Translating for Communicative Purposes across Culture Boundaries

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Abstract

Taking a "skopos-oriented" approach to translation means that translators choose their translation strategies according to the purpose or function that the translated text is intended to fulfil for the target audience. Communicative purposes can only be achieved under certain conditions, such as culture-specific knowledge presuppositions, value systems or behaviour conventions. Therefore, the translator will have to analyse the target-culture conditions for which the translation is needed (as specified in the translation brief) in order to decide whether, and how, any source-text purposes can work for the target audience according to the specifications of the brief. If the target-culture conditions differ from those of the source culture, there are two basic options: either to transform the text in such a way that it can work under target-culture conditions, or to replace the source-text functions with their respective meta-functions. The paper will explore how these two options relate to translation typologies.

1. Preliminary Remarks

According to functional theories of translation, translating is regarded as a "purposeful activity" (cf. Nord 1997). This means that a translation process is not something that "happens" but a communicative action carried out by an expert in intercultural communication (the translator) playing the role of a text producer and aiming at some communicative purpose. Communicative purposes are directed at other people who are playing the role of receivers. Communication takes place through a medium and in situations that are limited in time and place. Each specific situation

(including the interacting parties) determines what and how people communicate, and it is changed if people who communicate change. Situations are not universal but embedded in a cultural habitat, which in turn conditions the situation.

In translation, the translator deals with a source text produced under a set of source-culture conditions for a source-culture audience. What is said and how it is said are determined by the author's communicative purposes and his or her assessment of the situation for which the message is intended. The translation will be used in a different situation determined by a different set of target-culture conditions. It may be different with regard to time and place (except in simultaneous interpreting), sometimes with regard to medium (e.g., the translation of a conference *paper* is published in a *book* called *Proceedings*), and definitely with regard to the addressed audience (e.g., their general and cultural knowledge, sociocultural background, value systems and world view).

If the functionality of a text is determined by these extratextual or pragmatic factors, it is obvious that in order to make a source-culture text work in a target-culture situation the translator's activity involves more than just a "replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent material in another language", as Catford put it more than forty years ago (Catford 1965: 20). The meaning or function of a text is not something inherent in the linguistic signs; it cannot simply be extracted by anyone who knows the code. A text is made meaningful by its receiver and for its receiver. Different receivers (or even the same receiver at different moments) find different meanings in the same lingusitic material offered by the text. We might even say that a "text" is as many texts as there are receivers of it.

Somebody who commissions a translation and is willing to pay for it, usually has some purpose in mind for which the target text is needed. Therefore, the translator — like any other text producer — analyses the pragmatics of the (prospective) target situation before deciding on what to say (i.e. how to rearrange the information given in the source) and how to say it (i.e. what linguistic or even non-linguistic devices to use in order to make the text fit for the client's purpose).

Every translation process is guided by the communicative purposes which the target text is supposed to achieve in the target culture. This is a very simple principle. But how can we deal with these purposes? How do we define a communicative purpose? Can we find categories or types of such purposes? What are the conditions for the transfer of such purposes

across a linguistic and a cultural barrier? In the following sections, I will try to answer these questions. After explaining my concept of communicative purposes and functions (section 2.0), I will suggest a four-function model to be used in the translation classroom (section 3.0). We will then see how the basic functions (and their respective sub-functions) work in intra and intercultural communication and what consequences can be derived from the proposed model for translation practice and training (section 4.0). The relationship between functionality and text type is also discussed (section 5.0). In my conclusions (section 6.0), I will formulate a number of basic principles for functional translation.

2. Purposes and Functions in Communication

The core theory behind modern functionalist approaches to translation is Skopostheorie (Vermeer 1978). *Skopos* is a Greek word meaning "purpose" or "intention". In the theory, *skopos* usually refers to the communicative purpose of the translational action. To say that an action has a purpose is to presuppose the existence of a free will of the actant and a choice between at least two possible forms of behaviour. This means that if in a given translation assignment there are two (or more) possible ways of translating the source text (or any of its segments), the translator has to make a choice. The main criterion for this choice is the communicative purpose which the client wants to achieve with the translation (e.g., sell a product, convince the audience of certain ideas, inform or instruct the readers how to use a particular machine, explain the use of a new technical term, share an aesthetic or emotional experience, etc.).

