

دراسة معرفية-تداولية للتورية في الإعلانات الإنجليزية والكردية

دراسة معرفية-تداولية للتورية في الإعلانات الإنجليزية والكردية
جوان أحمد مصطفى

Jwan.mustafa@su.edu.krd

محاضر وطالب دكتوراه في كلية التربية الأساسية - قسم اللغة الإنجليزية - جامعة صلاح الدين
- أربيل

كافي شاكر محمد

kavi.muhammad@su.edu.krd

أستاذ مساعد في كلية التربية الأساسية - قسم اللغة الإنجليزية - جامعة صلاح الدين - أربيل



الكلمات المفتاحية: البراغماتية المعرفية، التورية، الإعلان باللغة الإنجليزية، الإعلان باللغة الكردية، نظرية الصلة

كيفية اقتباس البحث

مصطفى , جوان أحمد , محمد , كافي شاكر , دراسة معرفية-تداولية للتورية في الإعلانات الإنجليزية والكردية، مجلة مركز بابل للدراسات الانسانية، آذار ٢٠٢٦، المجلد: ١٦، العدد: ٣.

هذا البحث من نوع الوصول المفتوح مرخص بموجب رخصة المشاع الإبداعي لحقوق التأليف والنشر (Creative Commons Attribution) تتيح فقط للآخرين تحميل البحث ومشاركته مع الآخرين بشرط نسب العمل الأصلي للمؤلف، ودون القيام بأي تعديل أو استخدامه لأغراض تجارية.

Registered في مسجلة في
ROAD

Indexed في مفهرسة في
IASJ



A Cognitive-Pragmatic Study of Puns in English and Kurdish Advertisements

Jwan Ahmed Mustafa

Jwan.mustafa@su.edu.krd

Lecturer and PhD Student at College of Basic Education-English
Department-Salahaddin University- Erbil

Kavi Shakir Mohammed

kavi.muhammad@su.edu.krd

Asst. Prof. at College of Basic Education-English Department-Salahaddin
University-Erbil

Keywords : Cognitive Pragmatics, Puns, English Advertisement, Kurdish Advertisement, Relevance Theory

How To Cite This Article

Mustafa, Jwan Ahmed, Mohammed , Kavi Shakir , A Cognitive-Pragmatic Study of Puns in English and Kurdish Advertisements , Journal Of Babylon Center For Humanities Studies, March 2026, Volume:16, Issue 3.

This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license
(<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>)

[This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/)

Abstract

The current study aims to investigate the cognitive mechanisms in processing puns in English and Kurdish advertisement from the perspective of Relevance Theory as an approach to cognitive pragmatics. Puns involve ambiguity, incongruity, novelty and humor that serve advertisers to have an effective marketing tool. Advertisers leverage wordplay to engage their target audience and recall their brand name. The current study employs Sperber and Wilson's Relevance Theory to account for studying puns in English and Kurdish advertisements. It aims to analyze 10 samples, 5 from each language. The findings of this study reveal that linguistic structures and the background knowledge have great roles on the cognitive mechanisms that underlie the comprehension of puns in the two languages. It also arrived at the point that in both English and Kurdish advertisements, RT is an appropriate approach for the

analysis of puns. This research, further concludes that the cultural context of the two languages strongly affects the type and the humorous sense of puns.

الملخص

تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى التحقيق في الآليات المعرفية المشاركة في معالجة التلاعب اللفظي كمنهج (RT) الإنجليزية والكردية من منظور نظرية الملاءمة (التورية) في الإعلانات للبراغماتية المعرفية. ينطوي التلاعب اللفظي على الغموض والتنافر والجدة والفكاهة، مما يخدم المعلنين كأداة تسويقية فعّالة. يستفيد المعلنون من التلاعب بالألفاظ لجذب الجمهور المستهدف وتثبيت اسم علامتهم التجارية في الذاكرة. توظف الدراسة الحالية نظرية الملاءمة لسيربر ويلسون لتفسير ودراسة التلاعب اللفظي في الإعلانات الإنجليزية والكردية. وتهدف إلى تحليل ١٠ عينات، ٥ من كل لغة. تكشف نتائج هذه الدراسة أن البنى اللغوية والمعرفة الخلفية تلعب أدواراً رئيسية في الآليات المعرفية التي تقوم عليها عملية فهم التلاعب اللفظي في اللغتين. كما منهجاً (RT) توصلت إلى أنه في كل من الإعلانات الإنجليزية والكردية، تُعد نظرية الملاءمة مناسبة لتحليل التلاعب اللفظي. ويخلص هذا البحث أيضاً إلى أن السياق الثقافي للغتين يؤثر بشكل كبير على نوع التلاعب اللفظي وإحساسه الفكاهي

1. Introduction

The current study aims to employ Relevance Theory, henceforth RT, as a cognitive pragmatic tool to study puns in English and Kurdish advertisements. It aims to apply this theory to analyze the language of advertisement concerning processing puns in the minds of the target audience. It is worth to mention that applying RT for the analysis of puns in advertisement needs a complex interplay of cognitive efforts, effects, shared knowledge and cognitive context for the brand that is advertised for. On the other hand, advertisements with puns are designed to create humor, surprise and make a clever twist that destabilizes expectations of the target audience.

Relevance Theory is a cognitive approach which was developed by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson who based this theory on Grice's Theory of Cooperative Principles and maximized the maxim of relevance. This theory proposes that human cognition is geared towards maximizing relevance through balancing between cognitive effects and the effort required. It is a framework of analyzing communication with the interplay between cognitive processes, context, and the search for relevance. It is applicable for various fields and genres like linguistics, advertising, and any kind of interpersonal communication. In this study, the researchers tend to employ this theory to provide an insight description of how the target audience comprehend the message behind using puns in the selected samples of advertisements in both languages.





They, throughout this study, try to provide a detailed description to answer for the following research questions:

1. How the target audience cognitively process the message behind the puns found in the selected advertisements?
2. To what extent is Relevance Theory an effective tool for the analysis of puns?
3. What are the areas of similarity and difference between the advertisements of the two languages considering puns? And
4. Do cultural contexts create nuance differences in processing puns?

2. Theoretical Background

Cognitive pragmatics seeks the construal of meaning in context from the perspective of cognition which involves both language production and comprehension. According to Bara (2010, 1), cognitive pragmatics is 'the study of the mental status of people who are engaged in communication.'. As stated by Schmid (2012, 4), it is hard to generalize pragmatic rules to formulate the study of language since cognitive processes are carried out in individual minds and they are governed by the context, but still it is profitable to set out the general cognitive-pragmatic principles and processes. The cognitive context is the background that inferences and other forms of reasoning like propositions, mental representations, contextual and factual assumptions can be based on.

The first attempts of pragmatics can be attached to Grice's (1975) study of implicatures and cooperative principles, Austin's speech act, Searle's (1975) interpretation of indirect speech act. Later from 1986 to 1995 Sperber and Wilson worked on Grice's cooperative principles and built the Relevance Theory on it. These attempts were rooted in philosophical and sociological studies. To detect topics like common ground, shared knowledge, reference tracking and some other cognitive pragmatic areas, scholars like Herbert Clark and his collaborators have published experimental and theoretical researches. Other figures like Coulson, Gibbs, Giora, Glucksberg and Sanford, Fauconnier, Turner, Dirven, Geeraerts took the construal of meaning-in-context aspect of pragmatics. A unique exploration of human mental processes in communication has been done by Bara in 2010.

2.1 Relevance Theory

Dan Sperber and Deidre Wilson in their book *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* in 1986 formally put forward the Relevance Theory, RT,

as a cognitive pragmatic framework. One of the maxims that was put by Grice in his Cooperative Principles included the maxim of relevance. The so-called maxim gained extensive focus by Sperber and Wilson who condensed Grice's maxims in the principle of relevance. According to this theory, the basic feature of human cognition is to search for relevance. The most relevant input receives the most positive cognitive effect and the least processing effort. For a successful communication, two conditions should be fulfilled. The first condition is that the input is relevant enough when the audience processes less effort. The second condition is that the input should be economic enough.

2.1.1 Balancing Cognitive Effort and Contextual Effects

Mazzone (2018, p 16) asserts that relevance as a stimulus has '...capacity to modify the information represented within a cognitive system and a cognitive interpretation is the one that processes the stimulus so as to maximize its cognitive effects'. He believes that '...the relevance of cognitive inputs depends on the cognitive effects obtained by their processing'. Processing the input depends on the context and the gained knowledge is the result of cognitive efforts. Mazzone emphasizes that the most relevant interpretation for an input is the one that has the most cognitive effect. He asserts that this theory is an inferential approach that is of two dimensions; the cognitive and the communicative dimension. He criticizes Grice's assumptions for the pragmatic processes that a reference should be 'assigned' and 'disambiguated' that they are by no means trivial and that they are just a transition from 'premises: explicit' to 'conclusions: implicit'. Mazzone elaborates that according to RT since premises and conclusions depend on context and background knowledge, there should be a context construction which includes all the physical contexts and the cognitive entities that are activated. He sums up the heuristic proposition of RT in two steps. The first step is the mechanism that needs least effort such as disambiguation, reference resolution and implicatures for the interpretation. The second step is to stop interpretation when the expectations of relevance are satisfied.

