# Integration in Specialisation. The GENTT Research Group[1]: Genre as an Integrative Concept in Translation Studies

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## Abstract

The interdisciplinary and complexity of translation have led to a diversity of co-existing approaches in Translation Studies. Translation can be studied from a range of perspectives, and every approach tends to focus on a limited number of aspects. In the area of specialised translation, the integrative nature of translation is frequently neglected, which may lead to overly narrow analyses. In this paper, it is shown how the concept of 'genre' incorporates a wider range of the defining aspects of translation. The use of genre as a core element makes it possible to combine linguistic, textual, communicative and cognitive aspects as part of a more comprehensive study of specialised translation. In practical terms, this integrative approach is reflected in the GENTT knowledge management system (covering linguistic, textual and communicative aspects) and in the cognitive mapping within three fields of specialism (legal, medical and technical) that the research group is developing.

*Keywords: specialised translation, 'genre', cognitive mapping, integrative approach*

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**Introduction**

In recent decades, various scholars (Newmark, 1990; Pym, 1992; Gutt, 1993) have questioned the possibility and/or appropriateness of the creation of a general and comprehensive theory of translation, due to the multiplicity of factors involved therein. On the other hand, it has also been argued that there is a need to produce an integrative and general theory of translation (Holmes, 1972); Steiner, 1975). Both positions share a significant degree of common ground: the acknowledgment of the interdisciplinary nature of translation. This interdisciplinar-ity is corroborated by the definitions of translation provided by some of the most outstanding scholars, who adopt different perspectives and place the emphasis on different aspects: "the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent material in another language (TL)" (Catford, 1965: 20); "source-text induced target text production" (Neubert, 1985: 18); "a transfer process, which aims at the transformation of a written SL text into an optimally equivalent TL text" (Wilss, 1982: 3); "[…] an act of communication which attempts to relay, across cultural and linguistic boundaries, another act of communication" (Hatim & Mason, 1997: 1).

Leaving aside the two opposing positions mentioned above, it is a fact that current globalisation also entails a trend towards narrow specialisation. In the area of Translation Studies, narrow specialisation may imply a risk of moving towards a situation of overspecialisation, which would stake out separate and independent territories and result in a fragmented analysis, disregarding the complex nature of translation.

On the one hand, the diversity of approaches to translation create a multidimensional picture and, at the same time, lead to a segmentation of the discipline. Such segmentation may be useful in certain fields, such as machine translation, given their applied and specialised character. On the other hand, it is crucial to adopt an integrative perspective which interconnects these multiple dimensions, in order to prevent overspecialisation and compartmentalization, as this "can only weaken the position of the discipline in the academy and obscure opportunities for further progress in the field" (Baker, 1998: 280).

The research group GENTT (Textual Genres for Translation: www.gentt.uji.es) engages with the concept of textual genre from an interdisciplinary perspective that allows for an integrative approach to specialised translation. By introducing the concept of "genre", it is possible to incorporate the different

dimensions of text as well as aspects specific to a particular text type into our approach to translation, so that the concept of "genre" can be an extremely valuable tool which will lead to a more integrative approach to the discipline, while the translator can benefit from the practical application of the insights provided by the detailed analysis of specific genres.

In this article, I will review, in a succinct manner, the main co-existing approaches to translation, focusing on textual approaches, which the GENTT group's research is based on, and I will also provide a brief account of the main theories within genre studies. Then, I will present the research carried out by the GENTT group, showing how the concept of genre proposed by GENTT brings together the main defining elements of translation.

## Translation Theories

> There is no unified way of approaching the study of translation. [...] Translation invites and recommends a variety of theoretical and methodological responses. (Neubert & Shreve, 1992: 6)

Without aiming to be an in-depth analysis, this review of the most representative approaches to translation will sketch out the "mapping" of Translation Studies. Hurtado Albir (2001: 130-131) proposes a classification of the various co-existing approaches to translation, distinguishing five main theoretical blocks: "Linguistic theories", "Textual theories", "Cognitive theories", "Social and communicative theories" and "Philosophical and hermeneutic theories". Naturally, each of these five blocks contains a wide variety of models in which a general chronological evolution can be observed.

