



Informativity and Headline Translation: A Study of Selected BBC English Headlines and Their Arabic Counterparts

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Abstract

Of the seven standards of textuality forwarded by Beaugande (1980), *informativity* and its three orders seem to be the most relevant to media, more specifically headline, translation, as media is entirely concerned with conveying information to the reader. Due to the main function of headline of persuading the reader to the news story, a headline is usually upgraded through form and content to the third order where cognitive processes intervene for the purpose of rehearsal. *Informativity* is then redefined and its three orders are readdressed to suit the purpose of the current study. To verify this hypothesis, eight BBC English headlines along with their Arabic translations are subjected to analysis. The study has shown that translation fidelity is often violated for the purpose of inviting readers to the news story. This is achieved through a variety of semantic, syntactic and stylistic devices.

Keywords: Informativity, Informativity Orders, Headline Translation.

الإعلامية وترجمة عناوين الأخبار: دراسة في عناوين إخبارية انكليزية

مختارة من البي بي سي وترجماتها العربية

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المستخلص

تعد الإعلامية ومستوياتها الثلاثة من أكثر المعايير النصية السبعة التي اقترحها بيوغراندي (1980) أهمية في ترجمة النصوص الإعلامية، وعلى وجه الخصوص ترجمة عناوين الأخبار، إذ إن الوظيفة الرئيسية للعناوين الإخبارية هي نقل المعلومات للقارئ بطريقة تجذبه لمواصلة قراءة النص. ولتحقيق هذا الهدف يلجأ كاتب العنوان إلى جعله مثيراً للقارئ من خلال الانتقال إلى أعلى مستوى ممكن من الإعلامية باستخدام وسائل دلالية وتركيبية وأسلوبية مختلفة. وعند الترجمة إلى لغة أخرى فإن المترجم يأخذ بنظر الاعتبار اهتمامات القارئ وبالتالي يقوم بالتغاضي عن الأمانة في نقل النص. وللتحقق من فرضية الدراسة، تم اختيار ثمانية عناوين إخبارية مختلفة مع ترجماتها العربية من البي بي سي وإخضاعها للتحليل. وتوصلت الدراسة إلى صحة الفرضية التي بنيت عليها إذ أثبتت الدراسة أن مبدأ الأمانة في نقل عناوين الأخبار تتم التضحية بها عن طريق التقديم والتأخير والإضافة والحذف وغيرها من الوسائل اللغوية المتاحة من أجل الهدف الأهم وهو مخاطبة القارئ بطريقة تجذبه لمواصلة قراءة النص.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الإعلامية، مستويات الإعلامية، ترجمة عناوين الأخبار.