One of the essential components of RT is the cognitive effects. The cognitive system constructs only one interpretation at one time and that is the most relevant and accessible one. It is the least expensive and the most relevant. This means that RT works on maximization of the cognitive effect for the minimization of the cognitive effort. (Ibid, 2018, p 20)



2.1.2 Cognitive and Communicative Principles of Relevance Theory

Mazzone (2018, p15) asserts that RT is an inferential approach that is of two dimensions; the cognitive and the communicative dimension. He refers to the idea that processing of inputs cannot be non-selective since human cognitive system receives a vast number of conceptual inputs continuously. In RT this is expressed as 'Cognitive Principle of Relevance'. On the basis of this point, human cognition has to maximize relevance.

Considering communication, the case is partially different. Every ostensive stimulus, in other words every communicative act addressed to an interlocutor, provides a presumption that has its own optimal relevance. This means that the addressee expects that the addresser produces the most relevant utterance or stimuli to be worth the addressee's processing effort. Chang (2018, p 213) states that Wilson and Sperber believe that finding the optimal relevance is the key to a successful communication, so understanding discourse depends on searching for relevance and consequently gains best effect.

According to Lazović (2018, p 27), in RT, two points should be considered to communicate. The first point is that the speaker should have the intention to communicate to inform the hearer of something. The second point is that the hearer should have the intention to recognize the speaker's informative intention. She elaborates that an utterance may communicate some assumptions and not all of them are intended by the speaker. Among the assumptions are the explicatures and the implicatures. Explicatures denote the logical forms of assumptions that decoded by an utterance whereas implicatures involve contextual assumptions derived by the propositions of an utterance. As cited in Lazović (2018, p 27), Wilson and Sperber (2004, p 615) believe that comprehension process is not linear, but the two explicature and implicature assumptions go parallel against the background of expectations. The decoded linguistic meaning is started with the least processing level which then must be enriched by the context at the explicit level and later complemented at the implicit level until the resulted interpretation meets the most relevant meaning. Some cases of ellipses, metaphor, irony and idiomatic expressions may face ambiguities to be resolved.

2.1.3 Optimal Relevance

The concept of ostensive stimulus can be optimally relevant whenever, in the first place, the stimulus is sufficiently relevant to the audience's processing effort and even more relevant than any other alternative available at the moment. For example, when someone notices an empty glass, the audience may assume that the person desires a drink and when it is waved, a stronger inference is prompted that the person indeed wants a drink. Secondly, a stimulus is optimally relevant when the audience is entitled to higher expectations of clarity. Communicators tend to present information that not only represent their intended cognitive effects but also carries the audience's attention for further implications. When a person says, 'I have written a third of the paper.' The audience would be entitled to understand that (s)he has written only the third of the paper and if she had written two thirds she would normally expected to have said so. Thus, communicators when producing an utterance are not expected to go against their interests. Together the communicative principle of RT and the notion of optimal relevance are the key to relevance theoretic pragmatics. they both suggest a practical procedure to construct a hypothesis about the speaker's meaning. (Wilson, D. and Sperber, D. 2002, p 257)

2.2 Linguistic Forms and Figurative/ Rhetorical Expressions in Relevance Theory

Relevance Theory seeks mechanisms to deal with overt and covert communications. Accordingly, communication in RT revolves around implicit inferences. There are at least two main entities in any communication: the source, which is most of the time the speaker or the writer, and the hearer or the reader. There are different forms that the source uses to communicate including linguistic forms like sentences, phrases and words and non-linguistic forms like body movements, gestures, and facial expressions. In communicative situations, there might be one or more linguistic expressions whether spoken or written with more than a single meaning. People seek the most relevant meaning from the message of the communicator. The most relevant meaning is gained through meeting the hearer's expectations which is the result of matching background knowledge, the context, and the physical environment. Interpreting an overt message needs less processing effort while a covert message needs more processing effort.



In verbal communication, even the explicitly communicated content of an utterance goes beyond what is linguistically encoded. Grice in his Cooperative Principle emphasized reference assignment and disambiguation which can serve only fall on the explicit rather than implicit side without referring to the pragmatic principles and speaker's intention. As cited in (Wilson, D. and Sperber, D. 2002, p 267), Barsalou (1987, 1992) state that even apparently stereotypical narrowing of 'bird', 'animal', and 'furniture' need more contextual inferences like situations, time, place and individuals. Even in some cases, these components cannot derive the expected inference. For example, in a sentence like a: 'Did John pay back the money he owed?', b: 'He forgot to go to the bank.' the word 'bank' may refer either to the 'river side' or 'an institution to keep money'. Ultimately, loose uses of language cause a problem to Grice's framework. Since such expressions like in 'He has a square face.' the 'square face' violates the maxim of truthfulness. The RT analysis takes these points as the recovery of implicature into account. Firstly, RT doesn't account for the literal meaning. The logical form of the utterance depends on the contextual assumption and derivation of an implicit premise to deduce the expected explanation of John's behavior. RT seeks cognitive effects driven by search for relevance within the contextual implications. The implicit conclusion of an utterance is warranted by the explicit content. Secondly, the flexibility of using lexical items in utterances depends on the context in order to generalize the implicatures. Lexical entities like 'bird', 'animal', and 'food' strongly depend on the discourse context and considerations of relevance. Thus, a hearer may treat the encoded word meaning of 'bank' as the speaker's meaning of the word. According to the context, the speaker's meaning of the word 'bank' is the 'financial institution of investing and depositing money' because it satisfies the expectation of relevance and derives the cognitive effects.

Cases of puzzles, jokes, irony, sarcasm, punning, and some rhetorical forms of language need more processing effort than a simple message that has one interpretation. For these cases, the addressee cannot predict the implied meaning from the mere use of the linguistic items. Background knowledge, encyclopedic meaning, contextual assumptions contribute to deduce the relevant interpretation of 'He has a square mind.' for example. The words in this sentence don't denote the assumption that he is a man of principle who doesn't change his mind, rather they are combined to convey the meaning of the shape of the mind which cannot satisfy the expectations of relevance. The square shape gives the impression of being rigid and unchanged. Thus, it would rather be

convenient that the shape of square is relevant to the sharpness and seriousness of the mind. In each one of the above cases, the type of the implicature it conveys differs from the others and the hearer or the addressee needs more cognitive effort to get the relevant meaning of the rhetorical utterance.

2.3 Puns: Definition and Types

The term 'pun', which came from the Latin word 'paronomasia', is 'a form of wordplay which suggests two or more meanings, by exploiting multiple meanings of words, or of similar-sounding words, for an intended humorous or rhetorical effect'. (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 2009). According to Xiaoli Ghan (2015, p 1211-1212), pun is one of the figures of speech which deliberately aims at confusing by using similar words or phrases to achieve rhetorical effect, which creates humor. It is a common language phenomenon through which language can rely on the proposed equivalency of words that are orthographically similar and identical in their sounds (homonymy), with different meaning (polysemy), or of a literal meaning with a metaphor. Since puns evoke more than one representation of a word or expression at the same time, they are certainly a source of ambiguity. The ambiguity occurs at different levels. The levels can be phonemic, morphemic, syntactic...etc. Classes of puns are homophony, homography, homonymy, syntactic puns, puns based on idioms, and semantic puns. There are different classifications of puns since it is cultural-specific use of language. The ambiguity of puns shows the wit of language and reveals the taste of language users and their creative abilities in scrutinizing the sense of humor. According to Žyško (2017, p10) wordplay reveals speakers' creativity through using novel outputs and creating innovations from conventional meanings. The sense of humor is usually created through exaggeration, incongruity, surprise, and absurdity in a way that the addressee or the reader finds difficulty to solve points of ambiguity in search for relevance between the literal and the intended meaning.

2.4 Advertisement: Definition, Principles and Characteristics

The term 'advertisement' is defined by Merriam Webster (2025) as a 'public notice'. It came from the Anglo-French 'avertisement', 'advertissement' from 'avertiss-' or 'advertiss-' from the word 'advertise' which means 'to notify'. It is usually a paid notice to be published or broadcast to provide information of public interest of customers and attract their attention. Belch, G. and M. Belch (2018, p 15), on the other hand, define advertising as 'any paid form of nonpersonal communication about an organization, product, service, or idea by an identified sponsor'.





They refer to the meaning of ‘non-personal’ that it indicates the involvement of mass media like TV, radio, magazines or newspapers that transmits the message to the people. **Shimp (2007, p 234) defines advertising as ‘a paid, mediated form of communication from an identifiable source, designed to persuade the receiver to take some action, now or in the future.**

Advertising is based on some principles. These principles are; grabbing attention, communicating with the public, using simple and clear messages, no immediate feedback, making the name of the product memorable. The language of advertisement is the device to purchase products through using different rhetorical genres like allusion, humor, irony and metaphor. The content of the advertisement usually matches the context of the product and it is eventually blended with the social discourses and trends.

