

**Extending Beaugrande's  
Scheme of Textual  
Informativity to Include the  
Translation of Literary Texts**

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# **Key to Abbreviations**

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**SL = Source Language**

**ST = Source Text**

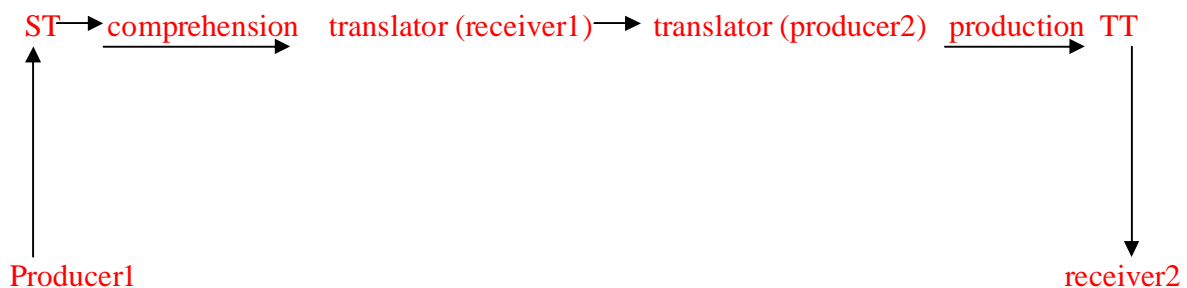
**TL = Target Language**

**Tra = Translation (only to label the  
numbered analyzed translations)**

**TT = Target Text**

## 1.Introduction

Informativity and its orders as defined by Beaugrande are thought to possess a considerable significance in the comprehension of the ST by the translator , the production of the TT by the translator and the comprehension of the TT by the receiver . In fact , the communication process is duplicated in any task of translation , with the translator taking double part in it : -



The feasibility of inaugurating thorough and more elaborate studies on this topic in translation is endeavoured to be proved in this analytical study wherein three translations of a text by Virginia Woolf are put under scrutiny . The translators are Ph.D translation students with distinguished professional background . The direction of translation is English – Arabic . The translations vary from bad , average to very good and are arranged in this order with numbers 1,2,3 . They are given these assessments according to the fidelity in rendering the text . What is analyzed here is the contribution of informativity to the comprehension and then production of the conceptual / relational organization of the ST and TT . Other translation aspects that do not relate to the aim of the study are not investigated .

## 2. Beaugrande's Informativity

The informativity of a particular occurrence is its relative probability (likelihood and predictability) as compared to other alternatives . The lower the probability of an occurrence , the higher the informativity (Beaugrande , 1980 : 103) .

It would be reasonable to distinguish various ranges on a scale of informativity ; thus , he (ibid : 105) proposes three orders which result from the extent of processing resources that are expended upon input . The lower-order occurrences allow processing ease, that is , the linkage of the occurrences to the previous ones is non-problematic . The higher-order occurrences call for processing depth because the linkage is problematic .

The complexity of probabilities suggests that people could rely not only on prediction , but on postdiction as well .The receiver would then read / hear an occurrence and seek some justification after the fact . The postdiction would increase either (1) if there were a wide spread of equally probable alternatives and a scarcity of determinate cues ; or (2) if an occurrence seems quite outside the predicted ranges , so that no cues are readily at hand .The second case undoubtedly requires a stronger focus of attention .

The mere selection of an available option in a context results in at least First Order informativity . This order applies when an option in the upper range of probability is selected . Here , we have a low degree of interestingness value which Beaugrande ( ibid : 106) defines as the degree of cognitive involvement resulting from uncertainty . The selection of an option in the middle or lower-middle degrees of probability results in Second Order informativity . The usual criterion for textual communication is that a text should include at least some such occurrences so that first order ones could be upgraded and those of third order downgraded . Downgrading is either 1) backward if the processor goes back to earlier occurrences in order to decode the present one , 2) forward if he waits for further occurrences to make the decoding ; or 3) outward if he goes to search outside the current context .

