

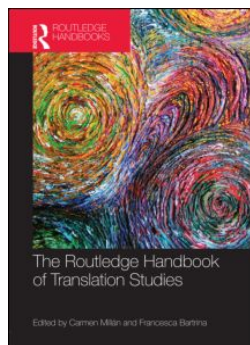
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Multimodality and translation

Klaus Kaindl

For a long time, the translation of languages was the only centre of interest in diachronic as well as in synchronic translation studies. Only the linguistic dimension was discussed – irrespective of the text type – so that translation studies could be described as a monomodal discipline. Those texts that existed in combination with other sign systems, such as films, children’s books, operas, comics, were largely neglected, left to other disciplines or analysed by excluding the non-linguistic text constituents. The concentration on one single modality also characterized the theoretical, methodical and analytical equipment of this discipline, the main aim of which was to explore the basic conditions, principles and methods of language transfer. For this purpose, mainly tools from linguistics and literary criticism were used. No reason was found to develop different analysing instruments for other modes.¹

Only quite late – encouraged by the multimedia era and the iconic turn related to that – the realization that texts consist not only of linguistic elements also emerged in traditionally monomodal disciplines. Gambier (2006: 6) even stated that meaning is always multisemiotic: ‘No *text* is, strictly speaking, monomodal.’ According to this, multimodal texts are not only those texts – written or oral – that combine visual (images and graphics), acoustic (sounds and music) and linguistic elements, but also all those texts that are ostensibly purely linguistic as they have multimodal elements like typography and layout. If multimodality is the rule, the question that arises is how non-verbal elements should be treated in translation studies. Should it continue concentrating on language transfer as a subject or should it – as can rudimentarily be seen in the last few years – start to move away from a monomodal perspective and develop towards a multimodal discipline? If the latter is pursued, a number of questions arise: What does an adequate concept of ‘text’ look like? Can verbal units remain the central category of investigation? What instruments and methods exist for a translation-relevant analysis of non-verbal modes? In short, what consequences does a multimodal conception of the subject have for the self-image of the discipline? In the following chapter, the introduction and development of the concept of multimodality in translation studies and its consequences will be traced.

Theoretical frameworks for transcultural multimodal communication

Multimodal aspects had become an issue in text linguistics as well as in semiotics. However, it was Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) who initially sparked the development of a

theory of multimodal communication. They defined modes as ‘semiotic resources which allow the simultaneous realisation of discourses and types of (inter)action’ (ibid.: 21). From this perspective, modes are not primarily products, but cultural processes which manifest themselves as discourses and the functions of which constitute texts in relation to other modes. In contrast to single semiotic analyses, which regard visual or musical signs in an isolated way, a multimodal perspective implies the awareness that modes exist in combination: ‘We have defined multimodality as the use of several semiotic modes in the design of a semiotic product or event, together with the particular way in which these modes are combined’ (ibid.: 20). The knowledge about different modes working together was not at all new, but Kress and van Leeuwen now regarded multimodality as a principle of text design where individual modes are not limited to certain functions, but work in combination. Which functions does a mode have in a text as a whole and which modes are used when designing a text depends on pragmatic as well as culture-specific factors.

Kress and van Leeuwen situated multimodality in the frame of social semiotics, the corner pillars of which are the two dimensions ‘discourse’ and ‘design’, and the two phases ‘production’ and ‘distribution’. Discourse and design refer, above all, to the different modes and their design, while production and distribution refer to the individual media. By discourse, the authors mean ‘socially situated forms of knowledge’ (ibid.: 20), which depend on the genre, the mode and also the design. The latter was defined by Kress and van Leeuwen as a ‘means to realise discourses in the context of a given communication situation’ (ibid.: 21). So, in the design, the form of the text is concretized and realized in the process of production, which is understood as ‘the actual material articulation of the semiotic event’ (ibid.: 22). Finally, in the process of distribution, texts are technically reproduced.

