

*Rhetorical Analysis and Translation of Arabic Mobile Prank  
Messages into English*

Asst. Prof. Omar D. Omar

Asst. Prof. Ziyad F. Himood

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University of Mosul /College of Basic Education/English Dept.

**Abstract:**

This study is an attempt to analyze and translate the Arabic rhetorical devices used in mobile prank messages into the English language. As it is bidirectional, this study is hopefully fruitful for translation teachers, contrastive analysts and students of translation since it highlights the problems translators undergo once dealing with languages of different origins and cultures in their daily life. To realize the study aims, the researchers selected data of 10 humorous messages from different hilarious resources retrieved from the web to be translated by five M.A. candidates at the Department of Translation, College of Arts, University of Mosul. The method of the study is painstakingly realized by rhetorically analyzing and translating the messages to fathom the factors affecting the untranslatability of such phenomena. As Arabic and English are distant from each other, it is hypothesized that different rhetorical devices can be used to attain an entertainment differently. The study comes up with the fact that the untranslatability of the humorous expressions are essentially due to word formation, thematic structures and rhyming for they demand linguistic rather than cultural substitution.

**Keywords:** Rhetorical Analysis, Translation and Arabic Mobile Prank Messages.

**1. Introduction**

A verbal humor statement(prank) is something comical that is said, written or done to make people express amusement. Pranks are part of peoples' daily life. People all over the world practice pranks differently according to some cultural and linguistic norms and aspects; they do not practice the same manner of pranks. Also, there are some differences in the method, style, and in the essence of pranks, whether they are spotless or not; disgusting or neuter or taboo related questions. They vary from culture to another; consequently, this undoubtedly poses challenges for translators.

As forms of humorous devices practiced in social life, pranks will be the main concern of analysis in this study since they are stretches of the participant's underlying intentions. As such, they are conceptualized

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inferentially by the receiver, fully turned into contextualized issues associated with contextual information to bring about humorous implications. Predictably, pranks can be used to trace back the expected humorous effects predicated by the addresser. On the receiver's side, when interpreting a prank message, although anticipations of relevance vary, people opt for the same inferential techniques which are utilized in addressing other discourses, basically directed to changing the schematic logical form of the prank message into a completely contextualized and related interpretation see (Sperber and Wilson, 1995). Accordingly, it is a matter of gap filling between what is conveyed via the prank message and what the addresser intends to communicate; that is, between what is hinted and what is finally inferred by the receiver. On the addresser's part, there is a sort of control over what inferences the addressee is thought to generate. Exclusively, with the assistance of our contrived mind-reading ability, the addresser can guess that some background information from the receiver's memory could be recalled and employed during processing of the prank. In other words, a number of inferences may be activated, but one interpretation is probably selected as the intended one in line with the relevance-theoretic approach to computing interpretations for the sake of achieving accessibility and discontinuing when one is appropriate. Notably, the same prank can embody humorous or disgusting attitude depending on the addressee's context of situation represented by his mood, his belief, social status and even on the type and degree of the prank practiced.

Unlike Arabic, English verbal humorous statements are almost sexist, racist and highlight unreasonable patterns that are still prevailing in most societies. Hence, the prankster has to guess the receiver's un/willingness to be told the prank and deduce its humorous effects. Even though the relevance theory proposed by Sperber and Wilson sets forth a remarkable cognitive framework for investigating verbal humor, Yus, (2003:1296) views that humor causes a number of problems for a relevance-theoretic scrutiny. Firstly, when someone does a verbal humor, the addressee frequently has to discontinue the immediate context of interpretation and the presumptions generated to involve in the processing of previous stretches of discourse and be prepared to receive an uninformative text that may require more mental effort than what is devoted to normal circumstances. The significance of a prank may not suit the ordinary sources of cognitive contentment, to facilitate, relevance ensuing inputs which are related to background information accessible to fructify deductions potential to the addressee.

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Secondly, in humorous language the addresser almost is involved in a certain form of covert purpose which is not uncomplicatedly made apparent so as to yield humorous effects.

## **2. Related Literature**

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, the Arabic mobile prank messages have not been investigated yet. Most, if not all, of the previous studies highlighted verbal humor, jokes. Pranks are basically uninvestigated and undoubtedly under-theorized by researchers. Other than immature and mean-spirited "How To" manuals, there is only one reference totally dedicated to the aesthetics and creativity of pranks: Pranks! by Vale and Andrea (1987). This book includes interviews with many famous pranksters like Hoffman, co-founder Roselle, published by Krassner, and songster, Biafra. In the introduction, Vale and Juno start to make the transformative control and radical significance of pranks, viewing that "the unsurpassed pranks research and survey the limits of the occupied are cognized as 'society' attempting to readdress that society toward an idea of a high life. Although it is an outstanding album of pranksters' recollections, the editors' method relies exclusively on conversation, occasionally at the expense of investigation." Unlike Arabic which are usually concerned with canonical love, English are almost dealing with disgraceful or sexual humor (Raskin 1985: 159; Dhaif, 1999:8; Vanderford, 2000:7).

