A Pragmalinguistic Basis of Humor in Some Iraqi Newspapers

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Abstract: *This paper presents a pragmalinguistic approach to the study of humor in some Iraqi newspapers. It also aims at probing into the linguistic bases involved in constructing humorous headlines. The writers of these newspapers are expected to carefully construct their humorous acts to guarantee humor success. Factors such as relevance, contextual situation and background knowledge facilitate the interpretation process for the readers to figure out the intended implicatures of the humorous speech acts. The core of the study relates to humor as a genre of linguistic and pragmatic interaction used in Iraqi daily newspapers. The paper discusses humor in newspapers' headlines in relation to a number of theoretical models: Relevance Theory, Speech Acts Theory, Grice's Cooperative Principle and Halliday's Functional Theory. The study reveals that the reason behind the choice of any type of humor by the writer is whether or not it increases the degree of the perceived credibility of the perlocutionary effects of the intended humorous acts.*

Keywords: Grice's Maxims, humor, Iraqi newspapers, pragmalinguistic basis, Relevance Theory

1.Introductory remarks

Humor is a linguistic, psychological and social phenomenon deeply rooted in every culture. It is described as a pragmatic-determined entity in a special use. Humor is seen in different forms and contexts as an achieving relevance and attitude to inform the reader/ hearer of a specific resemblance between a presupposed proposition and a newly given one. "Humor arises once people reconcile the incongruity between what speakers say and imply when using irony. Humor automatically emerges in these cases given the release of tension following a momentary sense of disparity" **(**Gibbs, Brynat and Colston 2014:575).

Humor is a communicative rhetorical genre that causes laughter or arouses people's interests which can be in a form of irony, metaphor, parody, playfulness of words, pun, satire, etc. It has been a part of social actions in every generation. It is ubiquitous and "has no boundaries. It permeates every social context. Undoubtedly, humor and laughing are essential parts of what it is to be human" (Lynch 2002:423).

In the situation of Iraq, humor is introduced deliberately or accidentally in various aspects of life as a comic relief to reduce the psychological tensions that the Iraqis have undergone during thirty four years of instability because of the first and second Gulf wars (1980-1988, 1991), and the sectarian struggle after

the American invasion to Iraq in 2003, on the one hand, and the economic blockade from 1991 to 2003, on the other hand. When they laugh, they are positively releasing the inner capacity of depression. "Freud's Relief Theory suggests that people laugh as a way of releasing the energy that builds up from forbidden thoughts and feelings" (Rybacki and Rybacki 1991:323).

In press register, especially in newspapers, humor can be used as a communicative device to persuade or delight the target readers to gain power for reinforcement of a particular political or social viewpoint. Writers always try to establish certain interactions and build bridges with their readers, anticipating their reactions to formulize their essays. Moreover, humor is used to uncover the economic and social problems and society depicted in a sarcastic way. However, most of the Iraqi parties own newspapers which reflect their ideologies, and mirror the current issues that concern Iraqis. In order to display their viewpoints towards the problems in the Iraqi society like the sectarian and political struggle, the writers of these newspapers use different figures of speech to achieve their ultimate goal. Humor is one of these figures which attract readers and can be easily referred to. "The relationships between irony and criticism on the one hand, and irony and humor on the other hand, have also been of great interest to authors working in the field" (Garmendia 2014:641).

Generally, it is important to acquaint the reader with the basic principles of the models adopted in this paper. Relevance Theory is a theory of implicature that incorporates some aspects of Grice's approach, but takes it in a new direction. The principle of 'relevance' has two aspects: cognitive and communicative. According to the cognitive aspect, the human cognitive system interprets an utterance in such a way as to maximize its 'relevance'. By the communicative aspect, it means that a sincere communicator, by producing an utterance, implicates his/her belief that it is optimally 'relevant' (Cruse 2006:152–153). Austin's Speech Acts Theory states that all utterances contain both constative and performative elements; they are all sayings and doings at the same time. To capture the implication of this intuition, he replaced the constative-performative terminology by a three-fold distinction: 'locutions' are acts *of* saying something, 'illocutions' are what is intended *in* saying something and 'perlocutions' are what is done *by* saying something. (Verschueren 1999:22–23). Concerning Grice's Co-operative Theory, Verschueren (1999:32) states that "Grice proposed a system of 'conversational logic' based on a number of 'maxims', i.e. intuitive principles which are supposed to guide conversational interaction in keeping with a general 'co-operative principle'". As for Halliday's Functional Theory, "Halliday's purpose is to specify the functions which language has in society, and then to establish what reflection these functions find in the structure of language itself " (Kress 1976:VIII).