Occurrences construed as outside the range of more or less probable options convey Third Order informativity . These are unusual and extremely interesting occurrences , and correspondingly hard to understand and control . This type leads to serious problems since the linkage of the new occurrence to the previous ones is put at the risk of unexpectedness , hence increasing the probability of failure .

Informativity orders are also linked to world knowledge ( *ibid*:108 ) . If the text asserts relations that are determinate or typical , then we have first order ; if the textual relations are nontypical , we have more informativity lying at least in the second order and the contradiction of typical relations leads to third order informativity .

### **3.Informativity and Translation**

In a typical communicative situation , there are two persons ; one an actual agent ,another a possible agent ,i.e a speaker and a hearer . Both belong to one speech community ,i.e a group of persons with the same language and related conventions for interaction (van Dijk , 1977 : 191)

In the translation process , the translator , the receiver of the ST , becomes the producer of the TT . Now , the crucial consideration is that the ST is reproduced by a person with a different socio-cultural setting . This does not mean that he is unable to understand the ST contextual background , but that he may not be accurate in diagnosing and appropriately manipulating the factors that determine the degree of probabilities . This misjudgement may lead to a certain translation product resulting in a more or less diverted interaction on the part of the reader .

However , even when the diagnosis is accurate , the translator may find himself reluctant to downgrade an occurrence in the opposite direction due to the lack of a corresponding TL structure as in the case of nonfinite clauses in English and their absence in Arabic . Any substitute method he may resort to to transfer the nonfinite clause to

Arabic shall dictate a change of word order or the early revelation of the cued semantic reference (e.g . causality) .

In fact , the translator's failure to realize that the text he is working on varies with respect to the orders of informativity may lead him to the trap of attempting to patch up what he takes as semantic tears ; and the result is a chaotic status of informativity on the one hand , and a retrograde collapse of the conceptual / relational network of the original text on the other . This may happen in the following manner : the translator is dissatisfied with the high order informativity of an occurrence ; so he chooses a certain interpretation that entails the adaptation of the subsequent occurrences so as to conform with the exigencies of the text coherence .

#### **4.ST : “The Duchess of Newcastle ”by Virginia Woolf**

“...All I desire is fame ” wrote Margaret Cavendish , Duchess of Newcastle . And while she lived her wish was granted . Garish in her dress, eccentric in her habits , chaste in her conduct , coarse in her speech , she succeeded in drawing upon herself the ridicule of the great and the applause of the learned .But the last echoes of that clamour have now all died away ; she lives only in the few splendid phrases that Lamb scattered upon her tomb ;her poems , her plays , her philosophy , her orations , her discourses – all those folios and quartos in which , she protested , her real life was shrined – moulder in the gloom of public libraries , or are decanted into tiny thimbles which hold six drops of their profusion .

#### **Tra 1**

( ... كل ما ارغب به هو الشهرة ) ، ذلك ما كتبتة مارغريت كافندش ، دوقة نيوكاسل ، وتحققت امنيتها خلال حياتها .  
فخلال حياتها التي عاشتها باطوار غريبة بين بهرجة الملابس وعفة السلوك وجلف الكلام ، استطاعت ان تحقق امنياتها . فقد اثارت وافادت من سخرية العظماء واستحسان المثقفين . الا ان صدى ذلك الصخب قد انتهى ولم يبق منه الا بضع عبارات رائعة نثرها لامب على ضريحها

: ابيات شعر من قصائدها ، ومسرحياتها ، ونظرياتها الفلسفية وخطبها واحاديثها . كل تلك المجلدات والكتب والدفاتر التي عبرت بها عن احتجاجها وشكلت ضريحا لحياتها الحقيقية – التي تهتريء اليوم في سكون المكتبات العامة ، او التي قد سكبت في كشاتبين صغيرة تفيض بست قطرات لاكثر .