Jodlowiec (1991:18) observes that a verbal humor is a prearranged chain of utterance, designed as a unit, with an entertaining peak or punch line deliberately adopted by the prankster to entertain the receiver. She tackles the notion of humor from an angle that effectively pays attention to humor production and understanding. She asserts that the interpretation of an utterance as a mindreading technique and the theoretical view of ineffective communication are of vital significance to explicate humor processing and clarify punch lines. This is a significant mandatory ending of the humor which constitutes the humorous effect that yields an amusement.

Chiaro (1992:10) points out that humor is global, and every language exhibits its own sort of ridicule. She examines the pragmatics of word play by means of frameworks basically adapted in descriptive linguistics. She investigates the structure of jokes, riddles, quips, gags, hoaxes and the extent whereby they can be global and particular to one culture. Every culture has dissimilar use of language on the basis of group practices and assumptions. Cultural contexts are methodically dependent upon in the interpretation of statements.

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Goatley (1994: 150) regards humor the same subject as cross word puzzles. Thus, he demonstrates that he is plausibly confident when one has found a solution correctly, one basically has to stick at expanding and selecting various contexts until s/he gets the point. Accordingly, humor is portion of those types of genres which intentionally raise processing effort as a way of fulfilling a specific locutionary effect, laughter. Processing, however, is somehow restricted in the sense the addressee obviously grasps when s/he has attained the desired interpretation.

Habwe (1995:146) regards jokes as expressions intended to amuse or create humor. He views them as universal features of casual exchanges, particularly among equal status. As a result, the point of what people feel humorous seems surrounded by socio-cultural, linguistic, geographical, personal and diachronic limits.

For Trudgil (2000: 57), language differs according to such variables as age, social class, sex, the addresser's ethnic group, and the environment whereby the addresser finds himself. Successful communication is the most important goal of any user of language. The statements employed in a language are typically habits of the society where the language is used. These expressions are at one's hand for use, but the societal context determines what is un/said, where and when. The effective and successful communication is attained when the addressee recognizes the addresser's intentions. In this study, conception of a humor is attained by bringing out the addresser's statements and the addressee's interpretation.

Ritchie (2004:16) defines a verbal humor as a moderately short text which, for a certain cultural group, is identifiable as having its crucial function; the product of an entertained reaction for the receiver, which is usually repeatable in many contexts.

### **3. Theories of Humor**

The fundamental theories of humor are:

**3.1. Relief Theory:** This theory was initially proposed by Sigmund Freud. It is primarily deals with the uptake of humor and its emotional effects on the addressee(s). According to the founder of this theory, humor is a means of mitigating and soothing the psychological tension(s) caused by social norms and factors, particularly when speaking of some points regarded as taboos (see: Raskin 1985:39).

**3.2. Superiority Theory:** It was established by the English philosopher, Thomas Hobbes. Its crucial claim is that the addressees laugh when they feel better than others because the one who laughs usually scorns anything or

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anyone s/ he laughs at. Accordingly, this theory views that all humor is a matter of ridiculing others(cf: Schwarz 2010: 46).

**3.3. Incongruity Theories:** According to this type of theories, humor occurs at the moment of the grasp of incongruity (contrast) between an idea implicated within a given context and the actual things expected to be pertinent somehow to the notion (Kant, 1790/2007:161).

**3.4. Linguistic Theories of Humor:** They mainly highlight the linguistic meaning whereby humor is communicated at the expense of such nonverbal modes of humor as “slapstick comedy and accidental humor” (Martin 2007: 110). These theories tackle humor from syntactic and semantic aspects. The "semantic script theory of humor" (SSTH), and the "general theory of verbal humor" (GTVH) are the most remarkable linguistic theories of humor. The first theory regards the script as a cognitive configuration of structured information and knowledge regarding the world. Linguistically speaking, a script stands for an equivalent to the lexical meaning of an item. A script includes such necessary information as subject, time, place, condition, activity and the like. Using such criteria people can depict any situation to make an adequate outline and associate it with a suitable context. The second theory(GTVH) was introduced by Attardo and Raskin (1991:293). It is mainly concerned with verbal jokes.

## **4. Figures of Speech:**

A figure of speech is a lexical item or phrase that retains a disconnected meaning from its literal definition. It can be a simile or metaphor intended to make a comparison. Also, it can be realized by the repetition of alliteration, using similar sounds at the beginning of neighboring items, or the hyperbole, exaggeration, to achieve a dramatic effect ( Alm-Arvius, 2003:9). Notably, Arabic is abundant with such literary devices, but the researchers tend to explore the most common figures of speech utilized by Arab mobile pranksters:

**1.4.1. Wordplay:** Manipulating items is the masterful exploitation of some semantic or structural characteristics of the language to modify meaning for the sake of ridicule, mockery, sarcasm joking, scoff, raspberry, irony and the like. Playing on words is recognized as one of the most troublesome rhetorical devices to translate. Such difficulty stems from some characteristics relevant to wordplay represented by such factors as sense relations, homonymy and polysemy as well as some thematic structures. In this vein, Delabastita (1994: 223) asserts: "The root cause of these special real or alleged, theoretical or practical difficulties lies in the fact that the semantic

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and pragmatic effects of source-text wordplay find their origin in particular structural characteristics of the source language for which the target language more often than not fails to produce a counterpart, such as the existence of certain homophones, near-homophones, polysemic clusters, idioms, or grammatical rules." In translation, the dilemma lies in absence of the linguistic means to render wordplay into the TL appropriately.

