Linguistic and Epistemic Inference in Cross-Cultural Communication in Satellite Television News Media

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ABSTRACT

Modern languages have developed linguistic patterns that are often in consonance with the epistemic knowledge of the world. For the main part, epistemic knowledge is inferred from such linguistic patterns. In some situations however, dissonance occurs between linguistic inference and epistemic inference. When this happens, language compensates by utilizing certain linguistic patterns and rhetorical techniques to realign linguistic and epistemic realities.

This paper examines aspects of translation-induced dissonance in linguistic and epistemic inference drawing on examples from news and current affairs Arabic corpus of satellite television.

INTRODUCTION

Modern languages have developed linguistic patterns that are often in consonance with the epistemic knowledge of the world. For the main part, epistemic knowledge is inferred from such linguistic patterns and when dissonance occurs between linguistic and epistemic inferences, language compensates by utilizing certain linguistic patterns and rhetorical techniques to realign linguistic and epistemic realities. For example, the English hypothetical conditional antecedent "If I *were* you" is a compensatory linguistic technique to achieve concordance between linguistic and epistemic inferences when it is physically impossible for one person to be another person physically. Languages differ in their linguistic representation of epistemic knowledge and when any two languages are juxtaposed, they are bound to produce cognitive dissonance due to the disagreement that ensues between the linguistic forms within the language pair used to express the same epistemic phenomena. Left irreconciled, such infelicities are bound to change the shared experience of a speech community or surreptitiously reconstitute its social and cultural model.

This paper examines aspects of translation-induced dissonance in linguistic and epistemic inference drawing on examples from news and current affairs Arabic corpus of satellite television.

EPISTEMIC KNOWLEDGE VERSUS LINGUISTIC KNOWLEDGE

Our knowledge of world's phenomena is often expressed in linguistic-epistemic forms that express these phenomena metaphorically or define them conventionally. As our knowledge of these phenomena changes through discovery and scientific enquiry, a shift in the epistemic definitions of these phenomena occurs causing dissonance with the epistemic forms used to express them linguistically. Other epistemic forms may include pictorial and audio-visual representations of epistemic knowledge. Sherry and Trigg (1996:38) define *epistemic forms* as models of information. "An epistemic form is a target structure that guides the inquiry process. It shows how knowledge is organized or concepts are classified, as well as illustrating the relationships among the different facts and concepts being learned". [1] Epistemic forms include charts, maps, process flows, that visually organize information.

Figure 2— Pictorial Representation of Epistemic Reality (Picasso, Girl before a Mirror)[2]

Translation-induced Metaphoric Shift

When epistemic shifts occur, the linguistic patterns in most situations do not concur with the epistemic knowledge. For example, "*the sun rises*" is a linguistic form that originally described a natural phenomenon as observed by people who understood it that way. While our knowledge of this phenomenon has changed—that is, we now know that the sun does not rise—the epistemic form remains in

use. To avoid this dissonance between our epistemic knowledge and linguistically represented epistemic form, the form is transferred into a metaphor that invokes a perceptual and cognitive representation consistent with the new epistemic reality, which for all intents and purposes may be in disagreement with its ontic nature.[3] Consequently, metaphors act as re-constitutive epistemic forms that reconcile linguistic and epistemic realities. When such reconciliation occurs, metaphors become dead or dormant metaphors—they lose the idea or phenomenon they initially denoted. A good example of such metaphors is the term "heartburn", once believed to be related to ailment of the heart, and now known to have nothing to do with the heart. Yet we continue to use the term metaphorically to refer to the burning sensation in the stomach.

> **Heartburn (n)** an uneasy burning sensation in the stomach, typically extending toward the esophagus, and sometimes associated with the eructation of an acid fluid. [American Heritage Dictionary]

However, readjustment does not happen right away and a metaphoric lag persists until the cognitive epistemic schema is reset. Only then does complete reconciliation take place. This is an important aspect of metaphors because "their meanings (the ground of the metaphor) are captured by terms that are not lexically related to the lexical items in the metaphors" (Hasson and Glucksberg, 2005: 4). This property of metaphors makes them susceptible to epistemic shifts, when subjected to a translation process that focuses on the lexical items of the metaphor rather than on the terms that are related to the meaning of the metaphor. The following figure illustrates this dynamic nature of metaphors.

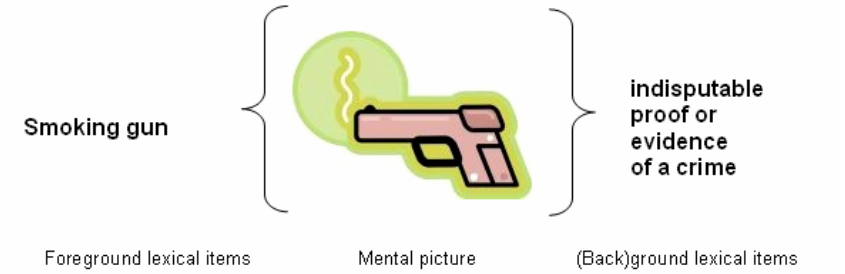

Figure 3— Smoking Gun Metaphor: the terms that are related to the meaning of the metaphor[4]

In this connection, Searle (reported in Johnson, 1987) contends that "every literal utterance ultimately presupposes a nonrepresentational, nonpropositional, preintentional "Background" of capacities, skills, and stances in order to determine its condition of satisfaction. The meaning of any metaphor will be determined only against a preintentional background that cannot be represented propositionally" (Johnson, 1987:72).

Reinforcing this notion of metaphor, Benzon and Hays (1987) make a distinction between physiognomic and propositional representations as one between a photograph of a scene and a verbal description of the scene. They argue that the filtering or extraction process which underlies metaphor, which in the context of our discussion creates consonance between two types of epistemic representation, "is fundamentally one involving physiognomic representations. The linguistic form of the metaphor is propositional. Hence metaphor is a device for regulating the interaction of propositional and physiognomic representations, that is to say, for recognition" (59), and subsequently for creating or restoring consonance between the epistemic and linguistic realities.