"Linguistic theories" are based on the application of a specific linguistic model and the idea that any translation theory should be built on a certain theory of language. The two languages involved in any act of translating are described and compared. Within these theories, different approaches can be distinguished, depending on the linguistic model applied. Amongst the proponents of this type of approach are Vinay and Darbelnet (1958), Catford (1965) and Vázquez Áyora (1977).

"Textual theories" argue that translation is a textual process, and they incorporate aspects such as macro-structure, micro-structure, intertextuality, etc., depending on the taxonomy applied, into their interpretations of the act of translation.

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Within these theories names such as Ladmiral (1979), House (1981), Neubert (1985) and Hatim and Mason (1990) can be highlighted.

"Cognitive theories" are those focusing on the analysis of the mental processes involved in the act of translation. Applying a psycholinguistic framework to translation, scholars intend to "establish how translators and interpreters process information, both as distinct from other speakers and writers and as distinct from each other" (Bell, 1998: 185). This approach can be found in work by scholars such as Delisle (1980), Wilss (1982), Kussmaul (1995) and Kiraly (1995).

"Communicative and Socio-cultural theories" place the emphasis on the communicative function of translations, taking into consideration all contextual aspects surrounding a translation and emphasizing the relevance of cultural elements as well as the role of the translations' readers. According to Mason, in communicative and socio-cultural theories "the context of situation is crucial and must include the participants in speech events, the action taking place and other relevant features" (Mason, 1998: 29). The translator should make any required adjustment in order to achieve appropriateness in the different contexts and uses involved. Scholars such as Nida and Taber (1969), Toury (1995), Reiß and Vermeer (1991), and Nord (1997) can be included in the list of those embracing this approach.

"Philosophical and Hermeneutic theories" are those that focus on the hermeneutic nature of translation and the philosophical aspects therein. According to Robinson, these theories involve "an empathic projection of the interpreter's desire to understand into the activity s/he is attempting to understand" (Robinson, 1998: 97). Hermeneuts, therefore, "imagine themselves inside the activity […] and attempt to describe what they find from within" (ibid: 97). This approach is adopted by Berman (1984), Steiner (1975) and Ortega Arjonilla (1996).

In the following subsection I will single out textual theories and follow their evolution, given that they constitute the background for the GENTT's approach to genre.

*Textual theories*

> [...] translations are texts and [...] the processes of translation are
> primarily textual processes. (Neubert & Shreve, 1992: 124)

Textual theories arose in the nineteen sixties and seventies, based on three main approaches: the British Linguistic Tradition (Firth, 1957; Halliday, 1976), the French

Linguistic Tradition (Maingueneau, 1991; Ducrot, 1972), and Text Linguistics (Beaugrande & Dressler, 1981). The British and the French Linguistic Traditions both discussed the relation of interdependency between language, culture and society; in the British tradition emphasis was placed on oral speech, studied from an anthropological perspective, whereas the French tradition focused primarily on written discourse and was more linguistically oriented. In Text Linguistics, the crucial notion is that of the "text", which is considered the essential linguistic unit and thus the primary object of study.

Textual theories argue that translation is a textual process and they work with the "raw material" of translation, the text, as the basic unit of communication. Within Textual theories, various models and approaches can be identified Particularly noteworthy is the work carried out by members of the School of Leipzig, with figures such as Neubert and Shreve (1992), who adopt the categories proposed by Dressler and De Beaugrande (1981); Chesterman (1998), who advocates the application of a contrastive-functional analysis, based on Halliday (1976); Hatim and Mason (1990, 1997) who place themselves within the Discourse Analysis approach; and Baker (1998), who proposes an analysis initiated at the word level and subsequently moving upwards to the levels of cohesion and coherence.

