

## Discourse Analysis Approaches in Translation Studies: Pertinent Models?

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### *Abstract*

This paper is concerned with the question of whether discourse analysis models are pertinent models to translation theory. It sets to answer this question by stating the views of Munday (2001) and Pym (1992), each from a different perspective. We conclude from the exemplification of Munday that despite discourse analysis applicability in translation analysis, the English-oriented models dictate a one way analysis. We recommend the setting up of **other languages-oriented** models for more profitable comparisons for translation analysis. We conclude from Pym's argumentation based on a definition of discourse pertinent to translation theory and an answer to whether a text and its translation conform to one or two discourses that the idea of 'discourse extension' is more pertinent to translation. This opens windows, in our view, as to the uni- or bi-directionality of the concept. If this is true, research is called to compare the results of such a bidirectional extension.

### المخلص:

نعرض في هذا المقال نقد مائدي لبعض النماذج الترجمية التي اعتمدت على تحليل الخطاب كمنطلق لها. منها نموذج هاوس

لتقييم الترجمات, نمونجي منى بيكرو حاتم و مایسون اللذان ادخلا  
البعد البراغماتي و الاجتماعي إلى الترجمة و تحليلها.

### ***Introduction***

According to Munday (2001), discourse analysis came to prominence in translation studies in the 1990s. Discourse analysis, as stated by Munday (2001), looks at the way language communicates meaning and social and power relations. The model that exerted the most important influence is Halliday's systemic functional model, which was employed in works by House, Baker and Hatim and Mason (Munday, 2001). These analytical frameworks are English-language oriented; this becomes problematic with other languages that need to be analyzed differently. This, in our view, undermines their validity to translation. Pym (1992), on the other hand, points out that a survey of the concerned linguistic approaches shows that most of these analyses are inappropriate because they cannot say if a ST and a TT can or should belong to the same discourse. This is another argument for the impertinence of DA to the problems of translation. The criticisms presented here, however, set to open space as to the possible solutions for the application-based models and to further question the concept of discourse extension for further research.

#### ***1- Munday's Criticism***

##### ***a- The Hallidayan Model of Discourse Analysis***

The model that exerted the most important influence on linguistics-oriented translation theorists is Halliday's systemic functional model (Munday, 2001). Halliday's

model of discourse analysis is based on his systemic functional grammar. It is linked to the study of language as communication, and sees meaning in the writer's linguistic choices, related to a wider sociocultural framework (Munday, 2001).

In Halliday's model, the genre is conditioned by the sociocultural environment and determines register, which comprises three elements:

1 The field of a text is the subject matter of the communication and is associated with ideational meaning, realized through transitivity patterns (verb types).

2 The tenor of a text is the participants in the communication and is associated with interpersonal meaning, realized through the patterns of modality (modal verbs).

3 The mode of a text is the form of communication and is associated with textual meaning, which is realized through the thematic and information structures (the order and structuring of elements) and cohesion (the way the text hangs together lexically).

Munday (2001) added that the analysis of patterns of transitivity, modality, thematic structure and cohesion in a text conveys the ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings of the text.

***b- Discourse Analysis Approaches to Translation***

Munday (2001) listed three models based on Hallidayan systemic-functional theory :

***1- House's Model of Translation Quality Assessment***

House's (2001) model of translation assessment is based on Hallidayan systemic-functional theory and it provides analysis and comparison of the original text and its translation on three levels: language/text, register (field, mode and tenor) and genre. House's (2001) model is based on functional, pragmatic equivalence which is related to the preservation of 'meaning' across two different languages and cultures. Of particular importance to translation are three aspects of meaning: semantic, pragmatic and textual. The first requirement of equivalence, according to House (2001), is equivalent function which is defined as the use of the text in a particular context of situation. The latter can be broken down to:

- field captures the social activity, subject matter or topic.
- Tenor refers to the participants and the relationship between them in terms of social power and distance.
- Mode refers to the channel and the degree of allowed potential participation.

House (2001) stated that the linguistic textual analysis where features in the original and translation correlated with field, tenor and mode does not tell about the textual function. Register merely captures the connection

between texts and their 'microcontext' while genre connects texts with the 'macrocontext' of the linguistic and cultural community in which texts are embedded. Taken together register and genre analysis yield a textual profile of the individual textual function. The maintaining of this function depends on the type of translation: overt and covert.

