Information entropy of Shakespeare's plays in the light of plurality in translation: Cognitive perspective

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Abstract

The article offers a cognitive research of the reasons and manifestations of information entropy in the time-remote original texts, namely Shakespeare's plays, with regard to chronologically distant translations into Ukrainian performed by Panteleimon Kulish and Yurii Andrukhovych. It is assumed that any literary text transmits certain scope of the information which is represented in the fulfillment of the literary concepts and verbalised by the linguistic means chosen by the author. Examination of the source text and its Ukrainian retranslations allows determining that information entropy of the time-remote original text causes plurality in translations viewed as different interpretations of the source text by different translators. The difference in translators' personal worldview as well as different life experience and social backgrounds lead to different interpretations of the original and presentation of different scope of information in their translations, which is caused by the information entropy of the time-remote source text which is revealed in different explication of the concepts of the source text in the target language.

Keywords: information entropy; literary concept; plurality in translation; cognitive research; time-remote source text; Shakespeare's plays

1. Introduction

Despite the objective nature of the linguistic component of any message, the real fact of communication presupposes the multiplicity of its possible interpretations. While the plurality of possible readings is undesirable for the texts of informative type, ambiguity is quite a characteristic feature for literary texts, as well as for some other "creative" texts. Hence, there is the possibility of different interpretations and, accordingly, different translations leading to representation of the different amount of information in different retranslations which is called "information entropy" in the contemporary Translation Studies.

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1.1. Literature Review

The phenomenon of plurality in translation was noted by critics of translation, classics of theoretical translation studies, and it still attracts the attention of scholars. Among the works that first raise the problem of the possibility of the existence of multiple translations are the works by José Ortega y Gasset (2004), Korney Chukovskiy & Andrey Fedorov (1930) and others. According to Theo Hermans (1996), creating multiple translations, we "suppress the more uncontrollable aspects of texts, their loose ends, their gaps, their unintended or unattributable features, their plurality and heterogeneity. Translation further compounds and intensifies this refractory growth. Translations temporarily fix interpretations which, as verbal constructs, are themselves open to interpretation" (p. 9). So, as Farzaneh Farahzad (1999) puts it, "the existence, or the possibility of coming into existence, of several translations of a source text in a target language is an evidence of the fact that translation, by nature, possesses, among other things, the quality of being indeterministic, at least in certain respects" (p. 2).

1.1.1 Information entropy and plurality in translation

It is believed that the difference between the translation and the source text is that the only possible version of translation cannot exist while the source text is present in its final independent form. It can be compared with the musical work which can have several performances that differ because each performer interprets it in his / her own way (Husak, 2013, p. 176). Roman Tchaikovskiy (2001) believes that a literary work is potentially polytextual, but the index of polytextuality varies depending on various factors. One of such factors, according to Veronika Razumovskaya (2011), is the information load of the source text, and hence there is a point to use the general scientific concept of entropy (p. 210).

Plurality in translation deals most with literary translation (Andriienko, 2014, p. 27) being defined as: "translation of information-type texts, which is performed mainly for the purpose of obtaining objective information, does not require several versions of translation into one language, provided the quality of the first translation. The literary text which contains information of the aesthetic sphere, is ambiguous from the very beginning and assumes the existence of many variants of its understanding and interpretation both at the stage of perception and decoding of the source literary text within the native culture, and in the case of recoding the text by the means of other languages and cultures" (Razumovskaya, 2011, p. 209).

The multiplicity of interpretations of the literary text, according to Yuriy Lotman (1998), is a characteristic feature of art rather than is the result of any external factors: "There is a large gap between the understanding and misunderstanding of the literary text. Differences in the interpretation of works of art are everyday phenomena […]" (p. 36). The factors determining plurality in translation and causing the problem of choosing a translation strategy are redundancy of information in the literary text and entropy. Redundancy is considered a characteristic feature of speech that ensures its resistance to noise in the transmission channel and automates the perception (Shennon, 1963). Entropy is seen as a measure of disorder, chaotic state of the system (Mikeshina, 2005).

