

## **Congratulation or Announcement? Different Cultures ... Different Norms**

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### **Abstract**

This paper revisits the notion of genre and genrelet and invites some extensions to allow for the cases where sub-genres/sub-genrelets occupy different locations along the conventionalisation continuum. Within this particular framework, 385 marriage congratulations/announcements, collected from Syrian and British newspapers, are examined. The analysis shows that the Syrian newspapers use one type to announce marriage and extend congratulations while the British newspapers use three types: a) the marriage announcement, b) the marriage congratulation and announcement, and c) the marriage congratulation.

The current research demonstrates how literal translation of a British marriage announcement into Syrian Arabic fails because it violates the Syrian norms of tenor, politeness, discourse and genre. The researcher suggests a model of translation which a) focuses on the importance of knowing the generic conventions of both source and target languages, b) admits that the generic identity of the text influences the translator's decisions, c) underlines the necessity of reproducing the target text according to the regulations of the target language and the expectations of the target text receiver, d) appreciates that the source and target cultures do not always share identical norms, e) suggests that the more culture-bound the text, the more modifications it requires in translation, and f) gives translators insights into how far they can intervene at the three levels of register, pragmatics and semiotics.

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## 0. Introduction

“Learning another language usually involves a great deal more than learning the literal meaning of the words, how to put them together, and how to pronounce them. We need to know what they mean in the cultural context in which they are normally used. And that involves some understanding of the cultural and social norms of their users.” (Holmes 1992:305).

Members of the same culture interpret the world in roughly the same way and are able to express themselves, including their thoughts and feelings about the world, in a way that is understood by all of them (Hall 1997). This means that “...culture depends on its participants interpreting meaningfully what is happening around them, and ‘making sense’ of the world in broadly similar ways.” (Ibid:2). On the other hand, 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).

Speakers from different cultures talk about issues in different ways (Kress 1989). Individuals are not usually supposed to face difficulties when engaged in a social occasion in their own cultural milieu. This is because “Individuals internalize well the various cultural conventions governing different situations” (Ventola 1979:271). But while these conventions are “automatic” and “natural” for those who belong to the same cultural milieu, they are not so for those who belong to a different culture. This becomes very clear when we meet somebody who belongs to a different culture and see her/him struggling with a certain convention unknown to her/him, or “...when we find ourselves out of our culture, not knowing “how to behave”, not knowing what the right thing to do might be.” (Kress & Knapp 1992:7)

Texts normally function within a cultural context. They are produced within the framework of a particular culture and “...operate within the value system of that culture” (Reah 1998:55). Anything significant about the text can be explained by asking the following questions: “...who produced it?, for whom was it produced?, in what context and under what constraints was it produced? In other words, ...all aspects of this text have a social origin, and can be explained in terms of the social context in which it was made.” (Kress & Knapp 1992:8)

The above argument leads us to the following conclusions:

- 1) "Part of knowing a certain language is knowing what one can and cannot say to whom on what occasions." (Dunnett, Dubin & Lezberg 1986:149),
- 2) Learning a second language is often considered a sort of learning a second culture (Brown 1986),
- 3) Learning a second language involves learning conventions and norms, including generic ones (Haddad 2001, 2003),
- 4) Target and source cultures "... do not always have identical values and attitudes." (Valette 1986:185). They might differ greatly in norms and patterns of interaction (Wolfson 1986),
- 5) A "...person's world view, self-identity, his systems of thinking, acting, feeling, and communicating, are disrupted by a change from one culture to another." (Brown 1986:34), and
- 6) As a mediator between a source text producer and a target text receiver who speak different languages and belong to different cultures, the translator must be more sensitive to the cultural differences between the source and the target languages than any ordinary language user.

Within this framework, this research studies 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.

## **1. Aim of Study**

The aim of the current research is threefold:

- 1) Revisit the notion of genre and genrelet discussed earlier in Haddad 1995 and 2001, and invite some extensions to the theory. These extensions include seeing genre and genrelet as a continuum where the less conventionalised genres occupy one extreme end, the most conventionalised ones occupy the other extreme end, and different genres of different degrees of conventionalisation occupy different places in between the two ends. The new extensions provide for the sub-genres/sub-genrelets which come under the same genre/genrelet but occupy different locations along the conventionalisation continuum.
- 2) Carry out a detailed comparative study between the newspaper marriage congratulations/announcements in both Syrian Arabic and British English. The research proves that, contrary to the Syrian newspapers which have one type to announce marriage and extend congratulations, the British newspapers have three types: a) the

British newspaper marriage announcement (BNMA) where the marriage is announced but no congratulations are extended, b) the British newspaper marriage congratulation and announcement (BNMCA) where marriage is announced and congratulations are extended, and c) the British newspaper marriage congratulation (BNMC) where congratulations are extended, but no marriage details are announced.

- 3) Adopt a kind of translation which a) admits that "...genre membership influences the translator's decisions..." (Hatim & Mason 1990:69), b) focuses on "...the importance of identifying the generic membership of the source text, knowing the conventions that govern the production of that particular genre in the target language, [and] reproducing the source text according to the generic regulations of the target language..." (Haddad 2003:9), and c) appreciates that the **"...more culture-bound a text is, the more scope there may be for modification"** (Hatim & Mason 1990:188), and the more impotent and unacceptable literal translation is.

