

Translating Arabic Poetic Riddles into English: An Approach in Qualitative Studies

Nida Salim Omar

University of Mosul, Mosul, Iraq
College of Medicine, Department of Iraqi Board
Email: nidaaso@uomosul.edu.iq
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4939-3031>
Research interests: translation studies, Quranic studies, literary translation

Kais Amir Kadhim Al Alwan

University of Malaysia, Terengganu, Malay
Centre for fundamental and Continuing Education
Email: kaisamir2011@hotmail.com
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3081-9757>
Research interests: translation, discourse analysis, stylistics,

Mahmood Abdul Khaliq Al-Baqoa

University of Mosul, Mosul, Iraq
College of Education for Girls, Department of Arabic Language
Email: m.albagooh@uomosul.edu.iq
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9466-0584>
Research interests: translation studies, Quranic studies, literary translation

Abstract. A *riddle* is a question that usually occurs in prose and poetic form. The composition of poetic riddles is complicated since it encompasses the trick structure of English utterances that require more effort and deep thinking on the part of readers to reach the intention of the riddle maker. The present study investigates the interpretation of utterances in poetic riddles when translated into English. The aim was to extend the tricky utterances in poetic riddles to obtain the intention of the riddle maker through translation. To achieve the aim, a Relevance Theory by Sperber and Wilson (1986, 1995) was adopted to interpret cognitively how the poetic riddles worked through translation. Then, Bach's (1994) Ambiguity was also used to explain the meaning that fell under a word, phrase or even a statement. Finally, Gutt's (1991, 1998, 2000) notion on the directness and indirectness of the interpretation was employed. Overall, the results showed that Arabic poetic riddles included ambiguous words and implicit meanings that require decoding to gain the intent word made by the riddle maker. Furthermore, Arabic poetic riddles are full of attribute words to help get the intent word.

Keywords: ambiguity; poetic; riddles; relevance theory; translation.

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Introduction

Riddles have specific importance in folk literature. *Folk literature* is oral literature through which individuals express their ideas and feelings privately. As a minor branch of oral literature, riddles are questions created and constructed with help from fiction and plays. Mental features, particularly those that permit people to resolve their problems, distinguish them from animals. From the psychological viewpoint, people sense happiness when they find the correct answers to their problems. This feeling arises from the power of reasoning that motivates people to ask with more deep ideas. That is why people tend to obscure things that enhance curiosity in them. This feature of people is first reflected in their moods and then in literature. Riddles are one of the best examples in which words are played to originate obscurity in folk literature. Thus, in folk literature, “obscurity” is related to riddles (Dalaslan, 2015, p. 1). Riddles are formed by verses joined by rhyme, figures of speech, repetition of words having the same end sound, and play-on-words; therefore, they have common features with poetry.

Consequently, the translation of riddles corresponds with poetry translation. The translation of poetry is not an easy task because it is comprised of verses joined by words that are bound together with rhythm and unison (Süreya, 2008, p. 95).

The explicit meaning of the riddle suggests that the riddle asker talks about the judge as a human being, whereas the implicit meaning confirms that the riddle asker talks about something inanimate, i.e., a balance scale. Obtaining the implicit meaning requires the translator to decode and interpret each lexical word in the riddle in order to convey the implicit meaning to the reader. The lexical words “له كف / has a palm”, “وليس له بنان / and has no finger”, “ولا نطق له / he has not spoken”, and “ولا لسان / and has no tongue” have been translated directly take part in communicating the implicit meaning clearly, i.e., a balance scale that has a palm with no finger, no tongue, and cannot speak. The present study aims to analyse the implicit meaning of the poetic riddles in both Arabic and English. Several studies have been conducted on riddles in both Arabic and English, as shown in the following section (Riddles in Arabic and English).

The present study tries to achieve this gap specifically on the difficulty of understanding and analyzing Arabic poetic riddles through English translation. This struggle might occur to a translator due to differences in the linguistic and cultural aspects between two languages.

