

Audience Design from a Translator's Perspective

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Abstract

This paper maintains that different cultures have different generic conventions, including those related to audience design. It examines the Syrian newspaper marriage congratulation (SNMC), the British newspaper marriage announcement (BNMA), the British newspaper marriage congratulation/announcement (BNMC/A), and the British newspaper marriage congratulation (BNMC) from a mono-addressee/twin-addressee perspective. It also investigates mono-function/twin-function language, the roles played constantly/in rotation by the participants, and the general/special audience.

The current research discloses the shortcomings of literal translation which, more often than not, stands out as a poor, lame choice when generic norms are involved. The researcher argues that texts should be reproduced according to the generic conventions of the target language. This involves adding some generic elements and carrying out some structural as well as grammatical modifications in the process of translating (BNMC) into Syrian Arabic.

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Introduction

There is nothing new about the fact "...that different language communities use language to categorise reality in ways that suit them." (Seidl 1998:102). Living in a world where different cultures exist "... means developing different ways of seeing the world as cultures are made up of different beliefs and value systems, literary and linguistic conventions, as well as social and moral norms that differ from each other..." (Garces 2002:289).

As widely acknowledged, language and culture are inseparable (Seidl 1998); culture "... is shaped by and conveyed in language; it is experienced, understood and interpreted in language." (Seidl 1998:101). This unbreakable and undeniable bond between culture and language has encouraged scholars to underline the important position occupied by culture on the agenda of foreign language teaching.

Reah (1998:55) maintains that it is important to bear in mind "that texts operate within a cultural context; that is, they are created within a particular culture, and operate within the value system of that culture." Seidl (1998) warns that language does not make much sense as abstract knowledge. It "...exists as a stable idealised body of linguistic forms and their functions which are established by convention in a community. Dictionaries, or, in a more comprehensive way, linguistic corpora, record this 'state of a language'. Learning this body of knowledge, however, is no guarantee for successful performance in a foreign language." (Seidl 1998:103)

Holmes (1992:374) argues that it is not easy to acquire sociolinguistic competence in language 2 "...since it involves understanding the social values that underlie the community's ways of using language. Many rules for polite interaction depend on an understanding of the social distance norms of the community." This evidently means that being polite in language 2 "...is not just a matter of using a perfect native accent and correct grammar. It also involves knowing the relative weight that the community puts on different kinds of social relationships, and how this is appropriately expressed." (Holmes 1992:374)

Translation, which is the process of mediation between two languages and, consequently, between two cultures, has, fortunately, not been outside this language/culture equation. The translator is constantly reminded of the importance of being "... aware of his function as a mediator between "text knowledge" and "people's world-knowledge" with regard to two languages and two text-users from (usually different) socio-cultural settings" (Zydatiss 1983:219), and of the communication breakdown that "...typically occurs when speakers superimpose their strategies of use, which are entirely different from those of the target language, onto the linguistic structure they find there." (Seidl 1998:109). When translation is dealt with as merely a lexical and syntactic process, the translated text has no place and addresses no audience because the cultural background has been neglected (Seidl 1998).

Aims of Study

Studying 385 British and Syrian newspaper marriage congratulations/announcements collected over a period of five years (1999-2003) from Tishreen, Al-Thawra, Al-Baath, The Times, The Daily Telegraph, The Scotsman, The Guardian, The Herald, and The Daily Echo, Haddad (2005) argues that the Syrian newspapers use one type to announce marriage and extend congratulations (the Syrian newspaper marriage congratulation SNMC), while British newspapers have three main types: the British newspaper marriage announcement (BNMA), where the marriage is announced but no congratulations are extended, the British newspaper marriage congratulation/ announcement (BNMC/A), where marriage is announced and congratulations are extended, and the British newspaper marriage congratulation (BNMC), where congratulations are extended but no wedding details are included.

