

Translating metaphor in disturbing news contexts: A case study of the Israel-Gaza War

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ABSTRACT

The current paper elucidates the metaphorical expressions employed in several news articles pertaining to the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict as of October 2023. The primary English versions of the selected news pieces from prominent English-language newspapers are examined to discern the metaphoric expressions present within the narratives. The corresponding translations of the identified metaphoric expressions are also chosen and compared with their original English counterparts. The comparative examination explores the manner in which metaphors are rendered and adapted within the Arabic linguistic framework, taking into account the cultural and linguistic subtleties that may impact the translation procedure. The various forms of equivalence utilized by the translator are emphasized. It has been determined that the strategy of literal translation is prevalent, with ideational and functional equivalence strategies also being employed. Notably, the omission strategy is conspicuous, that may be attributed to the ideological stance of the translator.

Keywords: translation, metaphor, news reporting, Israel-Gaza War

الملخص

توضح هذه الدراسة تعبيرات الاستعارة المستخدمة في العديد من المقالات الإخبارية المتعلقة بالصراع المستمر بين إسرائيل وغزة اعتباراً من أكتوبر 2023، تم دراسة النسخ الإنجليزية للمقالات الإخبارية المختارة من البي بي سي باللغة الإنجليزية لتمييز الاستعارات الموجودة في النصوص المترجمة للعربية من نفس الوكالة. تكشف الدراسة المقارن الطريقة التي يتم بها تقديم الاستعارات وتكييفها ضمن الإطار اللغوي العربي، مع مراعاة التفاصيل الثقافية واللغوية الدقيقة التي قد تؤثر على

عملية الترجمة. وأوضحت استراتيجيات الترجمة المختلفة التي يستخدمها المترجم ومنها أنواع التكافؤ المختلفة التي يستخدمها المترجم. توصلت الدراسة أن استراتيجيات الترجمة الحرفية هي الأكثر شيوعاً، مع استخدام استراتيجيات التكافؤ الفكرية والوظيفية، وكذلك استراتيجيات الحذف واضحة، والتي تدل على الموقف الأيديولوجي للمترجم. الكلمات المفتاحية: ترجمة، الاستعارة، التقارير الإخبارية، الصراع بين إسرائيل وغزة

Introduction

The study focuses on the translation of metaphor in the context of disturbing news. Metaphorical language is often employed in news reporting to convey complex emotions, evoke vivid imagery, and capture attention. However, translating metaphors accurately and effectively in such contexts can be a challenging task, particularly for student translators who are still developing their skills and strategies. This research conducts a case study analysis by examining the translations of news reports produced by BBC. It explores the rendition of metaphorical expressions from disturbing news reports related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, specifically the Israeli war on Gaza during October 2023. By investigating these news headlines, the study aims to shed light on challenges, intended message, emotional impact, and underlying intricates in translating metaphors. It also reflects on the potential implications for the overall understanding and impact of translating metaphorical news items. The analysis handles various aspects, such as the identification and interpretation of metaphorical expressions, the cultural and linguistic considerations involved in translating metaphors, and the potential impact of translation choices on the perceived tone. Through this investigation, the study seeks to contribute to the understanding of the complexities involved in translating metaphor in disturbing news contexts (see Ethelb, 2023). It provides insights into the choices and techniques employed by news reporters, and offers suggestions for enhancing the quality and effectiveness of metaphor translation in such challenging scenarios.

The use of metaphor in all types of texts is a subject of excessive research in translation studies (Baker and Saldanha, 2009). Translating texts that include metaphorical segments in Arabic has also been a topic of bountiful research within the cultural, social, and political works (Selim, 2019). This is because the use of contemporary metaphor is linked to the conversational use of language as well as the figurative and stylistic uses. Metaphor is employed in all genres of texts due to the solid depiction of imagery it engraves in the minds of text consumers (Hakami, 2022). In other words, metaphorical elements are usually appealing to readers as they are characterized with their vividness and expressiveness in conceptualizing ideas (Farghal & Mansour, 2020). In fact, metaphor is a crucial element in the processes of manufacturing texts as Schaffner (2004, pp. 1257-1258) states that "metaphors are not just decorative elements, but rather, basic resources for thought processes in human society". Metaphor is used to bring together resemblances of concepts in a non-literal way (Busman, 1996). According to Newmark (1988), metaphor can take the form of a single word, collocation, or an extended text, thus adding depth and precision to the translation process.

