



The Role of Discourse Analysis in Translation

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Abstract

Discourse Analysis (D.A) is a discipline which concerns the study of the relationship between language and the context in which it is used. In other words, Discourse Analysis is a branch of applied linguistics which investigates the study of language in use. As McCarty explains (1978: p 5) "This field of study grew out of work in different disciplines in 1960s and 1970s, including linguistics, semiotics, psychology, anthropology and sociology". One of the most interesting fields of study which has been recently affected by Discourse Analysis is a newly –born trend called Translation studies. This new area of research which is going from strength to strength delves into the systematic study of translation. It is assumed that D.A and Translation studies have much in common. Some of the areas of research which have been affected by D.A are Halliday's systematic functional grammar, Julian House model of translation quality assessment and Katherine Reisis text typology in translation. This papers aims at analyzing these concepts and terms in relation with translation studies.

Keywords: Discourse Analysis, Translation Studies, Systematic-Functional grammar, Context, House model of translation quality assessment.

1. Introduction

Discourse Analysis (D.A) is a field of study which tries to investigate the relationship between language and the context in which it is used. D.A is very connected to such disciplines as semiotics, the study of the signs of a language, psychology, the study of mind, anthropology, the study of human race, its culture and society and sociology, the study of society. As McCarty explains (1978:p 8) "at a time when linguistics was already concerned with the analyze of single sentences, Zelling Harris published a paper with the title 'Discourse Analysis'." Harris was interested in the distribution of linguistic elements in extended text and the links between the text and its social situation". A very interesting area of research which has recently been the engagement of many scholars is the Translation Studies_ the systematic study of translation. What roles does D.A play in Translation Studies? Is there any, if yes, relationship between D.A and Translation studies? This paper tries to shed lights on these notions at length and details, explaining the applications of D.A in translation studies.

2. Translating text in the context

Text is defined as "any passage, spoken or written, of any length that forms a unified form".

Context is defined as "aspects of extra-linguistic reality that are taken to be relevant to the communication".

Based on these two definitions, context, from one hand, shapes the text and, from the other hand, is shaped by the text. Fowler describes the relationship as follows:

There is a dialectical interrelationship between language and social structure: the variables of linguistic usage are both products of socio-economics forces and institutions _reflexes of such factors as power relations, occupational roles, social stratifications, etc.-and practices which are instrumental in forming and legitimating the same social forces and institutions (fowler, 1981:p 121).

So, as can be seen, context plays the major role in shaping the text and at the same time is highly affected by the text. This interaction is set in motion by what is called "textualization", a process which impinges on both the product and reception of texts and which at one hand and the same time involves a set of procedures and diverge range of products generally known as text (Hatim, 1990: p 45).

3. Cohesion and Coherence

Cohesion and Coherence are very important elements of textualization. Without these two, the understanding of a piece of text would be the major hurdle of the writer. Cohesion refers to the relations of meaning that exist within the text and that define it as text. Coherence is the interpretation of the text on the behalf of the receiver of the message. A text might have coherence but lacks cohesion. Look at the following example:

"Every student must learn English. English has seven words. I don't like the word book. My book is on the table. Eating on the table is very interesting."

As can be seen, this text has cohesion, but it is not coherent. Cohesion and coherence are culture-specific elements which might differ from one language to another one. It is incumbent on translator to, first, identify these culture-specific elements in the source text and, second, transfer them in the target language in a way that the message seems clear and understandable; otherwise the translation would seem absurd and vague.

4. Systematic functional grammar

Hallida's model of D.A largely depends on what he calls "systematic functional grammar". This model views language as communication event, seeing language and its functions in the socio-cultural environment. In this model, there is a strong correlation between surface level of realizations of the linguistic function and the socio-cultural framework (Munday , 2008: p 90).

Why is it systematic and functional? It is systematic because it follows very rigid rules of grammar and functional due to the fact that it has function, goal and purpose in any socio-cultural environment and it is designed in a way that it explains the language use.

