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Difficulties In Translating Conor McGregor's Ironic speeches with Reference to Gricean Maxims: A Pragmatic Perspective

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Abstract

This study examines the challenges of translating ironic expressions in Conor McGregor's speeches, focusing on how his flouting of Grice's maxims—especially Relevance—impacts the translation from English into Arabic. Adopting Newmark's semantic and communicative approaches, the study analyzes four pre-fight press conference clips translated independently by five MA students. It evaluates the type of irony, flouted maxims, translation strategy, and rendering quality. Results show verbal irony and communicative translation are most effective in preserving rhetorical impact. The study highlights the role of cultural competence and context awareness in

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achieving accurate translation, recommending pragmatic strategies and communicative methods in translator training for irony-rich discourse.

Keywords: Concept of Irony, Irony and Context, Irony and Culture, Types of Irony.

صعوبات في ترجمة التعبيرات الساخرة مع الإشارة إلى مبادئ غرايس في خطابات ماكغريغور: منظور
تداولي

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المستخلص

تتناول هذه الدراسة تحديات ترجمة التعبيرات الساخرة في خطابات كونور ماكغريغور، مع التركيز على كيفية انتهاكه المتعمد لمبادئ غرايس، لا سيما مبدأ العلاقة، وتأثير ذلك على الترجمة من الإنجليزية إلى العربية. وبالاعتماد على نهج نيومارك في الترجمة (الترجمة التواصلية والدلالية)، حللت الدراسة أربع مقاطع من مؤتمرات صحفية لما قبل النزال، تمت ترجمتها بشكل مستقل من قبل خمسة طلاب ماجستير. وتضمنت التحليل نوع السخرية، والمبدأ المخترق، والاستراتيجية المتبعة، وجودة الترجمة. أظهرت النتائج أن السخرية اللفظية والترجمة التواصلية أكثر فاعلية في نقل الأثر البلاغي. كما تؤكد الدراسة أهمية الكفاءة الثقافية وفهم السياق لتحقيق ترجمة دقيقة، وتوصي باعتماد استراتيجيات تداولية وأساليب تواصلية في تدريب المترجمين، خاصة في النصوص الغنية بالسخرية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مفهوم السخرية، السخرية والسياق، السخرية والثقافة، أنواع السخرية.

1.1 Introduction

Irony is a way of expressing meaning indirectly, often by saying something that appears untrue or irrelevant. It usually occurs when the speaker flouts Grice's Cooperative Principle (CP) maxims, to signal a hidden or opposite meaning. This makes irony challenging to interpret and even more difficult to translate across different cultures.

According to Leech (1983:142), irony is a pragmatic concept that allows the speaker to appear courteous while acting rudely by violating one or more of the cooperative principle maxims.

In Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC), much of the trash talk serves to sell tickets, promote upcoming fights, and increase Pay-Per-View (PPV) purchases. Fighters frequently use ironic expressions as a primary strategy to achieve these goals. Each fighter promotes himself / herself by emphasizing his / her skills in Mixed Martial Arts (MMA), while simultaneously speaking negatively about their opponents. In doing so, they often violate Grice's (CP) maxims. Although many fighters engage in this type of discourse, this study focuses on Conor McGregor, as he consistently employs this style of language more than any other fighter in the UFC.

Paralinguistic features such as facial expressions, tone of voice, and body language, along with cultural differences and the context in which ironic statements are made, play a crucial role in the creation and interpretation of irony. Therefore, the researcher includes the links to the clip videos to allow readers to observe these elements firsthand and understand how they significantly contribute to conveying various types of irony effectively.

1.2 The Concept of Irony

Irony is a complex concept that encompasses a variety of interconnected notions. This complexity presents a significant challenge in formulating a straightforward and all-encompassing definition of irony. As a result of its diverse manifestations, multiple definitions of irony have emerged.