This concept which arose in the natural sciences, in art, history, philology, and, in particular, in translation studies, is opposed to information and interpreted as information disorder, uncertainty of choice (Narashimha, 1994). The term "entropy" was originally used by the German physicist Rudolf Clausius, and later it was developed by Ludwig Boltzmann, Josiah Gibbs, and James Maxwell – scientists who gave entropy its statistical basis (Sokolovskiy, 2014, p. 335). It is known from this part of physics that entropy is often defined as "a measure of the chaos of a system", and the second law of thermodynamics says that entropy always increases with time (ibid.). More generally, Stanley Angrist and Loren Hepler (1967) understand entropy as a quantitative measure of system disorder (p. 4).

The concept of entropy has become a universal approach in many scientific spheres and academic research, including Translation Studies. Moreover, it is important to note that clear analogies can be found between the application of the term "entropy" in the natural sciences and in the humanities (for example, in our case, in Translation Studies). As the level of entropy grows within the original message interpreted by the translator, cognitive connections between the concepts in the translated text are weakening, just as the chains of the reproducible bacterium "E. coli Escherichia coli" will spontaneously stratify as a result of the influence of entropic forces, despite their strong localization inside the cell – both processes are based on the phenomenon of entropy (Sokolovskiy, 2014, p. 336).

Bram Vanroy (2019) describes translation entropy as the uncertainty for a translator to choose target language units for source language units (p. 924). He thinks that "it revolves around the idea that a translator has multiple ways to translate a given source token. The more options that are available, the harder it is to make a decision" (ibid.). Thus, information entropy in translation is defined as a measure of uncertainty of information about the object of translation (information deficit of the translator) which causes erroneous translation decisions at any level of the system of self-organization of special translation (Dorofeieva & Andrushchenko, 2019, p. 98). This uncertainty can exist (1) at the objective level of translation units of the source text (linguistic features of units translated), (2) at the objective level of the communicative situation (lack of data of the factors of the communicative situation in the source text), (3) at the objective level of discourse (significant differences between the norms of the source and target special discourses), and (4) at the subjective level of the performer of the translation (insufficient language, translation, discursive, and professional competence) (ibid.). It is the subjective factors of the information entropy of the whole text and its individual units in the translator's head that constitute the problem in the cognitive theory of translation.

Thus, information entropy is one of the reasons for the plurality in translation. Regarding plurality in translation, information entropy concerns the individuality of the translator who needs to perceive the text under translation both as the author and as a reader, interpreting it for the target audience. As different translators perceive such a text differently, they can voluntarily or involuntarily add or omit certain details in the process of translation which leads to the differences in the scope of information presented in the translation. As a result, the scope of the cognitive information in the time-remote source text and chronologically distant translations can differ.

1.1.2 Cognitive background of diachronic plurality in translation

Multiple realization (or potentiality of realization) is embedded in the specifics of literary translation as a kind of creative activity in the field of verbal art. The term "plurality in translation" means the possibility of the existence of several translations (retranslations) of one foreign literary work in the national literature, while the source text has, as a rule, one textual embodiment. The plurality in translation is determined by the semantic inexhaustibility of the work of art, its aesthetic essence, the presence of a certain interpretive range, as well as the individuality of the subject of translation, the level of the receiving culture, and the nature of translation depends on the development of literary language and literary translation as well as on the purpose of translation (Sytar, 2014, p. 238).

The translated literary work is a secondary phenomenon: it does not reflect the actual reality but it is only the reflection of this reality due to the creative consciousness of the author (Levin, 1992, p. 213). The translator should establish a relationship of co-creation with the author of the source text. The translation has the imprint of the translator's creative individuality, formed in other national and sometimes historical conditions. Being an individual, the translator has social and aesthetic views, which are more or less different from the views of the author of the source text. This individualization

of the translator creates the preconditions for the emergence of a new translation, caused by a new re-reading of the original, the use of other artistic means and, above all, the implementation of the principles of another translation style. The possibility of different interpretations of one source text, especially time-remote, is caused not only by the difference of translation positions of the translator but also by the interpretive range of the translated text (ibid., p. 214). In this regard, Pavel Topper (1968) rightly stated: "In every literature, there can be (at least theoretically) any number of translations of the same work, and each of these translations has the right to claim independent artistic significance" (p. 658).

