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## Generic Integrity and Generic Shifts in Translation

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*Generic integrity and generic shifts have been the two key issues in TS related to genre studies. The problems that stem from the two approaches include linking normative statements of genre membership of the texts to particular linguistic choices, distinguishing choices made under generic constraints from translation shifts motivated by non-generic cross-linguistic contrasts and identifying what counts as generic shifts. Approaching genres in isolation and without any reference to generic structures, typical textual composition and linguistic features often results in assigning generic status to random linguistic and compositional elements identified in the course of translation analysis. It is argued that the study of genre conventions in translation should be linked with the contrastive analysis of sets of related genres in SL and TL, the study of generic structures and interconnected sets of typical linguistic choices.*

*Keywords: translation, genre conventions, generic integrity, generic shifts, generic constraints, genre membership.*

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### Introduction

The area of research that may be very broadly referred to as ‘genre and translation’ includes an array of issues in TS and translation pedagogy. These are the study of generic conventions and constraints in SL and TL, the influence of translation on generic norms in the TL, the study of translated texts as a genre in themselves (James, 1989), and the formation of generic competence and genre awareness in training translators. All these interconnected issues are related to the broad context of genre studies. Two key issues prevail within TS: the

rendering of genre conventions and shifts to a different genre in the TL. The present research draws on problematic issues in the two trends and focuses on the two models of context presented in seminal studies by Hatim and Mason (1990) and House (1997). Both models are based on Hallidayan systemic functional linguistics building a link between micro- and macro-levels of context and include genre as a higher-level semiotic category. As it will be shown, the models represent two prevalent approaches to the study of generic shifts and generic integrity in translation.

### Hatim and Mason's Model

The comprehensive three-dimensional model of context presented by Hatim and Mason (1990) has been outlined and discussed elsewhere (e.g. Munday, 2008: 98-100) so I will focus on genre in its context. The model includes communicative, pragmatic and semiotic dimensions. The category of genre is integrated into the model as a part of semiotic dimension, which is represented by the genre-discourse-text hierarchical triad related to social context (social occasion → genre → discourse → text). Hatim and Mason define genres in line with functional linguistic approach as “conventionalized 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: 69). Discourses represent the attitudinally determined modes of expression and are realized in texts, “concrete entities”, which unfold in sequences of particular rhetorical intents or communicative functions in such a way as to achieve an overall rhetorical purpose. The other way round, texts “concatenate to form discourses which are perceived within genres” (Hatim and Mason, 1990: 73). The overall design of the model is upheld in other works by Hatim and Mason, in which genre, text, and discourse are referred to as macro-signs within socio-textual practices (Hatim and Mason, 1997; Hatim, 1997, 2013).

Genre, discourse and text are discussed by Hatim and Mason in terms of constraints that they impose on particular textual practices and on translation. Generic, discursive and textual constraints interact and are resolved in real textual practices or particular texts. Genre and generic constraints are discussed by Hatim and Mason primarily within the scope of semiotic dimension. However, references to generic conventions and constraints abound throughout the study in relation to communicative and

pragmatic aspects of context, concerning in particular the function of theme-rheme counter-argumentative structure, principles of composition (text structure), etc. The study does not focus on the analysis of generic structures and provides a number of examples of how genre membership affects inter-semiotic transfer of particular textual elements. The overall point is clearly articulated in the study; however, in each particular case the scope of generic constraints is problematic.

Genre as an element of semiotic dimension is introduced through the discussion of generic constraints. Hatim and Mason provide two examples that concern cultural references (cultural signs) in translation presuming that translators' decisions are systematically influenced by the genre membership of particular texts. The first example draws on contrasts between literary and journalist translation. In literary translation, due to the norms of “literary genre”, cultural signs are expected to be rendered, “no matter how esoteric” they may be. As a particular instance of such rendering, the expansion of ablutions as a cultural sign is made explicit in the TL:

...when the sheikh, the father, got up from his bed and called for a jug of water in order to wash himself before praying.

