

## The pragmatic-functional nature of intralingual translation and its affinity to top-down-procedures<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

This paper examines intralingual translation in terms of process and product. On the basis of the example of the adaptation of an Ancient Greek comedy, *The Birds*, into a Modern Greek comic book, it presents and illustrates the basic transformations and modifications carried out in this special type of intralingual translation. Theoretically and methodologically, the paper grounds its analysis on the functional translation theory and, in particular, on the fruitful combination of Christiane Nord's concept of "translational top-down-procedures" with the concept of "contrastive text prototypologies", which is grounded on Neubert's concept of "text prototypes" and Kußmaul's claim for "contrastive pragmatic studies". The overall aim of this paper is to contribute to translation theory by finding theoretical and methodological means to thoroughly study, explain and conceptualize the phenomenology of the still relatively unexplored domain of intralingual translation, as well as support its practice with the appropriate scientific knowledge. Finally, by means of this paper, based on one characteristic example of the wide range of intralingual translational practice, I hope to deliver useful theoretical and methodological insights that evidently apply to every single type of intralingual translation.

### Keywords

Functional Translation Theory, top-down-procedures, adaptation of ancient Greek comedy into a modern Greek comic book, contrastive text prototypologies, pragmatic-functional nature of intralingual translation

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## 1. Introduction

Taking a closer look at some of the main types of intralingual translation, e.g. expert-to-layperson communication, modernization of children's literature, adaptation of classics for children, adaptation of classics into comic books, oral-to-written intralingual translation, we can ascertain the following dominant characteristics they all seem to have in common: the modifications made from source text to target text do not focus merely on the use of a different linguistic register, but also on the production of different text types, as well as on the use of different verbal and/or non-verbal cultural elements. With this in mind, I believe, intralingual translation can no longer be merely seen as "rewording", as Jakobson (1981, p. 190) defined it from a restrictive linguistic point of view. Moreover, intralingual translation seems to be governed by its own inner rules that partially seem to differ from those of standard cases of "translation proper". In view of this, translation theory is faced with a challenging task: to find theoretical and methodological means in order to thoroughly study, explain and conceptualize the phenomenology of the still relatively unexplored domain of intralingual translation, as well as support its practice with the appropriate scientific knowledge.

This paper intends to contribute to filling this gap. On the basis of the example of the adaptation of an Ancient Greek Aristophanean comedy, *The Birds*, into a Modern Greek comic book, I shall present and illustrate the basic transformations and modifications carried out in this special type of intralingual translation. Along these lines, my overall aim is to detect the inner, structural rules that govern intralingual translation and to provide methodological and theoretical insights that conceptualize and determine its nature in terms of process and final product. The findings of my research may hopefully lead to the conclusion that it is possible to establish, by utilizing the theoretical and practical tools of translation studies, a well founded theoretical and methodological approach for studying in depth, explaining and conceptualizing the phenomenology of intralingual translation.

My working hypothesis is that, as a special form of intracultural interaction, intralingual translation is of a genuinely pragmatic-functional nature and can be analyzed, as well as carried out very successfully if one applies the means offered in the functional translation theory of German scholars Vermeer, Reiß, Nord, Kußmaul, such as the "top-down-procedures" in text analysis (cf. 3.) and the "contrastive text prototypologies" (cf. 4.) that help to understand the changes the source text has to undergo in its intralingual translational transformation to become the target text. This happens because both pragmatic-functional concepts distinguish themselves in that they regard the linguistic and internal aspects of a text as dependent on the external embedding of a text in a specific situation. And this naturally goes along with preference for top-down-procedures as opposed to bottom-up-procedures, which are based on commencing analysis from the linguistic level.

## 2. Basic ideas of the functional approach in translation

At this point, I would like to refer in passing to the basic ideas of the functional approach in translation and its affinity with pragmatics, which is the theoretical starting point of my approach.

The functional approach in translation is inextricably connected with the cultural turn in translation studies that took place in the mid 80's of the last century. This cultural turn increased our awareness of the importance of culture for translation, both written translation and interpreting. Since then, translation has been regarded predominantly as a special form of intercultural communication. While the cultural element of translation has received due attention from several different standpoints, e.g. the empirical/descriptive one by Israeli scholars Even-Zohar and Toury (cf. Even-Zohar & Toury, 1981, Toury, 1995) and the interdisciplinary one by English scholar Snell-Hornby (1986, 1986a, 2009), the functional translation theory reflected in the work of German scholars Vermeer (1992), Reiß (1993), Reiß/Vermeer (1991) and Nord (1993, 1998a, 1998b, 2009) has to be regarded as one of the most decisive scholarly approaches in terms of its general theoretical and practical significance.