Thus, on the one hand, translation is associated with linguistic variability of the target language (in what we see the form of interaction of the cultural paradigm of translation research with the linguistic one), then, on the other hand, translation is associated with individual psychological features of translation as a creative activity (in what you can see the connection of the cultural paradigm with the translation activity) (Rebrii, 2012, p. 308). In the process of interpretation, the translator builds his own "virtual object", i.e., the idea of the original text as a certain system of meanings, the importance of which is determined by the fact that "the translator is, first, able to explain, justify or, conversely, compromise certain translation decisions", and, secondly, that it "confirms the possibility of multiple translations of the same text" (Garbovskiy, 2007, p. 363).

Korney Chukovskyi (1930) once made an apt, figurative remark about the role of the translator in the creation of retranslations: "Imagine that the same poem, even George Byron's one, is translated by Chatsky, Khlestakov, and Manilov. Their translations will be as different as they are, and, in fact, the three Byrons will then appear before the reader, and none will be like the other one". As the cognitive perspective of translation "permits us to pursue the question of how the more or less structured knowledge sedimented in our memory is activated by external stimuli, i.e., by the text to be translated" (Wills, 1990, p. 19), translation plurality in this aspect deals with the fact that concepts as units of structured knowledge can be represented in translation differently because of the fact that information can be perceived differently by different translators.

Such an idea correlates with the statement that the process of creating and translating a literary text is primarily a cognitive process, which clearly illustrates the penetration of the individual's thought into broad areas of human activity, but reading and evaluating a literary text is a much more complex cognitive action of identifying its meanings. The literary text is the centre of transmission and storage of information, the form of existence of a certain culture and the embodiment of personal ideas.

This is primarily a model of the author, an indicator of the level of his intellectual, moral and other qualities. In this sense, the text is the result of the transformation of language signs from their cognitive and axiological representation. The conceptual approach to the objects of the surrounding world makes it possible to identify various figurative nominations that create new phenomena, characteristics, and features in the description of the subject. Therefore, the interest of translators to such concepts as the picture of the world, linguistic and conceptual pictures of the world, conceptual sphere, concept introduced into scientific circulation by cognitivists, in terms of adequacy of translation, makes it possible to more clearly identify the issues that prevent full reproduction of semantic and figurative components of the source text (Holubenko, 2019, p. 135), which determines the existence of plurality in translation on the conceptual level.

1.2. Research Questions

The objective of this study is to discuss the cases of information entropy in the time-remote original texts, namely Shakespeare's plays, from a cognitive perspective, and to reveal manifestations of information entropy of the source text in its chronologically distant translations while proving the fact

that information entropy of the source text presupposes the existence of plurality in its retranslations. For this reason, the following questions have been put:

(1) How the personal background of different translators causes multiple interpretations of the source text?

(2) How is the information entropy connected with the translator?

(3) How the information entropy of the original text is manifested in translation?

2. Method

2.1. Sample / Participants

The examples are taken from Shakespeare's "Hamlet" and "Romeo and Juliet" and compared with their Ukrainian translations performed in the 19th century by Panteleimon Kulish and in the 21th century by Yurii Andrukhovych as two chronologically distant Ukrainian translators that belong to different stages of the development of Ukrainian culture, so if the information entropy occurs in translation, the translations which arose in different societies by the translators having different social and historical backgrounds will reveal such an entropy.

The fragments from the original and translations are discussed from the viewpoint of comparing information content of the concepts of LIFE and LOVE in Shakespeare's works and their chronologically distant translations.

2.2. Instrument(s)

In their recent research, Yana Boiko and Vira Nikonova (2021) attempted "to combine conceptual analysis and more traditional methods of stylistic, semiotic, hermeneutic and other types of analysis is the methodology of poetical, cognitive and translation analysis of a literary text tested on the material of Shakespeare's tragedies" (p. 1039). Although the methodology was aimed at "identifying individual author's meanings that distinguish Shakespeare's personal worldview from the general cultural one and to understand how it is represented in translation" (ibid.), it is applicable for analysis of the information entropy in translation.