> Texts are vehicles of purposeful interaction. (Beaugrande & Dressler, 1981: 15)

> Text: A set of mutually relevant communicative functions, structured in such a way as to achieve an overall rhetorical purpose. (Hatim & Mason, 1990: 243)

> The text is the central defining issue in translation. Texts and their situations define the translation process. (Neubert & Shreve, 1992: 5)

Translation literature has provided a variety of definitions of text, more or less specialised, in accordance with different models. All of them contain elements which, despite not being purely textual, play an indispensable role in the configuration of a text as the unit of the communication and in the translation process. Indeed, text-centred approaches require the consideration of other categories or aspects which are intimately and necessarily related to texts. In this sense, text analysis can be considered an "initial exercise" (Hatim, 1998: 263) to be supplemented by the study of discourse.

In translation literature, scholars have presented several proposals for the analysis and categorisation of discourse. In what follows, I am going to summarize two of the most relevant theories, Neubert and Shreve's (1992) and Hatim and Mason's (1990).

Based on De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981), Neubert and Shreve (1992) apply the notion of 'textuality' to translation:

> In the context of translation studies, the principle of textuality can be used to define the conditions under which a $L_1$ text and its $L_2$ counterpart can be said to be textually equivalent. (1992: 70)

According to these authors, textuality consists of seven broad features: intentionality, acceptability, situationality, informativity, coherence, cohesion and intertextuality. These categories or features represent an attempt to perform an integrative analysis of the role of the text, considered to be the basic unit, within the translation process[2].

Intentionality (Neubert & Shreve, 1992: 72) is conceived as the effect of an author's decisions regarding the text and the intentions of the reader; acceptability (ibid.: 73) is defined as the constrains that texts must conform to in order to be recognisable as such; situationality (ibid.: 85) refers to the location of the text in a socio-cultural and temporal context; informativity (ibid.: 90) deals with the substantive knowledge content; coherence (ibid.: 93) is the logical structure that texts take on in terms of their semantic connections; cohesion (ibid.: 103) reflects the way knowledge is organised; and intertextuality (ibid.: 117) is the feature that allows the reader to recognise texts as "being like other texts of this kind".

Hatim and Mason (1990) emphasize the importance of the context and analyse it thoroughly, identifying three aspects to be taken into account, which means that the context of the act of communication taking place through texts consists of three dimensions: the communicative, the pragmatic and the semiotic dimension.

The most relevant aspects involved in the communicative dimensions (Hatim and Mason, 1990: 58) are linked to the user (idiolect, dialect, etc.) and to the use (field, mode, tenor, etc.). The pragmatic dimension (ibid.: 59-66) comprises "the study of the relations between language and its context of utterance" (ibid.: 59) and is determined by speech acts, implicatures, presuppositions, etc. The semiotic dimension involves

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[2] It is remarkable that these seven features are also incorporated into the notion of genre proposed by the GENTT group.

aspects such as word, text, discourse and genre, all of them considered as signs, as well as intertextuality (ibid.: 120-137) which is conceived as a fundamental element in the recognition of texts in terms of their relations with other relevant texts.

The above overview of the evolution within textual approaches shows how elements that traditionally would not have been regarded as "text" are considered to be key factors in the analysis of discourse and, ultimately, in the analysis of communication. Translation is, necessarily, an act of communication and, as such, requires a multiplicity of factors to be taken into account. This could be done by incorporating extra elements into the traditional view of texts, should one wish to continue considering the text as the core element, or by employing a wider and more dynamic concept: genre.

## The Concept of Genre: Genre Studies

> Without an integrating concept we run the risk that translation will be understood only in parts, and never as a whole. If there are no integrating concepts, there can be no hope of an integrated or unified theory of translation. (Neubert & Shreve, 1992: 13-14)

Having reviewed some of the main contributions within textual theories – based on the notion of text, supplemented by contextual categories or dimensions – it is clear that text is not a wide enough concept, as some aspects such as situational factors are left aside. Working with a wider concept implies the integration of a greater number of elements, and the concept of genre facilitates this.