## 2. Genre vs. Genrelet

"In order to distinguish various types of texts, and to use them correctly in communicative situations, the members of a speech-and-culture community must possess an implicit knowledge of generic requirements. No clear-cut dividing line can be drawn between this knowledge, and the general competence that enables people to communicate by means of the linguistic code. Rather, the knowledge of generic rules must be seen as an integral part of people's ability 'to do things with language'. ...each [genre] is constituted by a unique set of rules, but may share distinctive rules with other genres." (Ryan 1979:311-312)

Genres are generally seen as "...the text categories readily distinguished by mature speakers of a language..." (Trosborg 1997:6). They are the "Conventional forms of text associated with particular types of social occasion (e.g. the news report, the editorial, the cooking recipe)." (Hatim (1997:217). A genre "...is a type of text whose overall structure and whose grammatical and lexical features have been determined by the contexts in which it is used, and which over time have become institutionalized." (Thornbury 1999:85).

For quite a long time, the term was associated with literary genres. Non-literary genres received little, if any, attention. Only recently have genre studies started to focus more on non-literary genres (See, for

example, Swales 1990, Kress 1990, Bhatia 1993, Haddad 1995, 2001, 2003).

In addition to the linguistic factors that distinguish different genres, many of the recent studies have started to carefully consider the social and the cultural dimensions of genre. Focusing on all these dimensions together has brought to the definitions of genre new concepts, and preserved, reshaped or obliterated old ones. Kress & Knapp (1992:4-5) argue that texts are seen as "...produced in a response to, and out of, particular social situations and their specific structures. As a result our approach to genre puts most stress on the social and cultural factors, rather than on merely linguistic factors. For us texts are always social objects, and the making of texts is always a social process."

The following points are often highlighted in recent genre studies:

- 1) Genres are "...conventional forms of texts associated with particular types of social occasion..." (Hatim & Mason 1997:218),
- 2) Almost "...all our speaking or writing is guided to a greater or a lesser extent by conventions of generic form." (Kress & Knapp 1992:10).
- 3) Genres reflect the purposes of the participants, their roles and intentions in the social occasion (See Haddad 1995 for example).
- 4) Genres are culturally acceptable and easily recognisable by language community (See, for example, Haddad 2001, 2003).
- 5) For a successful communication, rules of the generic game should be known by all players (Haddad 2003). The "...closer we are to the generic conventions which are acceptable and acknowledged by a given language community, the more efficient our texts are, and, consequently, the closer we are to achieving our goals as communicators." (Ibid :33-4)

Haddad (1995) adopts the term *genrelet* from Hatim (1993). She (Haddad 1995) argues that genre and *genrelet* are both recognised by language community. They both occur in a repeated social occasion and they both involve participants with their purposes and goals. However, a *genrelet* "...is highly conventionalised in the sense that... it operates within constraints imposed by both structure as well as language..." (Ibid:25-26).

In another study which involves a detailed comparison between Syrian and British newspaper death notices, Haddad (2001:31) argues that the more conventionalised the text, "...the more predictable and stable the rules of politeness (a pragmatic consideration) and the more intolerant the discursal constraints (a semiotic consideration)..."

It is important to know that genre and *genrelet* lie at opposite ends of a continuum. At one end lie the less conventionalised genres where

creativity is highly appreciated and the violation of generic rules is welcome (e.g. novels, poems, short stories, etc.). On the other end of the continuum lie the most conventionalised genres (i.e. genrelets) where creativity is not appreciated, and violation of generic conventions is frowned upon (See Haddad 2001 for example). The space in between the two ends is occupied by different genres with different degrees of conventionalisation. While some of these genres are closer to the genre zone (editorials, news reports, letters to the editor, etc.), others are closer to the genrelet zone (e.g. recipes, weather forecasts).

The study of 278 British newspaper marriage congratulations/announcements proves that the notion of genre vs. genrelet has to be revisited and slightly modified to provide for the cases where sub-genres/sub-genrelets come under the same genres/genrelets but occupy different positions along the above-mentioned continuum. While the Syrian newspaper marriage congratulation comes in one highly conventionalised type (both linguistically and structurally), the British marriage congratulations/announcements come in three types. As my data proves, these types are linguistically and/or structurally conventionalised.

### 3. Syrian Newspaper Marriage Congratulation (SNMC)

For the purpose of this research, 107 (SNMCs) have been collected from Syrian newspapers and carefully examined. As mentioned earlier in this study, Syrian newspapers use one type to extend congratulations and announce marriage. This genre will be classified throughout the present research as genrelet rather than genre since it is materialized in a highly clichéd way both linguistically and structurally (See Haddad 1995, 2001). In other words, the language of (SNMC) is highly repetitive and the generic structure is strictly governed by intolerant conventions. No exception (shift of element order, absence of obligatory element, etc.) was found in my data.