Muecke (1978:10) points out that this challenge arises because irony can take on numerous types and forms, and it continues to evolve. In contrast, Marino (1997:404) attributes the difficulty to "the complex history of the word that makes it impossible to control" and notes that "irony typically involves intentions and always involves contexts." Consequently, Muecke suggests that a simple and comprehensive definition of irony can only be achieved if we thoroughly address the full spectrum of irony.

1.3 Irony and Context

An important part of irony's meaning is derived from the situational, linguistic, and pragmatic context in which it is used. Depending on the surrounding context, which includes the speaker's tone, facial expression, previous utterance, and the relationship between participants, the identical utterance may or may not be viewed as sarcastic. Therefore, context is essential to correctly

recognizing, creating, and interpreting irony .Pragmatically speaking, irony frequently entails a difference between what is meant and what is expressed, and identifying this contrast necessitates knowledge of the surrounding signs.

According to Clark and Gerrig (1984:122), irony operates as an indirect speech act in which the literal meaning is intentionally different from the speaker's intended meaning, and this gap is typically recognized through contextual signals. Without such cues, ironic statements can easily be misread as sincere or inappropriate.

For instance, consider the statement "You're so punctual" said to someone who arrives thirty minutes late. In the absence of context—such as the speaker's tone or the listener's knowledge of their own lateness—the sentence might be interpreted literally. However, when delivered with a sarcastic tone in a setting where both parties are aware of the delay, the ironic intent becomes clear.

1.3 Irony and Culture

Cultural context plays a crucial role in both the production and comprehension of irony. In high-context cultures, such as those in the Middle East or East Asia, communication tends to be indirect, and irony may be signaled subtly through tone, body language, or implication. On the other hand, low-context cultures like the United States or Germany often favor directness, and ironic remarks are typically more explicit and verbal in nature (Hall, 1976:91). This variation affects how irony is expressed and how it is received by different audiences. Furthermore, irony frequently draws upon shared cultural references. Allusions to social behaviors, public figures, or national stereotypes require the audience to recognize the background knowledge implied in the utterance. Without this shared cultural framework, the intended ironic meaning may not be fully understood.

1.4 Types of Irony

1.4.1 Situational Irony

Cuddon (1998:430) describes situational irony as occurring when a man mockingly laughs at another's misfortune while suffering the same. Shelley (2001:775) suggests it involves unexpectedness from anticipated normality and a "mocking quality." Peck and Coyle (2002:160) highlight the contradiction between perceived and true nature of situations.

Example (1): A fire station burns down.

Situational irony arises when an outcome starkly contradicts expectations (Abrams & Harpham, 2015:170).

1.4.2 Dramatic Irony

Muecke (1970:64) notes it as a subset of situational irony involving future-dependent expectations being undermined. Perrine (1974:216) defines it as a disparity between what a character says and what the reader knows.

Cuddon (1998:431) outlines three stages of dramatic irony: preparation (creating conflict), suspension (opposing audience knowledge), and resolution (audience knows more than characters). Ellestrom (2002:56) defines it as when the audience knows more than the character.

Example (2): In *Oedipus Rex*, Oedipus is unaware he has fulfilled the prophecy, while the audience already knows (Sophocles, 2009:34).

1.4.3 Cosmic Irony (Irony of Fate)

Cosmic irony occurs when results diverge from intended outcomes (Ankersmit, 1996:166). Abrams (1999:137) explains it as fate or a deity manipulating events to mock the protagonist. Boghian (2010:50) adds it reflects the distance between observer and the observed.

Example (3): In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Tess suffers despite her virtue (Hardy, 2005:102).

1.4.4 Romantic Irony

Abrams (1999:137) defines it as when an author builds a realistic illusion, then breaks it by revealing narrative control. Fischer and Greiner (2007:16) highlight its comic-serious blend and self-reflexivity. Muecke (1970:78) sees it as acknowledging literature's ambivalence.

