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TEXT TYPOLOGY AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE IN TRANSLATION

Introduction

Translation is a very broad, complex and multi-faceted phenomenon, encompassing much more factors than it seems at first glance. It is not just copying the words from the original work while changing the language, but it consists of a careful selection of appropriate phrases and expressions, combining them together in a skillful way while taking into consideration numerous aspects, one of them being the text type.

The purpose of this article is, therefore, to present various text typologies and text types, specify their implications for translators and determine the role of the correct recognition of text type in producing a successful translation. This will be done on the assumption that a text type is one of the basic factors that allow the translator to recognise the function and purpose of the text as well as the author's intention. Thus, depending on the nature of these, the translator will inevitably resort to different techniques and strategies in order to successfully render the source text. Therefore, identifying the text type also helps the translator to select the appropriate translation strategy.

Text, discourse and genre

In order to discuss the notion of text typology, it is necessary to differentiate between three other terms which are incorporated into its definition, namely: *text*, *discourse* and *genre*. According to Tomaszewicz (2006:112), *text typology* (Polish: *typologia tekstów*) is understood as *a certain system of classifying texts on the basis of the field they belong to, their genre and purpose as well as the type of discourse* (translation mine).

The notion of *text* may be defined from various points of view. It may be perceived, for instance, as an organised whole that meets seven standards of

textuality, that is: cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality and intertextuality (Beaugrande, Dressler 1990:58); as an orderly sequence of linguistic elements which can altogether perform a communicative function (Dobrzyńska 1993:287); as a basic unit of linguistic communication (Gajda 1992:9); as an integrated whole of semiotic character, having a beginning and an end, and conveying information that is complete from the sender's point of view (Mayenowa 1976:291-296).

Tomaszkiewicz (2006:96) defines *text* as *a linguistic object of various length, that creates a semantic whole* (translation mine). As Dąbska-Prokop (2000:230) points out, the very definition of text is determined by whether the utterance or communicative act is taken as a point of reference. In the former case, *text* is understood as a sequence of sentences which form a cohesive whole. Cohesion is achieved by means of connectors, specific word order, repetitions, etc., and is the basic criterion of textuality, that is the fact that a given series of sentences can be called a *text*. However, as Dąbska-Prokop (2000:230) observes, linguistic ways of expressing cohesion constitute only a part of cohesive mechanisms. This is because a *text* is more than only a semantic-syntactic structure. It has got a sender and an addressee as well as certain aims to fulfil.

Text may also be defined as *a certain communicative action of a complex structure that functions in a specific semantic space and is to fulfil specific functions, for instance: informative, esthetic, pragmatic function, etc.* (Dąbska-Prokop 2000:230, translation mine). It is this function that determines the text's characteristic features. Therefore, according to this definition, a text is perceived not only as a result of a certain effort of the sender, but also, and above all, as a product that is able to fulfil its communicative function in the process of the appropriate interpretation by a reader.

As regards the notion of *discourse*, it is *a sequence of linguistic signs that are organised according to the rules of a given language and representing what the sender wishes to communicate to the addressee* (Tomaszkiewicz 2006:35, translation mine). Discourse entails a certain interaction between two participants in the communicative act (the sender and the recipient) under specific spatial and temporal circumstances and with a certain purpose. An oral discourse necessitates the (visual and auditory) co-presence of the sender and the addressee. In the case of written discourse the production and reception acts take place in different spatial and temporal situations.

The term *discourse* can also be understood as a certain linguistic activity undertaken by the language users in a particular context (Maingueneau 1996:28); as a sequence of actions whose form is determined by who says what to whom, in what situation and with what purpose (Grabias 1997:264-265); or as a certain

norm and strategy in the process of constructing a text and utterance which is based on specific social and cultural patterns that comprise this norm (Labocha 1996:51).

Therefore, the notion of *discourse* seems to be broader than the term *text* since the latter is understood as a linguistic whole, expressed orally or in writing, which does not depend on the context, whereas *discourse* is related to a specific pragmatic situation, thus comprising both text and context (Maingueneau 1996:83). However, as Dambaska-Prokop notices (2000:64), when *text* is perceived as a product of a certain process which has got its own structure, then *discourse* is a dynamic term and refers to an individual process of text production and comprehension, a text functioning in a certain pragmatic situation. *Discourse* is also a superordinate term for various *text types*. However, if *text* is understood as a record of some communicative event determined by the author's intention and sociocultural conditions in which it is produced, then this *text* is identified with *discourse*.