If it is entirely up to the receiver to decide on the functionality of a text, there is no guarantee that a text will actually achieve the communicative purpose for which it is produced. Therefore, I would like to make a distinction between *purpose* or *intention* on the one hand, and *function* on the other. *Purpose* or *intention* is defined from the sender's viewpoint, whereas *function* is seen from the receiver's perspective. In an ideal situation, the sender's intention will actually find its aim, and if so, we would observe a congruity of intention and function. In other cases, intention and function may not be congruent but overlapping. But very often, especially where source and target cultures are separated by a large cultural distance, it is actually impossible that the sender's intention becomes the text function for the target readership. Just imagine a medieval magic formula produced for an audience that believed in the
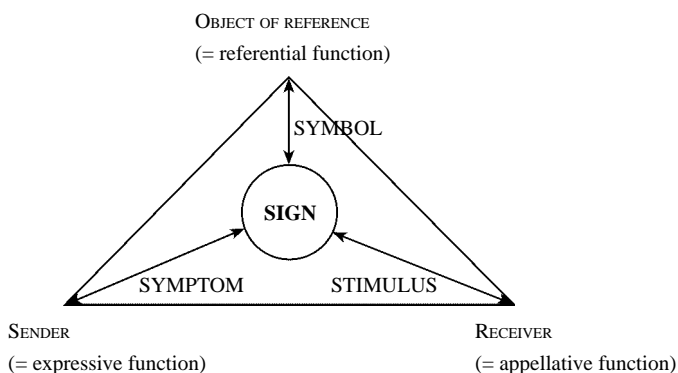
magic effects of certain words or phrases. If such a text is translated today, it is bound to have a different function for a modern audience, e.g. that of a document of magic beliefs in ancient times. Or think of proper names in fictional texts: A little English girl called Alice may turn into a little Italian or French or German girl if her name is pronounced according to the phonological rules of the respective target languages.

3. The Four-function Model

3.1 Theoretical Points of Departure

Various models of text function could serve as points of departure for translator training. The model which I suggest here has the advantage of being simple enough to be used in a translation classroom and of having a clear focus on translation. It draws on the combination of two previous models: Karl Bühler's (1934) organon model and Jakobson's (1960) model of language functions.

Karl Bühler as a psychologist regards the linguistic sign as a "tool" (in Greek: *organon*) which can be analysed on the grounds of its relationship with the main factors in communication, as depicted in his famous triangle:

OBJECT OF REFERENCE
(= referential function)

SYMBOL

SIGN

SYMPTOM   STIMULUS

SENDER   RECEIVER
(= expressive function)   (= appellative function)

According to this organon model, the linguistic sign (which Bühler thought of as words, but which we could think of also as part from a text or text segment or utterance) can be used in three basic functions: as a *symbol* of the object of reference when it is referential, as a *symptom* of the sender's state of mind it is expressive, and as a *stimulus* intended to move

the receiver into some kind of attitude or action when it is appellative. Referential, expressive and appellative functions are also present in Jakobson's (1960) model which also includes an additional fourth function. According to Jakobson, in its relationship with the channel of communication, the sign is phatic. This means that there are signs intended to make sure that the channel works.

We thus complete Bühler's (1934) triangular model by adding Jakobson's (1960) phatic function as a relationship between the linguistic sign, on the one hand, and the sender-receiver connection, on the other:
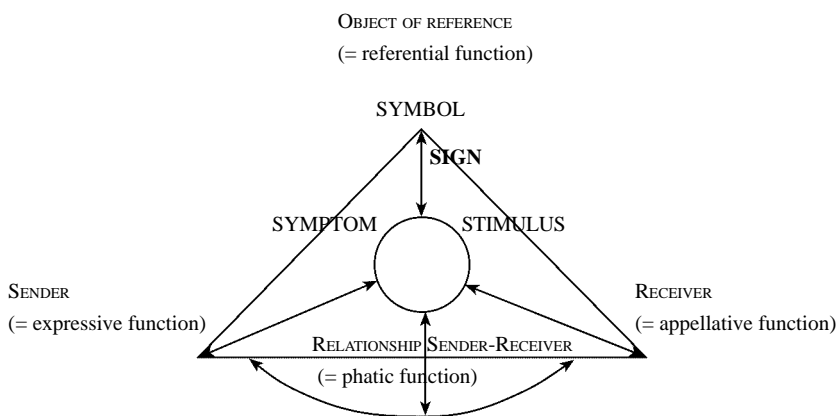
We will now define and describe these functions and some of their sub-functions, focusing on the way they work in communicative settings both within and across cultures.