Example (4): In *Don Juan*, the narrator comments self-consciously on the story (Byron, 2004:12).

1.4.5 Tragic Irony

Tragic irony appears in fiction when the audience understands a situation that the character does not (Cuddon, 1998:431).

Example (5): In *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo kills himself thinking Juliet is dead, though she lives (Shakespeare, 2003:215).

1.4.6 Comic Irony

Clift (1999:524) notes irony is used for comic effect and satire by presenting false truths. Jubair and Al-Hindawi (2016:25) explain it as blending humor and absurdity.

Example (6): In *The Importance of Being Earnest*, characters treat trivial matters as serious (Wilde, 2005:44).

1.4.7 Verbal Irony

Verbal irony replaces literal meaning with its opposite. Grice (1989:22) sees it as a rhetorical figure involving contradiction. Niazi (2004:90) defines it as suggesting an opposite meaning. Utsumi (2000:1803) describes it as implying an ironic situation through indirect clues. Searle (1979:113) views it as an indirect form requiring reinterpretation.

1.5 Methodology

This study employs both quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a comprehensive analysis. Data were collected from six press conferences and three interviews with Conor McGregor, sourced from YouTube and selected for their use of verbal irony, especially in mocking opponents.

The qualitative analysis focused on rhetorical features, types of irony, translation appropriateness, flouted maxims, and translation strategies. It aimed to identify the challenges of translating ironic expressions while adhering to Gricean maxims. The quantitative approach was used to determine the frequency and patterns of ironic expressions across events.

Clips were randomly selected from four press conferences to ensure diverse contexts. The videos were transcribed, and relevant excerpts were analyzed to examine the difficulties in translating irony while preserving the original meaning.

1.6 Model of Analysis

This study adopts two key models:

1.6.1 Linguistic Model

Grice's pragmatic theory emphasizes the cooperative principle and four conversational maxims:

- 1- Maxim of Quality: Speak truthfully and based on sufficient evidence (Grice 1975:46).
- 2- Maxim of Quantity: Provide the right amount of information—not too little or too much (Grice 1975:45).
- 3- Maxim of Relation: Ensure relevance to the topic (Grice 1975:53).
- 4- Maxim of Manner: Be clear, orderly, and avoid ambiguity (Grice 1975:46).

These maxims help distinguish between what is said and what is implied, which is essential in analyzing irony.

1.6.2 Translation Model

Newmark proposes two main translation approaches:

A) Semantic Translation:

Focuses on conveying the exact contextual meaning while preserving the structure and style of the original. It reflects the author's individuality but may result in less clarity or impact (Newmark 1988b:39–53).

B) Communicative Translation:

Aims to make the message clear and natural to the target audience, often prioritizing effect over literal accuracy (Newmark 1988a:47; Newmark 1988b:39–53).

1.7 Data Analysis

SL Text: [1] “*your wife is your husband*”

Fighter : “It's been a lot of growth, you know learning from losses in life and from uh and fighting , so just getting better...”

Conor : **“*your wife is your husband*”**

UFC - Ultimate Fighting Championship. (2021, July 8). UFC 264: Pre-fight Press Conference | Poirier vs McGregor 3 [Video].

Retrieved February 28, 2025, from

YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/live/JLlkx9c1TzU?feature=shared>

(14:26 - 14:35)

TL Texts

1-المقاتل : " هنالك تقدم كبير، كما تعلم ، جراء التعلم من الخسارات في الحياة والنزالات لذا الأمور نحو الأحسن".

كونر: "امرأتك هي صاحبة الكلمة"

2-المقاتل : "لقد كان هناك الكثير من النمو، كما تعلم، التعلم من الخسائر في الحياة ومن القتال، لذا فإنني أصبحت أفضل..."

كونور: "زوجتك اقوى منك!"

3-المقاتل: "كانت مرحلة مليئة بالتطورات، فمثلا تعلمت الكثير من الخسارات في الحياة كما في النزالات، فإن التقدم للأفضل..."