In functionally orientated translation theory, the translation of a given source text has to 'function' correctly in the target culture. This plays a major role, because it is quite possible that the specific parameters of a translational action may diversify essentially certain aspects in the source text from the ones in the target text. Thus, whether a target text is functionally correct or not is dependent upon several aspects inherent to the translational task, such as e.g. the skopos of the translation, the text type of the target text to be produced, the differences with regard to external and internal parameters by which the target text has to distinguish itself from the source text, etc. In this sense, and with regard to the essential principle of modern translation studies on the difference between cultures-in-contact, the pragmatic dimension is a core element. Given that pragmatics is the study of language as an action with a certain aim, as well as the social contexts in which linguistic action takes place, according to the functional translation theory, interlingual translation as a special form of intercultural communication has to be looked upon as the study of verbal and nonverbal action carried out by experts in order to functionally bridge two different cultural backgrounds. The significance of this contrastive culture-pragmatic approach in translation is grounded in the fact that it reveals the culture-specific use of language, text and mental concepts, which constitutes a major translational obstacle.

### **3. Top-down-procedures as a pragmatic-functional tool**

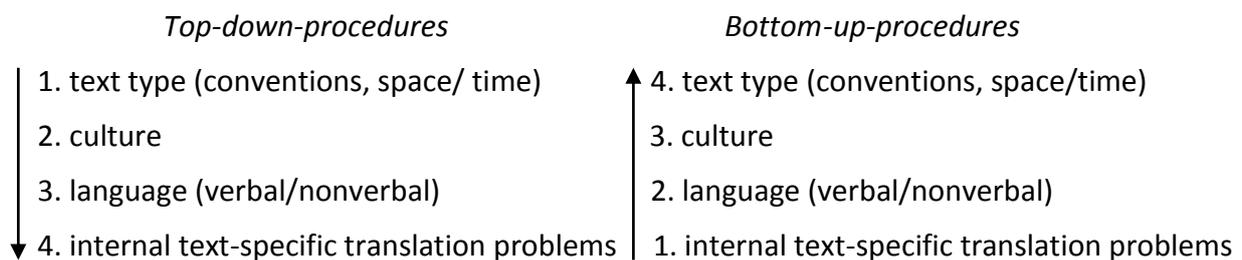
In the pragmatic-functional approach of translation, top-down-procedures, in contrast to bottom-up-procedures, are a core element. But what exactly is meant by "top-down-procedures"? In order to provide an answer to this question, I would like to very briefly present the theoretical background that underlies the notion of top-down-procedures in the context of translational text analysis.

The pragmatic-functional models of text analysis distinguish themselves in that they regard the linguistic and internal aspects of a text as dependent on the external embedding of a text in a specific situation. In accordance with Nord, as well as on the basis that the translation task is known before the source text has been analyzed, a prospective profile of the target text in a target-cultural communicative situation has to be elaborated on the grounds of the question, "Who conveys to whom, with which aim, through which channel, where, when, why, a specific text with which function?". This target text profile serves as a basis for analyzing the source text and ascertaining as well as isolating the elements that generate translational problems. When isolating these translation-relevant elements, one has to distinguish between subjective translational problems, e.g. translating competence of the individual translator,

condition of the translation situation, and objective translational problems inherent to the translation task. (Nord, 1998a, p. 352)

In order to better deal with objective translation problems, Nord proposes that a distinction be made among four categories: (1) the pragmatic translation problems that are posed by the juxtaposition of two different communicative situations in which the source text and the target text are embedded, i.e., besides “time” and “space”, the text type and its conventions, (2) the culture-specific translation problems that arise out of the contrastive comparison between norms and conventions inherent in the source and target text cultures, (3) the language pair-specific translational problems with which the translator is faced when contrasting the structure of the source language with that of the target language, and (4) the internal text-specific translation problems that occur due to the translation of a specific text with characteristics that cannot easily be transferred to other translation tasks, e.g. the translation of puns and wordplay. In order to solve these problems, Nord (1998a, p. 351; 2009) pleads for a careful assessment of every translational task in terms of its specific features and requirements, and its correlation with the pragmatic-functional text analysis. And here is exactly where top-down-procedures become relevant. Nord claims that translational problems have to be solved by starting from the pragmatic macrostructure through the cultural level and subsequently down to the linguistic micro-level, which, as such, reflects the very notion of a top-down-procedure.

