Punning (تُوارِيْهِا) in Arabic: A Semantic Study
Punning (tawriya) in Arabic: A Semantic Study

Abstract

This study attempts to present a complete picture, as much as possible, of pun in Arabic as a rhetorical device that stands as a bridge between rhetoric and linguistics. As no independent work has been done in Arabic that deals with punning as a semantic issue the study addresses itself to bridge this gap by investigating the linguistic aspects of this hybrid phenomenon. It aims to provide a semantic account for pun or, the so called ‘tawriya’ in Arabic that uncovers the nature of words being involved in. It also proposes a classificatory system for categorizing puns...
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semantically into the following types: Polysemous, naming, homonymous, homophonous and idiomatic.

Keywords: pun; tawriya; rhetoric; semantics; polysemy; homonymy; mushtarak lafdhi; communication.

1. Introduction

Punning is one of the common forms of language play that can be found in all forms of linguistic communication ranging from daily conversation to literary works. It has not only been a part of the everyday use of speakers but it has also become a part of their literature (Davis, 1954; Mahood, 1957; Redfern, 1984 and Cullers, 1988). The act of punning, in general, refers to the use of a word in such a way as to suggest two or more meanings or the use of two or more words of the same or nearly the same sound with different meanings with an intention to achieve certain rhetorical effects. It, thus, arises from the possibility of having a word that has more than one meaning. Al-Kawwâz (2002), in her study of pun in English, uncovers the nature of words used in the process of pun making claiming that punning is a phenomenon that ‘straddles the boundary between literary studies and linguistics’. She contends that in addition to being a trope, pun seems to be a linguistic device that relies heavily, in its mechanism, on the phenomena of polysemy and homonymy.

The art of punning has been an interesting topic of many studies in different cultures. In Arabic, it has been called tawriya which refers to the rhetorical device that involves an intentional use of a word or an expression that has more than one meaning in a way the speaker hides one meaning by showing another. Al-Kawwaz, in her attempt to make a contrastive study of pun in English and Arabic, finds out that she cannot accomplish her study because pun or tawriya in Arabic has not been studied linguistically yet. The fact is that although Arab rhetoricians and literary scholars have written a lot about this phenomenon, to the
best of the researcher’s knowledge, no linguistic study has been carried out so far to investigate puns in Arabic. Thus, attempts to tackle puns linguistically have been very scarce except for some scattered references in few books on philology and linguistics such as Al-Şāliḥ(1976), ʿUmar(1982) and ʿAbd Al-Tawwāb(1999).

The present paper tries its best to bridge this gap by examining the linguistic aspects of punning in Arabic depending on Al-Kawwaz’s (2002:119) claim that this phenomenon is ‘a valid topic for linguistic pursuit’ which is deeply rooted in the field of semantics. On this basis, it proposes a semantic description of puns in Arabic that helps the researcher to produce a workable classificatory system to categorize puns semantically. Thus, the aim of this paper, however, is neither to show the status of puns in literary studies nor their effect on the text and reader. Rather, the goal is to put forward a study that stands as a bridge between rhetoric and semantics focusing on the essence of punning in these two fields and the nature of words being involved in.

Since the term *tawriya* has been used to designate ‘pun’ in English section (2) is devoted to explaining its lexical meaning in language and clarifying its concept in terminology. Section (3) sheds light on pun in Arabic rhetoric as being one of the semantic embellishments in “ilm al-badī”. Section (4) describes it within the field of semantics illustrating the nature of words used in the act of punning which is almost polysemous or homonymous. It pursues different studies of Arab scholars to the concept of *mushtarak lafdhi*, its types and its relationship to the phenomenon of punning. Section (5) explains how puns exactly work in communication. Section (6) is devoted to showing the possible categorizations of pun and the criteria upon which it has been categorized. In addition to the rhetorical categorization of pun which is the only one made for puns in Arabic, the present study tries to categorize puns semantically by
inventing a scale that includes the following categories: polysemous, naming, homonymous, homophonous and idiomatic. After analyzing selected examples of pun carrying verses for different poets many findings are formulated and discussed. Finally in section (7), the study draws some general conclusions that may serve as a foundation and springboard for the contrastive study of pun in English and Arabic.

2. Pun (tawriya): Pursuing the Concept

According to Wahba(1974:453), ‘pun’ is a term used to indicate two literary devices in Arabic rhetoric: tawriya (تويرية) and jinās (جناس). In this study, the term ‘pun’ will be taken to refer to the concept of tawriya only taking into consideration another term to refer to jinās. (For more information see Ghazāla, 2000: 76, 85). The use of the word tawriya as an equivalent term to ‘pun’ undoubtedly involves scrutinizing its meaning in language and terminology to identify and clarify the concept of punning in Arabic.

2.1 Pun (tawriya) in Language

The word tawriya conjures up a lot of speculations concerning its lexical meaning which refers to both ‘hiding, concealing’ and ‘displaying, showing’. This matter made Arab lexicographers think of many roots for this word and then propound different views about its derivation. For example, Al-Azhari(2001: 15/221) states that the word tawriya refers to the meanings of ‘hiding’ and ‘concealing’ for being derived from the verb warrā (وارى) which means ‘hid something’ or ‘hid something and showed something else’.

Ibn Fāris(1984:6/104) emphasizes the sense of ‘hiding’ when he draws the attention to the relationship between the word tawriya and the verb yatawārā (يئوارى) which means ‘to hide from something or somebody’ as used in the Glorious Qur'ān. Let’s consider the following verse:
And when the news of (the birth of) a female (child) is brought to any of them, his face becomes dark, and he is filled with inward grief!* He hides himself from the people because of the evil of that whereof he has been informed. Shall he keep her with dishonor or bury her in the earth? Certainly, evil is their decision.

(Khân and Al-Hilâlî,1996: 354)

Ibn Fâris(1984:6/104) makes another emphasis on the same meaning when he claims that the word *tawriya* has been derived from the word *warâ’* (ءِرَاء) which means ‘behind’. He shows that when someone puts something behind another it will be hidden because of something front (apparent). This view has been rejected for being built upon the meanings of the words themselves rather than their derivation (Ibn Mandhûr,1988: 1/193). In spite of this rejection, it seems to be acceptable since it reflects the same meaning of the word *tawriya*.

The word *tawriya* may indicate another meaning which is different from what has been mentioned above. Al-Jawhari (1987: 6/22-5) refers to this meaning quoting that the word *tawriya* has been derived from the verb *wârâ* (وارى) which means ‘blaze fire’. It, thus, has the meaning of ‘displaying and showing’ because ‘blazing fire’ involves ‘displaying it and showing its flames’. Many Arab scholars maintain this view when they suggest other roots that give the same meaning and support this view (For more details see Fayyâd,1985:9).

It has been clear that the word *tawriya* indicates different meanings according to the roots it has been derived from. Some of them are related in meaning whereas others are not. It is also...
worthy to mention that most Arab scholars are unanimous on the fact that the word *tawriya* means ‘hiding something and concealing it’ or more precisely ‘hiding something by showing something else’. This meaning furnishes the way for its meaning in terminology that helps to formulate the accurate concept of *tawriya* as a technical term used in Arabic rhetoric.

### 2.2 Pun (*tawriya*) in Terminology

The term *tawriya* has been defined differently by different scholars. Most definitions are similar in content but divergent in wording. Ibn Munqiṭ (1960: 60), one of the pioneers who tried to explain *tawriya*, defines it as ‘the use of a word that has two meanings in a way that when the speaker intends one of them, he covers it up by another’. A similar definition is that of Al-Miṣri (1963:268) who states that *tawriya* occurs when a word has two possible meanings where the speaker shows one of them and neglects the other. However, the one he intends is the one he neglects not the one he shows. In these definitions, there is an indication that the term *tawriya* refers to an intentional use of the meanings that a word may have in such a way that enables the speaker to cover up what he intends by showing what he does not.