كونر "زوجتك هي المسيطرة".

4-المقاتل: "لقد كان هناك الكثير من التعلم، كما تعلم، التعلم من الخسائر في الحياة ومنك ومن القتال، لذا حظيت بتحسن أفضل".

كونر: "زوجتك هي زوجك".

5-المقاتل: "التجارب تعلمك الكثير، سواء في الحياة أو القتال، وأنا أتحسن يوماً بعد يوم..."

كونور: "زوجتك هي من تقوم بدور الرجل في علاقتكما".

Discussion

In this context, Conor deliberately insulted his opponent by implying that there was something unusual or problematic about his relationship with his wife. His intention behind using such expressions is to provoke and psychologically unsettle his opponent. The phrase "your wife is your husband", carries an element of verbal irony, as it suggests an unexpected or unconventional dynamic in the relationship, contradicting traditional gender roles.

Among the five translations, (1), (3), and (5) successfully conveyed Conor's intended meaning by adopting a communicative approach. These translations effectively preserved the ironic tone, ensuring that the confrontational and provocative nature of the original remark was maintained.

Specifically, translation (5) was particularly effective, as it not only retained the irony but also provided a natural and culturally appropriate rendering that conveyed the intended insult.

However, translation (2), despite also adopting a communicative approach, failed to fully capture the intended ironic expression. While it conveyed a sense of comparison between the fighter and his wife, it lacked the unexpected contradiction present in the original statement, making it less impactful. On the other hand, translation (4) followed a semantic approach, resulting in a literal rendering that did not effectively convey the irony. By translating the phrase word-for-word as “زوجتك هي زوجك”, the translation became ambiguous and lost its intended provocative effect.

All five translations flouted Grice’s maxims, particularly the Maxim of Quality (since the statement is not meant to be taken literally), the Maxim of Manner (as the phrasing is intentionally ambiguous and provocative), and the Maxim of Relevance (since the remark is a diversion from the fighter’s statement). This deliberate flouting is essential for generating verbal irony, reinforcing the humorous yet aggressive nature of Conor’s comment.

Thus, the effectiveness of a translation in this context depends on its ability to maintain both the irony and the intended insult. Translation (5) achieved this most successfully, while translation (2) weakened the irony, and translation (4) lost it entirely due to its literal approach.

Table (1): Text Analysis (1)

SL 1	SUB	MOT		POT			FM				APP
		Sem	Com	Ver	Situ	Dra	Qual	Quan	Relv	Mann	
your wife is your husband	1	-	+	+	-	-	+	-	-	-	+
	2	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
	3	-	+	+	-	-	-	+	-	-	+

	4	+	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	+	-
	5	-	+	+	-	-	+	-	-	-	+

SL Text: [2] “Asalamalaikumalaaida”

The repressor : “Next question.”

Conor: “Asalamalaikumalaaida”

UFC - Ultimate Fighting Championship. (2018, September 20). UFC 229 Press Conference: Khabib vs McGregor [Video].

Retrieved February 28, 2025, from

YouTube https://www.youtube.com/live/s8NL-n_XgSY?feature=shared.

(27:28 – 27:32)

TL Texts:

1- المراسل : " السؤال التالي "

كونر: " بدأ مشوار الألف ميل."

2- المقدم : " السؤال التالي "

كونور : " السلام عليكم "

3- المقدم : " السؤال التالي "

كونر : " السلام عليكم والحمد لله "

4- المراسل : " السؤال التالي."

كونور : " السلام عليكم "

5- المذيع : " السؤال التالي."

Discussion

When Conor McGregor said “*Asalamalaikumalaaida*”, he was not using the traditional Arabic greeting “*As-salamu alyakum*”, which means “*Peace be upon you*” sincerely. Instead, he deliberately distorted the phrase, likely to provoke a reaction or mock the situation. His tone and delivery suggest that he was being sarcastic or playful rather than respectful.