One of the most significant aspects for translation theory is that *discourse*, understood as a "text in context", functions in a certain pragmatic situation. Therefore, while undertaking discourse analysis in translation process, the translator needs to determine the conditions of linguistic communication, the roles of the participants in the communication as well as the ways in which the participants manifest their presence.

As regards the last of the three notions, namely *genre*, it is described by Trosborg (1997:6) as *text category readily distinguished by mature speakers of a language (...)* According to Miller (1985:151), *a rhetorically sound definition of genre must be centred not on the substance or form of the discourse but on the action it is used to accomplish*. Genre can be recognised as a system for achieving social purposes by verbal means. Therefore, for instance guidebooks, poems, business letters, newspaper articles can be referred to as *genres* because they are used in a particular situation for a particular purpose.

The notion of *genre* refers to completed texts. However, communicative function and text type, which constitute text properties, cut across genres. Hence, informative texts include newspaper reports, textbooks, TV news, etc., argumentative texts - debates, newspaper articles, political speeches, etc. (Trosborg 1997:12). Texts which are linguistically distinct within a genre may represent different text types, whereas linguistically similar texts belonging to different genres may represent a single text type. Therefore, prior to discussing text typology and its role in translation, it is worth explaining what a *text type* actually is.

Text types

According to Neubert (1985:125), text types are *socially effective, efficient, and appropriate moulds into which the linguistic material available in the system of a language is recast* (Neubert 1985, cited after Sager 1997:31).

Sager (1997:30) remarks that text types developed as patterns of messages for certain communicative situations. When writing a specific message, a person first of all thinks about the text type that would be appropriate for the given occasion as well as for the content of the message, and only then formulates the message itself. Repetitions of messages in certain circumstances have created particular expectations and conventions of what is appropriate for the given occasion. However, the notion of a *text type* is more complex than that. Whereas the majority of people associate a text type with a certain content, for instance film review, police report, recipe, it frequently happens that the same content may permit a variety of text types.

Sager (1997:31) concludes that text types have evolved from conventionalised communicative situations. As a result of this and since they arise from common relationships between the author and the reader, they are capable of conveying messages unambiguously. Their other characteristic features are topic and mode of expression.

According to the framework associated with Aristotle and Bühler, a text can be classified into a particular type according to which of the four components in the communication process receives the primary focus: speaker, listener, thing referred to or the linguistic material (Trosborg 1997:13). If the main focus is on the speaker (sender), the text will be expressive; if on the listener (receiver), it will be persuasive; if on the linguistic code, it will be literary; and if the aim is to represent the realities of the world, it will be referential.

A particular text type determines the reader's reaction to a message. The reader recognises the text type through the situation and the features of the text's composition. The text type also informs them about the author and his/her intention. Readers' responses to a text may be twofold. They are either directly addressed by the author of the text and hence they must receive the text in relation to their own individual background. However, if they are not regarded as personal messages, the text becomes only an item of writing which may be re-used by a different author and a different reader (Sager 1997:32).

However, as pointed out by Trosborg (1997:14), real texts usually display features of more than one type, thus being multifunctional. Therefore, text typology needs to account for this diversity (Hatim and Mason 1990:138). In many cases one of the aims is the dominant one and the other is a means, for instance information included in the advertisement in order to further the persuasion.

Hatim and Mason (1990:140), therefore, defined *text types* as *a conceptual framework which enables us to classify texts in terms of communicative intentions serving an overall rhetorical purpose*. For translation purposes they adopted Werlich's (1976) typology which comprises five text types: description, narration, exposition, argumentation and instruction, with the latter category being divided into two classes: instruction with option (advertisements, manuals, etc.) and instruction without option (legislative texts, contracts). This typology is based on cognitive properties of text types: differentiation and interrelation

of perceptions in space (description), differentiation and interrelation of perception in time (narration), comprehension of general concepts by analysis and/or synthesis (exposition), evaluation of relations between the concepts by extracting similarities and contrasts (argumentation), planning of future behaviour (instruction) (Trosborg 1997:15-16).