**1.4.2. Synecdoche:** It is a figure of speech whereupon a part is utilized to symbolize the whole and/or the opposite. In other words, it is recognized as replacing a more all-encompassing term for less comprehensive one or vice versa as is with the case of 'body parts' which are used to signal the whole body. More indicatively, a synecdochical meaning change may go on either of these meronymic views: a more inclusive whole can be depicted by means of a linguistic label that mainly indicates only a part of it, or an assigning for the entire thing can be employed about one of its constituents. The first category of synecdoche is more common. The second may be hard to make out from more clear-cut instances of metonymy (Alm-Arvius, 2003:163).

**1.4.3. Evasive Response:** It is the use of indistinct language to conceal one's meaning or to keep away from committing to a viewpoint. It is frequently used by deceitful politicians who desire to look like they accept with everyone. Also, it can be employed in legal contexts, for instance where a defendant likes to avoid confessing guilt, but at the same time does not tend to lie explicitly; so they use evasive response to evade the real answer. The two indispensable elements of evasive response are the vague language and an effort un/intentional to mislead the addressees (Wodak et al, 2009: 215).

**1.4.4. Personification:** A type of metaphor whereupon human qualities are attributed to inanimate entities or notions. This type of figurative device is widespread in literature. Strictly speaking, it is represented by adding abstract features to nonhuman as if it were human. Personification is a fictional device common often in literature. It is an operative use of metaphorical language since personification heavily depends on imagination for understanding. Undoubtedly, recipients logically recognize that inanimate things cannot feel, act, or imagine like humans. However, personifying inanimate things can be an exciting, creative, and operative means for a writer to demonstrate a notion or make a point (Crystal,1992:296).

**1.4.5. Metonymy:** Etymologically speaking, metonymy stems from the Greek item 'metonumia' which signals a change of name. Instead of indicating an unspecified item directly, one can utilize some other relevant expressions to indicate the definite thing. People, for instance, may use

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“skirt” to mean a woman. There is an assortment of metonymies like using the apparatus to signify the agent and employing the capital to indicate the country. There is a particular kind of metonymy in which a part designates the whole or vice versa, or the abstract stands for the concrete and the opposite is true, or material denotes object and vice versa. In rhetoric, such type of figure of speech is termed synecdoche. Though it is viewed by some rhetoricians as a sort of rhetoric, there is an inclination to view that there is no clear-cut between synecdoche and metonymy. Synecdoche, however, is regarded as a particular category of metonymy which comprises part and whole relationship. Synecdoche is usually put under the class of metonymy. Out of the field of rhetoric, it is unnecessary to draw a distinction between them. All in all, both metonymy and synecdoche are conceptual devices encompassing reference based on the relatedness or association (Warren, 1999:123).

**1.4.6 Anagram:** A lexical item or phrase produced by changing the arrangement of letters of a dissimilar word or phrase. They are widespread as hints for crossword puzzles. Anagram is a fruitful method in teaching vocabulary. It is a sort of pedagogical device realized in a mental game provoking the recipients to think twice. Rhetorically speaking, it is a sort of word play. A word or phrase is formed by arranging in a different order the letters of another word or phrase. Thus, anagram as a word-game is essential to teaching vocabulary and training memory since it motivates people to overcome such linguistic tricks; it is a matter of forming and acquiring new forms and structures (morphology and orthography). Strictly speaking, it is a rhetorical device used for pedagogical aspects and entertainment by virtue of morphological forms: verb ending, prefixes, infixes and/or suffixes to make learners get pleasure from the class once it makes the situation tasteful. Consequently, the education process requires a technique that makes it desirable (Crystal, 1992:19).

**5. Translatability of Humor:** When humorous messages are translated from Arabic into English, they inevitably go through some sort of loss and/or gain of meaning due to the divergence between the source and the target language. In this juncture, Basnett – McGuire (1991: 30) stresses: "Once the principle is accepted that sameness cannot exist between two languages, it becomes possible to approach the question of loss and gain in the translation process." It is an indirect reference that the low rank of translation that so much time should be allocated to discussing what is lost/gained when transferring a text from the source language (SL) to the target language (TL).

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In this regard, Munday (2016:92) views that translation inescapably undergoes some sort of loss of meaning, since it is unattainable to preserve all the ST fine details of structure and meaning in the TL. Nevertheless, a TT significantly may offset for ‘compensation’ by achieving gain in another position in the text. Loss is viewed by Dizdar (2014:207) as the imperfect reproduction of the (SL) in the (TL). Notably, loss is classified into two classes: unavoidable loss and avoidable loss. The former is attributed to sharp dissimilarities among languages of distant families as is the case with Arabic and English. The latter is due to the translator's incapability to convey the humorous sense from the (SL) to the (TL) due to linguistic incompetence and/or cultural unawareness. This study, however, adopts Delabastita's model (1993: 190-94) which is the most suitable one for translating the figurative/humorous language, for he gives priority to the function of the humor, to some extent, at the expense of the form. To that end, he proposes seven strategies:

**5.1. Compensation:** The wordplay is rendered by another rhetorical device such as synecdoche, imagery, metonymy, rhyme, etc. The target text comprises a wordplay in a position where no wordplay exists in the source text. This strategy is frequently used to compensate, for example, when the translator could not translate a wordplay that existed in another place in the source text. On his/her part, a translator in this case adds a wordplay in a position in the target text where s/he can make one. A totally new sentence or even some sentences containing a wordplay are subjoined to the target text.

