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Translating Political Satire and Interpersonal Meaning in Salmon Fishing in the Yemen: A Study of the Arabic Translation

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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ABSTRACT

Political satire depends on speakers' positioning, authority, and discrepancies between public justification and private calculation. This article examines these interpersonal relations in Abdulwahab Al-Maqaleh's Arabic translation of Paul Torday's Salmon Fishing in the Yemen. Using House's (2015) Translation Quality Assessment model, it adopts a qualitative, descriptive-comparative approach, prioritizing Tenor alongside mood, modality, evaluation, and participation. The analysis distinguishes denotative errors from contextual mismatches and examines altered and preserved satirical cues. Selected passages show increased epistemic commitment, redistributed evaluative intensity, formalized political insider speech, and selectively reduced institutional deference. Nevertheless, negative interrogatives, parallel imperatives, persuasive repetition, and indirect pressure survive in several selected passages, preserving substantial characterization and satire. An omitted proposition about religious opposition alters the ideological context, although the reference to radical Wahhabi schools remains. Within the eleven selected pairs, the Arabic text retains recognizable documentary voices but unevenly reconstructs the interpersonal contrasts sustaining satire. Local target-oriented adjustments do not establish a globally covert translation. The article recommends assessing stance, authority, and inferential distance rather than treating literal correspondence, fluency, or explicitation as sufficient evidence of satirical fidelity.

KEYWORD: political satire; interpersonal meaning; Tenor; translation quality assessment; English–Arabic literary translation

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1. INTRODUCTION

Political satire exposes the discrepancy between what institutions claim to do and the interests their language reveals. Its force often resides less in explicit condemnation than in an apparently reasonable explanation whose assumptions invite criticism. Bureaucratic courtesy, confident publicity, evasive qualification, and understated hostility can make a speaker simultaneously credible within an institution and ridiculous to a reader. Translating such discourse requires attention to the relationship between propositional content and interpersonal positioning. A rendering may preserve a policy, action, or event while changing how readily readers detect manipulation, acknowledge uncertainty, or distinguish sincerity from calculated performance.

Paul Torday's *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen* (2007) brings scientific expertise, Yemeni aspiration, British administration, and political publicity into conflict [2]. Its improbable project exposes tensions between public benevolence and strategic image management, situated by Shaw (2021) within imperialism and environmental imagination [3].

The novel's documentary construction distributes meaning among emails, memoranda, reports, interviews, personal reflections, and institutional exchanges. Peter Maxwell's communications discourse, Jay Vent's promotional rhetoric, Dr. Alfred Jones's scientific skepticism, Harriet Chetwode-

Talbot's professional mediation, and Sheikh Muhammad's reflective authority do not perform identical interpersonal work. Their juxtaposition allows readers to judge one voice against another. A document can therefore enact an immediate practical purpose while exposing its writer's assumptions at the level of the novel. This layered communication makes polyphonic contrast a central translation problem rather than a decorative stylistic feature.

Abdulwahab Al-Maqaleh's Arabic translation, identified in the parent dissertation as the 2008 edition, re-presents these encounters through predominantly Modern Standard Arabic [4]. Translation into this variety provides resources for precise institutional discourse and differentiated literary voices. It also creates choices about the treatment of colloquial insider expressions, indirect requests, official titles, elliptical speech, and British understatement. The difficulty cannot be reduced to an opposition between an inherently ironic English and an inherently formal Arabic. It concerns whether particular target choices retain the functional relationship among social position, degree of commitment, and implied evaluation in a specific passage.

This article extracts and reorients the dissertation's broader assessment toward political satire and interpersonal meaning. Its aim is to evaluate how the Arabic text reconstructs stance, role relationships, social attitude, and layered participation in selected political and interpersonal exchanges. The objectives are to identify the linguistic realization of these features in paired passages; determine which shifts preserve, redistribute, or weaken their function; and distinguish defensible adaptation from denotative error and Tenor mismatch. Interpretation remains tied to evidence rather than to presumed translator intentions or general cultural stereotypes.

Three questions guide the analysis. First, how are epistemic commitment, evaluation, politeness, and asymmetrical role relationships reconstructed in the selected Arabic passages? Second, how do the observed shifts affect characterization, institutional irony, and the contrast among political, scientific, and reflective voices? Third, which differences qualify as justified reformulation, overtly erroneous errors, or covertly erroneous dimensional mismatches, and what do they establish about cultural filtering and translation orientation? These questions define a focused qualitative study. They seek accountable functional interpretations of selected examples rather than statistical estimates of the translation's overall success.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Political satire and the translation of ironic distance

Political satire is not equivalent to the presence of jokes about politicians. It may operate through self-exposure, inflated claims, institutional contradiction, or the juxtaposition of incompatible descriptions of the same event. Irony similarly need not express the literal opposite of a speaker's intended meaning. A statement can be sincerely voiced by a fictional official while becoming ironic through its placement in the narrative. Translators must therefore identify who produces an evaluation, whose assumptions it echoes, and where readers are positioned to question it. Preserving an isolated phrase cannot guarantee preservation of this layered relation.

British comedic understatement presents a particular functional difficulty when criticism is packaged as restrained qualification. Its translation does not require reproduction of a supposedly uniform national temperament. Instead, the relevant features are local: mitigation, incongruous restraint, euphemism, understated negative evaluation, or an indirect threat formulated as procedural fairness. These can be reconstructed through different grammatical resources. The evaluative task is to determine whether the target retains the inferential distance that lets readers discover the accusation. Expanding an implication into direct explanation may improve immediate intelligibility but reduce the work through which an ironic judgment becomes available.

Vallès (2014) applies House's 1997 model to an English–Spanish translation of an episode of *The Simpsons*. His study supports the usefulness of functional-pragmatic comparison while acknowledging limitations in its application to humour. Its relevance here is methodological: humorous effect must be assessed through contextual function as well as linguistic correspondence. However, a television script combines verbal cues with performance and audiovisual information. A documentary novel locates comparable interpretive work in written voice, document arrangement, and shifts of register. Findings cannot simply be transferred between these forms [5].