The aim of the current research is to bring (SNMC), (BNMA), (BNMC/A), and (BNMC) back to the negotiation table to discuss issues related to audience design. Attempts are made to find answers to the following urgent questions:

- 1) Are (SNMC), (BNMA), (BNMC/A), and (BNMC) mono-addressee or twin-addressee texts?
- 2) Who is the general audience (GA) and the special audience (SA) in (SNMC), (BNMA), (BNMC/A), and (BNMC)?

3) Where do (GA) and (SA) play the roles of the addressee and the auditor constantly/in rotation?

Questions related to whether (SNMC), (BNMA), (BNMC/A), and (BNMC) are considered genres or genrelets are not discussed in the present research. Interested readers are kindly referred to Haddad (2005) for abundant information on this particular issue, and Haddad (1995, 2001, 2003, 2004) for similar issues.

Audience Design

Blanchard & Root (1997:7) claim that “What you write about (subject) and your reason for writing (purpose) are greatly affected by whom you expect will read the final product (audience). Because you will almost always be writing for an audience, you will communicate your ideas more effectively if you keep that audience in mind. Remember that all audiences have expectations, but those expectations vary from one audience to another.”

According to Hatim (2001:228), audience design is “...catering through texts for the communicative needs of an audience made up not only of hearers/text receivers but also of invisible sectors such as over-hearers, etc.”

Fairclough (1992:79-80) classifies audience into three types: “... ‘addressees’ (those directly addressed), ... ‘hearers’ (those not addressed directly, but assumed to be part of audience), and ‘over-hearers’ (those who do not constitute part of the ‘official’ audience but are known to be de facto consumers...”.

Along similar lines, Bell (1984) distinguishes four receiver groups: the addressee (who is a ratified participant in a given exchange, whose presence is known, and who is directly addressed), the auditor (whose presence is known, and who is a ratified participant but not directly addressed), the over-hearer (whose presence is known but who is not a ratified participant or addressed), and the eavesdropper (whose presence is not known at all).

Bell's four categories “...are listed in descending order of potential influence on the text producer's style: auditors will typically exert less

influence than addressees, overhearers less than auditors and eavesdroppers none at all.” (Mason 2000:4)

It is not in the scope of the current research to provide the reader with a detailed survey of the different classifications of audience (See Al-Mahadin 1995 for a detailed study). My main concern is to argue that within such classifications, particularly the domains of the addressee and the auditor, other details should be taken into consideration since they influence the decisions (1) text producers make in the process of creating texts, and (2) text reproducers make in the process of translating from one language into another, particularly when different cultures are involved.

Audience Design in (SNMC)

زفاف مبارك

في حفل بهيج وبحضور الأهل والأحبة تم زفاف الشاب محمد فراس على الآنسة غيداء. والد العريس الزميل محمد صبيح قباني والعائلة يتقدمون بالتهنئة والتبريك متمنين للعروسين حياة مملؤها السعادة وبالرفاء والبنين. ألف مبارك

(Tishreen, March 28, 2001)

Literal Translation

Wedding Congratulations

In a happy party attended by family and the loved ones, the wedding of the young man Mohammed Firas and Miss Ghaida took place. The father of the bridegroom colleague Mohammed Sobaih Kabani and the family extend congratulation and blessing, wishing the newly weds a life full of happiness. We wish you a prosperous life full of sons. A thousand congratulations.

The above is a twin-addressee text. It is addressed to general as well as special types of audience. The general audience (GA) is any person who happens to read the text, and the special audience (SA) is the bride and/or groom. While (GA) comes to the text with the aim of receiving information with no particular interest in congratulations, (SA) comes to

the text with the aim of receiving congratulations with no particular interest in receiving information already known to her/him.

If we go back to Bell's classification of receiver groups (Bell 1984), we can argue that (GA) and (SA) play the roles of the addressee and the auditor in rotation in (SNMC). In the above example, (SA) is the addressee who receives congratulations right from the beginning زفاف مبارك (Congratulation on Wedding). S/he is a ratified participant whose presence is known, and who is directly addressed. On the other hand, (GA) is the auditor in this case. S/he is a ratified participant whose presence is known, but who is not directly addressed since s/he is not included in the congratulations.

