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ABSTRACT

Puns revolve around two or more semantically incompatible meanings as they are formed by polysemic and homophonic words used in a certain context. According to the incongruity theory of humour, humour is created due to incongruity between expectation and reality. All kinds of puns are based on ambiguity principles. This study aims to describe and compare lexical, phonological, morphological, syntactical and idiomatic puns and literal translations used in the context of Urdu sitcoms "Hum sub Umeed say hain" and "Hasb-e-Haal" by the help of descriptive-analytical method. Five episodes of each sitcom are analyzed. The rational of choosing these programs is that they revolve around important social issues and sensitive political themes to highlight and eradicate those problems. Findings indicate that lexical and idiomatic puns occur the most in our data, whereas morphological ambiguity is present least in number. The cause of ambiguity of more than a quarter of the data is due to literal translations and code switching. Since little work (and none to my knowledge in Urdu) has been done on puns and working of humorous literal translations of words and idioms in the context of sitcom and comedy discourse, this paper can be a linguistic contribution to the areas of media and humour studies.

Introduction

There is substantial amount of recent work available in Western contexts on the humorous discourse in languages other than Urdu. Puns are generalized as mannerism, poetic licence and light verse. Puns or word play or play on words are the extreme form of language creativity. Puns depend on how verbal expression is manoeuvred (Ermida, 2008). Parrington (2010) asserts that with the slightest changes in original words, puns not only change their meaning but also their humorous quality.

Like other communicative exchanges, humorous exchanges also fall into the category of pragmatics. Humour has its origins as a biological concept in ancient Greek medical science. The

definition below gives the salient features of incongruity; laughter arises as a result of two or more inconsistent, unsuitable or incongruous parts of circumstances acquiring a sort of mutual relation from the peculiar manner in which the mind takes notice of them. Hence both speaker and the hearer should possess the required ability to encode and decode (comprehension and competence) the humorous message. Incongruity works as the starting point of humour. The central theme of incongruity is that the view of two or more unsuitable, inconsistent and incongruous parts is considered united in one object that creates laughter.

Pun is the linguistic expression which is hard to define. However, various definitions have been proposed by the linguists such as Delabatista (1997), who defined puns as: "deliberate communicative strategy or the result thereof, used with a specific semantic or pragmatic effect in mind." The language structure is exploited by the interlocutors to bring about two similar forms that agree in sound (homophones or homonyms) but differ in meaning or senses (polysemes). This leads to more than one interpretation of a word or an expression, which becomes the source of ambiguity and humour. One meaning of the word is usually denotative, while the other meaning is metaphorical or close and remote meaning. The users usually aim at the distant meaning to create humour. Al-Muraghi (2000) focused on the distant as well as near meanings of puns. Parrington (2009) defines puns phonetically as bisociative play between two sound sequences that will affect its success, quality and failure.

Puns are commonly used in our daily communication. Media and television programmes as well as the newspaper articles make use of puns for entertainment or to highlight a social problem in a humorous, ironic and sarcastic way. For Nordquist (2013), puns indicate the arbitrary nature of the language. The same sounds, signs and words can show extremely different meanings. Word play is a strategy of verbal interaction. They join interlocutors in the bond of equal power relations and solidarity. Use of puns in conversation makes it alive. A pun oscillates between form and meaning, between pragmatics and semantics, parole and langue, and cutting across all genres and text type distinctions.

Puns or word play is the universal feature of all languages as far as those languages have polysemes, homonyms, heteronyms and homographs. Puns result not only due to a clash between two existing meanings of words and similarity between sounds but also because of the clash between our existing domains of knowledge and experience. We can claim that there is a close association of puns in the domains of language and thought. The humour of puns depends on the shared expectations of the messenger and the addressee and on how the addressee is taken by surprise and is plunged into something entirely different from what he was expecting.

This paper aims to describe puns and literal translations in sitcom discourse. Characters' fictional communicative purposes are analyzed in their monologues, dialogues and polylogues (Dynel 2010, 2011, a, b). Since relatively little work (and no work in Urdu) has been done on puns as humour catalysts in the sitcom and comedy discourse, this work will hopefully contribute in the existing linguistic knowledge.