Schematically, top-down-procedures can be depicted as opposed to bottom-up-procedures:



**Figure 1.** Textual top-down-procedures as opposed to bottom-up-procedures.

Top-down-procedures make it evident that the category of linguistic translational problems in non-functional approaches is no longer all that decisive, because many language pair-specific problems automatically cease to exist if specific pragmatic conditions or conventions already prohibit specific linguistic expressions and forms. Thus, by beginning the analysis from the top level, i.e. the level of text type, one can imagine that specific text typological characteristics that are pragmatically incorrect with regard to the text typological conventions of the target text will very likely be eliminated or changed. And these text typological diversifications may also result in certain cultural as well as linguistic elements of the source text that are not applicable in the target text. The same chain of diversifications is very likely for the second level of top-down-procedures, i.e. the cultural one. Thus, cultural conventions of the source texts may not apply to the target text, which may bring about diversifications of the target text not only on the cultural level but also on the linguistic level. And even on the linguistic level, the inputs of the source text cannot be kept unaltered, for the upper two levels, the cultural and the text typological ones, impose a specific linguistic target text output that may differ from the linguistic data of the source text, from slightly to radically. Last but not least,

this goes also for the bottom level, the level of text-internal translational problems, as it may be unnecessary to render one or more of the above levels into the target text. Hence, by juxtaposing the target text profile with the source text analysis, the specific translation-relevant elements that are necessary for the functioning of the target text are distilled and isolated and it has to be examined whether they can be kept unaltered or whether they have to be included in the target text in a diversified manner, for these functional units may be rendered verbally or nonverbally in different cultures. As opposed to top-down-procedures, translational bottom-up-procedures followed by mere linguistic approaches begin from the bottom level, i.e. from the internal text-specific translation problem, moving over to the translational unit of the phrase or utterance or even the word, the paragraph, or the effect of the total text composition. This does not take due account of the cultural, pragmatic and text typological transformations that have to be carried out when translating cultures.

In conclusion, the pragmatic-functional tool of the top-down-procedure is a very helpful means, not only for translational text analysis but also for the production of the final translational product, which has to function correctly in the target culture.

#### 4. Intralingual translation

Let us now see what the inner structural nature of intralingual translation is and if its nature has pragmatic-functional affinity, as well as whether or not it complies with top-down-procedures. In accordance with my working hypothesis (cf. 1.), I assume that this is indeed the case with intralingual translation. I shall illustrate this on the basis of the adaptation of the ancient Greek Aristophanean comedy *The Birds* in its Modern Greek translation (approx. 1960) to a Modern Greek comic book dated 1987.

In order to be as clear and illustrative as possible, I shall apply a methodological concept that I regard as very useful when it comes to comparing text and cultures (especially in terms of teaching translation). This concept I would like to call “contrastive prototypology of text types”.<sup>2</sup> My concept dwells on relevant claims of two important German translation scientists, i.e. Albrecht Neubert of the well-known “Leipziger Schule” and the pragmatically and functionally oriented Paul Kußmaul. Neubert already pointed out in 1984 the need for constructing “prototypes of text types” (Neubert, 1984, p. 86), which would help when creating textbooks and other materials. These prototypes of text could also be useful for computer assisted translation, as well as for terminology data banks. (Cf. Kußmaul, 1995, p. 83) Nine years later, Kußmaul claims that, in order to help students produce functioning translations, the pragmatic dimension of the text must be given due attention. Consequently, text type conventions, which are genuinely pragmatic, have to be taken into account. Thus, he emphasizes the necessity of corpus-based contrastive studies for translation and translation teaching. These contrastive studies “should take both situation and culture into account” (Kußmaul, 1995, p. 75; see also Kußmaul, 1995, pp. 72-73; Nord, 1998b, p. 60). Kußmaul (1995, p. 83) writes:

We can sharpen our student’s awareness of pragmatic dimensions, and this will help them produce a “functioning translation”. We have seen that for the proper functioning of a translation, text type conventions must be taken into account. It would be very helpful if these conventions and the differences between conventions

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Seel (2015) for an intercultural contrastive prototypology of the text type “obituary” on the basis of the language pair Greek/German.

in the source and in the target language were known. For this reason we should encourage corpus-based contrastive studies.