Some characteristics should be present to maintain the best qualities of a creative advertisement. An advertisement should create a relation with the target audience’s most essential needs. An advertisement should deliver a singular unambiguous message that is pertinent to the brand’s position among other brands. A creative advertisement differs from a typical one by its novelty. It should be unique and fresh to reach beyond consumer’s expectations. They are more effective than a normal one. Simplicity is another characteristics of a creative advertisement. As well as these characteristics, a creative advertisement is the advertisement which generates concrete images, words and demonstrations. Besides these, storytelling can make an advertisement maintain a lasting impact through telling stories as they have plots, characters, and settings. (**Shimp, 2007, p 264**)

2.5 The Use of Puns in Advertisements

Language, by no means, is full of innovative, flexible, humorous, novel and diverse expression techniques. Humor is among these expressions that reveals language wit and advertisers would likely use it in their advertisement to stimulate people to buy their products. According to Zheng (2019, p 426), puns are used in advertisement because it is a novel use of language, economic, can be saved in long lasting memory, and it can achieve the persuasive goal of advertising. Abbas, (2010, p 46) states that ‘The use of rhetorical figures plays a pivotal role within the advertising process.’ He illustrates that human cognition can frame metaphors, puns and other rhetorical devices which are conceptualized

through experiences and external world. They create effective impression on human mind. In advertisement, since they are novel and witty, the primary function of these rhetorical forms is to achieve the goal of selling by attracting the attention of potential consumers and persuade them that their products are the worthiest. The humorous feature of puns creates a positive tone to the advertisement and consumers will acquire a positive attitude towards the product.

According to **van Mulken, M. et al.** (2005, p 708), advertisers use puns because puns are helpful to persuade consumers to have a more positive attitude towards the product. They referred to research by Leigh (1994) who concluded that from a large sample, 10 to 40% of all advertisements contain wordplay and pun. To sum up, the use of puns as a form of word play provides the advertisement a sense of humor and ambiguity that the consumers would probably try to reach the intended interpretation as if they solve a riddle. This makes them be entertained and interested to purchase the product.

3. Methodology

The current research is a qualitative comparative study that makes use of Relevance Theory as a cognitive pragmatic approach. It analyzes 10 examples of advertisements that contain puns from English and Kurdish languages. The reason behind this sample size is that the researchers tend to analyze these samples in depth and provide richer insights with keeping the content engaging and avoid repetition. The researchers, in this comparative analysis propose that the contextual relevance, cognitive effects, and the processing efforts affect the comprehension of puns in the audience's mind. It provides a detailed description of how the audience of these advertisements process and comprehend puns through making the most relevant inference. It further asserts the importance of the cognitive context.

Many studies have been conducted concerning analyzing puns in different registers and from different perspectives. However; few studies incorporate analyzing puns in advertisements and more specifically comparing two languages via cognitive pragmatic perspective. There are different linguistic and cultural contexts in understanding puns where cognitive mechanisms for interpreting meaning may be the same or diverse.

4. The Analysis and Discussion

4.1 A Cognitive pragmatic Analysis of puns in English Advertisements

The researchers, in this subsection, present examples of English advertisement and utilize RT as a cognitive pragmatic theory to study puns in these advertisements. The chronological order is not considered as a condition to analyze these advertisements. The letter (E) is put with the numbers of English examples and (K) for Kurdish examples.

E.1 McDonald's 'What's today? Fry day — get a free fry with your order!' California, USA, 22 Oct., 2022



In this advertisement by McDonalds, there is a play on the words 'fry day' which is homophonous to 'Friday'. The advertiser cleverly uses this pun deliberately to bring about ambiguity as well as humor. To derive inference and provide a thorough analysis, the researchers try to break it down to four steps

Before delving into analyzing via RT, there are two competing interpretations for 'fry day' and 'Friday'; the literal concept related to 'day', which refers to the seventh day of the week. The promotional interpretation related to the concept of 'food' that it is the day dedicated to the French fries. Relevance Theory works through the following steps:

1. Determining the utterance type (linguistic input) of McDonalds's '*What's today? Fry day, get a Free Fry with your order*' and the ostensive stimulus:

The advertiser raises the question 'What's today?' to trigger the audience to search for the name of one of the days of the week. Consequently, the audience expects to find a relevant answer which is likely a day of the week. According to the pun and its first interpretation, there is a play on the word 'Fry Day' to match the expectation of the audience. It is a homophonic pun that creates a cognitive puzzle. It is a short advertising phrase which is referred to by RT as 'ostensive stimulus' that is meant by the advertiser to attract the attention of the target audience. In the context of the McDonald's 'Get a free Fry with your order, there is a call for associating Fridays with an enjoyable and free offer. There is humor in the language to create positive atmosphere with McDonald's fast food.



2. Employing principles of Relevance: In this step, RT suggests two important principles; cognitive and communicative principles. In the cognitive dimension, the reference should be assigned and disambiguated. According to RT, it is called explicature. The audience tries to even narrow and broaden the content during pragmatic enrichment to arrive at the explicit proposition. In this advertisement, the explicature of literal decoding 'the day that is referred to is a 'Fryday' which means that it is a day designed for fries. The audience decodes the words 'what's', 'today', 'fry', and 'day' then tries to disambiguate them. The reference for 'today' is for the day that the advertisement is encountered. The idea of 'fry day' is then enriched and promoted to mean that 'today is not Friday but fry day'. The explicature for the context of this advertisement is that the reference assigned for 'today' is any day of the week. This offer is on service whenever the customer orders food from McDonalds' fast food. In this sense, the customer gets the reference of encouragement and reward.

There are assumptions to access the most relevant interpretation. These three assumptions are:

Assumption 1: It is McDonald's advertisement

Assumption 2: It sells French fries

Assumption 3: Advertisements usually promote the discounted and free products, so in this context the payoff of French fries creates a memorable association between the 'day' and the product 'fries'

3. Inferring the implicature: The association aligns with the principle of RT to seek the most relevant interpretation. The audience infers the implied message from the pun 'Fry day' compared to 'Friday' that it is a special day for fries. It suggests that McDonalds promotes offering free fries in this day. Besides the extra processing effort, there is a reward with humor and a light-hearted atmosphere through inviting the audience to enjoy the fast food. The contextual effect created by the pun in this advertisement has three implications; humorous, promotional, and persuasive.

4. Optimal Relevance: In this advertisement, optimal relevance is achieved via balancing two cognitive processes; minimal effort for maximal effect. The advertiser used minimal effort via the language of the advertisement which is clever and strong to engage the target audience. At the same time the advertisement achieves maximal contextual effects by engaging the audience with joy, making it



memorable, and pertaining positive branding. It has a kind of promise to offer fries for free which aligns with promoting the brand

To sum up, in this advertisement by McDonalds, the pun generates extra cognitive effects, exploits relevance from being informative, and communicates highly efficient and rewarding contextual effects.

E. 2 Red Lobster's Tagline 'Seafood Differently', the American Casual Dining Restaurant Chain, November, 2024



This restaurant, which is called Red Lobster, uses a highly relevant slogan to the brand. It reinforces the type of the product, which is seafood, with the quality and professionalism of the service. The slogan is powerful due to its inferential meaning. According to RT, this advertisement communicates more than its words. In other words, the literal input communicates more than one interpretation. The audience would likely seek the most relevant one based on the contextual implications.

Analysis of 'Seafood Differently' according to RT:

1. The literal input and the mental processing: The ostensive stimulus employed by the advertiser is triggered by the word 'seafood'. It creates syntactic anomaly. The word 'seafood' is followed by the adverb 'differently' and there is no verb. The advertiser plays on the word 'seafood' which is homophonous with 'see food' to create multiple interpretations. This lets the audience to recognize the homophony of the words, recover the intended multiple meanings, and reinforce the brand's innovation of serving food.
2. Contextual assumptions and RT principles: The audience accesses contextual assumptions to make the slogan relevant. These assumptions can be shown as follows:

Assumption 1: It is about Red Lobster's restaurant where seafood is served. It wants its

customers to have new perspectives towards seafood

Assumption 2: The word ‘differently’ conveys more than one meaning. It may refer to the

way it is cooked, tasted, or served whether at a casual, expensive or fancy

restaurant. It may even refer to the quality, price, or the state of the dish which

is served in how it is decorated.

Assumption 3: Red Lobster as a brand context is identified and characterized as specialists of

sea food. It has its approach to innovate in serving food.

