

TRANSLATION AS TEXT TRANSFER – PRAGMATIC IMPLICATIONS

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ABSTRACT: The aim of this paper is to show how different the production of a translated text is from the one of other texts produced under the constraints of a single context, especially at the pragmatic level. In the textualizing process of translation, the translator is bound to manage the pragmatic divergencies between both source and target context, i.e., he must eventually recreate textuality in all its dimensions anew. In order to achieve an adequate effect with his translated text, high demands are set in the translator's textual competence. That is why the latter should integrate every translator's training course.

KEYWORDS: Translation; text transfer; pragmatic problems; textuality; textual competence.

1. Introduction

In the process of translating a text from a given source language into a target language, several layers of problematic areas deserve to be taken into account by the translator, if the task is to be accomplished in a successful way. Bearing in mind that the pragmatic dimension of a text is a level in which several parameters interact so as to engender a specific effect on its readers, then a translator will have to examine the source text closely in order to evaluate how far the textual organization reflects the communicative situation the text is embedded into in order to recreate a similar one in the target context.

From a translational point of view, pragmatics operates in two different phases of the translation task: in the processing of the source text and also at the reverbalization of the target text. In both moments a great awareness of the pragmatically relevant differences is needed so as to achieve an adequate translation that can fulfil its communicative role in the target culture. As a mediator, the translator functions as text receptor in the first place by trying to understand and capture the message of the source text. During this hermeneutic phase, the translator is bound to the source text pragmatics that he tries to decode appropriately. However, when coming to the next stage, that of the reverbalization, he realizes that a mere transfer of the source text

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pragmatics is not only impossible but also undesirable, if the translation is supposed to be used as a communicative tool in the target context.

Besides, a translation asks for a special pragmatic treatment at two different levels: at the contextual level, since source and target linguistic and cultural contexts may diverge significantly and the target reader may not be aware of such discrepancies (in fact, he must not be aware of them and it is a bad sign if he does) and particularly at the communicative level, as more information can be given than what is explicitly said in the source text. Also the degree of explicitness vs. implicitness varies considerably from context to context and language to language. Contextual distance involves not only cultural but also sociocultural dimensions which have to be reappreciated when transferred into a new environment. Even at a more objective level, there may be considerable differences when expressing relative distance,¹ in which social aspects, as well as familiarity or non-familiarity and also inclusiveness or exclusiveness, ironic use and impersonality can be expressed in a language and lacking in another.

Also linguistic distance is abundantly exemplified as a major source of translation problems. What is considered relevant in a language, and as such is obligatory expressed, may be neglected in another language (consider, for instance, the position of an object – whether it is lying, standing or hanging – that is compulsory in English and German, but not necessarily so in Portuguese).

The amount of shared contextual meaning between senders of the source text and those of the target text may be very reduced, as a result of the a small overlap between both communicative contexts, and as a consequence the hermeneutic process may be hardened for the target reader if the translator does not intervene. In such cases, the translator plays a crucial role in the development of compensation strategies that help the target reader overcome his shortcomings in understanding the translated text. Also the issue of communicative distance between source text producer and target translation readers demands a few thoughts, as the translator has to ponder how to deal with presuppositions, more often than not having to compensate some gaps target readers can not be aware of. Thus, organizing the translated text along the lines of Grice's cooperative principle sets high standards of pragmatic management on the part of the translator that need to be conscientiously trained.

2. Text and text transfer

Let us first of all mention some basic assumptions on the understanding of the complex item we know as text. The most adequate concept of text that best suits the translational task follows the communicative model, it is there-

¹ In the case of personal distance, for example, the social deixis varies among the only form 'you' in English when compared with the opposition 'du / Sie' in German and the range of possibilities in Portuguese 'tu/ o senhor/ a senhora/ você / V.^a Ex.^a'.

fore the text in function that interests us here in which pragmatic aspects determine syntactic and semantic options. Intertwined with the pragmatic dimension of the text, the cognitive basis of the textual structure must also be considered, as it guides both text understanding and text production and allows the training of several aspects of the translation competence, such as the activation of different types of knowledge and the functioning of memory (Bell 1991).

