



The Problem of Translating Satire from Arabic into English

Israa A. ALAmeer Mohammad Saeed

Luqman Abdulkareem Naser

M.A. Student/ Dept. of Translation / College of Arts/ University of Mosul

Prof/Dept. of Translation / College of Arts/ University of Mosul

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Correspondence:

luqmanalsanjry@yahoo.com

Abstract

Satire is a type of humor. It is a manner of writing that mixes a critical attitude with wit and humor in an effort to improve mankind and human institutions. This paper aims at investigating the problem of translating satire from Arabic into English. It tries to find out the most problematic areas in rendering Arabic texts that include satire. It is hypothesized that culture specific elements are the most problematic issues in rendering such texts. Theoretically, the paper submits a brief account of the concept of satire and its types. Practically, some Arabic texts containing satire and their English renditions have been analysed in terms of investigating the translator's ability to keep the effect of satire through handling the cultural specific elements found in these texts. Nida's (1964) model of translation was adopted to describe the type of translation used in rendering these texts. Finally, the paper draws some conclusions about the importance of understanding the cultural background of each text of satire in rendering it into English.

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مشكلات ترجمة السخرية من العربية الى الانكليزية

اسراء عبد الامير محمد سعيد

لقمان عبد الكريم ناصر**

المستخلص:

السخرية هي نوع من الفكاهة. إنها طريقة في الكتابة تمزج بين الموقف النقدي والذكاء والفكاهة في محاولة لتحسين البشرية والمؤسسات الإنسانية. تهدف هذه الورقة إلى دراسة مشكلة الترجمة الساخرة من العربية إلى الإنجليزية. وتحاول معرفة المجالات الأكثر إشكالية في ترجمة النصوص العربية التي تتضمن السخرية. ومن المفترض أن العناصر الثقافية هي أكثر القضايا إشكالية في تقديم مثل هذه النصوص. ومن الناحية النظرية يقدم البحث نبذة مختصرة عن مفهوم الهجاء وأنواعه. ومن الناحية العملية، تم تحليل بعض النصوص العربية التي تحتوي على الهجاء وترجمتها إلى الإنجليزية من حيث التحقق من قدرة المترجم على الحفاظ على تأثير الهجاء من خلال التعامل مع العناصر الثقافية الخاصة الموجودة في هذه النصوص. وقد تم اعتماد نموذج نايدا (1964) للترجمة لوصف نوع الترجمة المستخدمة في ترجمة هذه النصوص. وأخيراً، يخلص البحث إلى بعض الاستنتاجات حول أهمية فهم الخلفية الثقافية لكل نص ساخر عند ترجمته إلى اللغة.

* طالبة ماجستير / قسم الترجمة/كلية الاداب/ جامعة الموصل

** استاذ/ قسم الترجمة/كلية الاداب/ جامعة الموصل

The Concept of Satire

Although the satirist frequently depends on an implicit moral code that his audience understands and pays lip service to, he may occasionally include serious statements of value or desirable behavior. The satirist's objective is to expose his target's hypocrisy in the hopes that the audience or the target will revert to a genuine adherence to the code. This definition makes the process of satire obvious: a particular topic is examined and put to the test. This definition indicates that the purpose of the process is to make fun of or show disdain for the subject at hand (Parre:1985,393 .)

According to Abrams (1999:275), "satire is the literary art of demeaning or diminishing a subject by making it ridiculous and evoking attitudes of amusement, contempt, scorn, or indignation toward it." In addition, Van der Parre (1985: 393) states that "satire uses humor as a tool, not as its goal." Comedy serves as a unifying force and attempts to draw in and hold the audience's attention .

In satire, the humor serves only as a vehicle for expressing and drawing attention to criticism, as stated in the statement, "[Satire] differs from the comic in that comedy evokes and against a but that exists outside the work itself." (Abrams, 1999: 275).

Satire v. Irony

The technological elements of literature are irony and satire. Their ancestry differs. They serve a variety of functions in different forms. There are various literary genres. Everyone evokes different forms of enjoyment and fun. Everyone has created novel varieties. Still, they have meanings and are frequently used interchangeably. In this piece, we examine some differences and similarities and make some conclusions. Even though satire can be seen as a kind of narrative or as a tool for representation, irony—a rhetorical device that acts through confrontation and incongruity—is what can subvert expectations and follow a "logic of discovery" in rhetorical troupes. Specifically, literary, dramatic, and satirical works that highlight vices, insanities, violence, or flaws in people (Khadka, 2020:3)

The Classification of Satire

There are three different characteristics that are used to distinguish between the various types of satire: literary form, stance/attitude of the satirist, and share in the entire text.