2. Humor and communication
Apart from its syntactic and phonological features, communication is a form of exchanging relevant thoughts and reciprocal roles between the speaker and the hearer. In order for communication to be smoothly carried out, it requires a

definite speaker's intention, a clear recognition and interpretation of the hearer and a prior conversational experience including relevant context and mutual knowledge for both interlocutors. In his book, *Using Language* (1996), Clark presented communication as an intention-directed practice, during which the interlocutors mutually recognize their intentions and goals, and make joint effort to achieve them. But as a fact, and formal communications as exception, one rarely finds a communicative process of social interaction without carrying some humorous tone. Therefore, humor is viewed as a communicative process having a dependent rhetor to create the humorous message and a hearer / reader to interpret the intended meaning of that message. To guarantee full achievement of the humorous effects of that message, it needs social and cultural relatedness of the supposed humor. Concerning the newspapers, the reporter should create the humorous utterance, whether alone as a headline or in a text, in such a way that the implied meaning can be understood with a minimal expenditure of effort by his readers. Consider the following example from *Al-Iraq Al-Youm* [Iraq Today], Thursday 22nd August 2014, No. 2163, p (1) as a headline :

EXAMPLE 1: **الطبخ السياسي معروف المكونات مقنّع الغايات**
' Political cooking: known ingredients; masked purposes '

      To achieve a humorous effect, the writer displayed a picture of a masked rural woman from southern part of Iraq sitting on an old box, putting in front of her three bowels of *zury* 'small dried fish' to be sold to passers-by on one of the unpaved roads. This picture represents a nonverbal communication which provides a humorous effect under the guise of a comic relief. In fact, the picture expresses itself, as they say, and the image contributes much to the implicit meaning of the headline for certain readers who are accustomed to the folklore of south of Iraq. However, for other readers, this type of political humor requires knowledge of culture-specific features of the southern Iraqi community or else, the humorous effect may be at a risk of failure if that culture-specific is not excessively explained or if the writer is not cooperative in the situational context. "Sometimes, culture-specific lexis provides clues for the reader and creates a more specific cultural 'shading' of a text" (Miśśikova 2007:99). However, the above metaphorical phrase activates some salient parts of the communicative act in addition to the reader's most associated and salient interpretation, as well. The writer tries to enhance the most relevant parts, i.e., they are the political blocs and the purposes behind their agendas, and suppress the less relevant ones, i.e., the circumstances that represent the downfall of most institutions of the Iraqi state after the American invasion in 2003. In fact, the writer succeeds in carrying out an appropriate communication with the target reader. Being coated with humor increases the percentage of being mutually understood, and that both communicators commit themselves to observing certain features of the political behavior of those parties. This is why the writer uses the plural form مكونات 'ingredients' to indicate to the large number of parties participating in the political operation, and this complicates the issue of government formation. Thus, the reference to الطبخ السياسي 'political cooking' metaphorically refers to those parties, and the useless and boring arguments

among the members of Iraqi National Alliance described in example (4) below. For the writer and the reader, this headline springs as a humorous utterance which is used to picture the real situation of struggle among politicians. In fact, the writer believes that his readers could feel content, funny and even get enlightenment about that political situation in a more humorous way to achieve certain intended effects, and thus smooth communication with the reader boosts the chances of humor success at last.

3. Humor and relevance theory
Relevance Theory is a good embracement of language humor because it relates the humorous text with a context that is necessary for the humorous utterance to be effective on the target readers. Consider the following example from *Al-Iraq Al-Youm* [Iraq Today], Thursday 3rd August 2014, No. 2151, p. (1):
EXAMPLE 2: **! منحة الحكومة العراقية لنازحي الموصل ... عربة اسعاف في الافلام المصرية**
'Literally: The support of the Iraqi government to the displaced people from Mosul is   an ambulance in the Egyptian films.'

        This is a humorous satirical expression used to criticize the Iraqi government in its treatment of the humanitarian crisis of the displaced people from Mosul as a result of the invasion of the Nineveh area by *Da`ish* 'The Islamic State in Iraq and Larger Syria'. "Society uses humor, and laughter in particular, as a form of social corrective. When one observes behavior that is immoral or wicked, one uses laughter to correct the behavior and warn others not to behave in this manner" (Rulli 2010: 9). This kind of satire arouses laugh in relation to the 'ambulance in the Egyptian films' which is very old and rarely reaches the hospital because it might stall in the middle of its way. Such an utterance is within the broader knowledge of the readers' interpretation since it satisfies their 'expectations of relevance'.[1] In fact, readers of such a humorous headline do not face difficulty in decoding and / or inferring the props of that humor, i.e., its language, context, relevance. "- a speaker should formulate her utterance / text in such a way that her intended meaning can be grasped with a minimal expenditure of effort by her audience" (Carston 2006:3). Here, the writer uses a good example (an ambulance in the Egyptian films) which is generally known by Iraqis because they are familiar with the Egyptian films, and they are accustomed to watch them on TV screens. Instead, to understand the semantic content and the pragmatic implicature of the humorous headline, readers need to depend on context where 'the ambulance' is said and on some essential pragmatic knowledge related to social and cultural factors of the humanitarian crisis of *Mosul displaced people*. The readers of this headline can infer its implied meaning through that context and through some basic processes of inference employing the 'broadening criterion' [2] to reach an optimal relevance between the 'government support' and the 'Egyptian ambulance' in order to understand the intended humorous message of the writer. "According to the inferential model, a communicator provides evidence of her intention to convey a certain meaning, which is inferred by the audience on the basis of the evidence provided" (Sperber and Wilson 2002:45). Within the humorous political