The elements of a multimodal communication theory represent an important basis for exploring multimodality in translation studies and can be related to communication-sensitive and culture-sensitive translation theories. An approach in translation studies that has numerous relations to Kress and van Leeuwen is Holz-Mänttari’s (1984) translation theory, which is based on action theory.² Similar to the role of human beings, ‘their *social agency*’, presenting ‘a criterial aspect’ in multimodal theory (Kress and Jewitt 2003: 9), Holz-Mänttari regarded translation as an activity where different actors participate in developing a text. Holz-Mänttari emphasized – similarly to Kress and van Leeuwen – the design character of translation. Translation cannot be reduced to language transfer, but it designs texts across cultural barriers. However, the aim of a translator as a text designer is not to understand the text himself/herself, but to produce texts for the needs of somebody else (Holz-Mänttari 1993: 303). The design of texts across language and cultural barriers needs a specification for production – this is negotiated in the interaction of different actors who act as a part of a social complex of actions. Translators normally specialize in the transfer of verbal texts, and because of the multimodal design of texts, they have to work with other experts like photographers, composers, graphic designers, etc. Concerning the production of design texts, Holz-Mänttari explicitly referred to their multimodal character and called them message conveyor compounds (*Botschaftsträger-im-Verbund*). The compound character of the different modes exactly corresponds to the functional relation, as Kress and van Leeuwen pointed out. Thus, in a technical manual, for example, the visual mode as well as the linguistic mode can take the explanation of the operating steps. Whether the communicative function is fulfilled by images or by linguistic explanations is, on the one hand, culture-specific and, on the other hand, depends on the production context.

Kress and van Leeuwen as well as Holz-Mänttari clearly pointed out that the individual steps of text production – from discourse and design to production and reception –

decide which modes are used in which combination to achieve a communicative aim. While Kress and van Leeuwen pointed out the characteristics of multimodality in their theory with the transcultural aspect hardly playing a role, Holz-Mänttari above all investigated the steps of actions that are relevant for producing multimodal texts across language and cultural barriers. Thus, both theoretical approaches can additionally be related to each other for perceiving multimodality in translation studies.

The contribution of Kress and van Leeuwen's theory of multimodal communication for translation studies is the specification of the modality notion, which Holz-Mänttari mentioned, but she did not elaborate on it comprehensively. According to Stöckl (2004: 14f), modes can be divided into core modes and sub-modes. The former comprise language, image, sound, music; the latter represent the building blocks of core modes. They can be compared with grammatical units. Thus, the sub-modes of music would be rhythm, melodies, harmony, orchestration, dynamics, etc. The sub-modes of spoken language would be volume, intonation, voice quality, speed, pausing, etc. The sub-modes of written language, however, would be typography and layout. A further distinction would be that of modes and peripheral modes; the latter are a kind of 'by-product' that result from a medial realization of a core mode (*ibid.*: 14).

Here it already becomes evident that mode and medium are two notions that are closely related to each other. As Kress and van Leeuwen emphasize, the distinction between mode and medium is not always clear and definite: on the one hand, text modes are always realized in medial contexts and, therefore, they are always related to a medium; on the other hand, using different modes is also caused by the respective medium, regarding the content as well as regarding the form. Kress and van Leeuwen define media as 'the material resources used in the production of semiotic products and events, including both the tools and the materials used' (2001: 22). In translation studies both the mode and the medium have their own specific impact on the translation process and the translation product. As translation cannot only mean a change of the mode, but also a change of the medium, a clear separation of the notions, as Stöckl (2004: 11f) claimed, also is essential.

