

THE TRANSLATION OF PUN IN DOUGLAS ADAMS' THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY INTO ARABIC: A RELEVANCE THEORY PERSPECTIVE

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ترجمة التورية في رواية "دليل المسافر إلى المجرة" لدوجلاس آدامز إلى اللغة العربية: دراسة من منظور

نظرية الملاءمة

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ABSTRACT

Pun refers to the use of words that express multiple meanings. It usually serves humorous purposes in the text. The present study investigates the translation of pun or wordplay from the relevance theory perspective. The latter is a cognitive pragmatic theory to communication which is initially proposed by Sperber and Wilson (1986). The current paper adopts the relevance theoretical framework for the analysis of the selected data. The choice of pun translation strategies from English into Arabic is assessed according to this framework. The study aims at analyzing the translation of pun in Douglas Adams' The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy into Arabic. It is hypothesized that the translator's choice of the translation strategy is determined by the extent to which it can achieve the cognitive effects intended by the source text addresser, and the way it lessens the processing effort of the target text readers. The analysis of the selected data verifies the hypothesis of the present study and let to the result that there is interrelationship between the choice of the translation strategy and the intended cognitive effect of the target text readers **Keywords:** Relevance Theory, Pun, Translation Strategies, Cognitive Effect, Processing Effort.

المستخلص

تشير التورية إلى استخدام الكلمات ذات المعاني المتعددة، وغالبًا ما تُستخدم لأغراض فكاهية في النص. تبحث هذه الدراسة في ترجمة التورية أو التلاعب بالألفاظ من منظور نظرية الملاءمة. وتُعد هذه النظرية نظرية تداولية معرفية في التواصل، اقترحها في الأصل سبيربر وويلسون (١٩٨٦). تعتمد هذه الورقة الإطار النظري للملاءمة لتحليل البيانات المختارة، حيث يتم تقييم استراتيجيات ترجمة التورية من الإنجليزية إلى العربية وفقًا لهذا الإطار. تهدف الدراسة إلى تحليل ترجمة التورية في رواية "دليل المسافر إلى المجرة" لدوجلاس آدامز إلى اللغة العربية. وتفترض الدراسة أن اختيار المترجم لاستراتيجية الترجمة يتحدد بمدى تحقيقها للتأثيرات المعرفية المقصودة من قبل مرسل النص الأصلي، وبالطريقة التي تقلل بها من الجهد المعرفي المبذول من قبل قراء النص الهدف. وقد أكد تحليل البيانات المختارة فرضية الدراسة، وأفضى إلى نتيجة مفادها وجود علاقة متبادلة بين اختيار استراتيجيات الترجمة والتأثير المعرفي المقصود لقراء النص الهدف. الكلمات المفتاحية: نظرية الملاءمة، التورية، استراتيجيات الترجمة، التأثير المعرفي، الجهد المعرفي.

1. Introduction

Douglas Noel Adams (1952-2001) is one of the contemporary English writers, musicians, and dramatists. He was born in Cambridge, England. He is best known for his work *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, which is the main concern of the current study. This work is initiated at 1978 as a radio comedy broadcasted on BBC, before it is developed into "trilogy" that involves a series of five books. It is also developed into a television series, comics, and computer video game as well as a feature film. (Simpson, 2003, p. 9). It is hard to be categorized under any kind of genre because of its surreal narrative that is situated in absurd world. However, it can be generally categorized as science fiction, and more specifically as science fiction comedy. Moreover, Douglas Adams