Translations are characterized by being specific textual manifestations that entail particular treatment by the translator. The movement a translated text undergoes (Pym 1992) – from the source to the target language, culture and audience with different background knowledge, expectations and communicative needs – comprises syntactic, semantic and pragmatic restraints. In fact, the transfer that is operated when a text gets translated is of a particular kind. First of all, the source text goes on belonging to the source text world, it does not give up its existence there. But on the other hand, a translated text is not a free text production as any other text, it is rather a “text induced text production” (Neubert/Shreve 1992) and as such bound to certain constraints prevailing in the target context. Such constraints demand from the translator a great amount of intervention in the sense of managing the pragmatic potential of the source text and adapting it to the target context according to the new circumstances of text reception and use, target audience and other relevant situational factors.

In translation, the displacement operated in a text that is to be transferred into a new linguistic and cultural context implies an exchange value (Pym 1992) that asks for certain adjustments, similar to those that take place when exchanging money for different currencies. Thus, a transaction takes place that needs to be appropriately accounted for. Perhaps the designation of communicative value coined by the Leipzig communicative approach to translation is a clearer counterpart of the exchange image, as it conveys both the textual and the extratextual dimensions of what is implied in the source text (in terms of symbols, cultural values, connotations, prejudices, taboos).

3. Text type, text genre

Prior to any decision at the text level, that is, at sentence sequence level, the translator should pay considerable attention to the guidelines provided by specifications of categories in the realm of different text worlds – namely text types and text genres.²

² In English, it is not usual to distinguish between several subdivisions of text classes as it is in German, with the designations *Texttyp*, *Textsorte*, *Textgattung*, *Textart* referring to different specifications of textual objects. In English all these different text classes are usually subsumed under the general heading ‘text type’, which has the disadvantage of not differentiating enough for certain purposes. As far as translation is concerned, it is advisable to apply a finer filter to the textual configurations as they may vary considerably from culture to culture.

One might argue that the present trend of growing standardization and normalization in textuality would create situations of text production that could do without a subcategorization of text types and genres. Indeed, the enlarged use of the computer, for instance, has brought about some uniformization in the textual configuration (no indentation, for instance, in paragraph formatting). However, the translator must once again be aware of the discrepancies that arise between the textualizing patterns in each text world.

In the context of a translators' training course, the awareness of text types and genres imposes itself, as it represents a set of relevant tools that provide hints about content and situational dimensions almost immediately:

Most categorizations of text types take the subject matter dealt with in the text as their main criterion for subdivision: technical and scientific texts vs. literary texts vs. pragmatic texts.³ To my knowledge, there is one exception to this rule. Albrecht Neubert (1968) settles an innovation by distinguishing four text types according to pragmatic criteria and having the translation task in mind:

- (1) source and target texts with similar goals and aiming at the needs of both source and target receptors (technical and scientific texts);
- (2) source text embedded in the source context (local press, legal texts);
- (3) texts potentially addressed to everyone (literary texts);
- (4) texts produced exclusively to be translated in a specific context (political propaganda to be delivered abroad).

Although this typology does not intend to be an exhaustive one and it is a dated one,⁴ it could eventually be useful when matched with content criteria and refined with further specifications, such as target audience background knowledge, which could serve as guidelines for the translator's decisions.

Belonging to a certain text type entails a set of features that can regulate both the interpretation of the source text and the production of the target text. These features orientate the readers' expectations as well as the degree of error acceptance against grammatical, semantic, stylistic and pragmatic norms.⁵

4. Textuality

Different approaches to the concept of textuality can be detected in the last forty years. Initially, in the sixties and early seventies, textuality was either confined to a grammatical perspective based on syntactical sequence and cohesion or rather a semantic view which drew on informativity and coherence. Later on, in the eighties and nineties, such features as intentiona-

³ See Jumpelt (1961), among others.

⁴ Neubert designed this typology in the context of the former German Democratic Republic that had a very intensive political programme that expanded itself to the Portuguese African colonies, for instance.

⁵ In Toury's sense of habitual procedures. See Toury (1995).

lity and situationality became predominant and finally cognitive procedures took the foreground, by means of which text production is seen as a result of internalized vs. inferred knowledge.⁶

In the particular case of translation, and due to the convergence of often conflicting factors that affect the translator's decisions when undertaking both text understanding and text production tasks, a most comprehensive model of textuality is required that enables the translator to tackle with a multiplicity of variables and to establish an hierarchy among them. Thus we follow Beaugrande's and Dressler's approach (1981) as the most adequate for dealing with what is involved in the translation process.