The methodology applied includes genre, text, linguistic and conceptual modules of analysis (Boiko & Nikonova, 2021, p. 1039-1041): (1) the background module supposes the analysis of the cultural and social context in which Shakespeare and the translators of his plays worked including the specifics of the societies surrounding the authors and translators as well as their own aesthetic views; (2) the genre module of analysis is connected with understanding the literary trends synthesised in Shakespeare's works and the works of the translators; (3) the text module supposes distinguishing the text fragments in which the analysed concepts are realised; here, the interpretative and textual analysis of the texts helped to distinguish the contexts of the tragic; these are textual fragments revealing one and the same topic, and the verbal embodiment of this topic creates the impression of the tragic in the texts of Shakespeare's plays (Nikonova et al., 2019, p. 92); (4) in the language module, the researchers analyse representing the concepts by the expressive, emotive, and figurative language means with determining the thematic dominant indicated by the thematic word; finally, (5) the conceptual module is represented by a set of literary concepts, their fulfilling which allows to trace the information entropy of the texts in translation. Further, by comparing the information in each of the modules, the researcher is able to trace how the literary concepts are represented in translation, i.e., how the information compressed in the concepts is represented.

Applying such methodology in the process of analysing information entropy of Shakespeare's plays in the light of plurality in translation is justified by the fact that the concepts are the carriers of the information embodied in the text, so determining how these concepts are filled in the chronologically distant translations would allow the researcher to trace how the translators' own worldviews and styles affect the representation of information in translation.

In particular, as Yana Boiko and Vira Nikonova (2021) state, "the literary concepts of the tragic as the components of the tragic conceptual space are the mental structures of Shakespeare's artistic world, from which the writer composes the tragic as a peculiar form of displaying life contradictions conditioned by the historical and cultural traditions of the Renaissance, as well as the requirements of the genre of tragedy" (p. 1041), and the literary concepts of the tragic in the chronologically distant translations have a footprint of the culture and literary traditions of the societies in which the translators lived, as well as the translators' individual view on the supposed results of the translation.

2.3. Data Analysis

The theoretical background of the problem of information entropy described above in the article allows supposing that the differences of perceiving the source text, especially time-remote, by different translators cause plurality in translation that is realised, in particular, in different scope of information embodied in the concepts of the source text and in the concepts of the translated text.

Thus, the cognitive analysis of chronologically distant translations of Shakespeare's plays is able to justify their existence by information entropy of the time-remote original – Shakespeare's plays.

The data of the analysis is famous main character's soliloquy *To be or not to be – that is the question* from the play "Hamlet" and fragments from "Romeo and Juliet" by William Shakespeare (1564-1616), the outstanding English playwright in the period of English Renaissance. The chronologically distant Ukrainian translations analysed in the research are performed by Panteleimon Kulish (1819-1897) and Yurii Andrukhovych (born 1960). The reason for choosing these translators is that they lived in different time periods and thus represent different stages of the development of Ukrainian culture, so, the analysed translations were performed in different societies by the translators with different social and historical backgrounds which is reflected in their translations.

In particular, the present research considers five modules analysis: (1) the background module, (2) the genre module, (3) the text module, (4) the language module, and (5) the conceptual module. The background and genre modules are already described by Yana Boiko and Vira Nikonova (2021, p. 1042-1044), so the present research concentrates on the latter three modules as the text realisation of the concepts LIFE and LOVE, which allows to trace information entropy in representing these concepts in translation.

3. Results and Discussion

In this part of the research, we compare two versions of Hamlet's soliloquy *To be or not to be – that is the question* (Act III, Scene I from *Hamlet*) by Panteleimon Kulish and Yurii Andrukhovych:

(1)   ***Who would these fardels bear, // To grunt and sweat under a weary life**, // But that the dread of something after death, // The undiscovere'd country, from whose bourn // No traveller returns, puzzles the will, // And makes us rather bear those ills we have // Than fly to others that we know not of?* (Shakespeare, 1899)

(2)   ***Хто би // Ніс той тягар, стогнав і прів під тиском // Життя**, якби не страх чогось по смерті? // Якби не той нещасний край, з котрого // Ще не вертав ніхто, мутив нам волю? //*

То й радше зносим біди ті, що маєм, *// Аніж тікать до інших, нам незнаних* ("Buty chy ne buty"…, 2007) – translation by Panteleimon Kulish.