However, as Trosborg (1997:16) points out, most discourse employs multiple views of reality, therefore encompassing more than only one type. She observes that pure narration, description, exposition and argumentation rarely occur. Therefore, a certain genre may employ several text types (also referred to as modes of presentation), but usually one of them is identified as the dominant type. Hence, she suggests that a two-level typology of text types is needed: text type at a macro level, that is the dominant function of a text type exhibited in or underlying a text, and microlevel text types that result from the process of textualisation determined by the producer's strategy. For instance, an argumentative text type may be realised by means of narration, instructions - by description, etc. However, a dominant text type is usually recognisable. Hatim and Mason (1990:146-148) account for the existence of blends of various text types, which they refer to as "hybridisation", emphasising the need for translators to be aware of this phenomenon.

On the other hand, according to Kussmaul (1997:69), the notion of *text type* is ambiguous as it can refer both to the idea of *Texttyp* within which Reiss (1971) distinguished several types (informative, expressive, appellative), and to what is called in German *Textsorte*, referring, for instance, to manuals, business letters, weather reports, contracts, etc.

However, similarly as Sager (1997), also Kussmaul (1997) agrees that there is a direct relationship between situation and text type. Kussmaul refers to the model of situational dimension proposed by Crystal and Davy (1969) in which the following dimensions have been distinguished: *individuality, dialect, time, medium, participation, province, status, modality* and *singularity*. All these dimensions affect the way a given text is written or spoken. This model has been applied to translation by House (1977). As regards the *medium*, it could be either speech or writing; with *participation*, it might be a dialogue or a monologue, the *status* may be for instance equal-to-equal, higher-to-lower; whereas *province* is a particular field that the text is related to. The change made to any of these dimensions results in another text type.

In his consideration about the text types, Sager (1997:28) provides the distinction between a primary and secondary reader saying that this distinction is of particular importance for translation since it is related to the difference between message and text. He defines the primary reader as *the person a writer has in mind*

when producing a message (ibidem). Therefore, all other readers, that is those not included in the writer's initial range of addressees, are secondary readers. Communication between the author and the addressee is most effective when the writer's presuppositions concerning the reader's expectations match the reader's assumptions regarding the writer's intention. However, most translation recipients are secondary readers and they become primary readers only if the authors address them directly and this address is retained by the translator. Therefore, for secondary readers the writer's influence on the success of the communication decreases while the translator's role grows in importance because it is now his/her task to interpret and match both the readers' expectations and the author's intention.

As regards the primary and secondary readership, the translators perform both these functions, adopting one or the other according to the stage of the translation process. When translators read the text in order to determine and comprehend its content and the author's intended message, they are primary readers. However, when translating, they are both the writers and the initial recipients of the target texts, hence they adopt the role of secondary readers.

Because the correct identification of a text type helps the translator to specify the text's function, the author's intention and the reader's expectations, it is worth looking at some of the ways of classifying text types, i.e. text typologies.

Text typologies

As Kozłowska (2007:26) notices, despite the fact that text typology is a very significant issue for a translator, it is often neglected by specialist literature concerned with translation studies. This might be the case because of the existence of multiple text typologies based on various criteria as well as the fact that a text rarely displays features of only one particular type. There have also been some doubts as to the feasibility of classifying texts and its usefulness for practising translators (Hatim and Munday 2004:285).

Because the text is subject of research for many different fields of study, for instance literature, linguistics or translation studies, there are various criteria for text typologies. According to Kozłowska (2007:25), there are two major approaches to the issue of text typology: general one (based on general criteria) and translational one (based on the translation-oriented criteria).

Tezaurus terminologii translatorskiej edited by Lukszyn (1993:326-334) contains forty-two entries with the notion "text". After removing the synonymous ones, there are roughly twenty-five types of texts, for instance: operative text, artistic text, expressive text, informative text, complex text, literary text, technical text, scientific text, nonliterary text, poetic text, popular science text, journalistic text, official text. It seems that such a division substantially complicates the issue of text typology.

Different scholars suggest various typologies on the basis of certain selected criteria. For instance, in the Polish edition of the French dictionary *Terminologie de la traduction* edited by Delisle (1999) – *Terminologia Tlumaczenia*, texts can be divided into various categories, depending on particular criteria. According to the field of study they refer to, there are for instance: biblical texts, legal texts, journalistic texts, scientific texts, literary texts. Texts may be also divided according to their communicative aims (for instance persuading, informing, arguing, etc.) or according to the type of discourse (narrative texts, descriptive texts, dialogic texts).

