

A Pragmatic Analysis of Metonymy in English and Its Translatability into Arabic

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Abstract

The present paper aims at analyzing metonymy in terms of pragmatic implicature, for implicature simply uncovers what is intended by the speaker when he is uttering an utterance. Since the study assumes that behind each metonymy there is an intended meaning, the study seeks to analyze metonymy in terms of implicature by constructing an eclectic model. The study, on the other hand, seeks to categorize metonymy into types depending on the type of the 'association' relationship of a metonymy. As the study attempts to find a suitable way of translating metonymy, it has proved, among different ways, that the nonfigurative way is the most appropriate way for it gives the metonymy its meaning intended by the speaker. Otherwise, if a metonymy is translated literally, there would result a semantic ambiguity or oddity.

1. Introduction

The study sheds some light upon the analysis of metonymy from pragmatic perspectives and how to translate it from English into Arabic because it poses a problem for the learners of English. The researcher selects an eclectic model which consists of Reinhart's model (1980): Tenor – Interpretation and Vehicle – Interpretation. Then the information or data from these two elements: Tenor and Vehicle, will be analyzed from pragmatic point of view to grasp the meaning meant by the speaker of a metonymy. In addition, the conventional implicature always expresses what is conveyed regardless

of context, whereas, the conversational implicature means, what is implied varies according to the context of utterance (Thomas, 1995: 57). The most important aims are to find out a suitable way for translating metonymy from English into Arabic and finding a pragmatic model for analyzing metonymy. However, and according to this study, metonymy is classified into types: spatial, temporal, personified and contiguous. In fact, this classification basically depends on the type of the association relationship that metonymy gets. Moreover, the study has proved that translating metonymy might be submitted to three ways presented by Larson (1984:

114). The first is called the non-figurative translation. The second is 'sense addition', while the third is the figurative equivalence. The study assumes that the first – the nonfigurative translation is the most suitable one for it avoids using the literal translation which if used, leads to problems of translation such as semantic ambiguity / oddness and misunderstanding. Bearing in mind that the data represents scatters of various examples taken from different sources.

2. Figurative Language

The figurative language is considered a departure from what users of the language apprehend as the standard meaning of words, or standard order of words in order to achieve some special meaning or effect. Such figures are described as poetic 'ornaments' integrated to the functioning of language, and indispensable not only to poetry but also to all modes of discourse (Abrams, 1993:66).

Ortony (1979:38) ensures that the figurative language introduces new creative ways, unpredictable situations perceiving the words and involves conceptual ideas which are different from those of literary interpretations. It is, in effect, the language of imagination which does not literally mean what it says. Abrams (1993:66) further states that modern classifications and analyses are based on the treatment of figurative language by classical rhetoricians. The fullest and most influential treatment is in the Roman Quintillians Institutes of Oratory. Since that time, figurative

language has often been divided into: (1) figures of thought, or tropes (meaning 'turns' or 'conversation') in which words or phrases are used in a way that affects a conspicuous change, namely, the speakers convey their intended meanings through using tropes. (2) figures of speech, or rhetorical figures, or schemes in which the departure from standard usage is not primarily in the meaning of words, but in the syntactic order or pattern of the words (Ibid.). This study discusses three interrelated figures of speech which are metonymy synecdoche, and personification.

2.1. Metonymy

Metonymy is a figure of speech related to synecdoche, in which one word is substituted by another with which it stands in a close relationship, (Preminger, 1974:499). He adds that there is a reason to believe that metonymy with metaphor, is more intimately related to processes whereby experience becomes language and thought rather than studying it as a figure. Originally, metonymy comes from the Greek word 'metonymia' – namely, it is derived from 'meta' which means 'change', and 'onoma' which means 'name'. Consequently, the name of a thing is transferred to take the place of something else with which it is associated. For instance, '**Baghdad**', explicitly, refers to the government of Iraq; '**The White House**' is a reference to the president of the United States of America, and so forth. Thus, the process of metonymy involves personification, and closely

related to that of synecdoche, (Hawkes, 1972:4).

A common type of metonymy is that of a proper name which is used as the generic term for a commodity produced by a firm, as for example: Xerox or Kleenex. Other types of metonymy can be seen in 'the leadership' which refers to 'the leaders' (abstract for concrete). 'Answer the door' implicates 'respond to somebody who knocks at the door', 'phone to communicate' implicates 'save somebody's pockets', (Gramley and Patzold, 1992:33). On the other hand, Hartmann and Stork (1972:141) view metonymy as "a type of semantic change in which the meaning of a word or a group of words is changed by using it for another word with which it is associated". For example:

(1) Jack ate all the dish of omlette.