Bearing in mind that what defines a text as such is not something given and fixed but rather a bundle of interacting variables in a communicative situation, it is more or less arbitrary in which sequence these features are to be dealt with. Of paramount importance for a translator is moreover the awareness of their mutual dependence and foremost of the possible discrepancies between the concretion of each textuality feature, as well as a recognition of the similarities involved in source and target discourse sequences. Thus the development of contrastive analyses of text organizing principles between language pairs would be highly welcomed.

4.1. Intentionality

In the special case of translation, intentionality may point at the sender's communicative intention, which can be only partially conveyed in the text, on the one hand, and at the addressee's perspective, on the other. The latter has to do with the relevance the receptor attributes to the information conveyed by the text, as Neubert/Shreve (1992) emphasize.

Intentionality involves a collaborative component between sender and receptor in as much as reference is not a fixed entity but rather a social act of creation in which both the context and the co-text provide the frame of possible referents (range of reference) that are conventionalized within a certain communicative group. The apprehension of reference involves two dimensions: the sender's intention of identifying an item and the receptor's recognition of that intention. As a consequence, the intended and inferred referent may be somehow distant, but the translator's task is to bring both referents as near as possible to each other, so as to appeal to the receptor's collaboration in the understanding of the text.

Besides, code switching often involves shifts in the conventions speakers of different languages make use of, so once again the translator's intervention is called upon in order to manage such discrepancies and smooth away any unwanted strangeness effects that might disturb the reader's understanding or lead him to a false path.

⁶ Beaugrande/ Dressler (1981).

4.2. Acceptability

This feature of textuality, that is a prerequisite of cooperation, which in turn is a prerequisite for translatability, is responsible for a satisfactory recognition of the text content, its type and purpose by the addressee. However, the acceptability of a text is not straightforward. In fact, the more standardized a text is, the more restrictions it will be submitted to. And as the patterns of textual acceptability diverge from receptors community to community, the translator's task implies not only understanding the acceptability patterns in each culture but also balancing any shortcomings that might hinder the addressee's cooperation. Following Grice's maxims, as to the maxim of Quantity, the translator may have either to expand or shorten discourse sequences, and also consider whether the degree of implicitness can and should be kept in the target text or some explicitation strategies are needed instead. If a translation is to follow the maxim of Quality, then the translator will try to keep the internal truth consistence of the text, which is feasible in technical texts and asks for the elimination of errors. As to the maxim of Relevance, the recreation of the text relevance structure may require topicalization of elementary content features different from the one in the source text. The maxim of Manner reminds the translator of the qualities his text production should offer in terms of avoiding ambiguity and obscurity, and showing briefness as well as orderliness. So every improvement of the quality of the target text the translator may find useful, including the optimal matching of the target textual expectations, is encouraged, as the degree of strangeness that target readers can bear must be kept to a minimum, so that their cooperation is still to be held.

4.3. Situationality

Translated texts raise several situational problems. The reader is not the ideal one, since he receives a text from a different context, and the translator is asked to find a balance between the constraints imposed by both source and target linguistic discourses and the demands of source text producer and target text reader.

As the translation is going to be imbedded into a new sociocultural and pragmatic context in the target culture, its situationality depends to a large extent on its goal. Here again the translator as intercultural mediator is asked to perform what Beaugrande and Dressler call situation management, which consists of orienting the target text according to the addressees' goals. According to the kind of situation involved (highly standardized or extraordinary), the translator will employ different strategies. The more standardized the situation is in both contexts, the more similar will be the textualization in the target context. On the contrary, a greater situational divergence between source and target contexts will ask for explicitations, compressions, rearrangements, reductions of emotive and figurative language features and similar alterations in the translation.

4.4. Informativity

As situationality and informativity of texts are closely associated, an attentive reading of so called parallel texts (i.e., texts on the same subject originally written in the target language) enables the translator to get acquainted with the specific formulations and terminology. Nevertheless, he may be compelled to alter the order of the information, to supply additional information due to the addressees' lack of background knowledge or change the information that may be associated to a different situation in the target context or even contextualize it anew, when the situation is unknown in the target culture.

4.5. Coherence and cohesion

These two features of textuality are more directly connected with the material side of a text, with its textness. In this respect, a translator must try to develop a global view of the text, so as to produce a similar coherence and cohesion structure in the target text. Lexical and grammatical cohesion reflect semantic coherence at the text surface, and the translator will explore the textonymy (Neubert and Shreve terminology) that is, all kinds of lexematic configurations at the syntagmatic level (synonyms, antonyms, hyponyms, metaphors, collocations, complementary and converse terms, and so on) available at the target text culture.