In the following, a sample of (SNMC) is given and the genrelet is subjected to a detailed analysis. To make sure that the points under scrutiny are understood by the non-Arab reader, the Arabic expressions, words, etc. are all translated very literally.

**Sample** (Tishreen, March 28, 2001)

زفاف مبارك

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

The generic structure of the (SNMC) is highly conventionalised. It usually consists of three obligatory elements that occupy fixed positions in the generic format of the text (See Haddad 2001, 1995 for more details on obligatory and optional generic elements). These are:

- 1) The title (T), which psychologically prepares the text receiver (TR) for the event (Haddad 2001), and positions her/him in the genrelet right from the beginning of the text. In this element, congratulations and best wishes are directly conveyed in clichéd expressions such as

مبارك، زفاف ميمون، ميروك، زفاف مبارك

(Respectively translated as: congratulations, happy wedding, congratulations, blessed wedding).

- 2) The title must be followed by occasion details (OD). This element usually includes various sub-elements. The sub-element in this research is any separate piece of information that comes under an obligatory or optional generic element. The sub-elements that come under (OD) are:

- a) A description of the happy atmosphere of the wedding. This is usually done in a rather clichéd language through expressions such as:

في حفل بهيج، في حفل بهيج ضم الأهل والأصدقاء، في جو عايق بالفرح

(Respectively translated as: in a happy party, in a happy party which included family members and friends, in an atmosphere full of happiness, etc.).

It has been argued that “Different syntactic arrangements encode different meanings even though the words may remain the same, even though the ‘statement’ is the same.” (Fowler 1986:19). The way the text producer orders elements within a clause can “...give weighting to one or more aspects, and reduce, or remove, others.” (Reah 1998:77), and can “...evoke different responses in the reader.” (Ibid:98). Apart from two exceptions where the wedding venue is given a prominent position in this element, (OD) starts with the description of the happy atmosphere in all my data. Through this syntactic device (i.e. placing this particular sub-element in a prominent, marked opening position), the text producer is actually inviting the text receiver to live the happy atmosphere and puts more emphasis on the description of the happy atmosphere than on the other sub-elements of the same generic element (venue or date of wedding, etc.).

- b) Wedding details (WD): this sub-element includes information on the wedding venue, date, etc.

c) Names of bride and groom (NB/G): this sub-element sometimes includes information concerning the profession of the bride/groom, and can be preceded by praising adjectives such as:

الآنسة المهذبة، الشاب الوسيم، الآنسة الحسنة، الخ

(Translated respectively as: the polite miss, the handsome young man, the beautiful miss, etc.)

Contrary to the British newspaper marriage announcement (BNMA) which often includes the names of the fathers and the mothers of the bride/groom and the status of the bride/groom in the family (only daughter/son, youngest daughter/son, etc.), only three of my Syrian data include the name(s) of the father(s) of the bride/groom, and none includes the name(s) of the mother(s) of the bride/groom or any information concerning the bride/groom's status in the family

3) Congratulations (C) is the closing element where best wishes are conveyed in a rather clichéd manner. Two kinds of congratulation are found in my data:

A) Specified congratulations where the name(s) of the congratulating person(s), establishment, etc. is/are specified, e.g.

أسرة تشرين تهنيء العروسين وبالرفاء والبنين وألف مبارك، الزملاء العاملون في مؤسسة الوحدة يتمنون للعروسين حياة هائلة، الأهل والأصدقاء يباركون للعروسين راجين لهم الصحة والسعادة والتوفيق

(Respectively translated as: “The staff members of Tishreen congratulate the bride and the groom wishing them a prosperous life and plenty of children. A thousand congratulations”, “Colleagues working in Al-Wehda establishment wish the bride and the groom a happy life”, “Relatives and friends congratulate the bride and the groom, wishing them health, happiness and success”).

(B) Unspecified congratulations where the name(s) of the congratulating person(s) is/are left unspecified, e.g.

مع التمنيات للعروسين حياة سعيدة وألف مبارك، أجمل التهاني للعروسين وبالرفاء والبنين، تهانينا الحارة للعروسين وبالرفاء والبنين

(Respectively translated as: “wishing the bride and the groom a happy life and a thousand congratulations”, “most beautiful congratulations to the bride and the groom wishing them a prosperous life and plenty of children”, “our warm congratulations to the bride and the groom wishing them a prosperous life and plenty of children”).

Needless to say, the clichéd way of expressing wishes for many children (بالرفاء والبنين), basically boys, echoes cultural information about



the great interest of Syrian society in having children as early as possible. Such wishes are not found in any of my English data.

Both the affective (social) and the referential (informative) functions (See Holmes 2001, for example, on referential and affective functions) are present in (SNMC). While (T) and (C) primarily serve a social function (congratulating, extending best wishes, etc.), (OD) primarily serves a referential function (provides TR with information on names of bride/groom, venue and date of wedding, etc.).