Among the translations, only (1) attempted a communicative approach by trying to capture the humor and irony instead of translating the phrase literally. However, it did not fully achieve the intended meaning, as “بدأ مشوار الألف ميل”, does not match McGregor’s sarcastic intent. While it moves away from a literal translation, it fails to reflect the mockery or playful provocation present in the original.

On the other hand, translations (2), (3), (4), and (5) all followed a semantic approach, translating the phrase as “السلام عليكم” or “السلام عليكم والحمد لله”. This literal rendering failed in two ways:

- 1- It did not capture the irony or sarcasm, making it sound like McGregor was genuinely greeting the audience.
- 2- It misrepresented his actual words, as he did not say the greeting correctly but rather distorted it for comedic or provocative effect.

In all five translations, the Maxim of Relevance was flouted, as McGregor’s phrase was not a direct or meaningful response to the context but rather a playful or mocking remark. However, the irony and sarcasm were lost in the literal translations, making them sound like simple, informative statements rather than provocative or humorous ones.

To illustrate the analysis:

Translation (1) attempted a communicative approach but did not fully succeed in delivering the intended sarcasm.

Translations (2, 3, 4, and 5) were ineffective because they treated the phrase as a normal greeting rather than an ironic twist.

A more effective translation should capture both the distortion of the greeting and the sarcastic intent, rather than just translating the words literally.

Table (2): Text Analysis (2)

SL 2	SUB	MOT		POT			FM				APP
		Sem	Com	Ver	Situ	Dra	Qual	Quan	Relv	Mann	
Aslanalikhumalaaida	1	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
	2	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
	3	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
	4	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
	5	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-

SL Text: [3] “Mama mama mama mama”

fighter: “I’m the Floyd Mayweather in MMA.”

Conor: “**Mama mama mama mama** Shut your mouth mate”

UFC - Ultimate Fighting Championship. (2018, September 20). UFC 229 Press Conference: Khabib vs McGregor [Video].

Retrieved February 28, 2025, from

YouTube https://www.youtube.com/live/s8NL-n_XgSY?feature=shared.

(24:07 – 24:14)

TL Texts:

1-المنازل : "انا" فلويد مايويدز في البطولة"

كونور: "أنت طفل اغلق فمك يا صاح . "

2-المقاتل: "أنا فلويد مايويدز في فنون القتال المختلطة".

كونور: "بلا بلا بلا، أغلق فمك يا رفيقي"

3-المقاتل: "أنا فلويد مايويدز من عالم الـ MMA".

كونور: "ماما ماما ماما.. اخرس يا فتى".

4-المقاتل: "أنا فلويد مايويدز في ام ام اي".

كونور: "ماما ماما ماما ماما، فقط أغلق فمك يا صديقي".

5-المقاتل: "أنا فلويد مايويدز في فنون القتال المختلطة".

كونور: "ماما ماما ماما، اصمت يا فتى".

Discussion

In this exchange, when Khabib Nurmagomedov claimed he was "*Floyd Mayweather in MMA*", he was positioning himself as the best in MMA much like Mayweather is in boxing. In response, Conor McGregor's remark of "*Mama mama mama mama*" served as a mockery, implying that McGregor found Khabib's claim childish and not serious.

In terms of translation, translation (1) adopted a communicative approach by conveying the mocking tone, but it failed to capture the full essence of the irony. The phrase "أنت طفل اغلق فمك يا صاح", doesn't reflect McGregor's mimicking tone, which is central to the intended mockery.

Translations (3), (4), and (5), on the other hand, adopted a more semantic approach, but here the use of verbal irony and dramatic irony effectively captures McGregor’s mocking intent. Translations (4) and (5), in particular, stayed closest to the original by retaining the “*Mama mama mama*”, phrase ensuring the irony was preserved while avoiding any violations of the Gricean maxims.