Hatim and Mason argue that translation within the conventions of news reporting (constraints of the news genre in the TL) would not admit such renderings (Hatim and Mason, 1990: 70). This normative statement, even if approached as one instance of generic constraints, neither explicitly specifies the underlying generic conventions, nor does it comply with the real translation practice. Such cultural signs may in fact be made explicit in journalistic rendering. For example *McCook Daily Gazette* (Nebraska), in discussing the ban on pets, mentions that

...Prophet Muhammad loved cats – and even let a cat drink from his ablutions water before washing himself for prayers.

Literary translation, on the other hand, provides examples of very different and selective treatment of cultural signs even within one text, including their neutralization and omission. Moreover, making cultural references explicit in the TL is not a simple act of semantic transfer. It may involve different levels of explicitness constrained by discursive, pragmatic, ideological, etc. factors.

The second example concerns generic constraints of the two news genres. The original Arabic text includes “the textual convention of respect for royalty within news reporting in Arabic” (Hatim and Mason, 1990: 68) that is omitted in the English translation:

...Bahrain’s ambassador to the United States, who called in order to greet His Highness and enquire about his health on the occasion of returning from his position in Washington.

The genre of the SL is “news reporting of official state functions”, while the target genre is “News in brief” “for an English-speaking expatriate community”. As a result “a formulaic statement of social greeting – *...in order to greet His Highness and enquire about his health...* – appropriate in the SL genre becomes totally superfluous within the conventions of the TL genre”. (Hatim and Mason, 1990: 70). It is claimed that the translator’s decision to omit this sequence is made under generic constraints of the target genre. However, Hatim and Mason show that news translation allows rendering such cultural signs as, for example, ‘honorifics’ (*shaikh*), as in the full sequence from which the fragment mentioned above was omitted (Hatim

and Mason, 1990: 65-66). An obvious issue stemming from this example is that the nature of such selectiveness may stretch well beyond generic constraints. Another issue is whether the omitted textual convention of the ST is a particular generic feature of “news reporting of official state functions” or it is characteristic of a wider scope of genres, such as editorial, review, feature or interview, etc. Consequently, it is not clear whether the omission of the sequence is made under constraints of a particular TL genre (“News in brief”) and whether the same or similar sequence would be rendered or omitted if the target genre was different. Generic conventions are not specified for the two genres, so the focus may be shifted to cross-generic or ‘super-generic’ features and constraints of a set of news genres.

My point here is not to question the nature of generic constraints or their functions. It should be mentioned once again that in the highly influential model of inter-semiotic transfer by Hatim and Mason the overall function of generic constraints and their relationship with different levels of textuality and intertextuality are clearly outlined. However, the analysis of particular examples represents a gap between normative statements of genre memberships of texts and the discussion of particular choices and functions of textual elements in translation.

Hatim and Mason state that there is no “some simple one-to-one relationship between elements of lexis, grammar, etc., and the social occasions associated with particular genres” (Hatim and Mason, 1990: 140). At the level of textual practice each genre is associated with a typical ‘format’ or generic structure “which is generalizable and which accommodates a number of actual structures” (Hatim and Mason, 1990: 171). Generic structure is appropriate for conventional social occasions (communicative events) and is signalled by typical textual composition (thematic, argumentative, rhetorical

elements) and linguistic features (see also Hatim, 2013: 245). However, the analysis of particular examples of generic constraints ‘at work’ does not relate particular linguistic choices to the level of genre structure or typical linguistic features.

