

Food Metaphors in English–Arabic Translation

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INTRODUCTION

It is a widely known assumption that the task of translation between culturally unrelated languages becomes more difficult than between those which share a historical and a cultural background. Metaphors as a cultural phenomenon pose a great deal of challenge in the translator's attempt to recreate the metaphorical image in the TL; this is due to the indirectness of the meaning of metaphors which makes "untranslatability" a likelihood (Al-Hasnawi, 2007: 13).

1. WHAT IS A METAPHOR?

I. A. Richards (1965: 89) defined Metaphors as “a shift carrying over a word from its normal use to a new one. In a sense metaphor, the shift of a word, is occasioned and justified by a similarity or analogy between the object it is usually applied to and the new object.”

According to OED (1995: 384), metaphors are figures of speech “in which a name or descriptive term is transferred to some object different from, but analogous to, that in which it is properly applicable.

Metaphor is a means of expressing one thing in terms of something else. It provides us with a means of understanding

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the way language works, from the most common phrases to the most complex linguistic theory (Wilkinson, 2002: 10).

A Metaphor as stated by Lakoff (1993: 204) is a major and indispensable part of our ordinary conventional way of conceptualizing the world and our everyday behavior reflects our metaphorical understanding of experience.

Metaphors do not happen to be an object of ornament in language, on the contrary, they serve as a very powerful communicative tool in all aspects of language whether spoken or written. They are utilized in language for the following reasons:

- To refresh our ordinary everyday language.
- To encourage interpretation.
- They give maximum meaning with a minimum of words.
- Allow us to understand a relatively abstract or inherently unstructured subject matter in terms of a more concrete or at least more highly structured subject matter.”
- They are a sign of genius. as Aristotle puts it: "The greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor." It is "a sign of genius, since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars." (owl.english.com.)

According to Avădanei (1994: 16) metaphor is present in “absolutely all perceived dimensions of human existence” being not a matter of words but conceptual in nature. It is the main mechanism through which we comprehend abstract concepts and perform abstract reasoning (cit. in Frunza, 2005).

2. *The concept of Metaphors in Arabic*

(*Almajaz*) is a term used to cover all types of metaphors in Arabic. Arab rhetoricians distinguish between two types of *Almajaz*: *Aqli* (mental) and *lughawi* (linguistic). A mental metaphor is when the act or its meaning is attributed to something or someone other than the original initiator of the act. The latter type is also called *Istiara* (borrowing), is when the basic meaning of a word or an expression is given to something other than the original object that it refers to (Al-Jurjani, 1954: 29, Abbas, 1987: 157). In more accurate terms, it means borrowing the word in order to describe a state or action related to something else, the new assigned meaning is deemed to be more eloquent and expressive than the conventional word:

For example, the word *Asad lit.* (lion) in Arabic is more expressive when it is used to describe ones' courage than the word *Shuja'a lit.* (courageous) (ASsyoti, U.D.:101 & ASsikaki, 1937: 127).

In order to realize *Istiara* three components must exist:

- *Mushabbah* (Tenor): the item or person described by the metaphor.
- *Mushabbah bih* (vehicle): an item, state or person from whom a particular feature is borrowed.
- *Wajhu alshabah*: refers to the point of similarity.

(Faiq, 1998: 230)

However, Arab linguists like AS-sikaki and Al-qazwini suggest that although *Istiara* can be subsumed under *Simile*, it cannot be achieved if the point of similarity is obscure or irrelevant, they further recommend that it must be shared by

the speakers of that community in which the metaphor is used, otherwise it would be misinterpreted or misunderstood or, in better cases, it will be viewed as a puzzle or a pun.

(ASsikaki, 1937: 170 & Al-Qazwini, U.D: 89).

3. Food Metaphors and Translation:

Due to the relevance and closeness of food in our lives, metaphors related to food have become very pervasive in languages around the globe. The increasing emphasis on food issues has made it easy for food-related metaphors to be easily introduced in language. It is not uncommon to hear people say "swallow the bait" or "digest the problem" or "chew the idea" or "spice things up" or "stew the suspect".