(3) ***І хто тягнув би далі // Життєву лямку і стікав би потом,*** *// Якби не страх – а що там, після смерті, // У тій країні з інших географій, // Що з неї не прийдуть мандрівники? //* ***І страх нам каже витерпіти муки*** *// Тутешні, добре знані, й не шукати // Незнаних, потойбічних* (Monoloh Hamleta…, 2019) – translation by Yurii Andrukhovych.

The analysis of the examples above is focused on the text realisation of the concept of LIFE in the source text and chronologically distant translations.

In particular, LIFE in the source text is associated with difficulties (*to grunt and sweat under a weary life*). It is noticeable here that living for Shakespeare's character is associated with grunting and sweating (*to **grunt** and **sweat***), that is, life is so complicated that the character physically feels its hardness like the person working hard.

In the translation by Panteleimon Kulish, LIFE is still associated with hard physical work (***стогнав і прів*** *під тиском*). However, the translator makes the character's efforts more passive – if in the source text the word *grunt* is used as a result of momentary strong effort, the translator uses the word *стогнав* as the representation of the character's continuous suffering. The idea of heavy work here is shifted to the periphery, so this translator concentrates on suffering rather than effort. Moreover, the representation of *sweat* as the result of hard work in the given example is substituted by the word *прів (під тиском)* which also shifts the attention from the heavy work to just sweating as a result of indefinite physical process (compare: *To grunt and **sweat under a weary life** / Ніс той тягар, стогнав і **прів під тиском***).

In Yurii Andrukhovych's version, LIFE is also complicated, but the word *grunt* is completely omitted in this version. So, the character just bears the difficulties of life without any verbal response, just physical actions leading to physical reaction of the body (*тягнув би далі // життєву лямку і стікав би потом*). It makes the reader of this version perceive the character as a more passive person who just obeys the destiny.

Another text fragment characterising life is *And makes us rather bear those **ills** we have* where the concept LIFE is verbalised by using the word *ills* meaning that the life is evil for the character making him suffer. In Panteleimon Kulish's translation, this idea is represented as *То й радше зносим **біди ті, що маєм*** where the life is rather a person's misfortune than evil. Here, the focus is shifted to suffering because of random reasons as the word *біда* does not suppose an intended evil. In contrast, in the translation presented by Yurii Andrukhovych, we see *І страх нам каже витерпіти **муки*** where *муки* is just suffering without stating the reasons.

The analysis of the three aspects of the concept LIFE in the research conducted allows concluding that, in chronologically distant translations, the scope of information embodied in the literary concepts differs as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Information embodied in the concept of LIFE in Hamlet's soliloquy

Idea	Shakespeare	Kulish	Andrukhovych
hardness	physical work physical reaction **verbalised** active	physical work physical reaction **verbalised** passive	physical work physical reaction **non-verbalised** active
suffering	**intended** **evil**	**non-intended** **misfortune**	**undefined** **suffering**

Thus, in Panteleimon Kulish's translation, the concept of LIFE is connected with more passive perceiving of the everyday reality, some fatalism characteristic for the Ukrainian national character of the 19th century. By contrast, Yurii Andrukhovych presents LIFE in terms of certain actions but still preserves the idea of fatalism which is characteristic for post-Soviet Ukraine.

Let us now shift to two versions of the text fragments from the tragedy "Romeo and Juliet" (Act I, Scene V) also translated by Panteleimon Kulish and Yurii Andrukhovych:

(4)   *My only love sprung // **from my only hate**! / Too early seen unknown, and known too late! / **Prodigious** // birth of love it is to me, / That I must love **a loathed enemy*** (Shakespeare, 2016, p. 36).

(5)   ***З єдиної злоби** – єдина і любов... // Не знаючи хто він, його я стріла рано, // Та пізно я про це дізналась, безталанна! // Як наді мною ти, **зла доле, насміялась**, // Що з **ворогом** своїм я вперше покохалась!* (Shekspir, 1998, p. 31) – translation by Panteleimon Kulish.

