

Terminological Distinctions in Translation

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Abstract: This paper examines some basic theoretical concepts in order to identify a few useful aspects in the translation of medical texts. The main aim of this work is to introduce different textual typologies from the perspective of some well-known linguists and translation scholars such as: Anna Trosborg, Basil Hatim, Ian Mason, Albrecht Neubert, Katharina Reiss, and to establish the way in which textual typology influences the translation of the medical/pharmaceutical texts which represents the subject of my doctoral research. This will be done starting from the assumption that a text type allows the translator to recognize the function and purpose of the text as well as the author's intention. Thus, the translator will inevitably resort to different techniques and strategies in order to successfully render the source text into the target language. We will define terms such as: *text*, *discourse*, *genre*, *text type* and *text typology*, identifying and explaining the relationships between these concepts and their implication for translation.

Keywords: text; discourse; genre; text type; text typology

Text vs Discourse

The terms text and discourse are often used as synonyms, but some scholars prefer to speak of text for the written mode and of discourse for the oral mode. In other cases, text is used for an individual piece of written or oral communication, and discourse then denotes a sequence of texts that belong together to a common subject domain (e.g. the medical discourse), or due to a single author (e.g. the discourse of Margaret Thatcher).

Trying to analyze the distinction between these two terms, in her article *Text Typology: Register, Genre and Text Type*, Ana Trosborg sums up some of the most important voices of the field asserting that: "For some scholars, *text* refers to written language and *discourse* to spoken language. For others, texts may be spoken or written, and they may involve one or more text-producers (cf. Virtanen, 1990, p.

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447). Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Quirk et al. (1985) talk about text, while e.g. Grimes (1975) and Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) and their followers deal with discourse. “(1997, p. 2). She adds that the two separate terms *text* and *discourse* have, in fact, been related to two different but complementary perspectives on language. A text may be viewed as structure and/or it may be regarded as a process. In line with these two approaches, text has often been used of a static concept - the product of a process - while discourse has been used to refer to a dynamic notion - the process of text production and text comprehension (Virtanen, 1990, p. 453). Although Trosborg does not provide an explicit definition neither of the term discourse nor that of text, it becomes clear from her presentation that she sees text as the unit for discourse analysis, which is in line with the Hallidayan tradition. Halliday and Hassan’s (1990) field of discourse refers to the total event in which the text is functioning. She speaks of text with reference to an individual, concrete occurrence, whereas discourse applies to a higher level and involves regular patterns in the use of language by social groups in areas of sociocultural activity.

Other scholars, such as Brown and Yule (1983), also support the text-discourse distinction, considering the text as a representation of discourse which can be either written or spoken, while discourse is language in use. After briefly introducing the various interpretations of text and discourse, we could notice that the representatives of British tradition (Halliday et al. 1976; 1985) use text from a sentence - based perspective, while the Birmingham School of Discourse Analysis (Sinclair and Coulthard; 1975), refers to discourse as language in use. In Translation Studies, the discourse is seen as a text in context that functions in a certain pragmatic situation.

In their study, *Introduction to Text Linguistics* De Beaugrande and Dressler define a text as a “communicative occurrence which meets seven standards of textuality” (1981, p. 3): *cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality and intertextuality*. Any text which does not display these characteristics is considered a non-text. It is this unifying frame that keeps the various elements or features of a text together constituting an unique message. The global function turns the text into a complex communicative event and in order to deliver the source text message into the target text the translator needs to monitor her/his work according to the standards of textuality enumerated by Beaugrande et Dresser:” On the surface, the translation exhibits various forms and degrees of *cohesion*. At deeper levels, indicative of the ordering or at least sequencing of ideas, translations are characterized by degrees of *coherence*. With respect to the source text and its author, a translation attempts to realize *intentionality*, and, with regard to

the target version and its readers, the desired aim is *acceptability*. Considering the place of the source and target text in the communicative continuum, the criterion of *situationality* has to be taken into account. Last but not least, translations act upon the cognitive state of the recipients by virtue of their *informativity* just as the originals are a source of informativity for their audience.”(Neubert, 1996, p. 92). These features of the source text which also serve in the construction of translation form an intricate network. Neubert also states that “translations, like texts are global systems that exhibit an internal structure” that corresponds as a whole to that of the original. Consequently, it becomes obvious how the insights of text-linguistics, even if derived from systematic descriptions of texts in one language can be applied to a comparison of texts in two languages. Thus, translation studies can use the principles developed for monolingual texts into a contrastive textual analysis.