It is traditionally believed that in translation, vocabulary is the major hurdle of translators. But it should be mentioned that grammar, also, plays a very important role in doing so .Indeed, Systematic functional grammar prefers to talk about lexio-grammar which includes both the vocabulary and the grammar of any language (Halliday, 1978: p 39). Regarding the important role of grammar in translation, C. Taylor Torsello believes that:

Grammar should be part of the education of a translators and in particular functional grammar since it is concerned with language in texts and with the role grammar plays, in combination with lexicon, in carrying out specific functions and realizing specific types of meaning (Torsello, 1996: p 88).

The model of Hlliday's systematic functional grammar can be seen in figure 1.

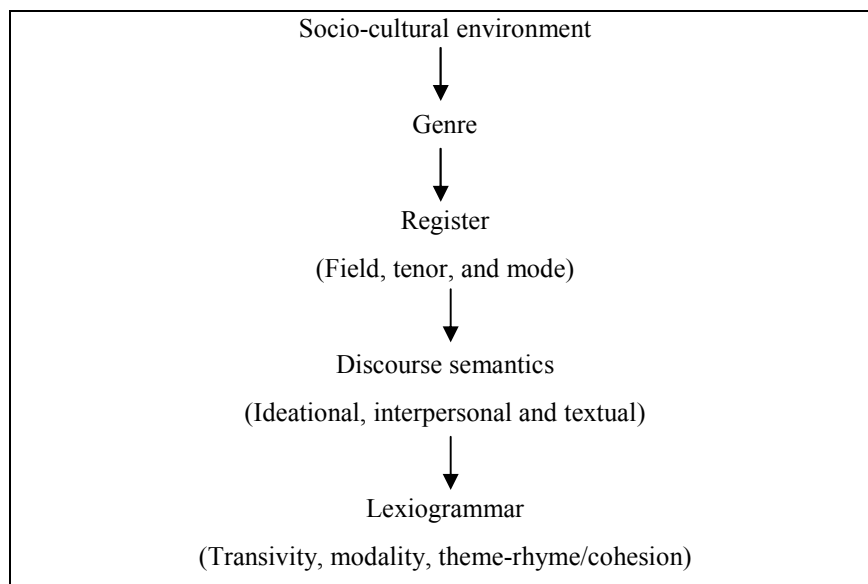


Figure 1. Hlliday's systematic functional grammar

The genre (a style that involves a particular set of characteristics) is conditioned by the socio-cultural environment. Genre itself conditions register which is the style of language, grammar and words used for particular situations.

Register comprises three elements:

A: Field: What is being written about, e.g. linguistics;

B: Tenor: Who is talking with whom, e.g. teacher and student interaction;

C: Mode: The form and model of communication, e.g. spoken.

These three variables of context of situation affect our language choices which are linked to three main functions of language. Halliday calls these three functions as Ideational, Interpersonal and textual.

The field of a text is associated with ideational meaning which is realized through transivity pattern (verb types, active /passive structures, participants in process).

The tenor of a text is associated with interpersonal meaning which is realized through patterns of modality (modal verbs and adverbs such as hopefully, should, possibly and any evaluative lexis such as beautiful dreadful)

The mode of a text is associated with textual meaning which is realized through thematic and information structure(mainly the order and structuring of elements in a clause) and cohesion(the way the text hangs together lexically, including the use of pronouns ellipsis, collocations, repetitions and etc.) (Munday, 2008: 90).

As mentioned, the context plays the major role in shaping the situation. But, it is also worth mentioning that context is of two kinds, namely as context of situation and context of culture. "Text always occurs at two contexts, one within the other" (But et al., 2000: p 3). These two contexts are context of situation and context of culture.

In systematic-functional grammar, context of situation is related to three variables of field, tenor and mode. If a translator figures out these variables correctly, he will be able to produce a text which is functionally adequate.

Context of culture is a wider scope which subsumes context of situation in it. It means that situation is highly affected by the socio-cultural environment in which it is used. In other words, any text is an expression of specific situation and of a wider social, historical, political, and ideological, etc. Culture can be defined as "a set of interrelated semiotics system" (Miller, 2005: 2). This classification is drawn in figure 2.

