

Prof. Dr. H. Gerzymisch-Arbogast



Advanced Translation Research Center

TRANSLATION CONCEPTS

Introduction to Multidimensional Translation Research

Forli 30 May 2008

Overview

1. **Introduction (object, aim, set-up)**
2. **Joint problems of subtitling, audiodescription and ,written interpretation‘ as multidimensional translation fields**
3. **,State of the art‘ in research**
4. **Multidimensionale Translation (MuTra): theoretical basis**
 - 4.1 **Classical definitions of Translation and new concepts**
 - 4.2 **MuTra: Conceptual basis and Methods**
5. **A Research Example**
6. **Literature (selected)**

Introduction

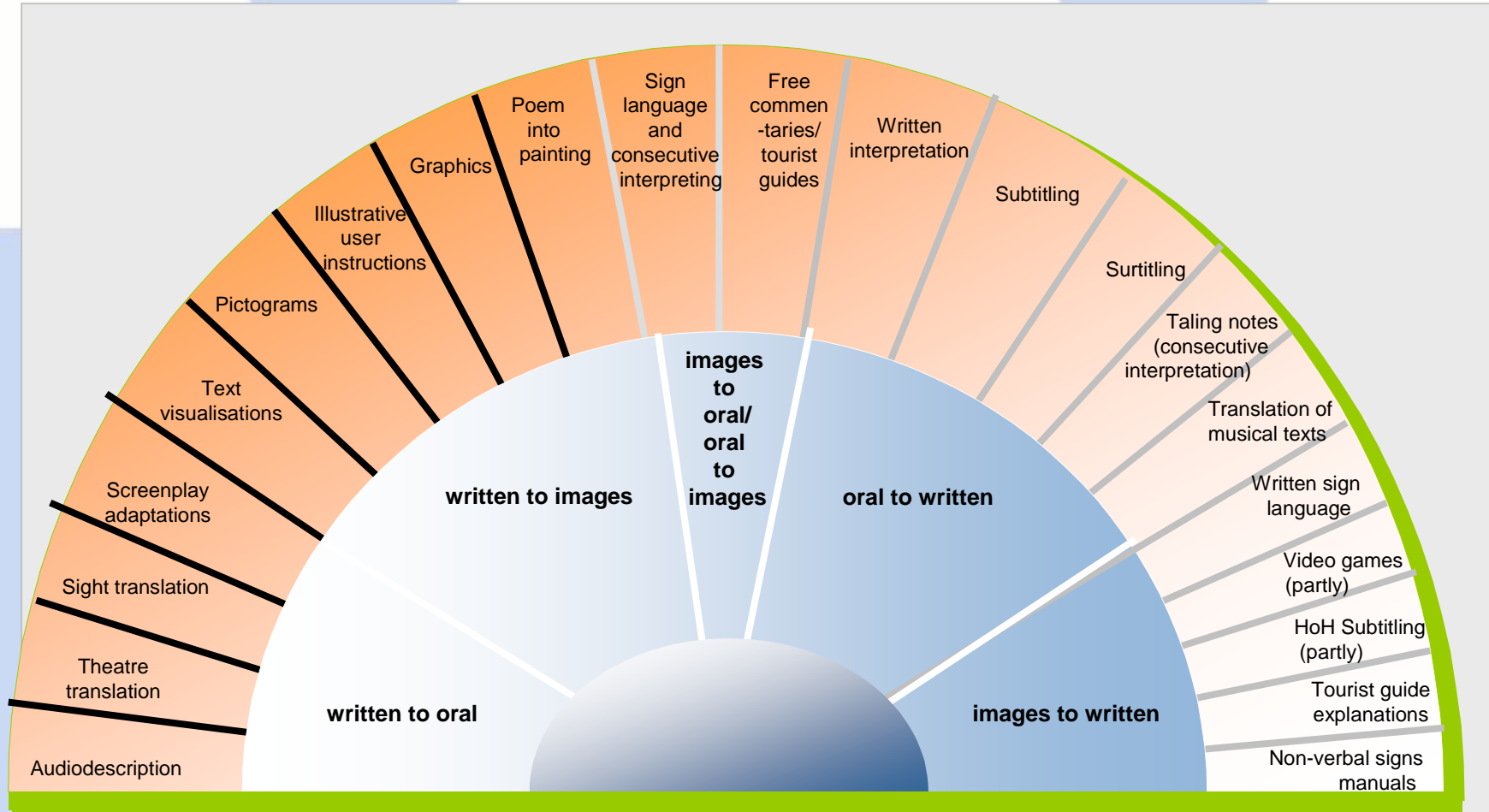
Forms of Multidimensional Translation

= Forms of Translation, which are ‚mixed‘

- **in their oral and written mode (e.g. subtitling)**
- **in the sign systems used (e.g. audiodescription)**
- **In the media used (film, live broadcast, DVD etc.)**

and which therefore pose special problems for translation and interpreting

Reading Material: Proceedings of the MuTra Marie Curie Conference 2006, www.euroconferenecs.info)



Level 3

Level 1
Multidimensional
Translation

Level 2

Traditional Forms of Translation (cf. Jacobsen 1959)

- **Interlingual Translation**
- **Intralingual Translation**
- **Intersemiotic Translation**

**This does not include ,mixed‘, hybrid or multidimesnional forms.
Therefore a wider Translation concept is needed.**

Multidimensional Translation fields: subtitling, audiodescription, 'written interpretation': joint problems

All of these Translation fields

- share the feature of being translation 'under adverse conditions' (Braun 2004) while
- they differ in kind.

Suggested Reading: Gerzymisch-Arbogast (2005): Introduction to Multidimensional Translation. Available at www.euroconferences.info (proceedings 2005).

Subtitling

„Subtitle’ = the mostly condensed rendering (written translation) of a film dialog which as written text appears synchronously with the corresponding spoken dialog on the screen. It is sometimes categorized as ‘diasemiotic’ translation (Gottlieb 1998:245) because two semiotic systems (the audio and the visual system) often need to be integrated in the translation, i.e. :

- (1) the audio spoken channel (dialogs, background voices, songs),
- (2) the audio non-spoken channel (music, background noises),
- (3) the verbal-visual channel (letters on the screen) and
- (4) the non-verbal visual channel (flow of pictures, coherence with text).



According to Nir (1984:91) the process of subtitling involves a ‘triple adaptation’:

- 1. from one‘ language‘ to another**
- 2. from a spoken dialog to a written text**
- 3. from a non-condensed to a condensed form of text**

Subtitling involves ,adverse conditions‘ in terms of limitations with respect to

- **Space (digits per subtitle not more than 60-70) and**
- **Time (subtitles not to appear longer on the screen than 1,5 to max. 6 seconds).**

The space problem: subtitles take up room in the lower part of of the screen (ca. 20%), audience needs to continuously switch between picture and text, impaired concentration.

The time problem: reading a written text is more time-consuming than listening to a spoken dialog. Therefore good readability is a must. Subtitle needs to be visible long enough (at least 1.5 seconds), and pauses between subtitles need to be long enough ($1/6$ to $1/4$ of a second are needed by the human eye to identify a new subtitle.

The process of subtitling involves reduction of the spoken text by about one third.

Therefore

- § **graphic design become very important as well as**
- § **a drastic condensation of text, including paraphrases, integration and summarizations**
- § **the integration of visual and verbal information call for a reduction of intersemiotic and intrasemiotic redundancies.**

Intersemiotic redundancy = ‚double information‘ through spoken dialog (auditive channel) and visual information increase comprehensibility of text. They can appear before the subtitle (nodding, shaking one’s head), accompany the spoken dialog (gestures, mimicry) or can be integrated into speech (intonation.

Intrasemiotic redundancy = Interjections (Ah, Oh), repetitions.

When condensing texts, intrasemiotic redundancy is deleted and intersemiotic redundancy is reduced.

We can therefore say that subtitling (seen from a multidimensional translation research point of view) involves problems of

- **Text condensation which raises research questions as to the choice and sequence of information included in the condensed text (i.e. the question of what information?) is to be included**
- **And as to the how this information is ‚packaged‘ to fit the comprehension capabilities of the audience under ‚adverse conditions‘.**

These questions may be tackled by such theoretical concepts as information structuring (theme-rheme-analysis) and information packaging (cf. Gerzymisch-Arbogast 1997) as well as coherence (introductions to these concepts are available under www.translationconcepts.org (Resources, Introductory Lectures)).

