

The Textual Metafunction as a Didactic Problem in Applied Translation Studies

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A. Opening *plaisanteries*

B. Three kinds of didactic challenges posed by the textual metafunction:

1. conceptual challenges:

- necessity of extending the traditional notion of structure

ideational: experiential	= constituency
ideational: logical	= interdependency
[interpersonal	= prosodic]
[textual	= culminative]

- issues concerning (most [didactically] appropriate) forms of linguistic representation

2. terminological challenges:

a. at 'object' level:

- typological differences between object languages (source, target; native, foreign) [as modified (at greater degree of delicacy) by register- and/or genre-specific differences]

b. at 'meta' level:

- differences in the metalanguages historically associated with particular object-languages

3. methodological challenges:

- cultural differences in preferred forms of didactic discourse (example of Saarbrücken francophones):

1.) Factor in didactic situation	2.) Cultural provenance of 1.)	3.) Preferred form associated with 2.)	4.) Philosophical provenance of 3.)
a.) institutional setting:	German	methodische Einführung	Hegelian (?)
b.) students:	French	initiation raisonnée	deductivist-rationalist
c.) teachers:	Anglo-Saxon	practical introduction	inductivist-empiricist

C. Some reasons for the 'invisibility' of the textual metafunction in didactic => pedagogic practice(s) transmitting the social discourse of translation transgenerationally within various cultures

- didactics involves (contrastive) classification of [impersonal] phenomena (either more system- or more instance-based, depending on the culture)
- pedagogy additionally involves classification and evaluation of personal instantiations (either as more symbolic of competence or as more symbolic of performance, depending on the culture)
- French didactics of translation apparently requires a bistratal model of language, based on Saussurean semiotics: translating is understood as pouring the content of a discourse (as carefully as possible) into a new form => the textual metafunction is problematic because there seems to be no *signifié* associated with any of its *signifiants* --- i.e., what do the 'tokens' of textuality 'stand for'?
- Anglo-Saxon pedagogy of translation apparently requires autocontextualisation of the terminology of error classification (at the 'meta' level) => does this imply (at the 'object' level) a petit-bourgeois fear of the very notion of the sign [Barthes]? and what consequences might this conceivably have for the treatment of the tokens of textuality? can they perhaps 'regain visibility' by being reinterpreted as 'autoreferential' signs (thus replacing the culturally problematic rationalist approach of meaning with a culturally less threatening empiricist one)?

D. Concluding *plaisanteries*

Some of the main metatextual evidence for the problems that Anglo-Saxon teachers have in dealing with the textual metafunction in a didactic/pedagogic context:

A. Metalinguistically vague marginalia that may possibly refer to certain aspects of the textual metafunction (sometimes, at least):

Abbreviated marginal form	Full term used in oral pedagogy	Meaning
awkward	awkward translation	?
clumsy	clumsy style	?
st	bad style	?
	context	?
	text	?

B. Slightly less metalinguistically vague marginalia that are apparently intended to refer (at least in part) to certain aspects of the textual metafunction:

Abbreviation	Term	Meaning
coll	collocation	wrong collocation or wrong collocation/colligation
ref	reference	the other term in this referential tie is not unambiguously identifiable
w.o.	word order	wrong relative sequencing of a single-word clause element
SSTR	sentence structure	(SOMETIMES:) wrong relative sequencing of a multi-word clause element
	shift of emphasis AND stress	EITHER: "native speaker likely to supply wrong subliminal tonicity" OR: "some lexical features of lexical item inappropriate"

Some of the sources of the problems that French students most frequently have with the textual metafunction in (didactically motivated simulations of) French-English translation:

(NOTE: the majority of these appear to have their basis in typological differences between language systems)

Theme-Rheme and (subliminal) Given-New:

1. the range of options available with clausally extraposed (pre- or post-posed) Themes is wider in French than in English, and declines less rapidly as one moves 'upwards' in terms of formality
2. there are differences in the degree of informational unmarkedness associated with particular relative sequencings of complements and adjuncts, often due in part to different patterns of verb valency
3. French is more tolerant of 'intercalated' group-/phrase-rank material in formal texts than English is
4. in French there is a more complete alignment of Theme-Rheme with (subliminal) Given-New in relative clauses having a non-Subject relative Wh-element, such that e.g. even OVS [(Wh/C)--(F/P)--(S)] sequencing is possible

Conjunction:

1. the two language systems map onto each fairly well in terms of conjunctive relations, especially structural (i.e. intra-clause-complex) ones, but there are minor differences in relation to which subtypes of enhancement preselect for a finite, a non-finite, or a reduced (= mood-ellipted) non-finite structure in the dependent clause

Reference (Participant Tracking) and Substitution/Ellipsis:

1. the different systems of noun classification (e.g. overt/covertness of gender) enable slightly different patterns of participant tracking via personal (and for French also: demonstrative) reference items
2. the unmarked term in the proximity-based deixis system in the context of esphora (with or without substitution/ellipsis) is apparently [covertly] 'near' in French, overtly 'far' in English
3. [genre-based:] in a text section introduced by a heading, the heading itself can apparently (in descriptive and/or procedural texts) count as the first clause of that section in French; participants introduced nominally in the heading can be linked to via personal reference in the clause immediately following the heading.