

Discourse and the Translator (Hatim & Mason, 1990)

idea → contribution
aspect

→ Significance of the study
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paper

1. Significance of the Book

- The book is important because of its contribution to the theories of Translation Studies.

2. Organization of the Book

- The book has 11 chapters.

Theoretical Contributions of the Book

- **1. Integrates Discourse Analysis with Translation Studies**
- Before this book, translation theory was dominated by:
 - **linguistic equivalence** models
 - prescriptive rules
 - literal vs. free debates
- Hatim & Mason introduced discourse analysis, showing that translation is shaped by:
 - context
 - ideology
 - audience
 - communicative purpose
- This shifted the field toward **functional, communication-oriented approaches.**

Theoretical Contributions of the Book

- **2. Presents Translation as Social and Communicative Action**

- The book argues that translation is not mechanical but interaction between cultures.
- Meaning depends on:
 - social relations
 - culture
 - genre
 - intertextuality
- Translators become **mediators of culture and ideology.**

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do's
don't's

Theoretical Contributions of the Book

- **3. Moves Beyond Sentence-Level Linguistics**
- They emphasize **discourse-level** features:
- coherence
- thematic structure
- register
- pragmatic force
- semiotic sign systems
- This broadened translation analysis beyond grammar.

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Theoretical Contributions of the Book

• 4. Highlights the Translator's Active Role

- The translator is:
- an interpreter
- a decision-maker
- a cultural mediator
- an ideological agent
- This recognizes translator agency, influencing later developments in Critical Translation Studies.

Theoretical Contributions of the Book

- **5. Helps Establish Functionalism and Pragmatics in Translation Studies**
- Their work complements and deepens functionalist theorists like:
 - Halliday
 - Reiss & Vermeer
 - Nord
- But they add strong emphasis **on discourse texture, pragmatics, and ideology** — making the theory richer and more detailed.

Chapter 1 — Discourse and the Translator

- This chapter introduces **the central idea** of the book:
- Translation is a **communicative process, not just linguistic transfer.**
- Hatim & Mason argue that translators must consider **context, discourse, intention, and social meaning**, not merely **grammar or vocabulary.**
- They establish translation as a **dynamic act** of meaning negotiation between cultures.

Chapter 2 — Discourse and Language

- This chapter explains the difference between **text (linguistic product)** and **discourse (communication in context)**.
- Key ideas:
- Language choices reflect **ideology and social** relationships.
- **Context** shapes meaning at all levels.
- Translators must decode the **communicative purpose** behind the surface text. (skopos/ function)
- This chapter lays the **linguistic foundation** for how discourse analysis informs translation.

Chapter 3 — Register Analysis

- Based on **Halliday's model (Field–Tenor–Mode)**, this chapter shows how **situational factors** influence translation.
- Field → subject matter
- Tenor → relationship between participants
- Mode → medium (spoken/written)
- Translators' decisions must maintain these **contextual variables** to preserve the text's **communicative effect**.

Chapter 4 — Textuality and Texture

- Focuses on **discourse texture**: how texts achieve cohesion and coherence.
- Explains:
- Cohesion (reference, ellipsis, substitution, conjunctions)
- Coherence (logical meaning-making)
- Theme/rheme structure
- Given/new information
- Translation should preserve the natural flow and structure of the original text's meaning.

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Discourse texture

- Discourse texture, according to Hatim & Mason in *Discourse and the Translator*, refers to the set of linguistic and pragmatic features that make a text “hang together” as a meaningful whole.
- It is the felt connectedness of a text — the internal structure that gives it unity, flow, and communicative effectiveness. In other words:
- **Texture = the network of cohesive and coherent relations that create a unified discourse.**

Components of Discourse Texture (Hatim & Mason)

- They highlight several elements that together create texture:

- **1. Cohesion**

- These are surface-level ties linking sentences and clauses:
- Reference (he, she, this, that...)
- Substitution & ellipsis (do so, leaving out repeated info)
- Conjunctions (however, therefore...)
- Lexical cohesion (repetition, synonyms, semantic fields)
- → These help create local connectedness.