**5.2. Explication:** This strategy involves two sub-strategies: Intra-textual and extra-textual. The former is realized by extending or adding some information internally to the (TT). Veisbergs (1997:166) gives a good example from Lewis Carroll's in the course of the Looking Glass: the source text reads: “In most gardens they make the beds too soft – so that the flowers are always asleep.” The Latvian translator renders it into: “In most gardens they make the flower beds so soft as the sleeping beds – so that the flowers are always asleep.” The latter is represented by adding annotations or some explanations to the translation out of the text by utilizing such techniques as footnotes, epilogues, endnotes, and the like.

**5.3. Direct translation:** The wordplay from the (ST) is translated into the target language literally, without preserving all characteristics, connotations and functions. This strategy is almost inapplicable. Strictly speaking, the wordplay of the (ST) is conveyed to the target audience in its original form, without rendering it.



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**5.4. Equivalent translation:** The target text comprises a figurative item or expression that acts as the translation of a specific one from the source text. The two figurative expressions hold a comparable place in the source and target messages correspondingly; consequently, they have comparable characteristics. These symmetries in characteristics can take place on various linguistic levels. They can have similarities, to some extent, in the phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic and/or pragmatic level.

**5.5. Transference:** The lexical item or phrase causing the humor in the (ST) is literally conveyed to the target audience with a neologism, new expression resulting in gaining of meaning.

**5.6. Omission:** The message of the target text acting as the translation for humor in the (ST) does not comprise a humor itself. The message is conveyed, but not with a humor. A message whereupon both meanings of the languages are preserved, but not as a humor.

**5.7. Substitution:** The humor from the (ST) is translated with a humor from the target culture which offers no formal symmetry to the original humor. The only indifference between the two lies in the kind of humor employed.

## **Methodology and Data Collection:**

The methodology of this study is as follows:

Ten Arabic mobile prank messages are retrieved from the web: (<https://www.wattpad.com/27146-mostafa>), and entrusted with five M.A. candidates at the Department of Translation, College of Arts, University of Mosul to translate them into English. As the current study highlights the rhetorical analysis, it pinpoints the rhetorical devices used by the (SL) writer in terms of the form and function, and their translatability into English. Besides, the researchers will examine the translational aspects of the pranks to verify their appropriateness to the styles and norms of the target language, English. Proposed translation is presented when the test-subject translators fail.

## **Text Analysis:**

### **Source Texts:**

(ST)1:

"كأك سكر, كأك عسل, كأك قشطة, كأك حلاوة, كأك لقمة ونام".

### **Target Texts (TTs):**

1. You are all candy, honey, butter, sweetie; you are all right to bed!
2. You are all tasty, honey, creamy, beauty; have a mouthful and sleep!
3. You are all sugar, you are all honey, you are all cream, you are all sweet; eat a bit, then sleep!

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4. You should be sugar, honey cream, sweetness; you should eat and sleep!

5. Eat some sugar, honey, cream, or halva. Eat something and go to bed.

## **Discussion:**

Rhetorically analyzing this text, it is well manifested that this message is abundant with the wordplay 'كلك'. This word apparently is ambiguous since it may stand for 'all of you' or 'eat or have'. Such a dilemma is attributed to the homophonic and polysemic cluster realized in the stem 'كل'. Such a multiplicity of meaning has been well exploited by the prankster to form such humorous aspects represented by wordplay to masterfully manipulate the words through the exploitation of some morpho-lexical aspects to change the meaning for the sake of humor and entertainment.

Translationally speaking, building on his unsound understanding of the (ST), (trans. 1) reveals a sort of contradiction between 'كل' at the beginning of the message and the one at the end realized by the imperative mood. Hence, he inclined to omission to overcome such an ambiguous message. Trans. 2, 3 and 4, however, opted for a different strategy, direct translation which is in fact inappropriate since the wordplay of the (ST) is conveyed into the target audience in its original form inefficiently, without rendering the required part appropriately. Due to her linguistic incompetence, (trans. 5) was not able to decode the intended meaning of the (ST), 'كل' 'all' not 'eat' since the prank messages punch-line differs from the beginning to create humor. Hence, a better translation could be realized in the following exchange:

A: I want you back!

Three items, eight letters. Say it, and we will be couple!

B: I got food!

(ST)2:

"ثلاث لا يتحملها أحد: فقدان صديق, وقصة حب فاشلة, ورؤية وجهك المخيف!"

(TTs):

1. Three unbearable: losing a friend, failing love story, and seeing your intimidate face!

2. Three cannot be endurable: loose of a friend, failing love story, and seeing your horrible face!

3. Three things no one can endure: losing a friend, failing love story, and seeing your scary face!

4. Three cannot be borne by anyone: losing a friend, failing love story, and seeing your scary face!

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5. Three things no one can afford: losing a friend, a failed love story, and seeing your scary face!