This semiotic status of metaphors, according to Hatim and Mason (1990:69), constitutes the crucial factor in deciding how a metaphor should be translated, since metaphoric use of language invariably conveys additional meaning. "Solutions to problems of translating metaphor should, in the first instance, be related to rhetorical function" (Hatim and Mason, 1990:233), and should seek to understand the "writer's whole world-view" (4). This world view is actually the epistemic reality which is for the main part in congruence with the linguistic reality as expressed by the chosen epistemic form of metaphor and with the epistemic schema.

Waking the Dead and Dormant Metaphors

The purpose of metaphor, according to Newmark (1988) is twofold: cognitive-referential and aesthetic-pragmatic. "[i]ts referential purpose is to describe a mental process or state, a concept, a person, an object, a quality or an action more comprehensively and concisely than is possible in literal or physical language; its pragmatic purpose, which is simultaneous, is to appeal to the senses, to interest, to clarify 'graphically', to please, to delight, to surprise" (Newmark, 1988:104). However, beyond their textual considerations, one of the functions of metaphors, according to Kövecses (2000:17), is that they "can actually "create," or constitute social, cultural, and psychological realities for us". Kövecses contends that conceptual metaphors do not simply reflect cultural models; they are in fact constitutive of cultural models. It can be argued however, that metaphors do both. "For a child, for example, hearing the metaphors constructs the model; for an adult, hearing and using the metaphor reflects and constitutes the model for others".[5]

Based on this constitutive view of metaphor, culturally bound metaphors that seek to align these realities are particularly problematic in translation. For instance, take the verb (create) in English and its metaphoric sense of "make, invent", as in "create a peaceful environment", "create web pages", "create an illusion", etc. The Arabic counterpart for the verb "create", (خلق) (*khalaqa*), which means (1) "to create or cause to come into being from nothing", (2) "fabricate; fake", and (3) "to assess or evaluate" [old usage], is usually an attribute of God in sense (1). In translating English expressions comprising the word "create" into Arabic, dissonance between the epistemic knowledge and

linguistic form occurs, which is increasingly left irreconciled in daily usage of both the colloquial and standard forms, causing cognitive dissonance in alert minds when encountered, gradually changing the frequency, currency and foregrounding of the primary and secondary meanings of the verb and eventually causing metaphoric shift.

Another example of this kind of dissonance is the Arabic translation of the word (astronomical) in the sense of "extremely large; exceedingly great; enormous", as (فلكية) (*falakiyyah*) in the sense of "pertaining to astronomy", a rendition no less moronic and retarded than the Arabic rendition of (create) which has been obstinately circulated and repeated by Arabic media producers and news editors. In this example, the concrete sense of the word (*falakiyyah*) is reversed, producing faulty metaphors. Faulty metaphors resulting in metaphoric shifts cause cultural and linguistic changes and mismatches of shared experience among members of the same speech community. When this happens, the likelihood of communication breakdown or misunderstanding increases.

1.1 أجور فلكية تفوق التوقعات.

1.1a *ujurun falakiyyah tafuqu at-tawaqqu'at.*

1.1b Astronomical wages exceed expectations.

1.1c Pertaining to astronomy wages exceed expectations.

The problem with this infelicitous metaphor is that the word (*falakiyyah*) does not invoke the same (back)ground meaning of (as considerable as the vastness of the universe) as its English counterpart in the same context. It always invariably refers to astronomy in its epistemic reference to "outer space, especially the positions, dimensions, distribution, motion, composition, energy, and evolution of celestial bodies and phenomena"[6].

Another example of metaphoric shift occurs when a source language metaphor is erroneously translated to produce a different pragmatic application of the translationally reproduced metaphor. For example, the idiomatic expression (to break the ice) has been translated into Arabic verbatim as (كسر الجليد) (*kasru al-jalid*) and is now being used in quite a different fashion from its English counterpart.

Break the ice: (1) make people who have not met before feel more relaxed with each other.

(2) start a conversation with someone you have not met before.

(3) make a start, pave the way

Normally Arabic would loosely express the same notion with a similar metaphor[7] that emphasizes the state, condition or action of the object rather than the object itself as in (2.1).

2.1 كسر الجمود

2.1a *kasru al-jumud.*

2.1b To break the freeze.

The word (jumud/جمود) means freeze, solidity and by extension, standstill. The rendition in (2.1) is normally used in sense (3) of *break the ice*. However, the new metaphor is used in senses (1) and (2) however in situations where *breaking the ice* is not called for. This is a clear case of compounded linguistic-epistemic dissonance. Consider the following example.

2.2 انتهت جلسة الأمس إلى "كسر الجليد" بين الأطراف التي سبق لها المشاركة بالحوار الوطني والاتفاق على "هدنة إعلامية"...

2.2a Yesterdays session ended (up) in “breaking the ice” between the parties that have previously participated in the national dialogue and in agreeing to a “media truce”.[8]

Example (2.2), which describes aspects of the current Lebanese political crisis, is typical of this infelicitous usage of “breaking the ice”. Breaking the ice usually happens between total strangers and not with bedfellow politicians who have had rounds and rounds of private talks and discussions and vicious and flagrant mud slinging matches in public and in the media. It is rather ironic that in a region, where the next war is predicted to be over water and where whatever is left of its water resources is rapidly drying up or filling with refuse, that such an expression (break the ice) is insanely spreading in media and political circles and fatuously parroted by laypeople at large. As a point of interest, Linda and Roger Flavell (1992) trace the origin of this metaphor to Europe:

> “This idiom is at least five hundred years old. It is not unique to English, but it is found in other European languages also. The allusion is thought to be to the hard ice that formed on European rivers in severe winters centuries ago. In years gone by it was indeed possible to skate on the Thames. But ice was not enjoyed by those whose livelihood depended on plying a small boat up and down the river. Their first task was that of breaking it up so that work could begin.
>
> Originally the expression was used to mean just that, making a start on a project. Gradually it came to mean embarking upon a relationship and breaking down the natural reserve one feels in the presence of *strangers* [emphasis added]” (Flavell, 1992:113).

