

A Socio-pragmatic Study of Some Caricatures in Iraqi TV. Media

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Abstract

The aftermath of the Gulf War in the liberation of Iraq (2003) brought about endless sufferings for Iraqi people. The use of caricature in Iraqi Media has been an outlet and a means of presenting the corruption, violence, marginalization and other social vices present in the society. The paper is an attempt at carrying out a socio-pragmatic study of selected media caricatures culled from Al-Baghdadia TV. Channel, drawn by Salim Al-Rubayee, an Iraqi caricaturist⁽¹⁾. The study will depend on Grice's maxims to find out whether these maxims are obeyed or not, and the socio-pragmatic factors governing language use or choice derived from the social situational context Surrounding each caricature. The analysis reveals that Grice's maxims have been observed except quality maxim which is flouted intentionally for humorous or sarcastic reasons, looking for conversational implicature through irony or metaphor. All the analyzed caricatures appear as a reflection of the current socio-pragmatic events in the country, thus they are intertextually related to caricature as a recognizable discourse genre of media, and intratextually related to caricature as TV media subgenre.

Key Words: caricature, maxims, context, implicature, intertextuality

1. Introduction

Caricature also referred to as comics or cartoons has already established itself as a popular sub-genre in media discourse including newspaper, magazine and also on some TV. Channels. Media discourse is a broad term embracing the totality of how reality is depicted in broadcast and printed media from television to newspaper. Montgomery (2011) contends that there exists two main traditions in the study of media discourse: the first one deals mostly with newspapers and the structure of news in written texts, whereas; the second deals with broadcast news interviews as a form of social interaction. The situation in Iraq after 2003 'invasion spring' to borrow 'Arab spring' brought forth religious, extremist, conflicting ruling parties highly favored to the invaders of the country. This situation paves the way to Al- Qaeda , ISIS and looters to play havoc with the destiny of the richest country in the Middle East. The use of cartoons, and most importantly caricature has been the main tool of unveiling serious ideas through satire, humor, contrast and surprise. This purpose can be achieved easily and openly in various media means, as part of democratic move including newspapers, magazines and TV. programs. Moreover, social media in Iraq, especially TV. programs have proven to be representatives of ordinary citizens, frowning at every form of corruption, violence, marginalization, disrespect of the educated elite and injustice. Besides, observation has shown that little attention is given to the pragmatics of media discourse. This paper is an attempt at carrying out a socio-pragmatic analysis of some TV. Caricatures taken from Al- Baghdadia, an Iraqi TV. Channel drawn by Salim Al- Rubayee, an Iraqi caricaturist for a daily short TV. Program called "Bisameer," meaning "nails".

The title of the program itself is metaphorical, as it implies a bitter satire of actual corruption in Iraqi society, thus it can be said that it is "hitting the nail on the head." A total number of (11) TV. Caricatures will be selected and analyzed pragmatically with special focus on Grice's conversational implicature. The selected caricatures have little linguistic data, but they are pragmatically loaded.

2. Pragmatics, Context and Implicature

Pragmatics as a term is well-established in everyday use to study the relations between language and context that are basic to account for language understanding. The term is taken from Greek word 'pragma' which means 'deed'. Language philosophers in the 1940s, such as, Morris and Pierce became interested in the relation of signs to interpreters and users. Levinson (1983: 32) equates pragmatics with meaning minus semantics or with "a theory of language understanding that takes context into account, in order to complement the contribution that semantics makes to meaning."

(1) <http://www.facebook.com/SalimAlrubaiee>

This implies that pragmatics deals with the study of meaning in context. Kempson (1986) defines pragmatics as the study of the general cognitive principles, involved in the retrieval of information from an utterance. Fasold (1990: 19) defines pragmatics as "the study of the use of context to make inferences about meaning." In the same vein, Sarangi and Slembrouk (1992: 142) contend that any adequate theory with the aim of "explaining how people arrive at meaning cannot come into existence unless it brings the social positioning of the language user and the societal bearings on the situational context to the fore front." In their emphasis on the role of context, Sarangi and Slembrouk purport to explain discourse in institutional contexts and examining the correlations between participants' social identities, social situation, powers and their expectations and activities in situational settings of language use. Osisanwo (2003) affirms that pragmatics involves the message being communicated, the participants involved in the message, the shared knowledge of the world, the deductions that can be made from the text on the basis of context, the implication of what is said or left unsaid and effect of the nonverbal aspect of interaction on meaning. The implication of these definitions is that in pragmatics, the context of situation plays a very prominent role in the interpretation of any text. Its adequate knowledge makes it feasible to make deductions on the intended meaning of an utterance, as it will be seen in the analysis of caricatures. Context does not only refer to the physical context of the real world around, but also to everything that surrounds the making of an utterance, or to use Yule's (2006) term co-text or linguistic context. In a wider sense, context covers the activities going on in the same place where the utterance occurs, the knowledge of the speaker and the expectations and discursive practice of the people among whom the utterance is being made, in addition to the roles and relationships between the speaker and the addressee.