Of these two general research has mainly dealt with information packaging phenomena from a contrastive (atomistic) point of view (cf. [www. Euroconference.info](http://www.euroconference.info). Proceedings 2006). MuTra calls for an inclusion of the condensation (what?) phenomena as well.

Theoretically formulated, we can say that the translation problem with subtitling involves a.o.

- (1) Choosing the information to be included in the condensed text according to relevance criteria (weighting scales)**
- (2) And ,packaging‘ this information on different levels and channels.**

The theoretical instruments which help solve these problems are the concepts and methodologies of coherence and theme rheme structuring.

Introductions to these concepts are available under [www.translationconcepts](http://www.translationconcepts.com). Resources. Introductory Lectures.

Audiodescription

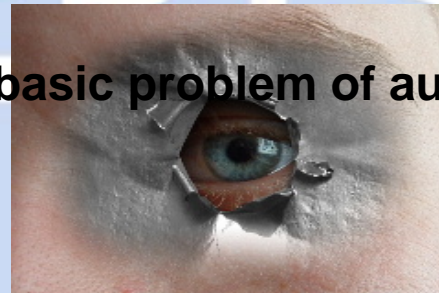
Audiodescription is the summary verbalization of visual information for visually impaired people (in films e.g. information on the looks of people and places, body language, clothing etc.)

It is given in the dialog pauses and needs to avoid the risk of overlapping with important sound and music effects.

Problems:

- **Change of the semiotic system from visual information to spoken information**
- **Adverse conditions in terms of time and space limitations**
- **Trade-off (=audiodescription dilemma) between information explicitation and information condensing**

This trade-off dilemma constitutes the basic problem of audiodescription



Theoretical problems with audiodescription (from a multidimensional translation research point of view) :

- (1) Necessity of text condensation (implies the economical selection of information according to relevance and coherence criteria)**
- (2) Linguistic adaptation of the information to fit audience's expectations and background (,packaging' information)**

Subtitling and audiodescription thus share the problems of

- Economy of information and expression**
- Text condensation processes under relevance criteria**
- Text optimization (comprehensibility factors, i.e. ,packaging' and structuring information (coherence)).**

Example:

„RASU“ Project at the *Advanced Translation Research Center* ATRC

(cf. Benecke (2007) within the context of information structuring)

Available at www.euroconferences.info Proceedings 2007

Written Interpretation

The concept of ‚Written Interpreting‘ developed from the hearing impaired community as visual support in the form of a simultaneously written text of what was spoken.

Today this is (as ‚speech-to-text conversion‘) one of the most challenging aspects of Multidimensional Translation research and is widely used in e.g.

- ‚Community Interpreting‘ settings,
- At conferences as a support when listening to presentations and lectures by non-native English speakers who use English as a *lingua franca*
- Live subtitling situations
- Parliamentary debates.

Suggested Readings: Susanne Wagner „Speech-to-Text-conversion“ available at www.euroconferences.info. Proceedings 2005.



Differences compared with subtitling and audiodescription

= ‚real time‘ transfer, i.e. the simultaneous translation of spoken communication into written text

Significant problems = text condensation AND simultaneity

- § **time factor: requires large-scale condensation (Wagner 2005:4 differentiates and compares ‚three methods when realizing (almost) real-time speech-to-text transfer: (1) speech recognition, (2) computer assisted note taking (CAN) and (3) and communication access (or computer aided) real-time translation (CART) and**
- § **linguistic ‚packaging‘: simple lexis, syntax, coherence building with the objective to make the text as easy to understand as possible.**

Time pressure and reader/hearer-orientation are the most significant problems of ‚written interpretation‘.

This means that ,written interpretation‘ involves

- (1) the necessity of text condensation (i.e. the selection of information and information sequencing within a limited time frame) and**
- (2) the simultaneous rendering from an oral to a written form.**

We can now summarize:

Subtitling, Audiodescription und ‚Written interpretation‘ share the following problems:

§ The problem of text condensation (can theoretically and methodologically be handled by the concepts of theme/rheme and coherence (for introductions into these concepts and their relationship to translation cf. www.translationconcepts.org Resources, Introductory Lectures.