intentionally avoids the use of the literary conventions. It mocks the genre of science-fiction (Gaiman, 2020). *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* still captivates the readers' imagination and attention because of its ability to exceed a particular era and reach the demands of the readers. As radio program, the *Hitchhiker* is the first of its kind that depends more on the comic premise than the logical image. In this work, Douglas Adams has combined his knowledge of the tropes of the science-fiction and his comical sense to produce a setting of the science-fiction formed in an absurdist idiom, but saturated with comedy. After the huge success the radio show has achieved, Adams was urged to publish his work as a novel in 1979. Consequently, in 1980, Adams published the second book which is entitled *The Restaurant at the End of the Universe*. The latter is followed by the publication of the rest of the books such as *Life, the Universe and Everything* in 1982, *So Long, and Thanks for All the Fish* in 1984, and *Mostly Harmless* in 1992 (Gaiman, 2020). The translation of fiction poses certain difficulties to the translators. This can be attributed to the freedom the writers of the science fiction have in inventing new concepts and creating new world. The problem of translating the science fiction narratives is embedded in finding translations for concepts that are not existing in the real world. In order to convey the same impact the source text may have on its readers to the readers of the target text, the translators have to adopt certain translation strategies that can achieve this aim. The current study investigates the translation of pun or word play in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* from English into Arabic from a relevance theoretical perspective, taking into account the effectiveness of the strategies of pun translation in rendering science-fiction novels. The presence of pun in the source text can result in translation problems. Such problems have to be figured out in a process called "problems potting" (González Davies, 2004, p. 189; González Davies & Scott-Tennent, 2005, p. 163). Nord (1997, p. 67) claims that some of the "translation problems are specifically bound to one particular source text, as may be the case for certain figures of speech, neologisms or puns". According to Hatim and Mason (1990, p. 3), translation encompasses a process, a procedure of decision-making, and a communicative act between the users of a language. Therefore, the current study considers not only the final product but also the process of translation which involves the decisions the translator has made. In this regard the translated Arabic text is interpreted as being an "evidence of a transaction, a means of retracing the pathways of the translator's decision-making procedures" (Hatim & Mason, 1990, pp. 3-4). Thereupon, the present study analyzes the translation strategies of pun adopted in the Arabic version from a Relevance-Theory perspective.

2. Relevance Theory and Translation

The bedrocks of Relevance theory is the assumption that the receiver of the message will make an effort to process it whenever he assumes that it is to be relevant. To put it another way, the effort is made whenever the message is considered to be able to improve or modify his assumptions about the world or his cognitive environment. Wilson and Sperber (2004, p. 610) state that the "Cognitive principle of relevance" involves that the "Human cognition tends to be geared to the maximization of relevance". Therefore, in the process of interpreting an utterance, the receiver tries to identify the intended meaning of the sender in that utterance. In this process, the addressee is guided by the communicative principle of relevance which involves that "Every ostensive stimulus conveys a presumption of its own optimal relevance" (Wilson & Sperber, 2004, p. 612). The ostensive stimulus is irrelevant unless it improves or modifies the cognitive environment of the addressee. The modifications of the cognitive environment of an individual are theoretically called positive cognitive effects. According to Wilson and Sperber (2004, p. 608), the "positive cognitive effects is a worthwhile difference to the individual's representation of the world: a true conclusion, for example". Therefore, an utterance is relevant as long as it produces certain cognitive effects in a particular context. The produced cognitive effects are proportional to the effort required to achieve them. Wilson and Sperber (2004) state that:

- a. Other things being equal, the greater the positive cognitive effects achieved by processing an input, the greater the relevance of the input to the individual at that time.
- b. Other things being equal, the greater the processing effort expended, the lower the relevance of the input to the individual at that time (p. 609). In the view of the communicative principle of relevance, the addresser and the addressee will seek the optimal relevance in their communicative acts. That is, any communicative act carries the assumption that it is intended to be relevant in a given context. The addresser can implicitly transfer the assumption that the addressee expects to derive an adequate cognitive effect without the investment of unnecessary effort. However, the processing of pun "seems to contradict this general principle, as the effort needed to process at least two interpretations and to decide whether they are equally relevant increases considerably" (Díaz-Pérez, 2014, p. 110). Therefore, the interpretation of pun requires additional cognitive effects and processing effort to reach the satisfying interpretation in the given context. Moreover, in the relevance theory, it is claimed that language can be

used either descriptively or interpretively. According to Hatim and Munday (2004, p. 177), an utterance “is said to be used descriptively when it is intended to be taken as true of a state of affairs in some possible world”, and it “is said to be used interpretively when it is intended to represent what someone said or thought”. According to Gutt (1998), from a relevance theory perspective: translation falls naturally under the interpretive use of language: the translation is intended to restate in one language what someone else said or wrote in another language. In principle it is, therefore, comparable to quoting or speech-reporting in intra-linguistic use. One of its primary distinctions setting it off from intra-lingual quoting or reporting is that original text and translation belong to different languages (p. 46). According to this view, the process of translation can involve interpretation cross languages. In the relevance theoretic view of translation, any text that is moved from its original context into a new one can have its meaning affected. Then, the task of the translator is to ensure the optimal relevance. From the Relevance Theory perspective, the translator needs to preserve the interpretive resemblance rather than the translation equivalence.