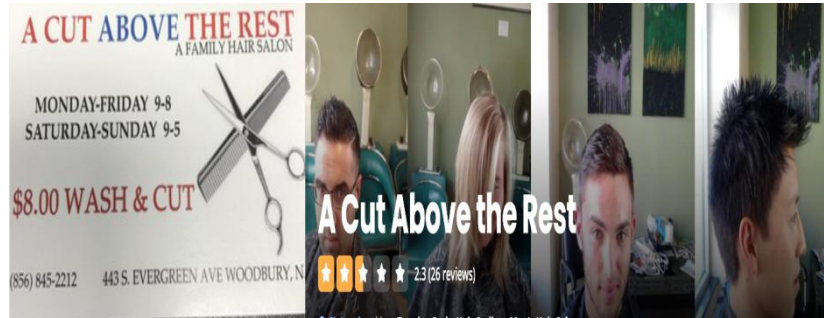
3. RT principles and deriving implicature: To derive the inference from the above explicatures and putting them in the context of the advertisement, the audience realizes that the advertiser intends to convey brand differentiation and innovation in quality and service. The stronger implicature intended to communicate is that Red Lobster is unique and different from its competitors. It suggests to try the unique and innovative type of food instead of conventional and traditional way of serving seafood. Quality and distinctiveness are valuable issues that the audience seeks. The advertisement plays on the word ‘seafood’ by using it as an instruction which implies to try Red Lobster to experience the difference. It is a call for action.
4. Optimal relevance: According to RT, this slogan ‘Seafood Differently’ is highly effective that suggests extra processing effort. The missing verb and patterning ‘differently’ with the noun ‘seafood’, makes the slogan considerably memorable and engaging.

The minimum processing effort: It leaves the choice for the audience’s ability to put the slogan in the context and derive the intended relevant meaning. Recognizing the homophonic pun ‘sea food=see food’ requires low effort especially when integrated to the context with the brand name. The audience tries to compensate the syntactic anomaly to derive the explicature and implicature of the advertisement to get the optimal relevance.

The maximum cognitive effect: The pun is cleverly used and it is worth processing because the audience feels that (s)he is rewarded to recognize the witty wordplay. It points to Red Lobster as distinctive as well as high expertise that can compete other restaurants. Finally, it

helps memorability of the restaurant of being different and able to challenge other restaurants.

E. 3 A Family Hair Salon 'A Cut Above the Rest' Evergreen, Ave Woodbury, Nov.,2025



This is a family hair salon in the USA beauty industry. A large group of hair salons share the tagline with the expression 'a cut above the rest'. The slogan is based on a common idiom which means 'better than the others' or 'superior quality'. The expression plays on the word 'cut' which is a clever way to make the message more engaging and to remind the customer with 'haircut'. The word 'cut' in the common idiom refers to 'level', but in this advertisement it communicates both 'level' and 'hair cut'.

Analysis of 'A cut above the rest' according to RT:

1. Linguistic input and cognitive decoding: According to the type of the pun of this advertisement, it is an idiom-based pun in which there is a play on the word 'cut'. Linguistically, 'a cut above the rest' is a noun phrase in which the noun 'cut' is the head and the prepositional phrase 'above the rest' is the post modifier. Since it is a familiar English idiom, the cognitive system of the English people automatically accesses three interpretations of 'cut': the first one is the noun that refers to the act of cutting with scissors or any instrument. The second meaning is polysemous with 'cut: hair style'. The third meaning is the idiomatic meaning of 'superiority among others'. The idiomatic meaning is the encyclopedic entry that is stored and fixed as a background knowledge about this phrase. This idiom comes from the British naval ranking in the eighteenth's century. The rankings were evaluated by the cuts of the uniform cloth. The higher ranks had better cuts. On the other hand, the literal meaning of 'cut' summons the encyclopedic entry about hair salons and hair styles and haircuts.
2. Relevance Theory principles and the search for contextual assumptions (explicature): Since the expression is a common idiom

and it is used creatively for the purpose of reinforcing the context of hair salons, the customer seeks the most relevant interpretation and makes some assumptions.

Assumption 1: The literal meaning of 'cut' leads to low-effort interpretation and yields weak cognitive effects if it is only connected to the act of cutting without putting it into its context.

However, there are only five words in this advertisement, the messages out rate their number.

Assumption 2: Hence, the customer would rather disambiguate the literal and the idiomatic domains and enrich the meaning by the context. The reference of 'cut' and 'above the rest'

should be assigned. The customer assigns 'a cut' literally as the hair cut done by this salon and idiomatically assigns it as the level of superiority. According to 'above the rest', it is assigned to refer to either better than the other competing salons or having higher qualities than others.

Assumption 3: To access the two cognitive processes of disambiguation and reference assignment for deriving the explicature, there is the process of context integration. Hence the resulting explicature is that the haircut service at this salon is higher than the other competing salons.

3. Processing inference (implicature):

The explicatures which are based on the literal and idiomatic meaning are deduced from the contextual implications in which the two meanings are not contradictory instead they mutually reinforce the core meaning of the advertisement. There is a poetic effect that strengthens the assumptions. The clever use of the pun leaves the impression that the salon itself is clever which is a desirable trait of it. This impression cognitively is handled by RT since the pun is expressed in a very compact and efficient form and is able to communicate this complex proposition. The most prominent implication that is communicated is that this hair salon is superior among other competing salons. Another core implicature is that the proposition that is put forward to this salon envisages the better quality and service than other salons. The advertisement besides these implications conveys the brand confidence of the hair salon.



4. Optimal relevance: from the perspective of RT, ‘A cut above the rest’ is optimally relevant since it requires extra processing effort. It is used as an ostensive stimulus to trigger two mutually equivalent meanings that serves the objectives of the advertisement. To resolve the ambiguity, the customer is willing to expend effort in order to achieve the cognitive effects. The maximization of relevance is the core principle of RT, so the following two points are essential to consider the optimal relevance of this advertisement:

The minimal processing effort: The amount of mental effort required for processing this slogan depends on the type of the ambiguity of the word ‘cut’ to settle the interpretation on the most relevant meaning. The most accessible meaning is retrieved with the context of haircut which seems strange, but when matched with the idiomatic meaning, the image becomes more clear and more relevant.

The maximum cognitive effect: There are three main types of cognitive effects. The first point is related to the contextual implications. These implications are not stated but they are communicated. In this advertisement, the superiority of this hair salon is communicated. It provides superior quality of haircuts. The second point is that the pun is cleverly used in which the costumer becomes confident of the services of the brand. The third message implied is the memorability of the brand. In a nut shell, the pun used in this advertisement invests higher cognitive effects with less mental effort for a more successful and memorable communication act.

E.4 Apple Watch Series 5, ‘Globe News Has Never Been So Close at Hand’, California, 5th April, 2015



**GLOBE NEWS
HAS NEVER
BEEN SO
CLOSE AT
HAND.**

This is an advertisement by Globe and Mail campaign to promote the Apple Watch. The slogan is carefully created to intentionally communicate dual activation. This presents an ostensive stimulus to

attract the attention of the audience. It is an advertisement for 'Apple Watch' and the Globe and Mail Campaign itself.

1. Decoding the linguistic input: There are two puns in this advertisement. The 'Globe News' is automatically decoded as the 'news that is everywhere on this earth and it is a part of the name of the campaign 'Globe and Mail'. The second pun is on the phrase 'close at hand'. The superlative structure of 'never been so' captures the attention of the audience to search for the emphasized part that follows which is 'close at hand' in the form of a phrase. The phrase 'close at hand' is ambiguous since it triggers two levels of meanings. The literal meaning is 'physically near the hand' and the idiomatic meaning is 'readily available' according to the linguistic knowledge. These decoding processes are automatic and they depend on the lexical, grammatical, phonological and orthographic knowledge.
2. Principles of RT and constructing the explicatures through pragmatic assumptions: With the help of the context, the audience tries to make some assumptions and derive the inference cognitively. The processes of disambiguation and reference assignment are the cognitively accessed with the contribution of context and background knowledge.

Assumption 1: The two encoded meanings of 'close at hand' which are literal and idiomatic

are stored and can be accessed during decoding. It is assumed that the two meanings are both

recovered simultaneously and that the advertiser actually intends both meanings. It reveals

the wit of playing on the words 'so close at hand' in a clever way.

Assumption 2: To have a complete proposition about 'Globe', 'never been so' and 'close at

hand', they assumed to be disambiguated. For example, the 'Globe News' has never been so

physically near to one's hands as it is now with Apple watch. If, on the other hand, idiomatic

meaning is taken, the proposition differs. After disambiguation, the reference should be also

assigned, so the spatial destination which is described by the word 'close' is being compared to

a point. In the context of this advertisement only the literal meaning endures this proposition.

The idiomatic dimension of 'close at hand' doesn't entail spatial reference instead it conveys





accessibility of the news through the apple watch.

Assumption 3: The audience assumes that ‘never been so’ is compared to previous delivery

methods of news like print forms, desktops, boards, or mobiles. The advertisement besides

comparing its brand to its competitors, creates a specific context that is neither idiomatic, nor literal.

3. Implicature derivations: The inferences driven from this advertisement and the contextual assumptions help to build the implicatures. The context of the advertisement is about the Apple smart watch which is being advertised through the Canadian news organization ‘Globe and Mail’. To people, convenient access of news or information is highly valued. The deliverance of these news can be through various media like print, online, and mobiles. The smart watch is one of the technological platforms that can deliver news while it is worn at hand. Apple smart watch is one of the brands that is flexible to the newest technologies.

