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Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 212 (2015) 230 – 236

Procedia
Social and Behavioral Sciences

MULTIMODAL COMMUNICATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY: PROFESSIONAL AND ACADEMIC CHALLENGES. 33rd Conference of the Spanish Association of Applied Linguistics (AESLA), XXXIII AESLA CONFERENCE, 16-18 April 2015, Madrid, Spain

Contrastive Multimodal Analysis of two Spanish translations of a picture book

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Abstract

This paper focuses on two Spanish translations of a Children's book titled *The story of Ferdinand* (1935) written by Munro Leaf and illustrated by Robert Lawson. The comparison of this specific narrative type is made between two translations carried by two different translators, published on different continents and by different publishing houses and whose illustrations were made by two different authors. Consequently, we will check how the imagery and the text of each Spanish edition satisfy some specific communication needs (Moya and Pinar, 2007, p. 22) that determine the reader's reception of a text in a target culture.

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Peer-review under responsibility of the Scientific Committee of the XXXIII AESLA CONFERENCE

Keywords: Translation, picture book, multimodal analysis, imagery, text reception.

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1. Picture books

Picture books are books in which the concept of reading, initially related with the interpretation of linguistic signs, has expanded to include the decoding of images. This reading experience consists of deciphering the verbal and the iconic codes so that the full interpretation of the book does not only rely in reading the text but also in “reading pictures” and decoding the interaction between both.

Nonetheless an illustrated book is not merely a work with illustrations. Its literary capabilities may transmit more than a message. The mixture of text and images can even evoke sensory perceptions. Nonetheless, illustrated or picture books must not be confused with albums (Díaz Armas, 2008, p. 44). The basic difference between the album and the illustrated book is that the former’s basis is image and the latter’s basis is text. Some extreme examples of albums have dispensed with linguistic signs.

Most importantly, one key-characterizing feature of actual children’s books is its didactic purpose. Since late 18th century, didactic and moralizing trends have taken over children and young literature so works that do not belong to this current are very rare nowadays (Cerrillo and Sánchez, 2006, p. 9). What is more, the special features of children’s books turn them into a sort of genre that, at first sight and because its intended readership, it shall deal with a range of topics and approach them accordingly. Nonetheless, some authors use these books to convey messages that exceed the borders of young audiences and aspire to reach an adult reader defending the existence of a double-addressee (child/adult).

1.1. *Multimodality in picture books*

From the ground-breaking publication of Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996), it is commonly accepted that multimodality has an essential say in meaning-construction processes of text analysis. Regarding picture books, it is true up to point that, nowadays, it is not feasible to interpret the sense of a text bearing only in mind its linguistic features. In fact, as it is argued, the main feature of picture books is that are based on an “independent narrative mode” (Agosto, 1999, p. 26) between text and illustration, none of its parts can be taken in isolation for decoding the message. The reading experience of this particular genre calls for consideration of the joint produce of both narrative modes. Images help to complement and support the text by expanding, enlarging or completing it. Thus, a synergistic relationship is constructed between both modes of expression whose final effect does not only depend on the linkage of text and picture but also on the interplay of both elements (Sipe, 1998, p. 98). All these elements together present the reader a verbal and non-verbal offering that he will decode according to his socio-cultural coordinates making his reading experience unique. In the case of translations of picture books, the influence of meaning distribution amongst the various semiotic resources as well as the influence that these paratextual apparatus exert on the translated linguistic code that contain is even more relevant.

Here, based on the contrastive multimodal analysis of a text (two translations) and the illustrated parts (made by two illustrators), essential elements in meaning construction (Ventola and Moya, 2009), we will unveil the expected interpretation of each edition, conditioned by the intention of the author of the text, that of the author of the pictures and the interplay generated between them; and, secondly, by the translator choices.

1.2. *Two multimodal versions of The story of Ferdinand*

In this picture book the author makes a metaphorical use of Spanish traditional game, bullfighting, characterized by its violence and cruelty, to show his opposite viewpoint through the eyes of a bull. While the rest of the bulls in the meadow are eager to boast of their braveness butting heads and stamping fiercely, Ferdinand, prefers to sniff the scent of the flowers lying under his favorite oak tree. Accidentally chosen for the bullring, his non-belligerent performance disappointed everyone. The character takes on a pacifist and pro-environmental stance although with varying nuances depending on the edition.

This paper compares two Spanish translations of *The story of Ferdinand* by Munro Leaf (1935). One was made in New York (United States, 1994) by Pura Belpré and with new illustrations by Werner Klemke (hereinafter Edition

A) for Viking Press. And the other translation was made in Salamanca (Spain, 1962) by Jacqueline Ruzafa for Lóquez publishing house, which used the original illustrations by Robert Lawson (hereinafter Edition B).

