

A Pragmatic Study of Hyperbolic Forms in English and Iraqi Arabic Songs

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ABSTRACT:

The current study deals with hyperbole which makes use of exaggeration to convey a specific idea. Songs often employ exaggerated language to evoke powerful feelings or conjure up vivid pictures. However, they should not be interpreted literally. When it comes to songs, hyperbole is one of the most significant figurative tropes common to most languages. Since it is common in everyday speech across a variety of speech communities, its primary goal is to stress the singer's or the speakers' points of view, emotions, sentiments, attitudes, and thoughts. This study aims at investigating hyperbole to see how the form of hyperbole varies in English and Iraqi Arabic songs; how they violate the Gricean Maxims, and how they function in songs. This is done using a qualitative method depending on an eclectic model at two levels: form and function. Data is collected by downloading songs from YouTube with a highly view rate and eliciting selected hyperbolic expression in six songs; four hyperbolic expressions from each language. The results indicated that Iraqi songs use the hyperbolic form of comparison and repetition more than English do, though both English and Iraqi songs violate the quality maxim, the latter also violate manner and relation maxims, as for the function, both use the hyperbole to denote emphasis and the English songs stress the function of surprise and vagueness heavily.

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Introduction:

Hyperboles are not grammatically structured in any particular order. This may lead to misunderstanding. Therefore, it is necessary for everybody to understand the meaning intended behind such hyperbolic uses in order to avoid any kind of misunderstanding. The use of hyperbole typically results in a genuine meaning divergence from the realistic bounds to the ludicrous and hypothetical ones. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no thorough investigations have been carried out on exaggerated phrases found in songs written in Iraqi Arabic and English. This study tries to investigate whether there are differences between the uses of hyperboles in the studied songs syntactically and pragmatically. This is done depending on an eclectic model at two levels: form and function.

Hyperbole has been linked to metaphor and irony. It is a common element of spoken language in almost all speech cultures. Exaggeration is the primary means by which we define hyperbole since it is a sort of overemphasis or exaggeration. Whether in writing or speaking, hyperbole is utilized to communicate ideas and messages in formal contexts. Through certain methods and strategies, hyperbole can be employed to bolster compelling speeches. "It can also be found in the media, poetic language, ads, and other slogans", such as those that promote environmental issues. hyperboles are used in love poetry to express the lover's deep appreciation for his beloved (Dhayef and Abdzaid, 2021). Dhayef and Abdzaid, (2021) add that there are three primary components that are so beneficial to understand hyperbole. The first is moving from the prepositional meaning to what the speakers wish to achieve; the second is exaggeration; and the third is a definite referent involved in the speaking.

Speakers utilize hyperbole to convey their emotions or mental states as clearly as possible. Therefore, exaggeration might shed light on the motivation behind a given statement, as in the following example: "I just witnessed the thousandth loss for the Pittsburgh Steelers football team!". The aforementioned exaggeration conveys to the audience not just the precise information—the team's loss—but also the speaker's attitude toward it (disgust or disillusionment, in this case). Using hyperbole more frequently gives the listener a second note of something. It is observed that a lot of hyperbolic terms used for the sake of applauding and praising, and, sometimes for condemning, attacking, and complaining about certain idea. There various forms through which hyperbole is realized as numerical hyperboles, adjectives, verbs, nouns, adverbs, and many others (Al-Tufaili and Al-Jobory, 2016). Hyperboles are at two levels: the word or phrase level and those at the clause or sentence level. Tian, et al, (2021) add that hyperbole may be easily accomplished by lexical replacement. For instance, substituting "a millisecond" for most time intervals will result in uninspired exaggerations to highlight how quickly things happens without having to be aware of the background. Accordingly, the study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the forms and functions of hyperbole used in English and Iraqi Arabic songs?
2. What are Grice's maxims violated in English and Iraqi Arabic songs?

2. Pragmatics of Hyperbole as a Form of Lying

Hyperbole is a linguistic means which is employed to mark impossibility and incredibility. It is sometimes heard and seen as an act of lying. In this vein, different views appeared regarding this opinion; Heinrichs (2011) is in line with McCarthy and Carter (2004:152), mentions that hyperbole is not to be viewed as a lie. Nonetheless, it emphasizes one aspect of reality and downplay other aspect. Hyperbole should be understood nonliterally. Otherwise, it will be considered as a 'deliberate lie' or "plain lying", Hyperbole is used to give flavour to everyday speech, the nature to overstate certain aspects of an idea is to meet certain rhetorical purposes. (cf. Quintilianus, 1856: Grindstaff, 2002; Charney,2014). What differentiate Hyperbole as an act of lying or not is whether there is a joint activity between the participants or not. In the case of hyperbolic use, a speaker and the listeners create a joint activity. However, when a speaker tells a lie, no joint activity is initiated (Clark, 1996:143).