## Tra 2

كتبت مارغريت كافيندش دوقة نيوكاسل " كل ما ارغب به هو الشهرة " وقد تحققت امنيتها وهي على قيد الحياة . وبسبب بهرجة ملابسها وخرابة طباعها وبساطة سلوكها وفضاظة حديثها فقد نجحت خلال حياتها في ان تبعد عن نفسها سخرية العظماء واطراء المثقفين . غير ان آخر اصداء ذلك الصخب قد تلاشت الان فهي لاتحيا الا بالعبارات الرائعات القلائل التي سطرها لامب على قبرها – فقصائدها ومسرحياتها وفلسفاتها وخطبها واحاديثها – كل تلك الاوراق من القطع الكبير وقطع الربع التي احتجت بان حياتها الحقيقية قد حفظت فيها – تبلى في عتمة المكتبات العامة او تحول الى اوعية صغيرة تحتوي على ست قطرات من غزارتها .

## Tra 3

كتبت مرغريت كافيندش دوقة نيوكاسل : "... كل ما اتمناه هو الشهرة " وفي اثناء حياتها تحققت رغبته . فمن خلال ثيابها المبهرجة وعاداتها الغريبة وعفة سلوكها وخشونة كلامها تمكنت من انتزاع سخرية العظماء واعجاب المثقفين . بيد ان ترديد الصدى الاخير لتلك الضجة تلاشى الان كله ، فهي لاتحيا الا بالعبارات القليلة الرائعة التي نثرها (لام) على ضريحها . اما قصائدها ومسرحياتها ومقالاتها الفلسفية وخطبها وطروحاتها – كل تلك المجلدات من القطع الكبير والصغير والتي كانت حياتها الحقيقية ، حسب شكواها ، قد بقيت ذخرا فيها – انما تتآكل في ظلمة المكتبات العامة ، او تصب في كشتبانات صغيرة تحوي ست قطرات من معينها .

## 5.The Analysis

The first sentence of the passage has a first order informativity . Thus , the writer tries to upgrade it by preposing the direct speech in an attempt to raise the degree of interestingness :-

Tra1 only maintains this technique . The other two downgrade it even more by postposing the direct speech , doing away with any temporary uncertainty concerning the identity of the speaker .

In the nonfinite clause starting with “Garish in her dress , ....of the learned ”, two informativity principles apply :-

- a) It is a third order utterance in that it is extremely interesting and hard to understand and control because it is a discrepancy and discrepancies , according to Beaudrande ( 1980:107 ) , are one of the three major criteria for third order informativity ; the other two are gaps and discontinuities .
- b) The process of its downgrading goes both backward and forward

Concerning (a) , there are a number of features that are rarely found gathered in a woman , especially one of letters and social rank as Mrs. Cavendish . Moreover , it is very difficult to see how “being chaste in conduct ” could be classified as a characteristic as strange as the other three . Another aspect raising interestingness is the fact that the kind of life she led drew the ridicule of the great and the applause of the learned . Although both classes are deemed within the elite of any society , their reaction is so divergent that this order can be taken as one of discrepancy for , according to Farghal (2003) , the only guarantor for producing a workable translation is the integration between the schematic structure in the text and the translator’s encyclopedic repertoire ( i.e , his general world knowledge ) . As for (b) , it is downgraded backward on the basis that she sought fame and it seems that these descriptions granted her what she sought . Forward downgrading is represented in the significance of the syntactic structure manipulated. One of the most familiar uses of nonfinite clauses is to express causality (Quirk etal , 1985 : 995) . This meaning is grasped only at the end of the long sentence . Thus , it is forward downgrading . In Arabic , this process is reversed due to the fact that nonfinite structures are not there . Therefore , backward downgrading becomes a forward one using a causal device such as “بسبب” :-



Tra1 turns the original picture of informativity upside down resulting in an awkward rendition . First , it says :

" فخلال حياتها التي عاشتها باطوار غريبة بين بهرجة الملابس وعفة السلوك ... " implying that chaste conduct is part of the eccentric habits , which contradicts sharply our world knowledge . It is not acceptable because it is not a fictional character ; the lady is real . Second , the translation makes a cut in this sentence , blurring the pathway that leads to the cause of granting the wish for there immediately appears : "استطاعت ان تحقق" and then the sentence is complemented by :

" فقد اثارت وافادت من سخرية العظماء واستحسان المتقنين " where the cohesive device "فقد" implies that what follows is a reason , bringing the TT readers before two options : either that her wish was to arouse and benefit from the ridicule of the great and the applause of the learned , or that these were the reason behind granting her wish . In this way fluctuation between two possible options disturbs the stability of the textual world .