As we will check, these two versions (translation) of the same original, whose publication dates are more than 30 years apart, whose publication places are separated by an ocean, whose lengths vary (Edition A, 34 pages; Edition B, 43 pages), whose imagery differ and whose translations provide different nuances, although they teach the same lesson, consequently, they convey different (if not opposite) nuances in the message.

1.3. Methodology

To that aim, along with the linguistic offerings of both versions, all the additional elements that provide any information on the text and that present, comment, etc. the text, so contributing to shape the reader's reception of the text. Talking about picture books, comprehending the supplementary devices is paramount to fully grasp the meaning embedded into the work. Amongst the full range of possibilities that these resources provide, this study focuses on some of the most prominent features of the illustrations that came up in versions A and B and, besides, compares the two translations with each other and with their accompanying elements.

Special attention is paid to the following features: this:

- Typographical format of letters
- The use of a color palette or black and white
- The portrayal of characters
- The framing of pictures
- The shots and single or double-paged images

All these components taken together along with their translation maintain interplay and perform a function (Díaz Armas, 2008) that serves a specific purpose.

For the analysis of the possible interactions between words and images, Nikolajeva and Scott's (2000) model is applied. They identified five interactional types:

- Symmetrical
- Enhancing
- Complementary
- Counterpointing
- Contradictory

Symmetry interaction takes place when imagery and wording tell the same story duplicating the same information in their corresponding communication mode (Nikolajeva and Scott, 2000, p. 225). *Enhancing* happens when imagery expands the meaning of words or the other way round so providing a more holistic view (Nikolajeva and Scott, 2000, p. 225). *Complementary* interaction generates a dynamics of mutual cooperation (Nikolajeva and Scott, 2000, p. 225-226). *Counterpointing* dynamics can occur when wording and imagery join forces to express meanings that go further their individual capabilities. (Nikolajeva and Scott, 2000, p. 226). *Contradictory* interaction happens when words and images appear to be reciprocally opposed. (Nikolajeva and Scott, 2000, p. 225)

1.4. Analysis of some examples of multimodal interaction between versions

Taking equivalent drawings from both versions, two couplings have been shortlisted to illustrate the different message conveyed by each version.





Figures 1 and 2. Representation of the infant bull (Edition A and Edition B).

The color variety in Edition A (Figure 1) is limited to black and white whereas Edition B (Figure 2) employs a wider range including blue, yellow and green. Inevitably the chromatic palette of Edition A elicits a duller representation of the characters than in the more colorful edition B. Both editions have eliminated frames to remove the visual barriers between reader and story and so narrow the distance between them (Nikolajeva and Scott, 2001, p. 62). Edition A (Figure 1 and 3) prefers using long shots to profile the character in recognizable settings. On the other hand, close-ups are highly abundant in edition B (Figures 2 and 4) what provides decontextualized sceneries. These features stress in Edition A the sense of belonging to a society and to group and contrarily, in Edition B, the bull's close-ups underline the idea of separation from his peers and the individualization of the main character.



Figures 3 and 4. The men who will eventually choose the bull for the ring (Edition A and Edition B)

Wearing hats, five men from the city came to pick the bull. These men, forming a dull group in black and white and easily distinguishable by their hats in edition A (figure 17) are in harsh contrast with the individualized colorful pictures of edition B, which devotes a full page to each one, so highlighting the uniqueness of the characters.

In addition to this iconic reading, the linguistic material plays a role in the reader's reception. The translation in Edition A is a more literal to the original and employs a great deal of cultured expressions (examples 1, 6, 23, 24, 34, etc.) than edition B. On the other hand, these learned words contrast with the fact that, on some occasions, this version has several inaccuracies. Instances of morphological calques are found. Some have to do with in the usage of the relative pronoun "*quien*" that in Spanish takes no antecedent (examples 15, 35). Others are caused by an incorrect use of Past Simple in the main clause that requires a compound tense (pluperfect preterit) in the subordinate clause (example 10). On the other hand, the translation of edition B exhibits a deeper knowledge of Spanish expressions and collocations (example 4) and lexical choices closer to the young reader (examples 8, 23, 29, 34, etc.).

In sum, the writer's intention is modulated by the translation – picture interplay of each edition in the collaborative meaning construction. Although in both editions this pacifist allegory conveys an environmentally friendly message trying to teach a lesson, there are nuances on the conveyance.

Edition A color choice builds a gloomier bull in contrast with the more optimistic attitude embedded in the colorful portrayal of the main character in Edition B. General shots in A stress the gregariousness of the bull, the sense of belonging to a herd whereas the closer-shots of B underline the individuality of the main part. The use of color and the more jovial expressions used to portray the character in B contribute to establish an affective bond with the young reader.