## **Discussion:**

From a rhetorical point of view, the prankster starts his/her message with three sorrowful attitudes represented by losing a friend and failing love story, but unexpectedly he approaches the recipient that his/her face is the third one too! Such an unanticipated last part of the message, the punch-line, is to play a prank through pulling the recipient's legs till the end. Synecdoche is apparent in the word 'وجه' 'face' which represents the whole body.

Regarding the English versions, all of the translators in question preferred using the 'direct translation' since they are (SL) oriented to maintain the original form at the expense of the (TL) norms, sexual-oriented. Investigating the English style of prank playing/writing, the lexical item 'face' is not crucial as is the case with Arabic. The most common style of English humor is highly related to sexual aspects. Unlikely, the Arabic humorous messages are initially formed by flirting realized in platonic love, but unexpectedly followed by backgrounding dispraise. In line with the (TL) conventions, the researchers put forward the following translation by adopting the 'substitution' to create humor by using a different rhetorical device, metonymy since the intentional misprinting of 'girlfrien' results in an unexpected bad word composed of the missed letter 'd' at the beginning of the word 'dick' which informally stands for a male reproductive organ:

A: I hope you are my girlfrien!

B: You mean 'girlfriend'!

A: What! You will get the latter!

## **(ST) 3:**

"الحب إحساس رائع, شعور جميل, بس الصراحة وجهك ما يساعد!"

## **(TTs) 3:**

1. Love is a cool sensation, nice feeling, but frankly your face would not make it!

2. Love is a fantastic sensation, beautiful feelings; frankly, your face is not acceptable!

3. Love is a wonderful feeling, nice feeling, but your face does not support that!

4. Love is a wonderful feeling; it feels awesome, but honestly your face does not help!

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5. Love is a great sense and a good feeling but honestly, you are not the right person.

## **Discussion:**

Concerning the rhetorical analysis, the (SL) message encompasses some aspects of love sensations realized by such good attributes as 'جميل' and 'رائع' 'wonderful' and 'nice', but suddenly the writer turns the situation openly bad. This (SL) style-shift is not groundless; rather, it is deliberately employed by the writer to create humor (prank). Such a punch-line prank message displays an effective rhetorical device, synecdoche, which stands for a part-whole relation realized by body-parts, 'وجه' 'face', which signals the person as a whole.

With respect to translation, different translation strategies are employed differently. Trans. 1 & 3 preferred adopting 'substitution', converting a certain (SL) rhetorical device by a different one into the (TL). This is so clear in translating the synecdoche into an understatement observed in such portions as 'would not make it' and 'does not support that'. Preserving the (SL) forms at the expense of the (TL), (Trans. 2 & 4) opted for direct translation strategies. Apparently, this is fruitless due to the fact that the (TL) prank message is not as effective as that of the (TL) structurally and functionally since the (SL) pranks almost consist of dialogues rather than monologues. To narrow the gap between two unrelated languages and cultures, the researchers evoke the following:

You are nice enough! I hope there is something between us.... a barricade!

## **(ST)4:**

قال رجل لزوجته: "قل لي كلمة أحلى من الحلاوة!" قالت: "طحينية!" قال: "لا، أريد كلمة تهزني هز!" قالت: "مرجوحة!" قال: "لا، أريد كلمة تفجر إحساسي!" قالت: "صاعقة تصعقك بين عيونك!"

## **(TTs):**

1. A man said to his wife: "say to me a word which is sweeter than sweet!", She said: "sesame juice!" He said: "no, I want a word which can shake me!" She said: "a swing!" He said: "no, I want a word that can explode me!" She said: "a thunder which strikes you between your eyes!"
2. A man said to his wife: "tell me the best word!" She said: "sesame juice!" He said: "no, I want a word which shakes me!" She said: "a swing!" He said: "no, I want a word that shakes my sensation!" She said: "a thunder strikes you!"

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3. A man said to his wife: "say to me a word more beautiful than sweet!", She said: "Sesame juice!" He said: "no, I want a word make me shake!" She said: "a seesaw!" He said: "no, I want a word blow my feelings!" She said: "a shock shocks you between your eyes!"

4. A man to his wife: "say to me something sweeter than sweetness!", She said: "sesame juice!" He said: "no, tell me a word that shakes my feelings!" She said: "a swing!" He said: "no, I want a word that blow my feelings!" She said: "a lightning bolt hits you between your eyes!"

5. Aman asked his wife to tell him some word sweeter than honey.

"Halva" she said

"No. I want a word to shake me." he said.

"A swing" she said.

"No. I want a word to strike me" He said.

"I wish thunder strike your head" She said.