The above example shows that metonymy involves the relationship between contents and containers in the sense that the above sentence means that Jack ate all the omlette, which is a kind of food. Hence, Jack ate the content (the omlette) not the container (the dish). Pragmatically, the word 'all' implicates that Jack ate all the dish of omlette not some of it.

In terms of association, Leech (1969:152) defines metonymy as "a figure of speech that consists of using the name of one thing for that of something else with which it is associated". This, in fact, covers all the rules of transference including that of metaphor since similarity is a form of association. However, practically, metonymy is treated as a residual

category including all varieties of transference of meaning a part from those which are separately classified as synecdoche and metaphor. An example of transference is the following:

(2) The whole village rejoiced.

The above example demonstrates that they are the people of the village who rejoiced not the roads, houses or lands which rejoiced, (Ibid.). 'Whole village' means all the citizens in the village, but it does not implicate some citizens in the village. Further, Coles (1981:118) views metonymy as a figure of speech in which the name of one thing is substituted for that of another with which it is closely associated. For example, the 'crown' is used to mean the 'monarchy' and the 'stage' is used to refer to the theatrical profession. Stevens and Charless (1966:221) point out that metonymy is a figure of speech in which the name of a thing closely associated with an object or person is substituted for that object or person. For instance, to say:

(3) I have read Golding

implicates that you have read somebody else. The word 'Golding' here is allowed to stand for the book that he wrote, (Ibid.). It is safe to say that there is a relationship between one thing and another associated with it and the sense is shifted from one to the other. Nonetheless, there is no resemblance between the two things. In Arabic, for example, one could find similar cases:

تناولت فنجاناً ، شربت كأساً ، إدارة نشيطة ،
درست شومسكي ، قرأت شيكسبير ، مدرسة

نشيطه ، حكومة شديدة ، وصف نشيط أو صف
كسول .

2.2 Synecdoche

Synecdoche is an important figure of speech which is regarded as a special type of metonymy, where the part is substituted by the whole or sometimes the whole is substituted by the part, (Preminger, 1974:841). The traditional figure of synecdoche is identified with a rule which applies the terms for the part to the whole. This case is mostly observed in proverbs, e.g.,:

(4) Many hands make light work.

The word 'hands' is a part which stands for the whole (i.e., the persons). In the same respect, Larson (1984:113) enhances that "the figurative senses based on part – whole relationships are also quite common in some languages, and are called synecdoche". A person may say:

(5) I am not going to let him come under my roof (Larson, 1984: 113).

Roof, which is a part of the house, is substituted for house. Hence, roof is used in a figurative sense to mean house. In Arabic, one may find a similar expression such as:

(6) عائلة كبيرة تعيش تحت سقف واحد

Here, the word 'سقف' which means 'roof' is substituted for 'منزل' house. To translate the above sentence from

Arabic into English, it is possible to translate it 'A big family which lives in one house'. In fact, translating the word 'سقف' as 'house', makes the sentence lose its figurative sense. Further, the word 'head' is used figuratively to refer to synecdoche, e.g.,:

(7) The merchant bought seven heads of sheep.

The above example shows that by using the term 'head', one does not mean that the heads are being talked about. Instead, 'heads' implicates the sheep as a whole. Consequently, the part, i.e., the head stands for the whole, i.e., the sheep as a whole. On the other hand, and from a semantic point of view, the use of a name of a part for the whole and vice versa is the way of meaning shift. Accordingly, it is inferred that synecdoche and metonymy share the same function of metaphor because in metaphor words are used rhetorically to have a meaning other than the literal meaning that they carry. In other words, they have intended meanings implicitly, (Al- Duleimi, 2003:67).

2.3. Personification

Personification is defined by Abrams (1993:69) as a figure of speech related to metaphor which is related to the Greek word 'prosopopeia'. Personification means either an inanimate object or an abstract concept which is given human attributes or feelings. Crystal (1989:70) relates personification to metaphor in stating that personification is a type of metaphor

in which an object or idea is represented in human terms, e.g.,:

(7) Sky lowered, and muttering thunder, some sad drops. Wept at completing of the mortal sin

Milton (1674) in his poem 'Paradise Lost' personifies the drops in stating 'sad drops' for drops cannot be sad; rather, it is the human being who can be sad, (Abrams: 1993:69). Moreover, Keats in his poem 'To Autumn' finely personifies the season autumn, as a woman carrying on the rural chores. The personification of abstract terms is standard in poetic diction – particularly in the eighteenth – century poetry, where sometimes it becomes a thoughtless formula, (Ibid.). Similarly, Stevens and Charles (1966:225) consider personification "a figure of speech in which inanimate objects or abstract notions are embodied with human qualities". Thus, the poet Thomas Gray uses personifications in his Elegy 'Written in a Country Churchyard':

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,

Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;

Nor Grandeur hears with a disdainful smile

The short and simple annals of the poor.