register, the writer might deliberately express his opinion in a sarcastic manner to fulfill certain effects. This strategy of pragmatic use of metaphor indicates that the writer wants to involve the reader within the whole political situation in a humorous way in order to understand the intention behind that humor:

EXAMPLE 3: ... أننا سنقضي اربع سنوات قادمة بين خروقات دستورية فاضحة وبين غفوات طويلة لرئيس الجمهورية ...

'Literally: … we will spend the next four years between shameful constitutional violations and 'long naps' of the president of the republic …'

(*Al-Iraq Al-Youm* [Iraq Today], Thursday 22nd August 2014, No. 2163, p. 1)

Most readers know and have a background knowledge about the ex-president of Iraq *Jalal Talbany* who used to have a nap during most of the official meetings. This kind of political humor is a critique to a specific situation in the Iraqi state before formation of new Iraqi government. It also shows that there is a shared knowledge between the writer of this utterance and his readers through relevance, i.e., the steps of formation of new Iraqi government echo with the 'naps' of the president. "It is a garden-path utterance which rewards readers by allowing them to reflect on the dishonesty of politicians" (Black 2006:113). It is to be said that the whole communicative exchange between the writer and the readers reflects the context through which the writer supplies the necessary information for the intended message (bad steps to form a new government) to be understood by the readers. Introducing such comparison in a comic way and in relation to a political situation increases the possibility of being fully achieved. Of course, such humor helps the readers to recall the information from the past (about the naps of the ex- president) with the time-being knowledge they already have about the contacts between the political blocs for new government formation. This is part of a 'relief humor' which is supposedly used to reduce the psychological tension which the citizens of a particular country have undergone. "Humor is mainly used to reveal suppressed desires and to overcome sociocultural inhibitions" (Buijzen 2004:147). This is so because a political humor is a cognitive process, and it needs an intellectual reader and a high degree of aptitude to comprehend. This form of humor is best understood through *parody mimics* between a meant political situation and a habit of a *nominated person*. The reader's comprehension does not solely depend on the syntactic structures nor on the semantics of the lexical items of the utterance. It rather depends on the implied meaning of 'what is said'. In fact, those elements غفوات طويلة 'long naps' and خروقات دستورية 'costitutional violations' serve as indicators to the speaker's intention of that political humor. They are assigned as the 'expectations of relevance' raised by an utterance in Relevance Theory's terminology which "are precise enough, and predictable enough, to guide the hearer towards the speaker's meaning" (Sperber and Wilson 2002:46).

4. Humor and speech acts
If we go along with Austin's Speech Acts Theory (1962), we can establish, an explanation to a humorous act as a rhetorical end. The function of such act is to operate a change on the attitude of the reader by simply amusing him, affecting

his emotions or directing him to a certain pragmatic function or a social action in relation to a certain communicative act and a context of situation. Let us assume that in introducing this speech act, as a humorous act, the writer has an illocutionary intention to 'changing' the knowledge set (behavioral, political, social, etc.) of his readers in relation to the context of that act. The writer may direct his readers to a form of social action as advices, orders or requests, etc. The hearer may be, or is expected to be, amused. This means that the hearer changes his 'attitude' with respect not to some specific event or object outside the communicative situation, but with respect to the text and the context itself. Thus, through manipulation of language, the writer uses 'wordplay' technique to generate a political humor. In the example below,

