Chapter 12
Intercultural Pragmatics and Text Typology: An Integrated Approach to Translation Teaching

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ABSTRACT
This chapter intends to integrate culture, pragmatics, and text typology in translation teaching and to raise awareness on their significance in the translation process among translation trainees. First, it offers an overview of contemporary translation theory on translation teaching from a culture-sensitive, pragmatic-functional, and text typological point of view. Then, it applies intercultural pragmatics to Greek/German translation of the special text type “obituary.” The findings of this analysis lead to the conclusion that intercultural pragmatics not only reveals translational obstacles and difficulties but also offers solutions for the amelioration of translational competence in general and in Greek/German translation of “obituaries” in particular. The chapter ends with the presentation of a short text type-specific contrastive typology for obituaries in Greek and German culture. By that, the author intends to demonstrate the significance of text prototypologies on the basis of intercultural pragmatics for the development of the translational competence of translation students and of its implementation in translation teaching.

INTRODUCTION
The cultural turn that took place in the mid ‘80s increased our awareness of the importance of culture for translation, both written translation and interpreting, and Translation Studies. Since then, translation has been regarded predominantly as a special form of intercultural communication. While the cultural element of translation has received due attention from several different standpoints, e.g. the empirical/descriptive one by the Israeli scholars Even-Zohar and Toury (Even-Zohar & Toury, Eds. 1981; Toury, 1980) and the interdisciplinary one by the English scholar Snell-Hornby (Ed. 1986; 1986a; 1988), the functional translation theory reflected in the work of the German scholars Vermeer and Reiß (Reiß & Vermeer [1984], 1991; Vermeer, 1986; 1992)
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and Nord (1993) has to be regarded as one of the most decisive scholarly approaches in terms of its general theoretical and practical significance. In functionally orientated translation theory the pragmatic dimension is a core element. Given that pragmatics is the study of language as an action with a certain aim, as well as of the social contexts in which linguistic action takes place, according to the functional translation theory, translation as a special form of intercultural communication has to be looked upon as the study of verbal and nonverbal action carried out by experts in order to functionally bridge two different cultural backgrounds. The significance of this contrastive culture-pragmatic approach in translation is grounded on the fact that it reveals the culture-specific use of language, text and mental concepts which constitutes a major translational difficulty or obstacle.

Hence, it is obvious that a solid translation competence can only be achieved if translation trainees elaborate on intercultural pragmatics of their working languages and develop awareness of the significance of culture, pragmatics and text typology in the translation process. In view of the above, contrastive intercultural pragmatics must be regarded as a core element of translation training. This is all the more important as, according to the author’s research, there is a gap in the relevant studies, for there seems to be no previous research on translation teaching in terms of intercultural pragmatics from functionally orientated translation theory.

On the basis of the above-mentioned theoretical framework, the central aim of this paper is to offer guidelines on translation teaching in terms of intercultural pragmatics. In order to achieve this goal, and after an overview of three important contemporary approaches to culturally and pragmatic-functionally orientated translation teaching, the author of this paper illustrates the significance of contrastive intercultural pragmatics for translation teaching on the grounds of one short but rather revealing special text type, i.e. obituaries, of the language pair Greek/German.

According to the categorization of text types of Reiß ([1976], 1993), this text type belongs predominantly to the category of the informative text type, but shows also a certain affinity to the category of the operative text type.

In order to achieve the central objective of this paper, the author will strive to raise awareness on the grounds of an applied contrastive culture-pragmatic analysis of the necessity for research on Translation Studies to analyze, categorize and systemize intercultural pragmatics contrastively and language pair-specifically. Then, this paper will take a further step to this direction by presenting a contrastive prototypology of obituaries based on the language-pair Greek/German. In this context, the author of this paper will elaborate on the relevant textual and cultural conventions and speech acts that can serve as guidelines on translation teaching in order to help translation trainees elaborate on intercultural pragmatics and thus foster their translation competence and accelerate the production of their output.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The teaching of translation in classroom has been one of the core issues of scientific research in Translation Studies over the last two to three decades. Yet, as due to the heterogeneity of the discipline and due to the fact that “there are simply too many problem areas” (Wilss, 2004, p. 13), we can ascertain that there are plenty of different research approaches to this particularly important issue of translation and Translation Studies. When looking at the relevant bibliography of the last twenty to twenty-five years or so, we are confronted with research papers with a wide range of approaches to translation teaching, thus reflecting the complexity and multidimensionality of the discipline. These approaches range from rather specific and isolated issues of the translator’s training to more complex and holistic ones. Nonetheless, all of them have in common that they