Al-Sakkāki (1981:226), in his attempt to define the term *tawriya*, substitutes it with the term *ṭhām* (إيهام) which means ‘double entendre’. For him, it occurs when the expression has two uses, near *muwarrā bih* (مويرى به) and far *muwarrā ḍanḥ* (موارى عنه). The speaker uses the nearer to delude the hearer till he arrives at the farther. An emphasis on the use of the term ‘double entendre’ has been drawn by Al-Qızwīnī (1998:331) to refer to the use of an expression with double meaning: near and far in a way he intends the far. Al-Ḥalabi (1980:249), on his part, uses the terms *tawriya*, *ṭhām* and *takhajjul* (تختلج) which means ‘fancying’ interchangeably to refer to the phenomenon in which the speaker uses expressions with multiple meanings. When
triggered by the speaker the hearer may understand the nearer though the speaker intends the farther.

A more technical definition has been brought forward by Al-Ħilli (cited in Al-Ħamawi, 1987: 2/45) in which he shows the nature of words used in the phenomenon of *tawriya*. He describes it as the use of a homonymous lexical word that has two meanings: near and far. Using such a word, the speaker shows that the near is the intended till he brings a contextual clue that deciphers the far and intended meaning. Al-Ħamawi (1987:2/39) assures Al-Ħilli’s reference to the use of homonymous words when he states that *tawriya* occurs when the speaker uses an expression that has either two literal meanings or one being literal and the other non literal(figurative). One of the meanings is close and apparently indicated by the speaker and the second is far and underlying. Though the speaker intends the far one he intentionally manifests the near so that he confuses the hearer to accept the near as the intended meaning whereas it is not. For example:

\[
\text{أقول وقد شدو إلى الحرب غارة دعوني فاني أكل الخنزير بالجبن}
\]

*I say as they made a war raid
leave me for I eat bread with cheese!*(2)


In this verse, *tawriya* occurs in the word *jubn* (جُبن) which yields two different meanings: ‘cheese’ and ‘cowardice’. The first meaning is linked to the act of eating in that the speaker evades from taking part in war because he is busy in eating ‘bread’ with ‘cheese’. The second is linked to the act of submitting in that the speaker announces that he will not take part in war for his submission to live cowardly. The poet plays
upon these two meanings in a way that steers the attention of the hearer to the near and unintended meaning ‘cheese’ whereas he actually intends the far and underlying one ‘cowardice’.

3. Pun (tawriya) in Arabic Rhetoric

Tawriya, henceforth pun, is probably a universal phenomenon that can be found in different languages where it is employed in all forms of linguistic communication ranging from daily conversation to literary works. It, thus, has not only been a part of the everyday use of speakers but it has also become a part of their literature. As regards Arabic, Arabs used puns in their everyday speech in a considerably earlier period than the time in which Arabic rhetorical theory began to develop. Poets also admired puns to the extent they showed special genius in producing them. They treated pun as a witticism that involves a trick of combining two or more ideas within a single word or expression to mislead the hearer and give him a sharp surprise. For them, it has been regarded as an effective way of creating puzzles that attract the hearer’s attention and allow him feel good about his intellectual capabilities that solve them. Pun has been also considered a strategy used to evade telling truth or talking about undesired or banned things. (Maṭlūb, 1980: 300; Sulṭān, 1986: 208 and Al-Khafāji, 2004: 131).

As a literary device with such strong expressive power and high esteem pun has occupied a significant position in literature, rhetoric as well as in ways of reflecting on and conceptualizing them. It has been treated as a salient topic in one of the major disciplines of Arabic rhetoric viz. ʿilm al-badīʿ (عِلْم ’اﻟﺒﺪﯾﻊ ‘schemes’). This discipline deals with linguistic features used to give the discourse decorative elegance and acceptability provided being clear in its significance and compatible with context. It relies on using mechanisms of beautifying the discourse which are called by the term muḥassināt (مُﺤﺴﻨﺎت) that means ‘embellishments’ (Abu Al-ʿAddūs, 2007: 237). Muḥassināt or embellishments are those linguistic and stylistic mechanisms
which aim to provide ornamentation to Arabic discourse. They are of two major categories: *muhassināt lafdhiyya* (مُحسنات لفظية) ‘lexical embellishments’ or and *muhassināt ma`nawiyya* (مُحسنات معنوية) ‘semantic embellishments’; each of which has several forms. The former refers to those embellishing devices used to beautify a given discourse through a given lexical item employed in proposition. The distinctive feature of this mode of lexical scheme is that the beautifying feature will disappear if we change the lexical item by synonym such as alliteration, assonance, paronomasia, parallelism, zeugma… and others. The latter is used to beautify a given discourse through semantic embellishing devices whose mechanism is attributed not only to the signification of the lexical items employed but also to the techniques employed by the communicator. The distinctive feature of the mode of semantic scheme entails that the beautifying feature will not disappear if we change the lexical item concerned by a synonym. There are many types of the semantic embellishing devices such as pun, antithesis, asterism, conceit, euphemism…and others (Abu Al-`Addūs, 2007:237 Abdul Raof, 2006:239, 243- 4, 259).

In the Arabic rhetoric, pun has been regarded as one of the semantic embellishments which is attributed to the discipline of “ilm al- badī ‘schemes’. It beautifies a given discourse through using a semantic embellishing technique that occurs when a lexical item is employed with an intention to create pun. This item or the word employed must have two meanings: one is the surface or near meaning and the other is the underlying or far meaning which is the intended by the speaker. Thus, pun takes place because the hearer may overlook the underlying meaning and take into account the surface meaning only (Abdul Raof, 2006: 254). For example:

> فقالت: رج برك من أمامي  
> قلت: برك أنت روحي.
So she said: Go for God’s Sake from front of me
So I said to her: For God’s Sake you do go!!!

(cited in Al-Ħusaini, 2008: 453)

The pun lies in the expression ُرُوحِي (رُوحِي) which gives rise to two different meanings ‘you do go’ and ‘my soul’. The reader may be confused for the first moment and make an error when he thinks of the imperative verb ‘do go’ as the intended meaning. Being aware of the poet or lover intention the reader realizes that this meaning is the one not intended by the poet and the other meaning viz. ‘you are my soul’ is the intended one.

It is worth noting that as much as pun has been studied in Arabic rhetoric it has not been tackled in linguistics. To the best of the researcher’s knowledge, attempts to investigate pun linguistically have been very scarce except for some scattered references in few books on philology and linguistics such as Al-Šālih(1976), ُعُمَر(1982) and ُأُبْدُ عَلِيِّ(1999). Hence, the following section is to be devoted to illustrating the notion of punning within the linguistic circles of studies.

4. Pun in Semantics

The phenomenon of punning is deeply rooted in the field of semantics where, according to Saussure(1983:67), the meaning of a word (sign) arises from the interaction of signifier (the physical image) and signified (the mental concept). Throughout the use of puns this interaction is violated and the main reason is that pun involves the use of one signifier with two signifieds or two identical or similar signifiers with different signifieds. It means that puns are principally ‘designed to sever the bond between signifier and signified, word and meaning, on which our discourses crucially depend’(Sim, 1987:326). Accordingly, they show a fundamental characteristic of the linguistic system - the anisomorphism between the levels of signifier and signified, that is, they reflect the lack of correspondence between form and
meaning which is evident in phenomena of polysemy and homonymy. This affirms the essential relationship between the phenomenon of punning on one hand and the phenomena of polysemy and homonymy on the other. Attridge (1988:144) points out this relationship when he describes pun as ‘the use of one signifier with two possible signifieds, which in a particular context are simultaneously activated, and as two identical signifiers which in a particular context are made to coalesce’. Thus, he refers to the polysemy in the first case and to the use of homonymy in the second.

In an attempt to explain the semantic aspects of punning in Arabic, it becomes very crucial to shed much light on the phenomena of polysemy and homonymy in this language.

4.1 Polysemy and Homonymy in Arabic

According to Ullmann (1962:159), it is a fundamental feature of human speech to have words with more than one meaning so that it seems possible for Arabic to have the phenomena of polysemy and homonymy which are referred to by the term mushtarāk lafdhi (مُشْتَرَك ْلَفْظِي). The following sections are to highlight the concept of mushtarāk lafdhi and its types in an attempt to uncover the nature of words involved in the process of punning.