1 .Classification based on literary genre

Satire can be categorized into two groups based on form:

Formal/direct satire: "The satirist speaks directly because they write in the first person. I can address a character in the text or the reader with this "I can address his argument" (Abrams, 1999:276).

b. Indirect satire: This category includes all satirical works where the writer does not use the first person and does not directly address the reader. Fictional narratives that use characters who make themselves and their beliefs seem absurd through their words, thoughts, and deeds are the most popular form of indirect satire (Abrams, 1999: 277) .

Types of Indirect Satire

1." A cheerful demeanor

The satirist adopts a carefree demeanor regarding his subject. His tone is lighthearted and humorous, and his main goal is to make the audience laugh at the foibles of humanity.

2 .Stubborn mindset

The satirist adopts a sober perspective on his subject. His tone is mocking and critical, and his primary goal is persuading the audience to share his offensive viewpoint and approach the subject in the same offensive manner.(Abrams, 1999: 277(

From humorous to cynical, Pollard (1970: 67–69) identifies six moods a satirist can employ:

3 .Ridicule: "Sarcasm ought to be temperate, just like wit." Whatever mockery it contains should be restrained and offset with lighthearted banter ".

4 .Irony: "Total distortion in the form of inversion is the weapon that irony employs. It's also not just inversion. Implicitness, insinuation, and omission are all included in its effect. Its peculiar direction of meaning must be recognized by a specific and receptive audience .

5 .Sardonic/cynicism: "There is a close relationship between sardonic and cynicism." They both stem from a profound feeling of disappointment, and they frequently happen in intimate relationships. (*) The sardonic comment is too pessimistic to accept even hollow laughter, while the cynic makes his criticisms against a background of hollow laughter. The speaker might chuckle, but it will be an isolated, bittersweet joy.

a. 2 .Categorization based on position or attitude

b. Abrams distinguishes between two forms of direct satire according to the satirist's position and attitude toward his subject: - a. Humoristic satire:

c. The speaker of Horatian satire embodies the traits of an urbane, witty, and tolerant man of the world. He is more likely to be moved by wry amusement than by outrage at the spectacle of human folly, pretentiousness, and hypocrisy, and he uses a casual, laid-back style of writing to make readers laugh wryly at human fallacies and failures, sometimes even his own (Abrams, 1999: 276) .

d. Juvenal satire:

In Juvenalian satire the character of the speaker is that of a serious moralist who uses a dignified and public style of utterance to decry modes of vice and error which are no less dangerous because they are ridiculous, and who undertakes to evoke from readers' contempt, moral indignation, or an unillusioned sadness at the aberrations of humanity (Abrams,1999: 276-277).

3-Classification according to share in the entire text

Satire can also be divided according to its share in the entire text. Concerning this Van der Parre (1985: 391-397) distinguishes two types of satire :

- a. A satire: a certain, more or less demarcated type of text with specific conventions .
- b. Satire the satirical attitude or tendency any text from any type of genre can adopt.
- c. witty gadgets
- d. Satire employs a variety of literary techniques as weapons to attack the target. Van der Parre (1985) illustrates the ways in which various satirical techniques distort reality while providing a few examples of their application.
- e. a. "Understatement: Using this device, reality is portrayed too lightly, making something purposefully appear smaller, worse, or less significant than it actually is .
- f. b. Exaggeration: When something is purposefully portrayed as being larger or more significant than it actually is, reality is exaggerated .
- g. Caricature: This effect emphasizes and exaggerates specific aspects of a character's appearance, either internally or externally .
- h. Parading: Satire uses parody as a comedic tool to purposefully distort the image of the subject it is criticizing.
- i. Similes and metaphors: The satirist compares the subject of criticism negatively to the image.
- j. Litotes: This literary device evokes irony by expressing a concept through the negation of its opposite .
- j. Antithesis: An opposing concept i Antithesis: The satirical subject is made to appear inferior in comparison by using an opposite term .

