Book Review

Multimodal Pragmatics and Translation: A New Model for Source Text Analysis

Brian Morales[a]

With the arrival of the Digital Age, text production has become increasingly sophisticated. Not having to settle with verbal-linguistic resources, we can now produce texts complemented with imagery, sound, and other semiotic elements which function not just as ornament, but rather as true sources of meaning by themselves, i.e., multimodal texts. This renders translators' work projects evermore intricate; thus, the need for a suitable model for a pre-translation source text (ST) analysis arises. Such is the premise of Sara Dicerto's Multimodal Pragmatics and Translation: A New Model for Source Text Analysis.

Modern Languages teacher and former freelance translator, Sara Dicerto became interested in the application of Pragmatics to multimodal translation issues during her studies in Italy and the United Kingdom. She argues that so far papers on ST analysis have a 'monomodal' approach in that they emphasize the linguistic components of a text and neglect others just as important. For the author, a Pragmatics-oriented model is required in order to address potentially problematic aspects in the translation of multimodal messages. She explains that such messages combine two or more semiotic systems independent of each other, yet interacting in such a way that they produce a single message which words alone do not deliver.

Going into the book and as a result of this perspective, Dicerto proposes Pragmatics as a support for addressing the multimodal phenomenon, as these texts are indeed more intrinsically context-bound than monomodal ones. She exemplifies how even in cases of success in the translation of linguistic information, a loss or shift of meaning results when the visual or aural elements do not express the same information in the target culture; yet, it does not suffice to 'adjust' these elements to fit the target context. Oftentimes, the intended meaning does not reside in the individual components per se or even the sum of them, but rather in the interaction of these elements, a meaning-charged relationship that may not exist in the target culture.

According to the author, translators effectively weather these challenges by (re)creating interactions between elements of the target culture, reproducing the intended meaning, and making use of a deep knowledge of the target society's cognitive context. In other words, translators must replicate the same stimuli the ST author intended to produce, predicting the recipient's personal interpretations. However, Dicerto states that, in absence of a 'multimodal principle', translators have been doing this at an 'intuitive level'. And this is where Pragmatics comes into play. So far, research on multimodality has been scarce, superficial and partial. Likewise, she argues, Pragmatics' models, such as Grice's maxims, have mainly been applied to the spoken word, and research on the 'points of contact' of Pragmatics and Translation Studies has not been sufficiently developed; therefore, the author proposes a Pragmatics-based unified model for pre-translation multimodal ST analysis. Accordingly, by the end of the book, Dicerto has already exemplified how Pragmatics' concepts such as, inference, implicature, explicature and mainly the

presumption of optimal relevance is applicable to the field of Translation Studies, and in particular, to multimodality. In the last chapters, the application of a newly proposed model applied to several multimodal ST is exemplified.

In brief, the author provides a solid theoretical background, resorting to the most relevant studies on the subject, enabling the reader to understand the current state of the art. Her proposal for a greater focus on the multimodal phenomenon in the formation of future translators is satisfactory. The ST analysis, however, is a time-consuming task, which cannot be applied to all translation projects; nonetheless, it can be useful in research and in teaching settings.

---

[a] El autor actualmente es estudiante de la Maestría en Lenguas Modernas en la Universidad Autónoma de Baja California.