2.2. Tenor, Politeness, and Interpersonal Characterization

Systemic-functional linguistics treats interpersonal meaning as the enactment of relationships, commitments, and evaluations through language. Mood structures organize exchanges; modality calibrates probability, obligation, and inclination; evaluative wording positions people and activities. These resources contribute to characterization because they make a voice socially recognizable. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) supply the grammatical foundation [6], while House (2015) places contextual relations within a comparative account of translation quality. The combination makes it possible to ask whether speakers remain similarly cautious, commanding, deferential, familiar, or evaluatively detached after translation, even when their clauses differ structurally.

Puurtinen's (1998) discussion of Tenor in literary translation distinguishes relatively unmarked interaction from marked uses of formality and politeness that generate effects such as irony. This distinction is especially useful for institutional fiction. A politeness formula can be appropriate to a workplace relationship and still contribute to satire when it wraps an unreasonable demand. Its preservation consequently requires comparison with the surrounding authority structure. Neither increased politeness nor greater directness is automatically an improvement. The issue is whether the target reproduces the character's social positioning and the literary significance of its particular realization [7].

Al-Hamzi et al. (2024) examine polite address in the Arabic–English translation of Mahfouz's Midaq Alley. Their socio-pragmatic study demonstrates the relevance of social factors to the selection and reconstruction of address terms. It offers an important corrective to evaluating honorifics as detachable lexical ornaments. Nevertheless, its language direction and cultural setting differ from those of the present article. An Arabic honorific added to an English political interview may provide conventional accessibility or generate an additional tension with an adversarial question. The appropriate interpretation depends on local interaction, rather than a generalized claim about Arabic politeness [8].

Narrative translation introduces a further distinction between character voice, narratorial organization, and translator mediation. Hermans (1996) establishes the analytical relevance of the translator's voice in translated narrative [9]. Hatim and Mason (1997) similarly connect translation with communicative positioning. These perspectives discourage attribution of every target evaluation directly to the historical novelist. In an epistolary work, a character's opportunism may be represented without being endorsed. The translator's recurring interventions can influence how those positions are distributed, but an account of mediation requires observable textual decisions; biographical conjecture cannot substitute for comparative evidence [10].

2.3. House-based Studies of Literary and Institutional Discourse

Empirical applications of House's model provide several adjacent lines of inquiry. Hakami (2024) adopts qualitative comparison in assessing audiovisual political translations by Arab intermediate translators. The study foregrounds the linguistic and cultural richness of political discourse and sender–receiver relations [11]. Al-Mizgagi (2025) applies the revised model to the English translation of the Yemeni Constitution, comparing lexical, syntactic, and textual features [12]. These applications establish the relevance of institutional meaning and contextual function. Their settings, however, differ from fictional satire: constitutional language performs authority directly, whereas fictional official language can perform authority and expose its misuse simultaneously.

Kullab et al. (2023) investigate House's applicability to fiction through Midaq Alley. Their focus helps situate register-based evaluation within literary translation, where functions cannot be inferred from subject matter alone [13]. Yahiaoui (2022), comparing Egyptian dubbing with Modern Standard Arabic redubbing of Monsters, Inc., connects humour with register variation and interpersonal meaning. His analysis provides a useful comparative warning about homogenization, but its audiovisual and institutional conditions prevent treating it as proof that Modern Standard Arabic necessarily diminishes humour [14]. The present study therefore evaluates normalization as an observed choice rather than an unavoidable property of the language variety.

2.4.Torday Scholarship and the Research Gap

Critical work on Torday supplies interpretive context for the translation comparison. Shaw (2021) examines the novel through imperialism and environmental concerns, while Altwaiji (2019) investigates its representation of Yemen [15]. Alaghbary and Al-Nakeeb (2017) offer a particularly relevant linguistic precedent by examining modality as a carrier of ideology in the novel's newspaper discourse. Their focus connects directly with the present article's attention to epistemic commitment and attributed evaluation [16]. However, analysis of these resources in the English novel does not establish whether their interpersonal functions survive in Al-Maqaleh's Arabic translation.

Relevant scholarship was drawn from the literature reviewed in the parent dissertation and reconsidered in relation to political satire and interpersonal meaning. Particular attention was given to studies of Torday's novel, House's translation quality assessment model, and the translation of stance, modality, politeness, register variation, and humour. The review constitutes a focused narrative synthesis rather than an exhaustive systematic review; consequently, the research gap is formulated in relation to the scholarship examined.

Within this reviewed scholarship, the specific issue requiring closer examination is how selected Arabic renderings reconstruct the interpersonal configurations through which Torday's political satire operates. The present article addresses this issue through a Tenor-focused reassessment of eleven verified source–target passage pairs drawn from the parent dissertation. It examines preserved and altered relations among epistemic commitment, evaluation, politeness, authority, and participation. Its contribution is a contextual explanation of these mechanisms in the selected passages, without claiming priority over all previous research or providing a comprehensive assessment of the translation's overall quality.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. House's comparative architecture

House's (2015) Translation Quality Assessment model relates linguistic evidence to register, genre, and textual function. The source profile provides the benchmark for a separately described target profile. Their comparison supports an account of equivalence and mismatch before a final quality judgment is made. Field concerns social activity and experience, Tenor concerns participants and interpersonal positioning, and Mode concerns the organization and conditions of communication. Genre situates these configurations within recognized communicative events. The present article prioritizes Tenor while retaining the other dimensions where changes to reference, medium, or documentary form affect interpersonal function.

Tenor is operationalized through interconnected rather than mechanically independent categories. Temporal, social, and geographical provenance concern the linguistic and contextual location of a voice. In fiction, these require careful separation of the novelist's historical location from the represented provenance of individual speakers. Insider abbreviation, professional idiom, and institutional labels can indicate a communications community without proving anything about the novelist's private attitudes. Authorial stance is consequently examined at two levels: the evaluative position enacted by a document's speaker and the distance created when that position is situated within the novel's larger arrangement.

