

**Pragmatic analysis of hotel websites in terms of
interpersonal relationships**

Theses of the PhD dissertation

by

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1. Topic and aims of the dissertation

The topic of the dissertation is pragmatic analysis of hotel websites in terms of interpersonal relations. The research is of inductive type: it has been built on a phenomenon experienced in practice. This phenomenon is „strangeness” in translated German tourist brochures. Klaudy has introduced the concept of quasi-correctness in her translation studies. This is the phenomenon which refers to the indirect interference effects of the source language on the texts in the target language, and the translated texts are slightly different from the authentic target language texts. (Klaudy 2002: 161) Factors outside language can cause strangeness in the target language that is why investigations of reality of the conversion are important in translation studies. (Cs. Jónás 2007: 2). From this perspective my research considers the influence of factors outside language to be predominant. I reckon the strangeness among the pragmatic phenomena, when certain language expressions are not properly used in a situation. The aim is to identify the reason for which the texts translated into German in the field of tourism seem to be strange.

2. Research questions and hypotheses

Contrastive analysis in the dissertation seeks to explore interferential pragmatic phenomena. I analyse original Hungarian, original German and texts translated into German belonging to the same contextual background and the same text type. A comparable text corpora analysis (the original Hungarian and German original texts) will show the lexical, grammatical, text structure properties of the original source texts. The further research question is, whether the difference of language elements refers to Hungarian and German politeness strategies and interpersonal attitude in tourism and hospitality. The additional questions are about the translations: to what extent the lexical, grammatical features of the source and target language are present in the translations. If the investigation reveals that the source-language attitude characterizes the translations, then another question arises: what changes, what translation strategies are needed to eliminate the strangeness.

3. The hypothesis of the thesis:

Certain hypotheses are derived from the questions, which are then justified or discarded on the basis of the results of the analyses. The Hungarian and German texts are from tourism and from the hotel area, where the priority of the advertisement and the customer connection is high. Since the phenomenon of strangeness is the starting point for investigation, the first assumption is that there is a difference in the language use between the German and Hungarian hotel websites. The relationship between the speaker and the recipient shapes the language habits, and therefore it can be concluded that the nature of the relationship between the speaker and the recipient is likely to differ in the two languages. The persuasion strategies in the information and other promotional materials are differently used in Hungarian and German. If in the original Hungarian and German brochures there are different types of interpersonal relationships, the assertion that the source structure and rhetorical approach in the translated target texts are kept may be true. In everyday translation practice the translator certainly needs to achieve functional equivalence using the so-called pragmatic cultural filter and the pragmatic application.

4. Theoretical background - House: Translation Quality Assessment

The theoretical background of the thesis is developed by Juliane House's pragmatic approach, Translation Quality Assessment (House 1997). This model is based on Halliday systematic-functional grammar (Halliday 1994), in addition, on the discourse theory and discourse analysis. The Translation Quality Assessment is based on the three-dimensional model of the discourse analysis. The first is the field of discourse involving the topic and the environment of discourse, the second dimension, the tenor of discourse refers to the participants of the communication and to the relationship between them. The third component is the mode of discourse, which is the text form of the discourse. In this paper I used the analysis of the tenor of discourse, which has four subcategories: stance, social role relationship, social attitude and participation.

5. The method of analysis and process

The data-based research was performed during three phases of the data collection and processing: 1. Pre-test 2. Manual analysis of the texts 3. The corpus analysis

5.1. Pre-test

Before starting the research I looked for evidence that the impression that the translated hotel websites seem to be strange can be generalized. Therefore I did a preliminary survey, in which original and texts translated into German had to be distinguished by deciding which the original or translated text was. In the texts I wiped out all proper names, and ordered the texts in random order. The result is as follows: respondents identified correctly 79% of the original German and 68% of the translated texts. These results clearly indicate that the translations have in some respects different norms from the native language.

5.2. The manual analysis of texts

First, the traditional "manual" analysis was performed. 3 original Hungarian, 3 original German and 3 texts translated into German had been analyzed in order to find elements which are expressed through means of language which show the relationship between author and recipient. The results of the manual analysis helped to find the annotation criteria of the corpus analysis. On this basis I have based my work on the following criteria: a list of adjectives, nouns, verbs, the roots of the "vendég" and "Gast", pronouns: "Ön" and "Sie", verb modalities: imperative and declarative mode of verbs, modality of sentences.