EXAMPLE 4: **المرشح في غرفة النقاش والتحالف في غرفة الانعاش**
'Literally: The candidate is in the argument room, and the National Alliance is in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) '
(*Al-Mashriq* [The Sun Rise], Thursday 7th August 2014, No. 2988, p. 1), the felicity conditions of the speech act failed when the writer used   التحالف في غرفة الانعاش'The National Alliance is in the ICU' metaphorically. However, this is done for the sake of humor especially when sibilant sounds in النقاش 'argument' and الانعاش 'ICU' are rhyming together. The writer may have many intended illocutionary forces in this headline: he may warn the National Alliance members through the readers**:** *I warn you that the National Alliance is about to end if you do not name your candidate*; or he may urge the National Alliance: *I urge you to name* …; or he may declare something: *I declare that the National Alliance* …; or he may advise the National Alliance members: *I advise you to name* …; or he may state his viewpoint to the reader: *I state that I feel disgusted about that boring useless argument*. In fact, the writer intends to cause an effect on the attitude of the reader. How far he is successful in achieving that effect is left to the consequent social and communicative events. In principle, if the reader succeeds to recognize all the above illocutionary forces, or even many of them, then we could say that the reader's attitude is changed, at least, with respect to the humorous utterance and its context. Being amused or even urged to a special 'liking' condition is interpreted as a specific change in the attitude system of the reader which is the perlocution of the speech act. Personification is another type of metaphor when the writer uses التحالف في غرفة الانعاش 'The National Alliance is in the ICU', and treat non-human as a human in the غرفة الانعاش'room of ICU', and this is a highly intentional speech act which represents the metaphorical object introduced as an individual in a very mocking way in order to criticize that object in a humorous way (Rossen-Knill and Henry 1997: 721-740).

The appreciative reader is not only concerned with the semantic meaning of the utterance, but rather with the many implied illocutionary points of that utterance in relation to its situational contexts. Of course, the writer is not meant to entirely change the reader's own thoughts with the idea (possibility) that readers may vary in their interpretation of the same utterance. However, though many implicatures can be interpreted, the situation to which this headline is

related may help the Iraqi readers to similarly comprehend the writer's intention for four reasons: (1) Now, Iraqi people are involved in the process of government formation because of the bad situation after *Da`ish* had occupied many areas in the north and middle of Iraq, so fear from a coming danger and wish to get a new government might be good motivations to trace the steps of the political operation, (2) the arguments in the Iraqi parliament to form the government are screened in the TV. channels, (3) the relevance of this humorous headline is highly determined since the parliament arguments are fully environmental and optimally relevant, (4) the writer communicates something true when and only when the information related to the communicative act is transparent in the writer and reader's minds. "The clearer and the more explicative the text is, the more the readers will be included, the reverse may be true on other occasions" (Morini 2008:42). The writer wants to say that such arguments are dull and infertile as a main illocutionary force, and the others can be regarded as sub-illocutionary forces. He wants to tell the reader that such arguments will lead the country to nowhere and now, it is in a period of demise similar to a patient in the ICU. This type of humorous act can be drawn like this:
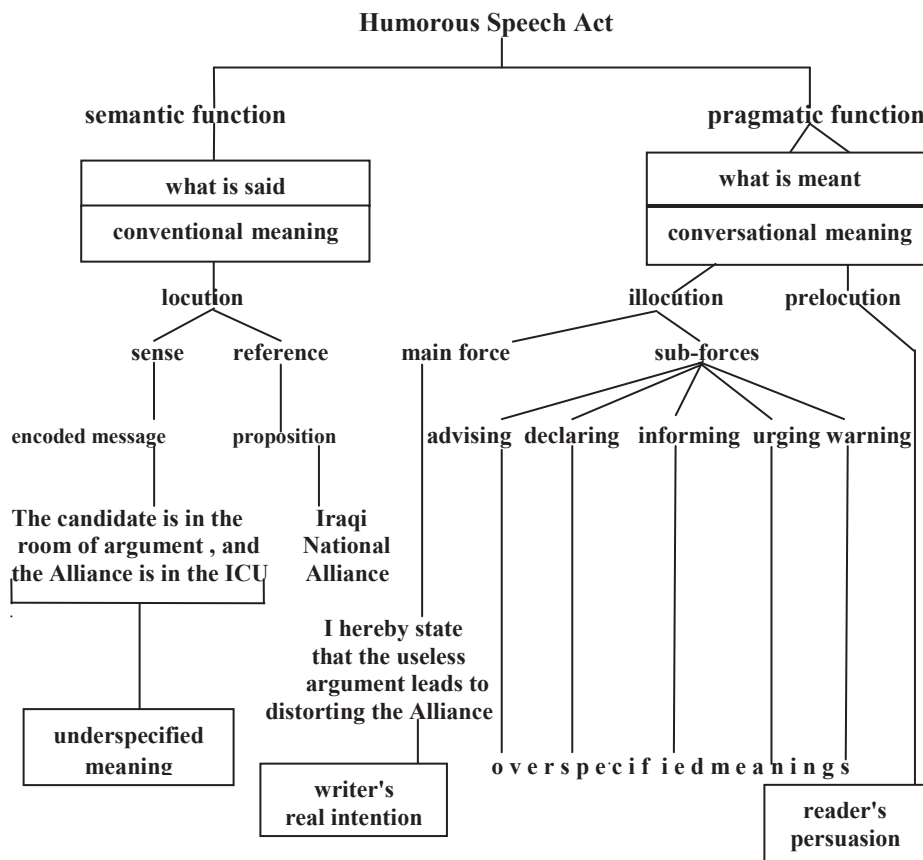

Figure 1: Humorous Speech Act

Nowadays, many contemporary Iraqi writers use irony, metaphor or satire as a tool to convey a political message to the public. This message comes through a multilayered mode of humorous utterance to make the reader more interested and thus strengthen the illocutionary forces of that message to guarantee competing perlocutionary effects. Of course, such process needs the writer and the reader to engage in a successful communicative act through a good degree of shared knowledge and a context which determines the status of an utterance act. However, understanding of the speech act could be reached at when the writer and the reader not only share linguistic contextual knowledge, but they are also aware of the pragmatic inference and the presupposed referents that make a certain speech act acceptable.