Social role relationships concern relative power, authority, and institutional entitlement. Symmetry cannot be inferred from first names alone, and asymmetry cannot be inferred from titles alone. The analyst considers who can direct action, control resources, define the situation, or challenge another participant. Social attitude concerns situated formality and interpersonal distance, including formal, consultative, and informal realizations. These labels are descriptive continua, not fixed properties of whole characters. Complex participation addresses layered communicative roles: an interviewer questions an official before a public audience, while novel readers encounter that exchange through its documentary representation.

This article adopts a selective application of House's (2015) model, prioritizing Tenor and interpersonal function in eleven source–target passage pairs. The principal categories assessed are speaker stance, social role relationships, and social attitude. Mood, modality, evaluation, address forms, and participation provide linguistic evidence for these categories. Field, Mode, and Genre

support contextual interpretation where changes in propositional content, documentary conventions, or communicative organization affect interpersonal meaning. Complex participation is examined at the intersection of Tenor and Mode.

3.2.Interpersonal Resources and Satirical Function

The interpersonal metafunction provides a linguistic basis for these categories. Mood analysis distinguishes grammatical declaratives, interrogatives, and imperatives from the speech acts they perform. A negative interrogative may challenge a policy or invite agreement with an official's preferred interpretation. Modality analysis separates epistemic probability from ability, obligation, and inclination. English could and would must therefore be interpreted in context rather than assigned invariant values. The comparison examines both the commitment expressed and the interpersonal work accomplished by the target construction, including the scope of qualification across an entire proposition.

Evaluation is examined through appraisal-informed attention to judgment, appreciation, affect, and intensity (Martin & White, 2005) [17]. These concepts supplement the linguistic description; they are not presented as additional categories invented by House. Intensifying an insult differs from increasing certainty about the interlocutor's opinion. Similarly, describing news as effective differs from evaluating it as favourable. Vocatives, honorifics, pronouns, and indirect request forms are assessed for their contribution to deference, familiarity, solidarity, or entitlement.

3.3. Equivalence, Orientation, and the Cultural Filter

Functional equivalence concerns the reconstruction of relevant ideational and interpersonal purposes, not formal identity. House distinguishes overt translation, which enables access to a source-associated communicative event, from covert translation, which can operate as a functionally comparable event within the target context. A culturally anchored literary novel requires particular caution because Arabic readers encounter represented British institutions rather than becoming the original addressees of their fictional memoranda. Natural Arabic syntax does not itself establish covert translation. This article therefore distinguishes source-anchored literary orientation from local target-oriented reformulation and avoids classifying whole texts from isolated lexical choices.

This study distinguishes ordinary clarification, possible pragmatic accommodation, and demonstrated cultural filtering. Ordinary clarification makes a referent accessible without necessarily changing interpersonal relations; expanding PM as "رئيس الوزراء" is treated primarily in this way. Possible pragmatic accommodation concerns a choice that may reflect target-language communicative conventions, such as adding "معالي" in an interview. Such an explanation remains provisional unless supported by relevant English–Arabic contrastive evidence. Demonstrated cultural filtering requires evidence of a difference in communicative conventions and a reasoned account of how the adjustment responds to that difference while maintaining the relevant function. Target-language naturalness alone does not establish cultural filtering. Where contrastive evidence is unavailable, the analysis describes the observable shift and considers pragmatic accommodation as a possible explanation rather than a confirmed classification.

3.4. Error Categorization and Interpretive Limits

Overtly erroneous errors concern non-dimensional problems such as denotative distortion, substantive omission or addition, and breaches of the target-language system. Covertly erroneous errors concern unjustified mismatches in the contextual profile, including Tenor changes that alter stance or role relationships while leaving the principal referents recoverable. These labels are independent of overt and covert translation types. A single error may have several consequences: translating an auditory transcription label as a visual one is a denotative error with effects on Mode and participation. The analysis records that relationship without treating the consequences as independent errors.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. Materials, Design, and Sampling

The study adopts a qualitative, descriptive-comparative design through a focused secondary analysis of English–Arabic passage pairs presented in Chapter Five of Alwan's (2026) dissertation. The dissertation examines Torday's English novel (2007) and Al-Maqaleh's Arabic translation (2008), using a corpus of 134 purposively selected source–target pairs across different discourse types. These pairs constitute the parent corpus from which the present article's sample was selected. The passages selected from the parent dissertation were checked against the English source edition (Torday, 2007) and Al-Maqaleh's Arabic translation (2008) [18]. This verification confirmed the wording and boundaries of the excerpts and distinguished omissions in the published translation from differences arising from excerpt selection or transcription.

This selection does not constitute an exhaustive screening of all 134 parent-corpus pairs. Consequently, the findings concern the mechanisms illustrated by the selected passages rather than their frequency or distribution throughout the parent corpus. Eleven distinct source–target passage pairs were purposively selected and assigned identifiers P01–P11. A passage pair comprises a bounded source passage and its corresponding target passage; an analytical cue is an individual expression or feature examined within that pair. Tables 2–6 contain seventeen cue-level rows drawn from these eleven pairs. Where several cues occur within the same passage, they retain the same identifier and are not counted as separate observations. Thus, P01 appears in Tables 2 and 6, while P06, P08, P10, and P11 each supply two rows within their respective tables. Appendix A records the passage boundaries, participants, document types, source and target page references, dissertation locations, and selection rationales.

4.2. Analytical Procedure

Each passage was first located within the dissertation's analytical subdivisions, principally Chapter Five's Field examples and Tenor sections on provenance, syntactic variation, and social relationships. Source and target quotations were then separated from the dissertation's evaluative commentary. This separation makes it possible to reassess interpretations, including claims about modal certainty, cultural motivation, and translation orientation. Quotations in the tables are shortened to the wording relevant to the analysis; ellipses identify excerpt boundaries. Orthographic presentation is lightly standardized where necessary, without silently replacing the translation's lexical choices. Back-translations are analytical glosses supplied for this article, not additional translations used as data.