Subtitling, Audiodescription und ‚Written interpretation‘ are different in the following aspects:

- § Subtitling focuses on the problem of condensing visual and oral information into condensed text under the constraint of economy of expression
- § Audiodescription focuses on the problem of selecting relevant information when building a continuous text for the visually impaired audience, integrating assumed knowledge backgrounds with text
- § Written interpreting focuses on the required simultaneity of translating spontaneous oral into written communication.

„State of the Art in research‘

The problems of these multidimensional translation fields – if considered separately – are

- well documented (e.g. the proceedings of MuTra 2006 available at www.euroconferences.info proceedings, or Gambier & Gottlieb 2001)
- but – when considered together - present a very heterogeneous picture of the translation research landscape (vgl. www.euroconferences.info proceedings 2005 ‚Introduction to Multidimensional Translation‘).

Gambier (2007:2) states „Our field remains too much on the level of isolated descriptions, incurring the risk of fragmentation, and claiming neutrality through a kind of informative mode of discourse: ...Danes talk about Danish TV, Germans about subtitling for the deaf and the hearing-impaired in Germany, and so on....“.

Gambier (ibid.) criticizes theoretical and methodological deficits with respect to

- the notion of text and sense
- homogeneity of methodology

These areas are discussed by the works of the ATRC Gruppe, e.g. the operationalization of culture (Floros), translation purpose (Sunwoo), or knowledge management (Will) at (www.euroconferences.info. Proceedings 2007 to appear also on [www. translationconcepts.org](http://www.translationconcepts.org), Publications, Journals).

Multidimensional Translation (MuTra): Theoretical Considerations

Translation Concepts

The classical differentiation into intralingual, interlingual and intersemiotic translation proposed by Roman Jakobson (1959) no longer holds today.

Instead there are no clear boundaries any more between these different categories.

The reason for this must be seen in the light of rapid technological developments and advances which have influenced translation in its form, content, structure and modality e.g. in such a way that today:

- **Written translation overlaps with oral consecutive interpreting (e.g. in written interpretation),**
- § **Narrative description techniques in audiodescription can be paralleled with literary translation (e.g. scene and character descriptions)**
- § **Restructuring information overlaps with techniques in sight translation or sign language interpreting**
- § **Simultaneous and consecutive interpreting resembles aspects of ‚live subtitling‘ and ‚revoicing‘.**

Semiotic boundaries are also blurred when it comes to transferring visual information to tactile information (e.g. in Mathias Wagner MuTra 2005) or in the different forms of theatre translation (e.g. Griesel MuTra 2005).

Important research questions are:

- **which notion of translation fits the multidimensional aspects involved in such translation forms?**
- **Which common conditions can be formulated for such ‚translations‘ e.g. which elements remain ‚invariant‘ in such forms of translation?**
- **Which equivalence relations can be established between the source material and the target results?**
- **By which linguistic means can non-invariance/ differences be described?**

These are the research questions which are posed by *Multidimensional Translation Research*.

Suggested Readings: www.euroconferences.info Proceedings MuTra 2005, 2006, 2007.

Catford (1965:20)	„Translation may be defined as follows: the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) [source language] by equivalent textual material in another language (TL) [target language].“
Koller (1972:69)	„Linguistisch kann die Übersetzung als Umkodierung oder Substitution beschrieben werden: Elemente a_1, a_2, a_3 des Sprachinventars L_1 werden durch Elemente b_1, b_2, b_3 des Sprachinventars L_2 ersetzt.“
Jakobson (1959:233)	„1) Intralingual translation or <i>rewording</i> is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language. 2) Interlingual translation or <i>translation proper</i> is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language. 3) Intersemiotic translation or <i>transmutation</i> is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems.“
Nida & Taber (1974:12)	„Translating consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source-language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style.“
Reiß & Vermeer (1991:119)	„Ein Translat ist ein Informationsangebot in einer Zielkultur und -sprache über ein Informationsangebot aus einer Ausgangskultur und -sprache.“