The development of a modal text and a concept of translation

It is no coincidence that multimodal texts were not dealt with in a more systematic way before equivalence postulates were given up in favour of culture-sensitive, target text-oriented approaches. In functional and culture-semiotic theories, as they were developed – among others – by Reiss and Vermeer (1984) and Toury (1980), translation was no longer a neutral communicating instrument used for a neutral and identical information transfer from a source language into a target language. Now the communication contexts of the target culture became the central factors for a text analysis. As a result, to be classified as a translation, a fixed connection to the source text was no longer essential, but those conventions, norms and values that were considered to be culturally and socially mandatory for a translation. Through the de-ontologization of the text related to this – the text notion was now a function the potentiality of which is only made concrete in a sociocultural context – the culture-semiotic dimension of texts became the centre of interest – and thus, also their multimodality. The non-verbal dimension which often made severe changes of the linguistic part necessary, and which could not be combined with equivalence criteria, was no longer seen as an obstacle, but as a challenge.

There have been various notions in connection with multimodal texts in translation studies. This process of conception is also the result of a certain discourse and thus also

reflects attitudes and theoretical positions – in the case of multimodal texts, above all, the challenge to surmount the basic language-centred direction of this discipline. One of the first scholars to include multimodal texts in the subject was Katharina Reiss.³ In her famous text typology, she explicitly mentioned texts that comprised different sign systems. First, the term ‘subsidiary texts’ was chosen (Reiss 1981: 78, my translation), the adjective indicating a hierarchic order of the text modes. Later this term was changed to ‘audio-medial’ (1971: 34). According to Reiss, these texts differ from purely linguistic texts ‘in their dependence on non-linguistic (technical) media and on graphic, acoustic, and visual kinds of expression’ (2000: 43). In skopos theory, this mixture of media-specific and mode-specific text characteristics was given up. Similar to Snell-Hornby (1993), the term ‘multimedial’, which is confusing from today’s point of view, was chosen.⁴ Multimediality actually does not refer to communicating and broadcasting media, but only to semiotic resources in the sense of the mode notion. This becomes clear by listing texts that are considered multimedial: apart from literary texts like children’s literature, comics and films, also specialized texts that comprise visual modes as well as, for example, graphics and typographic specialities, were mentioned for the first time (Reiss and Vermeer 1984: 211). Apart from the fact that denoting modal text characteristics with the media notion is difficult as two different aspects – mode and medium – are virtually equalized, this notion quite quickly caused misunderstandings because of the electronic development in the 1980s whereby multimedia got its own meaning.

The concept of ‘constrained translation’, which was introduced by Mayoral *et al.* (1988) and which should comprise texts like comics, films, songs, etc. in translation theory, is problematic as well. Constraints already indicate that non-linguistic elements are seen as obstacles for the translator and his/her actual – linguistic – work, and that non-verbal modalities are not seen as communicative text elements, or, as Zabalbeascoa put it: ‘So, the concept of constrained translation has sometimes been used as a label to brand any variety of translation that forced the unwilling theorist to consider the important role of nonverbal elements’ (2008: 23).

Not before transcending linguistic analysing perspectives and the call for interdisciplinary research was the issue of multimodality comprehensively included into translation studies. Above all, audiovisual translation contributed to the conception and the notion specification from the 1990s, but often without clearly separating the medium from the mode. Gottlieb suggested the term ‘polysemiotic text type’ (1994: 269), which means that a text consists of two or more communication channels. Apart from the fact that the term communication channel causes misunderstandings because this often refers to the communicating medium, the term ‘polysemiotic’ is also not clear. According to Gottlieb, a novel would be monosemiotic. As already emphasized at the beginning, it is, however, questionable if there are monosemiotic texts at all. The colour of the book cover, the paper quality, the layout and the typography already have semiotic qualities. However, not only the materials used, but also the production and distribution processes themselves are semiotic processes that give the text an additional meaning (cf. Kress and Jewitt 2003: 14). Therefore, the term polysemiotic is too diffuse for the usage of different modes.