This is definitely an alien metaphor culturally and geographically. So, to go back to example (2.2), if (break the ice) is used in the sense of “making a start”, then why “break the ice between the parties”? If it is used in the sense of “breaking down the natural reserve one feels in the presence of strangers”, these seasoned

politicians are no strangers to one another and have the temerity, audacity and brazenness to conduct any meeting with anybody in the same manner as they have run down the country and brought it to ruins. Long before the advent of Arabic satellite television and the rise to prominence of inept translators, journalists and copycat news editors, the expression (رفع الكلفة) (*raf'u al-kulfa*) had been naturally used in this context. This expression literally means (to lift the shyness). The word (kulfa) is an interesting one because it has compounded conceptual and metaphorical meanings: (1) unusual redness of the face, sometimes associated with bashfulness, (2) discomfort and inconvenience, which may result in redness of the face, (3) formality, which implies redness of the face because of discomfort or shyness, which sometimes occurs when meeting total strangers, and (4) outlay or cost; and since cost is sometimes associated with discomfort and discomfort with redness of the face, it makes perfect sense to express the notion of (break the ice) in a manner that is native to the environment and culture where ice does not occupy a large area of consciousness. So when one "lifts kulfa", in this context, one removes formality, discomfort and inconvenience.

To this end, Casnig (2003) contends that "[a] metaphor's only cause of death is the acceptance of its poetic meaning into the normal vocabulary of the host language. It is difficult to clearly distinguish the living metaphor from the dead because a language is dynamic, and individualistic – and therefore never a singularity. If one has never heard a given word in a specific metaphorical context, they will more likely see it as a living metaphor; where one who has accepted the use of this word in this same context as normal, will not likely identify it as a metaphor at all".[9] Furthermore, Grey (2000) confirms that "[t]he difference between live and dead metaphor is that dead metaphor is just an ordinary part of our literal vocabulary and quite properly not regarded as metaphor at all". [10] Grey also reminds us of an intermediate category of metaphors: dormant metaphors which consist of expressions "which we use without being conscious of their metaphorical character, but if we attend to them we can see at once that they [are] unmistakable metaphors. These are metaphors in the process of expiring", but they can be easily revived.[11] Consequently, a dead or dormant metaphor in one language may translate into a live metaphor or a live metaphor into a dead or dormant metaphor in another causing major epistemic dissonance. Furthermore, most discussion of metaphor has assumed a progression from live metaphor to dead metaphor. But not all metaphors start out as live metaphors and they then die or become dormant and so on. Certain metaphors start out as concrete, physical expressions of epistemic reality, as in our earlier example of "the sun rises". Both the pre-metaphoric state of expression and the metaphoric lifecycle (pre-metaphoric, metaphoric, and post-metaphoric) are not necessarily in full correspondence across languages and cultures.

Furthermore, regardless of the translation strategy, once a metaphor in one language is transplanted in another, the potential of the metaphor losing its nexus

to the original meanings and applications in its native environment and taking on a life of its own in the host environment is real, as illustrated in (2.2) and in the following examples.

2.3 هل ستكون الانتخابات المخرج العسر من (عنق الزجاجة) لإنقاذ أمريكا من المستنقع العراقي؟

2.3a Will the elections be the hard way out of the "bottleneck" to save America from the Iraqi quagmire?

2.4 بناء جسور الثقة بين الطالب واللغة العربية من خلال أنشطة الاتصال والمحادثة المختلفة في قاعات الدرس.

2.4a Building bridges of *the* trust between the student and Arabic language through various communication and conversation activities in the classrooms.

In example (2.3), it is not clear whether parenthesizing *bottleneck* is motivated by the awkwardness of usage or presumed newness of the metaphor. But it is clear from the combination of (bottleneck) and (quagmire) and the missing (or implied) subject of the metaphor (bottleneck) that the latter metaphor is applied incorrectly. One picture that this metaphor might evoke when linked to the (quagmire) metaphor in this sentence is that the (quagmire) has a (bottleneck), which further illustrates the confused application of the metaphor (bottleneck). In example (2.4), using the metaphor (building bridges of trust) "between *students* and the *Arabic language*" is a clear case of a metaphor gone awry, since *bridges of trust* are normally metaphorically built between individuals or between corporal entities.

Metaphoric Imperialism

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) have argued that our conceptual system "plays a central role in defining our everyday realities" (3). It is fundamentally metaphorical in nature and essentially culturally based. Making several observations on the role of metaphors in defining the structures of our daily activities, Lakoff and Johnson confirm that our metaphor-based conceptual system governs our everyday functioning, down to the most mundane details. In this regard, Phillipson (1992) alludes to the imposition of new mental structures in language contact. He asserts the following.

> "What is at stake when English spreads is not merely the substitution or displacement of one language by another but the imposition of new 'mental structures' through English" (Phillipson, 1992:166).

Elsewhere, he argues that asymmetrical interaction is a central feature of such imposition of imperialist structure as can be clearly seen in what he terms

"media imperialism", one of the branches of cultural imperialism (Phillipson, 1992:61). This downward asymmetrical interaction is nowhere more obvious than in news media translation, and more specifically in Arabic satellite television. Culturally dissonant metaphors are creeping into the language and are defining and redefining viewers' mental structures and world views. In this connection, undoubtedly, the idiom (carrot and stick) is a culture-specific condescending, downward expression. It is always used in reference to a higher authority or a domineering power enticing and threatening a subordinate group, community or nation. It is unheard of for example to say: "the trade union is resorting to a carrot and stick policy to secure wage increases", or "Iran is using carrot and stick diplomacy in its negotiations with the US and Europe over its nuclear energy program". Yet this culturally dissonant metaphor seems to be used ad nauseum in both Arabic media and politics. Most Arab journalists use it without a second thought. This kind of stubborn insistence by absent-minded, politically and intellectually inept journalists is unwittingly causing a metaphoric shift in Arabic that smacks of linguistic imperialism, or more accurately social and cultural submissiveness through metaphoric acculturation, for not only are they adopting faulty metaphors, but they are also importing culturally dissonant ones and they seem to at home with the obsequious roles such downward metaphors define for them. By collectively indulging in this practice, they are unwittingly embracing the linguistic forms of social and cultural subordination models, which compound the problems of already repressive social, political and cultural systems.

2.4 أكدت طهران أمس أن سياسة "العصا والجزرة" التي يستخدمها الغرب لإقناعها بوقف نشاطاتها النووية الحساسة محكوم عليها بالإخفاق.