Some food metaphors, due to their excessive use, are considered as conventional metaphors as in the following examples:

- What he said **left a bad taste in my mouth**.
- just can't **swallow** that claim.
- Let me **stew** over that for a while.

(Loos, 1998: 64)

As it is unanimously validated by most experts in the fields of communication, sociolinguistics and translation theory, translation heavily depends on the cultural aspects of the communities of the languages involved (Cutter, 2005: 60, cit. in Frunza, 2005). Most recent studies on translation theory stress that the translated text should have all the cultural and stylistic merits of the source text and must thoroughly deliver its intended cultural meaning. If this is the case when working on non metaphorical instances, consequently, the task is

supposed to be more complicated when attempting to translate metaphorical instances between two unrelated languages as is the case of English and Arabic.

As for the translation of metaphor, there have been numerous attempts to approach this domain. Some linguists proposed a purely linguistic standpoint, depending on the linguistic interrelationships to arrive at the exact meaning of the SL metaphor (Aristotle, Searle, 1979; Davidson, 1979 and Black, 1979). Others, on the other hand, proposed a cognitive approach to the translation of metaphor, judging on the degree of cultural overlap in experience and knowledge between SL and TL which decides the translatability of a given metaphor (Lakoff, 1987 and Gibbs, 1994).

A metaphor is culture – specific due to the fact that different cultures conceptualize experience in varying ways. According to Dagut (1976: 28) “there is no simplistic general rule for translation of metaphor, but the translatability of any given SL metaphor depends on: (1) the particular cultural experiences and semantic associations exploited by it, and (2) the extent to which these can, or cannot, be reproduced non-anomalously in TL, depending on the degree of overlap in each particular case.” Moreover, what determines the translatability of a SL metaphor is not its ‘boldness’ or ‘originality’, but rather the extent to which the cultural experience and semantic associations on which it draws are shared by speakers of the particular TL. (Ibid: 32)

Maalej (2002) explains that the untranslatability of a metaphor is due to the absence of the cultural reference of a

SL metaphor in the TL as well as the cultural and lexical specifics of the SL (Maalej, 2002: 149).

However, Newmark(1982: 88) proposed seven strategies to translate metaphors:

1. Reproducing the same Image in the TL.
2. Replacing the image in the SL with a standard TL image.
3. Translation of metaphor by simile.
4. Translation of metaphor by simile + Sense.
5. Conversion of Metaphor to sense.
6. Deletion.
7. Same metaphor combined with sense.

These strategies stated here are going to be the basis of our data analysis.

4. Procedure, Data Analysis & Discussion

For the purpose of the current study, 12 food – related English metaphorical expressions are chosen. These metaphors are explained with regard to the cultural setting associated with them. They are further analyzed according to Newmark's terms (object, image and sense).As for the target language translations, 12 reliable Test Subjects (henceforth TSs) M.A. and Ph.D. teachers of translation were asked to render these metaphors into Arabic in the form of a questionnaire. Target translations of the metaphors under discussion are analyzed in accordance to Newmark's strategies to translate metaphors (Newmark, 1982).A sufficient account of the translators' choices is provided concerning the cultural and linguistic aspects which led them to choose a particular TL lexical item to be (in their opinion) the equivalent of a particular

metaphorical expression of the SL. The notion of appropriate / inappropriate is highlighted in the TSs renderings.

Data Analysis:

1. Cooked:

- He knew he was *cooked* when he saw his boss standing at the desk.
- Object: actions exposure.
- Image: cooking, to be on fire.
- Sense: caught for wrongdoing.

The original meaning of the metaphorical expression (cooked) in English is: caught for wrongdoing. It involves an emotional state of being nervous, angry and disappointed. Arabic, on the other hand uses the equivalent word for "cooked" which is يُطَبِّخ (yotbakh), metaphorically to mean "to plot something or conspire. Due to the range of variance in meaning between the two languages, most of the translators rendered this metaphor depending on its sense, i.e. its Arabic metaphorical meaning:

- مات ذعراً (panic-stricken) inappropriate interpretation. (TSs 1, 2 &3).
- وشي به (denunciated) inappropriate interpretation.(TSs 4 & 5).
- قضي عليه (killed).inappropriate interpretation.(TSs 6, 7&8).
- حيكمت مؤامرة ضده (a conspiracy was plotted against him).TL – oriented metaphorical meaning.(TSs 9).
- كشف أمره (exposed). Conversion to sense.(TSs 10, 11, 12).

