

## Book review

# Brian James Baer and Christopher D. Mellinger, eds. *Translating Texts: An Introductory Coursebook on Translation and Text Formation*

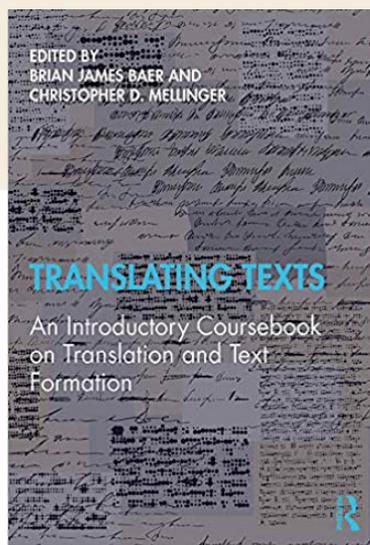
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In recent decades, a substantial amount of research has focused on the role of discourse conventions in translation. A wide array of studies, ranging from small-scale genre-specific cross-linguistic comparisons to larger corpus studies contrasting different text types, have repeatedly revealed the pivotal role of genre in translation of non-literary texts. At the same time, there is a general recognition among practitioners specializing in translator training in non-literary translation about the importance of incorporating text and genre awareness into translator training. It is therefore interesting that there has so far been limited interest in developing teaching materials that would help raise trainee translators' text awareness.

*Translating Texts: An Introductory Coursebook on Translation and Text Formation*, a textbook intended for trainee translators in both language-specific and language-neutral translation courses, as well as for language students, provides authentic materials designed to promote text awareness. It offers students an opportunity to gain insight into a text-centered approach to translation, fostering systematic reflection on macro- and micro-textual features of selected genres. Introducing a top-down approach to text analysis, the book draws on research into the text-based approach to translation, ranging from the seminal work of Nord (1988), Vermeer (1989), and Hatim and Mason (1997) to more recent studies by Laursen and Pellón (2014), Biel (2017), and Pietrzak (2019), to name just a few. Furthermore, *Translating Texts* explores the synergies between translation and text formation: a relationship between two processes that has



received surprisingly little attention in the context of L2 writing and L2 literacy skills development. As Göpefrich (2015: 416) points out, translation processes occur naturally in L2 writing; this textbook allows instructors and students to investigate this connection by combining L2 writing and translation.

The book comprises seven chapters. The introductory chapter focuses on three main issues. First, the authors shed light on the circumstances in which the textbook was developed and outline the reasons for its production, highlighting the interdisciplinarity of the textbook, which may be used in various courses, such as foreign languages, comparative and world literature, and translation. In addition, special emphasis is placed on the teaching aspect of translation, whereby the authors encourage a shift from a mechanistic approach, which is largely characterized by word-for-word translation, the overuse of bilingual dictionaries, and the disregard of other resources (e.g., parallel texts and background reading), toward a more holistic approach, which underlines the understanding of the core notion of text as the primary unit of translation. The second part of the introduction centers on the definition of the text, providing a brief theoretical background to text-based approaches to translation. Finally, the authors address how the textbook may be used, briefly presenting the six text types (recipes, instruction manuals, museum guides, patient education materials, news reports, and business letters) and the six languages (English, Chinese, German, Russian, French, and Spanish) used in the textbook.

Chapters 2–7 delve into the six text types in detail, starting with more informative and standardized genres, such as recipes and instruction manuals, before introducing less formulaic and more evaluative genres, such as news reports.

Chapter 2 deals with recipes, a highly standardized text type. The textual characteristics of recipes are first presented in English and then in the other five languages. For each language, the authors outline the general parameters of the corpus used for data collection and then focus on the macro- and micro-textual features of the specific language.

Chapter 3 considers instruction manuals, whose main goal is to provide the least competent user with all the necessary information on how to use a device as safely and effectively as possible. Although the main communicative function of instruction manuals is informative, the linguistic features that render this text type user-friendly vary across the six languages. In English, French, and German, there is frequent use of second-person pronouns, whereas Russian and Chinese resort to other strategies, such as impersonal passive constructions, impersonal plurals, and passive verbal adjectives or, in the case of Chinese, to ellipsis and a greater use of conjunctions.

Chapter 4 discusses museum guides, whose communicative function is also informative. Here, the most noticeable cross-linguistic differences appear at the macro-textual

level and regard various rhetorical moves. Some languages, such as English, use very persuasive language, providing details about parking, services, and accessibility information, whereas in other languages, such as Chinese, such moves are not vital for the success of a museum guide.

Patient education materials are introduced by Chapter 5. In this section, the focus is on the variation between languages in terms of reader involvement in the text by means of personal pronouns. Although all languages use the category of person (either through pronouns or, in the case of Russian, through verbal morphology), there is a tendency toward a more informal tone in English and Spanish, whereas German and Russian prefer the formal forms of pronouns and verbs, respectively.

Chapter 6 differs from the other chapters because it investigates the evaluative genre of news reports. Although news reports are expected to reflect events and provide information to the audience as objectively as possible, they often show traces of the ideological stance or attitude of the writers. All languages exhibit reporting verbs in the indicative mood in the present or past tense.

Finally, Chapter 7 analyses business letters, which are characterized by objectivity, politeness, formality, precision, and correctness. However, there are some cross-linguistic differences regarding the realization of these features. English and French, for instance, make frequent use of personal pronouns and possessive adjectives, whereas this is not the case in German and Russian, where the style appears more formal.

The textbook includes two appendices. Appendix A is a sample grading rubric and displays a possible grading scale that can be used to assess students' translations, and Appendix B contains useful tips and suggestions on how to build a corpus. The authors define the criteria that distinguish a corpus from a collection of texts, and they place particular emphasis on four criteria: representativeness, authenticity, size, and storage.

In sum, *Translating Texts* is a well-written, accessible textbook that fills a niche in translator training. Using corpus analysis, students are guided toward gaining insight into textual conventions and an in-depth understanding of the different layers of the text. With its versatile range of classroom materials, incorporation of the theoretical issues, and a scaffolded approach to obtaining the necessary textual skills, the textbook is a valuable resource for translator trainers working in non-literary translation.

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