2.4a Tehran stressed yesterday that the "stick and carrot" policy which the West is using to convince it to stop its sensitive nuclear activities is doomed to fail.[12]

Eleanor Roosevelt has been quoted as saying, "No one can insult you without your permission". From a social semiotics viewpoint, metaphors such as this one (carrot and stick) are indicative of subservience, deeply ingrained in the psychological and social makeup of those who adopt them without adjustment. Overtime, these metaphors of subservience cause a social and cultural shift through the imposition of new mental structures and epistemic realities.

Another role- and relationship-defining metaphor that seems to have equal appeal to Arab journalists and political commentators, and which is used mindlessly in Arabic news, is the metaphor (a game of cat and mouse). This English metaphor is usually used to describe a situation where one person is more powerful than another and uses this advantage in a cruel or unfair way. Yet it seems these journalists are oblivious of this skewed relationship of cops and robbers, heroes and villains, cowboys and Indians, which the metaphor establishes to the extent of reinforcing submissiveness and acceptance of an

imported, inappropriate cultural superiority model where Bugs Bunny always defeats Daffy Duck, Road Runner outmaneuvers the resourceful and tenacious Wile E. Coyote, the dumb Tweety Bird outsmarts Sylvester the Cat, and Chuck Norris, with one bullet and a broken leg, overruns the clumsy and squint Arab and Vietnamese *terrorists,* who cannot for all the *evil* in their hearts shoot straight, where the forces of nature and laws of physics work in cahoots, being invariably bent and broken to favour the superior man, and where a feeling of injustice rankles in the hearts of the viewers or those reacting to this model with some sense of justice.

2.5 بدأت لعبة القط والفأر بين الحكومة والأحزاب الأردنية حول أولويات اللجنة المشتركة.

2.5a *The* game of cat and mouse has started between the Jordanian government and [political] parties over the priorities of the joint committee.

2.6 يبدو أن واشنطن وطهران تلعبان لعبة القط والفأر، وأن اجتماعات الدول الخمس باتت من ضمن الوسائل الضرورية لزوم اللعبة.

2.6a It seems that Washington and Tehran are playing the game of cat and mouse and that the meetings of the five countries have become part of the necessary means required for the game.

In these examples, the epistemic reality is defined by the metaphor (a game of cat and mouse). In the logical progression of the sentences, the cat and mouse tally with the Jordanian government (the cat) and parties (the mouse) in example (2.5) and Washington (the cat) and Tehran (the mouse). This rhetorical matching is not always adhered to and cognitive dissonance ensues between the epistemic reality of the metaphor and the linguistic reality. Consider the following examples.

2.7 متى تنتهي لعبة القط والفأر بين الباعة المتجولين والبلدية؟

2.7a When will the game of cat and mouse between the peddlers and the municipality end?

2.8 هناك أيضاً لعبة القط والفأر، أحياناً في المجتمعات التي يوجد فيها هذا الهامش للحركة بين الصحافة والحكومة...

2.8a There is also the game of cat and mouse, sometimes in societies that have this *margin of movement* [leeway] between the press and the government.

The sequence in both examples requires additional cognitive acrobatics to link the cat to the municipality and mouse to the peddlers in example (2.7) and the

cat to the government and the mouse to the press in example (2.8). This may be a moot point, but it shows how the epistemic reality of the parts of the metaphor is organized in the writer's mind or epistemic schema in each instance.

Table 3—Cat and Mouse Metaphor Application

Example	Tenor	Vehicle	Dimension
2.6	Municipality	Cat	Chase, harass, bully, intimidate
	Peddlers	Mouse	Chased, harassed, bullied, intimidated
2.7	Government	Cat	Chase, harass, bully, intimidate, coerce
	Press	Mouse	Chased, harassed, bullied, intimidated, coerced

As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) again suggest, "[m]etaphors may create realities for us, especially social realities. A metaphor may thus be a guide for future action. Such actions will, of course, fit the metaphor. This will, in turn, reinforce the power of the metaphor to make experience coherent. In this sense metaphors can be self-fulfilling prophecies"(156). Consequently, a submissive metaphor will reinforce submissiveness and a defeat metaphor will engender defeatism.

Boorstin (1993) argues that peoples cannot be expected to share the intellectual product of a certain nation if they have not shared the processes from which it came. Calling for encouraging peoples of the world to make their own metaphors, Boorstin, asks: "How does it benefit the world when people freeze the metaphors of alien history into ideology? For ideology itself is a contradiction and denial of man's endless powers of novelty and change which are suggested by the very idea of progress". The carrot and stick metaphor is one such metaphor that is turning into ideology. If the Internet is anything to go by, a search in Google for "carrot and stick" returns around 445,000 results.

Such metaphoric infelicities are seldom encountered in borrowings or transfers from other languages say into English in the normal course of knowledge transfer. For instance, when the then Egyptian foreign minister and current general secretary of the Arab League, Amr Moussa, told a press conference at Sharm al-Shaikh in Egypt in October 2000 that "the position of the Arab countries towards Israel is clear" in Arabic (موقف الدول العربية من إسرائيل واضح), the interpreter conveyed this statement in English as: "the attitude of the Arab countries towards Israel is clear". With no access to the Arabic utterance, the CNN reporter relayed the interpreter's rendition in English as: "the position of the Arab countries towards Israeli is clear". This immediate reconciliation of epistemic reality and linguistic reality, that is the swap from *attitude* to *position*, is a good indication of how these realities are normally reconciled. Arabic news media seem to be ill at ease with this kind of treatment and a blinkered approach

is almost always invariably the prevalent solution resulting in absolute literal translations.

The social semiotics of metaphors cannot be discounted in assessing linguistic-epistemic dissonance. An example of such social semiotic is the metaphor "*money laundering*" (concealing the source of illegally gotten money). This metaphor has its origins in the use of public Laundromats in American cities. The idea is that when one washes dirty clothes in one tumbling washing machine, the clothes get mixed up. It also stems from the fact that Laundromats were owned by the mafia as a legitimate business front for illicit earnings—a combined social semiotic that does not exist in this fashion elsewhere. This metaphor is translated into Arabic as (غسيل الأموال) (*ghasil al-amwal*) (money washing). Now, whether (money washing), as a new metaphor in Arabic, conveys the same metaphoric meaning as its English counterpart is extremely debatable. But one thing is unequivocally certain. It does not convey the same epistemic reality.