Even though the analysis of the standards of textuality of the source text is pivotal for the construction of the translation, this is not the only aspect of the textual approach. Translation practice proved that in order to create a target text that is functionally equivalent with the original text, the translator needs to put the two texts into a wider context, and to analyze information that is also of a textual nature even if it cannot be inferred from the text that must be translated. It is the area where whole texts enter into larger “wholes”. The translation of a text is influenced by previous translations of other similar texts. Target texts need to obey the norms of a new and often contrasting target text world which are characterized by a group of features that have become representative for certain groups of texts. Translating a text implies translating a member of a particular text class or genre, which again makes it necessary that the translator take into account the distinctive features of that text class. (Neubert, 1996, p. 94).

Text Genre vs. Text Type

Text type and genre are sometimes used as synonyms, but they are more often treated as separate entities. The concept of *genre* has its origin in literary studies but throughout time it has been used in other fields too, increasing its complexity. Presently, the concept is relevant especially in the applied linguistics field (Swales, 1990; Bhatia, 1993) and translation studies (Trosborg, 1997; Hatim and Mason, 1990) being mostly used in the translation of specialized texts. In Anna Trosborg’s view “genres are the text categories readily distinguished by mature speakers of a language, and we may even talk about a ‘folk typology’ of genres. Texts used in a

particular situation for a particular purpose may be classified using every-day labels such as a guidebook, a nursery rhyme, a poem, a business letter, a newspaper article, a radio play, an advertisement, etc.” (1997, p. 3).

According to Hatim and Mason genres are viewed in terms of a set of features which we perceive as being appropriate to a given social occasion. Nevertheless, it should not be assumed, that there is some simple one-to-one relationship between elements of lexis, grammar and the social occasions associated with particular genres. In their opinion, genre membership of a given text is ultimately a function of users’ intentions. (1990, p. 140) In his turn Swales shares the same view and notes that genres are not simply assemblies of more-or-less similar textual objects but, instead they are coded and keyed events set within social communicative processes. Recognizing those codes and keys can be a powerful facilitator of both comprehension, composition and translation.

Genre analysis as an insightful and thick description of academic and professional texts has become a powerful and useful tool to arrive at significant form-function correlations which can be utilized for a number of applied linguistic purposes including the translation of specialized texts.” Talking Genre, after Swales (1985, 1990), it is a recognizable communicative event characterized by a set of communicative purposes identified and mutually understood by the members of the professional or academic community in which it regularly occurs. Most often it is highly structured and conventionalized with constraints on allowable contributions in terms of their intent, positioning, form and functional value. These constraints, however, are often exploited by the expert members of the discourse community to achieve private intentions within the framework of socially recognized purposes.” (quoted in Bhatia, 2013, p. 13).

As regards the notion of *text-type*, there is no consensus regarding its definition, classification and the way it relates to a textual genre. In German textlinguistic literature, ‘Texttyp’ (text type) is understood as a category for a more abstract, theoretical classification of texts, and ‘Textsorte’ (e.g. genre, text-class, text-variety) is a label used for an empirical classification of texts as they exist in a human society. (cf. Heinemann and Viehweger, 1991, p. 44, as quoted in Shaffner). Textsorte, corresponds to what is typically called ‘genre’ in Anglo-Saxon Studies on genre analysis, being defined as global linguistic patterns which have historically developed in a linguistic community for fulfilling specific communicative tasks in specific situations. Christiane Nord (1991) associates the notion of *text type* with that of *textual genre* while Anna Trosborg (1997) makes a clear distinction between these

two notions. She states that, "the theoretical basis of genres is independent from those for text types. Genres are defined and distinguished on the basis of systematic non-linguistic criteria, and they are valid in those terms. Text types may be defined on the basis of cognitive categories or on the basis of strictly linguistic criteria." (1997, p. 8)

According to Hatim and Mason, a *text-type* is defined as a "conceptual framework which enables us to classify texts in terms of communicative intentions serving an overall rhetorical purpose." (1990, p. 140). Starting from Werlich's typology (1976), the British linguists propose the following classification of text-types for translation purposes: expositive (descriptive and narrative), argumentative and instruction based, with a division of instructive into two classes: instruction with option (as advertisements, manuals) and instruction without option (e.g. legislative texts and contracts).

In Aristotle and Bühler's view, a text can be classified into a particular type according to which component, in the communication process receives the primary focus: if the main focus is on the sender the discourse will be expressive, if on the receiver, it will be persuasive, if on the linguistic code, literary and if the aim is to represent the realities of the world it will be referential.