The satirical cues

Satire as a genre or as formal/direct satire is easily recognizable. This is as a result of the genre's rigid conventions. The fixed formula that is frequently followed is one particularly identifiable convention of direct satire: "The bipartite structural design of the Roman model may be its most determinate generic feature. According to this pattern, particular vices and follies are attacked in Part A, "the satiric seen," and Part B, "the satiric norm," is where the suggested alternative is hammered home (Real, 1992:10 .(

Satire as a mode, on the other hand, is much more difficult to identify because its satirical elements only appear in one or a few text passages. This is due to the fact that satire, as previously established, makes use of a variety of comedic devices that can be employed for a variety of objectives. Satire can only be identified as a mode if one is aware of its various distinctive qualities, which include its primary goal of subtly attacking, as noted by Broader (2007:40).

Data analysis

The following three texts include cases of using satire in Arabic . These texts are taken from (Kishtainy ,1986) as samples for analysis to find the most problematic issues in rendering such texts and the solutions adopted by the translator in solving these problems .

Text No.1

On other occasions, Juha appears cheeky and clever as when he was accompanying the Wali to the bath and was asked by the Wali how much is he worthing?

TLText

جحا، مرافق أحد الولاة إلى الحمام، فسأله الوالي وليس عليه سوى | المنشفة

كم تقدر يا جحا ثمنني؟

فتملاه جحا من قمة رأسه إلى أخمصه وقال له:

- خمسين ديناراً.

لعنك الله.. إن منشفتي تساوي هذا المبلغ.

أجابه جحا

أعلم ذلك، وعليه بنيت تقديري!

Juha was accompanying the Wali to the bath and was asked by the Wali with nothing on other than his towel, what he was worth. 'Fifty dinars', said Juha.

' Damn you, only my towel is worth fifty dinars,' remonstrated the

Wali.

This is just what I allowed for, replied Juha.

SL item	TL item	Translation method	procedure	Justification	App.	Proposed R.
جحا	Juha	Formal	Transliteration	+	+	
الوالي	Wali	Formal	Transliteration	-	-	Local ruler
حمام	bath	Dynamic	Alteration of meaning	-	-	Bathroom
لعنك الله	Damn you	Dynamic	Subtraction	+	+	
وعليه بنيت تقديري	This is just what I allowed for	Dynamic	Alteration of meaning	-	-	It is considered in my valuation

Discussion

The humor in the Arabic text lies in the unexpected question by the Wali. The humor emanates from the answer of Juha. He makes the towel as worth as the Wali.

1. Cultural references: The text contains references to historical figures, places, like the SL "الحمام" which has more comprehensive meaning than its translation in the TL (bath) and cultural practices specific to

Middle ages and the Arabic-speaking world, like in the SL "الوالي" the TL Is (Wali) Translating these references accurately and conveying their significance in English may be challenging for a translator who is not familiar with the culture and context.

2 .Wordplay: The humor in the text might rely on wordplay or puns that are specific to the Arabic language. Translating these wordplay elements accurately without losing their comedic effect can be difficult.

3 -Names and Titles: Arabic names and titles often have significant meanings and implications that might be lost in translation. The translator must consider the cultural significance of names and titles when rendering them into English.

4-Untranslatable Humor: Humor is often deeply rooted in the cultural context, and some jokes or witticisms may not translate effectively into another language. The translator may need to adapt the humor or find alternative humorous elements that resonate with English speakers.

Contextual Nuances: The humor in the text might depend on specific social, historical, or political nuances that need careful consideration during translation to ensure the intended humor is preserved.

5 .Satirical Tone: The text has a satirical tone, which might require the translator to find equivalent satirical elements in English to maintain the intended humor.

6 .Length and Style: Translating from Arabic to English can result in text expansion or contraction due to differences in language structure. The translator needs to ensure that the translation conveys the original meaning and humor while maintaining a suitable style for the target audience.

7 .Play on Names: The names of the characters in the text might have specific meanings or connotations in Arabic that add to the humor. Translating these names while preserving their humor can be challenging.

4 .Syntax and word order: Arabic and English have different sentence structures and word orders. Translating the text while preserving the intended message and avoiding awkward phrasing in English is a challenge.

5 .Literary devices: The text might use literary devices like alliteration, rhyming, or repetition, which can be challenging to translate effectively into English without losing their impact.