(6) *Любов одна, **як ненависть одна** – // Її б не знати краще, **та вона // Сама прийшла – і спробуй відведи** // Це **щастя, повне знаками біди*** (Shekspir 2016, p. 98) – translation by Yurii Andrukhovych.

The analysis of the examples above is focused on the text realisation of the concept of LOVE in the source text and its translations performed by different translators.

LOVE in the analyzed text fragment is associated with fate (***prodigious // birth of love it is to me***) and it is evil fate (*that I must love a loathed **enemy***). Love for the main character is so unpredictable that it arose from the very opposite feeling (*My only love sprung // from my only **hate**!*).

In the translation by Panteleimon Kulish, LOVE is still associated with fate (*як наді мною ти, **зла доле, насміялась***). However, the translator makes the fate explicitly evil (***зла доле***) while in the source text it is implicit this meaning is implicit (***prodigious // birth of love it is to me***). Fate in this case is a living creature which can laugh at people (***зла доле, насміялась***). The idea of hatred is made weaker in the text – *hate* is substituted by *злоба*, i.e., being evil (***З єдиної злоби** – єдина і любов*). Furthermore, the idea of enemy in translation is also weakened (*Що з **ворогом** своїм я вперше покохалась*) while in the original text strong hatred is expressed (*That I must love **a loathed enemy***).

In Yurii Andrukhovych's version, LOVE is also associated with fate (*щастя, повне **знаками біди***), but the idea of fate is transferred through the idea of signs of fate. Fate in Yurii Andrukhovych's translation is similar to its perceiving in the source text – it is just how events outside develop outside a person's control. Fate is thus perceived as a supernatural power rather than a creature who does something. In this version of translation, the phrase *That I must love **a loathed enemy*** is omitted at all, but the idea of hatred is represented in the phrase *Любов одна, **як ненависть одна***. Moreover, the phrase *та вона // сама прийшла – і спробуй відведи* makes the reader of this version perceive the character as a victim of love rather that a person who loves.

The analysis of the two aspects of the concept of LOVE in the research conducted also allows concluding that, in the analyzed chronologically distant translations, the scope of information embodied in the literary concepts differs as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Information embodied in the concept of LOVE in "Romeo and Juliet"

Idea	Shakespeare	Kulish	Andrukhovych
fate	**prodigy** **unpredictable** unknown	**evil creature** **unpredictable** laughing at the person	**prodigy** **unpredictable** uncontrollable
loss of control	**loss of hatred**	**loss of being angry**	**loss of hatred**

regret	**regret**	**regret**
too early	first love	

Thus, the research reveals that, in Panteleimon Kulish's translation, the concept of love is connected more with the game of the evil fate, that, again, is characteristic for fatalism of the Ukrainian national character of the 19th century. By contrast, Yurii Andrukhovych presents love in terms of loss of control preserving the idea of fatalism which is characteristic for post-Soviet Ukraine but also maintaining the idea of averting evil.

Hence, it can be determined that the chronologically distant retranslations of the source text are determined by the information entropy of the time-remote original. The variety of retranslations is caused by the subjective factors connected with the translator and his / her perceiving of the surrounding world. In the case of chronologically distant retranslations, it can be traced by taking into account the cultural and social background of the translator.

4. Conclusions

The present research intended to characterise the phenomenon of information entropy through the prism of plurality in translation. Information entropy is accounted by the fact that any text, including a literary text, transmits a certain scope of information embodied in literary concepts and verbalised by linguistic means of the literary work. Different translators perceive the text under translation differently depending upon their personal life experience and social background which determine the possibility of multiple interpretations of the source text thus leading to presenting different scope of original information in translation. As a result, different concepts of the source text are explicated differently, and differences in the meanings of the linguistic units in the target language reflect information entropy of the original text in translation. The scope of the information embodied in the literary concepts in translations, especially chronologically distant translations, is also affected by social and cultural background of the translator, which also realizes the information entropy of the original text, especially time-remote, in chronologically distant retranslations of a literary text.

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