1. Riddles in Arabic and English

Commonly, riddles are traditional formulas used to perplex readers by using devious utterances based on particular poetic techniques with implicit meaning. They have creative value since they reflect on the linguistic and cognitive knowledge of the speaker. There are various types of riddles: poetic, prose, mathematic, religious, syntactic, crossword, criminal, political, engineering, logical, mechanic, astrological, and trades.

The present study focuses on ambiguous poetic riddles that may be problematic for a translator.

Ghuraby (2010) used of the descriptive-analytic approach to investigate “The Popular Riddle in the Barhoum Region: A Study of the Content and Technical Characteristics”. The researcher delved into the artistic features of her study, such as language, style, signs, and figures of speech. Abdelrahman (2014) investigated the language of poetic riddles of the first Mamluk period. The study went through the poetry of that period to take out the literal riddle components and the very prevalent art at that time.

The researcher also highlighted the meanings in which the poets housed their riddles. Commonly, poetic riddles are classified into two types: verbal and non-verbal. Non-verbal riddles provide some descriptions and attributes that refer to something wanted to be guessed by the receiver of the riddle. Verbal riddles focus on verbal games more than meaning. Therefore, they are full of ambiguities and/or figures of speech. Shams and Hebesh (2019) examined the “Symbolism of the Number in the Popular Riddles (Al-Akhdariya Region): Collection and Study”. They investigated the characteristics of popular riddles and the semantic symbolism of numbers in riddles in the region of Al-Akhdariya. They pointed out four semantic fields, namely religious, natural, human being indicators, and semantic indicator tools used by human beings.

Yanyk (2016) investigated riddles as an object of linguistic research. He attempted to regulate different linguistic methods to riddle studies and examined the sides of modern research to identify this folklore genre. Special attention was paid to cognitive-semiotic and digressive faces of riddles as those taking up a master place in modern linguistic studies. A variety of subjects of the genre have been explained on the examples of English and Ukrainian riddles. Mubarak (2018) attempted to apply a critical metaphor analysis on American offensive funny riddles pertaining to race, religion, and physical contexts.

2. Research methodology and theoretical framework

The present study is a qualitative study that inspects the explicit meaning, implicit meaning, and ambiguity of Arabic poetic riddles that can prove a challenge to translators. It examines five Arabic poetic riddles of the book entitled “Puzzles and Poetic Riddles” written by Muhammad Abdulrahim (1999) and dealt with the explicit and implicit meaning and several ambiguities, whether verbal or non-verbal. *Non-verbal riddles* are puzzles that give time to the answerer of the riddle to deduce the correct answer of the riddle by depicting particular objects, things, or animals. On the other hand, verbal riddles are puzzles that allow the answerer of the riddle to guess the correct answer of the riddle by using certain rhetorical devices such as pun, metaphor, ellipses, and reverse order. The data were translated by the researchers of the paper as all of them specialized

in Arabic-English-Arabic translation. The primary purpose of choosing such a topic is that poetic riddles are, in fact, short poetic poems that are part of literature and loved by many people interested in them. Five Arabic poetic riddles were chosen purposely after a comprehensive survey of the book entitled “Puzzles and Poetic Riddles” written by Muhammad Abdulrahim (1999) to be a sample of tremendous poetic riddles with descriptions and rhetorical devices involved in verbal and non-verbal alike. The study attempted to focus on how the riddles caused problems during translation in terms of the selected theories.

The selected data with their English translation were examined based on the Relevance Theory to find out how the implicit meaning and ambiguities were interpreted and conveyed into English. The data with their English translation were also examined using Ambiguity by Bach (1994) to determine what kinds of ambiguities were available in Arabic poetic riddles. Gutt’s Translation Theory (1991, 1998, 2000) was also chosen to examine whether the data would be translated directly or indirectly into English. Using all these theories that worked together helped convey the implicit meaning and decoding ambiguities into the English text. To achieve the aim of the study, relevance theory by Sperber and Wilson’s (1986, 1995) will be applied. It connects with pragmatics, which concerns how the speaker conveys their meaning throughout the communication. It also concerns the way the receiver interprets the meaning of the speaker. In another sense, the Relevance Theory involves the intention of the speaker in communication. Commonly, the theory builds on two major principles, namely cognitive and communicative. Furthermore, the analysis used Jolles’s perspective approach (2017) to strengthen the quality and look at these examples from a semantic and structural view.