Within this category, the Lebanese metaphor (Lebanon is a country of minorities)[13] has been recently translated verbatim by both Lebanese politicians and Western news media reporters, such as Octavia Nasr, Senior Editor of Arab Affairs at CNN in a recent comment on the events in Lebanon. The Arabic original (لبنان بلد الأقليات) (*lubnan baladu al-aqalliyyat*) (that is, Lebanon is a country of minorities) was a clever if not devious invention by pre-civil war politicians as group therapy for a sick, irredeemable, census-resistant [14], endemically corrupt[15], anachronistically feudal and sectarian, and superficially democratic social and political system, where the concepts of safety in numbers and divide and rule overlapped. Thin-slicing the social composition into small constituents of more than sixteen sects and small denominations, mass (inbound) ethnically and religiously driven immigration and naturalization policies designed to tip the demographic balance in favour of certain denominations and divisive foreign language policies[16] have certainly changed the social tapestry of the country in the sixty years that followed its independence from colonial France in 1943. However, while an analysis of this complex and peculiar sociopolitical phenomenon is interesting in its own right, what is relevant to our discussion here is the fact that the Arabic metaphor was treated as an absolute truism when translated into English and the metaphor seems to have lost its metaphoric sense overtime even in Arabic as revealed in the translation by Arabic speaking "experts". Apparently, people have come to believe their own lie and are lost forever!

Metaphor, Collocation and the Clash of Domains

Metaphors permeate language and no language can be effective and efficient without metaphors. They enable language to operate on the basis of the economy principle, expressing a world of knowledge in a few words. They paint a mental picture worth a thousand words, thus abbreviating and compacting the amount of words needed to express thought. Let us go back to our example at the beginning

of this paper (the sun rises). Apart from the elevation of the expression to a metaphor to restore the linguistic-epistemic consonance, to express the phenomenon as we now know it would take a few sentences. By the time we finished, we would probably need to describe the sunset!

Words such as *digest* (as in digest a report) and *absorb* (as in absorb an idea, absorb a loss), for example, are metaphors that resemble the act of mental assimilation to the act of digesting food and the act of taking in, utilizing and incorporating ideas, loss, etc to a sponge soaking up water respectively. For these metaphors to maintain their linguistic-epistemic consonance, collocations of all types (free, restricted, idiomatic, etc) are used to denote a figurative condition. McKeown and Radev (no date)[17], argue that because of the arbitrary, recursive and language-specific nature of collocations, "substituting a synonym for one of the words in a collocational word pair may result in an infelicitous lexical combination" (3-4). The infelicity they refer to is a result of the disruption in the epistemic form causing linguistic-epistemic dissonance. For example, to say in English "cast a question"* instead of "raise a question" is an infelicitous lexical combination that would cast doubt on the epistemic reality of the expression since "cast" belongs to the throw-domain and "question" to the question-domain. By the same token, to say (يفتح تحقيقاً) *yaftah tahqiqan* "open an investigation", in Arabic, instead of (يباشر/يبدأ تحقيقاً) *yubashir/yabda' tahqiqan* "start/commence an investigation" is an equally infelicitous lexical combination. The disruption in the epistemic form of these miscollocations is a direct result of a clash between two incongruent domains, where usually (after Johnson, 1987) a *system of implications* in one domain interacts with the *implicative system* of another domain. This interaction is essentially metaphorical in nature. For example, the English collocation (jump to conclusion) is a metaphoric relationship between (jump) that is to leap, spring over or skip (rather than walk) and (conclusion) being the end or final part of something, (the finish line), which is represented physiognomically.

When these collocated metaphors are translated verbatim, they create epistemic dissonance in the target language. A case in point is the Arabic rendition by Arab journalists of the preceding idiomatic expression "to jump to conclusion" as (يقفز إلى النتائج) *yaqfiz ila an-nata'ij*, which literally means *to jump to the results*. This rendition is an inane expression since (يقفز) *yaqfiz* and (نتائج) *nata'ij* do not collocate to create an acceptable metaphor and consequently fail to invoke the same mental picture as their English counterpart in English. In other words, it is a dud, *born-still* metaphor. Not only do these incongruities "make a perspicacious reader laugh at something you want him to take seriously", as Gowers (1948)[18] reminds us, but they also distort the epistemic reality of the original metaphor.

Two factors make such renditions infelicitous: "scope of metaphor" (Kövecses, 2000) and "metaphor creep" (Darwish, 2004, 2005). Kövecses (2000:35) argues that conceptual metaphors have a limited scope. "…the source domains of

conceptual metaphors do not have unlimited applications. That is, particular source domains seem to apply to a clearly identifiable range of target concepts". Changing the original application of the metaphor in translation renders the metaphor out of scope. Similarly, the infelicity in translating the metaphor, ironically by adhering to the lexical items of the metaphor, introduces new metaphors in the target languages that distort the meaning of the original metaphor, resulting in metaphor creep (Darwish, 2004, 2005).

Reductive and Summative Metaphors

Finally, as Benoit (2001) maintains, "[m]etaphors help us understand and interpret the world and the events, ideas, and people in it […].They can influence audience perceptions or interpretations of the world". By explaining one thing in terms of another, metaphors function as a terministic screen (Burke, 1965, 1966, cited in Benoit, 2001). In effect, they act as epistemic frames, which are reductive, summative and exclusionary in nature. They highlight a one-dimensional representation of reality to the exclusion of other dimensions since depending on the vividness and force of they evoke, metaphors set a frame around only one aspect at a time of epistemic reality. Here is an example from Arabic news.

3.1 المالكي يبحث عن طوق نجاة ينتشله من المستنقع العراقي!

3.1a Al-Maliki is looking for a lifeline to pull him out of the Iraqi quagmire [swamp].

In this example (3.1), the metaphor of quagmire, which is compounded and reinforced by the (lifeline) metaphor, evokes a one-dimensional pictorial summary of Iraq. This tunnel vision is reinforced in a host of borrowed metaphoric expressions such the following example.

3.2 البلاد على فوهة بركان بعد أن وصلت الأمور إلى نقطة اللاعودة، واستبدلت لغة الحوار بلغة التحدي والمواجهة.