4. Optimal Relevance: This advertisement about ‘Apple Watch’ is optimally relevant since it requires extra mental effort in decoding the literal and idiomatic meaning. Five words convey multiple messages that are compressed into minimal space and create additional positive impression about Apple smart watch. The pun is not difficult that could cause frustration or confusion. The phrase ‘close at hand’ can be interpreted as the ‘spatial distance’ which is literally inferred, but it can simultaneously be interpreted as ‘available and accessible’ if it is connected to the concept of news. The literal interpretation decodes the physical proximity to the hand whereas the idiomatic meaning triggers the characteristics of availability and accessibility of the global news.

The processing effort: The advertiser has chosen the most relevant words to convey the message, but not the easiest words to be processed. It can be traced that the processing effort is rewarded with the greatest overall cognitive benefit. Decoding the literal and idiomatic meaning and even the syntactic structure of this advertisement requires low effort. The audience automatically decodes the linguistic level of the advertisement and accesses the idiomatic interpretation that is stored in the mental storage. Encountering the contextual cues, the audience makes reanalysis for the advertisement. The phrases ‘The Globe’, ‘never been so’, and ‘close at hand’ suggest brand recognition, accessibility, physical



proximity, and wearable technology. Thus, the effort is justified by the cognitive effects.

The maximum effect: According to RT, there are three cognitive effects that are gained from 'The Globe has never been so close at hand'. The first benefit is that the audience can derive new information that the Globe and Mail has launched to deliver news on wearable technology like a smart watch. This means that all the news in this globe is now on wrist, and this shows technological progression. It is considered as a high positive cognitive effect. The second effect is that the existing assumptions are strengthened. It strengthens the idea that Globe and Mail embrace technological innovations. The advertisement also strengthens the idea that news agencies should adapt new digital platforms and this smart watch is a good example. The third positive effect is that the emotional response with the sense of humor is associated with cleverness, innovation and brand recognition. The advertisement reminds the audience with the brand qualities and engage them with self-generated conclusions.

E. 5 Baskin Robbin's 'Seize the yay!', Canton, Massachusetts, United States, 11th April 2022



Baskin-Robbins is an American multinational chain of ice cream and cake shops. It is a sibling brand with Dunkin Donuts. The company serves about 31 flavors. The slogan 'Seize the yay' was introduced by Carson Roberts' advertising agency to encourage these flavors. In this advertisement, the advertiser plays on the famous idiom 'Seize the day' which asserts to have joy in every moment. This idiom goes back to the Latin phrase 'Carpe diem' which is attributed to the Roman poet 'Horace' and for the first time was used in English language by 'Lord Byron' in 1817. The idiom is used to build on the pun to communicate the advantage of opportunities. It activates the original meaning besides



enriching it with the sense of having a nice taste and enjoying the moments.

Analysis according to RT:

1. The linguistic input and ostensive stimulation: There is a play on the whole sentence 'seize the yay' which is homophonous to the famous idiom 'Seize the day' to recognize the source phrase. The word 'yay' sounds like 'day' in which there is phonological substitution of the sound /j/ that substitutes the sound /d/. The substitution is deliberate. It is used to serve the context of eating ice cream and to create a new concept. The sentence is imperative. It starts with the verb 'seize' which means 'to pick or to pluck' as a call for an action and the subject does not appear, but it obviously is 'you'. In this concept it refers to the audience. The word 'day' is a noun while the word 'yay' is an exclamation to express 'joy' and 'delightfulness'.
2. Deriving the explicatures through the principles of RT: The advertisement explicitly communicates the propositional content that the audience decodes.

Assumption 1: The verb 'seize' literally means 'to hold', 'take' or 'grasp', but within the expression 'seize the yay', its meaning differs. In this context, the verb 'seize' means to take benefit from. This expression is built on the famous idiom 'Seize the day'. Hence, the context of 'Seize the day' is related to 'time' while the context of 'Seize the yay' has a different message that is defined by the context of having joy with eating ice cream.

Assumption 2: Pragmatically, the proposition of having joy is enriched, the audience can easily get the reference assignment of the proposition that the sentence calls for embracing joy, excitement and having a positive feeling. Another pragmatic enrichment is that the original idiom emphasizes the importance of the opportunities which is activated by the advertiser.

Assumption 3: The pun works through phonological substitution that makes the audience hold both sentences in mind and recover the reason of the substitution. The idiom is famous and native speakers of English language can easily derive the reference of the advertisement, however; it may be difficult for non-native speakers of English to recognize that it is an allusion to a famous idiom and understand its philosophy.

3. Processing the inference (implicature): The audience associates the product and the brand with positive experiences since the emphasis is on 'yay' which refers to joy and excitement. Another strong implicature is that the advertisement emphasizes the philosophy of



'carpe diem' which playfully encourages to enjoy life and live in the moment. The advertisement further implies that enjoyment with the good taste can be seized through Baskin Robbin's products.

4. Processing cognitive effort (Optimal Relevance): The overall processing effort is based on familiarity with 'Seize the day' of the well-known phrase 'Carpe Diem'. Optimally the advertiser created a new concept integrating both meanings.

Processing effort: The sentence 'Seize the yay' requires low processing effort since it is straightforward, transparent and playful. Decoding the pun is automatic and the phonological-lexical substitution is recognized relatively easily. For those unfamiliar audience, decoding this sentence requires higher effort, but for target audience, no obscure effort is required. Generally, recovering the phonological substitution, explicating the pun, and accessing the derived implicatures need moderate-low effort.

Cognitive effects: The advertisement is highly effective from the RT's perspective. It provides strong, positive and emotional impact. It cleverly triggers the audience's background knowledge about the idiom to integrate it with its new concept through playing on the word 'day' and replace it to 'yay'. The three words convey multiple layers of meaning and rich persuasive content.

The advertisement is optimally relevant. The cognitive effects outweigh the processing efforts.

4.2A Cognitive pragmatic Analysis of puns in Kurdish Advertisements

- K. 1. Hana dishwashing gel: '...Taku Hana be hanamanewe hāt, Hana ke hate hana her nakokiman her nema, Hana mihrebane legel destekant, hanê Hana', Translated as '...until Hana came and saved us. when Hana appeared, our arguments disappeared, Hana is kind to our hands', Hawler , Iraq, 21st Aug,2021





This Kurdish advertisement, Hana dish washing liquid, tries to create a kind of story in order that the audience can unify the conceptual content of rescuing or helping a group of friends from arguments about who would wash the dishes and connect it to the word 'Hana'. It is a brilliant way to achieve effectiveness, create the sense of humor and persuade the audience. The advertisement works on the word 'Hana' to generate multiple contextual interpretations. The dual activation of the word 'Hana' helps to reinforce memorability of the product.

According to Relevance Theory, this advertisement is analyzed as follows:

1. Linguistic input and the ostensive stimulus: The advertisement genuinely stimulates the brand's good quality through playing on the word 'hana'. It is homonymous to the proper noun of a girl and the brand name. On the other hand, it is a homonym to the non-finite verb form of the Kurdish verb 'to rescue' or 'to help'. This means that they are completely unrelated. The sentence 'Taku Hana be hanamanewe hāt', uses the word 'Hana' twice. The first 'Hana' is a noun in the subject position whereas the second one is another noun in the position of object/complement of preposition which completes the function of the verb 'hāt' which counterparts the English verb 'came'. In Kurdish language the expression 'be hanamanewe hāt' is an idiom or expression that corresponds the English expression 'came to rescue us'. In the same way, the expression 'Hana ke hāte hana' has the same proposition in which the word 'Hana' is used in two different uses. The two forms of the same word 'Hana' exploit two different propositions of the same linguistic string. In its slogan 'Hana mihrebane legel destekant', the word 'Hana' refers to either a person whose name is 'Hana' or it refers to the name of the dishwashing liquid. The linguistic input in this advertisement conveys more than its words.

2. Principles of RT and derivation of assumptions (Explicature): When the linguistic input is supported by the context of the advertisement, it is pragmatically enriched. In RT, as proposed by Sperber and Wilson, the two different uses of the same expression is called ‘double recovery of explicature’ to account for the mental status of the audience in the decoding phase. The audience makes explicit propositions.

Assumption 1: The advertisement cleverly plays on the word ‘Hana’ to create different meanings of the same text. The audience decodes two different levels of the text; the literal and the idiomatic meaning. Literally, the word ‘Hana’ is used as a proper noun for a female and product and idiomatically, it works with the help of the preposition ‘be’ together with the plural possessive pronoun ‘-mānewe’ acts as a complement of the verb ‘hāt’. The Kurdish speaking audience immediately recognize that each use of this word has its own purpose and its own meaning. It is a productive way to reward the attention

Assumption 2: To disambiguate the word ‘Hana’ in this advertisement, it is necessary to search for its reference within the context. In the whole text the word ‘Hana’ has three possible references. These references are assigned as either the name of a female, name of the product, or the non-finite verb ‘to assist’, ‘to help’ or to ‘rescue’ in all its possibilities. After assigning these references, the audience makes the assumptions like ‘The person named ‘Hana’ helps the girls or ladies to agree on the act of dishwashing and make it easier’, ‘The dishwashing liquid that is called ‘Hana’ helps or rescues these people in their action of dishwashing with its best qualities.’, or the audience derives the explicature that ‘This liquid rescues these ladies from disagreement about dishwashing’. All the references assigned for the expressions ‘**Taku Hana be hanamanewe hāt.. Hana ke hate hana her nakokiman her nema**’ are true for the expression **Hana mihrebane legel destekant**’ which later becomes the slogan of this product.