In addition to context, implicature is one of important concepts in pragmatics. Grice (1975) defines conversation as an essentially interactive and cooperative process. The general cooperation principle is called Cooperative Principle (CP). In order to illustrate how we interpret meaning, Grice presents four conversational maxims to show how we communicate effectively in the light of certain rules. These maxims are: Maxim of quality or be informative, giving the right amount of information, Maxim of quantity or be truthful, Maxim of relevance or be relevant, and the Maxim of manner or be clear and orderly (Aitchison, 1999: 98). Grice (1975: 53) views metaphor as a strategy of generating conversational implicature via violating the maxim of quality. This violation occurs when the speaker tries to convey or emphasize a certain meaning or idea in an apparently strange or striking way. However, there are occasions on which people fail to observe the maxims and result in either flouting, violating, infringing, opting out or suspending a maxim, of which the first case is the most important to Grice. Metaphor is one case of maxim exploitation by the flouting the maxim of quality (Thomas, 1995: 72). Hence, maxims can be flouted for various reasons, such as to create humor, irony, metaphor, hyperbole as well as to avoid an uncomfortable situation.

3. Kinds and Functions of Caricature

Historically speaking, in ancient Iraq the Babylonians try to make fun of evil spirits visually by using pottery and statues with ugly faces and semi-animals shapes. Yet, in ancient Egypt, the pharonic artists may be credited with earliest manifestation of caricature used to ridicule and criticize despotic governments. In Spain, the Spanish painter Francisco- Goya starts his movement as a social form of critique "Los Caprichios" depicting the harsh qualities of society (Wright, 1980: 35). In (1841) the humorous weekly magazine "Punch" was founded in England, and soon became famous for its satirical thrusts of the Royal family, besides the middle and upper classes of the society (West, 1988: 10). In France, the French journalist Charles Philipon made caricature an important part of French political life through his satirical magazine e. g; "Journal Pour Rive" (1948). (Hoffman, 1957: 26). The Protestant Reformation began in Germany, and this era produced the first full crop of satirical caricature. In (1925), George Grosz was known for his merciless caricatures in criticizing the Nazi Party (West, 1988: 17). The most important 19th Century American caricaturist was Thomas Nast, as his work which appeared in "Harper's Weekly" was a powerful weapon during the civil war. His works helped in the overthrow of the corrupted political group known as the "Tweed Ring" which controlled New York government during (1869_1872). Nast also created what became the national symbols of the Republican and Democratic parties as the "elephant" and the "donkey" (Keller, 1968: 71).

Since caricature is a message communicated by the artists to recipients with a shared common context in real life, it follows that there are different kinds of caricatures depending on their purpose. The first kind is social caricature that emphasizes social issues and contradictions in a highly satirical vein; it is strictly intended to criticize local or internal political affairs. The second kind is editorial caricature referred to as "pictorial caricature" that serves as a visual commentary on Current events, usually satirical rather than merely humorous in nature. The third kind is Gags or tourist caricature which consists of a single panel and sometimes followed

with one or two words usually placed outside the panel. It is used for purely commercial purposes that evoke simile rather than lampooning individuals. This kind is also found in greeting cards. The fourth kind is illustrative caricature which is used in connection with advertising or learning materials (ibid: 57). Generally speaking, caricatures can either be of opinion or jokes. The caricature of opinion is synonymous to an editorial or social caricature, where social caricature focuses on domestic politics, editorial caricature relates to current events or personalities. They are both important modes of communication worthy of increased academic attention, as artistic skills are directed at questioning authority and drawing attention to corruption and other social ills in a country. According to Osho (2008: 238), the main functions of cartoons or caricatures are: informing, educating, entertaining, amusing, disseminating serious information in a funny way, recording events in a memorable way, discussing serious national issues in comical parlance, reflecting current issues by projecting personalities through graphics, and inspiring the readers to buy a newspaper and magazine regularly, as it soothes their aching pain.

4. Intertextuality and Media

Recently, it becomes to be a usual practice that intertextuality is a fundamental nature of all texts reflecting the various voices implied if not in an actual interaction among texts. The term intertextuality refers to allusions to other texts. Relevant to intertextuality is the concept "anchorage" introduced by Barthes (1977: 37ff) to mean constraining the preferred reading of an image related to advertisements and other genres such as captioned photographs, cartoons, and TV and film documentaries. Barthes (ibid: 40) contends that the main function of anchorage is an ideological one.

While the term intertextuality refers to allusions or links established with other texts in the same discourse genre, intratextuality is used to refer to internal relations within the text itself. As an example, a newspaper photograph may have a caption. (Chandler, 2004: 231). In contemporary society, visual images as media discourse genre have been widely employed, especially caricatures in TV. media and newspapers as sub-genres of media discourse.