Perry (1995) adds other indicators of hyperbole away from lying, in this regard, hyperbole is characterized as "the speaker intends the statement to be deceitful but in a playful sense; the speaker expects the listener not to believe the statement and understands it as an exaggerated statement. Whereas lying is characterized as the speaker intends to deceive the listener in uttering the statement; the speaker expects the listener to believe the statement as a true statement".

Additionally, from one hand, hyperbole is one of the rhetorical figures of speech. It is distinct from other figures by the possibility of flouting of the Gricean's quality maxim overtly. This flouting of maxims causes conversational implicatures. On the other hand, lying also may flout the quality maxim. However, this flouting is carried on in a covert way. Consequently, no conversational implicature is expected by the listeners due to their beliefs that the speakers' statements are normal assertion (Allot, 2010).

3. Hyperbole in Songs

Hyperbole, as a literary device, involves the intentional exaggeration of information, emotions, or statements to achieve a specific impact. While the literal interpretation of a hyperbole may not hold true, its exaggeration serves to underscore a particular point. Hyperbole can also be employed in literature with sarcastic or humorous intentions, though its primary usage is for emphasis. Despite the varied and distinct meanings of each song, they share common themes and employ hyperbolic expressions to amplify the song's significance. Each song contains multiple layers of meaning through hyperbolic expressions. A prevalent theme that emerges from most songs is the experience of love, where individuals express the depth of their affections and their willingness to make sacrifices for their loved ones. Occasionally, this sense of love can make one appear foolish. However, it can also bring about happiness. There are many songs that use hyperbole in their lyrics, either to express strong emotions, create humor, or make a point (Dewi, 2022).

Hyperbolic expressions are distinguished by their utilization of implausible descriptions and exaggeration in terms of numerical figures and quantities. In one song for instance, Proclaimers express their commitment to travel a total of 1,000 miles in order to reach their beloved. Meatloaf, in his song "I'd Lie for You (and That's the Truth)", promises to accomplish seemingly impossible tasks, such as moving mountains, in accordance with his sweetheart's desires. Unfortunately, it appears that his beloved does not reciprocate these sentiments. Hyperbole pertains to the depiction of exaggerated concepts and events that are unattainable

in reality. The hyperbolic expressions in this study have been scrutinized with regard to their form, meaning, and function. The hyperbolic expressions within romantic songs serve to accentuate various themes, including acts of great sacrifice, self-love, love within friendships, male regret, romantic love, and more (Tussahrah, 2016).

4. The Model of Analysis

This study adopted an eclectic model for data analysis. It consists of three models; Claridge's Model (2010), of Hyperbolic Forms, Morra' (2006) Model of Hyperbole Functions, and Grice's Cooperative principles and its four Maxims (1975)

Claridge's Model (2010) of Hyperbolic Forms includes the following forms

- 1- Single word: it is the most common form of hyperbole. All the lexical items may be found in this category to represent a hyperbolic expression;
 - nouns such as miles, ages, etc. as in it has been ages since I last meet you.
 - adjectives, such as incredible as in (How does he find the concert? – incredible).
 - Adverbs: hyperbole is expressed by intensifying adverb such as: absolutely, incredibly, endlessly, etc. such as *players were absolutely ready for the competition*.
 - Verbs involve words such as dying, hating, loving, killing, etc. as in: *The soldier was dying to see his parents*.
- 2- Phrasal hyperbole: it "is the combination of words and senses that produces the hyperbolic meaning". Such as: *The whole world* watched my paly.
- 3- Numerical: include words such as thousand, hundred, million, etc.
- 4- Comparison: includes comparison that contains explicit particles (e.g., like, as) it is non-metaphorical **and produce** completely impossible results of two things being compared.
- 5- Superlative: superlative can jump any adjectives to the ultimate limits of their scale. So, the fattest of four boys is not necessarily to be a fat boy in a general sense at all. This purely reflects that nothing is extreme. For example: *The highest building*.
- 6- Repetition: hyperbole can be formed by repeating the same word several times without any interruption of any other words, for example: *The children shout over and over and over*. (*repeating this pattern means again and again*).