3.2 The Phatic Function

According to Jakobson (1960), the phatic function aims at establishing, maintaining or ending the contact between sender and receiver. If the contact is to be successful it is also important to make sure that the relationship between sender and receiver is defined and developed in accordance with their status and the social roles they are taking in a particular situation (expressed, for example, in categories like formal/ informal, distance/proximity, and the like).

The main specifications of the phatic function would therefore be: a) making contact (e.g., by means of a small-talk about the weather, a

greeting, a title or heading); b) maintaining the channel open (e.g., by means of meta-discourse or connectives); c) closing the communicative interaction (e.g., saying good-bye); and d) defining and developing the social role relationship (e.g., by using certain forms of address or choosing an appropriate register). Since social roles are by definition usually part of the opening phase, the fourth phase or sub-function might also be subsumed under the first.

As can be seen from the few examples mentioned in brackets, the phatic function relies on the conventionality of (verbal and non-verbal) behaviour. Greetings, forms of address, politeness markers, ways of expressing thankfulness or regret, even physical distance between partners in communication ("proximity") or behaviour with regard to time ("chronemics"), gestures and face movements are all controlled by conventions which are very often independent of language structures.

> **Example 1:**
> It seems to be a convention in German tourist information texts to begin with a well-known saying or proverb pointing to the topic. A text on culinary specialities is introduced by the German equivalent of "The way to a man's heart is through his stomach", and a list of hotels starts off with a proverb on the effect a good rest has on people's well-being.

Introducing a text with something well-known means meeting the readers at their own points of departure and building a bridge between their knowledge and the new information the text is going to confront them with — a very popular strategy in pedagogical or "didactic" texts, which ensures that the communicative channel is and stays open.

3.3 The Referential Function

The referential function of an utterance involves reference to the objects and phenomena of the world or of a particular world, possibly a fictional one. It is specified according to the type of object the text refers to: If the referent is a product or a process unknown to the receiver, the text may describe its technical properties (= descriptive sub-function); if the referent is a language or a specific use of language, the sub-function may be metalinguistic; if the referent is the appropriate way of handling a washing-machine or of using a software programme, the sub-function may be called instructive, and so on.

Example 2:
Context: Falling down the rabbit hole, Alice (in Wonderland) comes across a bottle with some unknown liquid in it. Alice ventured to taste it, and finding it very nice (it had, in fact, a sort of mixed flavour of cherry tart, custard, pineapple, roast turkey, toffy and hot buttered toast), she very soon finished it off.

The referential function relies on the balance between given and presupposed information, as we know from text linguistics and functional sentence perspective (e.g., topic-comment). In order to make the referential function work, the receivers must be able to match the message given in the text with the previous knowledge that they have about the particular object in question. If the amount of new information is too large, they will fail to understand the message; if there is too little new information, they will lose interest in the text. In the example, the author assumes that the audience knows the flavours of cherry tart, custard, pineapple, roast turkey, toffy and hot buttered toast and that these things are not normally eaten together. If the assumption is not met, the readers will not be able to process the information given in the text, i.e. they will not be able to imagine the task of the liquid in the bottle.

3.4 The Expressive Function

The expressive function refers to the sender's attitude toward the objects and phenomena referred to in the text. It may be specified according to what is expressed. If the sender expresses individual feelings or emotions, we may speak of an emotive sub-function; if what is expressed is an evaluation, the sub-function will be evaluative. Utterances indicating the sender's wishes, hopes or plans for the future are expressive, too.

Example 3:
In her book *Une mort très douce* (literally: "a very sweet death"), Simone de Beauvoir describes her feelings and thoughts at the deathbed of her mother, with whom she had a rather difficult relationship. The title expresses the author's attitude by way of a contradiction in terms.

The expressive function can be verbalized explicitly (e.g., by means of evaluative or emotive adjectives, as in: *Cats are beautiful animals*), or implicitly, like in the Spanish version of Simone de Beauvoir's title. Explicit expressivity will be understood even by a reader who disagrees with the evaluation or does not approve of the emotions expressed by the

sender. Implicit expressivity, however, does only work if sender and receiver share the same value system and connotations.