In literary studies, the notion of genre has been worked with for a long time; however, the incorporation of genre into translation studies is relatively recent, having taken place in the nineteen eighties. The concept of genre was initially applied to the most superficial levels such as formal structure and grammar, before being extended to more dynamic aspects such as function and intentionality. Generally speaking, "genres" are defined as "conventional forms of texts associated with particular types of social occasion" (Hatim and Mason, 1990: 241) and, as such, they are of great interest and value for Translation Studies (Berkenkotter and Huckin, 1995, Freedman, 1997, García-Izquierdo, 2005). The benefits of applying the concept of genre to the study of translation include, amongst other things, a deeper knowledge of the different translation fields and specialisms, and the identification of textual and communicative patterns:

El estudio sobre los géneros no ha hecho sino empezar. Consideramos que la descripción y la clasificación de los géneros es fundamental para el desarrollo de los estudios descriptivos en la Traductología, ya que permiten conocer mejor las modalidades y tipos de traducción, pero también para la didáctica de la traducción, por sus aplicaciones pedagógicas […]. (Hurtado Albir, 2001: 505)[3]

The most relevant approaches to genre are those provided by the Sydney School, also known as Functional-Systemic School of Linguistics, the New Rhetoric or American School, and by Textual Approaches. Although there naturally exists a considerable degree of overlap between them, they present differing theoretical positions in their approach to genre. According to Freedman and Medway (1994: 9), the main difference between the New Rhetoric and the Sydney School lies in the static vision of genre applied in the latter as well as "far greater emphasis by the Sydney School scholars on explicating textual features using Hallidayan schemes of linguistic analysis, while North American work has focused on unpacking complex relations between text and context".

The Sydney School, founded by Halliday, places the emphasis on the analysis of the relation between language and its function in society, applying the concept of register (context of situation), and genre (context of culture)[4], in order to provide an explanation of textual features, using the parameters of linguistic analysis proposed by Halliday. The Sydney School has produced outstanding work on the study of genre applied to LSP (Language for Specialised Purposes). Work carried out by authors such as Swales and Bhatia can be understood to share this approach. Swales (1990, 2004) applies the concept of "move" in order to illustrate the rhetoric progression of the text and provides an interesting analysis of the academic genre "research article" based on the following concepts: "discourse community" (Swales, 1990: 21-32), "genre" (ibid.: 33-67) and "communicative purpose" (ibid.: 10), which "operates as the primary determinant of task". Bhatia (1993) argues that the communicative purpose plays a determining role in the definition of genres; the distinction between genres is thus

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[3] English translation: The study of genre has only just started. We consider the description and classification of genres to be of great value for the development of descriptive translation studies since genres not only allow a deeper knowledge of different modalities and types of translation but are also useful for translator's training, due to their pedagogical applications.
[4] Terminology proposed by Halliday (1976).

based on an analysis of function. Like that of Swales, Bathia's research is also predominantly LSP-oriented.

The New Rhetoric approach, founded by authors such as Miller (1984), Bazerman (1988) and Freedman and Medway (1994), integrates sociology and rhetoric. Proponents of this approach have provided a significant contribution to aspects such as context and ideology within genre studies. As far as methodology is concerned, this approach is characterised by a strong influence of ethnography, whereas linguistic aspects do not occupy a central position. Freedman (1994: 50) defines genre as a goal-oriented purposeful rhetoric strategy, and he introduces the notions of 'ceremonial' and 'place' (ibid.: 63) in an attempt to reveal 'how language interacts with other semiotic systems to form texts', giving rise to the conventions that mark each genre. Along the same lines, Bazerman (1988) claims that writers need to be aware of and use genre conventions to "pursue individual interests, and/or to resolve particular issues of knowledge" (ibid.: 159). In the New Rhetoric approach, rhetoric and genre are linked in an attempt to analyse how genres influence the writers and readers of a text.