3. A Relevance Theoretic Perspective of Pun Translation

The difficulties of translating pun, which is the main concern of the present study, have been considered and analyzed by several researchers. Delabastita (1994) states that such difficulties can be attributed to: the semantic 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 (p. 223). Similarly, Sanderson (2009, p. 125) points out that due to the interlingual asymmetry, the translation of puns requires a greater variety of linguistic maneuvers than any other translation problems. The lack of symmetry in the levels of the signified and signifiers between the source and the target languages is the most challenging problem in the translation of puns because the translator has to find out whether the cognitive effects resulting from the presence of pun must prevail. Marco (2010, p. 280) recognized that such cases demand a higher level of creativity that a translator must have. Sharing the same view, Yus (2012, p. 144) identifies that the most vital role that a translator should perform is the reservation of inferential strategies which can make deriving the humorous effects conceivable in the source language, even though the semantic content of the joke has to be entirely altered. Therefore, the pragmatic effect predicted by the addresser in the source language has to be preserved by the translator in the target language, through balancing the cognitive effects with mental effort required to process it. Because of the fact that the translation of puns can be problematic, it is important to clarify the translation strategies or techniques used to solve such issue in the translation of pun in science-fiction language.

4. The Strategies of Pun Translation and Relevance Theory

There are a variety of strategies which are proposed to translate the expressions of pun. These strategies are used in the present to investigate and analyze the translation of puns in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* into Arabic. The first strategy is the *punning correspondence* or *pun to pun*. Despite the fact that finding pun counterparts in the target text that can totally correspond to the ones found in the source text is usually expected to be extremely difficult. This strategy involves a target text pun “pun based on the same linguistic phenomenon as its original counterpart and reflecting the same semantic ambiguity” (Díaz-Pérez, 2014, p. 112). Such correspondence takes place when the cognitive environment of the addresser and the addressee concerning the pun processing coincides to some extent. In this case the addressee retrieves the cognitive effect at a minimal cost. In translation, when there is a correspondence on the levels of the signifiers and signified cross-linguistically, the translators have the opportunity to reproduce the same cognitive effect in the target text. This is called a *congenial pun* by Delabastita (1993, p. 196). The second strategy is the *change of pun* or *pun to non-pun*. This strategy is used when “there is normally a lack of correspondence between the levels of signifier and content across languages” (Díaz-Pérez, 2014, p. 115). Consequently, the literal translation of pun from the source text to the target one does not achieve the same cognitive effect intended by the source text producer. In cases where it is impossible to preserve the form and meaning of the source text, the translator needs to choose whether to maintain the effect of pun with sacrificing its meaning or vice versa. If the translator's choice is the preservation of the effect, a new pun that conveys a different meaning is created. The third strategy is *the sacrifice of pun and the maintenance of part of the semantic content*. This strategy involves the translation of “the fragment which contains the pun by means of a textual fragment which does not contain any pun and which keeps at least part of the semantic content of the original pun” (Díaz-Pérez, 2014, p. 118). Using this strategy, the translator has to decide whether to maintain the two or more possible meanings of the source text pun in the target text, or to give the priority to one of them. The prioritized meaning is considered to be more relevant to the target addressee's cognitive environment. The fourth strategy is *punoid* or

pun to punoid which involves the recreation of the cognitive effects of the source text pun by means of using wordplay-related rhetorical devices in the target text such as repetition and assonance and irony. The fifth strategy is the *direct copy* which involves the reproduction of the source pun in its original form without really translating it. The other strategy is called *transference* which implies imposing the signified of the source text on the target one. It is similar to the direct copy. However, the direct copy brings the signifiers of the source text to the target one without concern about the semantic correspondence (Díaz-Pérez, 2014, pp. 120-122).