5. Humor and Grice's maxims and his conversational implicatures

Grice set out four conversational maxims which people generally follow when communicating efficiently. He believed that speakers obeying the Cooperative Principle should be truthful, informative, relevant and clear (1975:45-46). But he didn't claim that speakers are always cooperative; nor did he claim that speakers always follow these maxims. Speakers may deliberately or accidently violate any of these maxims for a number of reasons. Giving more or less information than usual and speaking falsely about irrelevant topic without being perspicuous all result in non-cooperation on the part of the hearer. Humor is not an exception to this rule since it is a daily conversational activity. However, violation of Grice's maxims makes the reader draw quite extensive implicatures especially in the political register. The political humor in Iraq tends to be implicit or explicit depending on the type of the newspaper whether published inside or outside Iraq. Newspapers of opponents which are published outside Iraq always use the explicit humor, whereas those published inside Iraq are classified into the government's and the independents'. The first, compared to the latter, enjoys a somewhat free environment to use a limited number of implicit political humor. The writers in the independent newspapers adopt a cleverly analytical strategy to insert their political criticism against the government and at the same time to delight their readers through discovering reading of the humorous rhetorical devices between lines in an opinion-essay:

EXAMPLE 5: **تبيع الميّه علينه في حارة السقائين؟**

'Literally: You sell water to us in the district of water carriers? ' which is equivalent to the English proverb: 'To take coals to Newcastle.' (*Al-Mashriq* [The Sun Rise], Thursday 7th August 2014, No. 2988, p. 7)

First, the interpretation of example (5) stems from the linguistic feature of the humorous utterance which employs an intonational question with an evaluative effect which implies a social and a political criticism against a specific period of Iraqi history. It questions the current social, political and economic problems. It is a rhetorical question of an Arabic proverb having a pragmatic reference applicable to the present bad situation in Iraq. However, humor stems from the metaphorical use of the above adage when the writer uses it in a relational context of the entrance of the Iraqi army to Kuwait in 1991. The writer thinks that this event arouses anger of the American administration.

Here, the humorous remark is that you sell something in the wrong place. In order to satisfy the reader's 'expectations' of this metaphorical device, the writer employs that folk proverb because it is within the Iraqis' memory and their background knowledge to achieve stronger conclusions than otherwise have been warranted on the part of the readers. But one should confess that without the reader's cognitive ability to infer the pragmatic meaning, the interpretation of the folk humorous proverb remains ineffective. According to the writer, the relational and the environmental effects nowadays are more important than the situational effects at that time. Thus, he creates an eloquent semantic/ pragmatic relevance about past and current events in Iraq, and activates the reader's curiosity to discover the writer's thesis. Such comparison has a humorous effect especially when the compared things (selling water and selling oil) exhibit less semantic similarity than expected. Of course, the reader of this humorous remark is supposed to be very attentive to all the minute details of the text where the adage is taken, expecting their relevance in the subsequent discourse. Mutual knowledge between the writer and the reader about culture-specific features is of great importance especially when a humorous act (headline) depends on an identifiable context of situation. Consider the following headline:

EXAMPLE 6: ساعة راسكوب ! 'An old watch sold as new and as a famous international mark by a disingenuous street seller in a tricky way. (*Tareek Al-Sha`ab* [People Road], Thursday 7th August 2014, No. 5, p. 5)

Iraqis use this humorous cliché as a joke for every useless thing or person to cause laughter or arouse people's interest in a funny way, so when the writer uses this cliché in this context and in relation to the present Iraqi government, he has certain implicit meaning. Therefore, the reader's interpretation of this joke is at a maximal point since there is a high level of interaction between the utterance act (cliché) and the reader's accessible assumptions on the one hand, and the principle of relevance to the situational context of the government, on the other hand. As a result, the communicative act is achieved since there is an "interplay of intention [the writer's] and attention [the reader's]; both are motivated by the common social-cultural background" (Black 2006:82).