Most of the translations can be deemed as a rendition of the sense of the metaphor. No equivalent TL food- related metaphor is found for this instance because although English and Arabic use the same word metaphorically, however, they refer to different experiences and actions.

2. Toast:

- He knew he was going to be *Toasted* when he got home.
- Object: state of anger.
- Image: exposed to tremendous heat.
- Sense: anger is heat that burns.

This expression is used in English to refer to the state of extreme anger. The literal meaning of (toast) in Arabic is *يتحمص* (*yatahamas*). It is not used metaphorically to refer to any social or cultural experience. Therefore, most of the renderings of the image expressed by the word (toast) were inappropriate:

- *يرحب به* (welcome) inappropriate interpretation.(TSs 1, 2, 3&4).
- *يتحمص* (to toast)literal meaning.(TS 5).
- *يحتفل* (celebrate)inappropriate interpretation(TS 6).
- *يؤنب* (reprimanded) inappropriate interpretation.(TS 7).
- *يويخ* (to be scolded) inappropriate interpretation.(TS 8).
- *سيموت حراً* (die of heat) sense meaning.(TSs 9).
- *سيكون الضحية* (will be the victim) inappropriate interpretation. (TS 10).
- *سيعنف* (will be rebuked) inappropriate interpretation.(TS 11).

- يعاقب (will be punished) inappropriate interpretation.(TS 12).

3. *Half-baked*:

- I am sure this is going to be another of his **half-baked** schemes that never come to anything.
- Object: Ideas
- Image: hasty and unfinished thought.
- Sense: ideas must take time to progress and must be fully "baked" to develop.

Doing things without taking time to consider the consequences is analogous to having cookies or bread "half done". Here, not taking enough time to think of something will lead to "half –baked" results. In standard Arabic, no record of a metaphorical usage of the same food-related expression is found. However, a colloquial Iraqi-Arabic equivalent does exist; نص ستاو (*nus staw lit. half- done*). Thus, most of the translations reflected the sense behind this expression:

- غير كاملة (incomplete) conversion to sense.(TSs 1, 2, & 3).
- شبه فاشلة (almost unsuccessful) conversion to sense.(TSs 4&5).
- غير مدروسة (unwise) conversion to sense.(TSs 6&7).
- حمقاء (dumb) conversion to sense.(TS 8).
- ساذجة (naive) conversion to sense.(TSs 9, 10&11).
- لن تجدي نفعاً (futile). conversion to sense.(TS 12).

4. *Simmering*:

- Relations between the government and opposition party have been **simmering**.
- Object: precarious or unsteady situation.
- Image: slowly heating to rise to the point of boiling.
- Sense: Heating is activity.

Disturbed relations are often characterized by lack of steadiness just like the case of a fluid slowly heated to reach the point where the surface starts to move turbulently. Most of the translations focused on the sense of this metaphor, while others expressed the exact literal meaning:

- تسخن على نار هادئة (slowly heated).literal meaning.(TSs 1, &2).
- تطبخ على نار هادئة (slowly cooked).literal meaning.(TS 3).
- احتدم (ragged) conversion to sense. (TSs 4 &5).
- تأزم (aggravated). conversion to sense.(TS 6).
- تدهور (deteriorated). conversion to sense.(TS 7)
- هادئة (calm !!) misinterpretation.(TS 8)
- اضطرب (disturbed). conversion to sense.(TSs 9, 10 & 11).
- تهتاج (in turmoil). conversion to sense.(TS 12).

5. *Boiling*:

- The boss was **boiling** mad.
- Object: anger.
- Image: boiling like water.
- Sense: Heat is anger, more heat means more anger.

