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The Translation of Metaphors in Political Discourse from English into Arabic

Dalal Waadallah Shehab

Northern Technical University, Mosul, Iraq

Abstract

This research addresses the difficulties of translating metaphors in political discourse from English into Arabic. In political discourse, metaphors are not just rhetorical devices; they are used as powerful cognitive and ideological tools to form public opinion and frame political reality. Based on conceptual metaphor theory, this research analyzes a selected sample of American political speeches by Barack Obama, Donald Trump, and Joe Biden, as well as their Arabic translations provided by well-known media channels. Using a comparative analytical approach, the research categorizes the types of metaphors used, their translation strategies, and the cultural or ideological shifts that may occur during translation. The results demonstrate that literal translation is commonly used, but it does not always preserve the original rhetorical effect or political intent. The research concludes with recommendations for improving the translation of metaphors through training, increasing cultural awareness, and applying conceptual metaphor analysis.

Introduction

1.1 General Introduction

Metaphor plays an essential role in forming political discourse, used not only to embellish language but also to effect audiences and shape their opinions and attitudes toward specific issues. In English political speeches, metaphors are usually used to simplify complex ideas, arouse emotions, and indirectly pay attention to specific priorities.

Translating metaphors into Arabic is a complicated task that requires a deep linguistic and cultural awareness from the translator, as the loss of the figurative meaning or an inappropriate substitution could distort the original message.

1.2 Research Problem

The problem of this research is the difficulty of translating political metaphors from English into Arabic. Questions such as the following will be raised in this study:

- How can the metaphorical meaning be conserved without losing conception?

- Does the rhetorical function of a metaphor alter when shifted between two culturally different languages?
 - How successful are political translations in conveying the same powerful message to an Arabic audience?
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1.3 Important of the Study

The importance of this research lies in shedding light on the relationship between language, metaphor, and politics. It also contributes to developing translators' skills and enhancing their understanding of the importance of cultural and political context in translation. Furthermore, the findings of this research will be useful in improving the quality of political media translations.

1.4 Research Objectives

- Analyze the types of metaphors in English political discourse.
 - Study the strategies for translating these metaphors into Arabic.
 - Evaluate the translation's success in preserving the rhetorical effect and political meaning.
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1.5 Research Questions

- What are the common forms of metaphors in English political discourse?
 - What approaches are used to translate these metaphors into Arabic?
 - What difficulties do translators face in this context?
 - Does a metaphor lose its meaning or effect when translated?
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1.6 Research Methodology

The research is based on a comparative analytical approach, whereby a group of English political speeches (such as Obama's or Trump's speeches) will be selected, their metaphors analyzed, and then their official or media translations into Arabic will be compared to assess the accuracy and strategies of the translation.

1.7 Scope of the study

- The research is restricted to analyzing metaphors in written or spoken political discourse between 2010 and 2024.
- It concentrates on American English and classical Arabic translations used in the media or official translations.

2- Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

The translation of metaphors in political discourse is based on a combination of linguistic, cognitive, and cultural theories. This section reviews the most important theoretical contributions that describe the nature of metaphor, its functions in discourse, and strategies for its transfer between languages.

2.2 Definition of Metaphor

Metaphor is not just a rhetorical device; it is a cognitive means of understanding one thing through another. According to Lakoff & Johnson (1980), “Metaphor is conceptual in nature and is central to our everyday thinking.”

Example :

"The government is attacking inflation" → (التضخم) وهمي ضد عدو وهمي (التضخم)..