6 .Arabic-specific terms: Some terms or concepts in the text may not have direct equivalents in English, and finding suitable ways to convey these ideas without losing their essence can be problematic.

Text No (2):

Satire

With the decline of caliphate and loss of the religious aura of the ruler, the poets were released from their shackles and began to enjoy themselves in the exercise of the cherished form of (هجاء' satire), producing some of the most caustic lines ever known in Arabic literature, like this one in which the

Abbasid poet, Bashshar Ibn Burd, attacked the Caliph al-Mahdi: Bashar Ain Burd. Here are the poet satires the political situation and the weakness of the authorities in the Abbasy rules.

SL Text

” خليفة يزني بعماته ...

يلعب بالدبوق والصولجان“

TL Text:

“A Caliph who copulates with his aunts

And plays with birdlime and the polo mallet.”

<i>SL item</i>	<i>TL item</i>	<i>Translation method</i>	<i>procedure</i>	<i>Justification</i>	<i>App.</i>	<i>Proposed R.</i>
خليفة	Caliph	Formal	Transliteration	+	+	
يزني	copulate	Dynamic	Alteration of meaning	-	-	fornicate
صولجان	Polo mallet	Dynamic	Alteration of meaning	-	-	Scepter
دبوق	birdlime	Formal	Alteration of meaning	+	+	

Discussion

1. Cultural references: The text contains references to historical figures, places, and cultural practices specific to Iraq and the Arabic-speaking world. Translating these references accurately and conveying their significance in English may be challenging for a translator who is not familiar with the culture and context.
2. Idiomatic expressions: The text includes idiomatic expressions and local sayings, which might not have direct translations in English. Translating these expressions while preserving their intended meaning and humor can be tricky.
3. Humor and wordplay: Humor often relies on cultural context, wordplay, and puns, which may not translate well into English. Maintaining the comedic elements and playful interactions while adapting them for an English-speaking audience can be difficult.
4. Syntax and word order: Arabic and English have different sentence structures and word orders. Translating the text while preserving the intended message and avoiding awkward phrasing in English is a challenge .
5. Literary devices: The text might use literary devices like alliteration, rhyming, or repetition, which can be challenging to translate effectively into English without losing their impact.
6. Arabic-specific terms: Some terms or concepts in the text may not have direct equivalents in English, and finding suitable ways to convey these ideas without losing their essence can be problematic.

Text No3:**Satire****SL T**

” خرج المهدي ذات مرة للصيد، فمر بخيمة أعرابي، فقال: يا أعرابي، هل من قرى؟ فأخرج له قرص شعير فأكله، ثم أخرج له فضلة من لبن فسقاه، ثم أتاه بنبيذ في ركوة فسقاه، فلما شرب النبيذ قال: أتدري من أنا؟ قال الأعرابي: لا. قال: أنا من خدم أمير المؤمنين الخاصة. قال الأعرابي: بارك الله لك في منصبك، ثم سقاه مرة أخرى، فشرب فقال: يا أعرابي، أتدري من أنا؟ قال: زعمت أنك من خدم أمير المؤمنين الخاصة، فقال: لا. أنا من قادة أمير المؤمنين. قال الأعرابي: رحبت بلادك وطاب مرادك، ثم سقاه الثالثة، فلما فرغ قال: يا أعرابي، أتدري من أنا؟ قال الأعرابي: زعمت أنك من قادة أمير المؤمنين. فقال: لا، ولكني أمير المؤمنين نفسه. قال: فأخذ الأعرابي الركوة، فوكأها وقال: إليك عني، فوالله لو شريت الرابعة، لادعيت أنك رسول الله ﷺ، فضحك المهدي حتى استلقى على ظهره، وأمر له بأعطية“.

TL Text :

“The peasant gave him barley bread, some yoghurt and then wine. After one mug, al-Mahdi asked him, 'Do you know who I am?' The peasant said that he did not and the caliph had modestly informed him, 'I am one of the special servants of the Prince of the Believers.' 'May God bless you in your position, added the host, as he replenished his mug with more wine which the caliph gulped gratefully and returned to his question, 'Do you know who I am?' 'You've just said that you are a special servant of the caliph. 'No, I am one of the Commanders of the Prince of the Believers The man lost no time pouring him more wine, which is the caliph drank and again repeated his question. 'You've said you are a Commander of the Prince of the Believers.' The man replied. 'No. I am the Prince of the Believers himself.' The peasant kicked the mug away from him. 'By God, if you drink the fourth you will say you are the Messenger of God.

