of interjection.

**1.6.2 Delimitations**: The researcher has digressed limitation by choosing "The adventures

of Tin Tin", because, a) "Tintin" story books are full of onomatopoeic words, expression, and onomatopoeic representative pictures, etc. b) Translation series of "Adventures of Tintin" are widely available among Persian language readers.

### 2.1 Review of the related literature
### 2.1.1 Typology of sound symbolism
Typology of sound symbolism based on Hinton et al. is as follows:

Sound symbolism as defined by Hinton et al. (2004), is explained in four categories. Each of the categories has a definition and a certain applying field. They are defined as follows:
Corporeal sound symbolism: "Corporeal sound symbolism is defined as the use of certain sounds or intonation patterns to express the internal state of the speaker, emotional or physical" .
Imitative sound symbolism: "This category consists of onomatopoeic words and phrases that view environmental sounds such as baby crying or buzzing of bees.

Synesthetic sound symbolism: "Synesthetic sound symbolism can be defined as acoustic symbolization of non-acoustic phenomena, through which some specificity of vowels, consonants, and super –segments, size, shape, color, etc…are in consideration."

"In synesthetic sound symbolism the non-arbitrary relations between sound and meaning to sight, taste, smell, and touch as onomatopoeic views are in the way. "(Hinton et al. 2004, p. 4).

### 2.1.2 Tintin studies
Apriadi as the thesis researcher confirms that the translator reduces the existing meaning, or adds a new meaning in the target text (Apriadi, M. C. 2013, p. xiv). Similarity of this research in view of omission or addition to the present research is in omitting or giving no translation or adding translation where, there were no original words or phrases. In chapter four the researcher has been offered this result.

Putri's research is a descriptive research as the present research. The finding of this study shows two kinds of Phrasal Verbs in The Adventures of

Tintin, Cigars of the Pharaoh: 8.7%using separable Phrasal Verbs and 91.7% inseparable Phrasal Verbs (Putri, A. S. 2013, p. 1).

### 3. Methodology
### 3.1 Participants / Source materials
### 3.1.1 Participants
There have been two interviews: First, an interview with a general publisher and second, 15 interviews with readers.

### 3.1.2 Source materials
Tintin's story books in English language– Tintin in America; Cigars of the Pharaoh; The Blue Lotus; and The Shooting Star - 4 volumes (source books)

Tintin's story books in Persian language– Jedal ba Tabahkaran; Cigarha-ye Ferown; Nilufar-e Abi; and Setareh-ye Asrar Amiz 4 volumes (new translation)
Tintin's story books in Persian language – Tantan dar Am(e)rika; Cigarha-ye-Ferown; Ghol-e-Abi; and Setareh-ye-Asrar Amiz- 4 volumes (old translation)

### 3.2 Instrumentation
In this study, instrumentation comprised in content analysis via Hinton et al.'s model, inter-rater analysis, and semi- structured interview with readers and a publisher.

### 3.3  Procedure
In this study, onomatopoeic words were listed as: 1. Onomatopoeaic words and expressions in English. 2. Persian equivalent from first translation. 3. Persian equivalent from second translation. 4. Definition from Oxford Advanced Lerner's Dictionary of English. 5. Definition from Farhang Moaser Millennium English –Persian Dictionary.

Afterwards, each word was given a comment through four categories of Hinton et al.'s model. From translation perspective, each entry of onomatopoeia is taken into consideration whether it is in non-correspondence, partial-correspondence, or complete-correspondence with the target text. After that, each of these categories were analyzed. This approach illumi-

nates how many onomatopoeic words are translated based on Hinton et al.'s four categories. Also, it reveals which of the categories is more useful and tangible for conveying the form and meaning in translation of onomatopoeic words.

### 3.4 Design

This study primarily followed a library research by which the researcher gathered information through references and heuristically and qualitatively analyzed through codification based on content analysis of the original and translated texts; which later described through simple statistics.

### 3.5 Data analysis

As this study is a qualitative research the data have been qualitatively analyzed. Although in some cases there have been quantities, they would reflect just numerical views not statistical ones.

### 3.6 Ethical considerations

In this study the name of participants as interviewers and some other information would be protected confidentially.

## 4. Results and discussion
### 4.1 Numerical results

Various cases of onomatopoeia have been phonetically and culturally analyzed. These calculations or analyses, though in approximation, are shown as follows and could answer the questions:

> 1. How does culture affect the translation of onomatopoeia phonetically in children's literature?

66 out of 83 equal % 79.51. So, % 79.51 of new translations are phonetically adapted to the original text.

76 out of 83 equal % 91.56. So, % 91.56 of new translations are culturally adapted to the original text.