2.1 Translation Theory (Gutt 1991, 1998, 2000)

Gutt viewed translation as interpretative management of the language through the language limitations and results from the cognitive process done by a translator. He built his opinion on the Relevance Theory of Sperber and Wilson (1986, 1995) that deals with interpreting utterances as a cognitive process and pragmatic inferences. He stated that the utterances are used interpretively when intended to represent what is said or thought by the speaker (1998, p. 44).

2.2 Ambiguity (Bach 1994)

According to Bach (1994), ambiguity is a word, phrase, or even a statement with more than two or more options of meaning. He distinguished two types of ambiguity, including lexical and structural ambiguity. Lexical ambiguity centres on a word that has more than one explanation. It may be a noun such as “pen”, a verb such as “draw”, or an adjective such as “deep”. He gave the lexical word “desert” as an example of lexical ambiguity, which comes as a verb and a noun. Both verb and noun have the same sound

but differ in their spelling. They are homonyms. In addition, Bach (1994) clarified that one meaning could be attained from another meaning.

3. Data Analysis

ST (1) خبروني عن اسم شيءٍ اسمه ظل في الفواكه سائرٌ
نصفه طائرٌ وإن صفحوا ما غادروا من حروفه فهو طائرٌ (Abdulrahim, 1999, p. 25)

TT (1) Tell me about the name of something known among fruits
Half of it is a bird, and if they change what they left off the letters, it is a bird
(Researchers' translation)

Generally speaking, the riddle above focused on a name of a type of fruit. The explicit meaning of the riddle suggested that the word intended is a kind of fruit. The meaning of the noun clause “نصفه طائرٌ / *Nisfuhu taʔru*.” was translated into an independent sentence “half of it is a bird”. It was still implicitly ambiguous in English because it required knowing how many letters the word intended has. It suggested that the word intended consisted of four, six, or eight letters that showed the name of a bird. Besides, the verbal phrase “صفحوا / *safahu*” comprised the bare verb “صفح / *safaha*” and subject “وا / *waw*”. It was also an ambiguous word because it conveyed the explicit meaning of “making something broad”. In translation, the verbal phrase “صفحوا / *safahu*” was rendered into “they change”, which helped to convey somewhat the implicit meaning of the verbal phrase “صفحوا / *safahu*” in English. Al-Qazweni (2013, pp. 5–6) affirmed that the bare verb “صفح / *safaha*” was a rhetorical device that had the meaning of changing places of dots that the word has, and consequently, producing new meaning. Therefore, the meaning of the phrase “صفحوا / *safahu*” has been sustained in English translation. It was altered obligatorily into the English equivalence verbal phrase “they change”. In turn, the obligatory alteration helped to answer the riddle in general. In addition, the implicit ambiguous lexical word “صفح / *safaha*” was a homograph (has the same spelling but different meanings) and homonym (has the same sound but different meanings). In the same vein, the verbal phrase “غادر / *ghadara*” was also an implicit ambiguous word that consisted of the bare verb “غادر / *ghadara*” and subject “وا / *waw*”. It had two assumptions: explicit and implicit meanings. The explicit meaning of the verbal phrase “غادر / *ghadara*” was “go away”, while the implicit meaning was “take off”. The implicit meaning was in line with the context of the riddle.

Accordingly, it could be said that the word intended was the Arabic word “بطيخ / *batykh*”, which meant “melon”. It is a kind of fruit consisting of four letters. When the noun “بطيخ” was divided equally into two parts and gave two different names of birds. The first one was “بط / *but*/duck”, while the second was “يخ / *yekh*”. Besides, the second lexical word, “يخ / *yekh*” required some amendments to get another new bird name. This amendment depended on the phrase mentioned in the second poetic line “صفحوا / *safahu*”.