3. Data Analysis and Discussion

The current study investigates the translation of puns in Douglas Adams' *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* into Arabic from a relevance theory perspective. In addition, the study explores the translation strategies of pun according to the relevance theoretic framework. *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* is translated by Amani Lazar in 2021 into *دليل المسافرين الى المجرة*. The first pun expression is "We'll see who rusts first" which is translated into "أنا مستعد، سنرى من ينفد صبره أولاً". The translator uses the strategy of *change of pun* or *pun to non-pun* because of the fact that in Arabic translation, the pun form is lost and only the figurative or the intended meaning is maintained. This is because the "rust" normally happens to metals not humans. The English word, in this context, is intended to communicate two meanings: the first is the meaning of rusting (i.e., the corrosion of metal) which is the literal meaning; the second is the figurative meaning which is intended to communicate the loss of patience. In relevance theory perspective, the translation must maximize the cognitive effort and contextual effect while minimizing the processing efforts. Therefore, the translator intentionally renders the word "rust" into "ينفذ صبره" to convey the intended meaning and minimize the processing efforts of the readers. Thus, the functional equivalence (i.e., conveying the intended meaning) is prioritized over the formal equivalence (i.e., preserving pun). This aligns with the relevance theory perspective of interpretive resemblance which suggests that translation must preserve the intended meaning of the source text in the target one rather than the form. In *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, the name of the character "Ford Perfect" is used to convey pun. Ford Perfect is a name of an alien who arrives to Earth. He wishes to fit in by adopting a normal human name. However, he chooses the name of cars' brand. Assuming that it was a common name for people, he misunderstandingly chooses the name "Ford Prefect". This pun is translated into Arabic as "فورد برفكت", using the strategy of *direct copy* because the name is transliterated with the attempt to recreate the pun in the target text. Moreover, the translator attempts to preserve the original form because in Arabic there is no pun that can capture the cars name and the humorous misunderstanding. In line with the relevance theory perspective, this translation satisfies the principle of relevance because the translation "فورد برفكت" maximizes the cognitive effect and minimizes the processing efforts of the target audience because they can recognize it as a name of a person without confusion. The expression "Sub-Etha Sens-O-Matic" is used to convey pun because it refers to the name of a pseudo-scientific device, stimulated by some of the futuristic technical terms. The pun does not occur in the direct double meaning, but in the exaggerated technical style. It is translated into "سب-إيثا سنسوماتيك", using the strategy of *transference*. This strategy is used because the name is transliterated into the target text with the aim of imposing the signified of the source text on the target text. It is used to avoid the cultural mismatch of this coined term because the target readers have no such term as well as to be appropriate to the sci-fi context of the whole novel. In connection with the relevance theoretic framework, using the strategy of *transference* can achieve the optimal relevance by preserving the intended the humorous and futuristic function of that fictional name. therefore, such translation is intended to maximize the cognitive contextual effect by aligning it to the overall context of the novel, and to minimize the processing effort by prioritizing the inference that this name must be referring to a fictional futuristic device. In the translation of the pun expression "Babel Fish" into "سمكة بابل", the translator uses the strategy of *pun to pun* because the source text pun is translated into a target text pun. In *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, the phrase "Babel Fish" the biblical story, the Tower of Babel which led to the languages confusion so that individuals could no longer comprehend each other. The Babel Fish converses this situation in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* when positioned in the human's ear, it instantaneously translates any language for him. Therefore, the form and the content of the original pun is reproduced in the target text. In connection with the theory of relevance, this translation achieves the optimal relevance by maximizing the cognitive effect and minimizing the processing effort of the readers of the target text. It maximizes the cognitive effect because it delivers the same literal and figurative meaning and minimizes the processing effort because the idiomatic expression is familiar in Arabic. Therefore, the translation achieves both the formal equivalence and the functional one. In the translation of the expression "The best way to get a drink out of a Vogon is to stick your finger down his throat" into "افضل طريقه للحصول على شراب من فوغون هو ان تقحم اصبعك في حلقه", the translator uses the strategy of the sacrifice if pun where the form and the literal meaning

of the expression is preserved. However, the intended figurative meaning of doing some action to irritate a Vagon is sacrificed. This translation maintains part of the semantic content of the pun expression by prioritizing the literal meaning of the expression and sacrificing its figurative meaning. Within the relevance theory perspective, this translation maximizes the contextual cognitive effect of the readers by preserving the form of the pun expression to encourage them to infer the intended meaning by modifying the readers' cognitive environment. Moreover, the translation minimizes the processing effort by the immediate grasping the violent physical act which, depending on the context of the novel, can communicate the meaning of irritation or provocation. In the translation of the expression "Infinite Improbability Drive" into "محرك الاحتمالية المطلق", the translator uses the strategy of pun to punoid where the source text pun is recreated in the target text with similar effect. The translation retains the same sci-fiction tone, and mimicking the playful absurdity of the original text. Taking the relevance theoretical framework into account, the translation maximizes the contextual cognitive effect by creating the pseudo-scientific and paradoxical tones that can trigger a similar humorous inference. It also minimizes the processing effort of the target readers by using a similar style of exaggeration. Therefore, the translation conveys the intended meaning effectively. The other pun expressions found in the novel are listed with their Arabic translation and the strategy used in that translation in the following table.

Table 1. Puns and their translation strategies in The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy.