SL item	TL item	Translation method	procedure	Justification	App.	Proposed R.
المهدي	al-Mahdi	Formal	Transliteration	+	+	
الاعرابي	Peasant	Dynamic	Alteration of meaning	-	-	The Bedouin
ركوة	Wine	Dynamic	Alteration of meaning	-	-	Wineskin
رحبت بلادك وطاب مرادك	-----	Dynamic	Subtraction	-	-	May your state spread and your hope be pleased
امير المؤمنين	The Prince of Believers	Formal	Literal translation	-	-	Amir al-Mu'minin

Discussion

A story in a similar vein was recorded in 'Al-Musharraf' about the Caliph al-Mahdi who had to accept the hospitality of an Arab peasant during a hunting expedition. The humor in the provided text lies in the interactions between Al-Mahdi and a bedouin. Here are some humorous elements:

1. Cultural specific terms: The text contains references to historical figures) 'المهدي' al-Mahdi, ('أمير المؤمنين' Amir al-Mu'minin) and) 'الاعرابي' the old man), and) 'ركوة' wineskin, i.e., a leather vessel or container of water, milk, wine, ... etc.). The translator does not manage almost all these terms in his rendition; except the first one, he misuses the functional meaning of these terms either by giving the literal meaning, i.e. 'أمير المؤمنين' into 'the Prince of Believers', or by giving an altered meaning, i.e. 'ركوة' into 'wine' and 'الاعرابي' into 'peasant.'

Style: in this text, there are certain expressions that are used for 'الدعاء' supplicated request', i.e. 'بارك الله' (May God bless you in your position) and) 'رحبت بلادك وطاب مرادك' (May your state spread and your hope be pleased). It is clear that this style is traditionally used by Arab interlocutors, especially those present before the rulers, wives, caliphs, ...etc. However, the second statement has not been rendered by the translator. So, the researcher suggests the rendition abovementioned, in order not to be loss of meaning of the TLT .

Overall, the humor in the text arises from the light-hearted and playful interactions between the characters, their casual and unexpected behavior, and the boatman's humorous dismissal of their claims of royalty.

Translating the given Arabic text into English may present some challenges due to the following reasons:

1 .Cultural references: The text contains references to historical figures, places, and cultural practices specific to Iraq and the Arabic-speaking world. Translating these references accurately and conveying their significance in English may be challenging for a translator who is not familiar with the culture and context.

2 .Idiomatic expressions: The text includes idiomatic expressions and local sayings, which might not have direct translations in English. Translating these expressions while preserving their intended meaning and humor can be tricky.

3 .Humor and wordplay: Humor often relies on cultural context, wordplay, and puns, which may not translate well into English. Maintaining the comedic elements and playful interactions while adapting them for an English-speaking audience can be difficult.

4 .Syntax and word order: Arabic and English have different sentence structures and word orders. Translating the text while preserving the intended message and avoiding awkward phrasing in English is a challenge.

5 .Literary devices: The text might use literary devices like alliteration, rhyming, or repetition, which can be challenging to translate effectively into English without losing their impact.

6 .Arabic-specific terms: Some terms or concepts in the text may not have direct equivalents in English, and finding suitable ways to convey these ideas without losing their essence can be problematic.

To overcome these challenges, a skilled translator with a good understanding of both Arabic and English, as well as knowledge of the cultural context, humor, and idiomatic expressions, would be required to ensure an accurate and engaging translation.

Conclusions

The research concludes the following:

1. The translation of satire in Arabic texts is problematic for the translators due to many reasons including linguistic and cultural ones. To overcome these challenges, a proficient translator with knowledge of both Arabic and English cultures, idiomatic expressions, and historical events is necessary. The translator must strike a balance between providing contextual information and staying faithful to the original text's intended humor and clever analogies.
- 2-The translation of some literary devices loaded with humor represents another problem for the translator who has to keep the same function of the device and at the same time maintain the humor loaded in the device.
3. The translator must avoid translating satire isolated from the cultural aspect which may entail inappropriate translation.
- 4-The inappropriate translation of satire arises from the camouflage lies in the meaning of words in the texts. The translator should have knowledge to cope with these challenges.

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