3.2a The country is [sitting] on *the mouth of a volcano* after things have reached the *point of no return* and the language of dialogue has been replaced with the language of challenge and confrontation.

Of interest in this example (3.2) is the expression (point of no return). Not many speakers are aware that this expression comes from aviation, "where it signifies the point where an aircraft does not have enough fuel to return to the starting point"[19] and has come to mean "the point in a course of action beyond which reversal is not possible". In the latter sense, the deterministic expression has been exported to other language, including Arabic. But neither the original expression nor the translation implies that continuing on the course of action yields positive results when in fact either outcome is possible.

Euphemism, Dysphemism and Socio-cultural Circumlocution

Euphemism is another area of cross-cultural communication where linguistic-epistemic dissonance occurs. Allan and Burridge (no date)[20] define Euphemism as follows:

> "A euphemism is used as an alternative to a dispreferred expression, in order to avoid possible loss of face: either one's own or, by giving offense, that of the audience, or of some third party".

According to Neaman and Silver (1983), we tend to substitute another word free of negative associations when unpleasant elements of response attach themselves strongly to the word used to describe those negative associations. They argue that "[h]owever culturally and historically based euphemisms may be, the psychological and linguistic patterns underlying their formation are the same" (9). Furthermore, euphemisms are intrinsically language and culture-specific, reflecting the social mores of the times and the system of beliefs of the people who belong to a certain language and culture. They are dynamic and adaptive to the internal and external social changes and are more relied on in taboo-governed societies and oppressive political systems. The famous Arab poet-philosopher Abu al-Alaa al-Ma'arri (973 - 1058) lived in an era of religious and political despotism. Through euphemism and symbolism he was able to express his thoughts and escape the wrath of the rulers. The first call ever for family planning and contraception may be ascribed to him in the following verse (Darwish, 1989-2001).

3.3 خَفِّفِ الوَطْءَ مَا أَظُنُّ أَدِيمَ الْـ أَرْضِ إِلاَّ مِنْ هَذِهِ الأَجْسَادِ

3.3a *Khaffifi el-wata'a ma athunnu adima al-ardi il-la min hathihi al-ajsadi.*

3.3b Walk lightly! Methinks the surface of the ground is but of these bodies.

3.3c Decrease copulation! Methinks the surface of the ground is but of these bodies.

In this verse, the word (al-wata'a) (الوطء) is an infinitive root noun that has two meanings: (1) to tread and (2) euphemistically, to engage in sexual intercourse. While the latter meaning has been demoted in terms of currency, frequency and distribution in Modern Standard Arabic (that is, restricted to religious text), in Al-Ma'arri's days, it functioned as a strong secondary meaning. Being the cynical and satirical philosopher that he was, it is highly likely that his euphemistic message was "to go easy on sexual intercourse because the earth is being covered with the remains of too many people."[21] Such a call would have been a certain death sentence in those times.

In modern times, various social and political movements have introduced euphemisms, from affirmative action to political correctness to international conflicts, which are linguistically and culturally driven. For example, the use of

"partner" to refer to "a husband or a wife; a spouse, or the other person in a relationship with equal status, irrespective of their sex", is a social euphemism that is specific to Anglo-American cultures and is made feasible linguistically by the gender-neutrality of the English language. This is not so feasible in gender-sensitive languages such as Arabic, where the word "partner" is normally morphologically marked either as a male partner (sharik/شريك) or a female partner (sharika/شريكة).

Consequently, a complete congruence does not always exist across languages, and while certain euphemisms in one language may find their counterparts in another, the register and pragmatic usage of such euphemisms may not coincide. Furthermore, certain euphemisms lose their euphemistic nature when translated verbatim, or worse still become dysphemisms. Allan and Burridge (no date), again define dysphemism as follows:

> A dysphemism is an expression with connotations that are offensive either about the denotatum or to the audience, or both, and it is substituted for a neutral or euphemistic expression for just that reason.

In other words, dysphemism is euphemism in reverse. While euphemism is employed to make negative or offensive things sound less offensive or neutral, dysphemism is employed to make positive things sound euphemistically offensive or negative.

Both euphemism and dysphemism are frequently used in political and social discourse, defining the social or political stance of those using them. Word such as "war on terrorist", "insurgents", "martyrs", "line of duty", "bring to justice", "target" (versus "liquidate"), are all euphemisms or dysphemism used for maximum effect, that constitute a specific epistemic reality. These and similar euphemisms and dysphemisms are translated verbatim into other languages and in this case Arabic. For example, the word "space" used in combinations such as "Eurospace", "Euro Mediterranean space", is a euphemism that has been transmitted literally into Arabic, however with "space" meaning primarily "outer space". While the Arabic word (fadha'/فضاء) originally means "vast and unlimited space, empty space or void", it has gradually come to mean "outer space" in its primary meaning.

Verticality

Verticality is a common feature across languages.[22] Verticality is a conceptual metaphor of action, condition or state invoking an upward or downward movement or direction to express intensity. In English, it occupies a large space in idiomatic expressions. For example, almost all positive things are expressed in terms of being "up", "high" and "highly", as in "cheer up", "high quality" and "highly appreciate"; and almost all negative things are expressed in terms of being "down", "low" and "under", as in "downturn", "low quality", "under siege". Consequently, verticality constructs an epistemic reality consistent with native English speakers' vertical view of the world. This elevatory experience is

a universal feature of all languages and cultures and is also found in expressions of elation and "high spirits".

4.1 I am so happy I could fly.

4.2 سأطير من الفرح

4.2a *sa atiru mina al-farah*.

4.2b I will fly with (literally, from [because of] the) happiness. (Arabic)

In his classic, much-quoted and controversial article, Robert Kaplan (1966) observes different rhetorical movements in discourse patterns across languages. He confirms that English employs a top-down linear (vertical) pattern while other languages exhibit a variety of circular, parallel, zigzag patterns. "An English expository paragraph usually begins with a topic statement, and then, by a series of subdivisions of that topic statement, each supported by example and illustrations, proceeds, to develop that central idea and relate that idea to all the other ideas in the whole essay, and to employ that idea in it proper relationship with the other ideas, to prove something, or perhaps to argue something" (Kaplan, 1966: 13-14). The linearity of discourse is extended to and enforced by its building blocks, which create the epistemic forms of verticality.