The poet Gray (1771) personifies the word 'ambition' by giving it the features of a human being. In other words, it is only the feature of the human being to 'mock', but it is not

the feature of the abstract thing such as 'ambition' to mock, (Ibid.).

3. Implicature

Implicature is a term derived from the work of the philosopher Grice (1975) and now it is frequently used in linguistics as part of the study of conversational structure, (Crystal, 2003:228). According to Mey (1993:99) the word 'implicature' is derived from the verb 'to imply', as is its cognate 'implication'. Etymologically, 'to imply' means "to fold something into something else", (from the Latin verbs 'plicare'; hence, that which is implied, is 'folded in', and has to be 'unfolded' in order to be understood, (Ibid.). Gazdar (1979:38) states that implicature is "a proposition implied by utterance of a sentence in a context even though that proposition is not part of, nor an entailment of what was actually said". On the other hand, Lyons (1977:592) adds that the notion of implicature rests upon a distinction between what is actually said and what is implicated in saying what is said. Consequently, it is safe to say that implicature involves a meaning which is conveyed through an utterance in a manner that cannot be captured easily from the explicit meaning of the words in the utterance. Accordingly, Levinson (1983:97) maintains that implicature provides some explicit account of how it is possible to mean (in some general sense) more than what is actually said, i.e. , more that is literally expressed by the conventional sense of the linguistic expressions uttered. Finch (2000:149) enhances that the study of implicature is fairly well developed

and forms the cornerstone of most of the pragmatic approaches. On the other hand, Crystal (2003:228) points out that several types of implicature have been discussed in the context of the relationship between language and logical expression, and of the conditions which affect the appropriateness of the utterance. Thereupon, he (Ibid.) classifies implicatures into 'conversational' implicatures which are inferences calculated on the basis of the maxims of conversation. As concerns the 'conversational' implicatures, which are a second type of implicature, they are not derived from these cooperative principles but they are simply attached by convention to particular expressions. Let us consider the following example:

(8) It is raining now.

(Implicature: you should not go out).

(Cited in Al- Duleimi: 2003:31)

Hence, Grice (1975) cited in Levinson (1983: 127) contends that conventional implicatures are non-truth-conditional inferences which are not derived from superordinate pragmatic principles like maxims, but are simply attached by convention to particular lexical items or expressions.

4. Categorizing Metonymy

Now, it is possible to classify metonymy into types and this might be possible if one adopts a certain model. In fact, the researcher proposes a model through which one could

classify metonymy into four types. The researcher ensures that metonymy involves association as shown in the following definition by Larson (1984:111) "the use of words in a figurative sense involving association is called metonymy". Moreover, in comparison with the other definition of metonymy, one remarkably finds that metonymy almost requires association. In addition to this, one might observe that 'association' could be classified into types according to the type of the relationship. For example, Larson (1984:111) states that the following example has a 'spatial relationship':

(9) Tom has a good head.

He classifies that 'head' is the 'place' where the brain is located. So, he contends that this association relationship is called 'spatial association'. This being the case, the study will classify metonymy according to the type of the association that metonymy gets. Hence, Larson's model (1984) of classifying association relationship of metonymy will be useful for the present paper. Let us consider the following examples of classifying metonymy:

(10) The kettle is boiling.

Absolutely, the word 'kettle' does not mean that the kitchen utensil used for boiling water, but rather it refers to the water which is boiling inside the kettle. Thus, it is the 'water' which is boiling not the kettle. Therefore, the above example is based on a 'spatial relationship'. Consequently, the study

considers the above metonymy a 'spatial metonymy'. Another example is:

(11) He has a good head.

'Head' is the place where the brain is located. Further, the word 'head' is being used in a figurative way to refer to the brain. Hence, this is classified as 'spatial metonymy'.

Association may have to do with 'temporal' relationship. For example, one would say with reference to a holiday:

(12) We have waited for this day with anticipation.