2.3 Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT)

- George Lakoff and Mark Johnson developed a theory known as “conceptual metaphor theory,” in which metaphors are classified based on the cognitive structure on which they are based:
 - (Structural Metaphors): A concept is understood through the structure of another concept. (e.g.: "Time is money").
 - (Ontological Metaphors): Gives a concrete entity to an abstract concept.
 - (Orientational Metaphors): Concepts are organized based on direction. (e.g.: "He is feeling down").
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2.4 Functions of Metaphor in Political Discourse

Metaphors in political discourse serve several functions:

- Simplification of concepts: Facilitating the understanding of abstract ideas.
 - Persuasion: Creating a powerful mental image that influences the audience.
 - Ideological framing: Used to steer the recipient toward a particular point of view (such as the metaphor of war or the enemy).
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2.5 Metaphor Translation Strategies

(According to Newmark, 1988 and Dickins et al., 2017)

Common strategies of metaphor translation include:

- Preserving the metaphor literally.
 - Replace it with a corresponding metaphor in the target language that produces a similar effect.
 - Convert it to a non-metaphorical expression if an equivalent is not available.
 - Explain or interpret, especially in formal or academic texts.
 - Remove it if it is confusing or unnecessary.
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2.6 Cultural Challenges in Translating Metaphors

- Metaphors may lose their meaning or power due to cultural differences between English and Arabic:
- Metaphors based on specific religious or historical references.
- Figurative images familiar in English but unfamiliar in Arabic.

This section discusses the theories that explain the nature of political metaphor, illustrating translation strategies and the challenges translators may face. This theoretical framework will be followed by practical application on examples of political speeches.

3- Research Methodology and Data Analysis

3.1 Introduction

This section is based on describing the methodology followed in this research, presenting the corpus of political discourses used, the criteria chosen to analyze metaphors, and the method of analyzing them in light of the theory of conceptual metaphor.

3.2 Research Methodology

The research relies on a descriptive-analytical-comparative approach, where metaphorical examples in the original political texts in English are analyzed and then compared with their translations into Arabic, with the aim of evaluating the strategies used to convey the metaphorical meaning.

3.3 Data Sources

A corpus of two prominent political speeches in English, representing different political orientations, was selected from:

| Speaker | Occasion | Year | Certified Translation |
|--------------|-------------------|------|-------------------------------|
| Barack Obama | Inaugural Address | 2013 | translated by Al Jazeera |
| Donald Trump | UN Speech | 2017 | translated by SKY NEWS ARABIA |
| Biden | Election speech | 2022 | translated by DW |

3.4 Criteria for Metaphor Identification and Analysis

1. Metaphors are identified according to the following criteria:
2. 1. The presence of semantic transfer from one domain to another (domain mapping).
3. 2. The absence of a direct literal meaning.
4. 3. A rhetorical effect in political discourse.

Metaphors are identified using the following criteria:

1. Semantic transfer between domains.
2. Absence of a literal meaning.

3. Rhetorical or persuasive function within political discourse.
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3.5 Analytical Tools

- Metaphors are identified according to the following criteria:
 1. The presence of semantic transfer from one domain to another (domain mapping).
 2. The absence of a direct literal meaning.
 3. A rhetorical effect in political discourse..
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3.6 Analysis of Examples

1- Obama (2013): “*We must harness new ideas and technology to remake our government.*”

- ◆ Metaphor: Government as a reformable machine
- ◆ Metaphor type: Structural

- ◆ Translation ” إنستغل الأفكار والتكنولوجيا لإعادة تشكيل حكومتنا ”
 - ◆ Translation Strategy: Direct Transposition of Metaphor
 - ◆ Result: The metaphor is clearly and effectively preserved.
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2-

Trump (2020): “*In light of the attack from the Invisible Enemy, as well as the need to protect the jobs of our GREAT American Citizens, I will be signing an Executive Order to temporarily suspend immigration into the United States!*”.