### **Discussion:**

Rhetorically, this (SL) prank message uncovers an exchange between a man and his wife who do their best to understand each other through their occasional interaction. They are entirely persuaded that the exchange goes smoothly because no one interrupts them or there is no hesitation breaks down their exchange. They utilized some flirtation frames that suit what priority each one has in mind in line with the situation. On his part, the husband likes to hear an affectionate expression; thus, he begins with: "قولي لي كلمة أحلى من الحلاوة" 'Say to me a word which is sweeter than sweet' looking forward to hearing a soulful answer from his wife, but she evadingly replied: 'طحينية' sesame juice'. Again, expecting her to feel compassion for him, he opted for more clarification as he said: "لا، أريد كلمة تهزني هز" 'I want a word which shakes me', but she as usual equivocally replied: 'مرجوحة' 'swing' Over again, he inclined to the most explicative message as he said: "لا، أريد كلمة تفجر" 'no, I want a word that stirs me', but as accustomed, she bluntly replied: 'صاعقة تصعقك بين عينوك' 'a thunder hits you!' Obviously, the exchange under investigation is abounding with evasive responses realized in the wife's replies to conceal her meaning or to keep away from committing to a viewpoint as a deceitful technique to demonstrate that she accepts her husband. This is why she has tended to the two crucial elements of evasive response: the vague language and an effort un/intentional to mislead him.

As for the translations, (1,3&4) adopted direct translation for the sake of maintaining the (SL) patterns. This, however, is unproductive for they sacrificed the force of the message in the (TL) to present the form of the (SL)

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message. With regard to (2&5), they did their best to narrow the gap since they opted substitution represented by replacing the (SL) synecdoche by a (TL) one as in: 'strikes you' and 'strikes your head', but they failed due to the fact that they adhered to translating the (SL) synecdochal expressions as is the case with: 'تصعقك بين عينوك' 'strikes you' and 'strikes your head'. To be in line with the English style, the researchers suggest the following renditions:

A: How much do you like me?

B: O.K. Consider the stars and enumerate them!

A: But it is morning!

B: Properly!

(ST) 5:

"نفسي أمسك يدك, نفسي أضمك للأبد! المرسل: سلك كهرباء (220) فولت!"

(TTs):

1. I wish I could catch your hand, engulf you! The sender: an electric wire (220) volts!

2. I hope I hold your hand, I hope embrace you forever! The sender: an electric wire (220) volts!

3. I would like to hold your hand, I would like to hug you forever! The sender: an electric cable (220) volts!

4. I wish I could hold your hand, hug you forever! The sender: an electric wire (220) volts!

5. I want to touch your hand and catch you forever.' The sender is 220 volts electrical cable!

**Discussion:**

In a rhetorical manner, the text under investigation discloses a well-known rhetorical device, personification. It is a type of metaphor in which animate characteristics are ascribed to inanimate or nonhuman entities. Here, it is crystal clear that adding human qualities to nonhuman entity, electricity wire, is to make a sort of suspense for the addressee. As known, the electricity wire is lifeless to have such emotional sensations as love, hug and/or embrace his/her beloved. Personification is a rhetorical device standing for a drag-and-drop strategy since its punch-line almost surprising, as is with the electricity wire depicted as a lover.

As regards translation, the (trans. 1&5) tended to employ such verbs as 'engulf' and 'catch' deceitfully since the former himself told me that he opted for using the word 'engulf' for it signals 'overwhelming'. On her part, (trans.5) euphemistically and dishonestly exploited such two subsequent

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catchy words as 'touch' and 'catch forever'. As for (2, 3and4), they are unsuccessful in conveying the Arabic prank message as forcible as possible, because their translations do not bring about the English rhetorical style of personification since there is no disgrace in the (TL) versions. A better translation is:

Doctor: I have awful and worse news! The bad news is that you have twenty four hours to live!

A patient: What about the worse news?

Doctor: I have to inform you yesterday!

(ST) 6:

لك ميزة في كل شيء: شوفتك, بسمتك, صورتك على جبن كيري!

(TTs):

1. You have a feature in everything: your meeting, smile and your photo on a Kiri packet!
2. You have a characteristic feature in everything: seeing you, your smile and your picture on a Kiri cheese!
3. You have a privilege in everything: seeing you, your smile and your photo on a Kiri cheese packet!
4. everything is perfect about you: your vision, your smile and your picture on Kiri'scheese!
5. You have advantages in all things: seeing your face, your smile, your picture on Kiri cheese boxes.

**Discussion:**

Viewing and scrutinizing the rhetorical device in this prank message, metonymy, it is found that it implies a change of name. That is, in place of referring to an indefinite item directly, one may employ some other relevant expressions to point to the definite thing. On his/her part, the addressee is supposed to be well-equipped with linguistic and extra-linguistic knowledge to decode what is being encoded. Hence, the prankster here adopts this rhetorical device to disdain the recipient as he prefers to look at the recipient's photo (cow) on a Kiri cheese box. Undoubtedly, such a left-handed compliment or an indirect dispraise ends in an entertainment.

Although they adopted the direct translation strategy, all of the test-subject translators failed to mimic the English rhetorical style, dishonor or bad words. Thus, the following adaptation is hopefully supposed to narrow the gap between the unconnected languages and cultures:

A: I think about you daily. I am passionately looking forward to hearing your voice. One of my shits smells like you!

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**A subsequent message:** Sorry, shirts!

**(ST)7:**

"سوالفك مطر هتان, وصوتك ساحر وفنان, وشوفتك أعود بالله من الشيطان!"