4.1.1 The Concept Mushtarāk Lafdhi

Arab philologists were the first to deal with words that have more than one meaning. They paid much attention to investigate them in the language of Glorious Qur'ān, Prophetic Ḥadīth (Prophet Mohammed’s (PBUH) speech) and Arabic in general. Among these scholars were Muqātil Al-Balkhi, Ḥārūn Al-Azdi and Al-Husain Al-Dāmaghāni who studied such words in the language of Qur'ān and wrote many books under the title Al-Wujūh wa Al-Nadhār (الوجوه والنظائر) which means ‘shades and equals’. In their books, they used the word Al-Wujūh (الوجوه)
‘shades’ to refer to the meanings a word may have whereas the word *Al-Nadhā’r* (الندائة) ‘equals’ is used to denote different words that have the same meaning (*Umar, 1982: 147-8*). Hence, it seems clear that they used the word ‘shades’ to indicate what all Arab linguists call *mushtarak lafdhi* (متشترک لفظي) and the word ‘equals’ to refer to what they call *mutarādifāt* (المترادفات) which means ‘synonyms’ (*ibid*:148-9).

Al-Šāliḥ(1976:302) and ʿAbd Al-Tawwāb(1999:324) mention that Al-Siyūṭi (1958: 1/406) stated one of the most accurate definitions of the *mushtarak lafdhi* as ‘an expression that signifies two or more different meanings which are equally accepted by the native users of the language. This shows that ‘some of Arab speech are words that agree in form and differ in meaning’ as Sibawayīh (*1*٩*٨*٨: 1/7) claimed. Ibn Fāris (1963:201) assured the existence of such words in Arabic as the word (عين’eye’ when used to indicate different meanings: (عين الماء) coin of money, and (عين الماء) rasing cloud. Al-Āmili (cited in Al-Ħakīm, 1965:74) defined the *mushtarak lafdhi* as ‘stating an expression with the same form and pronunciation for two or more disparate meanings’. The words *sin* (مين) and *daqīq* (دقيق) are two examples of *mushtarak lafdhi* in that each one has two or more disparate meanings: ‘tooth and age’ for the first and ‘flour, accurate and thin’ for the second.

Early Arab linguists differed in their opinions about the phenomenon of *mushtarak lafdhi*. Some of them denied its existence in Arabic claiming that it might happen accidently as a result of the semantic development of some words via figuration and metonymy. One of these scholars was Ibn Darastawayīh (1975) who insisted on his rejection to accept the verb *wajada* (وجد) *mushtarak lafdhi* though it can be used to indicate different meanings like ‘to find, be angry and be in love with’ (Al-Šāliḥ,1976: 303) as shown in the following sentences:
He found the thing.

He became angry.

He felt love with him.

Ibn Darastawayīh(1975) did not agree that the word *wajada* is a single word used for different meanings but all its meanings are the same which referred to: ‘performing something whether good or bad’. He also argued that the one who neither speculates these meanings nor investigates the facts of their different uses thinks that they are different meanings for the same word. He also accounted for the existence of identical words when he claimed that they might come from two different languages or they occur because of omission or abbreviation that make different words tend to be identical or similar in form and pronunciation (Ibn Darastawayīh, 1975:167-77). Moreover, the argument of scholars who denied *mushtarak lafdhi* principally relies on the purpose of language viz. to make understanding in that they denied the existence of *mushtarak lafdhi* since its use causes a lot of equivocation, indeterminacy and vagueness which is not accepted in language at all (For more details see “Abd Al-Tawwāb, 1999: 325 and Manqūr, 2011:173)

On the other hand, there were many scholars who believed in the existence of *mushtarak lafdhi* presenting authentic examples to prove their belief such as Al-Āṣmaʿī, Al-khalīl, Sibawayīh and Abu ʿUmar (Umar,1982:158). They used the term *mushtarāk lafḍī* to refer to all words that have more than one meaning (as shown in cf.5) regardless to the following points (Umar,1982:158-9):

1. The word can be considered *mushtarāk lafḍī* whether its meanings are related or not. e.g., the word *hilāl* (ہلال) has many related meanings such as Crescent, nail clipper, an
iron used for hunting...etc. and the word ‘ard (أرض) has three unrelated meanings viz. earth, cold(n.) and thunder.

2. The word is *mushtarak lafdhi* whether its two meanings are antonyms or not. For example, the word *jalal* (جلال) can be used to mean ‘grave and little’ and the word *jaon* (جون) for ‘white and black’.

3. The word is *mushtarak lafdhi* whether its two meanings are used in one or two dialects. For example, the word *sarḥān* (سَرْحَان) means ‘lion’ in haḍīl dialect and ‘wolf’ for all Arabs.

4. The word is *mushtarak lafdhi* whether its meanings belong to the same grammatical category or to different parts of speech. For example, the word *ʿajam* (أجم) means ‘to get near to’ when used as a verb and it can be used as an adjective with both ‘ram and man’ to mean ‘a ram without horns or a man without launce’.

Al-Āmidi (1981:1/20) assured that all these words are cases of *mushtarak lafdhi* when he claimed that the phenomenon of *mushtarak lafdhi* is found not only in Arabic but also in the language of the Glorious Qurān. He defended his claim by stating that if it has been impossible to understand the intended meaning from the *mushtarak lafdhi* itself it would have been very easy to get understanding from the context of situation that helps to grasp the intended meaning. Thus, it can be safely said that when such words happen in language they can be definitely found in the Glorious Qurān. He mentioned the following verse as evidence to his claim (1981: 1/21-2):

\[
٧٠
وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا غَسَسَ١٧
\]

*And by the night as it departs*

(Khān and Al-Hilālī, 1996: 785)

In this verse, the word *ʿasʿas* (عَسْسَعْس) is *mushtarak lafdhi*

Thus it can be safely said that all the above mentioned words seem to be mushtarak lafdhi since they look alike even though their uses and meanings are completely different. Moreover, their existence in Arabic becomes one of the salient features that denote its lexical width and expressive potentials.

4.1.2 Types of Mushtarak Lafdhi

It is worthy to note that most early studies of mushtarak lafdhi were far from tackling this phenomenon on a highly scientific basis. It might be because of their focus on the issue of its existence in Arabic that needs much effort and time to enumerate words and list their meanings. However, there were some scholars who treated the topic of mushtarak lafdhi in a different way so that they began distinguishing words into three types: mustaʿār (مَستَعَار) ‘borrowed’, manqūl (مَنْقُول) ‘transferred’ and mushtarak (مُشَتَرَك) ‘joined’ (Ali, 2003:346). According to Al-Ghazāli (1983:56), the borrowed (mustaʿār) occurs when a word that signifies a conventional meaning is sometimes borrowed to refer to another thing depending on certain similar aspects that correlate these two things. As a result, this word can be temporarily used to mean something else i.e. the word ‘mother’ which means ‘a female parent’ can be used to refer to the ‘earth’ (mother of all mankind). It is clear that the reason behind using ‘borrowed’ as a name for this type of mushtarak lafdhi is to show that the word ‘mother’ is not always used to mean ‘earth’ but it is occasionally borrowed for certain reasons (Al-Ghazāli, 1983: 56).

The transferred (manqūl) refers to the word which is transferred from its own meaning to another one that becomes its constant(fixed) meaning. This happens without changing its conventional meaning in the first use. For instance, the word ḥajja (حَج) whose conventional meaning ‘to go’ is transferred to
indicate something else viz. ‘to make the pilgrimage’. Therefore, this word can be used to refer to two different meanings: the conventional and the transferred. The difference that distinguishes the borrowed from the transferred is the constancy in use (ibid). The third type is the joined (mushtarāk) that, as Al-Ghazālī (ibid:56-7) sees, occurs when the same form refers to two different meanings. They both are conventional in that they are neither based on borrowing for certain occasions nor being transferred (ibid). It can be said that the criterion that Al-Ghazālī adopted in his categorization depends on the fact that the first two types results from the variety in the uses of words whereas the third seems to be related to the conventional meanings of the words themselves (For more details see "Ali, 2003: 345-59).