For each pair, the source profile records voice, addressee, communicative purpose, power relationship, social attitude, and salient stance markers. A corresponding target profile records the same features without assuming equivalence. Comparison then identifies the operation involved, such as explicitating a referent, replacing a metaphor, changing modal commitment, adding an honorific, or omitting a proposition. The functional assessment asks what the source cue contributes to characterization and satire, what the target preserves, and what changes. Where interpretation is ambiguous, an alternative reading is retained instead of forcing the example into a uniform pattern of deterioration.

Classification follows the distinction between denotative error and contextual mismatch. Necessary restructuring and defensible clarification are described without automatically being judged erroneous. Cultural filtering is considered only when a relevant pragmatic motivation can be articulated and weighed against functional consequences. Impact is expressed qualitatively in relation to a cue's role in the passage; no aggregate error rate or numerical fidelity score is calculated. Cross-case synthesis compares mechanisms and counterexamples rather than counting repeated mentions of the same shift.

Table 1. Worked Source–Target Profile and Comparative Assessment of P08

Profile component	Source-text profile	Target-text profile	Comparative assessment
Communicative context	David Sugden instructs Alfred Jones to proceed with the project and meet Harriet.	The same institutional instruction and participants remain.	The administrative event is preserved.
Field: contextual support	Authorization and direction of project-related work.	Authorization and direction remain explicit through "توجيه رسمي."	Broad activity is preserved.
Tenor: role relationships	An institutional superior directs a subordinate's work.	The writer retains entitlement to direct the addressee.	Hierarchical asymmetry is preserved.
Tenor: social attitude	"Please accept" and "I would like" mitigate an authoritative instruction.	"أرجو" preserves courtesy, while "وأريدك" expresses the writer's will more directly.	Mitigation is partly preserved and locally reduced.
Tenor: stance	Authority is asserted through "my formal instruction," alongside polite framing.	Institutional authority remains explicit, accompanied by a more direct expression of intention.	Authority survives with altered interpersonal packaging.
Mode and Genre: contextual support	Written administrative memorandum.	Written institutional communication remains recognizable; "المفكرة" requires consideration as a document-label choice.	The directive function survives, although the lexical label is less secure.
Interpersonal function	Secures compliance while maintaining professional courtesy.	Secures compliance with courtesy at the opening and greater directness subsequently.	Substantial preservation with a local Tenor mismatch.
Possible satirical consequence	Courtesy can coexist with institutional pressure within the surrounding narrative.	Greater directness may reduce that contrast without removing the exercise of power.	A plausible textual effect, rather than a demonstrated reader response.

Note. P08 corresponds to Table 4 and Appendix A. Source: Torday (2007, p. 5); target: Al-Maqaleh's translation (2008, p. 15). This profile illustrates the comparative procedure; it does not constitute a complete assessment of the memorandum or novel.

4.3.Credibility and Scope of Inference

Credibility rests on inspectable source–target evidence, transparent analytical back-translations, consistent category definitions, and consideration of alternative readings. Contested interpretations are qualified where the evidence permits more than one explanation. For example, the scope of "لا محالة" remains ambiguous, a change from *would* to a future construction does not necessarily increase certainty, and an added honorific does not automatically eliminate adversarial questioning. These distinctions separate observable linguistic changes from their inferred interpersonal consequences.

Supervisory review informed the parent dissertation's analysis but does not constitute independent validation of this article's revised interpretations. No independent dual coding or inter-rater reliability coefficient is claimed. The study also does not measure readers' humour recognition, comprehension, or political attitudes. Statements about altered satirical force concern the availability and configuration of textual cues and remain interpretive propositions that reception research could test.

5. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

5.1.Authorial Stance and Epistemic Modality

Table 2 compares shifts in epistemic commitment and evaluative intensity alongside a case of preserved modality. Stance refers here to the represented speakers' positions, rather than Torday's personal beliefs.

Table 2. Epistemic commitment and evaluative intensity

Passage ID	ST excerpt	TT excerpt	Analytical back-translation	Linguistic shift
P01	Some observers speculate … may not be universally welcome (p. 87)	بعض المراقبين يعتقدون … قد لا تلقى ترحيبا عاما (p. 109)	Some observers believe … may not receive a general welcome	Speculation becomes belief; modal caution partly survives.
P02	I expect you think we are all absolute idiots (p. 22)	أنا أتوقع أنك تحسبنا جميعاً مغفلين لا محالة (p. 34)	I expect that you consider us all fools, undoubtedly	Degree intensification becomes a certainty expression with ambiguous scope.
P03	I think you will be surprised at the answer that comes back (p. 139)	وأنا واثق أنك ستندهش من الإجابة التي ستحصل عليها (p. 166)	And I am confident that you will be surprised by the answer you obtain	Explicit confidence replaces a weaker mental stance.
P04	This might help get the right messages across (p. 8)	إن طرح هذا قد يساعد في توصيل الرسائل الصائبة المطلوبة (p. 18)	Raising this may help convey the right, required messages	Possibility is preserved; institutional specification is added.

Note. IDs correspond to Appendix A. Rows represent analytical cues; repeated IDs count as one passage pair. ST and TT references identify the 2007 English and 2008 Arabic editions, respectively. Back-translations are analytical glosses. These conventions apply to Tables 2–6.

In the observer's passage, speculate presents an attributed possibility whose evidential status remains unsettled. The target يعتقدون presents the proposition as the observers' belief, potentially increasing their commitment. However, the target retains قد لا, corresponding to may not, and preserves attribution to بعض المراقبين. The shift therefore does not convert the passage into an unqualified assertion by the narrator. Its effect is more precisely a recalibration within a still qualified reporting structure. This is a candidate Tenor mismatch because the document's relation to the reported claim changes while some distancing resources remain. Treating the Arabic verb as synonymous with absolute certainty would exaggerate the evidence.