This amendment complied with the second assumption meaning “change in the dots of letters”. Omitting one dot from the first letter of the lexical word “ليخ / *yekh*” would produce another new name of bird called “ليخ / *yekh*” known by Arabs.

In addition, poetic riddles often make use of beautiful rhyming words, such as the Arabic pair “سائر / *saʔru:*” and “طائر / *taʔru:*”, which was lost through translation. Consequently, the output riddle in English will be prose that lacks these rhyming words. For example, the Arabic pair “سائر / *saʔru:*” and “طائر / *taʔru:*” had the same end sound “R” in Arabic riddles. They lost their rhythm when translated into English “known and bird” in consequence. Moreover, although the explicit meaning of the verbal phrase “صفحوا / *ṣafahu*” partially lost its ambiguity when it was rendered into the English equivalent of “change”, the English equivalent “*change*” did not convey the full meaning of the Arabic verbal phrase “صفحوا / *ṣafahu*”, which meant “*change in the dots of letters*”. Thus, the translation followed in this example was dual (direct and indirect translation). In short, conveying the implicit meaning of some verbal phrases in the riddle such as “صفحوا / *ṣafahu*” and “غادر / *ghadara*” through translation helped to somewhat answer the riddle. Additionally, answering the riddle required Arab native and English readers to have sufficient linguistic knowledge and good knowledge of Arabic culture.

ST (2) إسم الذي أعشقه أوله في ناظره إن فاتني أوله فإن لي في آخره (Abdulrahim, 1999, p. 153)

TT (2) The name that I adore; its initial letter lies in his sight

If its initial letter is dropped, the latest letters will be mine

(Researchers' translation)

It seemed obvious that the general idea of the riddle concentrated on identifying the name of the lover that the riddle talks about. The meaning of the noun phrase “أوله / *ʔwaluhu*” was changed in English when translated into “its first letter”. This change occurred due to adding the lexical word “letter” in English, which in turn, was helpful in decoding the ambiguity that the noun phrase “أوله / *ʔwaluhu*” had. In other words, the English equivalence “its first letter” unveiled the implicit information in the noun phrase “أوله / *ʔwaluhu*” and gave a hint to the first *letter* of the name of the beloved. In addition, the riddle employed the literary device of pun to deceive the answerer when it employed the noun phrase “ناظره / *naTHrihi*” and maintained the same meaning in English “his sight” while conserving its implicit ambiguity. The lexical word “ناظره / *naTHrihi*” denoted two meanings. The first one had the explicit meaning of “vision/ seeing”. The second meaning had the implicit meaning of referring to the first letter of the name of the beloved. In a sense, the implicit meaning of the noun phrase “ناظره / *naTHrihi*” indicated the Arabic letter “ع / *ʕ*”, which had the English equivalent of “A”. Jointly, the Arabic letter “ع / *ʕ*” was obtained from the Arabic word “عين / *ʕayn*”, which meant “eye”. Thus, utilizing indirect translation here aided to unveil the ambiguous implicit meaning of the Arabic noun phrase “ناظره / *naTHrihi*” when translated into “his sight” in

English. Furthermore, the Arabic noun phrase “ناظره/ *naTHrihi*” was employed as a homonym and homograph because it had the same spelling and pronunciation but with unrelated meanings.

The verb phrase “فاتني/ *fatani*:” also had two meanings. It had the explicit meaning of “pass” and the ambiguous implicit meaning of “dropped”. The ambiguity of the implicit meaning of the noun phrase “فاتني/ *fatani*:” was unveiled in English by utilizing indirect translation when it was translated strictly into “dropped”. Moreover, it was noted that antithesis that belonged to the Science of Schemes was used here. Antithesis was shown by using two contrasting concepts put together to get a consistency effect “أوله/ *waluhu* / its initial letter” and “آخره/ *a:khrihi* /its latest letter”. Furthermore, the pair “أوله/ its initial letter”, “آخره/ *a:khrihi* /its latest letter” also consisted of antonyms that showed opposite meaning. The sentence “إن فاتني أوله فإن لي في آخره” / If its initial letter is dropped, the latest letters will be mine” revealed to the answerer on how to obtain the word intended, i.e., “if the first letter of the name of the beloved is dropped, the latest letters of his name will be mine”.