According to House (2001), in overt translation, the translation is differently framed; operating in its own frame and its own discourse world, permitting a cultural transfer where cultural items are transported from L1 to L2. In covert translation, however, there is a reproduction of the original function in its frame and discourse world, permitting a cultural compensation for L1 cultural phenomenon with L2 means.

What House in (Munday, 2001) calls a 'cultural filter' needs to be applied by the translator, modifying cultural elements (changes at the levels of language/text and register), giving the impression that the TT is an original.

She added that the difference between overt and covert translation must be taken into account in translation evaluation. In overt translation the original can be taken over unfiltered; while in covert translation, translation evaluation has to consider the cultural filter concept. The latter is 'a means of capturing socio-cultural differences in shared conventions of behavior and communication, preferred rhetorical styles and expectation norms in two communities.' (House, 2001: 251).

House's (1977, 1997) in ( Munday, 2001) model of register analysis is designed to compare an ST-TT pair for situational variables, genre, function and language, and to identify both the translation method employed ('covert' or 'overt') and translation 'errors'.

House's model (explained in Munday, 2001) operates as follows:

- 1 A profile of the ST register is produced.
- 2 A description of the ST genre
- 3 This allows a 'statement of function' to be made for the ST, (including the ideational and interpersonal component of that function)
- 4 The same descriptive process is carried out for the TT.
- 5 The TT profile is compared to the ST profile and a statement of 'mismatches' or errors is produced, categorized according to genre and to the situational dimensions of register and genre.
- 6 A 'statement of quality' is made of the translation.
- 7 Then, the translation can be categorized into overt or covert translation.

In step 4, the same descriptive process is carried out for the TT on the basis of an English language oriented model. This undermines the validity of the analysis for translation. ST and TT do not belong to the same language so as to permit the use of the same English language based-model of analysis.

## 2- *Baker's Text and Pragmatic Level Analysis*

Baker in (Munday, 2001) applied the systemic approach to thematic structure and cohesion and she

incorporated the pragmatic level or the way utterances are used in communicative situations.

### **-Thematic and information structures**

Baker in (Munday, 2001) incorporated a comparison of nominalization and verbal forms in theme position in a scientific report. An inherent problem in this kind of study is that thematic structure is realized differently in different languages. Baker in (Munday, 2001) gives a number of examples from verb- inflected languages which often place the verb in first or 'theme' position.

For Munday (2001), the most important point for ST thematic analysis is the translator's awareness of the relative markedness of the thematic and information structures. Baker in (Munday, 2001) talked about an awareness of the meaningful choices made in the course of communication that will help decide whether it is appropriate to translate using a marked form.

### **-Pragmatics and translation**

Baker considers various aspects of pragmatic equivalence in translation, applying relevant linguistic concepts to interlinguistic transfer. Baker's definition of pragmatics is as follows: *'Pragmatics is the study of language in use. It is the study of meaning, not as generated by the linguistics system but as conveyed and manipulated by participants in a communicative situation'*. (Baker, 1992 in Munday, 2001).

Three pragmatic concepts: coherence, presupposition and implicature are of particular importance.

-The coherence of a text depends on the hearer's expectations and experience of the world (Baker, 1992 in Munday, 2001).

-Presupposition relates to the linguistic and extralinguistic knowledge the sender assumes the receiver to have in order to retrieve his message.

-Implicature is defined as what the speaker means or implies rather than what he says.

Baker notes that translators need to be fully aware of the different cooperative principles in operation in the respective languages and cultures (Munday, 2001).

According to Munday (2001), the fact that the Hallidayan model of thematic analysis is English language-oriented undermines its validity for translation. Likewise, coherence, presupposition and implicature are determined by linguistic and cultural contexts. Thus they themselves require a model of analysis developed in the respective cultures of the concerned languages.

### **3- *Hatim and Mason's Semiotic Level of Discourse***

Basil Hatim and Ian Mason in (Munday, 2001) pay extra attention to the realization in translation of ideational and interpersonal functions (in addition to the textual function) and incorporate into their model a semiotic level of discourse. An example of Hatim and Mason's analysis of functions is their observations that changes in the transitivity structure in the English translation cause a shift in the ideational function of the text and shifts in modality, or the interpersonal function (Munday, 2001).