The mimicry in translations (4) and (5) kept the essence of Conor’s insult intact, making the irony clear. However, in translation (2), replacing the mimicry with a direct insult caused the translation to flout the relevance maxim, losing the intended humor and subtlety McGregor had conveyed with his original remark.

Table (3): Text Analysis (3)

SL3	SUB	MOT		POT			FM				AP P
		Sem	Co m	Ver	Situ	Dra	Qu al	Qu an	Rel v	Ma nn	
Mama mama mama mama	1	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
	2	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
	3	+	-	+	-	+	-	-	+	-	-
	4	+	-	+	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
	5	+	-	+	-	+	-	-	-	-	-

SL Text: [4]"suck these big Irish balls"

Fighter: "I came for an apology from him, I want an apology for saying my wife and kids."

Conr: "suck these big Irish balls"

UFC ON FOX. (2016, November 8). Watch the full UFC 205 pre-fight press conference from New York City | UFC 205 [Video]. Retrieved February 28, 2025, from YouTube https://youtu.be/_L0f477qDrg.

(17:51–17:58)

TL Texts:

1-المقاتل: "جئت لأطلب منه اعتذارًا، أريد اعتذارًا لحديثه عن زوجتي وأولادي".

كونر: "امتص هذه الكرات الأيرلندية الضخمة"

2-المقاتل: "جئت للحصول على اعتذار منه، أريد اعتذارًا بشأن قوله عن زوجتي وأطفالي".

كونور: "ضع هذه الكرات الأيرلندية الضخمة في فمك".

3-المقاتل: "أريد أن يعتذر عن الإساءة لعائلتي".

كونور: "خُذ هذا الرد القوي، ولا تستهين به".

4-المقاتل: "أريد أن يعتذر عن الكلام الذي قاله عن عائلتي".

كونر: "تنوق كراتي الأيرلندية الكبيرة"

5-المنزل "جئت للحصول على اعتذار منه بسبب ما قاله عن زوجتي وأطفالي".

كونر: "أفضلُ أن تمتص كراتي الأيرلندية الكبيرة"

Discussion

The phrase "*Suck these big Irish balls*", is a rude and mocking reply from Conor McGregor. He is rejecting Eddie Alvarez's request for an apology in a disrespectful way. The word "suck" is

used to insult, and by saying "*big Irish balls*". McGregor is showing off his pride in being tough and Irish in a way that feels exaggerated. The phrase is meant to make fun of Alvarez and provoke him, which is typical of McGregor's style.

In Translation (1), the phrase "امتص هذه الكرات الأيرلندية الضخمة", adopted a semantic approach by staying close to the original meaning. The word "امتص" is a direct translation of the original, which preserves the rude and mocking tone McGregor intended. While the phrase maintains the insulting nature, the intensity may be slightly softened for an Arabic-speaking audience, as the phrase might not carry the same level of crudeness as it does in English. This translation flouts the Maxim of Relevance because McGregor's response doesn't address the apology request but instead mocks Alvarez. Although it stays faithful to the meaning, the insult is somewhat reduced due to cultural differences, making this translation effective but less intense than the original.

In Translation (2), the adopted communicative approach makes this translation less direct and softer than the original. The verb "ضع في فمك", replaces "*suck*" which reduces the forcefulness of the insult. Although it still carries the mocking intent, the tone is less sharp, and the translation becomes more of a suggestion than an aggressive command. This translation also flouts the Maxim of Relevance because McGregor does not answer the request for an apology but instead mocks Alvarez. While the mocking tone is still there, the insult is weakened, making the translation somewhat less effective in conveying the intended irony.