Assumption 3: Pragmatically, when the text uses the word ‘Hana’ as a proper noun of a female, it envisages the good behavior and kind personality of that person. Because of her intervention, the conflict of washing dishes is ended. When this behavior of a human is applied on a product, the mental spaces of the audience create a context that can suit the context of a dishwashing liquid and trigger the features of being strong, productive and kind. These two concepts of the word ‘Hana’ are strengthened by the third use which is ‘to rescue’. In this



sense, the person as well as the product are employed as the savors of the conflict.

3. Derivation of the implicatures: The advertisement through playing on the words used in the text, asserts the good qualities of the product through portraying the image that people usually have the conflict of washing dishes and regard it as a hard work, but 'Hana' dishwashing liquid makes it easy and eliminate this conflict through its good qualities. The advertiser tries to convey that in addition to its strength to lipids, this product is kind and non-irritating to the skin. It is like a mediator and peacemaker. From the contextual assumptions, the advertisement puts 'Hana' dishwashing liquid ahead from its competitors.
4. The cognitive efforts (Optimal Relevance): The advertisement is optimally relevant. It cleverly employs the words to serve the goal of the advertiser.

The Processing Effort: The concept of rescue/ help is triggered through the word 'Hana' itself. Thus, it is an organic word which means that in Kurdish language, the name 'Hana' genuinely means 'to help/ rescue'. It dually activates personal interpretation and generating propositions besides integrating it to the sense of humor. Processing these propositions require mental efforts for different frames like social conflict caused by household labor, the conflict is chronic, the frame of the saver, the frame of being kind, the frame of memorability of the brand, and the frame of narration.

Cognitive Effects: This advertisement is effective because it communicates the product benefit, social relationship, humor, and different implicatures are recovered. It is culture-specific in which natural Kurdish resource is used.

This advertisement is optimally relevant because it requires low processing effort for maximum high effect.

K2. Lêzan school: Ewan le lêzanin boye awa lêzanin... Bo eweî mindalleket lêzan bê, pêwîste le lêzan bê, Translated as: "They are at Lêzan, therefore they are skillful" Hawler, Iraq, 12th 9, 2018



In this advertisement, the advertiser plays on the word ‘Lezan’ to create ambiguity. It is a homonymic pun which it is overly obvious. Thus, the pun is clever, but not sophisticated; however, it is successful to communicate its message. Advertisers understand that the audience sometimes want to work a little for their insights. They employ too transparent puns to make their advertisement maximally effective for their audience.

1. Linguistic input and ostensive stimulus: The advertisement uses the word ‘Lêzan’ in two different linguistic functions. It appears in two distinct roles: as a proper noun and as an adjective to mean ‘skillful’. The attribute ‘skillful’ is predicted from the noun ‘Lêzan’ and in the context of this advertisement, it refers to ‘Lêzan school’. In the text, the sentence ‘**Ewan le Lêzann, boya wa lêzann**’ suggests cause and effect relation in which, the students are in this place, Lezan school, that’s why they are skillful or competent. It has a clear syntactic structure, but there is the repetition of the word ‘lêzan’ which creates anomaly. The advertiser uses the prepositional phrase ‘**le Lêzann**’ then follows it with the adjective phrase ‘**awa lezann**’ which is the crux of the point. This is to let the audience search for the reason of the repetition and find a relevant meaning.
2. Search for explicature assumptions: To disambiguate “**Ewan le Lezann, boya wa lezann**”, their reference should be assigned. The audience resolves explicatures of this advertisement through some assumptions.

Assumption 1: The audience decodes the reference of ‘ewan’ which stands for ‘they’ as ‘the students’, ‘the children’ that refers to the individuals that are associated with school. The first ‘Lezann’ is preceded by the preposition ‘le’ and it refers to the name of the school. The second ‘lezann’ refers to the state of ‘being skillful’ which is the essential point that the advertiser has built the pun on. The key to employ the pun is the cause-effect’ conjunction ‘boya’ which means ‘therefore’. The audience already knows that it is an advertisement of





an educational context, they seek the quality and condition of learning outcomes. The advertiser effectively reinforces the learning outcomes of this school with the word 'lezann' which means 'they are skillful'.

Assumption 2: When this advertisement is integrated with its context, pragmatically there is a kind of brand promise. The school ensures the reward of better educational level through providing better services and suitable circumstances for students to become more creative and more competent.

Assumption 3: The advertiser communicates the fact that the attribute of 'being skillful' is not only inherent in the name 'Lezan', but it is related to this school and not to other schools. Thus, the advertisement is an overt communicative act that compares this school to others. It further raises brand recognition and audience persuasion.

3. Generating implicature according to RT: This advertisement has metalinguistic implicature since the name embeds the property of skillfulness. Another implicature is that the advertiser uses the cause-effect structure to motivate the audience to attend Lezan school. It provides a logical proof through the claim that 'Person X attends Lezan, therefore (s)he is talented or skillful.' This claim appears logical and the audience feels that it is inevitable or it is a fact. This advertisement builds a positive attitude towards the brand which is the school. Another strong implicature is that the advertiser creates a resonant and memorable echo between the school's name and the attribute which consequently makes the name of the school memorable.
4. Assessment of Optimal Relevance: For Kurdish audience, this homophonic pun is easily recognized and the ambiguity created by the word 'lêzanin' can be quickly recovered.

The processing effort: Grammatically, the structure of the sentence requires an adjective to complete the meaning of the subject 'ewan: they' with a property that suits the setting of learning outcomes. The audience decodes the dual meaning of the word 'lezann' as well as the argument about the cause and its effect. In the context of education, the concept of 'skill' is highly accessed so the audience spontaneously finds the connection of the homophonous words.

The cognitive effects: Cognitively, the advertisement is highly effective for its poetic language and clever use of pun. It raises positive brand appreciation and there is a promise to let their students be more talented to compete other students in other schools. This advertisement is highly persuasive and encourages brand memorability.

The advertisement is optimally relevant through the use of the homophonic pun as a powerful instrument to create cognitive effects.

K3. Çay Nawras, ‘Ew çaye xoşe wek çawî reş bê, şîrînî şeker jiyânî hawbeş bê, **ça bê ça nebê her kesê hem jînî ça nebê qet pêt ça nabet.** Eme ç çayeke wa îlham bexşe? Mamosta eme raste yek cor çaye, bellam têkeleyî hewt cor çaye. Eme çayî Nawrase newres.’ Translated as ‘The tea is nice that is black like the dark eyes, sweet as sugar like the sweet life of two people who live together, whether good or not (in another sense- a good or bad type of tea) if one’s life doesn’t improve, it will never be good’, Suleimani, Iraq, 5th Jan, 2020.



This is an advertisement for Nawras tea which is a dense of poetic description of the quality of the tea. The advertiser uses a mixture of figurative language like simile, paradox, metaphor and pun. According to the pun, there is a play on the word ‘ça’ it is used as a homonymic blend of the beverage, a sensory imagery with life’s philosophy and the property of a good personality. The type of the homonym is antanaclasis because the same word ‘ça’ is repeated with different references.

1. Ostensive stimulation through the literal input: The noun ‘ça’ literally refers to the hot comforting beverage that is drunk in Kurdish social rituals. In Kurdish language, this word is homonymous to the adjective ‘ça bûn’ that is associated to life ‘to become better’ or to the adjective ‘çak’ used for a person to mean ‘a good person’. In this advertisement, the advertiser plays on the word ‘ça’ in three different contexts. It is an ostensive communication that exploits ambiguity that makes the audience to recognize the ambiguity according to the context. The negative form of ‘ça bê’ is ‘ça nebê’ creates a paradoxical condition between these two forms. Structurally, the part that plays on the word ‘ça’ is formed on building a concessive-condition and a poetic convention that frames the folk wisdom of Kurdish people.



2. Deriving the assumptions (Explicature): The audience when decodes this advertisement retrieves the inferences of 'ça' in three contexts.