Purpose of the study

There is no work done (as the review of literature confirms) on Urdu language puns in the humorous discourse. This work can be taken as the starting point for other researchers to investigate in detail the kinds of puns identified by the researcher. The paper aims to describe and analyze naturally occurring puns and word play in Urdu sitcom discourse. The researcher looks at the aspects and effects of literal translations of Urdu words and idioms into English language in the context of humorous Urdu sitcom discourse. The study also analyzes the cultural aspects in the use of puns.

The researcher aims to analyze structural aspects of puns in Urdu sitcom discourse. Lexical, phonological and morphological ambiguity involved in the use of puns in characters' monologues, dialogues and polylogues in Urdu sitcoms is analyzed. The researcher also aims to analyze the literal translations of the characters' words, idioms and phrases in the sitcom discourse.

Research question

1. What are the different categories of puns that can be identified in Urdu humorous sitcoms?
2. How does the literal translation of words and idioms contribute in the production of humorous discourse?

Literature review

Ritchie (2004) points out that much of the research on puns is inconclusive and has resulted in the establishment of various taxonomies of puns as are mentioned above. The researchers have not explained how the puns function in real life discourse though. Mostly authors do not offer a definition of puns, assuming that readers are aware of what they intuitively are. Traditionally, puns are regarded as wordplay based on homophony. Hammond/ Hughes (1978) claim that puns are made when the hearer realizes that two words sound the same, and they construct the sentence containing this sound. Recent definitions of puns insist that puns are not limited to words only but to the way a sentence is said, thus taking into account the pragmatics; illocutionary and perlocutionary aspects of the use of puns. Parrington (2006) believes that puns are play on sounds. He believes that puns do not play with just single words but with an entire sentence. He further distinguishes puns into; exact puns and near puns. All linguists believe that puns are a source of humour due to their ambiguous meaning. However, it can be argued that all words are ambiguous. It is the context that shapes the meaning of a certain word. Attardo (1994) points out the difference between ambiguity and a pun is that the two co-existential meanings in puns have to be semantically incompatible in a specific context.

Sinclair (2004) claims that word play exploits the organizational expectations of hearers or readers by the use of relexicalization and rewording. Hoey (2005) builds on Sinclair's work and designs a lexical-grammatical framework which explains what the expectations of readers and hearers are and how they come about in the first place. This linguistic phenomenon is analyzed on

lexical, phonological, morphological, idiomatic and syntactic levels. Syntactic ambiguity is dealt by looking into the semantic shift created by confusion between grammatical categories and elliptic phenomenon. Phonological ambiguity is created on the level of sounds. Some examples (as identified by other researchers in Western context) are given as under:

Examples of lexical ambiguity:
1. Men recommend more *clubs* for wives.
2. Doctor testifies in horse *suit.*
3. Actor sent to jail for not finishing *sentence.*
4. Stadium air conditioning fails—*Fans* protest.

Examples of syntactic ambiguity are given below:
1. Man in Restaurant: I'll have two lamb chops, and make them *lean,* please.
   Waiter: To which side, sir?

<div align="center">(Clark 1968, 191)</div>

2. Eye *drops* off shelf.
3. Dealers will hear car *talk* at noon.
4. Research *Fans* *Hope* For Spinal Injuries.
5. William Kelly Was Fed Secretary.

Some examples of phonological ambiguity are given as under:
1. Is there a ring of debris around Uranus?

Humour in puns

The humour caused by pun depends on the "expectations shared by the framer of the message and the addressee and on the way the latter is taken by surprise and plunged into something entirely different from what s/he has been prepared for" (Delabatista 1996, 138). "Punning should also be considered in relation to another important aspect of human nature, namely our own sense of humour and our desire to produce a humorous effect on the people we communicate with."

As Parrington (2009) claims that puns play with words as well as with the ideas. He offers the explanation by analyzing British newspaper headlines. Rosenthal (1996) states that the humour of puns and other forms of jokes stem from the fact that human language moves in logical channels. Any deviation from these channels is felt as a release from these established channels which results in the production of humour. It is, however, debatable that what level of ambiguity leads to either humorous or in the creation of serious discourse.