Throughout the study, Hatim and Mason keep pointing to the functions of particular linguistic/textual elements within genres. It is argued, for example, that within the generic constraints of ‘the scoop’ the use of a particular theme-rheme counter-argumentative structure does not represent ‘argumentation proper’ because the text “is not so much concerned to argue an ideological case but rather to sensationalize the event”. (Hatim and Mason, 1990: 221). In translation, due to the lexical choices that explicate and reinforce the evaluative stance, the text represents a different genre, in which an argumentative structure is expected (e.g. an editorial). The point is quite clear again: the identical “theme-rheme pattern, characteristic of argumentation” performs different rhetorical functions in two news genres. However, it remains unclear how linguistic, textual or structural features of ‘the scoop’ and the discourse of ‘sensationalizing’ news modify the function of the theme-rheme pattern. It obviously does not suffice to mention that ‘the scoop’, as opposed to “mere news reporting”, entails “two discursual functions: reporting events and evaluating them” (Ibid. 221). Such a combination is characteristic of a number of genres and it does not provide a key for understanding the generic ‘mechanism’ of this modification. Presuming that the genre shift in translation is informed by deviant lexical choices, then, supposedly, these are the lexical choices in the source text that should account for the modification of the theme-rheme pattern function.

Within such approach any shift in translation – semantic, syntactic, pragmatic, compositional, etc. – can be interpreted in

terms of generic constraints. Without an explicit reference to the set or hierarchy of generic features below the normative ‘appropriateness to social occasion’, the identification of “genre-upholding lexical selection” (Hatim, 2013: 133), “a variety of linguistic features (lexical and syntactic)” that are signal of genre membership, (Hatim, 2013: 153) or “lexical and syntactic choices” that “are made in light of considerations of genre membership” (Hatim, 2000:132) remains a product of the analyst’s intuition. It is not specified, for example, why a particular example of text revision concerning the status of “background information” “is appropriate to the genre of news reporting in English” (Hatim and Mason, 1990: 167) or why modification of “one stylistic feature of popular fiction such as Mills & Boon”, particularly “the use of inanimates in subject position when a proposition relates to activity by women” accounts for a generic shift (Hatim and Munday, 2004: 175, 296-297).

### House’s Model

In the ‘revisited’ model of translation quality assessment House (House, 1997; see also House, 2014) introduced the category of genre as a means of clarifying relationships between textual function, linguistic characteristics and social use of text. This is the opening statement that introduces the revision of the categories for analysis. The revised model comprises a hierarchy of semiotic systems or levels – genre, register and language/text, which are interrelated in Hjelmslevian “content-expression” way: genre is the content-plane of register, register is both expression-plane of genre and content-plane of language, and language is the expression-plane of register. Genre, register and text are related in such a way “that generic choices are realized by register choices, which in turn are realized by linguistic choices that make up linguistic

structures in the instantiation of a text” (House, 1997: 106-107). The fourth component of the model is the individual textual function that comprises interpersonal and ideational functional components. The overall design of the ‘revisited’ model is essentially Hallidayan. The categorical system for register analysis is subsumed “under the simplifying Hallidayan ‘trinity’ Field, Tenor, Mode”. Genre is defined as “a socially established category characterized in terms of occurrence of use, source and communicative purpose or any combination of these” (House, 1997: 107). Individual textual function is derived from the register analysis (House, 1997: 110), while the category of genre is “linking register (which realizes genre) and the individual textual function (which exemplifies genre) (House, 1997: 107).

House only briefly mentions the role of the category of genre in translation assessment, stating that the source and target texts will be “related to ‘certain shared knowledge’ about the nature of the other texts of the same kind, that is, to the concept of ‘genre’” (House, 1997: 106). In her recent work House extends her argumentation and in particular says that while “register descriptions are basically limited to capturing individual features on the linguistic surface” (‘micro-context’), the category of genre relates single texts to the class of texts sharing a common purpose and function and “connects texts with ‘macro-context’ of linguistic and cultural community in which texts are embedded” (House, 2014, 64).

The category of genre is essential in the revision of the dichotomy of *overt* and *covert* translation. In fact, it is the only constant of equivalence in both cases. In *covert* translation equivalence is not obligatory at the levels of language/text and register, while at the levels of genre and individual textual function it is necessary. In *overt* translation the texts are to be equivalent at the levels of language/text,

register and genre. At the level of individual textual function equivalence is possible only as a ‘second-level functional equivalence’, enabling access to the function of the original text.