This research explores the intricate process of translating texts that incorporate metaphorical segments of disturbing news contexts into Arabic. The significance of studying metaphor in translation invites particularly attention of figurative and stylistic applications of language. Disturbing news, by its nature, presents unique challenges for translators. The accurate and sensitive translation of metaphorical segments within these texts is crucial for effectively conveying the intended message, emotional impact, and underlying intricacies (Mouzughi, 2022). Metaphors serve as powerful rhetorical devices in communicating complex and distressing topics. They allow for a profound understanding and interpretation of the underlying issues (Dagut, 1976). This research endeavors to enhance our understanding of how metaphorical

elements can be effectively employed in translating disturbing news. Thus, this study raises the research question of the extent to which disturbing news requires attention between preserving the original metaphorical expression and adapting it to suit the target language and cultural contexts.

Relevant Literature Review

The term "metaphor" originates from the Greek word 'metaphora,' meaning "to carry over" (Busman, 1996, p. 744). It is a figure of speech that is used and understood without explicitly stating the similarity or using comparative terms including "as" or "like". Metaphors can be classified into various types. One common distinction is between live and dead metaphors. Live metaphors are consciously recognized as substitutes for their literal equivalents, while dead metaphors are used without awareness that they were originally metaphorical (Fowler & Butterfield, 2015; Black, 1962). Newmark (1988) further categorizes live metaphors into subtypes, including dead metaphors, cliché metaphors, stock or standard metaphors, adaptive metaphors, recent metaphors, and original metaphors. Each subtype represents different levels of consciousness and familiarity in language usage. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) propose a different typology by distinguishing between linguistic metaphors and conceptual metaphors. They emphasize the significance of conceptual metaphors, as they are intertwined with human thinking, shaping perceptions, and used in interactions with others.

Steen (2011) introduces a contemporary perspective on metaphors. He emphasizes their role in direct communication of ideas and conveying specific messages, which is applicably relevant in the context of news reporting. This highlights the need to investigate the translation of metaphors in news discourse and their impact on conveying information effectively to other languages. Lakoff (1993) takes a cognitive-linguistic approach to metaphors. He underscores

their pervasive presence not only in language but also in thought and action. This perspective is highly relevant to news reporting, as metaphors play a crucial role in shaping public perception of current events and issues. In fact, the cognitive and linguistic aspects of metaphors in news reporting can provide valuable insights into how they contribute to the construction of meaning and the framing of news stories. Furthermore, the evolving nature of metaphor, as Freeman (1997) argues, has transcended its traditional role as a figure of speech and has become a cultural and conceptual phenomenon. This perspective is crucial for news reporters and translators, as it highlights the need to consider the cultural and contextual implications of metaphors when conveying news across different languages and cultures.

From a semantic perspective, Farghal & Mansour (2020, p. 106) argue that metaphors are often seen as false because they attribute characteristics to entities that belong to different semantic domains, resulting in literal contradictions. They offer the example that the metaphor "John is a machine" is semantically contradictory since the attributes of a non-human entity (- human) cannot be semantically applied to a human entity (+ human) like John (ibid). However, from a pragmatic viewpoint, they continue, this utterance can be reinterpreted to convey indirect messages or conversational implicatures (ibid). In fact, metaphoric expressions do not solely arise from their ambiguous nature and indirect implications. Instead, they are crucial for fundamental processes of reasoning. Metaphor has evolved beyond being a mere stylistic device characterized by intentional rhetorical detours, to become an "extension in the semantic value of a linguistic form resulting from perceived resemblance" (Trask, 2000, p. 211).

Building upon the existing research on cognitive metaphors, this study addresses the research question of how to explore the tension between preserving the original metaphorical expression and adapting it to suit the target language and cultural contexts when

reporting disturbing news. This investigation aims to contribute to the understanding of how metaphors can be effectively utilized in disturbing news contexts.

Translation of Metaphor

Newmark (1988) contends that the primary challenge in translating metaphor lies in selecting an appropriate translation method for a given text. Klopfer (1967) claims that the intricate nature of metaphor has inherently made its translation problematic. In fact, numerous attempts have been made to explore various facets of metaphor in translation, establishing connections between these two fields of research: translation studies and cognitive linguistics. Fernandez (2005) provides a comprehensive overview of different approaches that consider cultural, textual, and cognitive aspects.

According to her classification, linguistically oriented perspectives offer four distinct opinions on the translatability of metaphor. The first viewpoint presumes that metaphors, due to their unpredictable nature, are virtually untranslatable. This is because they serve as a demanding test for translators since they involve cultural experiences and semantic associations (Dagnev & Chervenкова, 2020). The second view asserts that metaphors are fully translatable and pose no special difficulties. The third view adopts the standpoint that metaphor translation is feasible but challenging. The fourth approach, proposed by Snell-Hornby (1988), referred to by Fernandez as "conciliatory," asserts that the range of possible renderings depends on the type of text and ad hoc factors, taking into account both intralinguistic and extralinguistic factors that influence a translator's process of rendering metaphor (Dagnev & Chervenкова, 2020).