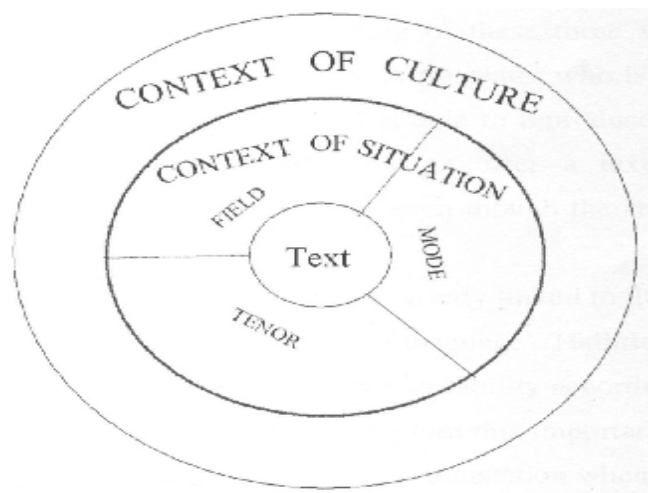


Figure 2. Text in context (adapted from Butt et al, 2004: 4)

Another implication of discourse analysis in relation with systematic-functional grammar is Julian House model of translation quality assessment.

Having inspired from Halliday's systematic-functional grammar, Julian House model of translation quality assessment has been designated as one of the most valuable tools for evaluating translations. According to Munday(2008, p:56) "although there are some common grounds between these two models, house herself rejects the more target-audience notion of translation appropriateness as misleading and so base her model on comparative ST_ TT analysis leading to the assessment of quality of the translation". "Text and context of situation are indeed separate, but two interact with each other through an inextricable connection between the social environment and the functional organization of language. When we analyze an original text, compare it with its translation and establish the equivalence frame work guiding the translation, both texts must refer to particular situation surrounding" (House, 2009: 34).

The framework of House model of translation quality assessment can be seen in figure 3.

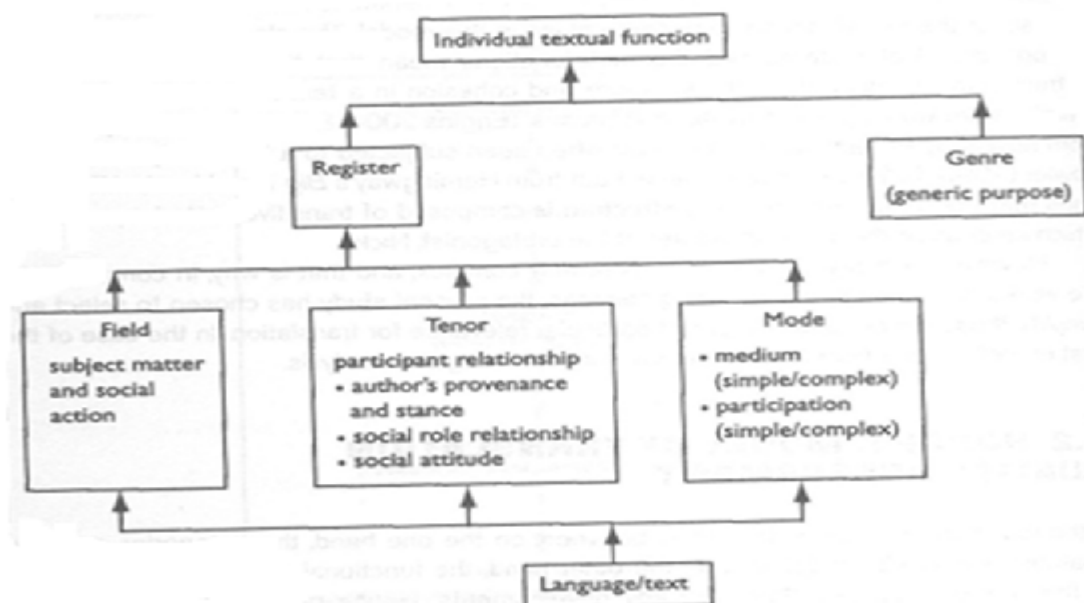


Figure 3. Scheme for analyzing and comparing original and translation texts (House, 1997:108)

Based on Munday, the model acts as follow:

- 1: A profile is product of ST register.
- 2: To this is added a description of the ST genre realized by register.
- 3: Together, this allows a 'statement of function' to be made for ST, including the ideational and interpersonal component of the function.
- 4: The same description process is then carried out for the TT.
- 5: The TT profile is compared to the ST profile and a statement of 'mismatches' or error is produced, categorized according to genre and to the situational dimensions of the register and genre.
- 6: A statement of quality is then made of the translation.
- 7: Finally, the translation can be categorized into one of the two types: covert translation and overt translation.

