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 Reiβ (Reiβ & Vermeer [1984], 21991; Vermeer, 1986; 31992)
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...
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