3.5 The Appellative Function

The appellative function is directed at the receivers' sensitivity or disposition to act and aims at inducing the audience to respond in a particular way. If we want to illustrate a hypothesis by an example, we appeal to the reader's previous experience or knowledge; the intended reaction would be recognition of something known. If we want to persuade someone to do something or to share a particular viewpoint, we appeal to their sensitivity, their secret desires. If we want to make someone buy a particular product, we appeal to their real or imagined needs, describing those qualities of the product that are presumed to have positive values in the receivers' value system. If we want to make a person do something or refrain from doing something, we utter a command or recommendation. Specifications of the appellative function may, therefore, be the various grades of requesting (like recommending, asking, ordering, etc.) and of reminding (like referring or alluding to something assumed to be known). A particularly interesting sub-function is persuasion, because it instrumentalizes all the other functions for the purpose of making the receiver react in the intended way. This can be observed in advertizing. Advertisements try to persuade by addressing the audience in a particular way, e.g., by describing the (positive) characteristics of the product, by expressing (positive) evaluations or emotions with regard to the product, or by evoking (positive) memories or quoting and alluding to well-known texts.

> **Example 4:**
> Kate Saunders: Career woman — or just the little woman? Chic dinner tables are resounding with funereal orations over the twitching corpse of the women's movement — they come to bury it, certainly not to praise it. It was so selfish, so uncaring, so unnatural — surely home-building is nicer and more fulfilling than hacking through the professional jungle? The Eighties ideal was the woman who ran a business, made breakfast appointments to meet her own husband, and spent 20 minutes "quality time" a day with her children.

The text is comprehensible for a reader who does not recognize the allusion to Shakespeare — but for those who do, it has an "extra" of irony that makes them smile and perhaps remember some more lines of Mark Antony's famous speech[1]. Intertextuality is often used for stylistic reasons,

and rarely do authors rely on it alone because there may always be some readers who will not discover it. But, since intertextuality is usually limited to the text repertoire of a particular culture (including the world of translated literature), it may pose quite difficult problems to the translator.

4. Dealing with Purposes and Functions across Cultural Boundaries

We now look at what happens to the four basic functions in settings of intercultural communication.

4.1 The Phatic Function in Translation

As was mentioned before, the phatic function works on the basis of shared conventions. In face-to-face communication, "situational indicators" may compensate for unconventional behaviour if the situation clearly points to a phatic intention of one of the participants. But in written texts, this may not always be obvious. Coming back to Example 1, we look at the introduction of a tourist information on good eating and drinking in Munich (cf. Nord 2005).

Example 5:

Spezialitäten	Specialities	Gastronomie	Especialidades
"Liebe geht durch den Magen". Dieser Spruch findet in München seine besondere Bestätigung. Denn es gilt als ein Teil der vielzitierten Münchner Gemütlichkeit, dass man hier auch zu essen und zu trinken versteht. […]	"The way to a man's heart is through his stomach" it is said, and this proverb is perhaps particularly true in Munich, a city where some attention is devoted to good eating and drinking. […]	"L'amour passe par l'estomac" affirme un proverbe allemand... qui se trouve à Munich amplement confirmé: l'art culinaire munichois est en effet d'une appétissante variété. […]	"El amor pasa por el estómago" es un adagio que vale especialmente para Munich. Entender de comida y bebida forma parte de la tan citada "Gemüt-lichkeit", la acogedora atmós-fera de Munich. […]

Comparing the three translations with the original German text, we find that the translators used different strategies. The English version starts off with an English saying whose meaning is relatively close to what is said in the source (if we overlook the limitation to male visitors which would be politically incorrect today!). The French translator could not refer to an existing French proverb or saying, so s/he took a meta-perspective informing the reader about a German proverb. The Spanish translator, in turn, uses a literal translation of the German proverb pretending it was a Spanish saying, which it isn't. Therefore, the text lacks coherence for a Spanish-speaking readership. Summing up, we can say that the English translation reproduces the phatic intention of the source referring to something known by the audience, whereas the French version replaces the phatic intention by a referential one, providing a piece of information about the source culture which may even have a negative connotation if French readers think that love, in their culture, normally affects the heart or soul and not the stomach. Therefore, this translation might have a referential and/or expressive function for them. The Spanish translation makes the readers wonder wether there really is such a proverb in their culture, which does not achieve a phatic function either because it deviates the receiver's attention from the actual topic of the text.