Overt translation is a kind of translation which enjoys, as much as possible, the statues of the original in the target text.

Covert translation which is a kind of function as the second original

Based on House typology, equivalence in terms of overt translation can be achieved at the level of language, text register and genre, while in terms of covert translation the equivalence is sought to at the level of genre and the individual text function(Munday, 2008: 93).

Interestingly, House claims that equivalence, in terms of overt translation, can be achieved at the above-mentioned levels, but not at the level of function. In other words, overt translation is only a second –level of functional equivalence (House, 1997: p 112).

An original text and its overt translation are to be equivalent at the level of language/text and register (with its various dimensions) as well as genre. At the level of individual textual function, functional equivalence is still possible, but it is of different nature: it can be described as enabling access to the function the original text has in its discourse world or frame. As this access is realized in the target linguculture via the translation text, a switch in the discourse world and the frame becomes necessary, i.e. the translation is differently framed, it operates in its own frame and discourse at best what I have called " second level functional equivalence" (House, 1997: 112).

Another application of discourse analysis is Katharina Reisis different types of text. Having inspired from the notion of text types and typology, Reisis was one the first scholars who tried systematically analyses text types.

Reiss's work in 1970s builds on the concept of equivalence, but vies text rather than the word or sentence, as the level at which the communication is achieved and at which equivalence must be sought to (Reiss 1997/89: 113-14).Her functional approach aims initially at systematizing the assessment of translation. It borrows Karl Buhler's three-way categorization of the functions of language. Reiss links the three functions to their corresponding language 'dimension' and to the text types or communicative situations in which they are used (Reiss, 1997/89: 108-0).

Reiss's text typology (Reiss 1977/89 p: 171) and categorization is shown as below:

- A: The communication of the content_ informative text type.
- B: The communication of artistically organized content –expressive type.
- C: The communication of content with a persuasive character_ operative.

As can be seen, Reiss's work is highly affected by Buhler's text typology (informative, vocative and expressive). After categorizing text, Reiss provides some principles and methodologies based on the type of the text. If the text is informative, the method proposed by Reiss is full referential or conceptual content of the ST. If the text is expressive, the translator should transfer the aesthetic or realistic form of the ST and if the text is an operative on, the translator's duty is to produce the desired respond in the TT.

An example of informative text is reporting books. An example of expressive text is biography and an example of operative text is a piece of advertisement.

Apart from text typology, Reiss has stipulated some criteria for quality assessment of translation.

These rules and criteria are "extra-linguistic and intra-linguistic". Extra-linguistic criteria are situation, subject, field, time, place, receiver, sender and affective implications. Intra-linguistic criteria are semantic, lexical, grammatical, and stylistic features.

According to Reiss (1971: p 69), although interrelated, the importance of these criteria varies according to text type. For example, the translation of any content-focused text should first aim at preserving semantic equivalence. For a TT that is a new item, second place might probably be occupied by grammatical criteria, whereas a popular science book might pay more attention to the individual style of ST.

5. Conclusion

Translation is more than the mere replacement of the ST materials into the TT. There are so many different factors in doing so. As mentioned, discourse analysis has, to a great extent, contributed to the notion of translation. Many scholars have made use of D.A in their studies and researches. Researchers, who have looked at translation from discourse analysis point of view, believe discourse as a socio-cultural environment in which communication is taken place. Based on this notion, it is the job of the translator to identify the socio-cultural environment of the ST and transfer the message

of it to TT in such a way that looks fluent and accurate in terms of socio-cultural environment; otherwise, the translation would seem nonsense, blurred and vague, so that the production shifts from its initial socio-cultural environment into a completely different world of socio-cultural context.

No text can remain in such a state of relative isolation from the facts of socio-cultural life. To be closer to the life of world of language user and to communicate anything meaning full regarding social, cultural or political issues text must involve more than organization and mapping procedures or simply the need to uphold conventionality. (Hatim 1990: 47).

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