Hatim (1984:146) argues that "It is assumed that the (in)formality of a text... is a function of a statistically determined predominance of certain lexical and grammatical features". In (SNMC), the level of formality is fairly high. At the lexical level, formality is echoed through the heavy use of formal lexical items (e.g. زفاف instead of بهيج , زواج , سعيد instead of سعيد), and particularly evident in the formal way the immediate relatives (father, mother, sister, brother, etc.) choose to congratulate the bride/groom. In element (C) in the above (SNMC), for example, the father of the bridegroom is referred to as والـد العريس/the father of the bridegroom) rather than بابا or لـبابا (compare with Dad, Mum, etc. in (BNMCA) in section 4.2.), and the family is referred to as العائـلة/the family) with no reference to specific names. This level of formality is enhanced by the formal way the congratulations are extended يتقدمون بالتهنئة والتبريك متمنين للعروسين حياة مـلؤها السعادة وبالرفاء ) /extend congratulations and blessings, wishing the bride and the groom a life full of happiness, prosperity and children). In other samples of my data, the congratulating persons are usually referred to in a very general way (e.g. الأصدقاء/friends, الأقبـارب/relatives, الزملاء/colleagues), or by using both the first and the family names (Compare, for example, with Mum, James, Becky, Ted and Nan in section 4.2.). However, the direct address of the text receiver (e.g. ألف مبارك /a thousand congratulations) and the sociable, friendly tone of the text producer (TP) slightly reduce the level of formality.

If we admit that "Naming is... a very useful device in promoting a particular response from an audience" (Reah 1998:59), we must also admit that the use of naming differs from one culture to another and from one genre to another, as does the audience's response. For example, any attempt to replace والـد العريس in the above sample by بابا or الـبابا in this particular genrelet will unfavourably bring to the mind of the Syrian

text receiver the negative aspect of the parent-child relationship (the weak, vulnerable, dependent child who still needs the protection and guidance of her/his parents). Needless to say, such images are not suitable for a mature bride/groom. On the other hand, the use of *بابا* or *البا* in another genre, casual conversation for example, can bring to the mind of the text receiver the bright side of the parent-child relationship (love, assistance, appreciated protection, emotional support, etc.), unless we are led to understand otherwise from the context (irony, sarcastic attitude, etc.).

According to Hatim (1997:216), discourse is “Modes of speaking and writing which involve participants in adopting a particular attitude towards areas of socio-cultural activities...”. Although the language of (SNMC) is fairly formal, the discourse is far from detached. The involved discourse is present in the three elements of the genrelet: (T) briefly extends congratulations, (OD) describes in a non-detached, evaluative way the happy atmosphere of the wedding, and (C) includes detailed congratulations. This non-detached discourse slightly reduces the distance between the text producer and the text receiver.

#### **4. British Newspaper Marriage Congratulations and/or Announcements (BNMC/A)**

Searching British newspapers for the purpose of carrying out the present comparative study between (SNMC) and (BNMC/A), I was quite surprised to find out that they have three types:

- 1) The British newspaper marriage announcement (BNMA) where the marriage is announced but no congratulations are extended. Under this type, three sub-types are detected in my data: (a) the British newspaper detailed marriage announcement with unspecified addresser (BNDMAUA), (b) the British newspaper brief marriage announcement with unspecified addresser (BNBMAUA), and (c) the British newspaper brief marriage announcement with specified addresser (BNBMASA).
- 2) The British newspaper marriage congratulation/announcement (BNMCA) where marriage is announced and congratulations are extended. Again, this type falls into two sub-types: (a) (BNMCA) with grey line between announcement and congratulation, and (b) (BNMCA) with clear line between announcement and congratulation.
- 3) The British newspaper marriage congratulation (BNMC) where congratulations are extended but no wedding details are announced.

##### **4.1. British Newspaper Marriage Announcement (BNMA)**

65 (BNDMAUA), 71 (BNBMAUA), and 40 (BNBMASA) have been examined for this research. As my data proves, the first two types are very similar in the sense that they are both created under rigid linguistic and structural regulations. The difference lies, however, in how obligatory/optional the sub-elements can be in the last obligatory element (Occasion Details). The two types are classified as *genrelets* in the present research.

It is important to mention at this early stage that future researchers are welcome to add their own observations to the present analysis. They are also welcome to add to the present list any type the current research has, justifiably or unjustifiably, failed to include.

**Type 1: British Newspaper Detailed Marriage Announcement with Unspecified Addresser (BNDMAUA)**

**Sample** (The Times, Feb. 17, 1999)

**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 Workop, 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.

(BNDMAUA) usually consists of three obligatory elements:

1. Title (T) [Marriage(s), Wedding(s), etc.]. Contrary to the Syrian newspapers where every (SNMC) has a separate title, one title might be used for the whole column of marriage announcements in the same British newspaper. This usually applies to all the types discussed in this section.
2. Names of bride and groom (NB/G).
3. Occasion details (OD): More often than not, this element includes many sub-elements that provide the text receiver with information concerning: a) date and venue of wedding, b) names of bride and groom, and sometimes their professions (e.g. Major, Dr., etc.), c) names of the couple's parents and where they come from, often associated with the couple's status in the family (e.g. younger son, eldest daughter, only son, etc.), d) who officiated, e) who gave the

bride in marriage, f) who attended the bride, who attended the groom, etc., g) reception held on this occasion, and h) honeymoon details.