At this level also, other languages favour a horizontal perspective and express intensity in degrees of energy, severity, strength and weakness. For example, Arabic traditionally expresses these notions in terms of intensity, immensity or enormity. Yet a peculiar translation-induced phenomenon in Arabic today is the all-pervasive adoption of the English language perspective of verticality in the daily parlance, idiomatic expressions and specialized terminologies of modern Arabs. Wholesale borrowing of English expressions, such as *highly appreciate*, *high quality*, *high competence*, *high performance*, *high skills*, *high professionalism*, *high definition*, *deep concern*, *deep doubts*, *deep regret*, *deep crisis*, *deep conflict*, *under the circumstances, under construction*, *under siege*, *raise awareness*, and so on, are being used willy-nilly everywhere in the Arab world, by laypersons and specialists alike, in every quarter of human thought and action.

This alien usage, which is in stark violation of Arabic norms, standards and rules, is causing a surreptitious linguistic-epistemic shift. Teachers, doctors, engineers, politicians, journalists, translators, thinkers and tinkers are daily parroting these expressions in such a bizarre fashion unaware of this incongruence. Instrumental in all of this mass linguistic chaos is the media. With the profusion of hundreds of satellite television channels beaming across the Arab region, translation-induced, flawed journalistic styles and expressions are being propagated at an unprecedented rate and are being adopted in other areas of human activity. For over a decade now, Arab viewers have been bombarded with literal translations of the examples above, and a generation of children has grown up in this linguistically contaminated environment. This psychosomatic

linguistic disorder is set to change modern Arabic forever thanks to translators and journalists.

Sensory-Perceptual Epistemic Inference

Linguistic-epistemic dissonance occurs with perceptual expressions such as (sound) and (seem). English uses both to express an epistemic reality visually and auditorily.

5.1 That *sounds* good to me.

5.2 It *seems* the Republicans will lose the next presidential elections.

Arabic in this instance normally expresses both perceptual notions visually and it is almost impossible to express the notion of (sound) in Arabic without producing affected forms.

5.3 هذا يبدو لي جيداً.

5.3a *hazha yabdu li jayyidan.*

5.3b This seems to me good. [this seems good to me].

5.4 يبدو أن الجمهوريين سيخسرون الانتخابات الرئاسية القادمة.

5.4a *yabdu anna al-jumhuriyyeen sa yakhsaruna al-intikhabat ar-ri'asiyyah al-qadimah.*

5.4b (it) seems that the Republicans will lose the next presidential elections.

This clearly demonstrates the different perspectives of both languages and the different epistemic forms that express the sensory perceptual experience of epistemic realities. While the difference does not cause a major problem in knowledge transfer it certainly does change the epistemic form.

Deictic Inference

Another point worthy of note in our discussion of linguistic-epistemic dissonance in translation is deixis. Curiously, the shift from (that), which refers to someone or something more remote in place, time, or thought in (5.1) to (this), which refers to someone or something nearer in place, time, or thought in (5.3) changes the perceptual distance of reference.

The distinction between the existential and referential functions of deictic elements is sometimes confused.

6.1 هناك من يأتي إلى هنا للسياحة فقط.

6.1a *hunaka man ya'ti ila huna lis-siyahati faqat.*

6.1b there who comes to here for the tourism only.

6.1a There are those who come here for tourism only.

While the existential (there) and referential (here) can occur in the same sentence in English, Arabic normally avoids this combination, given the compacted nature of the syntactic structure (as illustrated in 6.1b). Both instances of (there) and (here) may be construed as referential deictic elements, at least on first reading/listening.

Nominal Floaters

Nominalization, in this context, the conversion of a verb clause into a noun phrase, is another area of linguistic-epistemic dissonance. A special condition may be termed "floating nominalizations", where the noun-phrase does not have an anaphoric pronoun.

7.1 الرباعية الدولية تقرر الإبقاء على مقاطعتها للحكومة التي تقودها حماس إلى حين الاعتراف بإسرائيل.

7.1a The International Quartet decides the keeping of its boycott of the government that Hamas leads until the recognition of Israel.

7.1b The Quartet of Nations decides to continue to boycott the Hamas-led government until the recognition of Israel.

7.1c The Quartet of Nations decides to continue to boycott the Hamas-led government until Hamas recognizes Israel.

The Arabic noun phrase '*ila heen al-itraaf bi israel*' (إلى حين الاعتراف بإسرائيل) (until the recognition of Israel) is a floating nominalization that has an ambiguous reference. Strictly, it is not clear from the linguistic form whether the boycott will continue until (the Hamas-led government) or (the International Quartet)—that is the Quartet of Nations—recognizes Israel. The communicative intention obtains only from the epistemic knowledge of the relationship between the Quartet of Nations and Hamas—in other words, from outside the grammatical relationship of the constituents of text.

SOURCES OF INFLUENCE AND NORMALIZATION

Cross-cultural interaction through translation is unavoidable. In modern times, news and current affairs satellite television is playing a critical role in causing epistemic-linguistic dissonance through adherence to literalization of form irrespective of the pragmatic function of language both in the source and target. The bulk of news is translated from daily news feeds supplied by major news agencies such as Reuters, Associated Press and Agence France Press, into all languages of the world. Time-critical deliveries and poor translation skills are causing these news feeds to be translated verbatim into most languages, including Arabic.

It can be said with confidence that translation reveals the way one understands the source language. It is a window to the cognitive processes of the translator or

journalist-cum-translator. The amount of literalizations causing epistemic shifts in translations from English into Arabic, for example, is considerable. Apart from the literal transfer of technical terms and basic discourse, idiomatic expressions such as *carrot and stick*, *go back to square one*, *the ball is in your court now*, *the devil is in the details, break the ice, bridge the gap*, and *bring to justice*, are brazenly transferred into Arabic in their literal sense, changing as we have already seen the perspective and perception of these epistemic phenomena.