5.3. The computer analysis of the corpus

5.4. The structure of the corpus

I have selected texts from hotel websites of a higher category (four-, five-star), which are located in the lakeside resort. The speakers (the hotel, as company management or owners) will provide information to the interested persons, and also want to give an attractive description of the building, so the communicative function of the texts are both providing factual information and advertising.

The text corpus consists of a total of 20 500 words.

- (1)MK = Original Hungarian corpus: 28 Hungarian websites, 6713 words, 44,594 characters
- (2) NK = Original German corpus: 51 German websites, 7198 words, 44,730 characters
- (3) FNK = Translated German corpus: 28 German translations of texts, 7006 words, 45824 characters.

5.5. The method of corpus analyses

The aim of the computer analysis was to generalize the results. The traditional method of analysis of 107 texts and approx. 20 000 words would not have been possible. Csaba Oravecz created the Hungarian annotation with the tagging tool of the Hungarian National Corpus (Oravecz & Dienes 2002). The annotation of the German texts was prepared with the language-independent TreeTagger program in the University of Stuttgart, Institute of Corpuslinguistics.

5.6. The results of the research: results for the tenor of discourse

The results of the corpus analysis made according to the House's model demonstrated the hypothesis that the tenor of discourse is different in Hungarian and German hotel websites. The interpersonal relationship between author and recipient has other character, because different elements of language expression play a role in the discourse. The subcategories of the tenor of discourse can be described as follows:

The “stance” that is the speaker's personal cognitive and affective attitude in the Hungarian and the German hotel websites was determined by how they relate to the question of reality, i.e. the potential guests and the hotel. The selection of lexical items already reveals this relationship, so at this point there is a strong relationship with the dimension of field of discourse. The common feature of the Hungarian and German-language texts is the positive semantics lexicon: verbs, adjectives, adverbs. (For example: *pihenés, gyógyítás, élvezet, kikapcsolódás, szép, kellemes, gyönyörű, jól, mindig, együtt* - *relaxation, healing, pleasure, recreation, nice, beautiful, well, all together.*) The syntactic structures have also a promoting sense, for example increased adjectives, and the large number of adjectival structures. (Pl. *legszebb, legkülönlegesebb, kényelmes napozóágyak, hideg italok, kellemes strand* - the most beautiful, most special, comfortable deck chairs, cold drinks, a nice beach) The verb structures, however, showed a difference in the two corpuses: the verbs of the Hungarian texts are in more declarative mode, and also the modality of phrases is typically declarative. In the

German text, by contrast, the mode of verbal structures and the modality of phrases is varied, as shown in sentences with interrogative, exclamatory, and the largest number of imperative modality. This difference suggests that the preferences of authors are different; in Hungarian it is static, descriptive, while German has a dynamic, call-in character.

The second subcategory “social role relationship” characterizes the relationship between the recipient and author. The assessment of the sub-category “stance” has raised a difference in verbal syntactic structures in the Hungarian hotel descriptions and German texts. In German imperative dominates. This shows that the Hungarian texts inform the author, but the German encourage more action. How the texts addresses the reader tells most about the relationship between the communicating parties, in which sociolinguistic variables play a role, such as prestige or social status. The mode of addressing reveals what role the speaker gives himself and the recipient. (House 1997: 109) This point shows the biggest difference between the German and Hungarian texts. The Hungarian hospitality jargon uses the traditional form of addressing "Dear Guests", which is very polite and humble and shows the “host-guest” roles in the transaction, which determines their behaviour. In the German texts the direct solicitations are typical, which is not linked to the role of transaction-conditions.

The third subcategory, the “social attitude” is closely related to the previous category, because it expresses the social distance between the communicating parties, and the social distance is usually determined by the social status. Since in the Hungarian texts the traditional catering behaviour is typical, when a host from the background seeks to fulfil every wish of the guest, the distance between the communicating parties is large. In the German the speaker’s acts are to be interpreted as a friendly invitation due to direct rhetorical questions and the direct address. Therefore less social distance exists between the speaker and the addressee.

The “participation” subcategory refers to the recipient's participation in the discourse. This can be expressed with language elements, with which the speaker involves the recipient into the discourse, for example modality of verbs and phrases or personal pronouns. Since the use of the third persons characterizes the Hungarian texts, the recipient will be only passively involved in the activities offered on the hotel websites. While the German hotel advertising makes the guest a protagonist of the action. The recipient in the German texts has therefore more active participation.