Snell-Hornby (1995) acknowledges the translatability of metaphor and emphasizes the substantial impact of cultural factors, as well as the temporal and spatial disparities that exist between the cultural context of the source text and the intended recipients of the

translation. Dagut (1976) acknowledges, to some extent, the possibility of translating metaphor, but highlights the role of culture in complicating the task for translators. Nida (1964, p. 159) challenges the notion of untranslatability for any type of text, including metaphorical ones. He proposes two translation approaches for translators to consider. The first approach is formal equivalence, or correspondence, which entails a literal translation that prioritizes both the content and form of the message (Maitieg, Alshniet, & Ethelb 2023). It enables the reader to experience the source language context. The second approach is dynamic equivalence, which focuses on conveying the intended sense or meaning. Newmark (1988) and Dickins (2003) put forth a range of strategic approaches, which include the conversion of a metaphor into its congruous sense and the omission of the source language (SL) metaphor when deemed redundant or lacking specific significance, as viable strategies in the translation process.

Methodology

This paper focuses on the exploration and examination of metaphoric language employed in news articles, along with the corresponding translations of these metaphors into the Arabic language. Therefore, two carefully selected news narratives that address the notable occurrences transpiring in October 2023, particularly concerning the Israel Gaza war, together with their respective translations, have been procured from the distinguished news organization recognized as the BBC. They cover both English and Arabic sections, and are subjected to a thorough and meticulous analysis. The approach adopted for this investigation is primarily qualitative in essence, which enables an in-depth exploration of the specific metaphoric expressions present within the articles, along with their respective translated counterparts. The central aim of this analytical work is to investigate and elucidate the impact that these metaphorical expressions have on readers' understanding, interpretative engagement, and overall interaction with the presented news narratives, while concurrently evaluating

the competence and expertise of the translator in accurately conveying the intended significance and essence of the employed metaphors. By employing a qualitative methodology, this study seeks to provide a detailed analysis of the metaphoric expressions utilized in the selected news articles and their translations by focusing on both comprehension and translation faithfulness.

Research Data Collection

This study aims to investigate the utilization of metaphor in conveying disturbing news, specifically focusing on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The dataset comprises four (two English translated into Arabic) news stories sourced from a reputable news agency: BBC English and Arabic. The news stories center on events occurring in October 2023, as they allow for a timely and current exploration of metaphorical expressions employed in reporting on this ongoing conflict.

Analytical Approach

The analytical process involves two main stages. First, the researchers conduct a thorough examination of the original English versions of the news articles to identify metaphoric expressions within the text. Following this, a comparative analysis is performed, where the identified metaphoric expressions in the English news articles are juxtaposed with their corresponding translations in Arabic by the selected news agencies. This comparison investigates how metaphors are rendered and adapted in the Arabic language.

The qualitative analysis entails a detailed examination of the specific metaphoric expressions employed in the news articles and their intended meanings. This in-depth analysis aims to interpret the impact and implications of these metaphors on readers' understanding and engagement with the news stories. Ultimately, the research seeks to deepen the understanding of metaphorical language in the reporting of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It sheds

light on how such linguistic devices shape the narrative and perception of disturbing news events.

Analysis and discussion

This section presents a comprehensive analysis of selected news items sourced from a prominent international media outlet: the BBC. The focus of this analysis is on ten significant metaphoric expressions identified within these news articles, each chosen for its relevance to the reporting of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The examination is twofold: first, it explores the original metaphoric expressions in English, considering their contextual usage, connotative meanings, and potential impact on reader perception. Second, it offers a detailed analysis of how these metaphors are rendered in Arabic translations, paying particular attention to the linguistic and cultural adaptations made during the translation process. Examples from 1 to 7 below are taken from the BBC news agencies both in their Arabic¹ and English² platforms.

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1. It can negotiate Qatar is confident **that**
with time, patience and persuasion

يبدو أن قطر واثقة من أنها قادرة على التفاوض ... في
الأيام المقبلة، مع القليل من الوقت والصبر والإقناع

Time is an abstract entity which is used in the metaphor “with time”. Time is considered a significant factor that can influence the negotiation process in the Arab-Israeli conflict. It represents a valuable element that instills confidence in the progression of negotiations. The translator has chosen to use a literal translation approach, resulting in the metaphor not being conveyed. Additionally, the translator included the word 'little' to describe time, aiming to reassure Arab readers that the situation is manageable.