In (BNDMAUA), full sentences are usually used. No syntactic reductions (Holmes 2001) have been detected in the examined data (omission of subject, pronoun, verb, etc.). This type is classified as genrelet in the present research. The language is clichéd with a restricted range of lexical variation (e.g. the marriage took place on..., a reception was held..., the bride was attended by..., etc.). The generic organization is intolerant. No exception (shift in order of elements, absence of obligatory elements, etc.) was detected in my data. Producers of (BNDMAUAs) use an extremely formal language. The addresser is left unspecified and the addressee is not directly addressed (no use of second person singular or plural form). The discourse is extremely detached, impersonal, and non-evaluative. Contrary to (SNMC) where the happy atmosphere of the wedding must be highlighted at the very beginning of the text, (BNDMAUA) and (BNBMAUA), where emphasis is put on (NB/G) (which is syntactically given a prominent position in the text), do not usually provide the text receiver with this sort of information. Only two exceptions were detected in my data: in these, the two marriages were not described as happy but rather as taking place “quietly”.

The (BNDMAUA) serves a referential (informative) function, but does not serve any affective (social) function.

**Type 2:** British Newspaper Brief Marriage Announcement with Unspecified Addresser (BNBMAUA)

**Sample** (The Daily Telegraph, Feb. 17, 1999)

**WEDDING**

**Mr W.P. Jenks and Mrs C.A. Thompson**

The marriage took place on Feb 13 in Shropshire of Mr William Jenks, only son of Mr Bryan Jenks and the late Mrs Anne Attwood, and Mrs Caroline Thompson, only daughter of the late Lt Col Owain Foster and of Mrs Paddy Boden.

Like (BNDMAUA), (BNBMAUA) usually includes the three obligatory elements mentioned in the previous section (title, names of bride and groom, and occasion details). They all occupy the same positions in the generic organization of the text. The difference, however, lies in (OD) where the sub-elements D, E, F, G, and/or H are not always present.

As is the case in the previous type, this type uses an extremely formal language, and serves a referential function only. The discourse is highly detached, impersonal and non-evaluative. Again, this type is

classified as genrelet in the current research. It is produced under rigid regulations. Its language is clichéd and the generic structure is intolerant (See Haddad 1995 on this issue). More often than not, the sentences used in this type are full sentences where no syntactic reduction occurs. Only three instances of syntactic reductions were detected in my data.

**Type 3: British Newspaper Brief Marriage Announcement with Specified Addresser (BNBMASA)**

**Sample** (The Scotsman, Feb. 17, 1999)

**WEDDING**

Fisken-Thornton

Both families are delighted to announce that the marriage of Keith and Patricia took place at Dalhousie Castle Chapel, on February 11, 1999. Rev Marion Dodd officiated.

This type usually includes three obligatory elements:

- 1) Title (T) (Marriage, Wedding, etc.)
- 2) Family names (FN)
- 3) Marriage announcement (MA) which usually includes: a) reference to addresser(s), b) names of bride and groom, and c) date and often venue of wedding. Other pieces of information might sometimes be included (who officiated, where the couple will be living, etc.).

This type is classified as genrelet in the present research. It is produced under strict generic regulations. No deviation from the generic norms (organisation of elements, presence of elements, etc.) was detected in my data. The language is clichéd, though slightly less clichéd than the above two types, and the sentences are full with no occurrence of syntactic reduction. Contrary to the previous two types, this type reveals the addresser's identity (e.g. "both families" in the above text). This evident presence, in addition to the use of adjectives such as "delighted", "pleased", etc. slightly reduces the distance between the text producer and the text receiver through: a) being friendly to the addressee, and b) giving the addressee a glimpse of the addresser's inner feelings about the announcement and maybe about the whole event. They also help build up a kind of discourse which is less detached, and more friendly than the discourse of the above two types.

The primary function of this type is referential. The affective function, which creeps into the text through socialising strategies (e.g. pleased to announce, delighted to announce), is secondary and extremely limited.

#### 4.2. *British Newspaper Marriage Congratulation/ Announcement (BNMCA)*

53 (BNMCAs) have been collected from different British newspapers. As my data proves, two types can be detected: the (BNMCA) with grey line between announcement and congratulation, and the (BNMCA) with clear line between announcement and congratulation. Future researchers are certainly welcome to add any further types to the present modest list.

##### **Type 1: (BNMCA) with Grey Line between Announcement and Congratulation**

**Sample** (The Daily Echo, July 13, 2002)

**Your Wedding**

**SMITH-CONNOLLY**

**IAN AND KATE**

Congratulations Ian and Kate on your Wedding Day July 13, 2002. Hope you both have a wonderful day. Wishing you love and happiness for your future together. Love Mum, James, Becky, Ted and Nan. XXXXX

This type usually includes three obligatory elements: 1) title (T) [Your Wedding, Weddings, Congratulations, etc.], 2) names of bride and groom (NB/G), and 3) congratulations and best wishes (C) ending with names of congratulators.