In cooking, boiling is the culmination or the end point for heating any material. Assigning that meaning to anger feelings gives the impression that someone is extremely angry over something. Arabic uses the same metaphorical expression to express the same human experience. Consequently, most translations reflected the same metaphor in the TL:

- يغلي غضباً (boiling mad) a corresponding metaphor.(TSs 1, 2 & 3).
- استشاط غضباً (burn with anger) a corresponding metaphor.(TSs 4, 5, 6 & 7)
- ثار غضباً (become extremely angry) conversion to sense.(TS 8).
- تأجج جنوناً (blazing with anger). a corresponding metaphor.(TSs 9 & 10).
- تميز غيضاً (burst with rage). conversion to sense.(TSs 11 & 12).

6. *Raw*:

- She had a **raw** talent for music.
- Object: Unpolished potential or a talent.
- Image: uncooked.
- Sense: a talent is a raw potential and must be developed (cooked).

Every skill needs practice and training to develop. This is expressed through a metaphorical image of a raw food which takes certain processes to be edible and ready to be eaten. The Arabic equivalent of the word "raw" is نبيئ (nayye'a) or غير ناضج (ghayer nadhij).

For the specific metaphorical usage of the word "raw" which is collocated with talent, most of the TL renderings showed a tendency to translate it with a standard collocation in Arabic which is موهبة فطرية (*mawhiba fitriya*) lit. natural talent. This expression can hardly be considered as a valid equivalent for "raw talent", because the meaning of the SL metaphor is (a talent which lacks professionalism, while the TL rendering gave the impression of naturalness of the talent, the TL renderings are:

- موهبة حقيقية (lit. real talent) misinterpretation.(TSs 1, 2 & 3).
- موهبة فطرية (lit. innate talent) conversion to sense.(TS 4, 5 & 6).
- تنقصها الخبرة (lit. lacks expertise) conversion to sense.(TS 7).
- ليس لها خبرة (lit. lacks expertise) conversion to sense.(TSs 8 & 9).
- تحتاج إلى التدريب (lit. needs practice) conversion to sense.(TS 10).
- مهارة غير مصقولة (lit. unpolished talent) equivalent non-food metaphor.(TS 11).
- ناضجة (lit. ripe) misinterpretation.(TS 12).

7. *Stir- up:*

- Watching the last movie **stirred up** all kinds of emotions.
- Object: emotions
- Image: a touching event.
- Sense: emotions move to the next level in a certain situation.

Some recipes require slow movement of the mixture to obtain the desired form and taste. Emotions are likewise; they require invoking elements to move to the point desired by the initiator. This SL verb has been rendered in the TL as:

- حركت (moved) conversion to sense.(TSs 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5).
- أثارت (evoked) conversion to sense.(TSs 6 & 7).
- استثارت (touched) conversion to sense.(TSs 8, 9 & 10).
- هيجت (aroused) conversion to sense.(TSs 11 & 12).

8. Food:

- Reading is **food** for thought.
- Object: Reading.
- Image: The food that sustains our mind is reading.
- Sense: The mind is hungry and eats ideas.

Food is what sustains us, giving us the energy; "Reading", as a metaphor, is the real nutrient of our minds, as if the mind is a hungry being and lives on ideas. Arabic uses the equivalent غداء (*ghida'a*) "food" metaphorically to refer to the same cultural and social experience. Similarly: Music is food for the soul. الموسيقى غذاء الروح

Accordingly, all translations are metaphorically related to a TL food-metaphor:

- غداء (food). Food metaphor.(TSs, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 &12).

9. Plate:

- I can't help you, my **plate** is already too full.
- Object: Time.
- Image: No space for more.
- Sense: limited time is like a full plate which is limited in space for more.