Methodology

During the data collection process, the researcher selected a number of sitcoms in which the use of puns and literal translations was frequent. However, the collection of data was restricted to only two sitcoms: "Hum sab Umeed say Hain" and "Hasb-e-Haal." These programmes are chosen as

they give more data on puns and literal translations. The data is collected from online resource. It was posted on Google source on 4th March 2017, October 22nd, 2015, June 16, 2014, September 10, 2013 and October 2, 2016. Five episodes of "Hasb-e-Haal" are analyzed where the interlocutors are involved in a role play in which one of the male actors is playing the role of Pakistan's famous Lollywood actress, Meera. The other actors are providing a context of the humorous discourse. The same actor performs the role of a famous female politician who indulges in frivolous talk. The programmes are selected randomly. The selected programmes are watched from the You-tube and are transcribed. A total of 198 puns were found from the data, which are later divided into lexical, morphological, syntactical, idiomatic, polysemic, compound and phonological puns categories. The frequency is counted and percentages taken out. To analyze the data, all kind of ambiguity involved in the use of puns is taken into account by descriptive analytic method. This method involves close watching, reading and manual analysis of episode transcripts. In the given section, the examples are given in Romanized Urdu version. For full comprehension, each example has been translated into English by the researcher and is written in parenthesis.

Analysis, Results and Discussion

The collected data is analyzed by using descriptive analytical procedure, keeping in mind the background knowledge, context and the level of formality. The structure of puns is identified by looking at the features and puns are classified according to their specific category as under. The classification below is not exhaustive, as puns are difficult to classify. Some of the examples are as under:

Homographic or heteronymic puns or polysemic puns

It includes words that spell the same but may have different sounds and meanings. Words that can be used in more than one sense are called polysemes. An example from Urdu language collected from the data can be: *woh aurat takleef say **murree** ja rahi thi. (That woman was going to **murree** due to pain.)* Here the pun is on the word *murree,* which means "to die" and also it is a recreational place in Pakistan. The very title of the sitcom *Hum sub umeed say hain* contains a pun on the word *umeed se,* which means both "to be hopeful" and "to be pregnant." So, the sentence would either mean that "We are all pregnant" and "We are all hopeful." Another example from the data is:
　　Polysemic ambiguity can be the result of literal translations. In the data collected, we observed such examples as:

1) *Kehti hai keh mai choosy hoon, 100 cookar kha kay bhi choosy hai. (She says that she is choosy, even after eating a hundred chickens.)*

Here the pun is on the word "choosy" which in English means "very careful in choosing something," while in Urdu it means "small chick." This use of paronymy (similarity of both orthography and sound) causes a lot of humour. Another example from the data is:

2) *Shoaib kay saath mera koi circle (chakar) nahi tha. Albata circle of Shoaib was walking with my cousin. (I was not running an affair with Shoaib, rather Shoaib was running an affair with my cousin.)*

Compound Puns

It involves the use of two or more puns in a statement. The example from the data is**:**

1) *Dr Sameera nay mujhay kaha tha kay woh bohat moti hai toh oski madad karoon pounds less karnay mai. Eik toh oski madad ki pounds less kernay mei or mujhay hi eyes show kera rahi hai. Dr Sameera meray saath color game kar rahi hai.*

In the above sentences, the pun is on polysemic word "pounds" used both in the sense of money as well as for weight. The pun is also there in the use of idioms literally translated from Urdu to English: "eyes show kera raahi hai" (aankhai deikhana) and "colour game" is being literally translated for "raang baazi."

In the given example, the humour arises as "tablets" has been taken as literal translation for bullets in English and "goolian" in Urdu.

2) *The tablets are walking in our street. (humari gali mai goolian chal rahi hain.)*

In the above sentence the speaker meant that it has been firing in their street, the literal translation and word to word translation has been a source of humour here.

Phonological ambiguity/puns/homophonic puns

This category includes pair of words which sound similar but are not same in meaning. Taking an example from English: Atheism is a non- prophet institution. Here the pun is on the word profit taken as prophet; same in sounds but different in meanings. Pair of words in Urdu language can be: dua (to pray) /dµə/ and dawa (medicine) /dəvə/, "mango":آم /aam/ and "common": عام /ʔam/, another example can be "ba'd" (after) and "baad" (wind). The example from the data is:

*Tum waha **rokay** kia kar rahay thay?* Here the pun is on the word *rokay,* which means both "to cry" as well as "to stop by."