Textual Approaches focus on the concept of text and establish an association between text and situation in which the notion of genre[5] is introduced. Therefore, genre is considered to be a textual variation or characterisation within this perspective. Scholars such as Hatim and Mason (1990), Reiss and Vermeer (1991) and Neubert and Shreve (1992) have adopted this approach. Hatim and Mason (1990) conceive genre as a textual variant and undertake a thorough study of register (ibid.: 36-54), distinguishing between "field of discourse", "mode of discourse" and "tenor of discourse". Reiss and Vermeer (1991) claim that '*Textsorten*' originate, in each language, in the repetition of similar communicative situations and constitute an indispensable aspect without which an analysis of texts could not be complete. These authors provide a function-based analysis of translation and argue that genres are very useful for translators, since they enable them to produce texts which meet the expectations of readers and comply with the conventions of the target language. From this brief description, it can be concluded that, within textual approaches, the notion of

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[5] Note that there is a lack of agreement or standardisation regarding the choice of terminology. Reiss and Vermeer use the term '*Textsorten*' to refer to 'genre'. This lack of terminological uniformity has been studied in various works, with the intention of avoiding conceptual confusion.

genre occupies a secondary position, being considered little more than one factor to be taken into consideration in the textual analysis of texts.

## GENTT: Textual Genres for Translation

*General description*

The research group GENTT was created in 2000, at the Department of Translation and Communication at the Universitat Jaume I in Castellón de la Plana (Spain). The aim of the group's work is to apply the study of genre to the area of translation and to contribute to the development of new applications of genre within the scope of specialised translation and specialised communication. The focus lies on specialised translation, covering three different fields: legal, medical and technical.

The GENTT project is mainly aimed at the multilingual study of genres within the professional legal, medical and technical contexts, in the following five languages: Catalan, Spanish, English, German and French. In this study, an interdisciplinary approach is adopted, covering socio-professional, linguistic and cognitive aspects. The objectives of the project are to study genre conventions in the five languages mentioned above, to provide translators and writers of specialised texts with patterns that can be used as terminological, textual, conceptual and linguistic reference, and "to create a knowledge management system based on the concept of genre" (Borja, 2005).

As far as methodology is concerned, the GENTT group carries out an empirical-descriptive investigation, which includes a quantitative and a qualitative component. The quantitative component of the project involves the compilation of a specialised multilingual corpus, working with readily available corpus linguistics tools, as well as a tailor-made corpus management programme. The qualitative component is dedicated to the analysis of the socio-professional needs of the legal, medical and technical communities, both for translation and the creation of specialised texts. This part of the investigation is developed by means of surveys, based on questionnaires completed by professionals working in the fields mentioned above, in order to be aware of their needs, which will enable the GENTT group to provide them with useful working tools.

*Theoretical integration*

The theoretical approaches described above constitute the general background of GENTT's investigation on the concept of genre. In recent studies, genre has been regarded as both a process and a product. The following definitions illustrate these two different perspectives:

> A social construct that gradually emerges, evolves and disappears according to communicative needs. (Bhatia, 2004)

> It is the recognisable shape by which participation is enacted and understood. (Bazerman, 1988)

> [...] conventionalised forms of texts which reflect the functions and goals involved in particular social occasions as well as the purposes of the participants in them. (Hatim and Mason, 1990)

> A device to package our speech and make of it a recognizable response to the exigencies of the situation. (Bekenkotter and Huckin, 1994)