The idiots example concerns the distinction between graduation and epistemic positioning. Absolute intensifies the negative characterization within the projected opinion attributed to the addressee. لا محالة usually communicates certainty or inevitability rather than the degree of foolishness. The target consequently relocates emphasis. Yet its scope is not unambiguous: it can qualify the negative characterization, the anticipated judgment, or the speaker's assumption about that judgment. The retained أتوقع also continues to frame the sentence as an expectation. The robust finding is thus a change in the realization of evaluative intensity, with a possible increase in assuredness, rather than an unequivocal removal of all hedging.

In the sheikh's prediction, the evidence is stronger. I think becomes وأنا واثق, explicitly increasing commitment. The sheikh's spiritual or experiential authority is thereby more assured, although his earlier qualification of a future event is retained elsewhere in the reproduced target passage. This matters to characterization: reflective persuasion becomes somewhat closer to confident prediction. It can also modify the contrast between scientific skepticism and faith by allocating firmer epistemic authority to the reflective voice. The local Tenor mismatch concerns certainty, not the mere presence of religious discourse. No evidence establishes that Arabic grammar requires this stronger expression.

The final row supplies a counterexample: يساعد قد retains the possibility encoded by might. The surrounding passage proposes influence through potential honours and threatened funding cuts; these pressures remain in Arabic. المطلوبة adds institutional requirement, but the discrepancy between courteous suggestion and coercive leverage survives. This limits claims of comprehensive modal flattening. Commitment is sometimes intensified and sometimes maintained, requiring evaluation of interacting cues.

5.2.Political Spin, Bureaucratic Irony, and Understatement

Table 3 examines how publicity management, strategic idiom, and euphemistic evaluation expose Maxwell's political calculations, alongside the preservation of his narrative-control motto.

Table 3. Political strategy and the reconstruction of insider voice

Passage ID	ST excerpt	TT excerpt	Analytical back-translation	Linguistic shift
P05	we would drag the story back into the headlines … for the PM (p. 109)	سنجذب الحكاية ثانية إلى العناوين الرئيسة … لرئيس الوزراء(p. 133)	We will draw the story back into the main headlines … for the prime minister	Forceful metaphor is moderated; abbreviation is expanded; temporal-modal form changes.
P06	It presses a lot of different buttons (p. 10)	إنه يحقق أهدافا عديدة(p. 22)	It achieves numerous objectives	Colloquial strategic metaphor becomes explicit institutional purpose.
P06	less constructive news items (p. 10)	موضوعات الأخبار السلبية (p. 22)	Negative news items	Euphemistic evaluation becomes more direct negativity.
P07	Don't be the story, shape the story: that's my motto (p. 98)	لا تكن أنت محور الحكاية، صغ أنت الحكاية: هذا هو شعاري(p. 122)	Do not be the centre of the story; shape the story yourself: this is my motto	Parallel imperatives survive; metaphor and addressee emphasis are expanded.

The publicity plan retains deliberate management of headlines and photographic opportunity. Nevertheless, drag suggests more forceful intervention than جذب ordinarily supplies, moderating the speaker's relaxed admission of manipulation. The continuation retains الحكاية نوجه, preserving strategic direction. Cynical intention is thus attenuated locally rather than erased. The shift from would to a future form need not increase certainty: would can mark past perspective or a projected plan.

The buttons metaphor evokes several interests or reactions being activated at once. عديدة أهدافا retains multiplicity but recasts this tactical appeal as achievement of stated objectives. The shift makes the discourse more managerial and less casually performative. In the same passage, less constructive becomes السلبية, replacing a euphemistic description with overt negative evaluation. These changes have different consequences: one reduces insider colloquialism, while the other makes the dismissive attitude more explicit. Both modify the route through which readers infer the speaker's priorities. Satire remains available because the planned occupation of front-page space still reveals competition between publicity and inconvenient information.

The motto demonstrates stronger preservation. Negative and positive imperatives, repeated reference to the story, and the concluding self-definition remain. Adding محور clarifies the warning against becoming the news subject; explicit أنت gives the contrast additional emphasis. The surrounding command to shape the story and withdraw into the shadows also survives in the parent example. These features retain the character's self-conscious opportunism. Although the target rhythm is less compressed, the central mechanism of self-exposure persists: an apparently efficient professional maxim openly values narrative control.

5.3. Asymmetrical Power and Institutional Directives

Authority in these documents is exercised through the combination of entitlement and mitigation. Table 4 juxtaposes an institutional directive (P08) with a diplomatic conclusion (P09). The comparison shows why polite wording must be considered alongside the act it licenses.

Table 4. Mitigation, institutional authority, and diplomatic evaluation

Passage ID	ST excerpt	TT excerpt	Analytical back-translation	Linguistic shift
P08	Please accept this memo as my formal instruction (p. 5)	أرجو أن تأخذ ما في هذه المفكرة على أنه توجيه رسمي (p. 15)	I ask you to take what is in this memorandum as an official directive	Polite framing and explicit institutional authority remain.
P08	I would like you to meet Ms Harriet Chetwode-Talbot (p. 5)	… وأريدك أن تجتمع بـ (p. 15)	And I want you to meet …	Remote polite formulation becomes a more direct expression of will.
P09	We respectfully conclude … would be in the national interest (pp. 91–92)	ولذا فإننا نقدر … سيكون ذا نفع كبير للوطن(p. 115)	Therefore we assess … it will be of great benefit to the nation	Explicit deference is omitted; benefit is strengthened; conclusion is reformulated.

The opening directive preserves mitigated asymmetry: أرجو provides courtesy, while رسمي توجيه identifies institutional authority. توجيه need not be a weak suggestion; its administrative force depends on context. Polite framing still accompanies compulsory continuation. Rendering memo as المفكرة introduces uncertainty about document type, although the explicit directive function helps maintain its institutional identity.