5. Data Analysis

The total number of the caricatures selected for analysis is (11), the messages communicated in these caricatures range from corruption (political and economic), insecurity and scarcity of essential services(See Appendix) .The socio-pragmatic analysis of the selected caricatures will commence with elucidating the situational context and then applying Grice's cooperative principles on them. The caricaturist represents the speaker(s), while the viewers or readers of the caricature represent the audience or receivers. All caricatures depict issues recurrent in Iraq today, and show the TV. Media coverage of these issues. Accordingly, the stories depicted in these caricatures represent the main context of situation surrounding them. After establishing the context of situation surrounding the selected caricatures, the next stage is to study each socio-pragmatically using Grice's (1975) cooperative principle and its related maxims in order to infer the different meanings implied in these caricature .The meaning of each caricature has been translated from Arabic into English, and as follows:

Caricature 1

The caption written in Arabic is uttered by the second thief who carries a parcel of money on his back saying "**Sh! Sh! Sh! sh! Sh! Sh!**" a series of interjections calling for silence, while the caption written in Arabic is uttered by the first thief carrying a safe on his back replying "**Do not be afraid the watchman is our friend**" for the man who is sleeping on an armchair with half an eye opened as if there is a tacit consent among them. This caricature observes the maxims of quantity, relation and manner compared to the story in the captions because what the thieves perform is quite informative, relevant and clear of the incidents in the country, but it flouts the quality maxim sarcastically creating an irony, as a watchman must normally be alert not asleep.

Caricature 2

This caricature is captioned in Arabic meaning "**Sir, this (policeman) wants to prevent us from performing our task**" uttered by a thief presenting a policeman to his fellow thief who is acting as a governmental official. This caricature obeys the maxim of quantity, relation and manner, as it is highly instructive, relevant, containing no ambiguous words, but it flouts the maxim of quality to create an irony in humorous and sarcastic manner urging

the reader/audience to look for meaning indirectly stated in the utterance. Opposite to the norms, the thieves are ruling out the role of honest policemen in the country, in order to act freely in governmental offices.

Caricature 3

This caricature with an Arabic caption means "***I imported cooking oil which is neither animal oil nor vegetable oil, and not grease***" said by an official carrying a bottle of cooking oil and a parcel of dollars exposing them to his manager. This reflects the current situation in the Ministry of Trade which is responsible for importing food to be distributed on Iraqi people on a ration card. It also reveals one aspect of economic corruption of importing expired food by bogus transactions. The utterance observes the maxims of relation, quality and quantity. It observes these maxims, as it relates to an actual episode of stealing, and it is informative, as it hits the nail on the head.

Caricature 4

The caption of this caricature means "***I must make the status of the Ministry as my size.***" This is uttered by an appointed Minister whose body can hardly be seen sitting on a big chair. The utterance observes the maxims of quantity and relevance; it is informative, as it does not contain unnecessary words, it is also situationally relevant representing an instance of misadministration. The caricature flouts the maxim of quality to create an irony in a sarcastic way inviting the reader/audience to look for implied meaning. Opposite to the sound norms, the unqualified persons occupy higher positions in the government. This shows the political corruption resulting from power struggle among warring factions.

Caricature 5

This caricature which is written in Arabic contains a general comment on the right side of the picture means "***The kitchen of political process,***" on the left side, there is a caption means "***Now the pan is sitting on three***" uttered by a high rank official in the country who is depicted as a chief embracing a cooking pan put on three-legged holder. This caricature reflects the actual political situation which is based on shares distributed on the three major warring parties ruling Iraq. It obeys the maxims of quantity, relation and manner, as it contains no unnecessary words, it relates to power struggle in the country, and it is not ambiguous. Yet, it flouts the maxim of quality, as it creates a metaphor which consists of a primary subject (tenor) in this case political leadership expressed in terms of a secondary subject (figurative) the kitchen as a vehicle expressing one kind of thing in terms of another.

Caricature 6

The caption which is written in Arabic means "***Sir, we imprison people, they do not agree, we let prisoners escape, they do not agree***" uttered by a governor of a prison to his boss. The utterance obeys the maxims of quantity and relevance, as it is informative and relating dramatically to the situation in prisons. It flouts the maxim of Quality creating an irony which is based on binary opposition between putting people in prison indiscriminately and letting terrorists escape prison; a matter which is naturally refused by Iraqi people. This caricature describes a case of insecurity and injustice where the innocent is imprisoned on suspicious secret agent reports, while the criminals are set free against certain rewards. The theme of this caricature also observes the maxim of manner because the story is familiar and clear on both the local and global levels.