As for **Morra' (2006) Model of Hyperbole Functions**, it involves many pragmatic functions of hyperbole which is fulfilled by the speakers. Each of the rhetorical figure is used to meet specific functions (Honeck, 1997: 83). It is well recognized that hyperbole and other figures of speech share a common concern with emotions, sentiments, and the act of coloring our own feelings, attitudes, and emotions toward someone or something. However, they cannot be verified unless one is aware of the society's whole set of general standards. Furthermore, the listener's intimate familiarity with the speaker allows him to distinguish between the

genuine and appropriate happenings and those that are being exaggerated (Leech, 1969:168–169). The following involves a number of those functions:

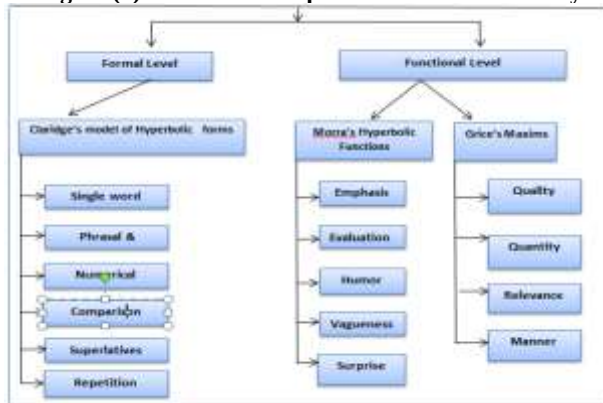
1. **Emphasis:** it is considered as the most prominent function of hyperbole. Mora (2006:203) states hyperbole is employed as a sufficient device to positively or negatively pinpoint certain feelings, emotions, and sentiments. The emphatic nature of hyperbole involves substituting the weaker word by the stronger one, *for example: 'He is very brilliant', instead of 'he is very intelligent'.*
2. **Evaluation:** it is of twofold, one can offer both positive and pessimistic viewpoints, feelings. Along these lines, individuals might exaggerate to satisfy positive evaluation, for example, to compliment, acclaim, express compassion, endorsement, charm or other type of positive effect. While the negative evaluation is considered as an emotional judgment, for example, the speakers complain, judgment and other negative mentalities (Mora, 2006:205).
3. **Surprise:** Speakers naturally express their surprise when they notice the contrast between what actually happens and what is expected depends on the semantic divergence between (Closton and Keller, 1998:449). For example, *'We got ten billion feet of snow last night'*
4. **Humor** is one of the functions of exaggeration which is considered by itself as a universal comic device by some theoreticians of the comic (Draitser, 1994:135).
5. **Vagueness:** this function is found in some hyperbolic expressions especially those that contains numbers and amounts as in ages, thousands, and millions. vagueness due to the fact that this vagueness is due to the lack of an exact amount when they are used. This function is also found in the generalizations. Afterwards, this feature of vagueness is considered cognitive which is neither semantic or linguistic (Morra, 2006, p.209).

Finally, Grice's Cooperative principles and its four Maxims (1975) is adopted to identify the implicature derived from the violation of maxims. The cooperative principle involves the following sub-maxims:

- 1- The Maxim of Quantity entails the objective of conveying the utmost amount of information possible, while ensuring that the information provided is sufficient and not excessive.
- 2- The Maxim of Quality, on the other hand, emphasizes the importance of honesty and the avoidance of conveying false information or making unsupported claims.
- 3- The Maxim of Relation emphasizes the significance of relevance in communication, urging individuals to focus on conveying statements that are pertinent to the ongoing discussion.
- 4- Lastly, the Maxim of Manner highlights the need for clarity, brevity, and organization in communication, with an emphasis on avoiding obscure or ambiguous language.

The following figure represents the model adapted for the data analysis:

Figure (1) The Model Adapted for the Current Study



5. Methodology

The current study is qualitative in nature as it aims to investigate the use of hyperbole in English and Iraqi Arabic songs. The data were collected from different songs in English and Iraqi Arabic. These songs were downloaded from YouTube, they were highly viewed. Three songs were selected from both English and Iraqi Arabic, four hyperbolic expressions from each language. The use of hyperbole in these songs have been analyzed formally and functionally depending on the following models. Claridge's (2010), Grice's (1975) and Morra's (2006) respectively.

