



## The Translation of Dynamic Elements in “The Great Gatsby into Arabic

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### Abstract

This paper examines the translation of dynamic elements in one of Fitzgerald's greatest novels, The Great Gatsby. The data analyzed are two translations of the English novel by Najib Al-Manea (1962), and Mohammed Mostagir Mustafa (1971). First, three excerpts of the novel containing dynamic elements are selected and identified according to referential and contextual meaning correspondence. Then, the study examines the translation problems encountered by the translators of these dynamic elements and applies the principles of possibility and necessity in evaluating the translation appropriateness. The study concludes that the element in a literary text is dynamic when it has no correspondence between its referential and contextual meanings. The study also ends with finding the most appropriate translation technique for translating dynamic elements in literary texts.

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## ترجمة العناصر المتحركة في رواية غاتسبي العظيم إلى العربية

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المستخلص:

يتناول هذا البحث ترجمة العناصر المتحركة في إحدى أعظم روايات فيتزجيرالد، وهي رواية غاتسبي العظيم. إن البيانات التي تم تحليلها هي ترجمتان لهذه الرواية الإنكليزية الأولى لنجيب المانع (1962)، والأخرى لمحمد مستجير مصطفى (1971). تم أولاً اختيار وتحديد ثلاثة مقتطفات من الرواية تحتوي على عناصر متحركة وفقاً للتوافق ما بين المعنى المرجعي والمعنى السياقي. بعد هذا يجري البحث دراسة مشكلات الترجمة التي واجهها المترجمان لهذه العناصر المتحركة وتطبيق مبادئ الإمكانية والضرورة في تقييم ملائمة الترجمة. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن العنصر في النص الأدبي يكون متحركاً عندما لا يكون هناك تطابق بين معانيه المرجعية والسياقية. كما تختتم الدراسة بإيجاد أكثر تقنيات الترجمة ملائمة لترجمة العناصر المتحركة في النصوص الأدبية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الترجمة، العناصر الحركية، النصوص الأدبية، كاتسبي العظيم

### 1. Introduction

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Translation is a linguistic process in which meaning is negotiated across various linguistic and cultural borderlines. In order to provide fundamental principles for a text analysis model, Hatim and Mason (1997) propose a model comprising two elements that should be regarded during the translation process. These elements fall into two concepts: "*dynamic*" and "*stable*"; "by static, we mean a type of textual activity that is maximally stable and where expectations are invariably fulfilled. On the other hand, the dynamics of elements subsumes cases where such stability is all but removed due to expectations being invariably defied" (Hatim & Mason, 1997, p. 48).

Moreover, Hatim and Mason (1997) implicate stable elements in source texts necessitate a literal approach. On the other hand, dynamic ones involve more challenges and cross-cultural difficulties which may not be suitable for a literal approach to translation. This general view can be further elaborated specifically in determining these elements in literary text. This corpus-based study attempts to elaborate the model and study the problems of translating certain dynamic elements in Fitzgerald's famous novel *The Great Gatsby* into Arabic. These problems are encountered by two translators: Najib Al-Manea (1962) and Mohammed Mostagir Mustafa (1971).

## **2. Research Questions**

The objectives of this paper are to answer the following questions:

1. How can a dynamic element be identified in a literary text?
2. What are the problems of translating the dynamic elements in a literary text?
3. What is the most appropriate technique for translating dynamic elements in a literary text?

## **3. Meaning and Literary Texts**

Meaning is a very complex phenomenon. It has been viewed differently by different scholars. Lyons (1981, p. 136) states, "Meanings are ideas or concepts which can be transferred from the mind of the hearer by embodying them as they were, in the form of one language or another". Moreover, different categories have been provided for the concept of meaning. For instance, the literal and non-literal meanings. In the realm of meaning theory, the literal and non-literal divide has consistently been a topic of interest (Giora, 1999). The definitions of these terms are distinct.

Literal meaning is the term used to describe how the speaker communicates in a neutral, precise manner. On the other hand, non-literal meaning is a term that refers to the act of a speaker intentionally describing an object in a manner that is deceptive or impossible in order to accomplish a particular effect. Moreover, Diyanni (2003, p. 563) states, "Language can be classified as either literal or figurative. When we speak literally, we mean exactly what each word conveys; when we use figurative language, we mean something other than the actual meaning of the words". Moreover, Chaer (2014) identifies several categories of meaning: "lexical and lexeme, grammatical, conceptual, contextual, denotative, connotative, and associative meaning" (p. 291).