A full plate in English is an image of being busy and loaded with responsibilities. No record of a metaphorical usage is found in Arabic which bears the same cultural experience expressed by the word "plate" in English for this instance. The Arabic equivalent for "Plate" is "*طابق*", which has metaphorical grounds in Classical Arabic but with a different cultural experience. Due to the unmatched cultural experiences between English and Arabic concerning "plate" and "*طابق*", most translators conveyed the sense behind this instance:

- مشغول جداً (very busy). Conversion to sense.(TSs 1, 2 &3).
- لدي ما يكفيني (very busy). Conversion to sense.(TSs 4&5).
- منشغل (busy). Conversion to sense.(TS 6).
- مثقل بالتزاماتي (overloaded with commitments). Conversion to sense.(TS 7 &8).
- مشغول أصلاً (already busy). Conversion to sense.(TSs 9, 10 &11).
- جدولي مزدحم (fully-booked schedule). Conversion to sense.(TS 12).

10. Appetite:

- Children have an enormous **appetite** for learning.
- Object: Children's learning.
- Image: appetite for eating when hungry.
- Sense: appetite reflects children's hunger to learn more.

Desire to learn and explore the world around us is similar to the desire to eat when feeling hungry. English utilizes this metaphor to express the desire to know or learn about anything. The Arabic equivalent of "appetite" is "*shahiyya* شهية" which is used metaphorically to express willingness to do something; yet, most translations reflected the tendency to render "appetite" by the sense it conveys:

- رغبة (desire). Conversion to sense.(TSs 1 & 2).
- قابلية هائلة (disposition). Conversion to sense.(TS 3).
- شغف للتعلم (passion for learning). Conversion to sense.(TSs 4 & 5).
- شهية كبيرة (appetite).metaphorical meaning.(TS 6).
- استعداد كبير (readiness). Conversion to sense.(TSs 7, 8 & 9).
- اندفاع (enthusiasm). Conversion to sense.(TSs 10 & 11).
- فضول كبير (curiosity). Conversion to sense.(TS 12).

11. Digest:

- Listen carefully and take a moment to **digest** the info.
- Object: Processing of a thought.
- Image: Taking time to think.
- Sense: Taking time to consider the issue just like taking time to digest food.

When you digest an information, you think about it carefully so that you understand it. Deep thinking is encouraged as much as proper digestion is also encouraged. Arabic uses the equivalent "*hadhem* هضم" for "digest" metaphorically to refer to being unfair or behave in an unjust manner. It collocates with the word "حقوق" (Lit. rights):

- To do injustice to.... هضم الحقوق

In Arabic, the word هضم has been newly adopted to express the metaphorical image of "Digest ", yet, most TL translations conveyed the sense of it:

- استيعاب (lit. comprehension) Conversion to sense.(TSs 1, 2, 3&4).
- تفهم (lit. to understand). Conversion to sense.(TSs 5, 6 &7).
- إدراك (lit. to recognize). Conversion to sense.(TS 8).
- تفقه (lit. to be versed in ...) Conversion to sense.(TS 9).
- حلل (lit. analyse). Conversion to sense.(TSs 10, 11 &12).

12. Ingredients:

- The film has all the **ingredients** of a box office hit.
- Object: Elements of anything.
- Image: Things are made up of elements mixed together.
- Sense: A smart mixture of elements is like a successful recipe with the right amount of ingredients.

This metaphorical image refers to the right choice of elements to be put together to achieve the desired result. This image is realized through shifting the original meaning of the word "ingredient" which basically denotes food objects to refer to entities outside the realm of nutrition. The direct

Arabic equivalent for this word is "mokawwinat" مكونات.

However, most translators opt for the sense of the word:

- مقومات (lit. characteristics).(TSs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5).
- عناصر (lit. elements).(TSs 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11& 12).

Here, the translators choose not to render it as "mokawinat" because it would be become awkward to say "مكونات" since both words do not collocate.

5. Conclusions & Remarks

The study has come up with the following conclusions:

1. The translation of metaphor is culturally conditioned, that is. it requires an insight into the cultural associations of the words and expressions which are used metaphorically. The difficulty of this cultural dimension multiplies especially when two culturally unrelated languages are involved as is the case of English and Arabic.
2. Although lexically equivalent food – related expressions are available in English and Arabic, some of these words express different metaphorical meanings depending on the cultural experiences associated with them.
3. Some food metaphorical expressions in English have no corresponding Arabic food – related equivalents simply because speakers of different languages and cultures do not conceptualize the metaphorical image similarly.
4. The majority of food-metaphorical expressions which are discussed in this study have been rendered by giving the non-figurative meaning of the image expressed by the metaphor, i.e. the sense. This is due to the fact that when an equivalent metaphorical expression is not perceived by the

translator, he/she will opt for the next most plausible strategy, vis- "sense meaning".