In the analysis of particular texts, House focuses primarily on register, while generic membership of the texts in SL and TL is presumed to be equivalent. For example, the genre of the ST is defined as an “academic text, featuring provocative hypothesis and re-interpretation of the causes of historical facts” (House, 1997: 151) and “an academic history text with a provocative new thesis and a strong emotional appeal” (House, 1997: 155). In translation the same genre is realized differently “in that the *Author’s Stance* as well as his rhetorical strategies are toned down considerably” (House, 1997: 155). This particular shift in the realization of the same genre stems from abundant modifications of register. Regarding the dimension of the field, a number of key concepts and terms are omitted or toned down, resulting in the detraction of interpersonal component and “making the text less provocatively effective and emotionally intense”. In the dimension of tenor “there is a pattern of changes in the author’s intellectual, emotional and moral stance due to the omission and/or downtoning of intensifiers, superlatives, and other upgrading devices as well as [+emotive] lexical items, and the lack of iconic linkage and foregrounded rhematic structures in the translation. <...> All these changes have an effect on the realization of the genre: the translation is more of a serious academic document rather than a provocative text expertly trying to convince its reader’s minds and hearts” (House, 1997: 155).

The question that stems from such an analysis is obvious. Is it possible for one and the same genre to comprise the opposition between “serious academic document” and academic “provocative text”? Such generic characteristics evoke different aspects of

“what we know about texts and intertextuality” (House, 1997: 107), the intuitively conceived similarity and distinction between the ‘types’ of academic writing. The analysis does not specify what is upholding generic identity of source and target texts. The normative statement that genre remains equivalent in the extreme cases of overt and covert translation provides no other opportunity within the analysis of particular examples but to state that the genre *is* equivalent. Without explication of generic features upholding for both SL and TL texts, whatever they may be, the reference to genre in the whole model may lose its point. In fact, according to House’s model, one statement of genre membership would be expected for both source and target texts. However, in the analysis outlined above we find two different characteristics for source and target genres. The same issue may be approached from the opposite direction. Presuming that all patterns of changes are a matter of genre realization, is there a quantitative or a qualitative threshold on modifications of register that is not to be cut across in order to uphold genre equivalence?

A similar approach is found in the recent work by House (House, 2014). Discussing a translation of “a children’s picture book to be read to young children” House states that “there has been no change in the genre of this text”. (House, 2014: 83). However, she mentions that ‘framing’ is different in the TL: “both title and ending set a very different tone: a humorous, innocent book to be read with pleasure, amusement and joy is turned into an ideologically laden, pedagogically motivated book imbued with a certain forced wit, and a tendency to infantilize the protagonists in the story through lexical and textual means” (House, 2014: 83). It may be argued that at least the communicative purpose, as one of the genre-defining elements, has been noticeably modified with all these shifts.

### **Generic shifts vs. generic integrity**

Both models discussed above have functional linguistic basis and integrate genre into context models as a higher-level semiotic category. Both models focus on translation in context, generic conventions and constraints being a part of overall functional design of cross-linguistic transfer. However, similar treatment and definitions of genre result in opposite approaches to the analysis of specific examples.

In Hatim and Mason’s research identifying particular generic choices and generic constraints is a matter of intuitive conceptualization reliant on the notion of appropriateness, “the suitability of language use to its context” (Hatim and Mason, 1990: 239). Genres are therefore viewed “in terms of a set of features which we perceive appropriate to a given social occasion” (Hatim and Mason, 1990: 140). Particular linguistic choices count as appropriate or inappropriate to a given genre (Hatim and Mason, 1990: 70, 167, 198, 221; compare to Hatim, 2013: 152, 282). The category of appropriateness is applicable for all dimensions and levels of the model. When we choose to write or speak something that is appropriate to a given social occasion in terms of efficiency and effectiveness, it will also be appropriate in terms of register, pragmatics, discourse, rhetoric purpose, etc., and exponentially in terms of genre. Likewise, on the grounds of intuitively conceived appropriateness, any particular linguistic feature may be considered directly in terms of generic constraints without specifying them at any ‘intermediate’ level. Identification of genre-specific norms of appropriateness in terms of generic constraints or conventions is beyond the scope of such approach. As a result, the category of genre is incidentally used throughout the study to account for a variety of linguistic choices without an explicit reference to particular generic features or structures.