The notion of multimodality is used in translation studies, but not always in a clear contrast to the notion of media. Thus, for Tercedor Sánchez (2010) multimodality is ‘information presented through different channels and signs’ – so she mixed sensory channels, media and modes. With the term ‘multidimensional translation’, Gerzymisch-Arbogast tried to comprise both the medial and the modal dimension of texts while she focused on the medial transfer and the impact of the medium or the new technologies on the

product. In this context, multidimensionality is defined ‘as a form of translation which transfers – with a specific purpose – a speaker or hearer’s concern expressed in a sign system 1, formulated in a medium 1, via the same medium or a medium 2 or a combination of media into another sign or semiotic system 2’ (2005: 5). However, because of the different consequences of modes and media for a text transfer, a distinct separation of these two terms seems reasonable. This will be explained with regard to a taxonomy of modal and medial types of translation.

According to Jakobson (1959: 233), who was one of the first to create a translation typology relating to semiotic codes and their connections to each other, the core of a translation is the ‘interlingual translation’, which he called a ‘translation proper’. Moreover, there is the ‘intralingual translation’ and the ‘intersemiotic translation’, the latter meaning the transfer between different sign systems – for example, the translation from image signs into language signs, etc. The term intersemiotic translation is unfortunate because a language is also a semiotic system, and thus the translation between two language systems would logically be an intersemiotic translation. Toury (1994: 1114) therefore defined Jakobson’s interlingual translation as an intrasemiotic translation that can be divided into intrasystemic (e.g. intralingual) and intersystemic translations. Concerning the latter, in fact, he only mentioned interlingual translation as an example, but in this context other communication systems would be possible, too. Toury defined intersemiotic translation, which means the translation between different codes, similarly to Jakobson.⁵

The criteria mode and medium should clearly be distinguished from each other because – as already stated – the semiotic dimension influences a text in many dimensions and is problematic for a translation-relevant text typologization in the way it is used by Toury and Jakobson. In fact, text modes are always realized in medial contexts, and therefore they are always related to a medium. Modes can also be realized in different media – for example, language can be realized in the medium writing as well as in the medium speech. Through the medial realization, different special modes emerge in each case, too, so it is essential to consider both aspects in their connection when translating.

The differences concerning the categories between modes and media have an impact on questions and investigation methods. Apart from the modal text factors, medial communication contexts, changes and transfers are also essential as the use of different modes is caused by the respective medium, concerning the content as well as the form.⁶ For translation studies it is important that the notion of medium comprises the respective form of performance (e.g. opera, theatre, comic) as well as its material communication channels (writing, radio, TV, electronic media, etc.).

On the basis of the aspects mentioned, we can expand the prototypic definition of the subject in the style of Prunc (2004), so that translation is a conventionalized cultural interaction which modally and medially transfers texts from a communication entity for a target group that is different from the initially intended target group. Here, texts as a basis for translation consist of the combined usage of different modalities – certain discourses form the foundation for this – and they are produced, distributed and received on the basis of a certain design. Even if the linguistic dimension currently still belongs to the prototypical core for translation studies, texts and transfers, in this definition, are not primarily characterized by language participation any more, but by the categories of mode and medium. Here, first intramodal translation and intermodal translation can be distinguished from each other:

- Intramodal translation concerns the translation of a mode with the same form of mode – for example, the translation of a linguistic mode with a linguistic mode, of an image

mode with another image mode, etc. Here, an intracultural as well as a transcultural intramodal translation is possible. The former would be, for example, a translation of a German play into Viennese or the translation of image parts of a recipe for a children's cookbook. Here the communication act is realized for different target groups within one culture; the latter, however, is realized – in the sense of Toury (1994) 'intersystemically' – across cultural barriers. Examples of this are the image translation of Mickey Mouse comics into manga, whereby the image elements are designed according to the functions and structuring principles of the target culture, and the translation of the musical dimension of a rock 'n' roll song into a reggae one.

- Intermodal translation focuses on the mode change in the transfer process, which can be intracultural as well as transcultural. Examples for this would be the translation from the linguistic mode into the image mode – for example, the Bible into a comic or the transfer of a manual created with images into a linguistic text.