• 2. Coherence

- This is deeper, logical connectedness of ideas:
 - How meaning progresses and relates
 - How arguments develop
 - How events are structured
 - → This produces global meaning unity.
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• 3. Thematic Structure (Theme–Rheme)

- How information is organized in clauses:
- Theme = what the speaker presents as “starting point”
- Rheme = new information
- Different languages structure themes differently — important for translators.

- **4. Information Structure (Given–New)**

- How known vs. new information is introduced, highlighted, or downplayed.
- → This influences readability, emphasis, and naturalness.

- **5. Rhetorical/Functional Patterns**

- Patterns such as:
 - Narration
 - Description
 - Argumentation
 - Exposition
- These patterns shape the text's communicative purpose and contribute to texture.

Why Discourse Texture Matters for Translation

Hatim & Mason argue that:

- Good translation **must recreate the texture, not only the content.**
- If texture breaks, the translation feels unnatural, confusing, or **w**rong in tone.
- Translators must decide whether to preserve ST surface ties or use TT norms **to recreate the same effect.**
- For example:
- English tends to prefer **explicit cohesion.**
- Arabic can rely more on coherence and less on explicit connectors.
- Thus, translators **adjust texture to fit the target-culture discourse norms.**

Conclusion to Speech Act Theory

- **Discourse texture** is the total set of cohesive, coherent, thematic, informational, and rhetorical features that shape a text's internal organization and communicative impact.

Chapter 5 — Pragmatics and Translation

- Shows how meaning goes beyond words:
- **Speech act theory** (illocutionary force)
- **Implicature** (what is implied but not said)
- **Presupposition**
- **Pragmatic meaning** can shift drastically across cultures, so translators often need to adjust or explicate meanings for the target audience.

Speech Act Theory According to Hatim & Mason

- For Hatim & Mason, Speech Act Theory is the idea that whenever people use language, they are not just saying things — they are also doing things. An utterance carries not only literal meaning but also an action, an intention, and an effect in communication.
- They explain that every utterance has three layers:
 - 1. Locutionary Act
 - 2. Illocutionary Act
 - 3. Perlocutionary Act

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- 1. Locutionary Act

- What is said — the actual words, syntax, and propositional meaning.

- Example:

- "It's cold in here."

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- Literal meaning: temperature is low.

• **2. Illocutionary Act**

- What the speaker intends to do by saying those words — the communicative function.
- It may actually mean:
 - a request (“Please close the window”)
 - a complaint
 - a warning
 - a suggestion
- Hatim & Mason emphasize that illocutionary force is crucial in translation, because it may change across cultures or contexts.

• **3. Perlocutionary Act**

• **The effect** on the listener — what the utterance achieves.

• Example effects:

• The listener closes the window

• The listener ignores it

• The listener apologizes

Key Point of Speech Act Theory by Hatim & Mason

- Hatim & Mason's central argument is:
- Translators must preserve the illocutionary force (the speaker's intention) even when literal wording changes. In other words, the communicative purpose of the speech act must be carried over into the target text.

Why Speech Act Theory Matters for Translation

- ✓ 1. Meaning is not only **linguistic**: Two sentences may have the same propositional meaning but different intentions.
- ✓ 2. Different **cultures** perform speech acts differently: Requests, politeness, commands, apologies, refusals, warnings — all vary across languages
- ✓ 3. Translators may need to **modify the form** to keep the same force
- Example:
 - A polite indirect request in English may need to be more direct in another language (or vice versa).
- ✓ 4. Failure to preserve **speech acts** leads to misunderstanding
- If a warning becomes advice or a request becomes an order, the pragmatic meaning is distorted.

• Speech Act Theory,

• is the study of **how utterances function as actions**, and they insist that translators must reproduce **the speaker's intended illocutionary force**, not just the literal wording.

Chapter 6 — Discourse and Semiotic Considerations

- Examines translation within semiotic systems such as symbols, cultural references, ideology, and values.
- Translation is a **semiotic act** because it transfers **signs** across cultures.
- This chapter emphasizes the **ideological responsibilities** of translators.