6. Data Analysis

6-1 Data Analysis of English Songs

1- "Heaven" by Bryan Adams

In this song, the employment of hyperbole emerges as a means to effectively convey his profound sentiments of affection towards an individual. Within the lyrics, Adams sings, **"Oh thinking about all our younger years, there was only you and me, we were young and wild and free"**. The line "there was only you and me" is hyperbolic as it is acknowledged that other individuals were certainly present within their lives. However, from Adams' perspective, the adored individual holds an unparalleled significance, overshadowing any other associations. This is a clause that violates the maxim of quantity and used by the singer for the sake of positive evaluation of his beloved.

2- "Firework" by Katy Perry

The singer utilizes hyperbole as a rhetorical device in order to motivate individuals to have faith in their abilities and potentials. Perry expresses this sentiment by proclaiming, **"Baby, you're a firework, come on let your colors burst, make 'em go 'oh, oh, oh!"**

It should be noted that the comparison drawn between individuals and fireworks is an example of hyperbole, as it is evident that humans are not literal pyrotechnic displays. Nevertheless, the underlying purpose of this metaphor is to inspire individuals to let their genuine selves radiate and to cast aside any apprehension regarding their individuality. Here,

hyperbole is used in a form of a single word namely noun phrase that violates quality and quantity. Quality is violated as her lover is definitely not fireworks. As for quantity, the “oh” is repeated three times. This hyperbole functions as an emphasis to stress the idea of casting aside any negative appraisal of oneself.

3- "Grenade" by Bruno Mars

Bruno in this song says “**I’d catch a grenade for ya, Throw my hand on a blade for ya , I’d jump in front of a train for ya, You know I’d do anything for ya**”. He expresses his willingness to undertake drastic actions, such as catching grenades, placing his hand on a blade, or jumping in front of a train, for the sake of his beloved. However, it is important to note that these statements are hyperbolic in nature. The singer is not literally intending to convey willingness to die or harm himself. Instead, he employs these extreme scenarios as a means to emphasize the depth of his affection and devotion towards his beloved. These hyperbolic clauses violate quantity and quality. Violating quantity maxims is made clear in the repetition of the drastic clauses; violating quality maxim is made the unbelievable promises the singer promise to do for the sake of his beloved. As for the function of hyperbole, repeating what he would do surprises his beloved that the singer will sacrifice for her.

4- “A Million Dreams” by Christina Showman

In this song, the hyperbolic example involves the following sentence “**A million dreams are keeping me awake**”. It is sung by Showman to his expected future wife named Michelle. He uses the hyperbolic phrase to intensify his confidence of the future that they will be together. He wants to convince her that if they work hard together for their future, they will come true and that is the dream that keeps him awake. This phrase ‘million dreams’ is a hyperbolic noun phrase written in a numerical word ‘million’ that violates the quality maxims in the sense that it is not truthful to have millions dreams at once. As states by Morra’s that the numerical hyperbole is always associated with the function of vagueness in the sense that the meaning is shattered and the hearer is puzzled about how many, if any, the speaker has dreamt of his goal.

6-2 Iraqi Arabic Songs

1-“Youm il ma shofak” by Saadoun Jabir

In this song, the singer says “لو رديت بذاك اسمك وطوبوك/ لاظلعك نجمة تضوي على طوبوك” “if you responded with that name of yours/I would be a star that lightens your paths”. This is a hyperbolic expression that exaggerates reward of the singer if his beloved answers him. According to the form of the hyperbole included in this extract, it is a single word “star” that violates the maxim of quality as the singer in no way can be transformed into a star. It shows how much he loves her to the degree he will try to do the impossible for her sake. Functionally speaking, the hyperbole is used to show emphasis in the sense that the singer emphasis his eagerness to have his beloved answered him.