However, this is not the only available typology. Maingueneau (1996:85) mentions three kinds of text typologies: based on the situation in which the text is uttered (that is the relationship between the participants in the communicative act and the time and place of its utterance); communicative typologies (function-oriented); and typologies that take into consideration the social sphere the text is related to (for instance: school, family, etc).

Sager (1997:32) distinguishes between the texts that convey the author's intentions (here the translator's task is to, first of all, render the author's thoughts) and texts whose main function is to meet the recipients' expectations (the translator adjusts the translation to the target language addressee).

For Delisle (1993:47, after Kozłowska 2007:25), the assumed criteria used in text typology are: the field of study the text is related to; the character of the text; and the purpose of the text. On their basis he differentiated between: a) literary, biblical and legal texts; b) reports, prefaces, school books, tourist booklets, novels and short stories; c) descriptive, narrative and argumentative texts.

However, the text typology most widely used in translation theory is the one proposed by Reiss (1976: 10) on the basis of the Karl Bühler's concept of language functions. This typology divides texts into: *informative (informative Texttyp - inhaltsbetont)* - information-oriented texts where the content is of paramount importance, the main task for a translator of such a text is to correctly convey all the facts (for instance: instruction manual, report, essay, leaflet); *expressive (expressive Texttyp - formbetont)* - recipient-oriented texts where the translator needs to re-create the form (novel, short story, poetry, drama, biography); *operative (operative Texttyp - appelbetont)* - texts oriented towards certain values and 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 (advertisement, satire). Therefore, these three types of text are distinguished one from the other by means of such factors as the intention (also referred to as "rhetorical purpose") of the text's producer and the function that the text is supposed to serve (Hatim and Munday 2004:281).

The text typology suggested by Reiss was originally intended as a set of guidelines for practising translators. It was also used to establish a correlation

between text type and translation method as it has been claimed that the type of text corresponds to the demands made on the translator. It has also been suggested that the main function of the source text needs to be preserved in the translation. Therefore, in the case of informative texts, the translators should first of all aim at achieving semantic equivalence and only then focus on connotative meanings and esthetic values (Hatim and Munday 2004:284). As regards expressive texts, the translators should preserve esthetic effect as well as important elements of semantic content, whereas in operative texts, the translator needs to successfully render the extra-linguistic effect the text is supposed to produce (for instance persuasiveness), which is usually achieved at the expense of both form and content (ibidem). Therefore, a translation can be deemed successful if: in an informative text it provides direct and full access to the conceptual content of the source language text; in an expressive text it transmits a direct impression of the artistic form of the conceptual content; in an operative text it produces a text from which it will directly elicit the desired response (Reiss 1989:106). However, Reiss also points out that a translator needs to bear in mind that there are also compound types in which the three communicative functions mentioned (transmission of information, creatively expressed content and impulses to action) are all present like for instance in a didactic poem or satirical novel (ibidem). The translator's task is therefore to identify the predominant function and choose the translation strategy accordingly. For instance, metaphors in predominantly expressive texts should be rendered metaphorically, whereas in predominantly informative texts they may be modified or even omitted altogether (Reiss, 1971:62, after Hatim and Munday 2004:73-74). As all texts are a sort of hybrid, this predominance of a certain rhetorical purpose in a specific text plays a crucial role in assessing the text type "identity" (Hatim and Munday 2004:74).

Conclusion

There has been a long debate within the field of translation studies about whether it is possible to classify texts and whether such a classification is useful for practising translators. As Hatim and Munday (2004:285) remark, there are two major problems related to the kind of text typologies currently available. First of all, the very notion of *text type* is so broad that it can comprise a large number of text-form variants. For instance, texts as varied as legal acts, technical instructions, sermons, political speeches and advertisements can all be included in the text type "instruction" (Zydatiss 1983). The second substantial difficulty related to text typologies is the issue of hybridisation, that is the fact that a certain text often includes several different types.

Nevertheless, text typologies and their role in identifying the text purpose and function as well as the author's intention are still perceived as valuable tools for translators, enabling them to establish the appropriate hierarchy of equivalence levels and choose such strategies that would best serve to preserve the given purpose, function and intention.

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