In حفل بهيج وبحضور الأهل والأحبة تم زفاف الشاب محمد فراس على الأنسة غيداء (In a happy party attended by family and the loved ones, the wedding of the young man Mohammed Firas and Ghaida took place), (GA) is the addressee and (SA) is the auditor since the details of the occasion are perfectly known to (SA) and, more often than not, unknown to (GA).

In

والد العريس الزميل محمد صبيح قباني والعائلة يتقدمون بالتهنئة والتبريك متمنين للعروسين حياة مليئة بالسعادة وبالرفاء والبنين. ألف مبارك

(The father of the bridegroom colleague Mohammed Subaih Kabbani and the family extend congratulation and blessing, wishing the newly weds a life full of happiness. We wish you a prosperous life full of sons. A thousand congratulations),

(GA) is the auditor and (SA) is the addressee.

The twin-addressee text has evidently involved a twin-function language: affective (social) and referential (informative) (See Holmes 2001 on functions of language). These two functions are served in rotation. In other words, when (GA) is the addressee, language plays an

informative role (information), and when (SA) is the addressee, language plays a social role (congratulations).

Audience Design in (BNMC/A)

As mentioned earlier, the British newspapers, unlike the Syrian newspapers, have three main types: (BNMA), (BNMC/A), and (BNMC) (Haddad 2005).

Type 1: (BNMA)

Marriage

Mr. H.J.P. Farr

and Miss C.E.F. Platt

The marriage took place on Saturday, February 13, 1999, at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Farm Street, London W1, between Mr. Henry John Philip Farr, son of Mr. and Mrs. Bryan Farr, of Worksop, and Miss Claudi Eveline Fenwick Platt, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Julian Platt, of London. Father Oliver McTernan officiated, assisted by the Rev Philip Tennant. The bride who was given in marriage by her father was attended by Willa Gray, Zoe Fircks, Claudia Esnouf and Hugo Fullerton. Mr. Rupert Uloth and Mr. Hugo Fircks were best men. A reception was held at the Savile Club and the honeymoon is being spent in Africa. (The Times, Feb. 17, 1999)

The above is a mono-addressee text. It is addressed to (GA) who comes to the text with the aim of receiving information. The text is, however, not 100% free of the presence of the (SA). While (GA) is the addressee according to Bell's classification, (SA) is the over-hearer whose presence is known but who is not a ratified or addressed participant. S/he comes to the text not as a receiver of new information (since all the pieces of information included in the text are old information for her/him), and definitely not as a congratulation receiver (since no congratulations are extended), but as an over-hearer who pays a visit to the text to enjoy seeing her/his wedding details announced. As an

over-hearer, s/he does not have any influence on the text producer's style. Contrary to (GA) and (SA) who play the addressee and the auditor in rotation in SNMC, (GA) and (SA) play constant roles in (BNMA); throughout the whole text (GA) is the addressee and (SA) the over-hearer.

The mono-addressee text has evidently involved a mono-function language; the language of the above text serves an informational function, but there is no sign of any social function.

Type 2: (BNMC/A)

WEDDING

Mr and Mrs Tyzzer are pleased to announce the marriage of their daughter Patrina Jane to Mr Richard Smithson Henney, which took place on July 6, 2002 at St John the Evangelist Church, Hedge End. Congratulations and every happiness to you both. With love Mum, Dad, Graham and Vicki. (*The Daily Echo*, July 7, 2002)

It goes without saying that this type is the closest to (SNMC). It is a twin-addressee text, addressed to (GA) who comes to the text to receive information, and to (SA) who comes to the text to receive congratulations. If we go back to Bell's classification (1984), we see that, similar to the case of (SNMC), (GA) and (SA) play the roles of the addressee and the auditor in rotation. The first sentence (Mr and Mrs Tyzzer ... Hedge End.) is evidently addressed to (GA) who plays the role of the addressee here. (SA) is the auditor. In the second sentence (Congratulations ... and Vicki.), (GA) is the auditor and (SA) is the addressee.