2- "Baghdad" by Kadim Al Sahir

The song Baghdad by Al Sahir features many instances of hyperbole. He is known by his extreme praise to women such as:

"هي أجمل من كل جميلة أحلى منك وأحلى مني هي أرشق من كل رشيقة هي أقرب من قلبي مني"

"She is more beautiful than all beautiful girls. She is more beautiful than you and me. She is more graceful than all graceful girls, she is closer to me than my heart". These comparatives (أجمل، أرشق، أقرب، أحلى) exaggerate the beauty and uniqueness of the city of Baghdad (The song is about Baghdad although it seems he is describing his beloved. Here, personification is used). These hyperbolic uses are presented in a form of comparison. They violate the maxim of relation where there is no relation between being graceful and the beauty of cities as they are not humans. Such descriptions are not irrelevant to the described referent, Baghdad. Moreover, he says that she is closer to him than his heart. This violates the maxim of quality as it is definitely closer than her. Such uses draw deep emotional imagery. The function of hyperbole in this song is emphasis whereby the love of the singer to the city of Baghdad is unbelievable.

3- "Kol li Al- Maliha" by Sabah Fkri

In this song, the singer says "فشارب الخمر يصحو بعد سكرته... وشارب الخب طول الغمر سكران" "Alcohol drinker can be awake from drunkenness whereas love drinker (lover) stays drunk all his life". The phrase "love drinker" exaggerates the way he loves his beloved as if he can drink love. This violates quality and manner where it is ambiguous. How can love make someone being drunk for his lifelong? These expressions amplify the attractiveness of his beloved and generate a vibrant impression in the recipient's cognitive faculties. Her beauty has an effect on him just like as wine does. The function of this hyperbolic expression is vagueness which is employed to attract the attention of the hearers to the status of Baghdad in the mind of the singer.

4- "Mu bi aydina" by Fuad Salim

In this song, the singer says "روحي طير اشتاق عشة لداركم، وقلبي نجمة تضوي بم شباككم" "my soul is a bird longed to his nest which is at your house, and my heart is a star shines at your window". The use of simile in implicit comparison of his soul to a bird, and of his heart to a star stresses his eagerness to the one he missed. A first glance at the song suggests that the singer longs to his beloved. However, when going deeply in the story behind this song, to our surprise, we found that the poet who wrote the words of this song was once in prison with a famous poet like Mudhafer Al-Nawab. When released from prison, he said these words. The form of hyperbole is implied in the repetition of "my soul is a bird..." and "my heart is a star...". This hyperbole violates the maxim of quality in the sense that the singer believes that it is impossible that his soul becomes a bird. It also violates the maxim of manner in the sense that there is no relationship between the "bird" and the "star" found in the simile of the current song. The function of this hyperbole is emphasis which is intensified by the use of repeated hyperbole in the same song.

7. Findings

These finding are present in cope with the research questions. As for research question no 1, the results indicated that English and Arabic songs under investigation are similar in the use of single word hyperbole. However, they diverge in the other forms of hyperbole; English songs make high use of clausal hyperbole than Iraqi ones. English songs also depend more on numerical hyperbole while Iraqi Arabic songs do not. Conversely, Iraqi songs are distinguishable from English in using repetition pattern of hyperbole and comparison forms as shown in table (1). This finding cope with Claridge's (2010:49) finding that "Single word

hyperbole is the most common form of hyperbole in songs. It is exclusively found in one word only of an utterance. All the lexical word classes are represented here, but nouns and adjectives are the most commonly used".

Table (1): Form of Hyperbole of English and Iraqi songs (Based on Claridge's 2010)

Forms of Hyperbole	English Songs		Arabic Songs	
	Occurrence Number	Percentage	Occurrence Number	Percentage
Single words	1	25%	1	25%
Phrasal & clausal	2	50 %	1	25%
Numerical	1	25%	none	25%
Comparison	none	0 %	1	25%
Superlatives	none	0 %	none	0 %
Repetition	none	0 %	1	0%

As far as the second research question is concerned, the results indicated that English songs violate quality and quantity maxims more than the Iraqi songs do. On the contrary, Iraqi Arabic songs, in addition to the violation of other maxims, they are prominent in violating relation and manner maxims more than the English songs do as shown in table (2). The English side of the findings copes with Wales' (2011:203) finding. He noted that that "hyperbole pragmatically flouts the maxim of quality, since it distorts the truth. So, it is clearly differentiated from telling lies, but not in the sense of deceiving the listener".