Tra2 succeeds in keeping the discrepancy , but in a more acute manner. It renders "تبعد عن نفسها" putting the TT receiver in a dilemma for he will not be able to find a suitable pathway to downgrade the sentence .

Tra3 comes close to the original informativity mapping . It begins the sentence with the causative device "ف" in order to establish the linkage with the previous occurrence . On the other hand , strength of linkage in world knowledge is relevant to informativity orders . Thus , the first part of the nonfinite clause is of second order since it asserts nontypical relations . The order is kept as it is here . The second part about the ridicule and the applause is of third order because it contradicts determinate relations leaving the reader to strive with a process of motivation search . This rendition puts the TT reader in a very similar situation , which means that transferring the same orders of informativity helps attain an equivalent effect on the TT reader . However , this transfer may require occasionally the expression on the surface structure of a certain device ( e.g. a cohesive device ) that lies in the deep structure , which , according to Nida and Taber (1974 : 43) , helps

provide the clearest and most unambiguous possible expression of the relational network .

The effect of informativity orders and their rendition emerges again with the vague beginning of the sentence “ her poems , her plays , ....profusion ” . For the purpose of treatment , this sentence shall be segmented into two parts : the first ends at “public libraries ” . Here , the translator , as a reader of the ST , has to expand more processing resources in order to choose one of the possible organizations of its possible structures and consequently one possible conceptual / relational configuration . The translator can not leave the choice to the TT receiver as is the case with the ST receiver simply because the punctuation system allows such elasticity in English ; whereas the implications of the tools of that system have to be rendered linguistically (i.e. in words) in the Arabic text . There are four possible organizations here :-

- a) that she lives only in the phrases that Lamb scattered ( upon her tomb and upon her poems and upon her plays ...etc )
- b) that she lives only in the phrases that Lamb scattered upon her tomb , while her poems , her plays ...etc .
- c) “all those folios and quartos ...etc.” is a description of her previously enumerated forms of work .
- d) “all those folios and quartos...etc.” is a different subject of a new sentence .

The translator’s option for any of these alternatives is absolutely dependent on the order of informativity he wants to assign this utterance. The choice of order , in turn , is controlled by the cohesion and coherence requirements .The coherence of a text depends , in part , on the assumptions which users bring to it and it is the job of the translator to reassess them (Hatim and Mason , 1989 : 194) . Hence , the existence of a semicolon after “tomb” indicates that a cohesive connection is intended . On the other hand , alternative (b) is given preference over alternative (a) since it is more coherent to presume that “few” in “few splendid phrases” narrows the scope of their presence to one location , i.e. , the tomb . Besides , practically speaking , words can be written on tombs , but not on poems and discourses . Then alternative (c) overrides

alternative (d) on the basis that the pronoun “those” is preferred to be interpreted endophorically (anaphorically , in reference to the previous works) rather than otherwise exophorically . Coherently , it is part of the world knowledge to assume that literary works usually appear in folios . In effect , it becomes conspicuous that this third order occurrence is inevitably downgraded to the second order in translation .

Tra1 grasps the inevitability of making choices , but unsuccessfully does it in a manner that transforms the occurrence from one type of third order informativity into another , leading to an inappropriate rendition of the original . This translation reuses punctuation as a means of achieving continuity . It substitutes the semicolon by a colon implying that the splendid phrases Lamb scattered on her tomb were verses of her poems , plays, ...etc. Then , it correctly opts for (c) over (d) . Yet , the discrepancy remains in the fact that the scattered phrases are only “few”; so how could they be verses from so many works ? . In fact , intense utilization of surface structure is needed here since there are evenly matched hypotheses about the underlying conceptual / relational structure :-

Tra2 The substitution of the semicolon by the cohesive device (ف) renders the occurrence suspended on the borderline between second order and third order informativity . This suspension is attributable to the prevailing meaning of continuity (rather than showing reason by contradiction) that (ف) shows in this context .