Considering the above-mentioned claims of both translation scientists, a methodological combination of Neubert’s concept of “prototypes of text types” and Kußmaul’s concept of “contrastive pragmatic studies” seems to be very promising not only for translation teaching but also for the aim of this paper, namely to determine the inner structural nature of intralingual translation, as well as to determine whether its nature has pragmatic-functional affinity and whether it complies with top-down-procedures. This is due to the fact that the contrastive elaboration of specific text types in specific language pairs in the form of prototypologies, where culture and pragmatics are the focus of investigation, enhances awareness of pragmatic dimensions. And, as pragmatic considerations in texts are genuinely hierarchical, this combined methodology goes along very well with the concept of top-down-procedures (cf. 3). Thus, my concept of “contrastive prototypologies of text types” functions as a multidimensional methodological tool that is made up of the fruitful combination of three different scientific concepts, a) “prototypology of text type”, b) “contrastive pragmatic studies” and c) “top-down-procedures”. In addition, it can be used in the context of this paper as a heuristic tool to prove the central hypothesis of this paper (cf. 1).

In Table 1, I shall ground my analysis in contrasting the “prototypologies” of both texts types mentioned in the beginning of this chapter: the ancient Greek Aristophanean comedy in its Modern Greek translation and the Modern Greek comic book.

	<b>Attic Comedy [414 b. C.] (Modern Greek Translation, [approx. 1960])</b>	<b>Modern Greek Comic Book [1987]</b>
<b>text typological features</b>	classical dramatic text type meant for performance	dialogic text type meant for reading
-structure	16 different dramaturgic units: prologue, towards parodus, parodus, conflict, iambic scenes as transition to the agon, agon, iambic scene as transition to the parabasis (with some anapaests, parabasis, iambic scenes with prosaic interpolations, episodic scenes with lyric and dactylic interpolations, second parabasis, iambic scene, iambic scene with lyrical elements, stasimon, iambic scene, exodus	one single unit, more than 200 panels with bubbles of different kinds (speech, whisper, thought, scream) and as graphic symbols (voice inflections, unspecified language)
	coherent dramaturgic structure	incoherent dialogic structure
	stage instructions	_____
	chorus of ancient Greek comedy	_____
-length	71 pages	45 pages

-narrative mode	neutral narrative voice: author is only implicitly present	meta-textual narrative commentary on characters, situation, author is explicitly present: external narrative voice
	_____	summarizing captions with regard to the historical background: epistolary narrative voice
	_____	commentaries on the author Aristophanes himself
	_____	explanation of dramatic devices of ancient Greek comedy, e.g. "deus ex machina"
-narrative frame	external and internal frame present tense	external frame past tense (the performance of <i>The Birds</i> , internal frame (spectators and Aristophanes himself) present tense
-content	original complete content	restrictive content of the original play
<b>cultural features</b>	indirect reference to Athenian democracy 414 b.C., the Peloponnesian War, Sparta, disappointment of the defeat, comic criticism of the informers and traitors amongst the Athenians, as well as the political flatterers and the new social (poverty and famine) and political conditions (end of the Athenian hegemony)	on the basis of the dramaturgic frame of the <i>The Birds</i> , direct reference to modern times (1987), few political insinuations (politicians of this period, e.g. Andreas Papandreou), more satirical dealing with everyday life situations and Modern Greek mentality (egoism, lack of respect of the other, avarice)
	_____	reference of technology and its use as dramaturgic means of the performance itself (motorcycle rider as "deus ex machina")
<b>linguistic features (verbal/non-verbal)</b>	Modern Greek, contemporary metric language of a higher stylistic register	Modern Greek, contemporary non-metric language of low stylistic register
	_____	slang
	_____	everyday elliptic single utterances
	_____	everyday elliptic dialogue
	_____	frequent interjections
	occasional indirect swearing (mainly word plays, cf. "Text-internal translation problems")	frequent swearing
	_____	occasional use of song verses of folk music, e.g. rembetiko