5. In cases of unmatched metaphorical conceptualization between English and Arabic, some of the instances studied here were unsuccessfully interpreted due to lack (or unavailability) of an equivalent TL Food- metaphor.

Judging on the uniqueness of culture in any community, the task of translating metaphor in such cases rings alarm bells to translators in order to bear all the consequences that may arise from misunderstanding and then mistranslating a metaphorical expression. Professional translators are very much aware that metaphor almost never translates if the cultural context of which is not understood.

Since a metaphor is a culture-specific conceptual association between two objects in life. Therefore, no attempt to translate metaphor is advised unless the translator is aware of the underlying cultural associations of the metaphorical expression under hand.

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Examples Analyzed are retrieved from:

http://knowgramming.com/metaphors/metaphor_chapters/examples.htm

and:

http://knowgramming.com/cooking_metaphors.htm

ترجمة مجازات الطعام من الإنكليزية إلى العربية

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المستخلص

لقد شاع بين الدارسين عدّ المجاز مجرد أسلوب يثري الكتابة ويزينها للتعبير عن تجارب الإنسان وأفكاره بوصفه أداة أكثر بياناً للمعنى من الأسلوب المباشر في النصوص الأدبية.

بيد أن الدراسات اللغوية الحديثة أظهرت أن المجاز ذو أبعاد تعبيرية أعمق من هذا. فقد تعدى ذلك إلى عدها إياه عنصراً مهماً في حياتنا اللغوية اليومية بأشكالها المختلفة كما بين ذلك العالم لايكوف إذ توصل إلى أن ما نسبته 70% من أحاديثنا اليومية ذو طبيعة مجازية (لايكوف وجونسون 1980).

ويأتي هذا البحث في إطار هذا النمط من الدراسات إذ نهض بدراسة مجموعة من العبارات ذات الصلة بمفردات مجازات الطعام من الانكليزية إلى العربية، فسلط الضوء على طائفة من الجوانب اللغوية ذات المضمون الثقافي ووقف البحث عند مفهوم (المجاز) معرّفاً به في إطاره العام فضلاً عن توظيفه في حيز مفردات مجاز الطعام بشكل خاص، ومن ثم سعت الدراسة إلى تحليل نماذج شائعة من عبارات المجاز المرتبطة بالطعام في اللغة الانكليزية وترجمتها إلى اللغة العربية.

واستنتجت الدراسة أن الجوانب اللغوية ذات المضمون الثقافي تؤدي دوراً

مهماً في الوقوف على سعة إمكانيات المجاز التعبيرية في مجال الترجمة بين اللغات حيث إنّ اختلاف طبيعة البنية اللغوية بين الانكليزية والعربية فضلاً عن تباين بيئتهما الثقافية أمران يجعلان من ترجمة المجاز أمراً تكتنفه تحديات كبيرة ، إذ يحتاج ذلك إلى أخذ كثير من الأبعاد المهمة وغير المتوقعة بنظر الاعتبار. وهذا يستدعي من المترجم أن يكون مدركاً للأغراض الثقافية لاستعمالات المجاز في اللغة المصدر (الانكليزية) فضلاً عن سعيه الحثيث للوقوف على القصد

* قسم الترجمة/ كلية الآداب/ جامعة الموصل.

الحقيقي للمتكلم أو الكاتب ، ثم البحث عن مكافئ لهذا المجاز في اللغة الهدف (العربية).

وقد توصلت الدراسة أيضاً إلى أن المترجم إذا خاض التعبير المجازي المكافئ في اللغة الهدف أو عجز عن إدراك المعنى الذهني الذي يرمي إليه المتحدث أو الكاتب في صورته المجازية فإنَّ المترجم يلجأ إلى الترجمة المباشرة غير المجازية.