The later وأريدك is more straightforward than I would like you. The source's remote form conventionally mitigates a request that follows an instruction; the target foregrounds the writer's will. This local strengthening can make hierarchical control more apparent. Yet it does not reverse the relationship or turn an equal consultation into a command for the first time. The source already establishes an instruction. Its satirical consequence is a reduction in the tension between courteous packaging and unmistakable power, not a newly invented hierarchy. The assessment is therefore a bounded Tenor mismatch within substantial preservation of the administrative event.

The diplomatic conclusion produces a different redistribution. Omission of respectfully removes an explicit marker of deference. نقدر can indicate assessment or estimation and is not automatically informal, but it does not reproduce the concluding speech act exactly. The target adds great benefit through نفع كبير and employs a future construction where the source has a conditional environment. The retained إن صح continues to qualify the project, preventing a simple diagnosis of unconditional endorsement. The resulting voice remains official and cooperative while becoming less ceremonially deferential and more positively evaluative. Authority, qualification, and praise survive in altered proportions.

5.4. Complex Participation and Political Interviews

The interview passages represent communication to an interlocutor and an overhearing public, subsequently encountered by readers of the novel. Table 5 combines the skeptical question, Vent's response, and a later interrupted appeal, reproduced in Chapter Five's syntactic Tenor analysis and genre discussion.

Table 5. Adversarial questioning and persuasive performance

Passage ID	ST excerpt	TT excerpt	Analytical back-translation	Linguistic shift
P10	Prime Minister, isn't … an idea from way out on the lunatic fringe? (p. 104)	معالي رئيس الوزراء: أليست … فكرة طائشة آتية من عالم المجاذيب؟(p. 128)	Your Excellency the prime minister, is it not … a reckless idea from the world of madmen?	Honorific is added; disparaging metaphor is reconstructed; challenge survives.
P10	improbable but truly, truly heroic (p. 104)	غريبة وغير محتملة، لكنها حقا، حقا، فكرة بطولية(p. 128)	Strange and improbable, but truly, truly a heroic idea	Contrast and emphatic repetition survive with additional evaluation.
P11	Water in the desert? … of a different sort of progress? (p. 106)	المياه في الصحراء؟ … لنوع آخر من التطور؟(p. 131)	Water in the desert? … of another kind of progress?	Elliptical appeal and resumed continuation remain.
P11	AM: [inaudible] (p. 106)	(أ م): (غير مرئي)(p. 131)	AM: [not visible]	Auditory transcription label becomes visual description.

The interviewer's negative interrogative challenges the project, and أليست preserves that function. معالي adds ceremonial distance without eliminating hostility. المجاذيب عالم reconstructs irrationality more extravagantly than fringe rather than neutralizing ridicule. Honorific and disparagement create a mixed configuration: formal address does not make the interview wholly deferential. Its adversarial organization still frames the official response as persuasive repositioning.

Vent's response retains the concessive turn from improbability to heroism and the repetition حقا، حقا. His use of the interviewer's first name, preserved in the larger quoted passage, continues to perform familiarity before a public audience. The later water-in-the-desert fragment likewise retains compressed symbolic appeal. Hesitation, interruption, and resumed speech make the political message visibly performed. These preserved cues support substantial equivalence in complex participation. The target's more elaborated vocabulary may alter rhythm, but the available evidence does not support the claim that the entire spoken exchange has been converted into homogeneous bureaucratic prose.

The transcription error is unambiguous: غير مرئي means not visible, whereas inaudible concerns hearing. This overtly erroneous error distorts the documentary record and the explanation for an unavailable contribution, affecting Mode and participation. However, speaker labels and interrupted continuation survive. Its impact concerns one moment rather than the entire interview structure. Distinguishing this denotative error from debatable register adjustments makes the assessment proportionate.

5.5.Interpersonal Omission and Possible Ideological Sanitization

The observers passage returns here because its omission has consequences beyond modality. Table 6 separates what the Arabic retains from what the dissertation's paired extract does not contain. It documents one passage already counted in Table 2.

Table 6. Retained religious reference and omitted attribution

Passage ID	ST excerpt	TT excerpt	Analytical back-translation	Linguistic shift
P01	several radical Wahhabi madrasas, religious training schools (p. 87)	العديد من المدارس الوهابية المتطرفة(p. 109)	Numerous radical Wahhabi schools	Wahhabi identification remains; explanatory apposition is absent.
P01	it is understood that salmon fishing is regarded as an unacceptable activity by some Wahhabi imams (p. 87)	No corresponding wording in the verified target passage (p. 109)	No corresponding proposition	Religious opposition and its mediated attribution are omitted.

The omitted proposition's absence was confirmed against the published Arabic passage. The missing apposition may be partly redundant for Arabic readers familiar with مدارس, although deleting it still reduces specificity concerning religious training. The omitted final proposition is more consequential. It identifies some imams as evaluating salmon fishing negatively and distances the report through it is understood. Its loss removes an attributed position and a reporting relationship, narrowing the ideological field of the passage. This qualifies as a substantive omission with interpersonal consequences. It is compatible with a sanitizing effect but does not prove deliberate censorship: the retained radical Wahhabi reference and absence of production evidence require caution about motive.

6. DISCUSSION

6.1.Tenor Equivalence and the Mechanism of Satire

Across the eleven purposively selected passage pairs, broad institutional relationships remain recognizable, but local shifts in commitment, evaluation, and mitigation alter how those relationships contribute to characterization and satire. Observer belief remains qualified; the sheikh's confidence strengthens; the diplomatic conclusion retains conditionality; and the directive combines preserved authority with reduced mitigation. These findings identify conceptual and interpersonal patterns within the selected sample; they do not establish their frequency across the 134-pair parent corpus or constitute a comprehensive assessment of the complete translation.