To sum up, it could be inferred that the word intended that the riddle talks about was the Arabic proper name “Ali”. The proper name “Ali” consisted of three Arabic letters. The initial Arabic letter of the proper name “Ali” is the letter “ع/ *yen* / A”. The second word intended was the prepositional phrase “لي/ *li* / will be mine”. The Arabic prepositional phrase “لي/ *li* / will be mine” was obtained by omitting the first letter of the original word intended, i.e., the Arabic proper name “Ali”.

The English text was an interpretation of the Arabic text with some modifications using indirect translation to unveil the implicit meaning of the ambiguous words. The aesthetical musical effect of rhyming words such as “ناظره/ *nadirihī*” and “آخره/ *a:khrihi*” was lost in the English text because English had no suitable equivalences that were aligned with the rhymes of Arabic noun phrases of “ناظره/ *naTHrihi*” and “آخره/ *a:khrihi*” to maintain the same rhyming words. Consequently, although the English text employed indirect translation to convey the intention and implicit meaning of the riddle into English, the answer to the riddle required solid linguistic knowledge of Arabic.

ST (3) وَأَكْلَةٌ بِغَيْرِ فَمٍ وَبَطْنٍ لَهَا أَشْجَارٌ وَالْحَيَوَانُ قَوْتُ
 إِذَا اطْعَمْتَهَا إِنْتَعَشَتْ وَعَاشَتْ وَإِنْ أَسْقَيْتَهَا مَاءً (Abdulrahim, 1999, p. 45)

TT (3) Eater without mouth and abdomen Trees and animal are its food
 If you feed it, you flourish and make it alive When you water it, it will die
 (Researchers’ translation)

The riddle employed some attribute word function as indicators of the word intended. The riddle asker utilized the adjective “وَأَكْلَةٌ/ *Wa: akilatin*” in order to mislead the answerer. This ambiguous word referred to animate and inanimate alike. The adjective “وَأَكْلَةٌ/ *Wa: akilatin*” was a metaphor because it compared the word intended

with something a human being or animal is doing. The ambiguous implicit meaning of the adjective “واكلية” *Wa: akilatin*” was still the same when it was translated into English as “eater” because it referred to animate and inanimate alike. The adjective phrase “بغير فم وبطن” *bighar famin wa batn*” sustained the same meaning in English “without mouth and abdomen”. It described the “eater” with no mouth and abdomen.

Besides, another adjective phrase “لها أشجار والحيوان قوت” *laha ?shjaru wal_hwan qutu*” was also conveyed directly into “trees and animals are its food” in English. This description reinforced that the “eater” was “something abstract” and inhuman because human beings may eat some animals but not trees. The conditional statements “إذا اطعمتها” *إذ اطعمتها / إنتعشت وعاشت / ?dha ?atmtaha: ?nta?shat wa?shat* / if you feed it, it will a live” and “وإن أسقيتها ماء تموت” *wa?n ?sqaytaha ma:? tamutu* /when you water it, it will die” were maintained in English with a slight difference. It was noted that the Arabic conditional particle “إن” *ina*” was translated indirectly into an adverb “when”. It is not translated into “if”. A distinct difference was clear between the two equivalents “when” and “if”. The Arabic conditional particle “إن” referred to the probability of occurring an event/ action. While the adverb “when” referred to the expression “at what time”.

In addition, the riddle asker made use of the feminine third-person singular pronoun “ها” in the verbs “اطعمتها” *?atmtaha* /feed it” and “أسقيتها” *?sqaytaha* /water it” to indicate that the word intended is something female. It was noted that the feminine third-person singular pronoun “ها” was changed into the inanimate third-person singular pronoun “it” when translated into English. Both lexical words “عاشت” *?shat* /alive” and “تموت” *tamutu* /die” reinforced that the word intended was something inhuman because human beings do not die when they are given some water.