Questions:

- 1. What do these well-known translation concepts have in common?**
- 2. In what way do they differ?**
- 3. Can they explain the multidimensional phenomena discussed above?**
- 4. Why/Why not?**

In order to account for multidimensional translation phenomena, we need a wide translation concept which covers

- **not only verbal signs but includes signs of other semiotic systems and which is not restricted to ,interlingual translation‘**
- **an understanding of text that is not limited to written text and allows for the switching of channels, modes and media**
- **and a methodology that considers not only what is explicitly written in texts but which is also implied in terms of ,assumed‘ meanings and knowledge.**

CONCEPTS

We therefore proceed from the notion that

**Multidimensional Translation aims at
making a documented concern of a speaker/hearer
formulated in a sign system 1
by a medium 1**

**is made understandable to
another hearer/speaker
for a certain purpose
In a sign system (n)
by a medium (n).**

**This definition includes any documented material (,concern‘), the
perspectives of hearer/speaker, the purpose, the potential switch of
sign systems and media**

Methodological Considerations

Three Text Perspectives

It is argued that texts and their translations can be viewed from different perspectives, i.e.

- 1) an **atomistic perspective** that views only individual components of a text put together to form the structure of a text, e.g. words like Lego components which form a structure or system,
- 2) a **hol-atomistic perspective** that takes the individual components further into the text and looks at their informational strings or semantic clusters and
- 3) a **holistic perspective** which looks at holistic ‘Gestalt’ phenomena, implied background knowledge, cultural attitudes and values in a text.

These perspectives lead to different translation methodologies, i.e. *Aspectra*, *Relatra* and *Holontra* (Gerzymisch-Arbogast/Mudersbach 1998).

Three Text Perspectives (cont.)

Analysis on the atomistic level accounts for ‘atomistic’, i.e. smallest individual text features, and may include all textual phenomena (from typographical idiosyncrasies, explicitness of reference, metaphorical diversity and/or cultural implications) that do not develop into more complex textual dimensions. They are identified, listed and systematized as text ‘aspects’ with different ‘values’ and correlated with respective text segments. The resulting aspective matrix allows for transparency of an individual reading and interpretation of a text in its atomistic dimension.