Regarding the second question, satire is affected where a shift changes the relation between a character's self-presentation and the judgment readers can infer. Institutional irony often requires both reasonable surface form and questionable purpose. The honours-and-funding passage remains a strong case because political leverage is still conveyed as discreet communication. The directive likewise retains politeness around an exercise of authority. By comparison, reducing the force of drag or replacing buttons with objectives moderates the casual candour of political calculation. The same plan remains intelligible, but the speaker's relationship to manipulation becomes less vividly inscribed in idiom.

6.2.Normalization and Polyphonic Contrast

The evidence supports a qualified concern about normalization. Formalized publicity language and expanded metaphor can reduce differences between an insider's tactical speech and institutional description. However, the displayed passages also preserve imperatives, rhetorical questions, interpersonal confrontation, repetition, and fragments. Polyphonic flattening is consequently a risk indicated by particular convergences, not a fully demonstrated outcome for the whole novel. The study does not provide parallel measurements of all major voices, and its sample cannot establish the extent of convergence between scientific skepticism and political promotion throughout the translation.

6.3.Translator Mediation, Cultural Filtering, and Orientation

The selected examples support different levels of explanation. The observed adjustments do not establish cultural filtering: expanding PM provides referential clarification, while adding معالي remains a possible pragmatic accommodation, with its interpersonal effect assessed separately.

Neither adjustment independently demonstrates cultural filtering in House's technical sense. The omission of an attributed religious objection changes the available propositional and interpersonal content; presumed cultural sensitivity does not establish a functional justification for that omission.

Within the eleven selected pairs, the retention of institutions, locations, and documentary forms is consistent with source-anchored literary representation alongside local accommodation and functional mismatches. This sample-bound interpretation qualifies the parent dissertation's characterization of reformulations as predominantly covert; it does not establish an overall overt or covert classification of the Arabic translation. A definitive whole-text classification would require a complete profile, paratexts, and evidence of intended communicative status beyond the present sample.

6.4.Implications for Quality Assessment

The analysis extends the methodological relevance of Vallès (2014), Puurtinen (1998), and House (2015) by connecting register comparison to the mechanism of narrative satire. Hakami (2024) and Al-Mizgagi (2025) establish adjacent institutional applications, but fictional documents demand another analytical step: a statement's practical function must be related to its exposure within the literary whole. Alaghbary and Al-Nakeeb's (2017) focus on modality similarly supports examining commitment as ideologically significant, while this comparison shows that a change may preserve attribution yet redistribute commitment inside it. Functional assessment gains precision from tracking that internal structure.

Table 7. Comparative Summary of Preserved and Altered Interpersonal Features in the Eleven Pairs

Passage ID	Principal feature	Preserved elements	Altered elements / assessment
P01	Attribution and epistemic distancing	Observer attribution, modal qualification, and Wahhabi identification	Reporting stance changes; an attributed objection is omitted.
P02	Evaluative intensity	Expectation and negative characterization	Intensification is redistributed into a certainty expression with ambiguous scope.
P03	Epistemic authority	Prediction and reflective persuasion	Explicit confidence strengthens local commitment.
P04	Indirect institutional pressure	Possibility and discreet persuasion	Added institutional specification; the central pressure mechanism survives.
P05	Political insider speech	Publicity management and institutional reference	Metaphorical force is moderated; abbreviation is expanded.
P06	Strategic evaluation	Multiple political purposes and news management	Colloquial metaphor becomes explicit purpose; euphemism becomes direct negativity.
P07	Directive self-exposure	Parallel imperatives and narrative-control motto	Added emphasis and elaboration modify compression.
P08	Mitigated hierarchy	Institutional authority and opening courtesy	Subsequent request becomes more direct.
P09	Diplomatic stance	Official evaluation and conditional qualification	Explicit deference decreases; positive evaluation strengthens.
P10	Adversarial participation	Challenging question, concessive response, and repetition	Honorific and additional evaluation alter interpersonal texture.
P11	Interrupted persuasive performance	Fragments, interruption, and resumed continuation	Auditory transcription label becomes a visual description.

Note. The matrix summarizes contextual judgments rather than numerical scores. Several preserved and altered features may coexist within one passage pair.

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This article examined political satire through eleven verified English–Arabic passage pairs drawn from the dissertation's 134-pair parent corpus. In these selected pairs, Al-Maqaleh's translation preserves important features of authority, interaction, and political self-exposure, while selectively altering epistemic commitment, evaluative intensity, mitigation, and insider idiom. Tenor equivalence within this sample is therefore uneven: communicative events remain recognizable, but some interpersonal distinctions connecting characterization to satirical judgment change.

Translators should assess individual expressions against a voice profile identifying authority, certainty, mitigation, addressee relationships, and communicative setting. Modal choices, politeness, euphemism, and clarification should preserve contrasts among political calculation, diplomatic caution,

and reflective persuasion. Editors should check omissions for both content and attribution and preserve repetitions, interruptions, speaker labels, and transcription cues where these contribute to characterization and participation. Any proposed alternative wording should be distinguished from the published translation.

The eleven-pair purposive sample supports qualitative interpretation of the conceptual and interpersonal patterns examined, not statistical generalization or a comprehensive quantitative assessment of the entire novel. It does not determine the translation's overall overt or covert orientation. Although quotations were checked against both published editions, the study includes neither independent coding nor reception testing. Further research could compare documentary voices more extensively, investigate translation and editorial records, and test readers' recognition of irony, authority, and indirect pressure. Within these limits, the findings support assessing satirical fidelity through the interaction of stance, authority, and inferential distance.

Appendix A. Inventory of the Eleven Source–Target Passage Pairs

The English and Arabic page references below follow the manuscript's supplied references. Dissertation locations refer to the attached dissertation's Chapter Five.