Relatedly, it could be inferred that the word intended was something inanimate because it had no mouth and no abdomen. Additionally, trees and animals were good fuels and made it alive, whereas water made it die. These semantic features were in contrast to other creatures with a mouth and abdomen. On this ground, it could be inferred that the word intended was “fire” because it lives to feed trees and animals and dies when water is given to it. Furthermore, the English translation of the above riddle fairly resembled the original with the loss of rhyming words such as “قوت” *qutu* / food” and “تموت” *tamutu* /die”. The lexical collocation words “اطعمتها” *?atmtaha*: /feed it” and “أسقيتها” *?sqaytaha* / water it” that were employed were past verbal phrases that changed into present verbal phrases in English by sustaining the same meaning. In the same vein, the lexical words “عاشت” *?shat* / alive” and “تموت” *tamutu* /die”, which functioned as antonymous words, sustained the same meaning in English.

ST (4) ومشموم له عُرْفٌ ذكيٌ وفي تصحيفه بعضُ الشهور
إذا أسقطتْ حُمْسِيَهُ تجدهُ كبيراً في السماء وفي الطيور
وأولُّه وآخره سواءٌ وأوسطه يضيّق به ضميري (Abdulrahim, 1999, p. 249)

TT (4) Something is being sniffed has a fragrant odour,

Changing it denotes a name of month,
 If you drop two-fifth of it,
 See it a big among birds in the sky
 Its initial letter and its last letter are similar,
 Its midst letters hurt my conscience (Researchers' translation)

The riddle above was about something that could be smelled and had a fragrant odour. The lexical word “مشموم/ *mashmumu*” had the literal English equivalence of “smelled” and gave a hint that the word intended was either a fruit or a plant. It changed when translated into “something is being sniffed”. This change was to make the lexical word “مشموم/ *mashmumu*” clearer in English. At the same, the riddle employed the literary device of pun by using the lexical word “عُرفْتُ/ *ʿrfun*” to deceive the answerer. The noun “عُرفْتُ/ *ʿrfun*” had explicit and implicit meanings.

The explicit meaning was “tradition”, while the implicit meaning was “odour”. In other words, the English equivalence “odour” unveiled the ambiguous implicit meaning of the noun “عُرفْتُ/ *ʿrfun*” through the English translation. Additionally, the adjective “ذكي/ *dhaki*” had ambiguous implicit meaning and pun at the same time. It had explicit and implicit meanings. The explicit meaning that came to mind was “*smart*”, while the ambiguous implicit meaning was “fragrant”.

By the same token, the lexical word “تصحفه/ *tashi:fihi*” conveyed explicit and implicit meanings. The explicit meaning was “*making something broad*”, while the ambiguous implicit meaning was somewhat conveyed and translated in English into “changing”. The lexical word “تصحفه/ *tashi:fihi*” derived from the basic verb “صفح/ *safaha*”, which had the meaning of changing places of dots that the word has. In addition, the implicit ambiguous lexical word “صفح/ *safaha*” was a homograph (has the same spelling but different meanings) and homonym (has the same sound but different meanings). Further, the noun “الشهور/ *alshuhuri*” was translated directly into “month”. In consequence, the noun clause “وفي تصحيفه بعضُ الشهور/ *wa fi: tashi:fihi baʿdu alshuhuri*” attracted the attention of readers to think of the names of months in order to infer the word intended. Specifically, changing the place of dots of the word intended would produce the name of a particular month. In addition, the conditional statement “إذا أسقطتِ/ *dha asqata khumusayhi*” was sustained in meaning when translated into English “If you drop two-fifth of it” to show that the word intended consisted of five letters. In the same vein, the lexical item “تجدهُ/ *tajidahu*” also had explicit and implicit meanings. The explicit meaning of it was “find”, while the ambiguous implicit meaning was unveiled in English translation to be the verb “see”. The clause “كبيراً في السماء وفي الطيور/ *kabiran fi: alsama:ʔ wa fi: altiyuri*” was translated directly into English “a big among birds in the sky”. This clause indicated that after dropping two-fifth of the word intended, it would show the name of a big bird that flies in the sky.