Tra3 brings in (اما) as the best substitute for the semicolon . It makes the threads of the relational network categorically distinguishable , descending the occurrence to the second order of informativity . The result is to bring the TT reader under a similar degree of equivalent effect that would not have been obtained had the orders of informativity been preserved .

The second coordinated part of the sentence is almost the most problematic from the informativity point of view . There is an unexpected material represented in moving to another environment (decanting , thimbles , liquids) that seems quite outside the range of the one dealt with (literature ,figures ,books) . The translator may find a way

out of this fix by considering this expression as an original metaphor which constitutes a third order occurrence . Though occasionally haphazardous , the choice of the intended transferred meaning of a metaphor is done intuitively on the basis that our intuitions are supported by world knowledge (Palmer , 1988 : 103) . Thus , to process this use , he must integrate the problematic element by reasoning that :-

- (1) her works are resembled to wine poured slowly from a bottle so as not to disturb the sediment (keep the silence that wraps them)
- (2) the wine is poured into tiny thimbles (glasses not sewing tools) which hold very little quantity (i.e., very little of her works are read or sought).

Hence , the original metaphor elicits a resolvable discrepancy between text-presented knowledge and previously stored knowledge (how could there be relation between wine and thimbles on the one hand and literary works and public libraries on the other?) . A serious problem arises because the linkage of this occurrence to what went before is endangered in an unexpected way and the probability of failure emerges . The translator is obliged in a situation like this to undertake a good deal of the comprehension processing the TT reader is supposed to perform , or at least to ease it to a certain degree . His obligation stems from the fact that he has to activate motivation search to find out a source for the unexpected material to make the occurrence accessible to its context and hence within the range of probable options . In addition , the diction of equivalents for such lexical items as “decant” and “thimbles” entails the choice of one option , and consequently the downgrading of the utterance :-

Tra1 commits the double mistake of wrong diction by choosing the word “كشتبان” as an equivalent for “thimble” and then hindering any chance of comprehension by rendering an incorrect plural form “كشاتبين” . The other inaccuracy is the use of the verb “تفيض” from “in profusion” ; whereas the original verb is “hold” . Evidently , no attempt has been made to consult the context backwardly nor outwardly . Had it been done , it would have , at least , told the translator that “الكشتبان” is used to protect

the finger while sewing not to pour liquid in . The result is an irresolvable gap , and a discontinuity in the context .

Tra2 Although the metaphor is still inaccurately rendered , comprehensibility is improved by the relative matching between it and the world knowledge . Here , the translator rendered “tiny thimbles” as “*اوعية صغيرة*”, but reversed the picture by depicting the works themselves turned into thimbles , while the original message makes it evident that the works are linked to some liquid poured into thimbles . Moreover , the translator’s literal rendition of “ of their profusion ” as “*من غزارتها*” leaves it without relational parsing . Its node has no links and can not be fitted with the rest of the network . The node can be changed into “*من معينها*” so that “*معين*” would cohere with the liquid state . All in all , the order of informativity is slightly downgraded that it can not be said to have reached the second order . It is still within the range of third order , which suggests the idea of amore graded scale of informativity orders for purposes of translation .

Tra3 The rendition of “thimbles” into “*كشتبانات*” deprives this translator from the opportunity to strengthen the linkage of this sentence to both text knowledge and world knowledge . So , inaccurate translation may result in a much higher order of informativity ; but but this order goes so far beyond the acceptable boundaries of informativity that it becomes beyond any means of problem solving processes and hinders the comprehension of the TT .

## **6.Criteria for Translators on the Rendition of Informativity Orders in Literary Texts**

Literary texts may be characterized by many third order occurrences of different types . This is viewed as part of the liberty writers are allowed to use in order to better their productions on the scale of innovation and creativity . It is , perhaps , useful to examine the difficult situation in which the translator finds himself when attempting to make decision about the most appropriate way of rendering a certain order of informativity :

\* He is to determine the order of the occurrence assuming himself a native speaker of the SL , which is not always easy for he would inevitably be meeting with cases that do not successfully match his schematic structure ( Farghal , 2003 ) and he , consequently , classifies them as belonging to the third , or at least second , order ; whereas they are taken as first order cases among the members of the SL culture .