House, on the contrary, provides a ‘holistic’ analysis of specific examples at all levels of the model, including genre membership of the texts. The normative statement of obligatory equivalence at the genre level presumes cross-cultural integrity of genres and identity of generic membership of the SL and TL texts. If a genre does not exist in the TL, translation is not possible. Variability or modifications that occur in translation do not in any case affect genre membership of a text and are discussed at the level of genre realization, i.e., at the level of register. As a prerequisite of register analysis, a simple statement of genre membership of a particular text, without any reference to generic features or structure, suffices the analysis within such a framework. As a result, in House’s model genre is a slippery and ‘overgeneralized’ concept. In her recent work House comments on the term *genre* as a socially determined pre-scientific, fuzzy-edged category, used “in its everyday sense”. The parameters of what counts as genre “cannot be set by scientific degree” and are to be discovered “in the everyday practice of the lingua-culture in question” (House, 2014: 70). “I have adopted the position that Genre is to be conceived so broadly that an inventory of generic categories subsumes all texts across all cultures. However, I have not attempted the rather daunting task of spelling out what this inventory might contain” (House, 2014: 70).

While Hatim and Mason focus on generic shifts and functions of similar linguistic elements in SL and TL genres, House presumes generic equivalence as a prerequisite of translation and focuses on differences in genre realization. In his review of House’s work Hatim mentioned that “in the case of covert translation, genre should not be held as sacrosanct. It could be forsaken when, say, what is at issue is how to get through to a group of tourists of a particular nationality, which might entail a remoulding

of source text genre” (Hatim, 1998: 97). An evident counterargument may be set out: the identification of generic shifts implies a formulation of what counts as a set of relevant generic features and what modifications are critical for genre membership of a text.

The models discussed above represent two approaches to the analysis of generic conventions in translation. The first approach focuses on shifting to a different genre in translation. Generic shifts (both inter- and intralinguistic) may occur as a result of an intentional choice of a different target genre (Ezpeleta, 2012), cultural (Mason 2010) or ideological constraints (Magalhães, 2000), or due to the lack of genre-related experience, “leading to serious language use and translation errors” (Hatim, 2009: 46). Within the second approach genre membership of source and target texts is presumed to be identical, while the linguistic realization of genre may differ (Erten, 2012; Orts, 2012; Mayes, 2004). Both approaches typically focus on the study of isolated genres and provide contrastive analysis of particular linguistic choices that either realize a genre in SL and TL or produce generic shifts in the TL. Generic status of such linguistic choices remains problematic as they may well represent cross-generic, stylistic or structural differences across languages.

For example, according to Mason, Graeco-Latin influence in the English translation of Freud, such as the substitution of nominalized German personal pronouns by Latin forms (*das Ich*, *das Es*, *das Über-Ich* → *Ego*, *Id*, *Super-Ego*) and other instances (*Besetzung* → *cathexis*, *Fehlleistung* → *parapraxis*, *die Seele*, *seelish* → *mind*, *mental*), modified the original genre “to meet different cultural conventions” (Mason, 2010: 87). Translators “strove to render the target text more abstract, more learned and more scientific in order to ensure that it would appeal to the Anglo-American medical/scientific

community” (Mason, 2010: 85). Lexical choices in Freud’s original writing could be accounted for both as a characteristic of Freud’s personal style, or in a broader cross-cultural perspective, as a feature of German scientific discourse in general. The systemic shifts in lexical choices in Freud’s English translation certainly render the “target text more abstract, more learned and more scientific”. However, it is not that obvious that such a rendering modifies genre. It might as well be claimed that lexical choices in the TL, for example, are made to comply with the generic constraints of a similar genre in the TL and prevent genre violation.