Although the generic organisation of this type proves to be rigid and intolerant in all the examined texts (presence of obligatory elements, sequence of elements, etc.), the language is not clichéd. The producer of this type is free to use the language s/he deems appropriate to achieve her/his goals. Being partially clichéd (i.e. structurally but not linguistically), this type would be best located on the continuum in a position closer to the genrelet zone than the genre zone.

This type serves two functions: referential and affective. However, there is no actual border line to clearly divide the two functions. The referential function is embedded in the affective one and seems to come into play only through it. This is evident in the above sample where the announcement, (See below, in italics), is part of the congratulation element (Congratulations Ian and Kate on your *Wedding Day July 13, 2002*).

The discourse in this type is very friendly and extremely involved, and the language is very informal. In the above text, for example, this informality is signalled by:

- a) Informal address forms (See Holmes 2001, for example, on address forms). The bride and the groom are addressed by their first names (Ian and Kate),
- b) Syntactic reductions: 1) omission of subject (Hope, Wishing), 2) usage of fragments (Love Mum, James, Becky, Ted and Nan), and 3) informal reference to congratulators (Mum, James, Becky, Ted and Nan).
- c) Informal way of closing text (XXXXX). The number of the Xs refers to the number of the kisses sent by the congratulators.

**Type 2: (BNMCA) with Clear Line between Announcement and Congratulation**

**Sample** (The Daily Echo, July 7, 2002)

**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.

This type usually consists of three obligatory elements:

- 1) Title (T) [Wedding, Your Wedding, etc.]
- 2) Marriage Announcement (MA) which usually includes names of announcers, names of bride and groom, date and venue of wedding, etc.
- 3) Congratulations (C) and best wishes. This element usually ends with the names of the congratulators.

As my data proves, this type is produced under strict structural regulations. No deviation from the generic structural norms (organisation of elements, presence of elements, etc.) was detected. However, the language of this type varies from fairly clichéd in (MA) to much more creative and far less predictable in (C). Being structurally clichéd and partially linguistically clichéd, this type would be best located on the continuum in a position much closer to the genrelet zone than the previous type.

The text serves two equally important functions: the referential, evident in (MA), and the affective, evident in (C) and very slightly in (MA) (through the polite formula *are pleased*). A clear line is drawn between the territories of the announcement and the congratulations. The language of the text ranges from the formal in (MA) to the informal in (C). The formality of (MA) is best signalled by the absence of the direct address of the text receiver, and the use of straightforward, direct language. On the other hand, the informality in (C) is best signalled by

using the second person pronoun to address the text receiver (e.g. “you both” in the above sample), resorting to syntactic reduction (e.g. “With love...” in the above sample), and referring to the congratulators in an informal way (e.g. “Mum, Dad, Graham and Vicki” in the above sample).

By the same token, this type hosts different degrees of friendliness and involvement. While the discourse in (MA) acquires a certain involvement and friendliness through the inclusion of the identity of the addresser(s) (Mr and Mrs Tyzzer in the above text), and through the use of polite formulas (such as “pleased” in the above text), the discourse in (C) is highly involved and very friendly.

#### **4.3. *British Newspaper Marriage Congratulations (BNMC)***

The examination of 49 (BNMCs) proves that, in this type, the text producer extends congratulations but does not announce marriage.

**Sample:** (The Daily Echo, Sept. 20, 2003)

##### **WEDDINGS**

##### **GRAY – SIMMONS JIM AND MANDY**

Congratulations to you both. From Vicky, Luis, Martyn, Stephen and Chloe.

This type usually consists of three obligatory elements:

- 1) Title (T) [Weddings, Marriages, etc.]
- 2) Names of bride and groom (NB/G).
- 3) Congratulations (C). This element includes congratulations and name(s) of congratulator(s)

(BNMC) is structurally clichéd. No violation of the presence or the order of the generic elements was detected in my data. However, the language of this type is far from clichéd. The congratulator can be as creative in her/his congratulations as s/he pleases. Being partially clichéd (i.e. structurally but not linguistically), this type would be best located on the continuum in a position closer to the genrelet zone than the genre zone. It is the same position occupied by (BNMCA) with grey line between announcement and congratulation (See section 4.2.).

The text serves an affective function. The language of the text is informal. This is usually signalled by 1) use of the second person direct address (e.g. “you both” in the above sample), 2) adoption of syntactic reductions (e.g. “congratulations to you both” in the above sample), and 3) referring to the congratulators by their first names only (e.g. “Vicky, Luis, Martyn, Stephen and Chloe” in the above sample).