During the recent conflict between Israel and Lebanon (July 2006), some Arab politicians and their media mouthpieces described Hezbullah's military operation of capturing the two Israeli soldiers, as (مغامرة غير محسوبة) (mughamarah ghayr mahsubah), literally meaning (uncalculated adventure).[23] The Arabic term, which is actually a bad translation of the English term (uncalculated risk), uttered by installed, undemocratically elected or parachuted Arab politicians, most likely under the influence of English language instructions from their masters and or negative translations by inexperienced, sloppy or absent-minded Arabic translators, was back-translated into English as (uncalculated adventure*).

Neither the Arabic term in Arabic nor its English translation makes much sense in either language. Yet both the Arabic and English oxymora have been parroted in news reports in Arabic and English language news media, and no one seems to be any the wiser. By definition, the Arabic word (مغامرة) (mughamarah) is a reckless, thoughtless act. Consequently, (mughamarah) and (غير محسوبة) (ghayr mahsubah) do not collocate. By the same token, (uncalculated) and (adventure) do not normally collocate in English either. This dissonance between the epistemic reality and linguistic reality in both languages remains irreconciled.

CONCLUSION

Languages normally compensate for epistemic-linguistic dissonance within the same language environment by elevating the linguistic form to a metaphor or by adjusting existing metaphors through metaphoric shifts. However, epistemic-linguistic dissonance that occurs in translation between divergent languages is usually the result of culturally incongruent skewed epistemic frames. Apart from the immediate distortion of source-language epistemic realities, skewed epistemic frames contribute to social change, which is not always necessarily positive, by changing the social and cultural perspective, and communication breakdown due to loss of shared experiences.

In translating news sources, irreconciled linguistic-epistemic dissonance seems to be more prevalent in Arabic than in the other direction. This is largely due to incompetence and short deadlines that force journalists-cum-translators to adhere to the surface structures of source text. It is also a deep-rooted translation tradition that seems to be further entrenched in the psyche of most translators and translation-reliant thinkers and intellectuals.

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[1] Sherry, L., & Trigg, M. (1996). Epistemic forms and epistemic games. Educational Technology, 36(3), 38-44. Retrieved 10 October 2006.

[2] Picture courtesy of Overstock Art. http://www.overstockart.com/girbefmir.html.

[3] It can be argued that the expression (the sun rises) is relatively speaking not a metaphor, but rather a propositional representation of a physiognomic perception of an epistemic reality. To our perception the sun still rises. For a farmer and a sailor for example, dawn/daybreak and sunrise are different, and we need a term to describe the latter. We know it does not rise, but that is not the point. It appears to, and it often looks beautiful when it does.

[4] Clipart courtesy of http://www.inmagine.com/iconica-photos/imagezoo-iz024

[5] I am indebted to Professor Errol Vieth for this argument.

[6] American Heritage Dictionary.

[7] It must be noted that even this metaphor (2.1) is a calque translation of the English expression (to break the standstill) introduced into Arabic during the Cold War era.

[8] Source of Arabic text: http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/EA06A1BB-E07E-4FBE-8657-0DD0C274DBED.htm. Retrieved 15 November 2006.

[9] http://knowgramming.com/metaphors/metaphor_chapters/living_and_dead_metaphors.htm. Retrieved 15 November 2006.

[10] http://www.ul.ie/~philos/vol4/metaphor.html. Retrieved 10 November 2006.

[11] Interestingly, using air quotes or intonation with a dead metaphor in speech or typographically emphasizing it in writing immediately brings it back to life.

[12] Source of Arabic text: www.annaharonline.com/htd/ARAB061023.HTM. Retrieved from cached pages 12 November 2006.

[13] An assumed representational metaphor of a country comprised of minorities, where everyone is a minority.

[14] One orphan census was conducted in pre-independence Lebanon in 1932.

[15] "Corruption is widespread in Lebanon. The reasons are, inter alia, low salaries and high living, education and health costs and red tape which provides civil servants with opportunities. High profile cases of corruption among politicians have had a negative impact on the public perception of the integrity of the political class. An anticorruption law was drafted in 2002, but has not yet been presented to the Parliament" (Commission Of The European Communities, Commission Staff Working Paper, Annex to: "*European Neighbourhood Policy*", Country Report: Lebanon,

{COM(2005) 72 final}),

ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/country/lebanon_country_report_2005_en.pdf.

[16] For quite some time, Lebanon has been divided along sectarian-driven foreign language lines. Being the second official language, French has been the second (if not the first) language of most Christians while recently introduced English the second language of most Muslims. The introduction of English in the early fifties may be seen as a direct result of US intervention. The landing of the Fifth Fleet in Beirut in 1958 at the request of the Lebanese President Camille Chamoun to quell pro Pan-Arab civil unrest marks the beginning of American influence in Lebanon. Roughly around that time, English was introduced to primary schools of private and charity organizations (such as al-Maqasid Islamic Charitable Association, owned by the late Sunni Prime Minister Sa'ib Salam) and later to government schools in predominantly Muslim areas. For

largely Christian Lebanese francophones, cultural affiliation to French was a straightforward matter, given the French colonial legacy in Lebanon and France as a single francophonic point of reference. In contrast, cultural affiliation to English was not as straight forward given the bipolarity of Anglophonic reference (American and British). While American culture was more attractive to most youths aspiring after freedom, democracy and American values, especially in the sixties, there was ambivalence towards affiliation to American culture given the prevalent official and popular attitude towards American foreign policy in the region. British culture did not offer such dynamism or have the same appeal.

[17] http://www.tangra.si.umich.edu/~radev/papers/handbook00.pdf . Retrieved 15 November 2006.

[18] http://ourcivilisation.com/smartboard/shop/gowerse/chap7.htm#Target. Retrieved 15 November, 2006.

[19] The American Heritage® Dictionary of Idioms by Christine Ammer. Online version.

[20] www.latrobe.edu.au/linguistics/LaTrobePapersinLinguistics/Vol%2001/1AllanandBurridge.pdf. Retrieved on 10 November 2006.

[21] This is based on the Quranic verse "You have been too busy propagating until you have visited the graveyards" (Propagation, 1).

[22] Further explored in Darwish, A. (2005). "English Verticality in 'Square' Arabic Translations". Online publication at at-turjuman.com online. Language: Arabic.

[23] Further explored in Darwish, A. (2006). Arab Politicians and "Uncalculated" Translations. ". Online publication at at-turjuman.com online. Language: Arabic.

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