'Day' refers to the 'Independence Day' in America, and 'day' is used for the holiday which the Americans will have on that day (Larson, 1984:112). The association relationship here is temporal. Therefore, this metonymy is classified as 'temporal metonymy'. On the other hand, there are some metonymies, i.e., association relationships which depend on personification. In other words, there are some metonymies which have the same function of personification bearing in mind that personification is defined by Crystal (1989:70) "a type of metaphor in which an object or idea is represented in human terms". For example:

Eight US soldiers sue

(13) Pentagon over extended Iraq tours.

(The Baghdad Mirror, Dec., 2004)

Accordingly, the word 'pentagon' refers to the Defense secretary, i.e., those people who work in the ministry of the American Defense.

Thus, this metonymy is classified as the 'personified metonymy'. Another example is:

(14) Kremlin sends a senior official to Geneva.

(The Independent, Aug., 1988)

'Kremlin' refers to the government of Russia-particularly it refers to the president of Russia. This personification which is depicted by making the Kremlin as a man – especially when the verb 'send' is used with the word 'Kremlin', which is only used when the subject is a human being. Thus, this metonymy is classified as a 'personified metonymy'.

Larson (1984:112) states that there are also figurative senses which are based on a logical 'contiguity' rather than spatial or temporal. The example:

(15) I listened to Beethoven.

The above example has a metonymic expression which is 'Beethoven' which is used to mean the music he composed. This means he listened to the music of 'Beethoven'. Hence, there is a logical contiguous relationship between 'Beethoven' and his 'music'. Thus, this metonymy which has a contiguous relationship is classified as 'contiguous metonymy'. The following is another example which has the same relationship:

(16) I read Shakespeare.

'Shakespeare' is figuratively used to mean the works he wrote but not his biography. Thus, by a contiguous association, the word Shakespeare refers to the plays and sonnets of

Shakespeare. Accordingly, this is classified as a 'contiguous metonymy'. Consequently, the study contends the following types of metonymy: spatial, temporal, personified and contiguous.

5. Pragmatic Analysis of Metonymy

To analyze metonymy pragmatically, one should find a suitable model to do that. Accordingly, Reinhart (1980:47) introduces his model through which he analyzes metaphors. This model includes two procedures:

The Tenor (Focus) – Interpretation and the Vehicle– Interpretation. So, he deconstructs a metaphor into tenor (focus) and vehicle in order to capture the implicature (intended meaning) of a metaphor. The study certainly will adopt the same model for analyzing metonymy pragmatically so as to get the implicature, i.e., the intended meaning of a metonymy. But before this, one should get a clear idea about the two terms: tenor (focus) and vehicle. Tenor and vehicle are two elements of metaphor. The word tenor refers to the subject, and the word vehicle refers to the figure of comparison, (Abrams, 1993:67). Thereupon, the model of analysis will be as follows:

Tenor – Interpretation

S implicates the data of X and Y

Vehicle – Interpretation

The researcher has added to the model the word implicature in order to have a pragmatic model. Thus, the study adopts an eclectic model for analyzing metonymy pragmatically. Accordingly, consider the following analyses:

(17) I like Bach.

Tenor – Interpretation

This implicates that the speaker likes his 'synphonys'.

Vehicle – Interpretation

(18) Jack ate all the dish of pizza.

Tenor – Interpretation

the container (dish)

This implicates that Jack ate the pizza.

Vehicle – Interpretation

the contained edible

(19) I have been reading Dickens'.

Tenor – Interpretation

Vehicle – Interpretation

This implicates that the speaker has read his novels.

(20) He has a good head.

Tenor –
Interpretation

Vehicle –
Interpretation

This implicates that he has a good mentality.

(21) Washington has reacted cautiously to the latest peace proposals.

Tenor –
Interpretation
The USA capital

Vehicle –
Interpretation
The American

This implicates that the American government has reacted to the latest proposals of peace.

(22) Kremlin sends a senior official to Geneva.

Tenor –
Interpretation
the Russian presidential

Vehicle –
Interpretation
The Russian

This implicates that the Russian government sends a senior official to Geneva.

So, one could observe fairly that metonymy is deconstructed in terms of tenor and vehicle then the data is analyzed in terms of pragmatic (conventional) implicatures contending the intended meanings of various metonymies.

6. Translatability of Metonymy into Arabic

The translation of the figurative sense of a word is almost invariable and it needs to be translated with a word or phrase which is not the literal translation of the word in the source language, (Larson, 1984:113). In the same respect, Beekman and Callow (1974:104) state that:

A single word in one language is likely to be translated into another language using almost as many different renditions as there are senses.