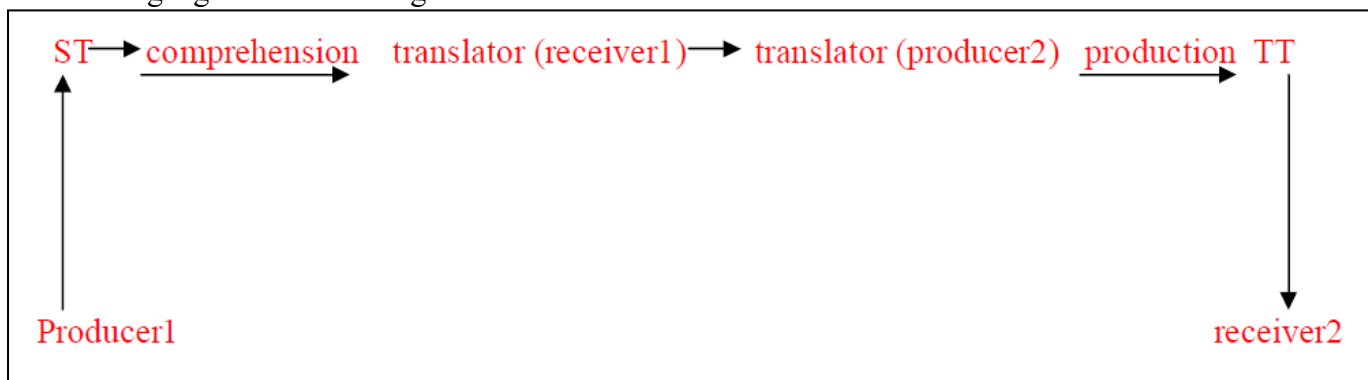
I. Introduction

Since the advent of text linguistics as an autonomous, academic field in the late 1960s, translation has undergone a great change of perception and analysis, and it is now deemed as a textual phenomenon. Informativity is one of the seven standards of textuality put forward by Beaugrande (1980). It plays a significant role in translation analysis, as translation centers around conveying information cross-linguistically. It becomes particularly so when it comes to media discourse whose main intent is to inform its readers in a systematic and attractive way. The key of any media text is its headline whose main function is two-fold; to tell and sell. Hence, reporters exert their utmost effort to make their headline design satisfy this function. When it comes to translation, it has been noticed that translators, in their attempt to make their headline desirable to their readers and other pragmatic considerations, sacrifice translation fidelity. They do so through upgrading the headline level of interestingness by a variety of linguistic devices; addition, omission, fronting, to mention but few. This paper is attempted to verify such observation. To do so, the paper first explores the concept of informativity and its orders as first suggested by Beaugrande (1980) and the redefinition the concept undergoes to suit the purpose of the current paper. It then discusses the related theoretical background to finally subject eight BBC English headlines, along with their Arabic counterparts, to analysis to see how informativity is manipulated in the two languages under investigation.

II. Informativity and Headline Translation

As defined by Beaugrande and Dressler, *informativity* is "...the extent to which a presentation is new or unexpected" (1994:139). This newness or unexpectedness is manifested in a variety of ways related to content (i.e. probabilities and interpretations) or form (i.e. departure from conventional usage of structural patterns), or as (Randall: 1998, Coman:2004, Vasas: 2009) put it (... a. novelty; b. rarity, uniqueness; c. relevance as extension (number of people affected), relevance in time (current or future), or space (the interest area); d. conflictuality) (cited in Superceanu, 2011: 25).

Informativity was first elaborated to analyze language at the textual level where communication requires two agents; actual and hypothetical (i.e. speaker/writer and hearer/reader), both belong to the same speech community (Van Dijk, 1977: 191). In other words, the analysis of informativity, as originally suggested, applies on a monolingual level. However, the utility of informativity analysis on a bilingual level (i.e. translation) has been proved feasible by Al-Obaidy (2013). Here, the translator performs the double task of first receiver and second producer, as illustrated by the following diagram (p.2):



Being on the bilingual level, the original definition of *informativity* is modified to suit the purpose of the study at hand. To do so, Superceanu's (2011:4) definition is adopted here and it refers to "...the property of a text to transmit information by content and form according to the expectations of the discourse community in which they function as a means of communication".

Beaugrande and Dressler (1994: 141-144) talk of three orders depending on the degree the text's information is in conformity with or deviant from the prescribed conceptual or structural patterns of a language. In relation to the three orders, then, cognitive aspects play a significant role for processing the available prediction and postdiction. The three orders are:

1. The first order - obtains when a highly probable option is selected. This order stimulates little interest, as it relates occurrences to previous ones and causes no problem being the typical communicative setting.
2. The second order – obtains when less probable occurrences are opted for. It usually points to two categories; middle or lower-middle degrees of probability (Beaugrande, 1980:106). This order derives its significance from the fact that first order occurrences are upgraded to this order and third order occurrences are downgraded forwardly (awaiting further information for processing), backwardly (going back for previous occurrences for processing), or outwardly (going to external world information for processing) to this order as well.
3. The third order – obtains when less probable occurrences are opted for. This order is highly difficult to process, and this difficulty results from unexpectedness; consequently it requires intensive cognitive processing.

The above argument of the concept of informativity suggests clearly that it is in the very heart of headline function, for a headline is a sub-genre (Bell, 1991) that should "encapsulate the story in a minimum number of words and attract the reader to the story" (Reah, 2012:13), yet it has no "...autonomous status" (Iarovici and Amel, 1989: 441), and the best headline is one that "...tells and sells" (Ludwig and Gilmore, 2005:107). In brief, a headline is intended to meet the following requirements:

1. the expectations of the readership in terms of informativity and appeal.
2. the commercial pursuit of the media institution.
3. the coverage of the text at hand.

With the above requirements in mind, it seems logically that a headline is placed at the third order informativity to suit the requirement of eye-catching flow of information, calling the reader to cognitively process the information at hand to get to the second order for the purpose of understanding.

III. Resources of Expectation

In any analysis of informativity and its related orders, resources of expectation which enable a s are listed in the following table for convenience:

English Headlines	Arabic Headlines
1. Egyptian protesters fill Cairo's Tahrir square http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-17786228	مصر: عشرات الالاف يتظاهرون في جمعة تقرير المصير http://www.bbc.com/arabic/middleeast/2012/04/120420_egypt_friday_demo

reader to cognitively process the information he comes across should be delimited. Beaugrande and Dressler (1994: 146-150) outline certain resources which can be summarized as follows:

1. integrating human situations elements organized into global patterns such as frames and plans.
2. utilizing common or rare linguistic devices for highlighting informative contents.
3. contextualizing a text.