Violation of Grice's maxims takes place in the above examples and with different forms of humor. If we just check them, we could find that metaphor, as one form of humor used in Iraqi newspapers, is not liable to direct interpretation due to its implicit propositional meaning. In example (1), the editor deliberately flouts Grice's Maxim of Quantity through a metaphorical use of الطبخ السياسي 'political cooking' and مقنع الغايات 'masked purposes'. This is an overt violation of one of Grice's Maxims which shows that the implicature of that remark is triggered because the writer is "unwilling to say more" (Grice 1989:99) about certain details of الطبخ السياسي 'political cooking'. The writer also violates the Maxim of Manner in that he does not tell the reader clearly about the type of political cooking the politicians are processing. If the writer wants to be more cooperative, he must provide further information about the political scene in Iraq: political parties, their clear programs and announced purposes, contacts among each other to form a new government and their stances concerning the

national reconciliation and economic and social reformations. All these fall into the 'political cooking' operation and 'unknown purposes' as humorous remarks. Instead, the writer wants the reader to infer the information related to the whole political operation, he is seeking for. But limiting the 'political cooking' to a period and a context immediately before formation of the new Iraqi government helps the reader to access the relevant information of the metaphorical humor. Thus, some knowledge of the spatio-temporal types of the metaphorical use might be helpful for the reader's comprehension. Attardo puts it in this way: limiting the violation of the cooperative principle to the smallest possible context makes the violation tolerable and facilitates communication (2000:815).

Moreover, if we check all other examples of this paper, we could safely deduce that the writer blatantly flouts Maxims of Quality, Quantity and/or Manner. In example (2), the writer is not truthful, in the headline, about the government support to the displaced people from Mosul because '*the ambulance in the Egyptian films*' is metaphorically used. But in narrating the news, he gives sufficient information about that support which he thought as invaluable. In example (3), The writer predicts that '*we* (speaking on behalf of Iraqis) *will spend* … ' which is not scientifically truth based, and that the way of how the constitutional violations will take place and how '*they will spend* … are not obvious to the reader. In example (4), the writer hyperbolizes the state of the National Alliance as echoing to the patient in the ICU.

Example (5) is a proverb which is applicable to any situation similar to that intended by the writer: *selling oil to America with low prices*. We mean that the writer makes an approximation between '*selling water to the district of water carrie*rs and '*selling oil to the oil country*, which might not be true as it is his viewpoint. Linguistically, the humorous communicative act of this proverb can be viewed as a four-tuple which can be thought as the props of a successful humor: language structure + topic of humor + relevant-theoretic context + reader. From the point of view of the General Theory of Verbal Humor, each joke can be viewed as a six-tuple, specifying the instantiation of each parameter: Language, Situation, Narrative Strategy, Target, Script Opposition, Logical Mechanism. (Attardo 1994:27). (For details on this theory, see Attardo and Raskin 1991.)

What is applicable to the above proverb is also applicable on the cliché of example (6) in terms of 'truthfulness' in addition to being non-informative in that it is not clearly stated by the writer that the Iraqi present government is *expired* and treated as a *raskoub*. However, though the given information in the examples above lacks adequate evidence, or is less than required and somehow obscure with others, the reader can share the intended message and rhetorical ends through the stylistic features and norms of a humorous comment, and also through his background knowledge and above all the accessible relevant context. In addition to that, the communicative effect is still applicable because it communicates something having a definite relevant context of the present situational events in Iraq. Therefore, Sperber and Wilson (1986) are right when they argue that all of Grice's Maxims could be replaced by a single principle of

relevance – that the speaker tries to be as relevant as possible in the circumstances.

6. Functional approach of humor

Linguistic meaning is as important as pragmatic meaning in that it supplies the appropriate set of contextual assumptions which the reader may use in order to formulate his 'relevant expectations' about the humorous effects and finally recognizes the communicative intention of the writer. On the other hand, Arabic humor uses a mixture of different rhetorical devices related to Arabic culture and the environment of a conservative society. However, though Arabs suffer from political oppression and/or economic crises, they have a sense of humor using comedy, irony, metaphor, paradox, pun, parody, sarcasm and satire as different resources of humor. Sometimes, they try to compensate their deprivation of rights by using political jokes in order to find a way out. Since language and its style, in particular, is the source of expressing meaning in a special context, the stylistic choice of a particular function plays a significant role making use of sociolinguistic features in achieving the intention of a press writer. This approach enables the reader to understand the meaning which the writer tries to convey depending on the actual functions of language: ideational, interpersonal and textual; each serves as a cooperative principle in the formulation and reception of the intended humor. Adopting the functional analysis to humor may be useful in this regard. Therefore, Halliday's (1994) functional model can be applied to the Arabic rhetorical devices فاضحة 'shameful' and غفوات طويلة 'long naps' in example (3) above:

The ideational function of the adjective فاضحة 'shameful' and غفوات طويلة 'long naps' is to be exclusively targeted to acknowledge the reader of their implied meanings. The first stems from the clarification of 'an evil doing' and some shameful disgusting action which ironically/satirically represents our real world as it is apprehended in our experience. The latter explains the feeling of dizziness of the human body and brain resulting in a nap. This ironically refers to the unlikable political operation through which the country has undergone. Thus, the underlying meaning that one can deduce is likely to be: We are tired of the performance of the government during the last 8 years. In order for the reader to comprehend the humorous utterance in example (3), he is to consider it as a mode of doing as part of Iraqi social interaction.