Additionally, the noun phrase “*waluhu wa a:khrihu sawa:ʔ*” / أوله وأخره سواء” was changed by adding the lexical word “letter” twice to convey the ambiguous implicit meaning of the phrase. It was translated into “its initial letter and its last letter are similar”, which helped decode the phrase. In turn, it gave a hint that the first and last letters of the word intended were similar. The noun phrase “*wa awsaṭhu*” / أوسطه” was changed in English by adding the lexical word “letters” when it was translated into “its midst letters”. Therefore, the English equivalence of “its midst letters” unveiled the ambiguous implicit meaning of the noun phrase “*wa awsaṭhu*” / أوسطه” and helped to infer the word intended. Similarly, the lexical word “*yadiqu*” / يضيق” in the verb phrase “*yadiqu bhi damiri*” / يضيق به ضميري” had explicit and implicit meanings. The explicit meaning of “*yadiqu*” / يضيق” conveyed the meaning of “narrowing”, whereas the ambiguous implicit meaning indicated the meaning of “hurt”. In consequence, the English equivalence of “hurt” unveiled the ambiguous implicit meaning of the verb “*yadiqu*” / يضيق” through indirect translation.

Accordingly, it could come to the conclusion that the word intended was the Arabic word “*nisri:n*” / نسرين”, which had the English equivalent of “Rosa canina”. It is a kind of flower also known as “dog rose”. It consisted of five letters, whereby the first and last letters of the word intended “*nisri:n*” / نسرين” were the same Arabic letter “*noon*” / ن”. Replacing the place of the dots of the noun “*nisri:n*” / نسرين” resulted in obtaining a new lexical word “*tishri:n*” / تشرين”, which meant “October” and referred to the Arabic name of a month. This change responded to the implicit meaning of the lexical word “*tashi:fihi*” / تصحيفه” in the first poetic line, which included “change in the dots of letters” – in other words, adding additional dots to the word intended “*nisri:n*” / نسرين” led to obtaining a new word “*tishri:n*” / تشرين”, which meant “October”.

By the same token, omitting two-fifth letters of the Arabic word intended “*nisri:n*” / نسرين” fulfilled another word “*niser*” / نسر”, which meant “eagle”, and referred to the name of a big bird that flies in the sky. Furthermore, the midst letters of the Arabic noun “*nisri:n*” / نسرين” provided a new word “*ser*” / سر”, which meant “secret” in English. A secret is defined as “something that is kept hidden, or that is known about by only few people (Longman Dictionary, 2006, p. 1480). Therefore, a “*secret*” hurts the conscience of someone when they make an error because sometimes a secret causes problems and the person is unable to endure to keep it alone. In terms of translation, some ambiguous implicit meanings were interpreted through indirect translation such as “*rifun*” / عرفت”, “*dhaki*” / ذكيت”, “*tashi:fihi*” / تصحيفه”, “*tajidahu*” / تجده”, and “*yadiqu*” / يضيق”. The indirect translation of the words mentioned above unveiled ambiguous implicit meaning when conveyed into English.

In short, it was noted that the English text was an interpretation of the Arabic one with some modification through using indirect translation to convey the ambiguous implicit information into English. It was also noted that antithesis that displayed contrasting impact was used via the lexical words “*waluhu*” / أوله” and “*akhru*” / آخره”

a:*khrihu* /its last”, which in turn lost their rhyming sound when they were translated into English.

ST (5) أيّ شيء إذا تفكرت فيه تم معناه حين ينقص حرفاً
وهو حلو وإن مضى منه حرفاً صار مرّاً ولم يكن قطّ يخفى (Abdulrahim, 1999, p. 36)

T (5) Which thing its meaning is completed when dropping one letter?