Hatim and Mason's 'foundations of a model for analyzing texts' include and go beyond House's register analysis and Baker's pragmatic analysis (Munday, 2001). Language and texts are considered, accordingly, to be realizations of sociocultural messages and power relations. They represent discourse, in its wider sense, as modes of speaking and writing where social groups adopt a particular attitude towards areas of sociocultural activity. One example of the influence of the pro-Western ideology and discourse they give is the English TT of a Spanish ST about the history of the indigenous American peoples before the arrival of the Spaniards in Mexico (Munday, 2001).

According to Munday (2001), Hatim and Mason's findings are illuminating as they analyzed a range of text types (written and spoken); but their focus remains linguistics-centered, as far as the terminology and the phenomena investigated are concerned.

### **c- Insights from Munday's Criticisms**

The discourse and register analysis approaches discussed by Munday (2001) are based on Halliday's model of systemic functional linguistics which relates microlevel linguistic choices to the communicative function of a text and the sociocultural meaning behind it. However, the Hallidayan model has been criticized by Fish (1981) in Munday (2001) as being over-complicated in its categorization of grammar and for its apparently inflexible one-to-one matching of structure and meaning

which questions its ability to cope with the different interpretations of literature,

As far as House's model is concerned, Gutt (1991) in Munday (2001) asks whether the intention of the author and ST function are recoverable from register analysis. House's model is based on discovering 'mismatches' between ST and TT which indicate translation errors. These mismatches, however, may indicate translation strategies such as explicitation or compensation. So how can House's model interpret that.

The analytical frameworks of the translation theorists discussed by Munday (2001) are English-language oriented. This is problematic with languages with different word order and subject inflected verb forms, especially in the analysis of thematic and information structures. The problem is even more serious, according to Munday (2001) if we try to impose such contrastive discourse analysis on non-European languages whose conceptual structure may differ totally. Venuti (1998) in Munday (2001) is one critic who sees linguistics-oriented approaches as projecting 'a conservative model of translation that would unduly restrict [translation's] role in cultural innovation and change'.

In our view, the three models are English language-oriented, i.e., they analyze a language in terms of the model of another, which will automatically yield shifts due to the specificity of the model rather than pure translational shifts. One way to overcome this limitation is to set up discourse analysis models based on the

languages of the concerned linguistic combinations. In this case, the English language model will uncover patterns and ideas of the English text; and the other language model will uncover patterns and ideas of the other language. If the analysis is flexible enough, it would uncover miraculous spots as well as weak ones in the text and in the translation (Berman's idea concerns primarily the translation). This might be beneficial for both translation assessment and translation theory. The comparison of the models' analysis will benefit from the readymade linguistic categorizations and thus would prepare for a discussion of the translation strategies to be employed at each level. There is possibility for a 'cross verification' of the existing categories in a language while using an English language oriented model, and then using that language's model to 'cross verify' the existing categories in the English language text. The cross verification in both directions can help in translation theory.

## **2- Pym's Criticism**

### **a- What is 'Discourse'**

According to Pym (1992:1), a survey of the linguistic approaches that applied discourse analysis shows that 'many kinds of analysis are inappropriate to the study of translation quite simply because they cannot say if a source text and a target text can or should belong to the same discourse'.

Thus, Pym (1992) believes that most of the forms of discourse analysis are 'fundamentally inappropriate' and hence 'potentially misleading' for the development of translation theory.

According to Pym (2001), in Delile's *L'analyse du discours comme méthode de traduction* (1984), there is no definition of 'discourse'; while in Hün and Mason's *Discourse and the Translator* (1990), there is no definition of 'translation'. This leads to two fundamental questions about:

- 1- How might the term 'discourse' be defined in a way pertinent to translation theory?
- 2- Should a source text and its corresponding target text conform to one or to two discourses?

As far as the first question is concerned, Pym (1992) considers that the problem with theories of discourse is the accumulation of different approaches about different levels which resulted in a 'terminological chaos' (Schaffner (2002) talked about the 'terminological confusion').