Literary texts are an excellent example of the richness of non-literal meaning. Gutt (1996p. 240) states, "The art of the author often shows itself in the ability to communicate a richness of ideas, feelings, and impressions that are not necessarily expressed in words, but communicated implicitly". The impact is further accentuated by the utilization of literary and figurative devices that enhance and amplify the impact of the text (Thorne, 2006, p. 69). According to Keraf (2009, p.136), figurative language refers to words or phrases that deviate from literal language. This is challenging for people since it involves

differences in context and the actual meaning. Figurative language is made up of comparisons and similarities.

Moreover, Johnson and Arp 2017, p.774) define figurative language as language that is impossible to interpret literally (or should not be interpreted exclusively in that manner). Oishi (2003) states, "It has been generally assumed that we have to understand two types of meaning to understand what the speaker means by uttering a sentence. . . . A sentence expresses a more or less complete propositional content, with a semantic meaning, and extra pragmatic meaning comes from a particular context in which the sentence is uttered." (p. 37). In this vein, two general types of meaning will be employed in the data analysis of this study. These two types are Referential meaning and Contextual meaning.

The meaning of a word or phrase inside a certain situation is referred to as contextual meaning (Chaer, 2014). Contextual meaning pertains to the circumstances, specifically the location, temporal setting, and context in which language is employed. It also refers to the meaning of a word or phrase as determined by the specific situation, text, or discourse in which it is used. It is influenced by the surrounding words, the speaker's intentions, and the cultural or situational context. The referential meaning represents a meaning that possesses a referent, an entity external to the language indicated by the word. According to Chaer (2014, p. 291), referential meaning pertains to meaning that possesses a reference or correlates with a real-world entity. Moreover, referential meaning applies to a meaning that may be perceived by the five senses and has a form existing in reality and corresponding to the external world outside language.

#### **4. The Concept of Translation**

There is no universal consensus on how translation scholars define translation and its theories in addition to the various categories or models of translation provided. Therefore, you can find each of these scholars has a certain definition, theory, or model for translation. Generally speaking, translation is frequently perceived as a project that involves the transmission of meaning from one language to another. This definition contains two crucial terms, namely, transferring and meaning. The initial keyword signifies the necessity of working with two languages during the process of translation. This is because translation, in its conventional sense, involves the exchange of information between a source language (SL) and a target language (TL). The SL refers to the language from which the translation is being done, while the TL refers to the language into which the translation is being done. The second essential term in the aforementioned definition indicates that translators are primarily focused on capturing or conveying meaning in interlingual communication. Meaning is a multifaceted term. Linguists often categorize meaning into denotation, which refers to the fundamental conceptual meaning of a word, and connotation, which encompasses the additional nuances of meaning that might be associated with the word. For instance, the English lexical pairs (die/pass away) have the same denotations but they have different connotations. That is "pass away" has positive connotations that are not present in the word "die". According to Hatim and Mason (1997), translation is an act of communication shaped by linguistic and cultural circumstances. They stress the significance of comprehending the source language text's purpose, function, and goal while efficiently transmitting it in the target language.

In his work "*The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*", Venuti (1995, p.7) mentions that cultural and ethical dimensions of translation should be highlighted. He (1995) states that translation is "the forcible replacement of the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text with a text that will be intelligible to the target language reader" (p.18). This is accompanied by the introduction of the

concepts of domestication and foreignization, in which the strategy of translation is either to adapt a text to the target culture or maintain its foreignness.

According to Venuti (1995), domestication is "an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to receive cultural values, bringing the author back home" (p.20). Foreignization is "an ethno-deviant pressure on those values to register the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad" (Venuti, 1995, p. 20). Foreignization is his preferred strategy whenever cultural texts are translated due to the need to "signify the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text" (p. 23). Moreover, Venuti (2013) believes that translators can be free to choose between domestication and foreignization strategies when they come across foreign expressions in literary texts. To make it clear, the following example shows how the two translation strategies are employed:

(SLT) It is only the tip of the iceberg.