ID	Passage boundaries / included cues	Speaker or writer → addressee	Document type	ST / TT pages	Dissertation location	Selection rationale
P01	From "Some observers speculate…" through "…some Wahhabi imams"; corresponding Arabic passage	News-report voice → newspaper readers; observers and imams are attributed participants	Newspaper report	87 / 109	§5.2.2.1, provenance/stance, Example 10 beginning "Some observers…"	Attribution, epistemic qualification, religious reference, and omission
P02	Harriet's sentence beginning "I expect…" and ending "…absolute idiots," with surrounding interaction	Harriet → Alfred Jones; recorded by Jones	Dialogue represented in a diary entry	22 / 34	§5.2.2.1, Example 10 beginning "I expect…"	Evaluative intensity and interpersonal positioning
P03	Sheikh's speech from "You cannot know…" through "…the answer that comes back"	Sheikh Muhammad → Alfred Jones	Reflective dialogue represented in a diary entry	139 / 166	§5.2.2.2, Social Relationship, Example 4	Reflective authority and epistemic commitment
P04	Suggestions concerning honours and funding, ending "This might help get the right messages across"	Andy → recipient of the institutional communication	Institutional correspondence	8 / 18	§5.2.2.1, Example 9 beginning "I think you could quietly…"	Preserved possibility and indirect institutional pressure
P05	From "At the right moment…" through "…where we could take it next"	Peter Maxwell → interviewer	Interview transcript	109 / 133	§5.2.2.1, provenance/stance, Example 3	Insider idiom, publicity management, and abbreviation expansion
P06	From "You will really like this…" through the bullet containing "less constructive news items"	Peter Maxwell → prime minister	Political communications memorandum	10 / 22	§5.2.1, Field, Example 12	Strategic metaphor and euphemistic evaluation
P07	Sentence beginning "Don't be the story…" and ending "…my motto," with surrounding interview context	Peter Maxwell → interviewer	Interview transcript	98 / 122	Tenor, "Syntactical differences," Example 1	Parallel imperatives and political self-exposure
P08	From "Please accept this memo…" through the instruction to meet Harriet and receive a briefing	David Sugden → Alfred Jones	Administrative memorandum	5 / 15	§5.2.2.2, Social Relationship, Example 2	Courtesy, mitigation, and hierarchical direction
P09	Complete concluding sentence beginning "We respectfully conclude…" and ending "…Anglo-Yemeni co-operation"	Hassan bin Mahoud, Ministry of Fish Wealth → newspaper editor and readers	Letter to the editor	91–92 / 115	§5.2.1, Field, Example 6	Institutional deference, conditionality, and national-benefit evaluation
P10	Interviewer's "lunatic fringe" question and Vent's immediately following response	Andrew Marr ↔ Jay Vent; television audience	Political interview transcript	104 / 128	Tenor, "Syntactical differences," Example 2	Adversarial questioning, honorific addition, and persuasive repetition
P11	From "Isn't it a form of intervention…" through "…of a different sort of progress?", including the interruption	Jay Vent ↔ Andrew Marr; television audience	Political interview transcript	106 / 131	Tenor, "Syntactical differences," Example 3	Ellipsis, interrupted participation, and transcription-label accuracy

Statements and Declarations

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest related to this study. There are no financial or personal relationships that could have influenced the outcome of the research.

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This study was not supported by any external funding. The authors conducted all aspects of the research using their personal resources.

Data Availability

The documentary evidence supporting this study is presented in the manuscript's source–target excerpt tables and comparative matrix (Tables 1–7), with an inventory of all eleven passage pairs, page references, dissertation locations, and selection rationales in Appendix A. The parent corpus is described in Alwan's (2026) dissertation. The underlying English novel and Arabic translation remain subject to copyright; the complete literary texts are not reproduced as a supplementary dataset.

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ترجمة السخرية السياسية والمعنى الشخصي في كتاب "صيد سمك السلمون في اليمن": دراسة للترجمة العربية

ملخص

تعتمد السخرية السياسية على موقع المتحدثين وسلطتهم، وعلى التناقضات بين التبرير العلني والحسابات الشخصية. تتناول هذه المقالة العلاقات الشخصية في الترجمة العربية لعبد الوهاب المقاله لكتاب بول توردای "صيد سمك السلمون في اليمن". وباستخدام نموذج هاوس (2015) لتقييم جودة الترجمة، تتبنى المقالة منهجًا وصفيًا مقارنًا نوعيًا، مع إعطاء الأولوية للمضمون إلى جانب الحالة المزاجية والأسلوب والتقييم والمشاركة. يميز التحليل بين الأخطاء الدلالية والاختلافات السياقية، ويدرس الإشارات الساخرة المتغيرة والمحفوظة. تُظهر مقاطع مختارة التزامًا معرفيًا متزايدًا، وكثافة تقييمية مُعاد توزيعها، وخطابًا سياسيًا رسميًا من الداخل، وتراجعًا انتقائيًا في التبعية المؤسسية. مع ذلك، لا تزال الاستفهامات السلبية، والأوامر المتوازية، والتكرار الإقناعي، والضغط غير المباشر حاضرة في عدة مقاطع مختارة، محافظةً على جوهر الشخصيات والسخرية. ويؤدي حذف فكرة حول المعارضة الدينية إلى تغيير السياق الأيديولوجي، مع بقاء الإشارة إلى المدارس الوهابية المتشددة. وفي الأزواج الأحد عشر المختارة، يحتفظ النص العربي بأصوات وثائقية واضحة، لكنه يعيد بناء التباينات بين الشخصيات التي تدعم السخرية بشكل غير متساوٍ. ولا تُؤدي التعديلات المحلية الموجهة نحو الهدف إلى ترجمة شاملة ودقيقة. وتوصي المقالة بتقييم الموقف، والسلطة، والمسافة الاستدلالية بدلاً من اعتبار التطابق الحرفي، أو الطلاقة، أو الصراحة دليلاً كافياً على دقة السخرية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: السخرية السياسية؛ المعنى بين الشخصيات؛ الأسلوب؛ تقييم جودة الترجمة؛ الترجمة الأدبية من الإنجليزية إلى العربية