

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE DISCOURSE-COMMUNICATIVE MODEL OF TRANSLATION

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Introduction

The discourse-communicative model of translation (DCMT) treats translation as an act of communication embedded within discourse, in which the translator continuously negotiates between the source text's discursive organisation and the communicative expectations of the target audience. While the previous stage of this research established the fundamental principles and the four-level structure of this model, the present thesis addresses a complementary question: which factors condition the way the model operates in practice, and how do these factors shape the translator's choice of strategy at each structural level. Identifying such factors is essential, since the model does not function identically across all texts; rather, its outcomes vary systematically according to a set of linguistic, extralinguistic, and situational variables.

The aim of this thesis is to classify and describe the principal factors that influence the discourse-communicative model of translation, distinguishing between factors internal to the text itself and factors external to it, arising from the communicative situation, the participants, and the socio-cultural context in which translation takes place. The discussion draws on the theoretical apparatus developed by Nida and Taber, Catford, Halliday and Hasan, van Dijk, House, Baker, and Munday, whose respective contributions to discourse analysis, translation quality assessment, and translation typology together provide the conceptual tools required for this classification.

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Before turning to the classification itself, it is necessary to clarify the sense in which a factor is said to “influence” the discourse-communicative model. Within the present thesis, a factor is understood as any variable that systematically constrains the range of translation strategies available at the strategic level of the model, or that alters the criteria against which the adequacy of a chosen strategy is assessed at the evaluative level. Factors, in this sense, do not determine a single correct translation; rather, they narrow the space of admissible solutions and establish the relative priority among the model's three governing principles — discursive integrity, communicative equivalence, and contextual dependency — for a given translation task. This clarification is essential, since it distinguishes the present analysis from purely descriptive inventories of translation difficulties, situating it instead within the explanatory logic of the discourse-communicative model as previously established.

Linguistic and textual factors

The first group of factors influencing the DCMT is internal to the text and concerns its linguistic and structural properties. Chief among these is “genre”, understood as the conventional organisation of a text type recognised by a given discourse community. Genre conventions determine expectations regarding macrostructure, degree of explicitness, and permissible stylistic

variation; a legal document, a literary narrative, and a news report each impose distinct constraints on how information may be sequenced and how much may remain implicit. Because these conventions frequently diverge between the source and target linguistic communities, genre exerts a decisive influence on which translation strategies are available at the strategic level of the model.

A second textual factor is “cohesion and coherence”, in the sense established by Halliday and Hasan. The density and type of cohesive devices — reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion — vary across languages, so that a cohesive pattern natural in the source language may, if transferred directly, produce a target text that reads as either redundant or insufficiently connected. The translator's decisions at the discourse level of the DCMT are therefore constrained by the need to reconstruct equivalent coherence relations using the cohesive resources native to the target language, rather than by mechanically reproducing source-language cohesive markers.

A third factor is “register”, comprising field, tenor, and mode as defined within House's model of translation quality assessment. Field refers to the subject matter and domain of the text; tenor to the relationship between participants and the degree of formality this relationship requires; and mode to the channel of communication, whether written, spoken, or hybrid, as in digital and audiovisual discourse. Shifts in any of these three dimensions between source and target contexts compel the translator to adjust lexical choice, syntactic complexity, and stylistic tone accordingly.

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A fourth textual factor, closely related to register but distinct from it, is “syntactic typology”, that is, the structural differences between the grammatical systems of the source and target languages. Languages differ in the extent to which they permit long subordinate clauses, in their preferred word order for conveying information structure, and in the devices available for marking topic and focus. Where the source and target languages differ substantially in these respects, the translator operating within the DCMT must reorganise sentence-level syntax in order to preserve the discourse-level coherence identified as a governing principle of the model, even at the cost of departing from the source text's surface grammatical form. Catford's early account of translation shifts already anticipated this necessity, describing the systematic grammatical adjustments that translation between typologically distant languages inevitably requires.

A fifth textual factor is “lexical density and terminology”, particularly relevant for specialised or technical discourse. Texts with a high concentration of domain-specific terms place a heavier interpretive burden on the translator, who must determine whether established target-language equivalents exist, whether such equivalents carry the same conceptual scope as the source term, and whether a gap in the target terminological system requires borrowing, calque, or explanatory paraphrase. This factor interacts closely with genre, since specialised genres such as legal, scientific, or technical discourse typically exhibit both a distinctive macrostructure and a correspondingly high lexical density.