In his discussion of Al-Ghazālī’s categorization, "Ali (ibid:347) draws attention to some essential points. He says that it is clear that when Al-Ghazālī proposed this distinction he saw that the first two types: the borrowed and the transferred correlate with the variety of word uses. It means that the word may have two or more meanings because of its use in different situations. However, all these new meanings are related to the conventional meaning of this word. The third type or the joined correlates with the conventional meaning itself in that two different words may accidentally have similar forms and pronunciations but different conventional meanings. On this basis, "Ali recognizes that the essence of this triple division has not been far from the dual division of western semanticists in which they categorize words that have two or more meanings into two types: polysemy and homonymy. On one hand, polysemy occurs when a single lexical item has several different but related senses that typically originate from metaphorical or metonymic usage such as ‘mouth’ meaning both ‘organ of body’ and ‘entrance of cave’. Homonymy, on the other hand, occurs when a lexical item accidentally carries two (or more) distinct
and unrelated meanings such as ‘punch1’ which means ‘a blow with fist’ and ‘punch2’ which means ‘a drink’ (Lyons,1977).

The distinction between polysemy and homonymy in English has been made according to certain criteria. One of them relies on the concept of ‘relatedness/ unrelatedness of meaning’. It seems to correlate with the native speaker’s intuition that certain meanings are connected and others are not. Generally, relatedness in meaning points to polysemy whereas unrelatedness in meaning points to homonymy(Lyons,1977). Hence, one can say that the criterion of ‘relatedness’ used to distinguish polysemy from homonymy emphasizes Ali’s claim that the dual and triple divisions are very close in their essence. Therefore, whenever meanings are related the word is to be called ta’adud al-ma’nā (تعدد المعنى) which means ‘multiplicity of meaning’ or polysemy such as the word ‘neck’ in English which means ‘part of the body’, ‘neck of a bottle’ and ‘collar’ and `ayīn (عين) in Arabic which means ‘eye’, ‘spy’, ‘fountain’. On the other hand, when the meanings are completely different the similar words are called mushtarak lafdhi (مُشَتَرَك لَفْظِي) such as the word ‘bank’ in English which refers to ‘side of the river’ and ‘financial institution’ and the word khāl (خال) in Arabic which means ‘maternal uncle’ and ‘mole’.

Accordingly, most modern Arabic studies of mushtarak lafdhi have been extremely influenced by writings of western semanticists like Ullmann(1962), Nida(1975), Lyons(1977), Leech(1981), and others. Among them are the studies of Umar(1982), Al-Khūli (2001), ‘Ismā‘īl (2011) and others. For them, mushtarak lafdhi can be divided into different types as illustrated in the following:

1. The first type includes words that have central meanings around which other marginal meanings go. The central meaning actually refers to what a word means when it comes in isolation and it actually correlates the marginal
meanings to each other. The word *waraga* (ورقة) which means ‘paper’ is used as an example for this type of meaning. It can refer not only to the material in general but to a variety of other things: legal or official documents, a newspaper, a set of examination questions, a communication read or sent to a learned society…etc (Ullmann, 1962: 161-2 and Ḩ. Umar, 1982: 163-4).

2. The second type is clearly close to the first one. It arises from ‘shifts in application’ as Ullmann (ibid: 159) and Ḩ. Umar (ibid: 164-5) show. This type refers to those words that have a number of different aspects according to the contexts in which they are used. Some of these aspects are purely ephemeral; others may develop into permanent shades of meaning and, as the gap between them widens, they eventually come to be regarded as different senses of the same term. For example, when you say *kullīyyat al-ʿādāb* (كلية الآداب) and *al-qadiyya al-kullīyya* (القضية الكلية), the word *kullīyya* (كلية) means ‘college’ in the first and refers to the ‘generality and comprehensiveness’ in the second (Ismāʿīl, 2011: 183).

3. The third type refers to those words that have multiple meanings because of figuration. A word can be given one or more figurative senses without losing its original meaning: old and new will live on side by side as long as there is no possibility of confusion between them. In this way a number of metaphors or metonymies may ‘radiate’ from the central sense (Ullmann, 1962: 162 and Ḩ. Umar, 1982: 156-166). For example, the word *lisān* (لسان) which means ‘tongue’ has been developed to be used for ‘language’.

4. The fourth type occurs when there are two or more words which are identical in pronunciation and form but distinct in meaning. This is what semanticists call homonymy. Homonyms may happen under the influence of ordinary
phonetic changes that make two or more words which once had different forms coincide in the spoken language and sometimes in writing as well. To illustrate, the verb qāla (قَالَ) is the past form of the verbs: yaqūl (يَقُولُ) that means ‘say’ and yaqīl (يَقِيل) which means ‘fire’ (Ibn Madhūr, 1988:11/ 572, 579). Or it may happen when two words that are identical or similar in form and pronunciation come from different languages e.g., the word ḥub (حُب) which means ‘love’ in Arabic and ‘jar’ in Persian as Ibn Madhūr (1988:1/289) mentions.

These types are closely interrelated to the extent that it seems too difficult to make a decisive distinction between the second and the third types or to distinguish the third from the fourth. Therefore, it is important to state that since it is out of the interest of this study to go far in explaining the difference among these types it seems enough to make a clear cut line between the first three types as being closer to the concept of polysemy or multiplicity of meaning (ta’adud al-ma’nā) and the fourth as being closer to the concept of homonymy or mushtarak lafdhi. The researcher sees that this dichotomy is very important in her attempt to bring about the semantically based categorization of pun (see 6.2).

1.2 Mushtarak Lafdhi and Punning

It has been clear that mushtarak lafdhi is the characteristic of words that have more than one meaning. This characteristic makes possible the existence of pun since the latter involves playing on the meanings a word may have whether these meanings are related or not. Both mushtarak lafdhi and punning depend on similarity of form and disparity of meaning, that is, in both, there are always two or more meanings in some kind of coexistence. This shows the intimate relationship between these phenomena that seems to be a means-end relation in which the nature of mushtarak lafdhi represents the basis for its potential as a means of punning. Many scholars such as Al-Siyūṭi (1958:
1/381); Abd Al-Tawwâb (1967: 78 and 1999: 335) and Al-Şâlih (1976:304) observe this relationship and point out that the abundance of *mushtarak lafdhī* in Arabic is the main reason behind the emergence of pun and many literary devices that involve using words with different meanings. Sulţān (1986: 79) documents that Arabs are fond of such type of word using, quoting some examples that affirm how they fully exploit the phenomenon of *mushtarak lafdhī* to create pun-based texts such as jokes, riddles, enigmas, mysteries…etc.

Al-Shayîkh (1986), on his part, examines the relationship between *mushtarak lafdhī* and pun attentively in an attempt to distinguish each one of them. Scrutinizing the similarities and differences he argues that ‘though *mushtarak lafdhī* and pun seem to be just similar in many aspects they do differ in others’ (ibid:207). On the one hand, they are similar in two aspects: the nature of words involved (one form with two or more meanings) and their need to *qarīna* which means the contextual adjunct or attribute that helps the hearer to arrive at the intended meaning (ibid).

On the other hand, they differ in many aspects that make the borderline between them very clear. First, in the case of *mushtarak lafdhī*, there are no different types as those of pun that will be mentioned in 6.1). Second, the meanings of *mushtarak lafdhī* are always literal and obvious in that none of them is hidden and covered as in the case of pun. They are so equally acceptable and accessible in that no one seems to be nearer to the hearer/reader than the other. The contextual adjuncts are also used to arrive at the acceptable meaning of *mushtarak lafdhī* which is often literal not figurative (ibid:208). This tells that *mushtarak lafdhī* is used without an intention of hiding one of its meanings by showing another. Let’s see the following verse where the poet exploits the three meanings of the word *ghurūb*: 

"..."
O, my poor heart, the agony of love!
My neighbors departed at sunset pale,
With anguish looks I eye their resolve,
And tears gushing like a pouring pail,
With them, a noble lady, the tenderest,
Smiling like daisies of valleys.

(Al-Khalīl bin Aḥmad Al-Farāhīdi, cited in Al-Ṣaliḥ, 1976:308)

In this verse, the poet uses the word *ghurūb* (غُرُوب) as *mushtarak lafdhi* which is repeated three times with three different meanings: ‘sunset pale, pail, and valleys’. Whenever the word is used, its meaning seems to be literal and very clear to the extent that the reader can grasp it without being confused with its other meanings. None of them seems to be nearer to the reader than the other since the poet uses the word with such contextual adjuncts that show the meaning he intends in every time it is mentioned. In other words, he does not intend to hide one of its meaning by showing another as what he may do in the case of punning.