Nevertheless, the classification of text types remains controversial and however the typology is set up, any real text will display features of more than one type. This multifunctionality is the rule rather than the exception and text purposes may only be viewed in terms of "dominances "of a given purpose or contextual focus. Beaugrande and Dressler (1981, p. 184) point out:" Some traditionally established text types could be defined along *functional* lines, i.e. according to the contributions of texts to human interaction. We would be at least able to identify some *dominances*, though without obtaining a strict categorization for every conceivable example. In many texts, we would find a mixture of the descriptive, narrative and argumentative function." Trosborg supports this idea and states that pure narration, description, exposition and argumentation hardly occur. Thus, a particular genre may make use of several modes of presentation (text-types), though typically with one of these as a dominant type. Hatim and Mason, (1990, pp. 146-148), refer to this phenomenon as "hybridisation", stressing the need for translators to become aware of this aspect.

Text typologies represent a very significant issue for a translator, being especially used in the contrastive analysis of the same textual genre in different languages, so translation studies literature takes a particular interest in analyzing and classifying

them. Different scholars suggested various text typologies, (Biber 1989, Hatim and Mason 1990) but the most widely used model in translation theory is the one proposed by Reiss (1976, p. 10) on the basis of the Karl Bühler's concept of language functions. This typology divides texts into: *informative* - information-oriented texts, the main task for a translator of such a text is to correctly convey all the facts; *expressive* - recipient-oriented texts where the translator needs to recreate the form; *operative* - texts oriented towards certain behaviour patterns, they are to affect people's opinions, behaviour and elicit certain reactions, in the case of such texts the translator often resorts to their adaptation to the target language recipients. As Katharina Reiss observes, there is a correlation between the text type and the translation strategies that are used, the textual typology influencing the process of translation. It has also been suggested that the main function of the source text needs to be preserved in the translation. Consequently, text typologies, represent valuable tools in the translator's work, helping him/her to choose the most important strategies in order to convey the aim, the function and the intention of the source text.

As mentioned before, this paper introduces some basic theoretical concepts from the field literature in order to identify a few useful aspects used in the translation of medical/pharmaceutical texts which represent the subject of my doctoral research. Medical translation is implemented through well established genres. Analysing medical genres and understanding their particularities, such as their textual organization, their communicative function, the situations where they are used and the roles of participants, represent important steps to achieving a qualitative medical translation. The translator should be aware of the function or purpose of the source text instead of resorting to literal translation. Medical texts to which pharmaceutical texts relate, have a specific structure and are characterized by precision in the use of terminology, scientific objectivity, methodological rigor and impartiality in transmitting information. As sub-genres of the medical genre, (in the sense that Ana Trosborg assigns to the concept of genre), pharmaceutical texts, (patient information leaflets, summary of product characteristics, drug advertisements), are mainly informative texts, displaying in the same time an operative function (aiming to influence the receiver's behaviour and to convince the potential client to buy the product).

The analysis and the understanding of the theoretical concepts introduced in this paper, as well as the relationships between them represent a good starting point in the process of translation, as "translation is always tied up with how other similar texts have been translated, the kind of problems encountered in a given text being,

normally, characteristic of a particular *text -type* or *genre* (Neubert,1996:91). Another important insight for translation purposes also stated by Neubert is that” translation in the real world always has to do with whole texts, the solution of individual translation problems being determined by the global function of the target text in relation to the source text.” (ibid.) These two aspects of what we call *textual translation* are highly relevant for the practical translator who will choose his strategies on the basis of an assessment of the global text function. Translators are encouraged to investigate the correspondences beyond the sentence level and to analyze whole texts instead of individual words and phrases. The most important purpose of translation is to recapture the message of a source text with the help of the target text. This overall purpose will determine the means of rendering the grammatical structuring, the lexical coding, the semantic load and the stylistic shading of the translation. Translations, like texts, are *global systems* that exhibit an internal structure. Consequently, the translator needs to analyze the internal structure of the source text in order to create a matching target text. But in order to achieve a target text that is functional equivalent to the source text, it is also necessary to put the two texts into a wider context because sometimes the translator cannot infer all the information he needs from the text to be translated. Translating a text implies translating a number of particular text class or genre, and the translator needs to take into account the distinctive features of that text-class. The result is generic translation which involves paying attention to grammatical, lexical and stylistic markers characteristic of an entire class of texts forming a part of a text world.

This paper aimed to introduce some theoretical concepts such as *text, discourse, text - type, textual genre* and to analyze the relationships between them in order to explain the way in which the *textual typology* influences the process of translation. When dealing with texts in translation we have to choose our translation strategies according to the situational context and to take into account the type, the function and the intention of the source text. Translating the words and structures correctly does not guarantee an adequate text. It is the textual profile that has to be translated in order to get the global text meaning or what we call ‘the meaning in translation’.

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