(TLT) Foreignization: أنها مجرد قمة الجبل الجليدي

(TLT) Domestication: وما خُفي كان اعظم

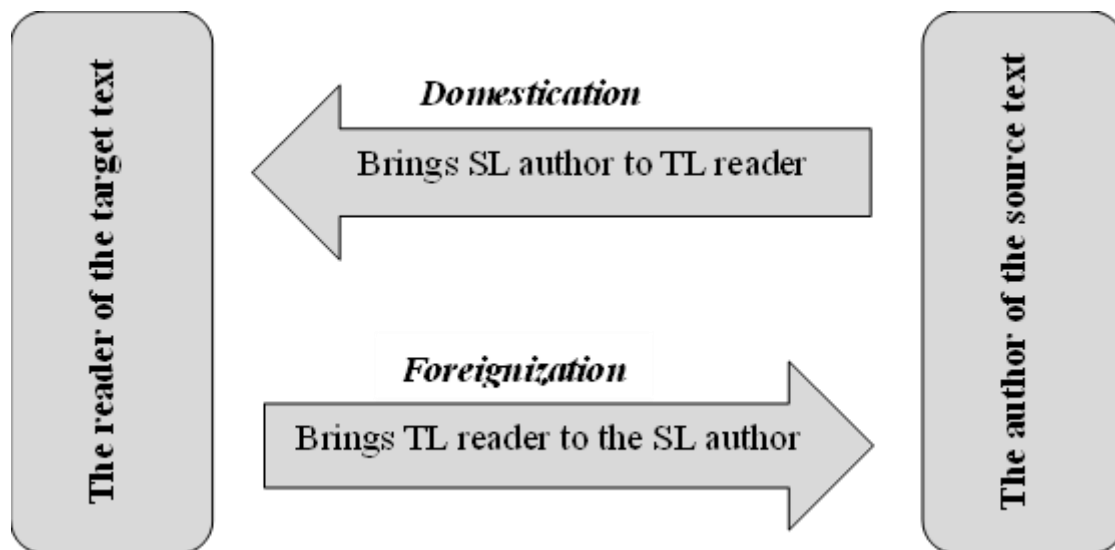


Figure 1: The concept of Foreignization and Domestication

## 5. Translating Dynamic Elements

According to Hatim and Mason (1997), a dynamic element is a word or group of words with more culturally specific or figurative challenges and difficulties that may not be suitable for a literal approach to translation. Moreover, the study employs the meaning correspondence at the referential and contextual levels to determine the SL dynamic elements and examine the TL text meaning, translation technique, translation strategy, and appropriateness. The appropriateness of translation will be evaluated according to the necessity and possibility principles. The former principle means that the translator has to resort to a target-oriented strategy to overcome certain translation problems resulting from the absence of an equivalent lexical item or the non-existence of the concept due to culturally specific differences. The latter refers to the possibility of using a literal translation of the source-oriented strategy without constituting any problem for the translator or the receiver in the target language (Nasser, 2023). The

mismatch between the two types of meanings of the dynamic elements and the translation appropriateness will be studied in the following excerpts from *The Great Gatsby*, one of Fitzgerald's famous literary works of the twentieth century and its two Arabic translations: Najib Al-Manea (1962) (T1), and Mohammed Mostagir Mustafa (1971) as (T2).

## 6. Data Analysis and Discussion

In order to answer the study questions, the researcher selects three problematic excerpts from the novel *The Great Gatsby* to be analyzed according to types of meanings, elements, translation techniques, strategies adopted, and appropriateness of translation. Each SL excerpt is followed by a table using the following abbreviations: RM stands for referential meaning, CM stands for contextual meaning, and E represents an element.

1. "I adore it," exclaimed Daisy. "The *pompadour*! You never told me you had a *pompadour* — or a yacht" (Fitzgerald, 1950, p. 72)

### Interpretation:

The word "*pompadour*" has a cultural and historical reference for it refers to a certain man's or woman's style of hairdressing. It is a hairstyle named after Madam de Pompadour (1721-1764), the mistress of King Louis XV of France (Sherrow, 2006). The Merriam-Webster English Dictionary defines a "*pompadour*", as applied to a male individual, as "a hairstyle in which the hair is combed into a prominent mound at the front."