This can be of relevance to the current paper where resources of expectation can be outlined as follows:

1. The context in terms of the event and the interest it may embrace.
2. The media innovative techniques for signaling in terms of new vs. given, central vs. marginal, etc.
3. The extrapolation and utility of the three orders of informativity.

IV. Data and Analysis

4.1 data

This study is based on the hypothesis that headlines and their translations follow different modes of expression for the purpose of making them eye-catching and meet the expectations of their readerships, thus moving from one informativity order to another, doing away with media objectivity and translation fidelity. To verify this hypothesis, eight English headlines along with their Arabic translations have been selected for analysis. For purposes of systematicity and objectivity, all the headlines are taken from BBC which is recognized worldwide as one of the best media institutions that adheres itself to strict rules of media writing. As headline topic has its burden on its formation and translation, the topics chosen cover a variety of topics on Asia, Africa, and Europe. The headline



2. Denmark approves controversial migrant assets bill http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35406436	الدنمارك تصوت على قانون مصادرة اصول اللاجئين الثمينة http://www.bbc.com/arabic/worldnews/2016/01/160126-denmark-vote-migrant-assets
3. US election: Obama calls Trump's election rhetoric "dangerous" http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-37722434	الانتخابات الأمريكية : أوباما يصف ترامب بأنه خطر على أمريكا والعالم http://www.bbc.com/arabic/world-37856024
4. Trump-Taiwan call: China lodges protest http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-38194371	الصين تقدم احتجاجا «شديد اللهجة» بشأن مكالمة ترامب ورئيسة تايوان http://www.bbc.com/arabic/world-38193889
5. Egypt mosque attack: Sisi gives military three months to secure Sinai http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-42170803	السياسي يكلف الجيش والشرطة باستعادة الأمن في سيناء في 3 أشهر http://www.bbc.com/arabic/middleeast-42165302
6. Praljak: Bosnian Croat war criminal dies after taking poison in court http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-42163613	سلوبودان براليك المدان في جرائم حرب البوسنة "يتناول سما" في قاعة المحكمة http://www.bbc.com/arabic/world-42168912
7. Saad Hariri: Saudis detaining Lebanon PM says Michel Aoun http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-41995939	الرئيس اللبناني ميشال عون: "احتجاز" الحريري في السعودية عمل عدائي ضد لبنان http://www.bbc.com/arabic/middleeast-41995953
8. Zimbabwe's Mugabe 'under house arrest' after army takeover http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-41997982	الجيش في زيمبابوي يسيطر على مقاليد الحكم http://www.bbc.com/arabic/live/41995482

4.2 Analysis

This section is designed to carry out the analysis of informativity of the eight headlines mentioned in the table above. The analysis of the headlines will be made according to their sequence in the table.

H1

The context of this headline is the Egyptian demonstrations against military ruling after toppling Mubarak's regime. The English headline is in the first order, as it follows the conventional structural pattern of the language. It is put in the frame of generally notifying its readership about an event happening in Egypt in compounding the nationality with the key

element of people holding the act of the protest. Thus the act itself, which is of high significance in the whole news story, is implicitly conveyed in merging it with the actors of the event. In other words, neither the event nor the actors is given a separate status so that they can be promoted to a higher level of interestingness. The only eye-catching element in the headline is the verb *fill* which is upgraded to a third order due to the high attraction and interestingness it embraces in the minds of its readerships where cognitive processing is highly involved as to the possible number of demonstrators involved. The Arabic version, on the other hand, is upgraded to a third order in a variety of ways

related to form, meaning and style. It first begins with an increasingly used media technique of a colon-separated item; here the event place, which is one of the expectation resources, *Egypt* is given a separate status which is intended to arouse the reader's curiosity through preparing it to what will come. Here, the reader is prepared to a number of probabilities to which he should await with interestingness. This is one reason behind using this technique, the other being to disengage items when more than two are used in a headline, thus endangering it to be placed at the level of misunderstanding.

The Arabic text, moreover, inserts the expression *عشرات الالاف*, a piece of information mentioned in the main text, thus upgrading the headline to a third order through hinting at the huge participation of protestors and the reader's curiosity is, thus, placed here at a higher level of interestingness through giving the headline a stronger stand. In other words, mentioning an estimated number in the Arabic version requires postdiction on the part of the reader more than the English *fill* stimulates.