In the interpersonal function, it is assumed that 'we' is exclusive since it refers to Iraqis for whom the writer speaks on their behalf. Moreover, the reference to 'the president of the republic' indicates certain behavior and experience of a particular person as opposed to the parliament members. Therefore, by reference to the experiential meaning of فاضحة 'shameful' and غفوات طويلة 'long naps', and also by investigating the utterance as a piece of a political comment between the writer and the reader, we can say that the implied meaning could be: We reject your (the government's) previous performance, and we are looking forward to change that, or we don't want to continue working with such a useless and unresponsive government.

Concerning the textual function of غفوات طويلة 'long' فاضحة 'shameful' and naps', the thematic organization of the utterance implies that the speech function of the above humorous words is thematic, declaring the rejection of the previous performance of the government and preparing the ground for a rebuttal (Hatim and Mason 1990) which is a feature of a political commentary writing. Furthermore, the use of the adjectives فاضحة 'shameful' and غفوات طويلة 'long' is tone markers of the speech utterance which exerts on the readers an exaggerated illogical impact and gives an explicit indication of a potential satiric intention. However, we can now suggest an interpretive figure for the rhetorical devices of that humorous utterance as part of discourse:
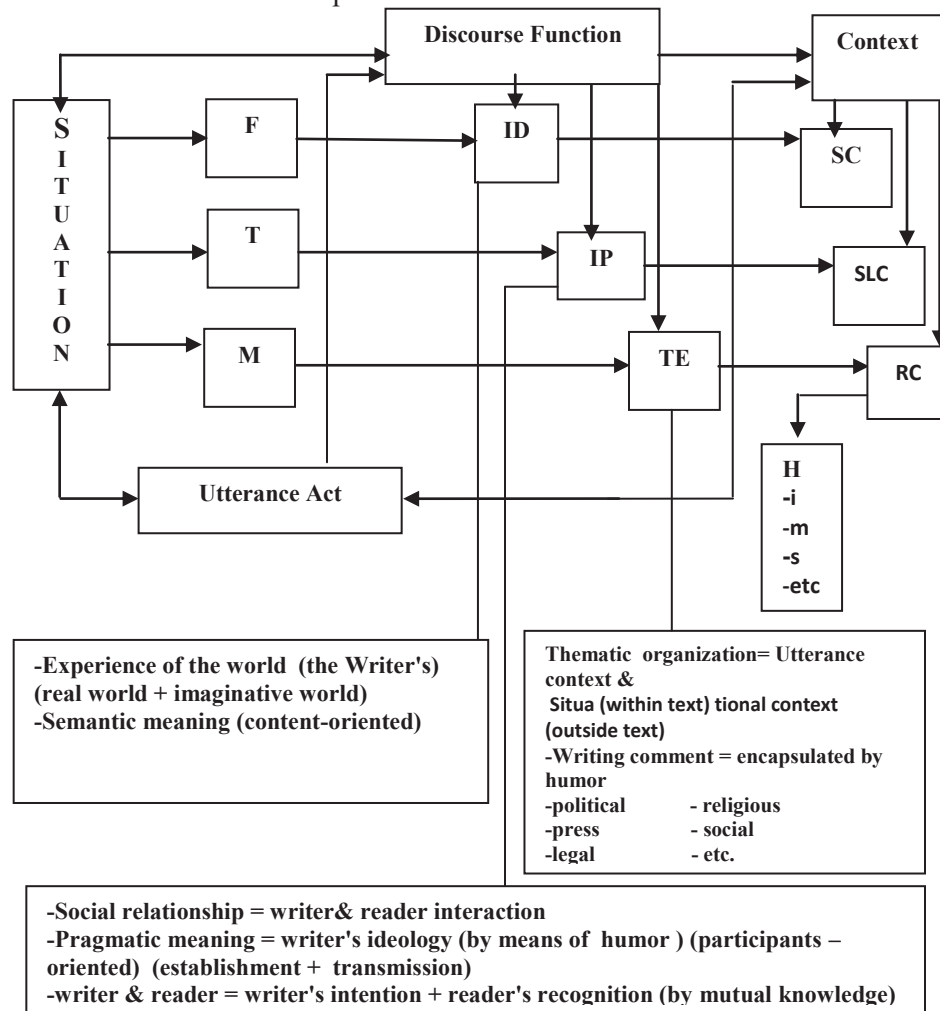