**(TTs):**

1. Your talks like cats and dogs rain, your voice is like magic and fine arts, and your complexion is like God forbid devil!
2. Your talks are plenty, your voice is enchanting and artistic, and your face I seek God's help!
3. Your tales like smooth rain, your voice is charming and artistic, and your shape I seek refuge in God from devil!
4. Your talk is like a quiet rain, your voice is charming and special, and your shape... I ask in the name of Allah to protect me from the devil!
5. Left!

## **Discussion:**

In terms of the rhetorical devices exploited by a message writer, synecdoche is prominent. The writer started to put up the recipient through such good qualities as 'مطر هتان' 'smooth rain' and 'صوتك ساحر وفنان' 'your voice is euphonious'. Rhetorically, the metonymy is represented by the first par, 'مطر هتان' 'smooth rain', which acts as an uncommon attribute 'هتان', which signals 'quietness'. These good attributes have been rhythmical to attract one's attention. The writer, however, opted for employing an indirect dispraise, metonymy, by exploiting a religious text commonly used in Arabic to dismiss the evil and bad entities 'أعود بالله من الشيطان' 'God forbid devil'.

From a translational point of view, (1&2) could not grasp the intended meaning of the lexical item 'هتان'. On his part, (1) unsuccessfully opted for an equivalent idiomatic expression 'cats and dogs rain' 'heavily', but this is a totally different point. Similarly, (2) adopted the explication strategy realized in 'plenty'. As for the other stretches of the message, they have been literally translated at the expense of the rhyming. Regarding (3&4), they tended to employ direct translation to the detriment of the sound effect. Regarding (5), due to her lack of linguistic as well as cultural competence, she couldn't translate it into English. To edge nearer and avoid communication failure, the researchers quote the following:

Roses are red,  
Purples are blue,  
A face as yours is part of the zoo!



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(ST) 8:

كلما ردت أطررد صورتك من خيالي, شففتها في منامي: قرد ينطط قدامي!

(TTs):

1. Each time I try to expel your image out of my mind, I see it in my dreams like a jumping monkey in front of me!
2. As I dismiss your image from my imagination, I see your picture while sleeping as a monkey jumping in front of me!
3. Whenever I want to hide your picture from my imagination, I see it in my nightmare, a monkey jumping in front of me!
4. Every time I want to kick your picture out of my imagination, I see you like a monkey jumping in front of me!
5. whenever I want to get you out of my head, I see you a monkey jumping in my dreams when I go to bed.

**Discussion:**

Rhetorically, the message under investigation exhibits a metonymy showed by a bad entity, 'قرد' 'monkey' which signals a mischievous or baleful creature. The writer of the message, for achieving a prank, depicts himself as so fond of his darling that he does his best to dismiss her image out of his mind, but he couldn't. Finally, he tells her that she is no more a monkey! Such a troublesome nightmare felt at night depicted by the sender in an unexpected manner is to create humor at the expense of the receiver's feelings, frustration.

Concerning the translations, all of the translators in question failed to convey the message properly as they stuck to the direct translation strategy. Eventually, such a failure is assigned to the fact that the form and force of the (TL) prank message is not similar to that of the (SL). To narrow the gap between the two unassociated languages and cultures, the researchers quote the following:

"How am I supposed to forget you when every time I go outside I see things that remind me of you like garbage bins and dog shit!" Retrieved from: <https://www.pinterest.com/hannahgotti/text-pranks>

(ST) 9:

أهديك ثلاث شمعات: شمعة حياتي وشمعة تنور طريقك وشمعة تحرق ثوبك!

(TTs):

1. I give you three candles as a gift: my life's candle, another candle enlightens your way and the last one burns your garment!
2. I get you three candles: a candle of my life, a candle enlightening your way and a candle burning your dress!

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3.I donate you three candles: a candle of my life, a candle lightens your way and a candle burns your dress!

4.I want to give you three candles: a candle of my life, a candle that lights your way and a candle that burns your dress!

5.I gift you three candles: a candle of my soul, a candle to enlighten your road, and a candle to burn your robe.

**Discussion:**

With respect to rhetoric, it is apparent that 'wordplay' is outstanding. It is evident in the word 'شمعة' 'candle'. Obviously, this word apparently is a multiple means since it may symbolize 'love', 'light' or 'burning'. Such a problem is assigned to the indeterminacy of usage. Such a multiplicity of meaning has been utilized well by the writer to produce such unexpected humorous aspects represented by wordplay to skillfully manipulate the situation through the intentionality to change the meaning for the sake of humor and entertainment.

Evidently, no one of the test-subject translators could replace the message effectively since they heavily relied on the (SL) conventions in that they adopted the direct translation which is nonsensical for the English audience. As a result, the researchers demonstrate:

Don't you dislike being single?

Yes, it is troublesome. I hope I've a girlfriend.

We shouldn't be single.

Maybe we should.

Sign up 4 match.com

**(ST) 10:**

أنت حمار, بقرة, كلب! لا تستعجل, إجمع أول حرف من كل كلمة!

**(TTs):**

1.You are a donkey, cow and dog! Don't rush! Gather the initials, and you get 'I love you!'

2.You donkey, cow and dog! The total of the first letters of the foregoing words in Arabic means 'love!'