The twin-addressee text has involved a twin-function language. The language of the above text serves an informational function when addressed to (GA) as addressee, and a social function when addressed to (SA) as addressee. The informational function, however, is slightly modified by "the polite formula *are pleased*" (Haddad 2005:71) which plays an affective function. Apart from this, "A clear line is drawn between the territories of the announcement and the congratulations." (Haddad 2005:71).

Type 3 (BNMC)**WEDDINGS****GRAY – SIMMONS JIM AND MANDY**

Congratulations to you both. From Vicky, Luis, Martyn, Stephen and Chloe. (The Daily Echo, Sept. 20, 2003)

The above is a mono-addressee text. It is addressed to (SA) who comes to the text to receive congratulations. The role of the addressee is constantly played throughout the text. S/he is the ratified participant whose presence is known, and who is directly addressed. However, (GA) is not totally absent. S/he might, by chance, come to the text as an over-hearer whose presence is known but who is not a ratified or addressed participant. This mono-addressee text has involved a mono-function language (affective function). The referential function is, obviously, not there.

Audience Design and Translation

The translator is a mediator between two languages that can sometimes be governed by completely different sets of generic norms (See Haddad 1995, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2005). Ignorance of these generic norms, including the ones that govern audience design, can at worst jeopardize, and at best shake, the mediation process.

The following (BNMC) was given to 30 postgraduate students who were asked to work as a team. Unfortunately, a unanimous decision was made: this text should be literally translated into Arabic. The following is their suggested translation.

Griffiths and English**Nicola and Trevor**

Congratulations on your wedding. Love Mum, Dad, Michelle, Robert and children. XXX (The Daily Echo, June 29, 2002)

جريفيث و إنكليش

نيكولا وتريفور

أجمل التهاني بزفافكما. مع كل الحب. ماما وبابا وميشيل وروبرت والأولاد.

Unfortunate Decision!

Obviously, the above literal translation introduces to the target culture (the Syrian culture) a mono-addressee text where a twin-addressee text is the expected norm. The translated text is specifically addressed to (SA) who comes to the text to receive congratulations, and who constantly plays the role of the addressee throughout the text. Moreover, it imposes on the target culture a generic structural arrangement alien to the target text receiver (TTR) (See Haddad 2005 for a detailed study), a set of lexicon different from the highly clichéd lexicon of (SNMC) (See Haddad 1995, 2001, 2003, 2005 on clichéd language), and a relatively informal language different from the fairly formal language expected in (SNMC) (See Haddad 2005 on level of formality in SNMC).

Theoretical Basis

Within the borders of the same language, communication “...between participants is better facilitated when they know the genre they are dealing with and the corresponding generic conventions. This sort of knowledge becomes much more crucial when two languages are involved.” (Haddad 2003:52).

Hatim & Mason (1990) argue that the generic identity of the text influences the decisions of the translator. The knowledge of generic conventions orients the process of understanding a given text and consequently translating it into another language (Haddad 2003). The source text should be reproduced according to the generic regulations imposed by the target language, not the source language, and the expectations of the target text receiver, not those of the source text

receiver (Haddad 2001, 2003, 2004). This means that the translator is expected to add target text norms to the source text (Zydatiss 1983). The “...more culture-bound a text is, the more scope there may be for modification” (Hatim & Mason 1990:188), and, consequently, the less acceptable literal translation (Haddad 2001, 2003, 2005).

Suggested Translation

In the following, the above (BNMC) will be reproduced according to the generic regulations of the target language and the expectations of the target text receiver. The focus will be on converting the text from a mono-addressee into a twin-addressee text, and the language from a mono-function into a twin-function language. Other modifications (formality of language, generic structural arrangement, clichéd language, etc.) will be dealt with very briefly since they are discussed in detail in Haddad (2005).