SL item	RM	CM	E
<i>pompadour</i>	Reference to a name	Reference of a style of hairdressing	dynamic

TT	Renderings	Meaning	Element	Technique	Strategy	Appropriateness
T1	هتفت ديزي: ((لم تخبرني ان لديك بومبادور! - أو يختا.)) (87)	RM	Dynamic	Transliteration	F	-
T2	صاحت ديزي: ((إني أقيم بها ... البومبادور! لم تقل إن لديك بومبادور... أو يختا.)) (121)	RM	Dynamic	Transliteration	F	-

### Discussion:

According to the contextual reference of the SL dynamic element, "*pompadour*" is a type of "*hairstyle*". The analysis of the two Arabic renderings shows a difference in conveying the contextual reference of this dynamic element to the TL text. T1 and T2 keep the element "*pompadour*" dynamism in the TL text by referring only to its referential meaning and resorting to *transliteration*. By doing so, they

foreignize the TL text by introducing the name (بومبادور), which is completely new to the culture of the TL reader.

2. “Now he was a sturdy straw-haired man of thirty with a rather *hard mouth* and a supercilious manner.” (Fitzgerald, 1950, p. 8) **Interpretation:**

The dynamic element “*hard mouth*” is an idiomatic expression whose literal meaning is a mouth with a rough texture. Meanwhile, its non-literal meaning is represented within this context by a person having “a stubborn and obstinate attitude” (Longman Idioms Dictionary, 1998, p.162). The term “hard mouth” in the context of a narrative is used to express the character of Tom Buchanan. In the narrative, Tom is depicted as a man who is both stubborn and strong.

SL item	RM	CM	E
<i>hard mouth</i>	A part of a body	Expressing stubborn and strong character	dynamic

T <sup>T</sup>	Renderings	Meaning	Element	Technique	Strategy	Appropriateness
T1	وفمه أقرب الى الصرامة (16)	RM	Dynamic	Literal	F	-
T2	ذا فم تبدو عليه الحدة (14)	RM	Dynamic	Literal	F	-

### Discussion:

The mismatch between the referential and contextual meanings of the SL element “*hard mouth*” proves its dynamism. The above table shows that the T1 and T2 convey the SL referential meaning to the TL text. Such retention leads to the dynamism of the SL dynamic element “*hard mouth*” renderings in the TL texts.

The two translators follow the literal translation technique to render the SL dynamic element “*hard mouth*” into the Arabic TL text. They foreignize the TL text by introducing the unusual combinations between these Arabic words (فم), (صرامة), and (حدة).

Furthermore, such atypical synthesis represented by the Arabic words (فم), (صرامة), and (حدة) results in inappropriate translations for they fail to convey the contextual meaning of SL dynamic element. These words are (صرامة), which means strictness, rigorous, or tough, and (حدة) which signifies intensity or severity. The Arabic word (فم) the two translators use is a literal translation of the English word “*mouth*”. The following is the proposed rendering of the dynamic element “*hard mouth*” in Arabic:

شخص صعب المراس

3. “confident girls who weave here and there among the stouter and more stable, become for a sharp, joyous moment the centre of a group, and then, excited with triumph, glide on through *the sea-change* of faces and voices and color under the constantly changing light.” (Fitzgerald, 1950, p. 33)

### Interpretation:

The contextual meaning of "*the sea-change*" in *The Great Gatsby* implies a significant transformation, especially in the scene of the dynamic atmosphere of Gatsby's gatherings. The expression denotes the continual, almost fluid transformations in the appearances, voices, and behaviors of the party attendees, highlighting the superficial and transient nature of these social interactions. This depicts individuals with faces that change color, potentially rendering them shallow. Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines "*the sea-change*" by two concepts: The first is an archaic use where a change brought by the sea or ocean. The second is a marked change or transformation of things.