Aloof in A, merry in B; negative and losing feeling in A, positive and winning message in B. The non-verbal message is complemented by a more literal translation in A, sticking to the original text, using learned expressions; edition B translation employs more Spanish idiomatic constructions, set phrases and a simpler lexis, what naturalizes the message to the young native speaker.

Appendix A.

Table 1. Translation examples from versions A and B.

N	Original text	Translation A	Translation B
1	<i>Once upon a time</i>	<i>Había una vez</i>	<i>Vivía una vez</i>
2	<i>A little bull</i>	<i>Un torito</i>	<i>Un toro joven</i>
3	<i>And his name</i>	<i>Que se llamaba</i>	<i>Llamado</i>
4	<i>Would run and jump</i>	<i>brincaban</i>	<i>Se pasaban el día corriendo y saltando</i>
5	<i>But not Ferdinand</i>	<i>Pero Ferdinando no (3 times)</i>	<i>Ferdinando no (twice)</i>
6	<i>To sit quietly</i>	<i>Sentarse en simple quietud (4 times)</i>	<i>Estar tranquilamente sentado (3 times)</i>
7	<i>Cork tree</i>	<i>Alcornoque (4 times)</i>	<i>Encina (4 times)</i>
8	<i>Pasture</i>	<i>pradera (twice)</i>	<i>Campo (twice)</i>
9	<i>His mother, who was a cow,</i>	<i>su madre, quien era una vaca</i>	<i>Su madre, que era una vaca</i>

10	<i>She was afraid that he would feel lonesome</i>	<i>temía que estaba triste tan solo</i>	<i>Temía que pudiera sentirse aislado</i>
11	<i>Little bulls</i>	<i>Toritos</i>	<i>Toros jóvenes</i>
12	<i>His mother saw</i>	<i>se dio cuenta</i>	<i>Se daba cuenta</i>
13	<i>An understanding mother</i>	<i>madre entendida</i>	<i>Madre comprensiva</i>
14	<i>She let him just sit there</i>	<i>le dejó sentado</i>	<i>Le dejaba hacer lo que él quería</i>
15	<i>Other bulls who had grown up with</i>	<i>toros quienes</i>	<i>Toros, con los que</i>
16	<i>Funny</i>	<i>graciosos</i>	<i>Cómicos</i>
17	<i>And he didn't care</i>	<i>y no le importaba</i>	<i>Aunque no le importaba</i>
18	<i>Nice cool grass</i>	<i>hierba tierna y fresca</i>	<i>Hierba fresca</i>
19	<i>Bumble bee</i>	<i>abejarrón</i>	<i>Abeja</i>
20	<i>Well, if you are a bumble bee and a bull sat on you, what would you do?</i>	<i>Pues bien, si tú fueras un abejarrón y un toro se te sentara encima, ¿qué harías?</i>	<i>¿Qué se hace cuando uno es una abeja y un toro se sienta encima?</i>
21	<i>Wow! Did it hurt!</i>	<i>¡Caramba!, ¡que dolor!</i>	<i>¡Ay!</i>
22	<i>Puffing</i>	<i>resollando</i>	<i>Bramando</i>
23	<i>Butting</i>	<i>topeteando</i>	<i>Dando cornadas</i>
24	<i>With joy</i>	<i>Júbilo</i>	<i>Alegría</i>
25	<i>He was the largest and fiercest bull of all</i>		<i>Cornúpeta</i>
26	<i>Just the one for the</i>	<i>Exactamente el único</i>	<i>Precisamente lo que necesitaban</i>
27	<i>In a cart</i>	<i>En una carreta</i>	<i>En un carro</i>
28	<i>Flags were flying, bands were playing...</i>	<i>Las banderas flotaban, tocaban las bandas</i>	<i>Las banderas ondeaban, sonaba la música</i>
29	<i>The lovely ladies had flowers in their hair</i>	<i>bellas señoras (twice) y señoritas llevaban flores en el cabello</i>	<i>chicas guapas (twice) llevaban flores en el pelo</i>
30	<i>parade</i>	<i>procesión</i>	<i>desfile</i>
31	<i>First came</i>	<i>Primero vinieron</i>	<i>Primero iban</i>
32	<i>Long sharp pins</i>	<i>largos y agudos alfileres</i>	<i>palos de agudas puntas</i>
33	<i>Skinny horses</i>	<i>caballos flacos</i>	<i>jamelgos</i>

34	<i>Make him madder</i>	<i>enfurecerle (twice)</i>	<i>Ponerlo más furioso (twice)</i>
35		<i>el matador , quien era</i>	
36	<i>ladies</i>	<i>señoras y señoritas</i>	<i>damas</i>
37	<i>Red cape</i>	<i>capa roja</i>	<i>trapo rojo</i>

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