4.6. Intertextuality

Intertextuality can be perspectivated in two different ways: either as specific configuration of certain text markers that enable the reader to identify the text type it belongs to, or as a more or less implicit echo of another text, an allusion in the text at stake. In the first case of intertextuality, consulting parallel texts will be very helpful for the translator. As to the second case, the translator depends exclusively on his knowledge of the source text world to detect those allusions and of the target text one to find an equivalent example.

5. Textual competence of the translator

Even today, it is important to underline that the textual competence of a translator can not be subsumed under linguistic competence nor can it be assumed that it installs itself automatically when translating, but rather it has to be trained in a systematic way.

Several reasons impose themselves for the need of training the textual competence of would-be translators. One of the most obvious one is revealed by the production of non texts by translation students, due to their lack of opportunity of formulating their own thoughts in an orderly, structured, autonomous way, poor reading habits, deficient domain of their mother-

-tongue other than in the form of its oral discourse (hence their difficulty in recognizing and adhering to the conventions of different text types and genres).

Another major drawback most translation graduates show consists in sticking to the cognitive pattern that works bottom-up, in other words, in sticking to the word and not apprehending the text as a whole. Therefore their training course should include a combination of both cognitive strategies – top-down in order to be able to grasp the whole text, and bottom-up, to be able to make adequate options at the microtextual level along the lines of the macrostructural level.

Two other difficulties that denote a deficient pragmatic competence and have serious implications upon the production of the target text have to do with a faulty recognition of speech acts and the eventual discrepancies between their enunciation and the illocutionary and perlocutionary acts that enunciation brings about.⁷ However, in order to interpret correctly the relationship between the enunciation of a certain speech act and its illocution, the translator must be aware of the performative expressions at stake, because the latter enable understanding the enunciation.

Thus pragmatic knowledge involves not only being acquainted with the social relationships of the target context, and also with their enunciation context, but foremost with the management of their discrepancies.

Pressupositions, inferences and implicatures are significant in the interpretation of the source text and the production of the target text. Context and co-text awareness should be systematically trained so as to bring forth the relevance of their pragmatic implications and the adequate strategies to manage them.

As we have seen so far, textual competence can only be achieved if the translator is trained to interpret the syntactic and semantic marks in the source text from a pragmatic point of view, otherwise he will miss the relevant contextual elements that will turn the translated text into a successful communicative tool that may function in the target culture and bring about a specific effect similar to that of the source text in its own context.

7. Conclusion

A full comprehension of what is conveyed by a text involves not only what is written in it but also what can be inferred from it. This interplay between what is actually expressed and what can be communicated without being explicitly conveyed may vary considerably between the source and target textual worlds. What is obligatorily explicit in the source culture may become optionally expressed or even implicit in the target culture and vice-versa.

⁷ A single illocutionary act may give rise to several different perlocutionary acts.

By evaluating the distance between the source and the target contexts, between the text producer with his own communicative intentions and the target text reader with his expectations, his hermeneutic competence and his willingness to grasp the producer's intended meaning, the translator is asked to find a balance and provide his target readers with inference cues that allow an adequate interpretation of what is conveyed by the translated text. This management requires some skill on the part of the translator, as the communicative value, which involves both the semantic and pragmatic meaning with all its allusions, symbolism and connotations, must be kept homologous, so that Grice's cooperative principle may function. In order to achieve this, the translator may have to drop unnecessary information or add new relevant one in his translation, avoid ambiguity and strive to be clear, but by no means leave everything unchanged as found in the source text and merely reproduce it verbatim.

If we consider pragmatics as grammaticalized relations between language and context, then we will have to assume language-specific pragmatics (and not only universal pragmatics), and in the case of translation even twice, both in the source and target culture. The fact that more is communicated than what is actually said leads to a concept of potentiality in the pragmatics of the source text that has to be recreated and adjusted to the intended target recipient, his knowledge presuppositions, communicative expectations and needs and the situational context in which the translation is going to function. In order to achieve an adequate target text production, a translator must be trained to develop his textual competence, both at the interpretation and at the text production level, so as to be aware of the text dimensions he is expected to adapt to the new context in a holistic way.

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