The English *Cairo's Tahrir Square* is located on the first order, as it neutrally mentions the place of protesting which loosely involves the reader in the news story as a whole. In the Arabic version, however, it is overlooked altogether replaced by the more interesting and more emotionally involving *جمعة تقرير المصير* which endangers the whole situation to a radical change. It, thus, involves the reader's cognitively and psychologically.

H2

The context of this headline is Denmark and its endeavors to deal with and delimit migration by preparing a bill to be enacted in the parliament. The English headline uses the synecdoche *Denmark* to refer to the legislative institution, parliament, which is responsible for enacting the law upgrading it to the second order through indicating a bigger consensus over the act at hand. This device is kept the same across translation where *الدنمارك* is used to implicitly indicate the parliament. The English headline uses *approves* to be coherently associated with *bill* to give the intended meaning that the bill has passed and it is hinted that it is now a law. It is, therefore, product

oriented. This coherence, realized through the collocation *approves* and *bill*, is rendered into the Arabic *تصوت على قانون* collocation as it is the translator's job to reassess the coherence of a text in his own language (Hatim and Mason, 1989: 194).

The presence of the adjective *controversial* in the English text upgrades the act of voting, which did not pass without opposition, to a third order through simulating a higher level of interestingness. This is altogether overlooked in the translation suggesting that the act has passed unanimously, downgrading the level of interestingness and consequently the whole act into a first order.

The English headline uses *migrant assets* to refer to any person who would like to resettle in Denmark, thus the two words are in concordance with each other, and it is in the first order, for the whole piece of news arouses little cognitive and emotional interestingness. The translator; however, uses the highly emotionally-charging collocation *اصول اللاجئين* and upgrades it to the third order. In Arabic, it is emotionally-charging through replacing the generic *migrant* by the specific *اللاجئين* and for two other ideological reasons, one is objective and the second is subjective, as follows:

1. It contradicts our real world knowledge where refugees are supposed, according to the human law, to be treated with more sympathy, part of which is to let them keep their assets as a self-supporting tool.
2. It is a rather sensitive topic to the Arab readers as Arabs make a high proportion of refugees worldwide.

The translator; moreover, deepens his sympathetic line through adding the adjective *ثمينة* which is not intended in the original text. The Arabic headline, in brief, arouses more suspense to its readers than its English counterpart does.

H3

The context of this headline is the US election campaigns (2016) where the debates of the two major parties, Republicans and Democrats, are concerned.

The English headline utilizes the colon separated initiation strategy to upgrade the occasion to a third order through imposing the second longest pause after the full stop. The



translator maintains fidelity in translating this portion through following the same technique.

In the second part of the headline, both English and Arabic upgrade it to a third order, stimulating a higher interestingness value, but with different techniques. The original text delimits the description *dangerous* to Trump's election rhetoric. This description is put between two inverted commas to perform a double task; one is to satisfy the conventional way of dictating other's direct speech, here Obama's description of Trump's rhetoric, and the other is embedded which is upgrading this description to the third order to increase the reader's suspense. In the Arabic translation, the inverted commas technique is avoided and the whole part is upgraded through generalizing this trait to include Trump's speech and action. Cognitively, this generalization in the Arabic translation could be attributed to one of the following two factors or both:

1. indicating that election rhetoric is the standpoint of the foreseeable policy, thus it is subjectively extended.
2. highlighting the Arab reader's interesting value as the US election is of direct impact on the whole globe with special emphasis on the Arab world due to the unsettled files between the two parties.

H4

The context of this headline is the controversial relation between US and Taiwan due to China's position concerning the disputed status of Taiwan. It is about a phone call between Trump and Taiwan. The Taiwan agent doesn't surface in the headline, yet it can be guessed as the protocol requires that a talk is usually carried out between counterparts. In English, the headline initial part is upgraded to a third order where a higher degree of interestingness and cognitive involvement are maintained. This upgrading is done through two devices, one is rhetorical and the other is stylistic, as follows:

1. The headline utilizes synecdoche where the whole, Taiwan, is used to refer to the part, the president. Any act of synecdoche simulates a higher degree of cognitive involvement.
2. The headline uses the colon-separated initiator to give the topic at hand a more

psychological motive, thus more probabilities evolve here.

In Arabic, the cause-effect relation is retained in its normal order where the effect is preposed and the causative device *بشان* is used. It is thus downgraded in the Arabic version, and the degree of interestingness is lowered. However, the translator inserts the forward expression *شديد اللهجة* to give the headline a stronger stand through attaching a focusing point to the protest to raise the degree of interestingness and here it becomes more inviting. Although forward interpretation is, in Beaugrande and Dressler's terms, a device of downgrading, it works reversibly in this headline in that it gives a stronger tendency, on the part of the reader, to read the text at hand.