The manipulation of words at the level of sounds is a cause of ambiguity. In the corpus, many homophonous words were used intentionally, which are different in meaning and spellings but are similar in sounds. The rhythmic verses used by the characters are a source of great humour in the data collected. It is not just the rhyming words that are creating humour, but also the setting, attire, the tone and the context in which they are uttered, create hilarious perlocutionary effect on the hearers. Some of the examples are given as under:

1) *Hello Miss Meera*
   Aaj kal har cheez mai taang aranay ka bana liya hai aap nay wateera
   Aap toh hoti ja rahi hain jawan
   Na chehray pay jhurian na nishan
   Halankay aap toh hain age fellow of Imran Khan
   Aakhir is khubsoorti ka kia hai raaz

Hum toh bachpan say daikhtay aa rahay hain aap kay yeh andaaz
Is beauty kay peechay hai kia koi cream
Yah gali mai rehta hai koi hakeem

As evident, we see a lot of code switching going on in the above verses, which is used intentionally to create humour. Except for lines 3, 5 and 6, rest of the lines have used the exploitation of distinct but phonetically similar rhyming noun puns such as *cream/hakeem* (Italic) and *jawan/nishan/khan*. Here we see the use of English words and phrases; the examples being "hello Meera," "age fellow of Imran Khan" and "beauty." This kind of ambiguity forces syntactic level of changes as well.

2) *Jee Queen Meera, the Queen of scandle*
Dr. Sameera ka issue kaisay karo gi handle
Is martaba toh os kay haath mai bhi hai sandle
Is masaly pay daalo light of candle.

Again we see the use of noun puns which are phonetically similar. Also, the switching from Urdu to English language words and phrases is frequent, which is a source of humour. Infact, all the noun puns used here are English language words; scandle/handle/sandle and candle.

3) *What what bataoon*
Meray khilaaf kia kia puk raha hai
Ay piyaray logo
Kia mai shakal say lagti hoon pogo

In our data, we find phonetic identity captured in some of the sub-units of the words, some of which are real and others are pseudo morphemes. In the above sequence, we find the noun "pogonophoran" being reduced to the pseudo morpheme "pogo" which does not even form a regular English morpheme. It is indeed used to create humour and used in replacement of and in the sense of Urdu word "pagal" meaning insane. Another source of humour here is the use of literal translation of "kia kia" into "what what."

4) *Well Miss Meera*
Aap nay baray nojawanoo ka dil hai cheera
Rishta honay ki Mubarak ho
Wiya kera kay Green card pharo
Sachi chuni hai aap nay destination
Agarcha dulhay kay baap kay hain kuch reservation

In the above example, we observe code switching not only into English and Urdu but there is a deliberate use of Punjabi words "wiya" and "pharo" used as puns to create humour.

Corpus analysis also produced the examples of puns which changed the gender of the phrases such as is given in the example below. Here this change of gender is intentional as in the context in which this interaction takes place causes a lot of humour. The verses are indicative of lack of thought and loose talk that is so much prevalent in our society revealing the low morality of common as well as important members of our society. It also highlights how our media focuses on unimportant aspects of our lives.

5) *Kab tak mujhay qismat ka bulb fuse milay ga*
   Mujhay yaqeen tha kay mujhay good news milay ga

Instead of using the phrase "good news milay gi" the character uses "milay ga." When the dummy "Meera" actor is asked for the reason of the choice and is corrected to use "milay gi," she justifies her choice of the phrase by saying that her husband's name is Naveed and in English Naveed is translated as "good news."

Morphological ambiguity/puns

In the data collected, derivation and compounding are used and exploited to produce ambiguity, contiguity and humour. Some of the examples are as follows:

1) *Interviewer: Aap kis class mai parhi hain?*
   Meera: Upper calss
   Aap soch nahi saktay mai kitni ready writy (parhi likhi) hoon. Mai bohat ziyada notes and books parhti hoon. Notes baray walay and all check books parhti hoon.