¹ <https://www.bbc.com/arabic/articles/cqv9xqewz1lo>

² <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-67205109>

2.This major western ally is **providing a home** for the political, wing of an organization... هذا الحليف الرئيسي للغرب والذي يستضيف قاعدة عسكرية أمريكية كبيرة، بتوفير الإقامة للجناح السياسي لمنظمة ...

The term 'home' is often extensively utilized in discourse to denote a state of tranquility and balance within an individual's existence, particularly in the context of being integrated into a familial unit. However, within the realm of political discussions, as articulated by Davies (2014), it carries a significant implication related to the concept of the 'nation' and a cohesive national identity, which frequently includes an explicit or implicit demarcation between the categories of 'us' and 'them'. Qatar finds itself under scrutiny, as articulated by the author of the news piece, who charges the nation with a notable level of support for Hamas, a designation that carries considerable weight in geopolitical discussions. An intricately woven suggestion is posited that, despite Qatar's role as an intermediary in the quest to ameliorate the ongoing crisis, it exhibits an excessive loyalty towards Hamas. Thus, rendering it a biased entity, considering that it is perceived as being aligned with them. In this context, 'them' is understood to cover Arabs as a collective, while also specifically pinpointing Hamas as a particular focal point of reference.

The translator has chosen to use a literal translation approach. The metaphor "provide a home," which was previously discussed and contains additional meaning for English readers. Unfortunately, the Arabic translation does not convey the implied ideas as it has been translated as 'providing accommodation' solely. Additionally, in the English text, Qatar, acting as a mediator, is criticized for being biased. The overall implication that an Arab or individual cannot act as a mediator in this crisis is not conveyed to the Arab reader. Hence, the message is deliberately veiled.

3.If Qatar's efforts going forward **prove largely fruitless** ... وإذا ثبت أن جهود قطر في المستقبل غير مثمرة إلى حد كبير ...

The author adeptly communicates the expected inability to achieve a resolution between Hamas and Israel by skillfully utilizing a conditional statement while simultaneously integrating the metaphorical expression 'prove largely fruitless,' which conveys a sense of inevitability regarding the outcome of the discussions. When the negotiations are characterized as fruitful, for instance, it implies an underlying indication of the willingness and readiness of both parties involved to take proactive steps towards addressing and resolving a particular issue that has significant implications. Furthermore, the metaphor serves to suggest a pronounced level of certainty regarding the exasperating and unproductive nature of Qatar's persistent attempts to mediate and facilitate peace in this complex geopolitical context.

The Arabic translator opted for a literal translation method. While this technique communicates the intended meaning, it overlooks the suggested connotations of the metaphorical expression. By employing literal translation, the precise words are retained, but the figurative meaning is sacrificed as metaphors often convey deep implications. Thus, the literal translation method has fallen short in capturing the metaphorical subtleties of the original text.

4. Little wonder then that **the two sides**
need a mediator in the middle ...

فلا عجب أن يحتاج الجانبان إلى وسيط بينهما ...

The employment of the metaphor, 'the two sides need a mediator in the middle' denotes how intricate the predicament between the two factions has evolved to the extent that the discord cannot be reconciled without an external entity who ought to assume the pivotal responsibility of discovering a consensus for the discourse between the disputing parties. The metaphor indicates the pressing requirement for the external entity to possess the capability to broker compromises, and not to exhibit partiality towards either party.

The translator has chosen to skip the metaphor and instead used a literal translation approach, using the simple sentence 'the two sides need a mediator between them'. This approach has resulted in the Arab reader missing the implied message in the original English text, which suggests the need to appoint a neutral mediator and hints that Qatar may be biased.

5. There are **a lot of factors at work** here. هناك العديد من العوامل التي لها علاقة بهذه المفاوضات.

The expression "a lot of factors at work" serves as a metaphor to illustrate the interconnectedness of various elements contributing to the complexity of a particular issue or situation in our daily lives. Furthermore, it conveys the idea that numerous components and individuals play a role in shaping outcomes. The phrase "at work" implies the active involvement of all intricate elements. The translator opted for a literal translation approach, which resulted in the Arab reader missing out on any additional meaning conveyed by the metaphor.

6.... Hamas wants those hostages, and possibly all its foreign ones too, **off its hands** ... حماس تريد أن تتخلى عن هؤلاء الرهائن...

The metaphorical phrase 'off its hands' implies that an individual has been liberated from a considerable and burdensome obligation, which can occur either through the transfer of responsibility to another entity or by complete elimination of that obligation altogether. Additionally, this expression serves to communicate a profound sense of relief from the weight of significant responsibilities that one may have been shouldering. It has been posited that Hamas has been effectively absolved from the ethical and moral obligation it held towards the hostages in its custody.