Table (2): Violation of Grice Maxims (Based on Grice's Maxims)

Grice Maxims	English Songs		Arabic Songs	
	Occurrence Number	Percentage	Occurrence Number	Percentage
Quality	3	75%	1	25%
Quantity	1	25 %	0	0%
Relation	none	0%	1	25%
Manner	none	0 %	2	50%

Finally, concerning research question no 3, the results indicated that the hyperbole in the English songs and Iraqi Arabic songs are similar in the use of hyperbole with the evaluation function and with the avoiding of humor function. On the contrary, they diverge in the use hyperbole with other functions as shown in table (3), remarkably, English songs rely in the use of vagueness and surprise function of hyperbole while Iraqi Arabic do not. Besides, Iraqi Arabic songs make use of hyperbole that denotes emphasis that the English songs do.

Table (3): Functions of Hyperbole (Based on Mora's Model).

Functions of Hyperbole	English Songs		Arabic Songs	
	Occurrence Number	Percentage	Occurrence Number	Percentage
Emphasis	1	25%	3	75%
Evaluation	1	25 %	1	25%
Humour	0	0%	none	0%
Vagueness	1	25 %	none	0%
Surprise	1	25 %	none	0 %

8. Conclusions

It is concluded that hyperbole is a technique frequently active in both English and Iraqi Arabic songs. This device is used to intensify emotions and communicate meaning. Hyperbolic expression takes various forms rating from single words to clauses. In many songs under study, in form, hyperbolic expressions are used as a phrase or a clause. Phrasal hyperbole is the combination of words that gives the hyperbolic meaning. This category of phrasal hyperbole is sub-divided into NP, VP, and PP which may include either superlative, a number. These categories reappear in the clausal hyperbolic expressions. This is a kind of evidence that there are some items which don't cause any overstating effect in their own right. NP is the most common type utilized compared with the remaining classifications (divisions) of phrasal hyperbole. They have in common violating the quality maxims while diverges in the violating quantity, manner and relation. Gricean's maxims are flouted to fulfill certain intended purpose and the success of grasp that implied meaning behind violation depends on both the speaker and the listener. Otherwise, the hyperbole will be perceived as lies. Besides, it is easy to distinguish between hyperbole and lying in the sense that hyperbole is socially acceptable. The speaker or singer does not intend to disguise the listeners by using exaggerated expressions.

دراسة تداولية لصيغ المبالغة في الأغاني الإنجليزية والعراقية العربية

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ملخص البحث:

يتناول البحث الحالي أحد أشكال المبالغة والذي يستخدم لتوصيل فكرة معينة. غالباً ما تستخدم الأغاني لغة مبالغ فيها لإثارة مشاعر قوية أو استحضار صور حية. ومع ذلك، لا ينبغي تفسيرها حرفياً. عندما يتعلق الأمر بالأغاني، فإن المبالغة هي واحدة من أهم المجازات التصويرية الشائعة في معظم اللغات. نظراً لأنها شائعة في الكلام اليومي عبر مجموعة متنوعة من أشكال الكلام، فإن هدفها الأساسي هو التأكيد على وجهات نظر المؤلف أو المتحدث وعواطفه ومشاعره ومواقفه وأفكاره. علاوة على ذلك، تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى دراسة المبالغة لمعرفة مدى اختلافها من ناحية الشكل في الأغاني الإنجليزية والعراقية؛ كيف تنتهك مبادئ العالم غرايس، وكيف تعمل في الأغاني. ويتم ذلك باستخدام أسلوب نوعي يعتمد على نموذج انتقائي على مستويين: الشكل والوظيفة. يتم جمع البيانات عن طريق تنزيل الأغاني من موقع **YouTube** بمعدل مشاهدة مرتفع واستنباط تعابير مبالغة محددة في ست أغنيات؛ ثلاثة عينات من كل لغة. وتسعى هذه الدراسة أيضاً إلى تعريف المصطلح، وتقديم أمثلة على استخدامه، واستكشاف الدوافع وراء تطبيقه. وبعد تحليل الأمثلة، تعرض الدراسة وجهات نظر وتكتيكات مختلفة حول المبالغة في الأغاني العربية والإنجليزية. لقد تبين أن الأغاني العراقية تستخدم صيغة المقارنة والتكرار في شكل المبالغة أكثر من اللغة الإنجليزية، رغم أن الأغاني العراقية والإنجليزية تخرق مبدأ الكم للعالم غرايس، إلا أن الأخيرة تخالف أيضاً قواعد الطريقة والعلاقة، أما بالنسبة للوظيفة، فكلاهما يستخدم المبالغة من أجل للدلالة على التأكيد والأغاني الإنجليزية تؤكد على وظيفة المفاجأة والغموض بشكل كبير.