The medium as a second central text dimension for translation studies can also be differentiated according to the transfer aspect:

- Intramedial translation comprises intracultural and transcultural media transfers while the communication dispositif or the performing form remain the same. An example would be the music videos of American pop singers such as Christina Aguilera, Jennifer Lopez or Marc Anthony, which are produced for the English-speaking as well as the Spanish-speaking population. In fact, the American culture-specific use of, for example, cuts, image sequence, etc., remains the same, but for the intramodal translation between English and Spanish, for example, changes concerning the image sequence are necessary. By contrast – if it seems worth it economically – for the European market, different videos are shot according to the video habits of the European audience (e.g. fewer hard cuts, different image material, etc.). Intramedial media transfers across cultural barriers can have numerous consequences for the use of different modes because of the culture-specific characterization of modes. If, for example, a French *opéra comique* is translated into a German Romantic opera, the media transfer has – because of the different dramaturgy, the musical-singing realization and the editing of the content – an impact on the use and the design of the modes involved.
- Intermedial translation refers to translation across media barriers, which can also be realized intraculturally and transculturally. This comprises – among other things – the translation of a novel into a film, the transformation of a play into a musical, etc. In translation studies this domain in particular seems to open a broad field of activity, one which is also claimed by other disciplines like literary criticism. However, this does not have to cause a kind of rivalry if the competences are clarified on the basis of distinct subject definitions.

As the examples have shown, hybrid forms can develop between the different transfer forms on the mode and medium level. Thus, an intermodal and an intramedial or an intramodal and an intermedial translation can be connected with each other. I think it is reasonable to differentiate from the perspective of translation studies because of the different problems according to the respective transfer forms, but also because of the different translation-relevant questions in each case, even if the mode and the medium are always connected with each other and influence each other in texts.

Investigation fields and methods of multimodal texts

Even if the role and the function of non-verbal modes in transcultural communication have not been described comprehensively and systematically thus far, audiovisual translation is at the cutting edge of this issue. Already in the basic programme that Delabastita (1989) developed for research in this field, non-verbal elements were mentioned explicitly. Thus, in audiovisual translation – without mentioning it at the beginning – a multimodal text notion that took seriously ‘the importance of considering non-verbal items as part of a text rather than part of its context’ was favoured (Zabalbeascoa 2008: 37). The research boom that took place in this field from the 1990s was also the reason why non-verbal modes were included in all kinds of film translation. As an example for synchronization research, a study by Pruys (1997) will be mentioned: he developed a set of translation strategies based on rhetoric which he consistently applied for all modes – language, image, music. In subtitling (see Díaz Cintas, this volume), as well, the influence and the importance of non-verbal modes for translation of linguistic elements has been dealt with. On several occasions Gottlieb indicated that the multichannel and polysemiotic nature of film influences the design of subtitles, which he showed with puns (1997). Perego (2009) analysed how non-verbal modes that characterize oral speech semantically can be verbalized in subtitles. One field where the translation of non-verbal information into a verbal text plays an especially important role is in audio narration where the visual mode is translated into a linguistic mode for visually impaired persons (cf. e.g. Kruger 2010).

A field that is related to film subtitling – surtitles in theatres and operas – has also been dealt with concerning its multimodal conditions. As the performance as a multimodal text is seen as the actual basis for surtitling, the semiotic resources of the stage are seen as an interactive part of the translation analysis (cf. Virkkunen 2004; Griesel 2007; see also Espasa, this volume). The same can be said for singable translations of libretti: while often only the structural correlation between the linguistic and the musical mode is important in earlier studies, recently the semantic correlations and their meanings for translation have also been analysed (cf. Kaindl 1995).