   During the first stage of the research project, the previous definitions and approaches to genre were taken as a starting point, with special focus on the work by Hatim and Mason (1990). However, in GENTT, the concept of genre has been evolving according to the results obtained during the development of the project, based mainly on functional-systemic linguistics, genre studies and sociology. This interdisciplinary perspective implies that GENTT's current concept of genre has become wider. Genre is viewed as a semiotic category, but with a more dynamic and changeable nature than in existing semiotic approaches: genre is not a static category but a changing one. This wider approach to genre implies:

● a shift from the traditional semiotic approach to a more dynamic definition of genre, as a changing category, hybridization, etc. (Borja & García-Izquierdo, 2008)
● the incorporation into the research of the concept of a 'system of genres' (Bazerman, 1994)
● a connection between process and product, connecting communicative, social and professional approaches (Borja & García-Izquierdo, 2008)

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Furthermore, working with the notion of genre — as described above — entails a triple integration: first, the integration of micro (text) and macro (discourse and context) levels; second, the integration of process and product which, from a more practical perspective, implies a shift of emphasis from purely linguistic aspects to socio-cultural ones, placing the emphasis on "generic competence" rather than on "linguistic competence"; and third, the integration of the communicative, formal and cognitive dimensions of translation.

There are also some practical implications regarding the establishment of a classification of genre in the specialised areas GENTT covers. The definition of genre as a changing, hybrid category allows us to explain situations in which boundaries between genres as fuzzy (García-Izquierdo, 2005), a feature typical of less conventionalised genres. Similarly, integration is reflected in the updating of the mapping of genre in professional domains (legal, medical and technical), in order to incorporate the constant changes in the social context. Furthermore, GENTT's dynamic and integrative approach helps to explain the difficulty of categorisation of some genres that are difficult to classify due to their changing and hybrid nature (Borja & García-Izquierdo, 2008). An example of this might be a document dealing with intellectual property, involving the creation of a technical device, which could be classified either as a technical or a legal document.

This theoretical integration is also reflected in a wide range of applications, covering academic research, didactics and practical applications for translators and writers of specialised texts that will be presented in the next section.

*Applications*

Within the theoretical framework described above, GENTT's research also has practical applications in the field of specialised translation. One of the most relevant applications relates to translators' training. The GENTT group has been applying the results obtained in its research to translation courses at the Universitat Jaume I since 2002, obtaining a highly satisfactory outcome. The pedagogical applications of genre constitute one of the main focuses of the Sydney School. However, theorists from that school have placed the emphasis on LSP teaching, and GENTT's results have been applied to the field of translation and academic writing. The application in the translation classroom of the concept of genre proposed by GENTT has led to the

publication of some methodological proposals, amongst others García Izquierdo (ed.) (2005) and Borja (2005).

Furthermore, what could be considered the most significant contribution of the GENTT research group, as it is possibly the most visible result of its research, is the creation of a multilingual annotated corpus of specialised texts. This corpus represents the materialisation of the theoretical research and comprises more than 900 texts, which are classified according to GENTT's genre trees (textual mapping). Genre trees have been created through a process of continuous examination of the professional domains and the incorporation of the recommendations of the professionals working within the corresponding specialised field. These genre trees are also considered to be dynamic and revised and updated when necessary, in order to incorporate any changes experienced in the socio-professional domains. Compiled texts are analysed in accordance with GENTT's interdisciplinary notion of genre and each text is contextualised in order to be able to provide useful terminological, conceptual, textual and linguistic reference for translators and writers of specialised texts.

In addition to these applications, which are the visible research output of the GENTT project, it also facilitates integration at a different level, namely the creation of a bridge between the academic framework of Translation Studies and professional specialised translators.

**Conclusion**

Integrative approaches make it possible to cover the diversity and interdisciplinary nature of translation.

Taking the classification proposed by Hurtado Albir (2001) as a reference, GENTT's concept of genre comprises elements from practically all the main approaches to translation distinguished by this author.

The integrative features of the concept of genre enables the GENTT group to carry out comprehensive research, contributing to the preservation of the multi-layered nature of translation, incorporating most of the relevant dimensions of specialised translation.

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