\* Then , he comes to the most critical decision of whether to render the occurrence in the same order or to downgrade it ( It is out of the question that translators should desire to make the TT more difficult to comprehend than the ST and , thus , I would not say upgrade it ) . The difficulty stems from the fact that the informativity lines sometimes cross with those of cohesion and consequently with correct TT comprehension , “ Textual features providing cohesion are to be appropriate in order not to produce nonsensical pieces of meaning .” ( Adab , 2003 ) . A third order occurrence that still keeps the cohesion of the ST may render the TT incohesive and , hence , needs to be downgraded in translation .

\* On the other hand , the downgrading may do harm to the stylistic features of the ST , particularly when it demolishes the stylistic choices built on uncommon word order , punctuation or certain syntactic devices.

From the previous study and analysis of the chosen literary text and its translations in terms of informativity and its related linguistic aspects, the researcher may recommend the translators to react in the following ways :

1-When deciding that it is in the best interest of the translation to preserve a high order of informativity , the translator must make sure that his translation of the previous and following parts of the text allows the TT reader to accomplish his motivation search backward and forward in order to successfully downgrade the relevant occurrence .

2- Cohesion has priority over informativity in that cohesion contributes to the text comprehension while informativity has to do with text interestingness . Thereupon , whenever a conflict arises between the cohesive features and informativity order , the translator is expected to choose to preserve the former rather than the latter . On the other hand , it has to be emphasized that the translator should not seek to achieve a higher level of cohesion than intended by the ST writer on the account of informativity orders .

3- Uniqueness of some world referents and concepts in certain communities is not a legitimate justification for downgrading the order of occurrences in the TT . This is part of the problem of cultural differences in translation and it has its own techniques of tacklement .

4- If a higher order is based on a certain syntactic variety that has no correspondent in the TL , the translator shall find himself reluctant to downgrade the order by resorting to a TL syntactic structure that carries the same content but is capable only of a lower order of informativity .

5- Although punctuation marks in English are grammatical and stylistic tools used to perform particular functions and convey meanings in writing ( Ghazala , 2004 : 230 ) , their transfer to words in Arabic should be done very carefully and succinctly lest it should affect cohesion and informativity negatively in that the chosen words either misinterpret the intended semantic relation or they unnecessarily downgrade the informativity order . Such errors could be quite grave since the range of their damage is often extended to include the following occurrences , and accordingly disturbing the map of semantic relations . When the translator has several probable interpretations of a certain punctuation mark , his choice should be based on which of them achieves an equivalent or at least the closest order of informativity rather than on which of them renders this part of the text clearer for the translator's job does not include determining the writer's intention behind it .

## 7. Conclusions

Informativity is undoubtedly a cornerstone in communication . Translation as a form of communication , must , by corollary , pay informativity its due attention . Having done this piece of analytical work , the researcher has come out with the following conclusions :-

- (1) The translator , as a processor of the ST and producer of the TT , can not possibly preserve the same orders of informativity. The routes of the informativity map including the directions are redrawn in such a way as to serve the most accurate transfer possible of the ST . The techniques of Beaugrande in this respect have proved useful for this aim .
- (2) Informativity affects the fidelity of translation and vice versa , i.e. , when the occurrence is of a high order informativity , the degree of its comprehension by the translator may reduce , affecting the content of the message to be conveyed . On the other hand , the requirements of fidelity may drive the translator to change the order of informativity or the direction of its downgrading .
- (3) Cohesion and coherence have been found to play a pivotal role in resolving high order informativity particularly in downgrading third order occurrences . Underlying relational structures in the ST have appeared on the surface expression of TT through cohesive devices . Besides , the principles of coherence have been frequently manipulated in outward downgrading .
- (4) The translator has to give special care to obligatory changes in informativity orders , i.e. , those dictated by the differences between the systems of the SL and TL .
- (5) Downgrading is not always recommended , particularly when it brings more options than the original ; hence increasing ambiguity .



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