3.You are a donkey, cow and dog! Don't be in hurry, gather the first letter from each word!

4.You are a lamb, owl, van and elephant! Don't rush! Collect the first letter of each word!

5. Left!

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## **Discussion:**

Referring to rhetoric, the message at hand envisages a word-game rhetorical device, anagram. It is formed by a word or phrase produced by re-ordering the arrangement of letters of an unrelated word or phrase. Such a linguistic phenomenon is commonly used in the crossword puzzles at the magazines, which is basically used for strengthening thinking and amusement. Therefore, it is a potential method in teaching vocabulary. It is a sort of pedagogical device realized in a mental game provoking the recipients to think twice. As far as rhetoric is concerned, it is a kind of word play in which a word or phrase formed by rearranging in a different order of the letters of another word or phrase. Notably, the Arabic message in question initially argues for insulting the addressee via such bad words as 'حمار' 'donkey', 'بقرة' 'cow', and 'كلب' ;dog'. Afterwards, the writer surprisingly recommends the recipient to gather the initial letters of each word to form a friendly and lovable message, 'أحبك' 'I love you'. Such a sudden shift of attitude is to entertain the addressed person as well as the audience.

As far as the translations are concerned, all of the translators involved could not convey the message efficiently since they heavily depended upon the (SL) style in that they opted for the direct translation which is useless for the English audience. As a result, the researchers tended to quote a fruitful equivalent:

A: "you are ABCDEFGHIJK!

B: What does that mean?

A: Attractive, brilliant, cute, darling, elegant, funny, gorgeous and hot.

B: What about 'IJK'?

A: I'm just kidding!"

## **Concluding Remarks:**

1. As producing humor demands linguistic and extra-linguistic knowledge, misconception of the (SL) figures of speech, as is the case with the 'wordplay', (text 1, trans. 5) poses problems for translators and ends in a sort of mismatch and unevenness.

2. Direct translation is predominant but disadvantageous since it does not make the English people feel similar emotions as that of Arabic, as it sheds light on the literal meaning; it tries to convert the (SL) message into the (TL) according to its original form. This can be seen throughout most of the translations under investigation. To demonstrate, consider the following: text 1, 2, 5, 6, 8 and 9, the whole versions.

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3. It is not necessary to translate an (SL) figure of speech into the same device as in (text 3, trans. 1 and 3), where a synecdoche is translated into an understatement.

4. Compensation is a translation strategy rhetorically used to lessen the impact of the prank message on the addressee (text 3, trans. 5).

5. An interrelatedness between sound and sense poses challenges for translators as it requires a poet translator to overstep such a barrier. This is evident in (text 7), whereupon all the translators did not pay attention to this point. Consequently, their attempts are unsuccessful.

6. The thematic structure (backgrounding) realized in enumeration ends in an unexpected message shocking the addressee as in texts: (2, 5, 6, 7 and 9) respectively.

7. The morphological aspects represented by such a rhetorical device as 'anagram' demands extra/linguistic knowledge on the part of the recipient to figure out the word game; with a greater reason, it affects the translating process, particularly between such unrelated languages as Arabic and English.

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**تحليل بلاغي لرسائل الجوال النصية العربية المنضوية على مقالب ومشكلات  
ترجمتها إلى اللغة الإنكليزية**

أ.م. زياد فاضل حمود

أ.م. عمر داود عمر

جامعة الموصل/كلية التربية الأساسية/قسم اللغة الإنكليزية

**مستخلص البحث:**

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تسليط الأضواء على تحليل وترجمة رسائل مقالب الجوال إلى اللغة الإنكليزية ومدى ملائمتها لمعايير تلك اللغة. نظرا لكونها ثنائية الأبعاد, يرجى أن تؤتي هذه الدراسة أكلها لأساتذة الترجمة وطلابها وذوي الاهتمام بإجراء التحليلات المقارنة لأنها تركز على معالجة المشكلات التي تواجه المترجمين, لاسيما وأنهم يتعاملون في حياتهم اليومية مع لغتين وثقافتين من أصول مختلفة. ولتبيان أهمية الدراسة, تم اختيار عينات متمثلة بعشرة رسائل جوال فكاوية مأخوذة من الانترنت ليتم توزيعها على خمسة طلاب ماجستير في قسم الترجمة, كلية الآداب, جامعة الموصل. إذ يتمثل منهج الدراسة بإجراء تحليل بلاغي لتلك العينات, فضلا عن تدليل العقبات التي يواجهها المترجمون في التعامل مع النصوص الفكاوية. وبما أن هاتين اللغتين تنحدران من أصول مختلفة, تفترض الدراسة تنوع الأساليب البلاغية لتحقيق الأحاسيس الفكاوية, لاسيما في ظل توظيف الجوانب الدلالية والصرفية في هذا المضمون. وفي الختام, تتوصل الدراسة إلى تحديد العوامل التي تؤثر على عدم طواعية ترجمة الرسائل الفكاوية, متمثلة ببناء الكلمة والتراكيب البنيوية والنظم الأدبي كونها تتطلب تبني استراتيجية لغوية أكثر مما هي ثقافية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** تحليل بلاغي, ترجمة, رسائل مقالب الجوال العربية.