## 5. The Translator's Perspective

The translation model suggested in this paper is based on eight important premises:

- 1) The generic identity of the text influences the decisions of the translator (Hatim & Mason 1990).
- 2) The knowledge of generic conventions orients the process of understanding a given text and consequently translating it into another language (Haddad 2003).
- 3) Within the borders of the same language, communication "...between participants is much more 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." (Ibid:52). This means that the competent translator should (a) identify the generic membership of the source text, (b) know the conventions that govern the creation of that genre in the target language (TL), and (c) reproduce the source text (ST) according to the generic regulations imposed by the target language (Haddad 2003, 2001).
- 4) It is extremely important for the translator "...to be 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. Not only will he have to add target text norms to the source text and the states of affairs it refers to, he will also have to select carefully the actual expressions in the target language because they activate a certain world-knowledge on the receiver's part." (Zydatiss 1983:219).
- 5) The "...target culture and the native culture do not always have identical values and attitudes." (Valette 1986:185). They might differ to a large degree in norms and patterns of interaction (Wolfson 1986). Generic conventions are far from universal. Every language has its own set of generic rules and constraints that govern what may/not be said, how, when and where (Haddad 2003).
- 6) The fact that a certain genre is highly conventionalised in the source language does not necessarily mean that it has to be equally conventionalised in the target language.
- 7) Producing the target text according to the conventions of the target language and the expectations of the target text receiver requires that the translator make certain modifications at the levels of tenor (register consideration), discourse and genre (semiotic consideration), and politeness rules (pragmatic consideration). These modifications

would involve: (a) omission of structural element(s), (b) addition of structural element(s), (c) omission of informational segment(s), (d) linguistic modification(s), and (e) addition of informational segment(s) (See Haddad 2001 for a similar issue)

- 8) The “...**more culture-bound a text is, the more scope there may be for modification**” (Hatim & Mason 1990:188), and, consequently, the more unacceptable literal translation.

The impotence of literal translation can be easily proven if we try to translate into British English or Syrian Arabic any randomly-selected sample of the types examined in this research. Due to lack of space, only one sample is going to be brought under scrutiny.

Before we embark on discussing details concerning the translation of the text cited in section 5.1. and the modifications required, it is important to specify what we mean by tenor, discourse and politeness rules.

According to Gregory & Carroll (1978:8), tenor is “The relationship the user has with his audience”, i.e. the “level of formality” (Hatim 1997:221).

Discourse is the “Modes of speaking and writing which involve participants in adopting a particular attitude towards areas of socio-cultural activity...” (Hatim 1997:216)

Lakoff’s rules of politeness (1973), referred to elsewhere (Lakoff 1990) as politeness strategies, fall into three categories: 1) Don’t impose: this rule can “...also be taken as meaning, remain aloof, don’t intrude into ‘other people’s business’.” (Lakoff 1973:298), 2) Give options: this rule means “...’let A make his own decisions– leave his options open for him’.” (Ibid:299), and 3) Make A feel good – be friendly. This rule produces “...a sense of camaraderie between speaker and addressee. The ultimate effect is to make the addressee feel good: that is, it produces a sense of equality between SP and A, and (providing SP is actually equal to or better than A) this makes A feel good...” (Ibid:301)

Needless to say, “Being polite in another language 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)

### **5.1. *Literal Translation: Real Dilemma***

**Marriage**

**Mr. S. Redmond**

**And Miss M. Somani**

The marriage took place on Saturday, June 15, 2002, in London, between Simon, son of Mr. and Mrs. Stanely Redmond, and Manisha, eldest daughter of the late Mr. Chandra Somani and of Mrs. Somani. (The Times, Sept. 3, 2002)

## زواج

السيد س ريدموند

والآنسة م سوماني

تمت واقعة الزواج يوم السبت في 15 حزيران عام 2002 في لندن بين سيمون ابن السيد والسيدة ستينلي ريدموند ومانيشا الابنة الكبرى للراحل السيد تشاندرا سوماني والسيدة سوماني.

Holmes (1992:300) argues that we sometimes "...cause offence by treating someone too familiarly... or by treating them too distantly... Being polite means getting the linguistic expression of social distance right as far as your addressee is concerned. This is very variable from one community to another".

The Syrian text receiver will be surprised by the dry title (زواج), which unexpectedly serves a referential function but certainly not an affective one. The absence of congratulations 1) unjustifiably and unexpectedly introduces an anonymous text producer who treats her/his text receiver "too distantly", 2) creates an uncomfortable social distance between the text producer and the text receiver, and 3) imposes on the text receiver a set of politeness rules that is completely alien to her/him. It goes without saying that, for the Syrian text receiver, the literally translated title unjustifiably breaches the third rule of politeness "make A feel good".

The occurrence of (NB/G) as an element on its own is alien to the generic structure expected by the target text receiver (TTR). For her/him, this generic position should be occupied by (OD) starting with a description of the happy atmosphere of the wedding. Again, the absence of this description enhances the above-mentioned distance.

If we admit that texts "...are created within a particular culture, and operate within the value system of that culture." (Reah 1998:55), we must admit that the above translation is, at various points, operating outside the value system of the target culture. The Syrian text receiver is unjustifiably provided with information on the names of the fathers and mothers of the couple, and the status of the bride in the family (الابنة)

الكبرى). This breaches Gricean maxim of quantity and makes the text more informative than is required (For more details on Gricean maxims, see Grice 1975, 1978).