In Translation (3) Here, "خُذْ هذا الرد القوي، ولا تستهين به" (take this strong reply, and don't underestimate it) completely shifts the meaning. This translation uses a communicative approach but departs significantly from the original tone. The phrase loses McGregor's verbal irony and sarcasm, turning into a serious response rather than a mocking insult. The Maxim of Relevance is still flouted, as McGregor avoids addressing the apology request, but the response no longer feels like a sarcastic dismissal. By changing the tone from mockery to seriousness, this translation fails to preserve the essence of the original phrase, weakening the impact and the intended irony.

Translation (4), In "تذوق كراتي الأيرلندية الكبيرة", this translation adopts a semantic approach, maintaining the original meaning but replacing "*suck*" with "تذوق", which softens the insult. While it still conveys the mockery, it doesn't have the same aggressive or forceful impact as the original English phrase. McGregor does not provide a relevant answer to the apology request. However, the change from "*suck*" to "*taste*" reduces the intensity of the insult, making this translation less successful in conveying McGregor's sharp sarcasm and mocking tone.

In Translation (5) the word “أفضلُ”, weakens the mocking tone significantly. This translation adopt a communicative approach, but the use of “أفضلُ” makes it sound like a less aggressive suggestion than McGregor's original insult. The phrase still flouts the Maxim of Relevance, as McGregor does not address the apology request, but the tone becomes much softer and less confrontational . By altering the original phrase to include politeness and reducing the force of the insult, this translation significantly alters McGregor’s intent, making it the least effective in conveying his sarcastic and mocking tone.

All five translations reflect a verbal irony and all five translations failed in capture the intended meaning, which is of course not the literal one .

Table (4): Text Analysis (4)

SL 4	SUB	MOT		POT			FM				AP P
		Sem	Co m	Ver	Situ	Dra	Qu al	Qu an	Rel v	Ma nn	
suck these big Irish balls	1	+	-	+	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
	2	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
	3	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	+	-
	4	+	-	+	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
	5	+	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	+	-

SL Text: [5] “Ladies first”

Journalist: “ this is a question for both McGregor and cowboy , I see you both winning the championship coming up soon, could you see yourself Fighting each other coming up in the next year?”

Cowboy: "yeah, go ahead MCnugget you wanna answer that or no?"

Conor: "Ladies first"

Podcast TV. (2015). Conor McGregor Go Big Campaign - UFC 194 [Video].

Retrieved February 28, 2025, from

YouTube. <https://youtu.be/L3Ma5gluYo4?feature=shared> (22:03 - 22:22)

TL Texts:

1- الصحفي: "سؤال لكما، ماكغريغور وكابوي، هل تعتقدان أنكما ستتواجهان العام القادم؟"

كابوي: "تفضل يا ماكنجت، هل تريد الرد أم لا؟"

كونور: "السيدات أولاً."

2- الصحفي: "هل يمكن أن نراكما في مواجهة خلال العام المقبل؟"

كابوي: "تفضل، ماكنجت، هل لديك رد؟"

كونور: "الأولوية للنساء."

3- الصحفي: "هل ترى نفسك تقاثل كابوي قريباً؟"

كابوي: "ما رأيك يا ماكنجت؟ عندك جواب؟"

كونور: "السيدات قبل الرجال."

4- الصحفي: "هل هناك فرصة لنزال بينكما قريباً؟"

كابوي: "ما رأيك يا ماكنجت؟ ستتكلم أم لا؟"

كونور: "تفضل أولاً."

5- الصحفي: "هل تفكر في نزال مع كابوي العام القادم؟"

كابوي: "ماكنجت، هل لديك تعليق؟"

كونور: "النساء يبدأن أولاً."

Discussion

Conor McGregor's response, "Ladies first," in this exchange is a sarcastic remark aimed at Donald "Cowboy" Cerrone. By saying this, he avoids answering the journalist's question directly, instead mocking Cerrone and skillfully imposing his own dominance. The phrase implies that Cerrone must answer first, which serves as a psychological tactic to belittle him in front of the audience. McGregor uses irony here, not to answer the question but to control the situation, showing his self-assured and mocking personality.