In intercultural communication, the phatic intention verbalized in the source text can be interpreted correctly as phatic function by the target audience

- if the conventions of phatic communication are identical or similar in the source and the target culture, or
- if the phatic intention is clearly indicated by situational clues.

If these conditions are not met, the translator may decide

- either to change the phatic into a meta-phatic (= referential) function e.g. by informing about the phatic markers present in the source text (see the French version of Example 5),
- or to make the phatic intention work as phatic function for the target audience by replacing source-culture conventional behaviour patterns with target-culture behaviour patterns (see the English version of Example 5).

4.2 The Referential Function in Translation

As we have seen above, the referential function works on the basis of the

information explicitly verbalized in the text plus the information that is not verbalized because it is presupposed to be known to the addressed audience. In face-to-face communication, there may also be "situational indicators" compensating for any lack of previous knowledge. For example, there is no need to mention the conditions of time and space or the participants if they are evident to everybody present in the communicative interaction. In written communication, however, the references have to be meaningful by themselves.

Therefore, the referential intention of the source-text sender can be interpreted correctly by the target-text receiver

- if the textual information is sufficiently explicit and does not presuppose any information the reader is not familiar with,
- if the referent of the source-text is sufficiently familiar to the target audience,
- if the source-text sender and the target-text receiver share a sufficient amount of knowledge about the object in question, or
- if situational indicators compensate for information deficits.

If these conditions are not met, the translator, again, has two basic options:

- either to make the ST sender's referential intention work as a meta-referential function for the TT receiver by giving additional information about the ST situation in a metatext (e.g., footnote, glossary, foreword);
- or to make the ST sender's referential intention work for the target audience, giving additional information by means of an expansion in the text or turning the presupposed, implicit information of the source text into an explicit textual information.

Using Example 2 again, the first option would mean that the translator gives an explanation of, for example, *custard* in a footnote if the target reader cannot be expected to know this particular type of English dessert. The second option could be put into practice by either expanding the reference (e.g., "a thick sweet yellow liquid made by adding custard powder [= a mixture of dried eggs, fine flour, and sugar] to boiling sweetened milk", to use the definitions of the DOCE) or, if the culture-specificity is not relevant, by replacing it by a reference to a similar object known in the target culture, like *Vanillepudding* in German. The choice of strategy depends on whether the object of reference is the custard itself or the taste it brings to the mixture of various types of food which the text

refers to. It is obvious that the substitution with a target-culture "equivalent" may interfere with the homogeneity of the source culture represented in the story.

4.3 The Expressive Function in Translation

An explicit expressive intention is realized on the basis of evaluative or emotive plus verbal or nonverbal signs, as, for example, connotative adjectives or nouns or facial expressions like a wink of the eye. If the expressivity is implicit, it works on the ground of the value system and perspectives shared by sender and receiver. In intercultural communication, the source-text sender's expressive intention can be interpreted correctly as such by the target-text receiver

- if the expressive source-text utterances are explicit, or
- if implicitly expressive source-text utterances refer to values shared by the source and the target culture.

If this is not the case, the translator again has to choose between two strategies:

- either to make the ST sender's expressive intention work as a meta-expressive function for the target audience, which actually means turning it into a referential function by informing about or explaining the source text's expressivity in metatexts like footnotes or a foreword,
- or to make the ST sender's expressive intention work for the target audience by making implicit evaluations explicit or by adapting the expressivity markers to target-culture patterns.

Returning to Example 3, let us consider the English, German and Spanish translations of Simone de Beauvoir's book.

A Very Easy Death	Ein sanfter Tod (lit. A gentle death)	Una muerte muy lenta (lit. A very slow death)

Whatever purpose the author (or the publisher, for that matter) had in mind when she formulated the original title, we may state that the three translations will have different functions for the three audiences. The English title is evaluative: this could have been the doctor's statement, telling the daughter that her mother did not have to suffer much when she

died. The German title is both emotive and evaluative because *sanft* means "soft" referring to a touch or "gentle" referring to a person's character, but it is used idiomatically referring to an easy death. It is interesting to note that the emotive aspect is strengthened precisely by the omission of the emphacizing adverb. In a more literal translation, *Ein sehr sanfter Tod*, the hissing sound of the two "s's" of *sehr* and *sanft* and the long light vowel "ee" in *sehr* would have destroyed much of the title's poetic effect, of its "gentleness", so to say. The Spanish title is referential, describing the mother's death as a long process, probably with a negative connotation, at least in the Spanish culture, as I am told, because dying slowly (maybe painfully?) is not usually what most people would wish for.