This example is a mixture of phonological as well as morphological puns full of code switching. The pun on upper class and "parhi" creates humour here. The word parhi in Urdu language is polysemic and has double meanings: "to study in" and "to live in." The answer of the actress "Upper class" creates irony as well as a source of humour. Meera used ready writy for the Urdu idiom parhi likhi (literate). The pun is again used in the words "notes" and "book" which is taken literally for "money" and check books respectively by the speaker.

2) *I don't like 100 ears (sokan). (I don't like husband's wife.)*
3) *Tanqeedaize karnay walay aur tareefize karnay walay bohat hotay hain. (There are many people who criticize and appreciate.)*

In the above example tanqeed and tareef are Urdu words which are given English suffix "ize" to create humour.

4) *After marriage, I'll be MSc (mother of six children) and my husband will be FSc (father of six children.)*

We can see above the puns in the use of abbreviations, MSc and FSc.

5) *PM (Prime minister) ko PM kiyo kehtay hain and AM kiyo nahi. (Why do we call the prime minister as p.m (post meridiem) and not as a.m?)*

The pun is on the abbreviation P.M.

Idiomatic puns

This category includes the use of puns in set idioms. A pun is used here to produce a conflict between an idiom's literal and its figurative meaning, thus causing humour by the new ambiguous meaning produced. The example of this kind can be found in translating a text in another language.

A translator may bring in an equivalent idiom, an analogue, an extension, transformation or substitution to produce a similar effect to that of the source text. An example can be Oscar Wilde's translation into Russian, German and Latvian languages. The examples from the data are

literal translations of the Urdu idioms into English creating ambiguity and humour in a certain social context. Idiomatic puns take into account the pragmatics; illocutionary and perlocutionary aspects of the use of puns.

Some examples are as under:

1) *Oh Mr. Media man, keep your work with work.*

Where *keep your work with work*is a literal translation for "apnay kaam say kaam rakhain." Or "to mind your own business."

2) *I don't have mind. (mai mind nahi karoo gi.)*

Here, the character meant that she won't mind.

3) *Imran Khan aaj bhi mujhay chance dai toh mai unhay apna head crown (sartaj) bana longi. (Even if today Imran Khan gives me a chance, I'll marry him.) Where sartaj is used in the sense of husband.*

4) *I came in their round abouts. (mai unkay chakroo mai aa gai.)*

In the above phrase, she means that she was tricked.

5) *Yeh jo president Moodi hai, is say sab nose-o-nose (nakonak) aai hoi hain. (Everyone is sick of the president Moodi.)*

6) *Cooking oil doesn't come out of straight fingers. (Ghee seedhi unglioon say nahi nikalta.)*

7) *Horse old, red hold. (Budhi ghori lal lagaam.)*

The above idiom means to act age inappropriate.

8) *Don't eat my head. Already my head is revolving*. (mera sir na khao. Mera sir aagay hi chakra raha hai.)

The above sentence means: Don't bother me. It's already hurting my head.

9) *Agar Indians nay intiha pasandi dikhanay ki koshish ki toh mai filmoo mai intiha pasandi dikha doongi. (If Indians will try to show extremism, I'll show extremism in the films.)*

10) *Ateeq nay mujhay sharmindagi say two four (doh chaar) kia hai. (Ateeq has made me embarrassed.)*

Syntactical ambiguity/Puns

There were interesting examples which caused ambiguity in syntactic forms. Ambiguity is produced due to not only a break in grammatical rules but also linguistic factors, such as:

1) *I haven't seen what is. (Mai nay abhi daikha hi kia hai?)*

The speaker here meant that she hasn't seen much in the world.

2) *Moodi has done end. (aakheer kar di hai Moodi nay)*

The above sentence meant that Moodi had been intolerable.

3) *Thanks God English only comes to me. (Thank God, only I know English.)*

A funny situation arose when Meera asked the waiter,

4) *Meera: What what* is? (*What's available for food?*)
    deaf nay kaha: "all some is."
    Meera: Head foot is?os nay kaha "is".

The speaker in the above situation asked the waiter (deaf), what was on the menu? The waiter replied that everything was available. The speaker demanded for trotters (head foot). The waiter confirmed that it was available ("is" translated from Urdu as hai.)