Al-Shayīkh(1986:209) mentions another difference between *mushtarak lafdhi* and punning. For him, *mushtarak lafdhi* only occurs in single words that have two or more meanings whereas pun occurs in single words as well as grammatical structures (phrases or complete sentences) that can be read in two or more different ways as shown in the following dialogue:
In this example, one of the speakers plays upon the meanings of the delivered questions deliberately to evade answering them. In these questions, there are three subtle puns of different types. Two arise from complete sentences and one stems from a single word. The first two puns lie in the first two questions: ‟Where do you come from?’ and ‟Where did you exit?’ respectively. Taking each question as a whole unit it can draw two readings which are completely different. The third pun lies in a single word where the lexical item ‟sin” (سن) refers to two different meanings: ‟age” and ‟tooth”. As a result, two different readings have been drawn: ‟how old are you” and ‟what is your tooth”.

After showing the minute differences between the phenomena of mushtarak lafdhi and punning it is worthy to note that the use of words, phrases or sentences that have different meanings is not enough for making them puns. This is due to the fact that puns involve a deliberate exploitation of such words and structures with an intention to hide one of their meanings by showing another to attract the attention of the hearer/reader and provoke him to look for the intended meaning. Arab scholars have referred to the intention of users in most definitions of puns but they have not tackled this aspect in details. Consequently, it seems very important to talk about pun in...
communication in order to realize the essence of intention in the process of pun making.

5. Pun in Communication

Ambiguity, in its general sense, has been usually taken as ‘a language characteristic that acts as a barrier to clear communication’. It impedes the function of language; that is, ‘the clean transmission of a pre-existing, self-sufficient, unequivocal meaning’ (Attridge, 1988:140). This raises an awkward question: how pun that essentially relies on ambiguity exactly functions in successful communication. According to Sperber and Wilson (1986:23), the success of communication depends on the hearer’s recovery of the speaker’s intended interpretation, and not merely on his recognition of its linguistic meaning. Therefore, communication can succeed when there is more than one possible interpretation of the utterance as long as the speaker’s intended interpretation is recoverable. This is what can be seen true in the case of punning where the speaker intends the hearer to arrive at one interpretation though he plays upon two or more meanings. This proves that the significance of puns lies in their intention; in that ‘they are meaningful only when intended to be so’ as Delabastita (1996:131-2) notes.

Attridge (1988:141) illustrates this issue when he claims that in spite of its dangerous tendency to polysemy, language works well enough because the context always works as a disambiguating device. Language appearance in a context enables the hearer to choose one of the several meanings for a word or sentence for being guided by the immediate verbal surroundings, the nature of the speech act in which the words are used, the social and historical setting and others.

Su (1994:72) emphasizes Attridge’s speech when she portrays context as ‘a means for resolving ambiguity, and it is able to do so only if it contains sufficient specifications which guide the selection of one meaning over another for a homonymous or
polysemous word. It often happens that context sets the frame which determines access to only one meaning, so that potential ambiguity is not activated and may not even perceived. Attridge (1988:141) also describes the role of context in the case of punning saying:

In place of a context designed to suppress latent ambiguity, the pun is the product of a context deliberately constructed to enforce an ambiguity, to render impossible the choice between meanings, to leave the reader or hearer endlessly oscillating in semantic space. (author’s italics)

This may justify why he contends that pun is ‘not just ambiguity that has crept into an utterance unawares, to embarrass or amuse before being dismissed but that it is an ambiguity unashamed of itself’.

Leach (1976:25) adopts a different view concerning how pun works in communication. He states that a pun ‘forbids us to recognize that the sound pattern is ambiguous’. It means that the audience does not recognize the ambiguity of a pun because there is something about it which prevents such recognition. Tanaka(1992: 61-2) criticizes Leach’s view showing that it is incorrect to say that audience do not simultaneously recognize the ambiguity of puns. On the contrary, the conscious recognition of multiple interpretations is essential for an audience to process an utterance as a pun. An audience appreciates the ambiguity of a pun as necessary for its success, and does not see ambiguity as a sign of failure in this kind of communication.

Tanaka (ibid) also shows how pun functions in communication. For him, two or more interpretations intentionally are triggered by the speaker of a pun, but the hearer rejects the most accessible interpretations in search of a more acceptable one. The speaker usually intends to communicate a
single interpretation which the hearer has to recover, although, occasionally, more than one interpretation has to be combined to reach the ultimate message. It is manifest to both speaker and hearer that the speaker, in his playing on words, intends the hearer to notice more than one interpretation. In most punning cases, only one interpretation is intended to be retained, and it is made mutually manifest that other interpretations are to be rejected in favor of the one intended by the speaker. When a communicator intends two meanings to be recovered, they reinforce one another in some way. Thus the essence of the pun lies in its access to multiple interpretations. For a pun to be successful it is necessary that the addressee should access more than one interpretation of a given utterance. Ultimately, the speaker communicates a single message, even if he intends to activate two or more interpretations. For example:

وواد حكي الخنساء لا في شجونها ولكن له عينان تجري على صخر

_A valley imitated Al-Khansa’ not in her grief but in two fountains flowing on the rock._

*(cited in Al-Tinsi, 1980: 264)*

In this verse, the poet subtly plays upon two images: that of a ‘valley’ and of ‘Al-Khansa’ through the use of two puns that lie in the words: *ayīnān* (عَﯿﻨﺎن) which means ‘fountains and eyes’ and *ṣakhr* (صَﺨﺮ) which means ‘rock and a personal name’. Such use of language yields two readings of the verse and raises a sense of ambiguity especially in the presence of the context in which both readings seem to be acceptable. The first reading describes a valley in which there are two fountains flowing on the rock. The second reading involves looking for some contextual elements that enable the reader to arrive at the acceptable interpretation. The word *Al-Khansā’* reminds the reader of Al-Khansā’’s story- an Arab poetess who bereaved her
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brother named Šakhr and spent the rest of her life lamenting, mourning and elegizing his death. Being aware of the story of this poetess the reader will reject the first reading in favor of the second.

6. Categorizations of Pun

This section is devoted to showing the possible categorizations of pun and the criteria upon which it has been categorized.

6.1 Rhetorical Categorization

It has been mentioned that Arab rhetoricians who wrote about the art of punning scarcely made any contribution concerning its own types. Al-Qizwīnī (1998:331) paid much attention to this aspect when he categorized puns into two types: mujarrada (المجردة) ‘the bare’ and murashsha (المرشحة) ‘the nominatd’. He built his categorization according to the type of the qarīna (قرين) ‘contextual adjunct’ used in the context of punning. Down through the years and along with the increasing interest of the late rhetoricians, two more types have been added to make the final list consist of four types: mujarrada (المجردة), murashsha (المرشحة), mubayyana (مبينة), munayya’a (مئينة) as Al-Ḥamawi(1987: 2/45) said. The four types will be shown in the following:

6.1.1 Bare pun (mujarrada)

This type of pun is called mujarrada (مجردة) which means ‘bare pun’ because it does not show an adjunct that strengthens the near meaning (Al-Ḥamawi, 1987: 2/45). This may be achieved in the following situations:

A. Bare pun may occur when the word used for punning is not associated by an adjunct that strengthens one of the possible meanings. In other words, it does not involve the use of such elements that refer to the near muwarra bih
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The Most Gracious (*Allah*) rose over the (Mighty) Throne.  

(*Khān and Al-Hilālī:1996: 410*)

In this glorious verse, an act of punning *tawriya* occurs through the use of the word *'istawā* (َاﺳﺘﻮى rose over) which is supposed to have the following meanings: ‘settling in a place’ ruled out, ‘dominating’ and ‘possessing’. The pun here is bare since the word *'istawā* has not been associated with an adjunct that refers to either near or far meaning in that the reader arrives at the far and intended meaning viz. ‘dominating’ without an assistance of any contextual element.