Caricature 7

This caricature has the Arabic caption which means "***These are important contracts. I want you keep them in an inflammable place***" uttered by a corruptible government boss responsible for concluding commercial contracts to an employer in contracting department. The utterance here observes the maxims of quantity, relevance and manner; it is brief pointing straightly to an actual episode of economic corruption prevailing in governmental institutions where fire is often set on purposely, especially in contracts departments to eliminate traces of corruptible deals. A sarcastic irony is created by flouting the maxim of quality in the sense that important contract documents are usually kept in a safe and guarded place not in an inflammable one.

Caricature 8

The general Arabic caption means "***where is the electriwater?***" in which the word '***electriwater***' is a blend of two words, viz., electricity and water. This is an urgent demand that is raised by Iraqi people in the face of the government owing to the lack of electricity and running water. The caricature depicts the officials responsible for

these essential services as if they were children playing for fun. This nonchalant attitude of the high officials in the government can be considered as

an impudent response, and it obeys the maxim of quality due to the fact that Iraqi government embezzles the money meant for electricity and water projects without any consideration for the needs of people. This caricature also obeys the maxims of quantity, relevance and manner, as it is informative and quite revealing of the suffering of the masses, and it contains no ambiguous words.

Caricature 9

The Arabic caption here describes the general chaotic political situation in Iraq, its meaning is "***A group of Iraqi Chalghi***" where the word "***Chalghi***" is an Iraqi Baghdadi popular word standing for '***music band***.' The caricature describes the current political situation in the country represented by the three leaders of the major ruling ethnic parties (Sunni, Shia and Kurds) who are playing on spoiled musical instruments in a disorganized manner. This reflects the adverse interest of politicians, yet they pursue their disharmonious policy leading to brinkmanship. This caricature obeys the maxim of quantity, as it is informative and conforms to the contextual and schematic conventions serving its purpose. It also obeys the maxims of relevance and manner in that it is quite relevant to the political situation in Iraq and does not carry obscure or ambiguous message to the readers. Yet, it flouts the maxim of quality in humorous and sarcastic manner, thus creating an irony reflecting the political chaos and lack of harmony among the leading parties.

Caricature 10

The Arabic caption is uttered by a high rank government official holding keys meaning "***From now on you are my consultant to fight corruption***" while giving keys of important governmental offices to a thief. This caricature is self-evident of the large scale economic and political corruption in the country. People who lack experience and integrity receive higher positions in government. This caricature observes the maxims of quantity, as it is informative to the readers; it is also relevant to the context of situation in the country and does not contain ambiguous words. However, it flouts the maxim of quality in a sarcastic manner to create an irony; in that important governmental positions must not be assigned to dishonest people.

Caricature 11

The caricature depicts the Iraqi parliament in which the Arabic caption uttered by an angry member of parliament to his friends' means "***Do you also snore in the parliament, you should know that others need to sleep.***" This caricature reflects the actual context in the parliament where most of the members come by rig votes, thus they are disqualified passing their time either by sleeping during parliamentary sessions or traveling abroad. It also observes the maxims of quantity, relevance and manner, as it is quite informative to the readers giving the truth in an unambiguous manner. Nevertheless, it flouts the maxim of quality sarcastically creating an irony; on the opposite tendency, instead of being alert, the parliament members sleep deeply and snore showing their nonchalant attitude towards others.

6. Conclusions

The analysis reveals that there are instances where Grice's maxims are observed or flouted and that flouting occurs in the maxim of quality for the sake of creating an irony or a metaphor. All the analyzed caricatures in this paper obey the manner maxim, as they do not make the message conveyed obscure or ambiguous to the readers. The caricatures also obey the maxims of quantity and relevance in being quite informative to the local layman hearer/reader and situationally relevant to events recurring in society. No instances of infringement, suspension, and opting out are observed due to the fact that all the analyzed caricatures occur in real life situations, where cooperation with the readers has been sought by

the caricaturist. This can give a proof that media do not present socio-political issues in a vacuum but rely on the prevailing socio-pragmatic context in the country in order to send messages to the readers. Meanwhile, all the caricatures are both intertextually linked in content to the outside world incidents in the country, and also intratextually linked via internal relations within each caricature. Thus, it is evident that the messages portrayed in these caricatures are reflections or recurrent issues in Iraq. Prevailing corruption has brought economic and political sabotage, insecurity, injustice, scarcity of essential services, power struggle and ethical prejudice that trigger off a crisis portraying the country in a bad light. The social context surrounding each of these caricatures makes them easy to be understood. It is suggested that further studies in the same vein can be conducted taking

into account other media caricatures. The analysis can be based on semiotics theory, speech act theory, or schema theory that may render interesting results.

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Appendix

Caricature 1



Caricature 2



Caricature 3



Caricature 4



Caricature 5



Caricature 6



Caricature 7



Caricature 8



Caricature 9



Caricature 10



Caricature 11



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