Visualization is by matrix form

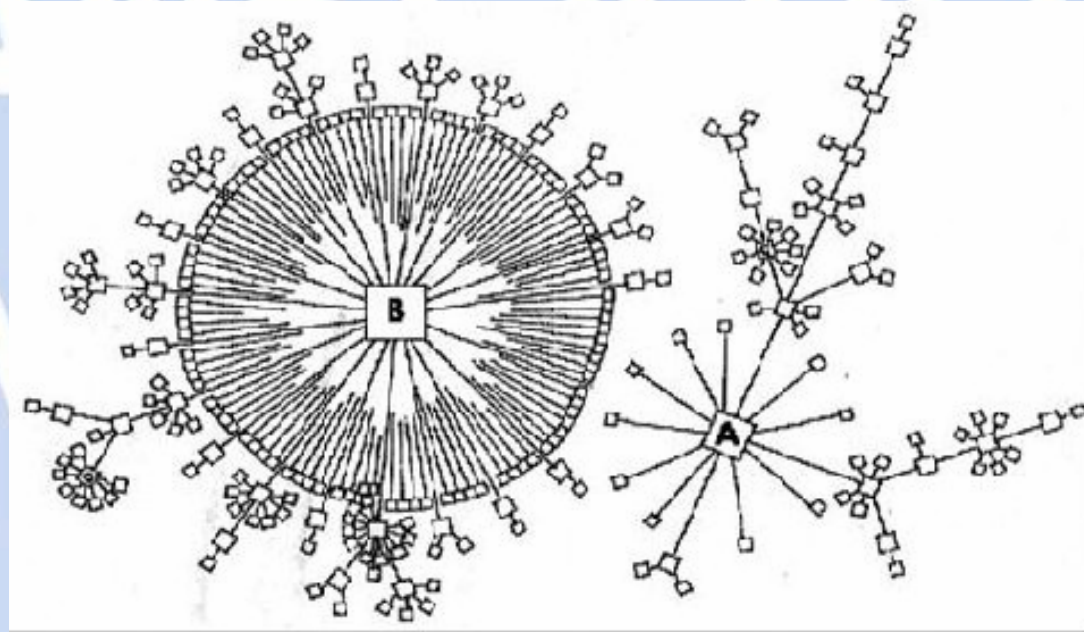
Textstellen \ Aspekte	1. Terminologie	2. Syntax	3. Kohärenz	4. Begriffseinführung	5. Autor-Leser-Verhältnis	6. Sprecherindikatoren
	1.1 Vorhanden 1.2 Nicht-vorhanden	2.1 Nominalisierungen 2.2 Verbalkonstruktionen	3.1 mit Inferenzziehung 3.2 ohne Inferenzziehung	4.1 direkt 4.2 indirekt	5.1 inhaltsbezogen 5.2 leserbezogen	6.1 vorhanden 6.2 nicht vorhanden
0. Transactions Demand	1.1	—	3.1	—	5.1	6.2
1. People and firms need money as a transactions medium	1.1	2.1	3.1	—	5.2	6.2
2. Households need money to buy groceries and to pay for electricity and fuel bills as well as occasional large consumer durables.	1.1	2.2	3.2	—	5.2	6.2
3. Firms need money to pay for materials and labor.	1.2	2.2	3.2	—	5.2	6.2
4. These elements constitute the <i>transactions demand for money</i> .	1.1	—	3.1	4.2	5.1	6.2
5. We can illustrate the mechanics of the transactions demand for money in Fig.162.	1.1	2.1	3.2	—	5.2	6.2
6. This figure shows the average money holdings of a family that earns \$ 1000 per month, keeps it in money, and spends it all evenly over the month.	1.1	2.2	3.1	—	5.2	6.2
7. Clearly, the family holds \$ 500 on average in money balances.	1.1	—	3.2	—	5.2	6.1

Aspekte Textstellen		1. Terminologie	2. Syntax	3. Kohärenz	4. Begriffseinführung	5. Autor-Leser-Verhältnis	6. Sprecherindikatoren
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Three Text Perspectives (cont.)

The hol-atomistic level ‘mediates’ between the atomistic and holistic levels. Analysis on a hol-atomistic level identifies features in texts that extend from the isolated atomistic unit to a more complex dimension in the context of the text as a whole. Examples are the (linearity or digression of) information structures (theme-rheme analysis) or the quality and complexity of isotopic patterns .

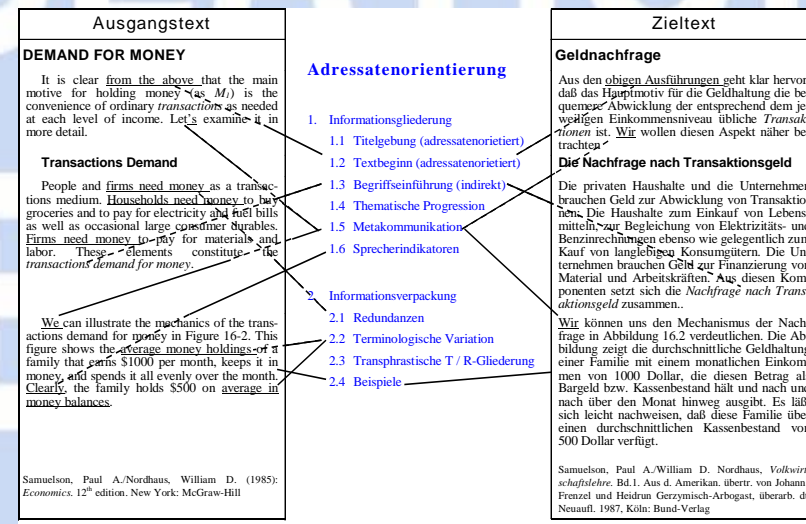
Representation and visualization is by semantic networks.