SL item	RM	CM	E
<i>Sea-change</i>	A profound transformation caused by sea or ocean	A fluid, shifting atmosphere of a lively party	Dynamic

T <sup>T</sup>	Renderings	Meaning	Element	Technique	Strategy	Appropriateness
T1	كما يكون هناك فتيات واثقات ينتقلن هنا وهناك بين المدعوين الذين هم أكثر استقراراً من غيرهم ثم للحظة واحدة غامرة الفرح يصبحن مركز زمرة من الزمر وبعد هذا واذ يكن منتشيات بانتصارهن، ينسرين خلال هذه التغيرات البحرية التي قوامها الوجود والأصوات والألوان تحت أنوار لا تفتأ متغيرة. (43)	RM	Dynamic	Literal	F	-
T2	فتيات مليئات بالثقة بندمجن هنا وهناك في جماعات أكثر حجماً وثباتاً، ليصبحن في لحظة فرح بالغ مركزاً لجماعة ما، ثم ينزلن – وقد انتشين بالنصر - عبر بحر الوجود والأصوات والألوان المتغير تحت الأنوار المتغيرة أبداً. (55)	CM	Stable	Adaptation	D	+

### Discussion:

The element “*sea-change*” from the above excerpt of the novel has two different interpretations. The mismatch between the referential and contextual meanings of the element “*sea-change*” verifies its dynamism. T1 conveys the referential meaning, which refers to the change that the sea makes to things. Thus, the dynamism of this element is retained in the TL text. However, this is not what the writer intends, and the word “*sea*” is part of this element and cannot be overlooked. Hence, the literal technique that T1 employs provides an inappropriate translation for what the Arabic rendering (هذه التغيرات البحرية) means is marine changes. The translator of this dynamic element sacrifices clarity in the contextual sense.

T2 rendering captures the contextual meaning of transformation and fluidity, which align with the broader metaphorical intent of the SL text. The conveyance of SL contextual meaning to the TL texts produces a stable element in the TL. This stability is realized using the adaptation technique. The translator’s use of the Arabic metaphorical expression (بحر الوجوه والأصوات والألوان), which means “a *sea of faces, voices and colors*” retains to some extent the metaphorical image and the aesthetic value of the SL dynamic in the TL text in addition to the use of the Arabic word (المتغير) to refer to a continual change. Thus, T2 rendering is more appropriate, as it effectively captures the dynamic and shifting atmosphere described in the novel’s scene, making it more accessible, acceptable, and evocative for Arab readers. The translator here provides an appropriate translation of the dynamic element.

## 7. Findings and Conclusions

The study answers its first question by the criterion of meaning correspondence. The dynamism of an element in a literary text is determined when no correspondence exists between its referential and contextual meanings. This is identified clearly in the above three excerpts of the novel *The Great Gatsby*. The analysis of each SL element, *pompadour*, *hard mouth*, and *sea-change*, shows no correspondence between its referential and contextual meanings. The mismatch between these dynamic elements’ referential and contextual meanings leads to interpreting problems. The two translators face cultural problems, as seen in the SL dynamic element “*pompadour*,” a hairstyle that has cultural and historical significance. According to the principles of possibility and necessity, T1 and T2, in this case, have to explicitly refer to the contextual meaning of the SL dynamic element “*pompadour*” in the TL text. For an appropriate rendering, the translators are advised to domesticate the SL dynamic element “*pompadour*” in the TL text and add the word (تسريحة) to his TL text.

The SL dynamic elements “*hard mouth*” and “*sea-change*” are another source of difficulties and problems. The above analysis shows the translators’ resort of conveying the referential meaning of the dynamic element “*hard mouth*” in Arabic by the words (فم) along with nouns (صرامة) and (حدة). “*hard mouth*” has a figurative sense and carries the ideas of resistance and lack of responsiveness or excessive force to control and interaction. Here, the two translators also face difficulties in providing appropriate translations of this dynamic element. They have to convey the contextual meaning of the SL dynamic element “*hard mouth*” and domesticate this dynamic element to the Arabic reader. The following is the appropriate translation of “*hard mouth*”:

صعب المراس

As for the SL dynamic element “*sea-change*”, T1 and T2 try to reproduce the metaphorical language in their renderings by providing the Arabic words (بحرية) and (بحر). However, T1 conveys the SL referential meaning of the dynamic element “*sea-change*,” providing inappropriate rendering. T2



rendering is more appropriate for it conveys the contextual meaning of the dynamic element “*sea-change*” in Arabic by the word (المتغير) and keeps the aesthetic value behind this figurative language.

The study concludes that any linguistic element with no correspondence between its referential and contextual meaning is dynamic. This dynamic element can be translated literally unless cultural and figurative difficulties necessitate an adaptive translation technique.

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