66 out of 83 equal % 79.51. So, % 79.51 of old translations are phonetically adapted to the original text.

74 out of 83 equal % 89.15. So, % 89.15 of old translations are culturally adapted to the original text.

2. How does culture affect the translation of onomatopoeia morph-o-graphically in children's literature? (By morph-o-graphically we mean transcription of onomatopoeia in the target language and it results from the culture.)

% 91.56 of new translations is culturally adapted to the original text.

% 89.15 of old translations are culturally adapted to the original text.

3. Is Hinton, et al.'s a comprehensive model for translation of onomatopoeia?

% 87.03 of new translations are adapted to the original text.

% 91.25 of new translations are adapted to the original text.

% 94.44 of old translations are adapted to the original text.

% 92.50 of old translations are adapted to the original text.

Onomatopoeias from viewpoint of synesthetic and conventional sound symbolism have been analyzed. These calculations or analyses, though in approximation, are shown as follows:

From viewpoint of synesthetic sound symbolism 47 out of 83 equal % 56.62. So % 56.62 of new translations are adapted to the original text.
From viewpoint of conventional sound symbolism73 out of 83 equal % 87.95. So % 87.95 of new translations are adapted to the original text.
From viewpoint of synesthetic sound symbolism51 out of 83 equal % 61.44. So % 61.44 of old translations are adapted to the original text.
From viewpoint of conventional sound symbolism 74 out of 83 equal % 89.15. So % 89.15 of old translations are adapted to the original text.

### 4.2 Discussion

It is obvious that Tintin series were written before Hinton et al's model in 1994. The first translations were done before Hinton et al's model in 1994, too. Only the new translations were released after 1994. If writing and translating used Hinton et al's model, they were sensible in writing and more adaptable in translating versions. The fore-mentioned data were based on the total number of onomatopoeic cases i.e. 83; but if the one

considers synesthetic sound symbolism or conventional sound symbolism in writing itself, it would be lesser than the total number.

### 4.2.1 Answering questions and conclusion

The questions below have been addressed by this study as follows:

1. How does culture affect the translation of onomatopoeia *phonetically* in children's literature?

These calculations or analysis, though in approximation, are shown as followings:

% 79.51 of new translations are phonetically adapted to the original text.

% 91.56 of new translations are culturally adapted to the original text.

% 79.51 of old translations are phonetically adapted to the original text.

% 89.15 of old translations are culturally adapted to the original text.

2. How does culture affect the translation of onomatopoeia *morph-o-graphically* in children's literature?

By morph-o-graphically we mean transcription of onomatopoeia in the target language. When transcription adjusts to the original form the culture adapts it. Then cultural adaptation shows transcription *morph-o-graphically* adaptation, too.

% 91.56 of new translations are culturally adapted to the original text.

% 89.15 of old translations are culturally adapted to the original text.

3. Is Hinton, et al.'s a comprehensive model for translation of onomatopoeia?

The following calculations reveal the positive answer:

From viewpoint of synesthetic sound symbolism47 out of 54 equal % 87.03. So % 87.03 of new translations are adapted to the original text.

From viewpoint of conventional sound symbolism73 out of 80 equal % 91.25. So % 91.25 of new translations are adapted to the original text.

From viewpoint of synesthetic sound symbolism51 out of 54 equal % 94.44. So % 94.44 of old translations are adapted to the original

text. From viewpoint of conventional sound symbolism 74 out of 80 equal % 92.50. So % 92.50 of old translations are adapted to the original text.

### 5.1 Implications
### 5.1.1 Theoretical implications

Synesthetic and conventional sound symbolism are not independent categories but the researcher assumed they are features that were used as spot light on onomatopoeias, to give more information than the onomatopoeias themselves provide.

It is obvious that Tintin series were written before Hinton et al's model in 1994. The first translations were done before Hinton et al's model in 1994, too. Just the new translations were done after 1994. If writing and translating used Hinton et al's model, they were sensible in writing and more adaptable in translating versions.

### 5.1.2 Pedagogical implications

The name of "Tintin" itself is onomatopoeic, in researcher's view. Because, it is recursive, i.e. 'tin' is repeated two times; besides, it represents the sound of beating a drum or stamps of soldiers while they march or every other sounds like that.

### 5.2 Suggestions for further research

Some titles are proposed by the researcher as the subjects for future researches, they are as followings:

5.4.1 Interjection could be researched as the title of this research:

5.4.2 Interjection could be researched as the title of this research: but with other case study.

5.4.3 Children's literature vocabulary could be researched as the title of this research:

5.4.5 It would be better if any researcher study on initial two or three- letter clusters of: 1. Interjection; 2. Onomatopoeia; 3. Children's literature vocabulary according to the conventional sound symbolism and etymology or linguistics.