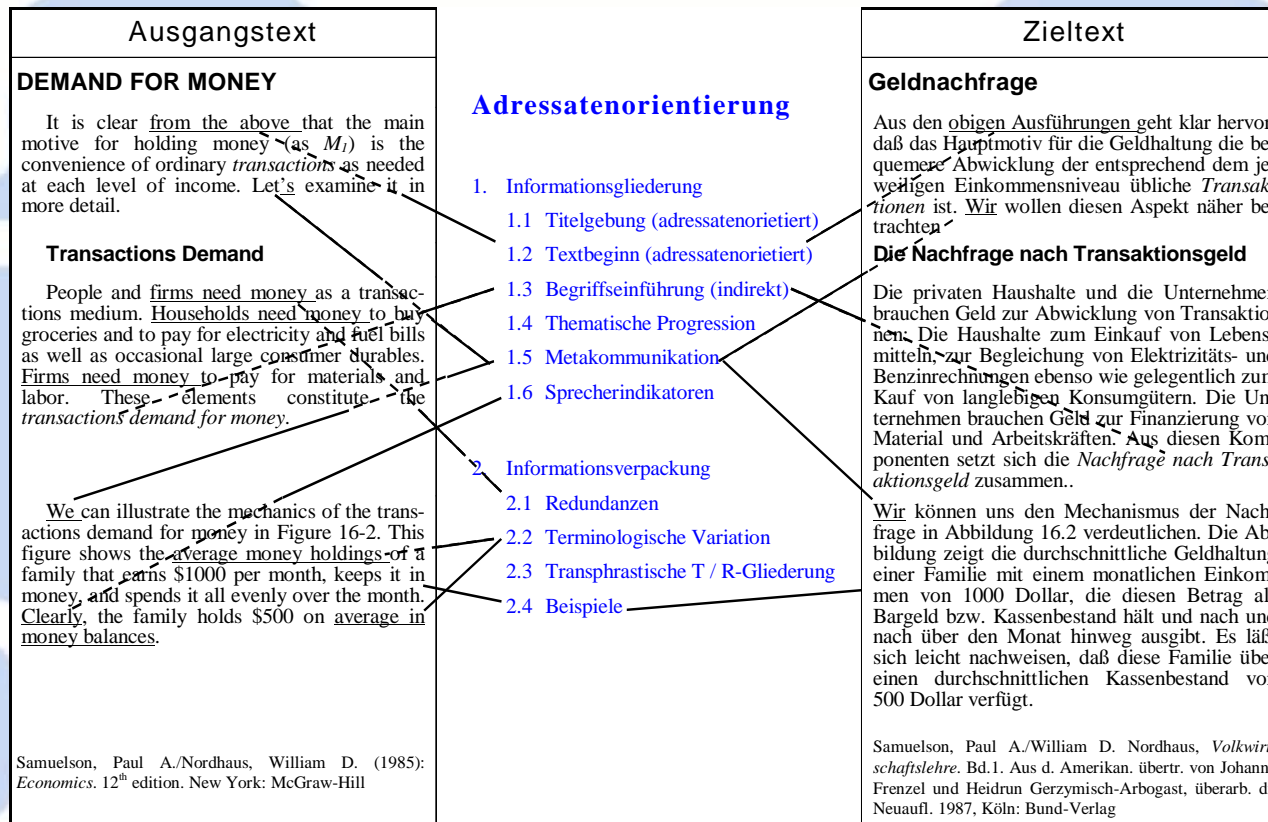


Three Text Perspectives (cont.)

Analysis on the holistic and most complex description level accounts for ‘gestalt’ phenomena in individual texts and structures them as (implied) holistic systems (holons) of knowledge, culture and/or values (‘constellations’, Floros 2003). It is generally recognized that understanding texts requires world knowledge in interaction with what is verbalized in the text. This interaction is made transparent by relating system and text in the form of ‘concretizations’ which allow for identifying individual (coherence-establishing) inferences and transparency of interpretations of a text.

Representation and visualization is by thesaurus or semantic networks.