H5

The context of this headline is the blast that happened in one of Egypt Sinai's mosques and claimed many lives and injured many others. It was one of the major terrorist attacks that happened in Sinai. Due to its immense influence, this attack necessitated the interference of Egypt's top leadership to have a suitable reaction against it.

The ST highlights the cause of the event through using the colon separated initiation style of writing a headline, thus upgrading it to a third order. The TT, however, downgrades the cause to a second order forwardly through avoiding it altogether delaying the reader's attention to the cause to the main text. The ST uses the word *gives* which is of direct relation to the time given to the security forces to secure Sinai, avoiding the direct *order* which is of a more direct relation to the headline at hand, for the whole issue is within the military field and Sisi is the general commander. It is thus downgraded to a second order as it moves opposite to the reader's expectation. The target text's *يكلف* is of more direct relation to the military atmosphere that covers the issue at hand, thus it is on a higher level of interestingness.

The ST delimits the mission of securing Sinai to army only, overlooking the role of the police which is of more direct relevance to internal security. Here the role of the army is upgraded, but only at the expense of the role of the police.

The TT upgrades the role of both army and police upgrading it on a higher level of interestingness.

The ST *secure* is rendered into the more formal Arabic استعادة الامن "restore security", thus upgrading it to a third order as formality meets the expectation of the Arab readers in reading a newspaper text.

H6

The context of this headline is the trial of one of the criminals of the Bosnian war in the 1990s. The ST follows the colon separated initiator strategy where the defendant's name is separated upgrading it to a third order through making it the focus of attention. In the translation the name is downgraded through avoiding the strategy followed in the ST. The headline central issue of taking poison in the court, however, is made in the first order in the ST through a cause and effect construction which stimulates a lower-degree interestingness. This central issue is upgraded in the TT through:

1. indicating the cause without the effect which is left open to a variety of probabilities.
2. the cause itself is upgraded to a third order through putting it between inverted commas. Here it should be noted that direct speech is not used for mere objectivity or even handedness, but for ideological imposition as well (Hatim and Mason, 1989: 223-238).

From media point of view, and in terms of the above analysis, the TT is generally upgraded to a higher order than its corresponding ST, and thus it appeals more to its readership.

H7

This headline talks about prolonging Saad Hariri's stay in the KSA where he was on a visit. The source text follows the normal media style of delaying the source of the news story. The translator in his attempt to be compatible with the Arabic media style opts for initiating the source compounded with his formal status. Thus the source status is downgraded to zero in the ST, but upgraded to the second order in the TT.

The main act in the headline expressed by *detaining* in the ST is upgraded to a third order in the TT through enclosing it by inverted commas. The description of the act is downgraded to zero in the ST, but upgraded to a third order in the TT through inserting the

controversial عدائي (hostile) increasing the level of unusualness.

H8

The context of this headline is when the army in Zimbabwe implemented a coup and ousted the state's ex-president.

In the ST, the president and his destiny (home arrested) is upgraded forwardly to a third order through making it the headline's focal point, following the strategy of enclosing between inverted commas. In the TT, on the other hand, the president's destiny is downgraded to zero, leaving its prediction to يسيطر على مقاليد الحكم which is explicated in the TT. This downgrading is made through maintaining it to a third order in the ST where the result of the coup is left open-ended and a high level of uncertainty, and consequently of interestingness, is manipulated.

V. Conclusions

The paper has come up with a number of conclusions, all of which are exclusive to the data of this paper. The most important conclusions are:

1. Informativity is a key issue in headline formation, probably more than anywhere else, due to the fact that headlines endeavor to sum up the main idea of a news story in the least possible number of words. Moreover, the attempt to make a headline attractive and eye-catching, which is a basic requirement that journalism seeks to achieve, has its own burden on informativity.
2. Due to the process of editing, which is usually compounded with translation in multi-language service media agencies, a fertile area is provided for movement between informativity orders.
3. The movement from one order to another in headline formation and translation takes a variety of forms; namely linguistic through certain techniques and strategies such as fronting, textual through manipulating coherence and cohesive devices, and stylistic through utilizing certain stylistic devices used increasingly in media discourse such as colon-separated initiation.
4. Although three orders of informativity are generally acknowledged, the paper has shown that a fourth order works in relation to headline translation, namely zero order which obtains



when an item in the ST is altogether overlooked in translation.

5. Inverted commas used for enclosing direct speech for the purpose of objectivity and even-handedness can also be used as a means of upgrading to a higher order.

6. Arabic headlines investigated in this paper are relatively more upgraded to the third order than their English counterparts.

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