مبارك

في جو عابق بالفرح تم زفاف تريفور إنكليش على نيكولا غريفيث. الوالدة والوالد وميشيل وروبرت والأولاد يتقدمون بالتهنئة للحروسين. ألف ميروك

The decision to replace (Griffiths and English, Nicola and Trevor) by the title مبارك is made on generic grounds. The title is addressed to (SA) who receives congratulations right from the beginning according to target genre norms. S/he is a ratified participant whose presence is known, and who is directly addressed. Meanwhile, (GA), who is any person who happens to read the text with the aim of receiving information not congratulations, is the auditor. S/he is a ratified participant whose presence is known, but who is not directly addressed since s/he is not included in the congratulations.

The addition of *في جو عابق بالفرح*, a clichéd opening in SNMCs (See Haddad 2005 for details on clichéd language), helps restore the twin-addressee identity of the text. Through this piece of information, (GA) creeps into the text. S/he occupies the position of the addressee, while (SA) takes a back seat and occupies the auditor's position since the details mentioned in this addition (i.e. description of a joyful atmosphere) are perfectly known to (SA), not to (GA). As expected by the target text receiver, (GA) and (SA) rotate positions.

The passive voice structure in *تم زفاف نيكولا غريفيث على تريفور إنكليش*, which should have been directly addressed to (SA) had it been translated literally (*زفافكما*), boosts the position of the (GA) who is still occupying the addressee's position. According to the generic arrangements of the target culture's norms, the newly weds' names occur here, not at the beginning of the text. In the rest of the text, (SA) is the addressee and (GA) is the auditor.

Along the same lines, the aforementioned modifications help restore twin-function language. While in the students' translation the language plays a social role (congratulations), the suggested translation is the arena for twin-function language: the informative role, where (GA) is informed, and the social role, where (SA) is congratulated. Again, these roles are played in rotation, according to the norms of the target language: when (GA) is the addressee, language plays an informative role, and when (SA) is the addressee, language plays a social role.

Translating *Mum* as *(الوالدة)*, and *Dad* as *(الوالد)*, and omitting the three X's, which refer to the number of kisses, restore the fairly high level of formality that should predominate in the target genre (For further details, see Haddad 2005). On the other hand, the addition of the closing element *ألف مبروك* restores the generic structural arrangement to the text which, according to the generic regulations of the target language, should end with congratulations (See Haddad 2005).

Conclusion

The source and target cultures do not always share the same values and attitudes (Valette 1986). They might have different norms and patterns of interaction (Wolfson 1986), and, more often than not, different generic conventions that govern what may/not be said, how, when and where (Haddad 1995, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2005, Haddad forthcoming).

When we analyze language, "...at the textual level we always need to go beyond the mere formal properties of the text in order to take account of the cultural differences. Moving to the contextual level poses a number of questions: what kind of text is it and of what genre? Who wrote the text for whom and why? Whose reality does it represent, what kind of social attitudes, beliefs and values does it reflect?" (Seidl 1998:108).

Genre and audience design have been the main focus of the current research. It has been argued that different cultures have different generic conventions, including those related to audience design. (SNMC), (BNMA), (BNMC/A), and (BNMC) have been discussed from a mono-addressee/twin-addressee point of view. This has involved investigating the function of language (mono-function/twin-function language), and the roles played by the addressee and the auditor (constant/in rotation).

From a translation perspective, it has been maintained that the target text should be produced according to the generic norms of the target language and the expectations of the target text receiver. More often than not, this conformity entails some modifications, something that makes literal translation an unfortunate decision. A suggested translation of (BNMC) into Syrian Arabic preserves the twin-addressee nature of the target genre through adding some elements, and carrying out some structural as well as grammatical modifications.

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