However, Larson (1984:114) points out that there are three general ways in

which metonymy is to be translated. First, the sense of the word may be translated nonfiguratively, i.e., the intended meaning may be made plain so that there is no longer a figurative sense in the receptor language translation as for example in :

(23) The kettle is boiling.

If the above example is translated figuratively or literally, the Arabic rendition would be archaic or a misfire would be resulted from translating it figuratively:

- الابريق يغلي

But if it is translated nonfiguratively, the Arabic rendition would be more clear:

- الماء يغلي

Thus, translating it 'الماء يغلي', the word 'kettle' is no longer used in the Arabic rendition because the intended meaning is the 'water' but not the kettle. Another example is:

(24) Martin Beni lives by his gloves.

which is better translated nonfiguratively:

- يكسب مارتن بَنِّي قوته اليومي من الملائمة

Hence, the word 'gloves' which means 'قفازات' is no longer used because if the sentence is translated figuratively or literally:

يكسب مارتن بَنِّي قوته اليومي من القفازات

one would think that 'Martin Beni lives by selling gloves. To recapitulate, the nonfigurative translation saves the translator from ambiguity or misunderstanding.

The second way which may be better in some situations, is to retain the word in the original but to add to the word its sense (i.e., the intended meaning). For example:

(25) The world is mad.

The word 'world' should not be translated literally as 'العالم' because it has no sense, but instead of it the word 'الناس' is used. Therefore, the word 'people' is the sense (the intended meaning of the sentence):

- الناس مجانين

Or (26) He has a good head.

It is translated: (هو شخص ذكي) for if it is to be translated literally

(يملك راس جيد) it will be wrong, namely, the sentence will give the wrong intended meaning meant by the speaker (Larson, 1984: 114). Similarly, the following sentence should be rendered into Arabic by considering its real sense (intended meaning):

(27) He drank three cups.

- تناول ثلاثة اقداح من الشاي

Hence, the word 'شاي' is added to the Arabic rendition in order to give the real sense of the sentence.

The third way is to substitute a figurative expression of the receptor language for the figurative expression of the source language. It is important that the same meaning is retained. For example:

(28) I liked his tongue.

The word 'tongue' should be substituted by a figurative expression in the receptor language, i.e., the Arabic language. Thus, the sentence should be translated as follows (Larson, 1984: 115):

- أحببت كلامه / حديثه راق لي

Once again, the word 'tongue', is not translated literally; rather, there should be a suitable equivalent term for the word 'tongue' which is 'كلام'. Seemingly, the third way requires an equivalence. In other words, the expression 'bread and butter' which if translated literally in the following sentence, it means 'الخبز والزبد':

(29) He seeks to get his bread and butter.

But if it is translated nonliterally via seeking its appropriate equivalent in Arabic. Hence, it should be translated as :

- يسعى للحصول على رزقه

Now, it is safe to conclude that the first way is the best in translating metonymy because this avoids using the literal translation which if used, would lead to problems of translation such as ambiguity and misunderstanding. Furthermore, this way makes the reader / listener grasp the intended meaning of the sentence having a metonymy.

7. Conclusion

The analysis of metonymy pragmatically has shown that each metonymy carries the speaker's intention which could be captured by analyzing metonymy in terms of conventional implicature for implicature obviously expresses what is intended by the speaker. In addition, metonymy which is just like metaphor, includes tenor and vehicle and deconstructing metonymy into these two elements will give enough information. Henceforth, it is possible to implicate this information in order to grasp what is implicated which lies behind metonymy. The study, on the other hand, has classified metonymy into four types depending on the 'association' relationships resulting from metonymy. As the study has exploited Larson's (1984) method of describing the association relationship, metonymy is classified, throughout this study into: spatial, temporal, personified and contiguous. Also, the

study has shown up that there are three possible ways of translating metonymy into Arabic. The first way, which is the nonfigurative translation, appeared to be the most appropriate one because it keeps translation away from semantic ambiguity / oddity and misunderstanding as well. For example, 'the kettle is boiling', if it is to be translated figuratively 'الابريق يغلي', it is odd and semantically unacceptable, because it is the 'water' which should be boiled and not the 'kettle'. Thus, the sentence should be translated nonfiguratively into 'الماء يغلي' in order to give the intended meaning of the metonymic expression. Besides, the first way pays attention to the intended meaning (sense) of metonymic expression.

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