B. Bare pun sometimes occurs when the context shows certain adjuncts or elements that strengthen both the near and far meanings. As a result, none of them will be nearer than the other. This is clearly shown in the following example:

*Being fond of setting traps and nettings*  

*The eye said: what to hunt? I said: Crane bird!*  

(*Jamāl Al-Dīn bin Nabāta, cited in Ṭāllām, 1980:137*)

The pun, in this example, lies in the word *karākī* (كَرَاكِي) which means both the ‘crane bird’ and ‘your sleepiness’. The poet uses adjuncts like ‘set’ ‘traps’ and ‘nettings’ that strengthen the near meaning viz. the ‘crane bird’, and he also uses the word
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‘eye’ as an adjunct to strengthen the far meaning ‘sleepiness’ which is the intended by the poet.

C. Bare pun may occur when the context shows an adjunct that supports the far meaning which is the intended one as presented in the following:

I see the necklace perfect in her mouth.
It shows us Al-Šiћāћ of Al-Jawhari !!!!

("Imād Al-Dīn bin Dabūqā, cited in "Allām, 1980: 136)

In this verse, the pun resides in the phrase Al-Šiћāћ min Al-Jawhari (ال صحيح من الجوهر) in which the word Al-Šiћāћ refers to one of the well-distinguished books on linguistics by an Arab linguist- Al-Jawhari. Being aware of the neighboring phrase ‘in her mouth’, the reader can interpret the word šiћāћ as ‘integral and al-jawhari as ‘jewels’ to arrive at the far meaning that the poet sees his beloved’s teeth as a perfect necklace made from an integral type of jewels.

6.1.2 Nominated pun (murashshaћa)

This type of pun is called murashshaћa (المشحة) that means ‘nominated pun’ whose context contains adjuncts supporting the near meaning muwarā bih which is not intended by the speaker. It, thus, depends on the use of some contextual elements that strengthen the near meaning whether they come before or after the act of punning (Al-Hamawi, 1987: 2/45). For example:

كـٰأـن للمـجـاءـرة اقتـسـمتا فـلـسـي جـاـهـرـم وـالـدـمـعـ جـاـري

("Imād Al-Dīn bin Dabūqā, cited in "Allām, 1980: 136)
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As we shared neighboring ..
so my heart is being their neighbor and my tears are my neighbors.

(Jamāl Al-Dīn bin Nabāta, cited in Al-Ḩamawi: ibid)

In this example, the pun occurs in the word jāri (جائري) which means both ‘my neighbor’ and ‘flowing’. By inventing a context in which the phrase ‘their neighbor’ is used as an adjunct, the poet draws attention to the near meaning ‘neighbor’ whereas he intends the far one viz. ‘flowing’.

6.1.3 Manifest Pun (mubayyana)

This type of pun is called mubayyana (مَبْيَنَة) that means ‘manifest pun’ because its context contains adjuncts which support the far meaning muwara ʿanh that is actually intended by the speaker. In this type of punning, the intended meaning seems to be too difficult to be recognized without using an adjunct referring to it. It does not matter whether it comes before or after the act of punning (Al-Ḩamawi, 1987: 2/45).

By God, if it were not for the fear of your resentment
It would be easy what I get in your tribe.
You possessed the east and west  and left me astray and impressed
And they are but my heart and your earrings.

(Ibn Sanā Al-Malik, cited in Abu Al-ʿAddūs, 2007:242)
The pun lies in the word *al-khāfiqayn* (الخافقين) which means both ‘the east and west’ and ‘two beating things’. The poet plays upon these meanings in such a way that is difficult to arrive at the intended meaning without an adjunct that refers to. Therefore, he mentions ‘his heart’ and ‘her earrings’ to help the reader grasp the intended meaning viz. ‘two beating things’. Interpreting this verse in terms of the second meaning assures the poet’s deep sense of love that makes him depict his heart as one of the two beating things that his beloved possesses.

### 6.1.4 Prepared Pun (*muhayya’a*)

This type of pun is called *muhayya’a* (مُھﯿﺌﺔ) which means ‘prepared pun’. It requires a certain type of contextual adjuncts that includes two expressions related in their meanings in a way by which they prepare the chance of punning to each other. It means that the relationship between these expressions helps to arrive at the far meaning which is too difficult to uncover without it (Al-Ḥamawi, 1987: 2/45) as illustrated in the following verse:

أيها المَنْجِكِ الْثَرْيا سَهِيلا
هِي شَامِية إِذَا مَا أَسْتَقَلْت
سنَسْهِيل إِذَا أَسْتَقَلْتْ إِبَانِي
عمِرَكَ اللَّهُ كَيْفُ بِلَقِيْانِ

*Oh you who will marry Canopus to Pleiades*

*How on God will they come together?*

*She came from the Syria*

*While he comes from Yemen.*

(‘Umar bin Abi Rabī’a, cited in Abu Al-Addūs, 2007: 240)

In this verse, the poet uses the words ‘Canopus’ and ‘Pleiads’ to create two puns that are contextually related. The word
‘Canopus’ has been already used to name a star that rises from Syria and the word ‘Pleiads’ has been taken to name a star that rises from Yemen. These meanings seem to be the near ones that the poet does not intend. In the context of this verse, the poet uses the word ‘marry’ which cannot get along with stars so that the reader will be sure that the word ‘Canopus’ or Al-Thurayyā (الثوريا), as Arabs label, belongs to an Arab lady named Thurayyā who was obliged to leave her lover and marry another man named Suhayīl – an Arabic name for ‘Pleiads’. The presence of these two words together helps the reader to conjure up the story of Thurayya and Suhayīl and then arrives at the intended meanings.

6.2 Linguistic Categorization

In spite of being an issue related to semantics, Arab linguists have hardly spoken of punning or even thought of its types. To the best of the researcher’s knowledge, the only categorization made for puns is simply the rhetorical one which is based on the type of contextual adjunct as being illustrated above. In this section, the researcher tries her best to propose a classificatory system to categorize puns semantically taking the linguistic material itself as a basis for this categorization. She relies on two variables which are crucial to the nature of punning in Arabic and particularly useful for this categorization.

Ever since Saussure(1983 cited in Dienhart,1999:108-9), it has been customary to describe the linguistic sign as a combination of two parts: form and meaning. Since the act of punning matches identity of form with the disparity of meaning, it is the meaning that the first variable is concerned with. This variable is based on the ‘relatedness factor’ which refers to the degree of relatedness between meanings of a linguistic sign. The second variable stems from the fact that puns are different in their structure because they are made from single words, phrases or sentences as illustrated in(4.2). Based upon these variables the semantically oriented scale has been constructed where a word
with related meanings marks one of its ends and a sentence with completely unrelated meanings marks the other. In between these poles are types of puns: polysemous- naming-homonymous- homophonous-idiomatic- each one being progressively further moved from the true relatedness pole towards the absolute unrelatedness one and from a word to a sentence. Before defining these types let’s look at the scale itself. It will be as follows:

**Single Word (true relatedness)**

- Polysemous puns
- Naming puns
- Homonymous puns
- Homophonous puns
- Idiomatic puns

**Sentence (absolute unrelatedness)**

It is worthy to mention that polysemous pun is nearer to the end of true relatedness since polysemy involves one form (word) with multiple meanings (different but related). Naming which is in its essence near to polysemy comes after and then homonymous pun that shows different words or phrases which are identical in form and disparate in meaning. Homophonous pun appears as the fourth category in the scale. It involves playing upon grammatical structures that include different words which come to be similar in pronunciation after certain additions at their ends. Idiomatic pun is the last category where puns arise from idioms or idiomatic expressions that conjure up completely different meanings.

### 6.2.1 Polysemous Pun

Polysemous pun occurs when a word used refers to different but related meanings. It is generally agreed that in each case only one word is being discussed not two that happen to have the same form (as in the case of homonymy).
When whole clan left us away
We stopped by and allied with swords against the time
So we have never surrendered at misfortune
Nor have we lowered eyelids on the sword.