Another field where the visual mode has consistently been dealt with is the translation of children’s literature (see O’Sullivan, this volume). Here, above all, the communicative relations between verbal and non-verbal modes, which are especially important because of the specific target group of children’s literature, are in focus (cf. O’Sullivan 1998; Oittinen 2003; Pereira 2008). In contrast, the image text in comics was excluded from investigations for a long time. Instead, linguistically ‘challenging’ stories like Asterix, which had enough material due to its puns and wordplay for a language-centred form of translation studies, was the focus, and only later did other modes or the relation between the individual modes become an issue (Celotti 1997; Kaindl 1999).

For a long time multimodality was hardly an issue in pragmatic texts – advertising and commercial texts where, above all, the visual design plays a central role are an exception (see Valdés, this volume). The knowledge that for the realization of the appellative function of advertising texts, visual modes also have to be translated led to a number of multimodally oriented investigations. For this, Millán-Varela (2004) used the visual grammar of Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), just like Smith, who discussed the impact of images for the transfer of the advertising message (Smith 2008), but the translator has to decide, based on his/her cultural knowledge, which visual design in the sense of Kress and van Leeuwen works in the target text.

Multimodality in specialized texts has been largely neglected. Apart from Schröder (1993), Risku and Pircher developed the first approaches concerning multimodality in technical

communication (see Olohan, this volume) and critically pointed out the deficits of translation technologies concerning the visual dimension of technical communication. One aspect that has been dealt with, above all, in pragmatic texts, is the sub-mode of typography. Schopp (2005) extensively researched the semioticity of typographical elements, like font, font size and font scale, and layout.

Newer kinds of texts such as websites and video games, which are inseparably related to the multimedial development, have been analysed from a multimodal perspective since the beginning. The interactive character of video games and the aim of translation to make an adequate game experience possible requires the involvement of all modes in the translation process, where research is just beginning (cf. O'Hagan 2007). Similar to video games, in websites, too, where the translation of visual aspects into language is a common practice, the localization aspect leads to a holistic examination of the involved modes (cf. Tercedor Sánchez 2010).

If you consider the important role of non-verbal modes like gesture, mimics, but also sub-modes like intonation, the speed of speech, etc., for interpreting, the relatively low number of works that make these aspects a central issue is astonishing. Apart from studies about multimodal aspects of the spoken language (Collados Aís 1998; Ahrens 2004), recently the role of visual graphic material like charts and diagrams in hospital interpreting (Bührig 2004), the correlation between language and gesture of simultaneous interpreting (Zagar Galvão and Galhano Rodrigues 2010), and the multimodal description of voice and gesture for a dictionary for sign language interpreters (cf. Kellett Bidoli 2005) have been investigated.

If we now say that multimodal texts belong to the core of the subject, respective translation-relevant analysis methods have to be developed for their translation. However, as the centre of translation studies is language, the role and the importance of non-verbal text elements is reduced to general statements, but a systematic integration in analyses has rather been the exception to the rule until today. What Gambier (2006) said about audiovisual translation is true of all fields of multimodal translation:

There is a strong paradox: we are ready to acknowledge the interrelations between the verbal and the visual, between language and non-verbal, but the dominant research perspective remains largely linguistic.

(Gambier 2006)

In this context, he also noticed 'the lack, until recently, of a relevant methodology to deal with multimodality'. Actually models of other disciplines that deal with its constitution of meaning are often used; examples for this would be film theory for audiovisual translation; music theories for the translation of operas, musicals, songs; image theories for the translation of advertising, children's books, comics, etc.⁷ Taking analysis methods from other disciplines is problematic because they often do not consider the specific interest of investigation – the transfer across cultural barriers – and therefore they have different segmentations and classifications as their bases.