Lexical ambiguity/puns

Lexical puns result from the exploitation of polysemy and homonymy. Sitcom discourse uses proper nouns to signal the unrelated meaning with the same linguistic form. (Cruse 2006, 80).

1) *Boundary ho gai hai. (hud ho gai hai.)*

The above sentence is used when someone has crossed his limits.

2) *Meera: Go and bring the mathematics. (ja hisaab laa.)*

Here, Meera demanded a bill so she could pay.

3) *What is your timing? (Tumhari auqaat kia hai?)*

The above sentence is a rude expression; the intensity of rudeness has been decreased by the literal translation. The Urdu word auqaat (worth) has been translated as timing, which causes a lot of humour.

4) *Aap say achay toh hotel kay deaf (waiters) hain. (The hotel waiters {deafs} are better than you.)*

For the purposes of this paper, the lexical puns are used to cover semantic and pragmatic puns (Meluck 1998, 2007). In this category the researcher included idioms, quasi-idioms and collocations. It is the incongruity in sounds, syntax, meanings and sense that result in phonological, morphological, syntactic, lexical and idiomatic puns. This ambiguity and humour is mostly produced due to the literal translations and code switching. We found out in the data analysis that playing with words is frequent in our daily discourse. It is an unending process of forming new puns and new forms of words and phrases. We create puns according to our knowledge of language, our creativity, our state of mind and the context. In our data, puns are analyzed in the context of creating humour. However, this can be intriguing as change of context and group of people renders a particular joke humourless. It can rather be deemed as offensive by some people. It was noted while formulating the results that some of the puns listed in one category can also be listed in the other categories too. The reason for this ambiguity is that the researcher has focused not just on semantic level of analysis but also in terms of pragmatic level, keeping the context and background knowledge as centre of our focus during analysis.

Humour due to literal translations is created due to the diversity of linguistic typology. English and Urdu differ in their grammar and vocabulary. In a multilingual country Pakistan, English is considered as the prestigious language. The people of Pakistan borrow a lot of words from English. These words have become substitutions for Urdu words. It is for this reason; the researcher analyzed the data containing translation of Urdu phrases into English to check on how it becomes a source of humour. The words in our data such as "timing," "waiter," "deaf," "mathematics," "cooking oil," "boundary," "food" etc., are so frequently used in Urdu language,

that their Urdu translations are almost lost. It is surprising, however that how their use in different contexts create humour.

Table 1: Number and percentage of different kinds of puns

Kinds of puns	Literal translations	Polysemic puns	Compound puns	Idiomatic puns	Lexical puns	Syntactic puns	Morphological puns	Phonological puns	Total
Number	51	23	13	28	36	14	9	24	198
Percentage	26%	11.5%	6.5%	14%	18%	7%	5%	12%	100%

The above table 1 shows the number of puns calculated in the data set. As evident, the greatest ambiguity was caused by lexical puns followed by idiomatic puns, phonological puns, polysemic puns, syntactical puns, compound puns and morphological puns respectively. There were 51 incidences of code switching and literal translations. It is the context and the level of formality between the interlocutors that determine what kind of pun or ambiguity will be used. Further research can be conducted on determining the quality of humour and mental procedures in the comprehension of humour.

Conclusion

The main focus of this paper was on the literal translation of Urdu lexemes and idioms into English language which causes ambiguity and humour. The researcher examined the structural aspects of puns in the sitcom discourse. The analysis reveals that wordplay is complex and multifaceted both structurally and functionally (Parrington 2006, 142). However, despite relative complexity, puns are used to create ambiguity which results in humour in sitcom discourse. An interesting result was that literal translations and frequent code switching resulted in puns in the given data set. It is the researcher's understanding though that the type of puns used depend on the context, the kind of ambiguity as well as the level of formality between interlocutors. The greatest numbers of puns found in this research were lexical puns followed by idiomatic and phonological puns. Only a few examples of morphological and syntactical puns were found. Further research can be conducted on determining the quality or sophistication of humour in the Urdu language (Parrington, 2006; Raskin, 2008). Also, there is a need to study multiple cognitive processes in the understanding of puns.

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