Assumption (1): The literal reference of 'ça' is the hot drink tea. Thus, the expression 'ça bê ça nebê' is processed as 'either it's a good quality of tea or not'. On the other hand, the expression 'her kesê hem jîmî ça nebê qet pêt ça nabet' literally means 'Anyone who's life is without tea is never a good life.'. if the reference of 'ça' is a good person, the expression

'ça bê ça nebê' is processed as 'if the person is a good person or not'. Consequently, the expression 'her kesê hem jîmî ça nebê qet pêt ça nabet' means 'if someone's life is not good, this person is not good'. The third reference of 'ça' is a 'good life' which is processed as 'if someone lives a good life or not'. Hens, the expression 'her kesê hem jîmî ça nebê qet pêt ça nabet' is processed as 'if anyone doesn't lead a good life, you can never fix it'. These inferences are disambiguated according to the related meaning of their context in RT.

Assumption 2: Pragmatically, the inferences that are assigned for the word 'ça' are integrated to their contexts and the context of the advertisement to purchase the product of 'Nawras tea'. It is a call of the good quality of this product. The audience tries to find the relevance between the product and the text. The advertiser tries to convey that life without drinking tea is never a good life especially if the tea has a high quality.

Assumption 3: If different interpretations are made for the word 'ça' and applied to all the three references, then the audience tries to find the most relevant interpretation of the text. Thus, RT bases its analysis on the most productive interpretation. If the literal and idiomatic meaning of the word 'ça' are integrated, then the audience associates 'good personality of people and their way of life to drinking good quality of tea'. This interpretation is supported by the expression 'Eme ç çayeke wa îlham bexşe?' which means 'What kind of tea is this that gives such inspiration?' as if 'Nawras tea' inspires a good way of life for good people.

3. RT principles and deriving implicature: Repeating the word 'ça' reinforces the pun that is used in this text. It has a poetic enchantment that equalizes drinking tea to life-goodness and constructing a well-built personality. The language profoundly praises the product's essentiality in a hyperbolic tone.
4. Optimal relevance: The audience is neither satisfied with deriving the explicature alone nor with the strong implicature of equating 'tea to life-goodness'. The interpretations are mutually paralleled and

adjusted connecting it to the purpose behind the advertisement. It needs mental effort to match the intended meaning.

The processing effort: The mental status of the audience generates the interpretations needed to access all the possible meanings of the advertisements. The repetition of the same word 'ça', poetic expression and the expectation of the audience are condensed to attain the intended meaning. The ambiguity of the word 'ça' is not accidental but it is ostensive and purposeful; however, it is justified as being deep and insightful.

Cognitive effect: This advertisement demands inferential work to exploit relevance theoretic principles but it is rewarded with layered meanings. The cost is balanced through the benefit that it has cognitive and emotional effects.

This advertisement is optimally relevant according to RT because it demands minimal effort to process it and it is rewarded with maximum effect.

K 4. Bo ayindeyekî runak 'Runakî hellbijêre. Pele bike toş were bo Runakî, Translated as ' For a bright future, choose Runaki, Hurry up! You too come to Runaki' Sulemani, Iraq, 26th Sept., 2021



In this advertisement, there is a call for joining Runakî institution. There is a play on the word 'Runakî' which means 'light', 'bright future', 'brightness of the day', or more specifically 'daylight'. Spontaneously, it is the name of the institution. It is a homonymic pun that exploits antanaclases of the word 'Runakî'. The advertisement communicates its message emphasizing the importance of joining this institute in a smart way.

1. Ostensive stimulation and the linguistic input: The advertisement starts with the prepositional phrase 'for a bright future' to attract the attention of the audience and declare t reason to join Runakî institute. The imperative structure 'Choose Runakî' is another way to stimulate the audience. The term 'Runakî' in the first phrase is an adjective,



while in the second part of the sentence it is a noun or more specifically the name of the institution. In the second sentence, the imperative structure is repeated to explicitly target the audience. Although the noun 'Runakî' is a metaphor of life, brightness, bright future, it is used as a homonymic pun. The structural repetition indicates that the advertiser intends more than the literal meaning.

2. Developing the explicature: The audience's encyclopedic knowledge allows assigning the reference of the literal form of 'runakî'. as the 'light'.

Assumption (1): The abstract noun 'runakî' is culturally used as a metaphor for 'hope', 'goodness', 'literacy', 'education', 'bright future', 'optimism' and other positive senses. The call for joining the institute is accessed through attaining the collective value on education and learning. The imperative form maintains actual speech acts, meanwhile the suffix '(-ş)' presupposes that other people have chosen this institute.

Assumption (2): The advertiser exploits the homonymic relation between the adjective and the name of the institution. Firstly, the word is used as an attribute for the future, then it turns to become the name and title of the advertisement. Thus, the relation is not arbitrary, instead it is the quality that is provided to create the positive sense of the bright future.

Assumption 3: The advertiser tries to focus on the word 'Runakî' to let the audience think of the bright side of the future and think that it is only achieved through joining Runaki institution. When the advertiser uses the phrase '**Pele bike toş were bo Runakî**' there is repetition of the imperative structure to persuade the audience that it is the correct choice to be in Runaki institute. It is a logical presumption to decide to be in an institution that inspires progress to have a bright future.

3. The principles of RT and implicature: the advertisement implies trustworthiness and reliability of the program that is followed in this institute. The phrase '**Bo ayindeyekî runak**' depicts the progression and better standard of education at this institution. It makes the name 'Runaki' memorable and competent to other institutions. Although there is enrollment period for students, but the advertisement stimulates a quicker decision.
4. Optimal relevance: the advertisement uses simple and clear language. It doesn't use a difficult language and the pun is explicit. It creates effectiveness through the transparent idea that presupposes bright

future for those who are enrolled in this institute. It calls for solidarity. There is a kind of promise to be fulfilled.

Processing effort: The advertisement is clear and direct that minimizes mental processing effort through effective and vital communicative message. The repetition is easily processed with minimum effort. The pun that is used is explicit depending on retrieving the property of brightness to invest it in the name of the institution.

Cognitive effect: The audience, being stimulated with the language of the advertisement is rewarded with cost of aspirational values like better future, standard system, progress, promotion, and high expectations of successful education.

It is optimally relevant because the minimum effort for processing meets with maximum effects.

K5. Bazaar app: To meço bo bazar, bazzaar xoy yiet, Translated as 'Do not go to bazar, Bazzaar will come to you' Suleymani, Iraq, 9th Sep. 2024



According to Relevance Theory, there is a successful communication in this advertisement since it leverages the expectations of relevance of the audience from recovering the intended meaning. The search for relevance parallels the least cognitive effort.

1. Ostensive stimulus and the linguistic input: The advertisement plays on the word 'bazar' and repeats it in two different contexts. It is a homonymic pun; however, it can be regarded as antanaclasis since the name of the application is built on the noun 'bazar'. The advertiser starts with an imperative structure 'Don't go to bazar' as a result of the piece of information that 'bazzaar itself is coming'. The first part of the slogan is the consequence and the second part is the factor. The literal meaning of 'bazar' is the physical marketplace where people buy and sell goods, however, it is also a name of an application for marketing. Even the verb 'yiet' has two meanings. Literally, it means 'is coming' when its subject is 'bazar', but idiomatically it refers to



'delivered' when its subject is the name of the application 'bazaar'. Structurally as well as semantically, the first 'bazar' is the location and it is the complement of the prepositional phrase 'to the bazar' while it is the agent of the action 'is coming' in the second part when it acquires the property of movement as a mobile entity.

2. Assigning and disambiguating reference and making assumptions (explicature): The audience assigns the reference of 'bazar' differently from 'bazaar' since their contexts are different.

Assumption (1): Normally people go to bazar for some need. So, the word 'bazar' refers to the physical place where people can obtain their needs, however, it requires effort and time. The advertiser triggers the audience with the negative imperative verb, 'Don't go', and ensures them that 'bazaar' comes to you. This violates the world knowledge because locations cannot move. The literal interpretation is rejected and non-literal, and pragmatically enriched meaning is required with the help of the context.

Assumption (2): In modern life, it is assumed that delivery services exist and can recover this place. Marketing can be done at home or everywhere through applications designed to invest time and place. The word 'bazaar' is one of these applications. These applications offer delivering peoples' order, so the verb 'yiet or dêt' can be assigned as 'come or arrive' and for the online marketing it refers to the verb 'deliver'.

Assumption (3): It is an advertisement for online marketing. It uses the imperative structure not to deliver an order on the audience, instead it is used to recommend using this online platform. The first 'bazar' is for the physical location and the second 'bazaar', which is based on the word 'bazar', is used as a name of the platform.

3. Derivation of inferences (implicature): From the premises made from the pragmatic enrichment, the audience concludes that going to bazar requires time and effort and it is a traditional way of shopping. The bridging inference is that it is more desirable to be at home and order things and it is more convenient to be served. Therefore, there is a shift from location to application and the advertiser is confident with the quality and service of this platform and offers the audience the intense services of 'bazaar' platform. On the other hand, elaborative inference derives the implicature that delivery service provides a full range of experience and quality besides using progressive model of technology and innovative commerce.

4. Optimal relevance: The slogan clearly communicates the services of the new alternative way of shopping through a highly-qualified modern way of taking the action of bazar.

Processing effort: The advertisement is straightforward and requires a moderate effort to seek interpretation that is culturally familiar and needs least effort. It has the sense of humor when it establishes the concept of the moving bazar. It repeats the noun 'bazaar' to remind the audience of the platform name.