## References

Abelin, A.(2011), **"*Imitation of bird song in folk-lore – onomatopoeia or not?"*** Department of Philosophy, Linguistics and Theory of science, University of Gothenburg.

Apriadi, M. C. (2013), *"Loss and Gain in Tintin Comic Translation: Land of Black Gold"*, Faculty of Humanities Dian Nuswantoro University Semarang.

Haghshenas, A. M. et al, (2003),*"Farhang Moaser Millennium English –Persian Dictionary"*, Tehran: Farhang Moaser Publishers.

Hergé, (1353), *"Dastani as Majarahza-ye Tantan va Milo: Setareh-ye- Asrar Amiz"*, Iran: Entesharat-e Universal.

Hergé, (1354), *"Dastani as Majaraha-ye Tantan va Milo: Tantan dar Am(e)rika"*, Iran: Entesharat-e Universal.

Hergé, (1384), *"Majara-ha-ye Tantan Khabarnegar-e Javan: Cigarha-ye-Ferown"*, Iran: Nashr-e Rayehe-ye Andisheh & Moassese-ye Entesharat-e Ghadyani.

Hergé, (1385), *"Majara-ha-ye Tantan Khabarnegar-e Javan: Jedal ba Tabahkaran (Tantan dar Am(e)rika)"*, Iran: Nashr-e Rayehe-ye Andisheh & Moassese-ye Entesharat-e Ghadyani.

Hergé, (1384), *"Majara-ha-ye Tantan Khabarnegar-e Javan: Nilufar-e-Abi"*, Iran: Nashr-e Rayehe-ye Andisheh & Moassese-ye Entesharat-e Ghadyani.

Hergé, (1384), *"Majara-ha-ye Tantan Khabarnegar-e Javan: Setareh-ye- Asrar Amiz"* (Shahab Sangh)", Iran: Nashr-e Rayehe-ye Andisheh & Moassese-ye Entesharat-e Ghadyani.

Hergé, (----), *" Majaraha-ye Tantan va Milo: Cigarha-ye-Ferown "*, Iran: Entesharat-e Venus.

Hergé, (----), *" Majaraha-ye Tantan va Milo: Ghol-e-Abi "*, Iran: Entesharat-e Venus.

Hergé, (2003), *"The Adventures of Tintin: Cigars of the Pharaoh"* Boston/Newyork/ Torento/London: Little, Brown and Company.

Hergé, (2003), *"The Adventures of Tintin: The Blue Lotus* /London: Little, Brown and Company.

Hergé, (2003), *"The Adventures of Tintin: The Shooting Star"* Boston/New york/Toronto /London: Little, Brown and Company.

Hergé, (2003), *"The Adventures of Tintin: Tintin in America"* Boston/New york/Torento/ London: Little, Brown and Company.

Hinton, L., Nichols, J. & Ohala, J.J. (2004). "*Sound symbolism*", New York: Cambridge university press.

Hornby, A. S. (2010), *"Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of current English"* London: Oxford University Press.

Kantartzis K. et. al. (2008), "*Japanese sound symbolism facilitates word learning in English speaking children"*, Birmingham: University of Birmingham.

Masui, T. (2002), *"Music Composition by Onomatopoeia"* Shinagawa, Japan: Song Computer Science Laboratories Inc.

Putri, A. S. (2013), *"Translation of Phrasal Verbs in Herge's Tintin Books: The Adventures of Tintin, Cigars of the Pharaoh, and its Translation"* English Department, Dian Nuswantoro University.

Seyyedi H. & Akhlaghi, E. (2013), "*The Study of Onomatopoeia in the Muslims Holy Write: Qur'an*."

Somigli, P. (2009), "*From the Onomatopoeias to Musical Form: Resources of Circularity of Listening and Performance"*, Italy:Free University of Bozen, Bolzan.

**Mehdi Zolfegarian** was born in Khalkhal, Iran in 1968. He holds his BA in Translation from Islamic Azad University, Tonekabon Branch 1993. He is working for Melli Bank of Iran. Alongside, he has been doing his MA in Translation at Islamic Azad University, South Tehran Branch. He loves reading novels, in English and Persian languages and writes short stories and poems.

Born in 1970, Dr. **Alireza Ameri**, a published bilingual poet, conceptual photographer, transla-

tor, lexicologist, interdisciplinary researcher, and two-decade tenured assistant professor of English language studies at IAU, has been penning on how to fuse art, ethics, and improvisation into alternative syllabi, and has queried from hegemony to edutainment. His PhD thesis entitled him as an Impromptutor. Currently, he is vice-dean of research at his affiliate faculty after experiencing seven years of superintendence of English Language Department.