(Yaḥyā bin Manṣūr Al-Ḥanafi, cited in Ḥallām, 1980 :137)

In this example, there is a polysemous pun in the word *al-jufūn* (الجُفُون) which has two different but related meanings viz. ‘eyelids’ and ‘sheaths’ as Arabs used to manipulate the word *al-jufūn* figuratively to refer to ‘sheaths of swords’. It has been reinforced by another pun that lies in the word *witre* which means ‘sword’, and ‘revenge’ as well. Thus, the word *al-jufūn*, in this verse, may be taken literally to mean that ‘they did not lower their eyelids’ or figuratively to say that ‘they never kept their swords in their sheaths’ which implies that they always sheathe their swords to be ready to fight’. The word *witre* (وِتَر), here, means ‘sword’. A third meaning may be raised from the expression *aghḍaina al-jufūn* (أغضينا الجُفُون) when taken as an idiom to mean ‘we never forgot to get revenge’ where the word *witre* (وِتَر) refers to ‘revenge’.
I say it as the hot sand made it more aglow
And no way to smell the breeze
I think the breeze passed away
As I knew it gentle in Syria.

(Șalāḥ Al-Dīn Al-Șafadi, cited in Shu’ayīb, 2008: 245)

In this verse, the polysemous pun resides in the lexical item ʿalīl (عليل) whose meanings are ‘gentle’ when used with breeze and ‘ill’ when used with persons. The two meanings are somehow related since Arabs use ʿalīl (عليل) figuratively to describe ‘gentle breeze’ as being calm and cool. The poet subtly enhances the ambiguity of this pun by creating another one that lies in the word nasīm (نسم) which means both ‘breeze’ and ‘a personal name’.

6.2.2 Naming Pun

Naming pun is that type of punning which involves using words that have been already known as personal names or names of places, religions, literary works…etc. It, thus, occurs when the punster manipulates such words to create two-fold meanings. In such puns, the two meanings being played upon are to some extent related to each other: the conventional meaning of the word itself and the person to whom the name refers. The sense of relatedness that they display in their meanings makes them very near to polysemy and then appear as a second category in the scale. It is also worthy to mention that this type of punning is essentially dependant on that type of mushtarakh lafdhi called manqūl ‘transferred’ (see, 4.1.2) which has been regarded as one type of polysemy or multiplicity of meaning. In Arabic anthology, there are a lot of examples of puns where the poets play upon the meanings of their personal names, surnames and names of certain religious, historical or political characters (see e.g., 10, 13, 16 and 18).
I keep my face skin away from people
Who sees death when met a literary man
A verse man may be hateful
Even if it is written by their beloved.


In this example, the poet puns upon the word ћabīb (حَبِيب) to create the so called naming pun. He exploits the nature of this lexical item for being used as a common noun means ‘beloved’ and a proper noun refers to the well known Arab poet’s name Ħabīb bin ‘ Aws as well. Playing upon the two meanings of this word, the poet achieves the meaning he wants to convey.

They say that longing is fire and anguish
so why is my longing so cold today?

(Hāfidh Ibrāhīm, cited in Al-NiI, 1987: 7)

In this example, there is a naming pun in the phrase shawqi (شوق) where the poet plays upon its meaning ‘my longing’ and its reference to his friend’s surname. Therefore, while the poet seems to be complaining from the coldness of his own feelings, he intends to refer to his friend aversion.
6.2.3 Homonymous Pun

Homonymous pun involves using identical forms but different words or a word which agrees with another in sound and spelling, but differs from it in meaning. It occurs either in single words or in homonymous phrases as well.

I remembered your nights with the glass at my hand
The glass is at hand palm but the heart is exhausted.


In this example, the homonymous pun lies in the lexical item rāḥa (راحة) which means both ‘hand palm’ and ‘comfort’. The poet plays upon these two meanings in a way he draws the attention of the reader to the first ‘hand palm’ whereas he intends the other ‘comfort’.

I glanced a mole on her face
So she smiled wondering about my state
She said: stop and hear what happened
My old paternal uncle adore my maternal uncle.

("Iz Al-Dīn Al-Mawṣili, cited in Sulṭān, 1986: 207")
In this verse, the homonymous pun lies in the expression *khāli* (حادي) which consists of the lexical item *Khāl* (خال) attached to the possessive pronoun of first person singular to make the nominal phrase *khāli*. This phrase bears two apparently incompatible meanings: ‘my maternal uncle’ and ‘my mole’ upon which the poet plays in a way he hides the latter by showing the first.

### 6.2.4 Homophonous Pun

The term homophony represents one type of the partial homonymy in which words sound the same but differ in meaning and spelling (Lyons, 1977). According to ḤAli (2007: 394), it refers to those words which are pronounced the same but spelt differently such as the words *ʿalā* (علی) ‘prep. means on or over’ and *ʿalā* (علا) ‘v. means to go up’. Homophonous pun, in its general sense, is that type of puns which involves using homophones. It often occurs in homophonous phrases because ‘homophones are very rare in Arabic’ (9) as ḤAli claims. Such phrases are made up of similar words with some inflectional affixes that make them identical structures sharing the same pronunciation. This type moves further down the scale displaying much more unrelatedness of meaning between the structures being played upon as shown in the following verse:

*A messenger of my beloved came and said: be tender, gentle  
And docile to win our love  
Many lovers have suffered from humiliation for our love  
Then he became dear as he tasted humiliation.*
In this example, there is a homophonous pun in the expression hawānā (ھَﻮاﻧـﺎ) where the poet plays upon the lexical items hawān (ھَـﻮان) which means ‘humiliation’ and hawā (ھَـﻮى) which means ‘love’. He makes them homophones after adding the possessive pronoun of first person plural na (نا) to the word hawā (ھَـﻮى) to have the nominal phrase hawānā (ھَﻮاﻧـﺎ) that means both ‘humiliation’ and ‘our love’.

Your enamored and agonizing slave
undergo and endure poverty
How much a poor man boasted
while he complained poverty and surpassed it.

The homophonous pun, in this example, resides in the expression fāqah (ﻓﺎﻗـﮫ) which can be read differently according to its grammatical analysis. In the first reading, the reader may render this expression to the lexical item fāqah (ﻓﺎﻗـﺔ) which means ‘privation’ so that the Arabic coordinator wa (و) which means ‘and’ coordinates the two nouns faqr (ﻓﻘـﺮ) ‘poverty’ and fāqah (ﻓﺎﻗـﺔ) ‘privation’. In the second reading, the reader conjures up the verb fāq (ﻓﺎق) ‘surpassed’ attached to the objective pronoun of the third person singular to make the structure fāqah which means ‘it surpassed it’ taking wa ‘and’ as a coordinator that coordinates two clauses. Hence, it seems clear that the words
6.2.5 Idiomatic Pun

Idioms, in general, refer to a sequence of words that functions as a single unit. The meanings of the individual words cannot be summed to produce the meaning of the idiomatic expression as a whole (Crystal, 1991: 170). In idiomatic pun, idioms offer this potential in a way that invites a comparison between the literal and idiomatic meanings of words. Thus, this type of punning is created through playing upon these two types of meanings that an idiomatic expression usually has. For example:

I try to tolerate passion I concealed
Yet I do not find the tried patience eases
In which I find the garment of grey hair stained
And I wash it with tears but the stain is imprinted.

(Jamāl Al-Dīn bin Nabāṭa, cited in Shu‘ayīb, 2008:245)

In this example, the poet exploits the expression ʿalṭab “u aghlabu (الطيب أعليب) to create an idiomatic pun whose meanings are plainly distinct: one being literal that means ‘the stain is imprinted’ and the other being idiomatic that means ‘the temper is dominant’.
You who ask me among people about my work

Alas, they made me lost and bankrupt

How can a person whose penny spent be

If he takes it from people’s eyes!


The poet, here, plays upon the two meanings of the idiomatic expression *ya'khuduhu min 'a 'yun alnasi* (يأخذه من أعين الناس) which means that ‘he gets his money from people’s eyes’. This expression can be read in two different ways. At one level of reading, the reader may conjure up an image of someone who gets his money from curing people’s eyes because he works as an optometrist. At a higher level of reading, he may think of the idiomatic meaning of this expression which in Arabic implies ‘he gets his money with difficulty or by force’ as if he takes it from people’s eyes’. It is worthy to mention that Arabs used to use the word *-'aīn (عين)* idiomatically with verbs of giving and taking to express two paradoxical meanings: ‘to take or give things with pleasure’ or ‘to oblige people to pay in that they give by force’.