If the constitution of meaning is seen as a multimodal process, this does not only mean a new definition of text as the basis for translation, but also needs an extension of the analysis instruments in translation studies. In this context, text analysis as an investigation method – be it in the form of case studies or corpus-based investigations – comprises two questions: one, in what way are the different modes composed and how do they work; and two, what are the correlations and interaction modalities between the different modes. Although there have recently been increasing attempts to investigate – across language –

other modes, with regard to their translation, too, there are hardly any translation-relevant analysis models or classifications of translation units for non-verbal modes. Modes follow different principles concerning form, function and perception respectively. Thus images, for example, are perceived holistically; language is perceived gradually in the form of words and sentences. The meaning construction, too, is done using different means and in different ways. Images do not have any precise speech act repertoire, and therefore their illocution remains imprecise compared to language (cf. Stöckl 2004: 18). This is similar to music: while language has precise semantics, music is much vaguer, but it can – via its own means – communicate a meaning; this happens, above all, on the connotative and associative level. Exactly this uncertainty of semantics opens up a wide field of interpreting for image modes and musical modes, which can culture-specifically vary greatly, and thus transfer-oriented investigation methods are necessary. Here a multimodal discourse analysis on the basis of the critical discourse analysis can provide a useful contribution. How the different modes can be transcribed has been shown for the audiovisual translation, by Baldry and Taylor (2002) among others. Taylor (2004) showed how the transcription of different modalities can serve in choosing those verbal elements for subtitling that make it possible for a target culture to understand a film holistically. For the field of simultaneous interpreting, Zagar Galvão and Galhano Rodrigues (2010) presented a describing pattern for forms, functions and the meaning of the speakers' and interpreters' gestures in order to explore their meaning for the interpreting process. On the basis of a functional image grammar, Kaindl (1999) elaborated a translation-relevant component analysis for images in comics as he attached certain narrative functions to the individual visual elements.

The second essential question that arises in the context of multimodal text analyses is to focus more closely on the investigation of interaction modalities between different modes from the perspective of transfer. For this, too, there are approaches for different fields, like, for example, the correlation between the language mode and the musical mode for the opera (Herman *et al.* 2004); between image and language in comics (Kaindl 2004); and between non-verbal and verbal signs in films (Zabalbeascoa 2008). Relations between different modes are investigated in different disciplines; translation studies is mainly interested in communicative correlations between semiotic resources. Basically, the following relations can be distinguished from each other: the illustrating function, whereby the modes basically transport the same information and thus support each other in their meaning; the commenting or extending function, whereby the modes supplement each other in their meaning, add something or concretize it; and the contradictory function, whereby the meanings between the modes contradict each other.

Apart from text analysis, which is the most common method, experimental studies such as that about subtitling by Linde and Kay (1999) and about the meaning of visual elements in simultaneous interpreting by Rennert (2008) can only rarely be found in the context of multimodality. Empirical field studies based on participant observation, e.g. Risku and Pircher (2008), were carried out with regard to visual aspects in technical communication, and survey studies with questionnaires and interviews relating to multimodal aspects are also rare, so it can generally be said that the repertoire of investigation methods is currently not really being exploited.

Future challenges

If we assume that multimodality is the norm, and not an exception, mainly concentrating on the language part of translation studies is obsolete. Thus, the question arises whether

the subject of translation studies, which so far has been – above all – language-centred, generally needs to be updated and extended. If we take multimodality seriously, this ultimately means that transfers of texts without a language dimension or the concentration on non-language modes of a text are a part of the prototypic field of translation studies.

This means that translation studies has to develop appropriate investigation instruments for non-language modes. However, the approaches relating to this are still in their infancy. In fact, there are many texts – literary as well as pragmatic texts – that are also perceived in their semiotic complexity in translation studies, but the methodical instrument remains based on linguistic analysis criteria. This becomes evident – for example – in the different definitions of translation units which are seen as linguistic elements.

A further task is sharpening the notion instruments. The often diffuse usage of mode and media notions constitutes an obstacle for a more systematic investigation of relations and interactions between modes and media. The ‘media age’ also challenges translation studies to focus more intensively on mediality concepts in the transfer process, because modes are inseparably connected with media and characterized by them with regard to their form and their content.