3 Die musikalische Fokussierung (Musical Focussing)

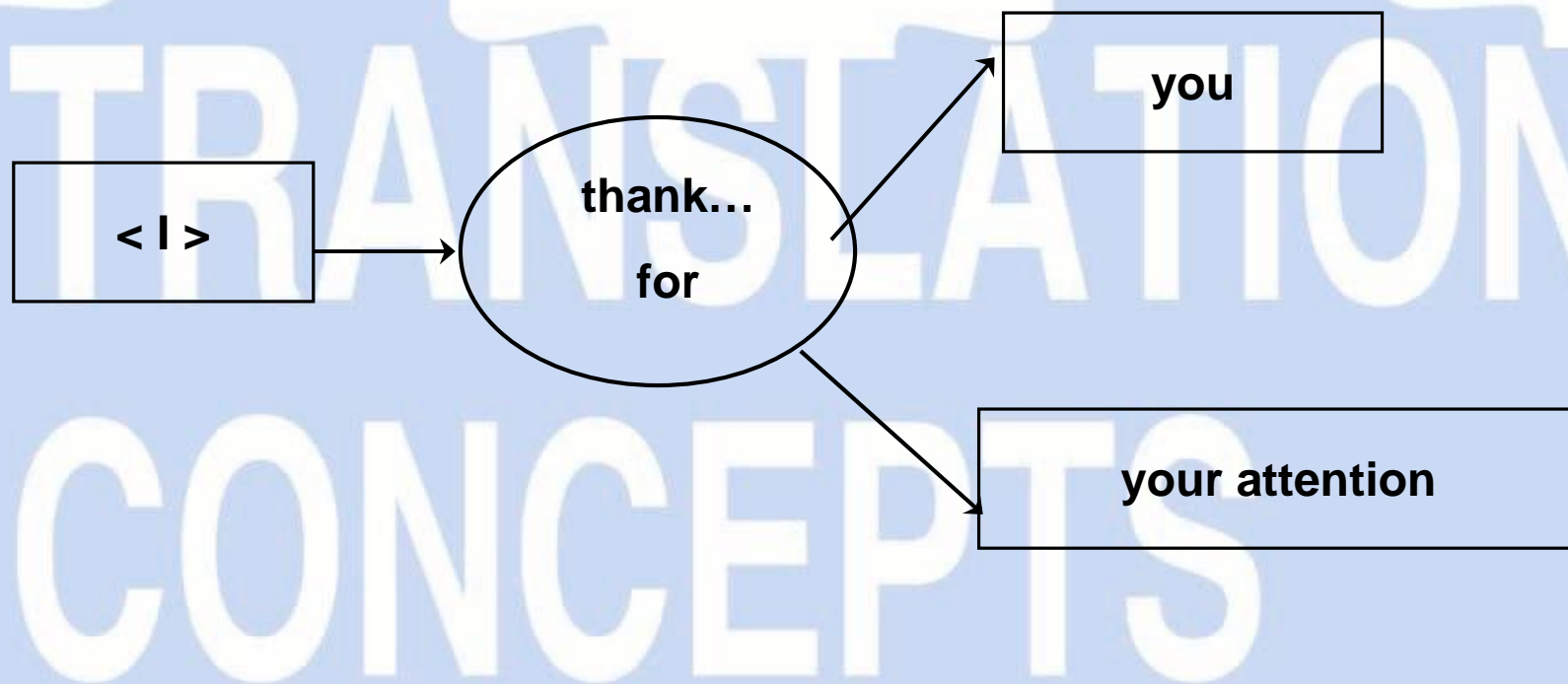
From Jan Kunold:
Translating Music

	20.	
1. Hervorhebung	21.	
1.1 Rein textuelle Hervorhebung	22.	
1.1.1 Wiederholung	23.	
1.1.2 Satzmarkierung	24.	
1.1.3 Interjektion	25.	
1.1.4 Interpunktion		
1.2 Rein musikalische Hervorhebung		
1.2.1 betonte Taktzeit		
1.2.2 markierte Rhythmik		
1.2.3 unerwartete harmonische Wendung		
1.2.4 unvorbereiteter Einsatz		
1.2.5 lange Tondauer		
1.2.6 musikalische Wiederholung		
1.3 Musikalische und textuelle Hervorhebung		
1.3.1 getreue Wiederholung (Text und Noten)		
1.3.2 variierte Wiederholung		
1.3.3 lautmalerische Gestaltung		

GERMAN

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ENGLISH



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