Tracing the term discourse, Pym (2001) cited three traditions:

In French-inspired tradition, some theoretical usages of the term refers to the relation between the persons represented in linguistic utterances, the relations between utterances and the nature of the semiotic processes in general increasingly associated with degrees of use-related competence...etc. From these uses, there is, however, no consensus as to whether translation involves one or several discourses. In the English language research, text was identified with discourse. For Pym (2001), it is necessary to maintain Widdowson's distinction that text analysis investigates "the formal

properties of a piece of writing” while the aim of discourse analysis is to investigate “the way sentences are put into communicative use in the performing of social acts”. In the German theory, discourse correlated with speech as well as text. Pym (2001) concludes that the profusion of terms concern ‘language functions’.

The general non agreement about the limits of discourse and the level on which it must be sought, lead, according to Pym (2001), to the fact that there is no consensus on whether translation involves one or two discourses.

### **b-Delimitation of ‘Discourse’ and ‘Translation’**

Pym’s (1992) proposed approach sees discourses as a set of constraints on the process of semiosis (dynamic displacement of meaning from symbol to symbol through the capacity of the interpretant). ‘Discourse’ in this proposed approach should not be identified with utterances and should be related to a level of meaning where something happens. ‘Semiosis’ is Pierce’s term refers to translation in Jakobson’s definition (Pym, 2001).

This view posits that discourses can bridge the frontiers between different tongues, extending themselves or finding their limits through the process of translation. Pym (1992: 235) states that ‘The only way to cut across the dilemma is to regard translation as the active movement by which discourse may be extended from one cultural setting to another. What translation theory would then want to know about discourses is the relative degree of difficulty and success involved in their

extension and the degree to which they may undergo transformation through translation. It is here that translation could become a discovery procedure of some importance to discourse analysis'.

Pym (2001) gave several examples in which the same discourse can be extended across different tongues, where the variants are not due to linguistic constraints but to discursive ones. This suggests, according to Pym (2001), that translation works on the assumption that the same discourse can be manifested in different cultures. He suggested a two part strategy for isolating pertinent data determined by discursive constraints:

- a- A unit that is determined by discursive and not lingual constraints is indicative of potentially equivalent discourses.
- b- If back translation fails to attest the equivalence of the pairs isolated, then the unit concerned is determined by non equivalent discourses.

Pym (2001) further explained that if DA was to be applied only at the level of potentially equivalent discourses, then what would be the necessity of translation. That is why the second step questions the idea that all discourses are possible in all cultures, and accords translation a specific role in the in the discovering and challenging of discursive limits.

The translation of an Australian aboriginal chant functions as a bridge between initially non equivalent discourses, at once explaining the chant and allowing to be read as an English text. And since translation alerts the

discursive status of the source text, it should count as 'a legitimate discursive work' extending the original discourse from tongue to tongue, despite initial non-equivalence (Pym, 2001).

#### **c- Insights from Pym's Criticism**

In our view, we consider the idea of discourse extension via translation compatible with the translation endeavor as well as to the idea of creativity in translation. Discursive constraints are occasions of potential importance to creative solutions and linguistic enrichment for the languages we translate into. This will have a retrospective effect on the languages we translate from. The translation will unveil new potentials of the original language (as literary criticism does to the literary work under study). Remains a practical investigation of this extension in both directions: from the source text to the target text and from the target text to the source text. This can be arranged in different ways, provided that different variables are controlled. Working on a translation and its comparable texts in the reverse translation; or else considering back translations in very specific conditions are all possible avenues for further research.

#### **Conclusion**

Discourse analysis succeeded in alerting the translator to some considerations and in incorporating some dimensions into the translation analysis. Hatim and Mason (1990) talked about the appropriateness of translation to be judged in the light of some of these considerations. But this is not sufficient as far as there are no **genuine and competing discourse analysis models** to represent **other languages** of the translation

combination. The presence of these will, in our view, produce a **more useful** comparisons for translation analysis. **Discourse analysis extension** opens the window to new questions, requiring a practical work on the concept. Thus, we would borrow Newmark's (1988) 'translational analysis' as a more pertinent concept than DA to both translation theory and criticism.

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