Furthermore, the translator has made a deliberate choice to employ the strategy of Ideational equivalence, where the essence and significance of the original meaning are conveyed without resorting to the use of the metaphor. This unsuccessful translation has ultimately led to the unfortunate consequence of diminishing and thus losing the additional layer of meaning that is typically communicated through the use of metaphorical language, which is particularly significant for the Arab reader who relies on such expressions for deeper comprehension.

7. Qatari officials, though, say releasing hostages **buys Hamas time**.
ومع ذلك يقول المسؤولون القطريون إن إطلاق سراح الرهائن يمنح حماس بعض الوقت.

The metaphor 'to buy one's time' signifies the postponement of an action with the intention of securing a strategic advantage or avoiding immediate repercussions. Hamas faces a critical decision; however, for various reasons, as indicated by the employed metaphor, it engages in negotiations to procure additional time for the purpose of formulating its future strategies and operations. The translator has chosen not to utilize an equivalent Arabic metaphor 'to buy time' due to its implication of a negative connotation associated with procrastination, which is generally viewed unfavorably in the context of negotiations. Instead, the translator has adopted a model of functional equivalence, where time is conceptualized as a valuable commodity.

Examples from 8 to 10 below are taken from the BBC news agencies both in their Arabic³ and English⁴ platforms.

8. The Israeli army has said **it is upping the tempo** of operations.
ولم يضيف الجيش الإسرائيلي اليوم شيئاً إلى ما قاله الليلة الماضية في تصريحاته، وهو أنه يزيد من وتيرة العمليات العسكرية.

³ <https://www.bbc.com/arabic/articles/cjk7d8j7d36o>

⁴ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-67248454>

The metaphorical expression 'upping the tempo' is utilized to indicate that a phenomenon that is currently in motion is poised for acceleration. In this context, it implies that Israel is likely to augment its military operations in Gaza. The translator has chosen to implement ideational equivalence. The metaphorical expression is diminished while retaining the core meaning. Furthermore, the gravity of the critical decision is mitigated in the translation in order to soothe the Arab readership.

9. But as far we can tell, **it is still going on.** ولكن ما يمكننا قوله أن الهجمات لا تزال مستمرة.

The metaphorical expression 'is still going on' serves to signify that a particular action or event is engaged in an ongoing and indefinite state of persistent activity. It implied a lack of resolution or completion. There exists no anticipated conclusion that can be discerned on the horizon. It therefore suggests an open-ended nature to the situation at hand. This metaphor effectively communicates that the assaults on Gaza are not only continuous but are also perceived to be unceasing in the foreseeable future. It paints a picture of relentless turmoil. In the Arabic rendition of this metaphor, the approach of ideational equivalence is employed. The original meaning is elucidated by sacrificing the metaphorical expression, thus prioritizing clarity over stylistic expression.

10. ...it (the war) increases volatility and //
uncertainty in a **region that is already**
fragile.

The phrase 'a region that is already fragile' vividly depicts an area grappling with multiple difficulties and susceptibilities. It suggests that the region is at a crucial point, with limited capacity to withstand external pressures and challenges in maintaining stability. Using this metaphor indicates the pressing need for attention and assistance to address the region's vulnerabilities and prevent further instability or collapse. Interestingly, the translator

has chosen not to translate either the metaphor or its message. The researchers speculate that the translator made this choice to avoid offending Arab readers by implying that their country is in a state of collapse. In this case, the translator could be perceived as influenced by his/her own ideological inclinations.

Conclusion

To draw a comprehensive conclusion from the analysis presented, it can be asserted with considerable certainty that the translators of the metaphoric expressions that were analyzed in this study exhibited a pronounced tendency to depend predominantly on the literal translation method. It regrettably resulted in a significant deprivation for the Arab reader regarding the rich and underlying messages that are effectively conveyed to the English reader through the use of metaphors. The Arabic language, recognized for its profound eloquence and expressive capabilities, possesses a rhetorical beauty that was unfortunately not reflected in the translations provided by the translators discussed in the data. This is they appeared to lack the necessary skill to render the text with equivalent metaphoric expressions that would resonate with the target audience. The researchers posit that the ideological orientations held by the translators may indeed serve as a substantial contributing factor influencing their decision to favor the literal translation method over more adaptive strategies that could have better captured the essence of the original metaphors. The intricacies involved in the translation of metaphors undoubtedly present a formidable challenge to any translator. This phenomenon remains an area of exploration that has yet to be fully unveiled and understood within the broader context of translation studies.

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