A similar inconsistency often occurs within the approach that focuses on cross-linguistic integrity of genres. For example, it could be argued that in the genre “call for papers” in English and Portuguese (Erten, 2012) the contrasts in the use of passive and active voices, personifications, evaluative elements and directives are not motivated by generic conventions of a particular genre. These contrasts may represent other instances of cross-linguistic variability.

### Conclusion

The problems that stem from the two approaches include linking normative statements of genre membership of the texts to particular linguistic choices, distinguishing choices made under generic constraints from translation shifts motivated by non-generic cross-linguistic contrasts and identifying what counts as generic shifts. It does not mean that researchers’ intuitions are wrong in every case mentioned above or that outlined contrasts of genre realization across languages do not represent generic choices proper. On the contrary, observations made by Hatim and Mason concerning rendering cultural signs and functions of theme-rheme pattern definitely link the analysis to genre level. House’s statement

of genre equivalence in the case of remoulding “serious academic document” into academic “provocative text” clearly relates both texts to higher-level generic features of “research text”. However, approaching genres in isolation and without any reference to generic structures, “typical textual composition” and linguistic features often results in assigning generic status to random linguistic and compositional elements identified in the course of translation analysis. The study of isolated genres results in a paradox: on the one hand, no element of recurrent language use may be undoubtedly assigned to have generic nature; on the other hand, any particular cross-linguistic contrast may be interpreted as an element of cross-linguistic genre realization or an element of genre remoulding.

The study of genre conventions in translation should be embedded in the broader context of genre studies, including contrastive analysis of sets of related genres in SL and TL, generic structures and interconnected sets of typical linguistic choices. Depending on particular instances and the focus of study, various approaches to genre analysis may be employed. The study of genre structures in LSP focuses on *genre as text*, with the aim to explore “lexico-grammatical and discursive patterns of particular genres to identify their recognizable structural identity” (Hyland, 2013: 2285). The study of generic structures employing such or any other relevant methodology, such as the analysis of ‘moves’ or typical rhetorical steps (Swales, 1990), may potentially reveal the means of genre realization and remoulding at the level of textual and rhetorical composition and identify sets of generic choices in the SL and TL. Contrastive analysis of genre systems (Bazerman, 1994) may yield insights into the motivation and regularities of generic shifts. This is especially relevant in the areas of textual practices that are characterized

by loose and flexible generic boundaries such as news writing, where sets of genres are similar, but rarely identical (Kornetzki, 2012: 152; Wang, 2007). Contrastive study of news genres might potentially be useful for systemic explanation of translation shifts within the area known as transediting (Schäffner, 2012). The study of hierarchies or “colonies” of related genres, with

members not necessarily respecting disciplinary or domain boundaries” brings “a degree of versatility to genre identification and description, in that it allows genres to be viewed at different levels of generalization” (Bhatia, 2014: 65). This perspective will shift the focus to the generic integrity across languages and contrasts in genre realization.

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## **Жанровое единство и жанровые сдвиги в переводе**

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*В изучении жанровых особенностей перевода можно выделить два основных аспекта – сохранение жанрового единства или целостности и анализ так называемых жанровых «сдвигов» в переводе. Анализ указанных аспектов связан с такими проблемами, как связь нормативной характеристики жанровой принадлежности текста с реализацией жанра на уровне конкретных языковых средств, отграничение набора языковых средств, обусловленных жанровыми рамками, от переводческих трансформаций, обусловленных внежанровыми языковыми контрастами, определение критериев жанровых «сдвигов». Анализ жанров вне контекста жанровых систем, без учета жанровой структуры и характерной для жанра организации текста, ведет к тому, что жанровый «статус» приписывается случайным языковым и композиционным элементам оригинальных и переводных текстов, выявленных в ходе переводческого анализа. Изучение жанровых аспектов перевода необходимо осуществлять с учетом контрастивного анализа систем связанных жанров, жанровых структур оригинальных и переводных текстов и наборов, типичных для жанров языковых средств.*

*Ключевые слова: жанровые аспекты перевода, жанровое единство, жанровый сдвиг, жанровый статус текста.*

*Научная специальность: 10.00.00 – филологические науки.*

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