It is sweet. When you omit a letter, it becomes bitter clearly (Researchers' translation)

The general meaning of the riddle concerned something sweet. This sweet had the meaning of completeness when one letter was omitted and had the meaning of bitter when another letter was omitted. On the whole, it was noted that the first poetic line “أيّ شيء إذا تفكرت فيه تم معناه حين ينقص حرفاً” / *ʔyu shayʔ dha tafakarta fihi tam maʿnahu hyna yanqusu harfan*” embedded the meaning of the question. It was translated visibly into a question ended with a question mark “Which thing its meaning is completed when omitting one letter?” That is to say that the translation conveyed the intention of the riddle asker when translated into question form. This structural change from the statement into question did not change the meaning of the riddle. It remained the same meaning of the first poetic line “أيّ شيء إذا تفكرت فيه تم معناه حين ينقص حرفاً” / *ʔyu shayʔ dha tafakarta fihi tam maʿnahu hyna yanqusu harfan* / which thing its meaning is completed when omitting one letter?” in both Arabic and English.

Additionally, the conditional clause “إذا تفكرت فيه” / *dha tafakarta fihi* / if you think of it” was a redundant clause and had been dropped from the English translation without affecting the meaning in the translation because it was merely additional information.

In the same vein, the verb “ينقص” / *yanqusu*” had explicit and implicit meanings. The ambiguous explicit meaning of “ينقص” / *yanqusu*” was “decrease”, which literally meant “become smaller or fewer”. Whereas the implicit meaning was “omitting”, which was conveyed in English.

The noun “حرفاً” / *harfan*” reinforced the meaning of “omitting” more than “decrease” because the lexical word “letter” collocated with “omitting” rather than with “decrease”. In consequence, indirect translation was used with the verb “ينقص” / *yanqusu*”.

Moreover, it was noted that the riddle used antithesis that belonged to the Science of Schemes (it is a science of rhetoric that deals with figures of speech such as juxtaposition, alliteration, etc.). It is a literary manner that refers to two opposite concepts or words put together to acquire a consistent effect. Antithesis was employed to the twin lexical items “تم” / *tam*” and “ينقص” / *yanqusu*”. They also showed two opposite concepts and were translated consecutively into “is completed” and “omitting”. At the same time, the dual antithesis sustained the same meaning in the English translation. Further, antithesis was manifested by using adjectives “حلو” / *hulwu*” and “مر” / *mur*”.

Both words consecutively were translated into the direct literal meanings of “sweet” and “bitter”.

Accordingly, it could be inferred that the word intended was the lexical word “تمر / date”. It is sweet and consists of three letters. If the third letter was omitted, the new word of “تم / tam/ is completed” would be obtained. If the first letter was omitted, the new word of “مر / bitter” would be obtained.

In short, it was noted that the Arabic poetic riddle sustained its meaning in the English translation. It was also noticed that the lexical word of “حرفاً / *harfan*” had been repeated twice in Arabic with the same rhyming sound of “أ / *a*”. At the same time, the English equivalence of “letter” was also repeated in English by keeping the same rhyming sound “er”. The rhetoric device of antithesis of “حلوة / *hulwu* /sweet” and “مر / *mur* /bitter”, “تم / is completed”, and “ينقص / *yanqusu* / omitting” sustained their meaning in the English text. Consequently, the English text looked like the original text with a slight difference to a large degree. That is to say, direct and indirect translations were employed to translate this riddle.

Conclusion

The present study explored challenges embedded in translating Arabic poetic riddles and their English translation in respect of the Relevance Theory (Sperber and Wilson, 1986, 1995), Translation Theory (Gutt, 1991, 1998, 2000), and Ambiguity (Bach, 1994). On the ground of these theories, five Arabic poetic riddles were analysed based on ambiguity, implicit, and explicit meaning. The results displayed that the Arabic poetic riddles included ambiguous words and implicit meanings that required decoding to obtain the word intended made by the riddle asker. In addition, the results indicated that Arabic poetic riddles are full of attribute words to help in getting the word intended. Generally speaking, the explicit meaning of the Arabic poetic riddles is maintained directly in the English translated text. In the same vein, although dual translation (direct translation and indirect translation) is often used in translating poetic riddles, the implicit meaning of ambiguous words is conserved in the translated text at the same time.

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