Footnotes are not normally used neither in original nor in translated titles, therefore the meta-referential option was out of the question in this case. But the translator (or the publisher) could have decided to use a meta-communicative explaining sub-title, e.g. something like: *Tender feelings at my mothers deathbed*, if the title had to be translated for a culture that does not share the same values.

4.4 The Appellative Function in Translation

The appellative function works on the basis of common experience, sensitivity, world and cultural knowledge, emotions, values etc. are shared by sender and receiver. The receiver must be able and willing to cooperate to make the appellative function work. In intercultural communication, the source-text sender's appellative intention can be interpreted correctly by the target-text receiver,

- if the receivers in the source and the target culture share the experience, sensitivity etc. to which the source-text sender appeals.

If this is not the case, the translator may choose between three options, two of which involve a change of function:

- either to make the ST sender's appellative intention work as a *meta-appellative* function for the target audience by means of explanations or comments in a metatext (which may amount to something like explaining why a joke is funny, but in certain situations this is what the client wants the translator to do …),
- or to make the ST sender's direct appellativity work as *indirect appellativity* by drawing the target-culture audience's attention to

> the analogies between their own situation and the one described in the text,
>
> • or to make the ST sender's appellative intention work as appellative function for the target audience by adapting it to target-culture functionality conditions or by replacing source-culture appellative elements with target-culture appellative elements.

In example 4 we referred to an intertextual allusion used for stylistic purposes in a commentary in the New York Times. For a translation of this text fragment, the first option would mean that the translator introduces a footnote referring to the source (e.g. "allusion to Shakespeare, Julius Caesar, Act III, scene 2"). This option would be appropriate if the text were translated for a scholar analysing intertextuality in newspaper texts, for example. In a translation for a similar press publication, an expansion like "using Shakespeare's words" would at least give the reader an (informative) indication that there is an allusion to Shakespeare — but it is obvious that this cannot achieve an appellative function in the sense intended by the author. It might be difficult to replace the allusion to Shakespeare by an allusion to an equally classical author of the target-culture, but only this strategy would be able to produce something like an equivalence of effect.

5. Translation Strategies — Translation Types

Analysing the conditions of functionality in intercultural communication we find that the translator's two basic options correspond to the dichotomies known in translation theory since the days of Cicero (46 BC). The following table shows some of them. Type A refers to the "retrospective" or "source-oriented" strategy of keeping close to the source text, thus inevitably changing the function intended by the source-text author into a "meta"-function in the sense described above[2]; Type B refers to the "prospective" or "target-oriented" strategy of adapting the target text to target-culture conditions in order to make the source-text author's intention or purpose work for the target audience (cf. Nord 1997: 4ff.).

Although the definitions of Type A and Type B translations vary from one author to another, it is obvious that this "either-or" is typical of any translation process. Being a target-language text received under target-culture conditions, a translation can hardly be "faithful" to both the lexical and syntactical structures of the source text *and* the author's intention at the

Author	Type A	Type B
Cicero (106–43 B.C.): *De optimo genere oratorum*	"[traducere] ut interpres" (translate like a translator)	"[traducere] ut orator" (translate like a rhetorician)
Hieronymus [St. Jerome] (348–420): *Letter to Pamachius*	"verbum e verbo [exprimere]" (render word for word)	"sensum de sensu exprimere" (express sense for sense)
Martin Luther (1483–1546): *Circular Letter on Translation*, 1530	"translate" (reproduce the structures and the wording of the source text)	"Germanize" (i.e. adjust the text to the vernacular of the [German] target culture)
John Dryden (1631–1700): *Preface to Ovid's Epistle,* 1680	"metaphrase" (word for word or line for line)	"paraphrase" (sense for sense)
Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834): *On the different methods of Translating*, 1813	"taking the reader to the [original] text" (= "Verfremdung", *exotization*)	"taking the text to the reader"
Eugene A. Nida (1964)	"formal equivalence" (focusing on the source-text surface structures)	"dynamic/functional equivalence" (focusing on the purpose of the source-text author)
Juliane House (1977)	"overt translation" (for texts that are bound to a historical situation or author)	"covert translation" (for texts used in everyday communication)
Christiane Nord (1989)	"documentary translation" (subdivided into word-for-word, literal, philological and exoticizing translation forms, according to the purpose of the translation)	"instrumental translation" (subdivided into equi-functional, heterofunctional and homologous translation forms, according to the purpose of the translation)

