

Discourse and the Translator*

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The title of this book is enticing. It suggests a discussion of translation that brings into the fore the components of discourse analysis, speech acts, semiotic systems, linguistic choices in the messages conveyed, the social and psychological intentions of the creator of the message and how the translator conveys these into the target language. The authors try to do just exactly what one expects from the title, for they tackle these aspects of language use in social activities and thus give the reader fresh perceptions and concepts for understanding both the messages of the source text and the target text and the complex task of the translator.

The positive attitude of the authors appears in their awareness that what applies to translation in discourse analysis applies also to other forms of language use. They realize that since both the source text and the target text are involved primarily in communication and since both writer and translator go through certain procedures to produce their texts, then different procedures produce different effects in different genres, different cultures and different times. Thus it is a natural consequence that the investigations in the book would trace the aims, lexical selections, grammatical arrangements of both the producer of the text and its translator and the context in which he is operating.

The authors' adopted position concerning objectivity and subjectivity is beyond reproach in light of modern critical theory: "Every reading of a text is a unique, unrepeatable act and a text is bound to evoke differing responses in different receivers." Of course, translation of any text is the translator's reading of that text. Different

* (London: Longman, 1990), 257.

parts of the book tackle the issues of translation of style, author's/translator's intent, poetic discourse, etc. In all, there are eleven chapters that cover the complex relationships that connect translation with linguistics, register analysis, language discourse, pragmatic and semiotic dimensions of context, text type and structure, intertextuality and discourse texture.

The authors suggest that the translation process involves the interaction of communicative, pragmatic, and semiotic principles. For the translator, these suggest a set of procedures that he follows in his capacity as a mediator between diverse cultures with differing perceptions of the world, differing ideologies, myths, etc. For the communicative transaction, the authors suggest that terminology is "a direct reflection of cultural specificity. The challenge to the translator is to perceive terminologies as vehicles of a culture...."

For pragmatic action, they see the translator faced with two sets of problems, "politeness strategies are likely to vary from culture to culture." The other involves the danger of loss of "subtle indicators of the way interaction is going...." Of the semiotic interaction, the authors suggest that intertextuality is a powerful dimension that signals schematic orientation and can lead to misunderstanding of cultural value, and the equivalence of texts as signs.

The book is a must for serious translators and translation studies researchers. Although it breaks new ground in the coupling of discourse analysis and translation, its major contribution is in the different avenues it opens for future study and in its attempt at creating a metalanguage for translation studies.