The English pun	The Arabic Translation	The used strategy
You haven't got a leg to stand on...	ليس لديك حجة لتعتمد عليها	Pun to non-pun
Not at all	لا شيء على الاطلاق	Pun to non-pun
Time is an illusion. Lunchtime doubly so	الوقت وهم. وقت الغداء وهم مضاعف أيضا	Pun to non-pun
The ships hung in the sky in much the same way that bricks don't	تعلقت السفن بالسماء بشدة بنفس الطريقة التي لا يتعلق بها القرميد	Pun to non-pun
Don't Panic	لا تجزع	Pun to non-pun
Apathetic bloody planet, I've no sympathy at all	كوكب لعين فاطر، لا أملك ذرة تعاطف تجاهه على الاطلاق	Pun to non-pun
The Heart of Gold	قلوب الذهب	Pun to pun
Don't talk to me about life	لا تحدثيني عن الحياة	Pun to pun
Best Bang since the Big One	أفضل انفجار منذ الانفجار العظيم	Pun to non-pun
Vell, Zaphod's just zis guy, you know?	حسناً، إن زيفود هذا الفتى وحسب أنفهم ما أعني؟	Sacrifice of pun
Your Plastic Pal Who's Fun to Be With	رفيقك الآلي الممتع	Pun to punoid
The twin suns of Soulianis and Rahm... Or whatever	الشمسان التوأمين سوليانييس ورام... أو أي شيء	Pun to pun
The suspense is killing me	التشويق يقتلني	Transference
... was almost, but not quite, entirely unlike tea	يكاد يكون مختلفا كلياً عن الشاي لكن ليس تماماً	Pun to punoid
Beware of the Leopard	حذار من النمر	Sacrifice of pun
you'd better be prepared for the jump into hyperspace	من الافضل ان تكون مستعداً للقفزة في الفضاء الفائق	Pun to pun
you're turning into a penguin. Stop it	انت تتحول الى بطريق. توقف	Pun to pun
the Ultimate Question	السؤال النهائي	Pun to punoid
your brains smashed out by a slice of lemon wrapped round a large gold brick.	بان تحطم دماغك شريحة ليمون لفت حول قرميدة ذهبية كبيرة	Transference
Just put this fish in your ear	فقط ضع هذه السمكة في اذنك	Pun to pun
if you can't see it, it can't see you	ان كنت لا تستطيع رؤيته يفترض انه لا يستطيع رؤيتك	Pun to punoid
This must be Thursday. I never could get the hang of Thursdays	لا بد ان اليوم هو الخميس. لم أستطع التعامل مع ايام الخميس قط.	Pun to pun

In addition to the qualitative analysis of the selected data, they are also analyzed quantitatively to assess which of the translation strategies of pun is more frequently used by Arab translators to render the pun expressions a

more relevant manner to the target readers. Therefore, table 2 reflects the frequency and the percentage of each pun translation strategy. **Table 2.** The frequency and percentage of the pun translation strategies.

No.	The strategy type	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Pun to pun	٨	29.62%
2.	Pun to non-pun	8	29.62%
3.	Pun to punoid	4	14.81%
4.	Direct copy	1	3.70%
5.	Transference	3	11.11%
6.	Sacrifice of pun	3	11.11%
	The total	27	100.00%

The quantitative analysis of the selected pun expressions reveals that the most frequently used strategies of translation are the pun to non-pun and pun to non-pun because these two strategies can maximize the cognitive effects of the target readers and minimize the processing efforts. The pun-to-pun strategy can reproduce the form and the content of the pun expression in the target text in a way that the readers can understand and recognize its intended meaning. Though the pun to non-pun strategy causes the form of the pun to be lost in the target text, it is still frequently used because it communicates the intended meaning of the pun to the target readers effectively. The less frequent use of the other strategies can be justified by that the translated pun expression can be less relevant to the target text. Moreover, translating the pun expressions using these strategies can result in readers' confusion. It can also be justified by the loss of humor and the meaning presented in the source text. Additionally, it can be interpreted by the cultural mismatch between English and Arabic, particularly in the context of science fiction novels.

Conclusions

It has been argued that the relevance theory can be effectively applied in the field of translation, particularly the translation of the pun expressions. The relevance theory involves that the translator has to make a decision concerning the meaning that is intended to be communicated. Therefore, the translation is not only a product but also a process of making decisions. In the relevance theoretical framework, the translator usually chooses the translation strategies that achieve the functional equivalence rather than the formal one in the translation of pun expressions. The translator decides which strategy of pun translation is adopted by taking into account the possible cognitive effect it can create and the possible processing effort it requires to be comprehended by the target readers. Consequently, the choice of the translation strategy depends on how much effort the translated pun requires for the processing. That is, the much processing effort, the less selected strategy and vice versa. Accordingly, the assumption of the pun untranslatability is falsified by the application of the relevance theoretical framework because the latter is based not only on the equivalence but also on the recognition of the intentions. In other words, it emphasizes the cognitive effects intended by the source text addresser.

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