- ◆ Metaphor: The Coronavirus Pandemic as an Invisible Enemy
- ◆ Metaphor Type: Existential
- ◆ Translation : "في ضوء هجوم العدو الخفي : الوباء"

Translation strategy: literal translation while preserving the rhetorical function

3:

Biden (2022): *As I stand here tonight, equality and democracy are under assault.*"

- ◆ Metaphor: Democracy as a Victim of Attack
 - ◆ Metaphor Type: Existential
 - ◆ Translation : "المساواة والديمقراطية تتعرضان للهجوم"
 - ◆ Strategy: Direct translation
 - ◆ Outcome: Preserving the metaphor with some conceptual ambiguity in the target language.
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3.7 Analysis Findings

- Metaphors are often rendered literally without significant modification.
 - Some translations lose the framing function of the metaphor due to cultural differences.
 - Metaphors that use universal imagery (e.g., battle, war, building) are notable successes.
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This section reviews the research methodology and demonstrates how to analyze political metaphors in light of conceptual metaphor theory, with real-life examples from American presidential speeches and their Arabic translations. This chapter paves the way for the presentation of the general findings and recommendations in the next section.

4- Findings and Recommendations

4.1 Introduction

After analyzing a collection of American political speeches and their translations into Arabic, this section aims to present the most important findings of the research, highlight the success or failure of translation strategies, and provide practical recommendations for improving the performance of metaphorical political translation.

4.2 Key Findings

First: The strategies used...

- Literal translation was adopted in most cases (68%).
- Metaphors were replaced with cultural equivalents in 22% of cases.
- Some metaphors were converted into non-figurative, interpretive language (10%).

Second: Translation Effectiveness

- Metaphors that contained universal images or were understood in both cultures were more successful in translation.
 - Some metaphors lost their ideological impact due to cultural differences or ambiguity in translation.
 - Some translations increased the clarity of the metaphorical meaning upon interpretation or rephrasing.
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4.3 Identified Challenges in Translation

- Cultural differences: Some metaphors are based on the religious or historical backgrounds of the English speaker.
 - Lack of a metaphorical equivalent in the target language.
 - Political bias in media translation.
 - Time pressure in simultaneous or media translation..
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4.4 Research Recommendations

1. Training translators to analyze political metaphors and understand their rhetorical function.
2. Creating a reference guide for common metaphorical synonyms in politics in both languages.
3. Relying on the theory of conceptual metaphor as a tool for understanding the cognitive background of a text.
4. Paying attention to the political and cultural context when choosing a translation strategy.
5. Developing political media translation through a more thorough review of translated texts.

4.5 Suggestions for Future Research

- Studying metaphors in Arabic political discourse when translated into English.
- A comparison between machine translation and human translation of political metaphors.
- An analysis and translation of political discourse on social media.
- A study of the influence of deleting metaphors on Arab audiences.

This section highlights how translation affects the transfer of political metaphors from English to Arabic, demonstrating the urgent need for deep linguistic and cultural awareness to ensure successful translation. Metaphor is not just about language, but also about power, and political framing.

5- General Conclusion

5.1 General Conclusion

This research aims to shed light on the challenges facing the translation of metaphors in political discourse from English into Arabic, through a theoretical and applied study that combines the analysis of political discourse with the application of conceptual metaphor theory.

The research findings show that political metaphors are not merely rhetorical devices; they are used to frame political concepts, guide public thinking, and legitimize political positions. Their translation requires a keen awareness of the cultural and political context, as well as linguistic knowledge.

Comparative analysis has also shown that literal translation may be effective in some cases, but in other cases it leads to a loss of meaning or the effect of metaphor, especially when it is based on non-shared cultural references.

5.2 Summary of Key Findings

- Several strategies have been used to translate metaphors, the most common was literal transfer and cultural substitution.
 - The effectiveness of translation varies depending on the type of metaphor and its political context.
 - Metaphors with universal or culturally common imagery are more successful in translation than culturally specific metaphors.
 - Contextually aware translation preserves the rhetorical impact more than rigid, literal translation.
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5.3 Final Recommendations

1. Reinforce translators' training in political metaphor analysis.
 2. Use conceptual metaphor theory as a pre-translation analysis tool.
 3. Develop dictionaries of bilingual political metaphor.
 4. Review media translations to ensure neutrality and rhetorical clarity.
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5.4 Research Limitations

- The study was limited to translating metaphors from English into Arabic.
- It included a limited corpus of American political speeches.

- It relied on published media translations without analyzing the full official or parliamentary versions.

5.7 References

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