The absence of the closing element (C) makes the text end abruptly and maximizes the distance between the text producer and the text receiver. This further enhances the referential function of the text while eliminating the affective one. Again, the third rule of politeness “make A feel good” is unjustifiably breached.

For the Syrian text receiver, the discourse that prevails throughout the whole translated text is too detached, too unfriendly, and too uninvolved, and the tenor is too formal.

Thus, for the target text receiver, the translated text surprisingly 1) serves a referential but not an affective function, 2) contains unexpected pieces of information (names of mothers and fathers of the couple, family status of bride), 3) misses out expected information (description of happy atmosphere), 4) hosts an alien generic element (NB/G), 5) excludes an obligatory element (C), 6) maximizes distance between text producer (TP) and text receiver (TR) and imposes on the latter an unexpectedly alien set of politeness rules. The rule that stipulates making the addressee feel good is particularly breached, and 7) imposes on the text an unfriendly, highly detached discourse, and an extremely formal tenor.

## **5.2. A Way Out**

Reiss (1981:126) argues that the “Target language receptors will generally have different “pre-knowledge” of matters related to the text, and different general background knowledge, from those of the source language receptor”. Although it is undeniable that “...it is not within the competence of a source-language sender to anticipate the adjustments necessary for a target-language receptor” (Ibid:126), it certainly is within the competence of the target text producer (i.e. the translator) to make whatever adjustments necessary to recreate a text that largely abandons the value system of the source culture and adopts that of the target culture. In other words, the target text should be as close as possible both to the norms of the target culture, including generic norms, and to the expectations of the target text receiver (Haddad 2001, 2003).

In our case, the translator should make modifications at the levels of tenor, politeness rules, discourse and genre.

### **5.2.1. Suggested Translation**

مبارك

في جو عابق بالفرح تم يوم السبت 15 حزيران 2002 في لندن زفاف السيد سيمون ريدموند على الأتسة مانيشا سوماني. ألف مبروك

- 1) Replacing the title زواج (marriage) by مبارك (congratulations) is the linguistic modification the translator has to carry out at all levels: register (tenor), pragmatics (politeness), and semiotics (genre & discourse). Through this kind of modification: a) the extremely formal TP/TR relationship becomes less formal, b) the extremely detached discourse becomes less detached and more involved, c) the Syrian addressee feels good because, according to Syrian norms, the addresser is being as friendly as is required, and d) generically speaking, the text starts the way it should.
- 2) The elimination of the alien generic element (NB/G), carried out on generic grounds, would bring the text closer to the generic norms of the target culture and the expectations of the target text receiver.
- 3) The addition of في جو عابق بالفرح (in an atmosphere full of happiness) is another modification the translator should make on tenor, politeness, genre and discourse grounds. It a) makes the extremely formal TP/TR relationship less formal. Through this piece of information, TTRs feel closer to the addresser who cares about providing them with information concerning the happy atmosphere of the event, and consequently welcomes them to how s/he feels about the event, b) changes the extremely detached discourse to an involved one, c) converts the text producer from an unfriendly person, according to Syrian politeness norms, to a friendly person who cares about making her/his addressee feel good, and d) helps restore generic identity to the text. This is carried out at the level of syntax, through giving the added piece of information a prominent opening position, and at the level of lexicon, through using a cliché which is considered one of the hallmarks of the genrelet in the target culture.
- 4) The omission of the names of the parents and the status of the bride in her family is made on generic grounds.
- 5) The addition of the closing element (C) ألف مبروك is made at the levels of register (the TP/TR extremely formal relationship becomes less formal), pragmatics (the addressee feels good because TP is as friendly as is required in the TL), semiotics (the discourse has become more involved and the generic structure is restored through adding an obligatory element to the translated text).

## 6. Concluding Remarks

Generic conventions are far from universal. The translator, as a communicator and a mediator between two languages and two cultures, is strongly encouraged to enhance her/his knowledge of the norms of both the source and target languages, and to reproduce the source text according to both the norms imposed by the target language and the expectations of the target text receiver (Haddad 2001, 2003). This means that literal translation can sometimes be far from acceptable, depending on how far/close the conventions of the source language are from/to those of the target language.

The current research has revisited the notion of genre and genrelet and suggested a few extensions that allow for the cases where sub-genres/sub-genrelets occupy different locations along the conventionalisation continuum. Having examined 385 marriage congratulations/announcements collected from Syrian and British newspapers, the researcher has found out that Syrian newspapers use one type to announce marriage and extend congratulations while British newspapers use three types depending on the objective. These types are: a) the type that announces marriage, b) the type where marriage is announced and congratulations are extended, and c) the type where congratulations are extended.

By literally translating a British marriage announcement into Syrian Arabic, the researcher has exposed the pitfalls of literal translation. It has been argued that this kind of translation violates Syrian norms at the three levels of register, pragmatics, and semiotics. In order to recreate a target text that conforms to the norms of the target culture and meets the expectations of the target text receiver, the present paper has provided future translators with insights into how far they can intervene. The modifications suggested in the current research include omitting structural element(s), adding structural element(s) omitting informational segment(s), adding informational segment(s), adopting linguistic modification(s).

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Received 15/4/2004