Extralinguistic and situational factors

The second group of factors is external to the text and arises from the communicative situation and its participants, corresponding to the communicative-situational level of the DCMT. The most prominent such factor is the “target audience”, whose background knowledge, expectations, and cultural frame of reference determine how much implicit information the translator may safely retain and how much must be explicated. A text intended for specialists

tolerates a higher density of unexplained terminology than one intended for a general readership, and the translator's assessment of audience competence directly shapes decisions taken at the strategic level of the model.

A second situational factor is the “communicative purpose” (skopos) of the translation, which may diverge from the purpose of the original text. A literary work translated for academic analysis, for instance, may require a more source-oriented, annotated rendering than the same work translated for general publication, where a more target-oriented, fluent rendering is typically preferred. Because purpose can override other considerations, it functions within the DCMT as a high-level filter that determines the relative weight assigned to the principles of discursive integrity and communicative equivalence.

A third situational factor is “cultural distance” between the source and target communities. Where source-culture references, idiomatic expressions, or socio-historical allusions have no direct counterpart in the target culture, the translator must resort to strategies such as domestication, foreignization, or compensation, as classified by Baker and Munday. The degree of cultural distance therefore directly conditions which strategic options are realistically available, and how heavily each option will be weighted against the principle of contextual dependency.

A fourth situational factor, often underestimated in earlier models but explicitly accommodated within the DCMT, is the “channel and medium” of communication. Translation for subtitling, dubbing, print publication, or digital platforms each impose distinct technical constraints — spatial, temporal, or interactive — that interact with genre and register to shape the final translation independently of purely linguistic considerations.

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A fifth situational factor is the “translator's own position” within the communicative event — a factor increasingly recognised in discourse-oriented approaches to translation, including Munday's discussion of translator visibility and ideological positioning. The translator is never a neutral conduit but an active participant whose interpretive choices are shaped by professional norms, institutional constraints, and, at times, ideological commitments. This factor becomes particularly salient in politically or ethically sensitive texts, where the translator's implicit stance may influence the selection of near-synonymous lexical items or the degree of explicitation applied to contentious content, thereby affecting the communicative equivalence achieved between source and target texts.

Interaction of factors within the model

Although the factors described above can be analytically separated into textual and extralinguistic categories, in practice they interact continuously within the four-level structure of the DCMT. Genre conventions at the discourse level frequently presuppose a particular audience and purpose at the communicative-situational level; register choices are simultaneously constrained by cultural distance and by the specific channel of communication; and the evaluative level of the model assesses the translated text against target-discourse norms that are themselves shaped by all of the preceding factors combined. It follows that no single factor can be treated as decisive in isolation: the discourse-communicative model requires the translator to weigh these factors jointly, resolving tensions between them according to the communicative purpose that governs the translation task as a whole.

This interaction also has a direct methodological consequence for empirical research conducted within the DCMT framework. Because each factor can, in principle, be operationalised as an observable variable — genre as a classifiable text type, register as a measurable configuration of field, tenor, and mode, cultural distance as an identifiable set of untranslatable references, and channel as a specifiable technical constraint — researchers are

able to construct comparative corpora in which the influence of individual factors on translators' strategic choices can be isolated and tested. Such research typically proceeds by holding certain factors constant across a set of source texts while allowing others to vary, thereby permitting the analyst to observe which factor most strongly predicts the selection of a given strategy in a given context. This methodological principle underlies the comparative analysis of translation strategies undertaken in the subsequent stage of the present research.

It is also worth noting that the relative weight of these factors is not fixed across all translation tasks but shifts according to text type and communicative goal. In highly formulaic genres, such as legal or administrative documents, textual factors — particularly genre convention and terminology — tend to dominate, since deviation from established macrostructure risks undermining the legal validity or institutional recognisability of the translated document. In literary translation, by contrast, extralinguistic factors such as cultural distance and the translator's own interpretive stance frequently assume greater weight, since literary discourse typically permits, and often rewards, a wider range of legitimate strategic solutions. Recognising this variable weighting allows the discourse-communicative model to remain sufficiently flexible to accommodate the full diversity of text types encountered in translation practice, while still offering a systematic account of the factors that any translator must consider.

Conclusion

The discourse-communicative model of translation operates under the joint influence of textual factors — genre, cohesion and coherence, and register — and extralinguistic, situational factors — target audience, communicative purpose, cultural distance, and channel of communication. These factors do not act independently but interact continuously across the four structural levels of the model, jointly determining which translation strategies are available and which are judged adequate at the evaluative stage. Recognising and systematising these factors provides both a deeper theoretical understanding of how the discourse-communicative model functions and a practical methodological basis for the empirical, comparative analysis of translation strategies to be undertaken in the following chapter of this research.

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