In Translation (1), "السيدات أولاً" the translation remains faithful to McGregor's sarcastic tone and intent. This translation adopts a communicative approach, directly conveying his mocking tone and maintaining the humor of the original. The Maxim of Relevance is flouted because he does not answer the question but instead focuses his attention to his ironic expression. The irony here is verbal irony, as he says something that's the opposite of what might be expected in the situation, intentionally implying that Cerrone should answer first. This translation is the most successful in maintaining the sarcastic and mocking nature of McGregor's response.

Translation (2), adopted a communicative approach conveying a similar meaning but softens the impact of McGregor's response. The phrase "للنساء الأولوية", doesn't carry the same sharpness and directness as "Ladies first". While it still flouts the Maxim of Relevance, the mockery is less forceful, making the sarcasm less impactful. The irony remains verbal irony, but the translation doesn't have the same punch as the original.

In Translation (3), the Communicative approach was the adopted approach. The irony is still present, but the addition of "قبل الرجال", defects the original statement. While it still maintains a mocking tone, the change makes the remark sound more neutral and less biting. The Maxim of Relevance is flouted once again, as he doesn't answer the question but diverts attention to his sarcastic comment. However, this translation loses some of the sharpness and directness of the original, weakening the irony slightly. It still represents verbal irony, but its effect is somewhat softened.

Translation (4) also adopted a communicative approach, but the phrase. "تفضل أولاً", changes the tone significantly by turning McGregor's sarcastic remark into a polite request. This softens the mockery and makes it sound like a casual suggestion rather than a sharp and disrespectful comment. The Maxim of Relevance is still flouted, but the sarcasm is lost. It is much weaker and less effective in conveying his mocking and dominant tone.

In Translation (5), “النساء يبدأن أولاً”, the irony remains but is diluted further. The phrasing lacks the sharpness and directness of the original, making the remark seem less mocking. While it still flouts the Maxim of Relevance, it doesn't capture the same psychological tactic of superiority and mockery that he intended. The irony is again verbal, but the impact of the sarcasm is significantly reduced.

Table (5): Text Analysis (5)

SL 5	SUB	MOT		POT			FM				APP
		Sem	Com	Ver	Situ	Dra	Qual	Quan	Relv	Mann	
Ladies first	1	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	+	-	+
	2	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
	3	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
	4	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
	5	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	+	-	-

In all five translations, McGregor’s response flouts the Maxim of Relevance, as he avoids answering the question and instead mocks Cerrone. However, Translation (1) most successfully captures his verbal irony and his mocking, dominant tone. The other translations soften the sarcasm to varying degrees, with Translation (4) being the least effective in preserving his original intent.

1.9 Conclusions

This study revealed that verbal irony was the most prevalent form used in the selected samples, functioning primarily as a tool for provocation and mockery. This type of irony depended heavily on indirect language and culturally loaded expressions. A clear pattern emerged regarding the flouting of Grice's maxims: the Maxim of Relevance was most frequently violated, as McGregor often avoided direct responses and instead employed irony to assert dominance or provoke reactions. Less frequent, but still notable, were violations of the Maxims of Quality and Manner, which contributed to the ambiguity or exaggeration typical of his speech style.

Furthermore, the study found that communicative translations were generally more effective in preserving the intended ironic meaning. These translations succeeded in conveying the sarcastic tone and rhetorical impact, especially when adapted to fit the cultural norms of Arabic-speaking audiences. In contrast, semantic translations, despite their linguistic accuracy, often failed to reflect the speaker's underlying intentions, leading to a loss of impact or misrepresentation of the original message.

Ultimately, it became evident that the appropriateness of an ironic translation depends largely on the translator's sensitivity to context, tone, and cultural connotations. A purely literal approach proves insufficient when dealing with irony, which by nature relies on pragmatic and contextual understanding. Therefore, a context-aware, communicative strategy is essential for capturing the essence of ironic discourse in translation.

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