same time, except perhaps in rare occasions where two linguocultures share the same linguistic and literary traditions. Even in neighbouring cultures with closely related language structures (like, for example, Dutch and German, or Spanish and Portuguese), culture-specific usage norms and behaviour conventions[3] account for divergent expressions of communicative intentions, which may then be interpreted as markers of different functions by the target audience. What matters, though, is the criterion determining the translator's decision. Cicero related the choice between Type A and Type B renderings to the role of the translating person

("translator" vs. "rhetorician"), for St. Jerome it depended on the text type (Holy Scriptures vs. non-biblical literature). Luther already used a purpose-related criterion ("exact interpretation" vs. "comprehensibility") but did not specify on what grounds he decided to follow one strategy or the other. Other scholars, like Schleiermacher or Nida claim that only one of the two types is the "translation proper", which for Schleiermacher is Type A and for Nida Type B. My own typology is strictly functional: The choice of translation type depends on the translation purpose(s) defined in the translation brief. In principle, the brief may require a Type-A or a Type-B translation for each and every source text.

In certain cases and within the boundaries of a particular culture, we might speak of "conventional" relationships between text type and translation type but this is by no means a general, let alone a universal, rule or norm. A set of operating instructions, for example, will *normally* require a Type-B translation (with the necessary adaptations to target-culture pragmatics and conventions), whereas a marriage certificate is *usually* rendered according to Type A (reproducing certain — but not all — features of the source text in the target language). But if the commissioner or the user of the translation is interested precisely in the differences between source and target language or culture, the translator might have to follow a type-A strategy even in the case of the operating instructions.

6. Conclusions

Functionalism is widely seen as appealing to common sense, although some consider it for "professional translation" in the sense of translation of computer manuals, operating instructions, technical descriptions, and commercial correspondence. If the source text is no longer regarded as the only yardstick, the other pole — the participants and conditions of the target situation — must naturally come more into focus. In order to emphasize this change of perspective, both Vermeer in his presentation of *Skopostheorie* as a "general theory of translation" (Vermeer 1978 and later) and other functionalists engaged in translator training (e.g., Kussmaul 1995) have probably been putting more emphasis on cases where adaptive procedures ensure the functionality of the target text than on all the other cases where documentary translation forms are called for.

This may have produced the impression that functionalist models in general, or *Skopostheorie* in particular, are mainly models of adaptation (cf. the criticisms levelled by Newmark 1990: 106 or Koller 1995: 196).

Yet this impression is really no more than a form of "selective reception", quite a normal process whereby, confronted by a large offer of information, we pay attention to only those items that succeed in awaking our interest or our disapproval. As has been discussed above, the functional approach accounts for all sorts of both documentary and instrumental modes of translation.

Finally, the aim of this contribution is not so much as to produce "new insights" about Skopos theory than it is to correct some frequent misconceptions (which, as I heard, are also present in Chinese functionalist circles) and to show its applicability to both translation practice and translator training. A general theory models a phenomenon of reality without paying attention to specific manifestations at specific moments or in specific places. Its application, however, has to account for culture-specific views and conditions and to get down to the nitty-gritty of doing. The analysis of speech-act functions and the conditions under which they "work" may provide some guidelines for any decisions which the translator has to take in the course of the translation process.

Notes

1. Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears; I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him … (Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, III,2)
2. I am not using the term *meta-function* in the sense it is given by systemic functional linguistics, but referring to meta-phatic, meta-referential, meta-expressive and meta-appellative. In these words, the Greek prefix *meta*-means "on a higher level", as in *metalanguage*. A meta-referential function can be observed in a translator's note explaining the source-text reference to a target reader.
3. In this context, I would like to make a distinction between the language structures with regard to vocabulary and syntax provided by the *langue*, in Saussure's terms, and preferences in language use, which are determined by cultural norms, like genre conventions or general conventions of what is viewed as "good style" in one culture or another (cf. Nord 1997: 53f., 2003). There are even striking differences in verbal and non-verbal behaviour between different parts of larger language areas, such as Germany, Switzerland and Austria, or Spain and any South American country.

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