Figure 2: The Dimensional Discourse Function of Humorous Utterance F= Field T= Tenor M= Mode ID= Ideational Function IP= Interpersonal Function TEF= Textual Function SC= Stylistic Context SLC= Sociolinguitic Context RC= Rhetorical Context H= Humor i=irony m= metaphor s= satir

In press, the writers employ humor as a tool to convey an intended message of political, social and economic purposes, i.e., they want to be corrective for certain political situations; to be comic for amusing certain readers; to be moral for recovering certain immoral behavior and/or performance of certain politicians, aiming to keep them honest and calling for actions not words; to be hortatory calling readers to be patient and endure behavior that is not admirable. In the example above, the writer is both corrective and moral through the textual manipulation of a comic relief. However, when the writer includes the humorous words غفوات طويلة 'long naps' in the above utterance, he expresses a view about an SL particular person *Jalal Talbany*, first; he has chosen an indirect style of implicit, detached and non-committal criticizing against the ex-president of Iraq, second; and he disassociates himself from the so called democratic political operation, an operation which he thought as non-profitable and time consumer, third. 'Long naps' of the ex-president are associated with the government's inability and non-effectiveness to offer services to the public, and it also failed to execute economic, political and social improvements. In fact, the writer expresses his views and expectations towards the Iraqi issue targeting the readership, communicatively aiming at a non-committal, corrective and hortatory criticism. The press reader is free to assign whatever meanings seem relevant to the linguistic utterance, but what decides the writer's intended meaning of that utterance is the linguistic and the pragmatic situations in the discourse, taking into account that no two readers interpret the same humorous act similarly. However, the whole communicative exchange between the writer and the reader can be represented by the following figure:
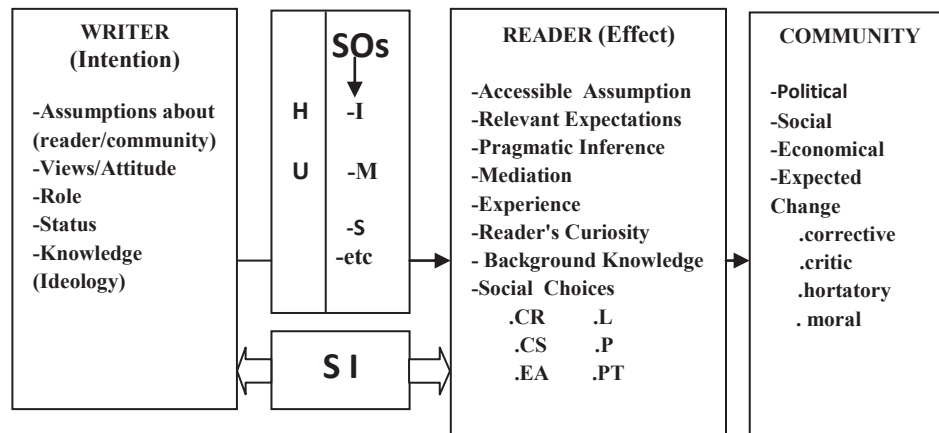

Figure 3: Writer / Reader's Social Interaction of Humor

CR= Comic Relief   CS= Criticism   EA= Evaluative Attitude   HU= Humorous Utterance I=Irony L= Laughter M= Metaphor P= Personation PT= Psychological Tension S= Satire SI= Social Interaction SOs= Stylistic Options.

7. Conclusion

This paper highlights the use of humor in the daily communication of some Iraqi newspapers to delight their readers, and then lead them to adopt the writers' viewpoints. Being endowed with personal experience, knowledge and socio-cultural background, the reader is supposed to positively cooperate with the comprehension of the humorous communicative act. The writers of these newspapers use different shades of humor (irony, metaphor, words play, satire, etc.) to attract their readers and gain their liking. These figures of speech definitely flout Grice's Maxims and his Cooperative Principle resulting in dispersion of the humorous effect on the reader and causes some problems to him. Nevertheless, the relevance theoretic context can compensate such violation and guarantee an appropriate perlocutionary effect on the target reader. The relevance of a humorous act invariably depends on the information it conveys about the writer's attitude to the echoed opinion that is implicitly meant, and also on the mutual cooperation between the writer and the reader to achieve an efficient communication. Concluding then, in political register, the writers use various tools creating humor, making use of the linguistic information, first, and the pragmatic meaning and socio-cultural background knowledge related to the intended speech act, second to achieve their political and ideological goals.

Endnotes

[1] The relevance-theoretic account is based on one of Grice's central maxims(Maxim of Relation): that utterances create expectations which guide the hearer towards the speaker's meaning. Grice describes these expectations in terms of a Cooperative Principle and Conversational Maxims which speakers are expected to observe. (Sperber and Wilson 2002:45).
[2] In Wilson's view, comprehension must always involve some narrowing (excluding properties that are irrelevant in the present context) and will usually also involve some broadening (extending the ordinary range of associated properties) (2003:274).

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