There are also consequences of a multimodal comprehension of translation for translation didactics. Its focus currently is the communication of linguistic transfer competences. However, a comprehensive translation competence would also have to include a multimodal awareness that allows for the multifunctionality of different modes in designing texts. Thus translation would not only be seen as a language and culture transfer, but also as a modal transfer.

A concept of the subject where the core field of translation studies is not in the monomodal domain, but in the multimodal domain, needs more interdisciplinary work. As Mittelstrass appropriately stated, interdisciplinary competence requires disciplinary competence (cf. 1987: 154); the latter is always related to a clear idea of the object field, to the questions connected with this and adequate investigation methods. In all three fields, there remains much to be done for translation studies.

Related topics

multimodal; multimediality; types of translation; semiotic resources; audiovisual translation

Notes

- 1 Thus, Rabadán stated that images were universally comprehensive, and therefore there was no need to translate them (1991: 154).
- 2 For a comprehensive account of Holz-Mänttari’s theory, see Nord 1997.
- 3 In fact, there were earlier approaches which included multimodal texts like films, comics, operas, etc. in the subject canon, but without subsuming texts which combine different semiotic resources with each other in one mutual notion.
- 4 Later Snell-Hornby distinguished four categories from each other, namely multimedial, multimodal, multisemiotic and audiomedial texts (2006: 85). However, here the distinction between multimodal, multisemiotic and audiomedial is also unclear because Snell-Hornby categorizes texts that use ‘different graphic sign systems, verbal and non-verbal’, like comics or print advertisements, as multisemiotic. Audiomedial texts in turn are texts like, for example, political speeches or academic papers, which are at the interface of the written and the spoken mode. Thus, audiomedial as well as multisemiotic refer to multimodal texts.
- 5 Gottlieb also referred to Jakobson’s approach when he drafted – based on different categories like inter- and intrasemiotic translation, iso-, dia-, super- and hyposemiotic translation (Gottlieb

- 2005) – a taxonomy of translation comprising 30 types. Here, the problem is that modes, media and sensory channels were not clearly distinguished from each other.
- 6 In this context, intermediality research or media studies have interesting incentives. Although the concept of intermediality was at first related to the correlation between language arts and painting (cf. Hansen-Löwe 1983), it was later expanded to other fields like the technical communication dispositifs (radio, film, tape, etc.) and material medial dispositifs (brochure, book, etc.) (cf. Clüver 2000–1).
- 7 What Ventola *et al.* said for linguistics is also true for translation studies: ‘Research into multimodality is therefore marked at this point by a broad degree of eclecticism’ (2004: 2)

Further reading

- Gambier, Y. (2006) ‘Multimodality and Audiovisual Translation’, in M. Carroll, H. Gerzymisch-Arbogast and S. Nauert (eds) *Audiovisual Translation Scenarios: Proceedings of the Second MuTraConference in Copenhagen 1–5 May*. Available at: www.euroconferences.info/proceedings/2006_Proceedings/2006_Gambier_Yves.pdf. (The focus of this article is on audiovisual translation. However, the explanations about multimodality are also true for other fields. Gambier discusses the impact of a multimodal perspective on the notions of text and translation, and he drafts research desiderata.)
- Kaindl, K. and Oittinen, R. (2008) *Le Verbal, le Visuel, le Traducteur/The Verbal, the Visual, the Translator*, special issue of *Meta* 53(1). (In this special issue, a broad range of fields where multimodality plays a role is presented: here the focus is on the translation of visual modes in audiovisual texts, advertising texts, children’s literature, comics, typography, interpreting and technical texts.)
- Kress, G. and van Leeuwen, T. (2001) *Multimodal Discourse: The Modes and Media of Contemporary Communication*, London: Hodder Arnold. (This book comprises the bases for multimodality and its theoretical foundation. Although there is no direct reference to translation, this book, starting from social semiotics, provides useful insights into the functions of different modes and the correlations between modes and media, also for translation scholars.)

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