Cognitive effect: The advertisement presents a contradiction like 'Don't go... bazaar comes' that requires resolution. From the contradiction and abnormality of the moving bazar, the audience derives a set of implicatures, so the most relevant interpretation is processed with least effort and presumption of optimal relevance is satisfied, for example 'Using the services of bazaar is the best alternative'. It is candidate to be the most relevant and the least effort is required. Processing stops interpretation when optimal relevance is achieved.

5. Conclusion

The current analysis of English and Kurdish examples yields the following key concluding points. The findings directly address the research questions and fulfill the objectives of the study. These points represent the most prominent findings of this research.

1. The language of advertisement usually evokes common resemblance thoughts, puns, retrieving on an idiom, and a cultural idea rather than presenting just facts. English advertisements like E1, E2, E3, and E5 alongside Kurdish instances K2, K4, and K5 usually favor simple, straightforward, and accessible phrasing. Despite their transparent language, they prefer to create a gap between the literal and the intended meaning.
2. Advertisers, namely both English and Kurdish ones, create puns in different ways. Some depend on acoustic sameness 'fry day: Friday', some others rely heavily on syntactic puzzle 'seafood: see food; Hana be hanamanewe hat; ça bê ça nebê; bo ayndeyekî rûnak toş were bo runakî', or a dead metaphor 'A cut above the rest', or a famous idiom 'seize the day: seize the yay'. According to RT, processing such advertisements undergoes some cognitive conditions that the ultimate intended interpretation is extracted from the state of being satisfied with the most relevant interpretation.



From the data analyzed in this study, according to cognitive pragmatics, puns require more mental effort because they activate dual interpretations. Relevance Theory works within two main principles; cognitive and communicative. Cognitively, there are a set of phases to analyze puns. Firstly, reference is assigned and disambiguated literally and idiomatically, then pragmatically enriched to derive the assumptions. The audience then base their implicatures on these assumptions and finally the most optimally relevant interpretation is driven. Communicatively, puns trigger a playful sense that labels the lightheartedness and humorous fact from them. It makes the advertisement more persuasive and memorable.

In English advertisement, advertisers try to maintain cultural embeddedness and specificity in which the target audience trace the phonetic play like 'fry day; Friday' or 'yay; day' or recognize any idiom or dead metaphor that is used as a basis of the pun. The syntactic function of the elements is deviated to be used as an ostensive stimulus to create humorous effect, for example, 'seafood differently

It is also concluded that in Kurdish advertisements, the names of the brands mostly are chosen for meaningful associations and memorability. Advertisers base their puns on reusing the name of the brand in a different syntactic function. In consequence, this triggers the target audience and tries to resolute what is being dually contextualized.

The findings confirm that RT provides a robust framework for the analysis of puns in English

and Kurdish advertisements. It effectively illustrates how puns work in advertisements across

linguistic contexts and how do they achieve optimal relevance. Comparison between English

and Kurdish advertisement reveal that RT depends on cultural-specific contextual assumptions

that depend the creativity of the advertisers. This confirms that RT's cost-benefit is culturally-

dependent and consequently, it highlights flexibility of RT in framing the cognitive aspect of

analysis.

References

1. Abass, F. (2007). 'The use of puns in advertising', [*Journal/Bulletin Name*], **Aichi University** in Japan (Volume 16) 43(16), pp. 45-62.

2. Bara, B.G. (2010). *Cognitive Pragmatics: The Mental Processes of Communication*. Translated by J. Douthwaite. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press. (A Bradford Book).
3. Belch, G.E. and Belch, M.A. (2018). *Advertising and Promotion: An Integrated Marketing Communications Perspective*. 11th edn. New York: McGraw-Hill Education.
4. Bengtsson, A. and Hancock, V. (eds.) (2010). *Humour in Language: Linguistic and Textual Aspects*. Stockholm Studies in Modern Philology, New Series. Stockholm: Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis.
5. Chang, Yujie (2018) *A Study on Puns in English Advertisement from the Perspective of Relevance Theory*, Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research, volume 151 ,2nd International Conference on Economics and Management, Education, Humanities and Social Sciences (EMEHSS 2018)
6. Mazzone, Macro (2018) *Cognitive Pragmatics: Mindreading, Inferences, and Consciousness*, De Gruyter Mouton: Boston, Berlin
7. Lazović, V. (2018) 'How to P(1)ay with Words? The Use of Puns in Online Bank Advertisements in English and Serbian in Light of Relevance Theory', *Elope*, 15(2), pp. 25–44. doi: 10.4312/elope.15.2.25-44. Available at: revije.ff.uni-lj.si/elope (Accessed: 17 March 2025).
8. **Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary:** [Merriam-Webster](https://www.merriam-webster.com/)
9. Schmid, H.-J. (ed.) (2012). *Cognitive Pragmatics*. Handbooks of Pragmatics, Vol. 4. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.
10. Shimp, T.A. and Andrews, J.C. (2012). *Advertising, Promotion, and Other Aspects of Integrated Marketing Communications*. 9th edn. Australia: Cengage Learning
11. van Mulken, M., van Enschoot-van Dijk, R. and Hoeken, H. (2005) *Puns, Relevance and Appreciation in Advertisements*, *Journal of Pragmatics*, 37(5), pp. 707-721. doi:10.1016/j.pragma.2004.09.008
12. Wilson, D. and Sperber, D. (2002) '*Relevance Theory*', in Horn, L. and Ward, G. (eds.) *Handbook of Pragmatics*. Oxford: Blackwell.
13. Wilson, D. and Sperber, D. (2004). '*Relevance Theory*', in Horn, L.R. and Ward, G. (eds.) *The Handbook of Pragmatics*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 607-632.
14. **Xiaoli, G.** (2015) 'A study of the humor aspect of English puns', *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 5(6), pp. 1211–1215.
15. Zheng, Lan (2019) *A Brief Analysis about Pragmatic Function of Pun in English Advertising Based on Grice's Cooperative Principle*, Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research, volume 371, 2nd International Workshop on Education Reform and Social Sciences (ERSS 2019)
16. Žyško, K. (2017) *A cognitive linguistics account of wordplay*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

English Advertisement accesses:



1. **McDonald's fries:**

https://www.google.com/search?q=9mcdonald%E2%80%99s+%E2%80%98what%E2%80%99s+today%3F+fry+day+%E2%80%94+get+a+free+fry+with+your+order!&oq=&gs_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbWUqCQgDEEUYOxjCAzIJCAAQRRg7GMIDMgkIARBFgDsYwgMyCQgCEEUYOxjCAzIJCAMQRRg7GMIDMgkIBBBFGDsYwgMyCQgFEEUYOxjCAzIJCAyQRRg7GMIDMgkIBxBFGDsYwgPSAQoxOTM5NmowajE1qAIIsAIB&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8

2. **Red**

Lobster:

https://www.facebook.com/theCurveShoppingMall/photos/enjoy-seafood-like-no-other-with-red-lobsters-seafood-differently-promotion-come/5329007420506144/?_rdr

3. **A Cut Above The Rest:** <https://www.yelp.com/biz/a-cut-above-the-rest-huntington-beach>

4. **The Globe News:** <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/community/digital-lab/the-globe-and-mail-now-on-your-wrist/article24097622/>

5. **Baskin robins:**

<https://news.baskinrobbins.com/news/baskin-robbins-aims-to-inspire-everyone-to-seize-the-yay-through-rebrand-and-new-campaign>

Kurdish Advertisement accesses

1. **Hana dishwashing liquid**

https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=%D8%B2%D8%A7%D9%87%DB%8C+%D9%87%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%A7

Lêzan school: Ewan le lêzanin boye awa lêzanin... Bo eweî mindalleket lêzan bêt, pêwîste le lêzan bêt Lezan school: Ewan le Lezann, boya wa lezann

<https://www.facebook.com/reel/1311672673822319>

2. **Chai**

Nawras

<https://www.facebook.com/nawrasgroup/videos/573941403166971/>

3. **Peymangay Runaki:** Bô Ayndeyekî runak tosh runaki helbzhera, Pele bka, tôsh were bo runaki, Runaki institute:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=efcxaPKtNBM>

4. **Bazaar:**

https://www.google.com/search?q=%D8%AA%DB%86+%D9%85%DB%95%DA%86%DB%86+%D8%A8%DB%86+%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%B1+%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%B1+%D8%AE%DB%86%DB%8C+%DB%8C%DB%95%D8%AA&oq=%D8%AA%DB%86&gs_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbWUqBggAEEUYOzIGCAAQRRg7MgYIARBFgDkyBwgCEAAyGAQyBwgDEAAyGAQyBwgEEAAyGAQyBwgFEAAyGAQyBwgGEAAyGAQyBwgHEAAyGAQyBwgIEAAyGAQyBwgJEAAYgATSAQoyNTcyNGowajE1qAIAAsAIA&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:a7ff1e73,vid:tiNUZAD9-Qg,st:0