6. Communicative preferences in the Hungarian and German tourism discourse.

The conclusions of the analysis show which communicative preferences prevail in the Hungarian and German tourism discourse. House drew up a system in which culture-specific speaker's attitude is characterized by pragmatic aspects of text analysis (House 1997: 84). The results of the analysis have been included in this system, where the dominant communicative preferences of the Hungarian and German hospitality discourse have been set up.

Figure 2: German and Hungarian speaker's stance on the basis of the corpus analyses. (Following House 1997: 84)

Hungarian	German
content-oriented	partner-centric
indirect contact	direct contact
orientation to the subject of the description	orientation to the addressee
implicit	explicit
language patterns	language patterns

On the Hungarian websites the speaker's stance is typically implicit, the description of the hotel, the services and the positive image contain hidden persuasive function. The addressee has an indirect connection tone, the character of the text is content oriented, and language patterns are used, for example the expression with "dear guest". In contrast, the German texts directly call the recipient to visit the hotel and take advantage of the services, therefore, the call function focuses on the recipient. The German texts also contain the hospitality language patterns.

7. Politeness strategies in the Hungarian and German tourist discourse

These linguistic phenomena justify the hypothesis that there is a difference between the speaker's attitude and politeness strategies in the two cultures. The model of politeness by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) differentiates two types of social behaviour and strategies of politeness: the positive face approaching, which seeks sympathy and it is collaborative. The

negative face is linked up with distance and honour. The analysis of the thesis designed the tenor of discourse in Hungarian and German hotel websites, furthermore on this basis the politeness strategies. In the Hungarian there is a large emphasis on keeping the customer's prestige. In the high-category restaurants and hotels one expects a standard of humble, quiet, almost invisible service. The guest and the host "play roles" in which there is no place for development of personal relationships. Like these the negative face characterizes the traditional speaker's attitude in the Hungarian hospitality. In the German hotel websites by contrast, it is permitted and even expected the natural, direct form of behaviour. In the four and five star hotels, of course, the German discourse is polite and respectful towards the client, but now no longer expects the humble service. The German sites reflect the positive face in the speaker's attitude.

8. The analysis results of the translated texts

The question to what extent the source and target language pragmatic features are found in the translations was answered by the results of a computer analyses: descriptive, distant speaker's stance is shown, because declarative mode, predominantly third person verb forms, addressing with nouns are found in the translated texts. These features characterize the Hungarian source texts, which mean that the German websites are similar to the source texts. The tenor of discourse of the translations is characterized by the language elements of the negative face politeness strategy. The strange character in the target texts is caused by the fact that the speaker's attitude from the source is maintained in the target websites.

9. Translation strategy - the application of cultural filter

The cultural filter is part of House's model of Translation Quality Assessment. With this the translated text can be fitted to the target environment from pragmatic point of view (House 1997: 71). The cultural filter as a metaphor means the translator's pragmatic and inter-cultural skills in the source and target language, on basis of which it is possible to eliminate strange phenomena in the target language text. House believes that before the translation process we should compare registers of source and target language discourse and adjust the target language translation into pragmatic context. The results of the present study suggest that we should implement changes in the tenor of discourse in the translations of tourism texts to save the communicative function in the target text. The cultural filter is especially important in the

translating of everyday genres and commercial advertising. The primary goal is to preserve the source communication functions in the target language, and herewith to create functional equivalence. (Klaudy 2002: 154) For this we have to take into account the extra-linguistic factors and pragmatic considerations. Contrastive pragmatics facilitates the translation decisions, because it specializes on speaker acts and strategies of politeness and directness. (Klaudy 2002: 154) The difficulties of terms are often regarded a problem in the translation, but in many cases we should look for the causes of the strangeness in a wider context, language and culture.

10. The place of the research in practice: website localization

The presented research is part of a larger field of work, localization of websites. The localization means adjusting the Internet site to the target environment, the audience habits and expectations. In the translated sites therefore the question of how to keep the original form and to what extent changes to apply has always arisen. The short texts are a separate entity in the web pages, and therefore it is possible to do some pragmatic changes in the target language translation within the text, this possibility should be used. (e.g., interpersonal tone)

11. Further research directions

Text collection started in 2004 and was completed in 2008. During these four years I have experienced very much development in the translation and formal appearance of tourist websites. There is a possibility to compare a certain text type, the hotel website in two periods. I have already collected a text corpus from the period of 2004-2008, and this could be compared with a corpus from a later period. The aims of this study would be the following: the changes of interferential phenomena in Hungarian tourism texts.

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