6.3 Findings

In the light of the semantic scale proposed to analyze puns in Arabic, the study has come up with the following findings:

1. Puns are those linguistic devices that exploit all possibilities of ambiguity in words and expressions with an
intention to achieve certain rhetorical effects. They, thus, make full use of the confusion found between two meanings of the same form or two readings of the same structure to attract the attention of the reader and provoke him to look for the intended meaning.

2. Puns can be classified according to a semantically oriented scale based upon the nature of the linguistic signs involved in the punning act.

3. As this scale ranks puns according to their structures and the degree of relatedness they display in their meanings it ranges from a word with true related meanings at one end to a sentence with absolute unrelated meanings at the other.

4. Puns are of five types: polysemous, naming, homonymous, homophonous, idiomatic that mark increasingly larger units and weaker degrees of relatedness between meanings of the linguistic signs.

5. Polysemous puns are always accompanied with metaphor or metonymy because they raise from words that bear a shift in meaning from the literal to the figurative.

6. Since polysemy stems from different uses of the same word, meanings of the polysemous pun tend to be somehow related. This sense of relatedness renders puns short of giving a sufficient element of surprise. Thus, polysemous puns often require other puns as well as contextual adjuncts that help to draw two different layers of meaning upon which the punster plays.

7. The punster may invest personal names and names of places, religions, well-known characters….etc. as linguistic tools to create certain type of puns namely ‘naming puns’. These puns may be considered near polysemy due to the relatedness they show in their meanings. They occur either in single words as in the lexical item habīb or phrases as in shawqi (noun+ Possessive Pronoun).
8. In homonymous puns, the relatedness of meaning is definitely weakened since this type of punning is no more dealing with one form but it deals with identical twins.

9. Since homonymous puns are made from identical words whose meanings are completely different they are capable of provoking sharp surprise through yielding two distinct images from one occurrence. Hence, there is no need to be accompanied by other puns as in the case of polysemous puns. These puns may also occur either in a single word as rāha or in a phrase as in khāli (noun+ possessive pronoun).

10. Moving down the scale, we can find homophonous puns that can mostly be in grammatical structures since homophones are very rare in Arabic. They raise from words which are similar in form but different in meanings. These words become homophonous structures after adding certain attached pronouns to one of them as in the nominal phrase hawānā (noun+ possessive pronoun) or the clause fāqah (verb+objective pronoun).

11. Unlike other types of punning, idiomatic puns can only be in strings of words or whole sentences which are culturally taken to be known as idioms. They give rise to two different meanings where the far and intended meaning cannot be caught from the lexical meanings of the words but it can only be realized through looking at this string of words as a whole unit or an idiom.

12. Contextual adjuncts and shared knowledge are definitely decisive in the analysis of puns. They are regarded as determinant factors that help the reader to grasp the far and intended meaning. They have not been taken into consideration since the scope of this study is exclusively limited to the semantic level.

7. Conclusions

The study has arrived at the following conclusions:
1. The term ‘pun’ has been used to designate an Arabic rhetorical device called tawriya which refers to an intentional use of words or expressions that have more than one meaning in a way that the speaker hides one by showing another.

2. The act of punning relies heavily on the confusion found between two meanings of the same form or two readings of the same structure. It, thus, exploits all potentials of ambiguity in language with an intention to raise certain rhetorical effects.

3. Punning is a hybrid phenomenon that stands as a bridge between rhetoric and linguistics in each of which it plays a somewhat different role. In rhetoric, pun has been regarded as one of the al-badi’ s devices (schemes) which is used to beautify a given discourse through using a semantic embellishing technique that associates words through the use of sound to forge links between seemingly unrelated images.

4. In linguistics, pun has been tackled as a linguistic phenomenon whose mechanism is deeply rooted in the field of semantics where it mostly has its origin in polysemy and homonymy. Accordingly, the phenomenon of punning requires an in-depth semantic study that focuses on the linguistic aspects of this phenomenon.

5. The phenomenon of mushtarak lafdhi seems to be one of the salient features of Arabic that denotes its lexical width and expressive potentials. The abundance of mushtarak lafdhi in Arabic gives rise to pun and other literary devices that involve using such words unexpectedly to attract the reader’s attention and provoke him to look for the intended meaning.

6. The concepts of pun and mushtarak lafdhi (polysemy & homonymy) correlate to each other via a means-end
relationship. They are two sides of the same coin in a way that pun is the rhetorical side whereas mushtarak lafdhi is the linguistic one.

7. It cannot be said that in any use of mushtarak lafdhi there is an act of punning. On the one hand, punning involves a deliberate use of mushtarak lafdhi with an intention to work on two layers of meaning concurrently and simultaneously by relating one set of events while really indicating something completely different.

8. On the other hand, punning may occur either in single words or structures (e.g. phrases or sentences) whereas mushtarak lafdhi is merely a feature of lexical items in that it occurs in single words only.

10. In the case of punning, ambiguity cannot be regarded as a defect of style or a sign of failure in communication but it is a decisive factor for its success. The essence of pun lies in its access to multiple meanings. For a pun to be successful it is necessary that the addressee should access more than one interpretation of a given utterance.

11. Context of situation plays a vital role to resolve ambiguity and determine an access to only one interpretation. It helps the speaker to communicate a single message, even if he intends to activate two or more interpretations.

12. The data analysis proves the validity and efficiency of the classificatory system proposed by the researcher and how it noticeably succeeds in categorizing and analyzing puns on the semantic basis.

References

1. **English References:**


Punning (tawriya) in Arabic: A Semantic Study ........................(51)


Punning (tawriya) in Arabic: A Semantic Study


2. Arabic References:
Punning (tawriya) in Arabic: A Semantic Study

Punning (تْوَريَا) in Arabic: A Semantic Study


### Appendix

#### List of Arabic Symbols

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Punning (tawriya) in Arabic: A Semantic Study

**Arabic Diphthongs:**

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(1) The researcher sees that the term ‘paronomasia’ which means ‘equal word’ is an equivalent term to *jinās* in Arabic. According to Frye et al. (1997: 282), paronomasia involves ‘a play on words where the repeated word is slightly changed’ and this is exactly what occurs in *jinās* which relies on at least two occurrences of the same, or a similar word in the text.

(2) Since puns are always the combined effect of phonological and semantic features they can hardly be kept when translated into another language, especially those belonging to different families. In her attempt to translate all verses used in this study, the researcher gives literal renderings of puns showing the near meanings first and then showing the far and intended meanings in the analysis.

(3) Arabic rhetoric includes three major disciplines: *ilm al-maʿāni* (_word order or semantic syntax*), *ilm al-bayān* (*tropes*) and *ilm al-badī* (*schemes*). (For more details see: Al-Sakkāki, 1981; Al-Qizwīni, 1998; Abdul-Raof, 2006 and Al-Kawwāz, 2007).

(4) The term ‘schemes’, according to Murfin and Ray (2009: 179), refers to the figures of speech that involves the use of words in a special way to create an unexpected effect without significantly altering the words’ meanings. They, thus, deal with word order, syntax, letters, and sounds, rather than the meaning of words. The researcher uses the term ‘schemes’ as an equivalent term to the so called and *ilm al-badī* (*schemes*) taking in her account the difference between English and Arabic as far as the scope is concerned.

(5) The researcher does not use one of the terms, polysemy or homonymy, as an equivalent term to *mushtarak lafdhi* since she finds that Early Arab linguists used *mushtarak lafdhi* as a hyperterm to refer to all words that have two or more meanings, that is, it includes the phenomena of polysemy and homonymy as well.

(6) Conventional meaning is that type of meaning which ‘refers to the arbitrary nature of the relationship between linguistic expressions and their meanings’ (Crystal, 1991:82).

(7) The researcher sees that this type of *mushtarak lafdhi* occurs when some words are used as names. For example, the word *fahd* ‘فہد’ whose conventional meaning refers to ‘cheetah’ is sometimes transferred to be used as a personal name. Accordingly, it can have two meanings: the conventional that refers to this animal and the transferred which refers to someone.

(8) Linguistic sign may be a single word, a phrase, a complete sentence... etc.

(9) Ali (2007: 394) states that Arabic is different from other languages in regard to the homophones. This may be attributed to the fact that Arabic is basically characterized by the identity between spoken and written forms.