	_____	paralanguage as whispering, shouting
	_____	suprasegmental elements of language (as graphic depiction in balloons), e.g. astonishment, wrath, love
	_____	visual kinesics, e.g. beckoning, culture-specific kinesic forms of swearing
	_____	use of contemporary legal language, e.g. «ιδιωτικό συμφωνητικό» [Engl.: private contract]
	_____	use of transliterated English words as loan words in Greek (e.g. “ρηλάξ” = Engl. to relax, “το σκαλπ = ”Engl. the scalp)
	_____	language is supplemented by the image, the message is only comprehensible in form of the co-structuration of language with the image and kinesics and paralanguage
<b>Text-internal translation problems</b>	puns and word plays	_____
	all-around metric language	_____
	metric-bound onomatopoetic elements (“κουκουβάου κουκουβάου, τοροτόρο τοροτορολιλίξ” = imitation of bird twittering)	non-metric-bound onomatopoetic elements (κρα! κροξξξ! κρρρρρ!! τιοξ-τιοξ! = imitation of bird twittering implicating aggressiveness and anger by suprasegmental elements, e.g. exclamation mark )

**Table 1.** Contrastive prototypology of the intralingual adaptation of a classic Aristophanean comedy as a modern comic book.

As we can ascertain, the differences in nature between the dramatic text of the Aristophanean *The Birds* and the comic book version of the same play are astonishing and also astonishingly pragmatic. First of all, on a text typological level, we are confronted with a completely different structure, layout, narrative mode and time and length. Not to mention that the content and the medium of literacy differ dramatically where stage instructions and the chorus are essential. Thus, the intralingual rendering of the dramatic text in the modern comic book version can by no means rely on the source text input, but, on the contrary, has to adapt every single parameter of the text typological functional unit of the source text to the different pragmatic needs of the target text. It is evident that the pragmatic-functional changes and omissions by the translator or author of the text are, merely with regard to this first level, tremendous. The content has to be limited and reorganized and adapted to the textual and culture-pragmatic rules that govern the comic book in which the graphic element, the image, is predominant and conveys messages not only in co-structuration with verbal and non-verbal

means, but very often also in a linear manner, i.e. independently of verbal and non-verbal means. There is no need to illustrate every single change of this transformation, as this would by far exceed the space limitations of this paper. It is only important to point out that the intralingual translational transformations on the text typological level are evidently genuinely functional and pragmatic, as the target text that has to be produced demands radical changes that have to go along with a completely different pragmatically determined target text nature.

The same goes for the level of cultural features, which constitutes the second functional unit of pragmatic-functional text analysis. Here, the differences in cultural references in both texts focus on the insinuations and implications of the social and political background at the time when both texts were written. While the play indirectly criticizes the corruption of political men and, in general, the political misfortune of losing the Peloponnesian War which led to the humiliating loss of the Athenian hegemony and poverty and famine inflicted on the population, the comic book only uses the central theme of *The Birds* as a means of revealing unpretentiously the selfishness and other bad character traits of modern Greeks in a very comic and direct manner. Political implications are few, albeit still existent. Again we can ascertain that the cultural features in texts are dependent on time and space and, therefore, they constitute pragmatic translational problems because they can only be understood by the receiver through culture-specific background knowledge. In this context it is also important to point out that the cultural features of the source text appertain to a pragmatic reality predominantly on the dia-cultural level, while the ones in the target text refer to the para-cultural level.<sup>3</sup> Thus, an intralingual translation can only be regarded as functional if the cultural features refer not only to their specific pragmatic reality but also if they are rendered in accordance with the upper level of the text type, i.e. by taking into account e.g. the predominance of the graphic text element in the comic book version of *The Birds*, as well as all the other afore-mentioned specific text typological constraints.

For the third functional unit of analysis, which concerns linguistic features, the differences are even more striking. While the dramatic text is written in metric Modern Greek of a higher stylistic register with only occasional, indirect swearing, mainly in form of rhythmic wordplay, the linguistic features of the comic book is a low-register non-metric language, with plenty of everyday elliptic dialogue and single utterances, slang, sudden interjections, swearing, verses of folk music, transliterations of English words, paralinguistic, visual kinesics, contemporary specialized language, e.g. legal language, suprasegmental elements co-structured with the images of the panels. Thus, once again, we can ascertain the radical changes that intralingual translation has to bring about in terms of the functionality and pragmatics of the target text, and that these changes are absolutely dependent upon the upper two functional levels, the text typological level and the cultural one.

Last but not least, on the fourth level, which concerns text-specific translational problems, it is mainly the puns and eloquent word plays, as well as the metric nature of the dramatic text and metric-bound onomatopoeic elements that would demand a lot of the translator if these elements of specific literacy were to be translated interlingually. Yet, the intralingual transformation relieves the writer of the target text of this difficult task, as the requirements of the intralingual output set by the other three levels above do not include any of these

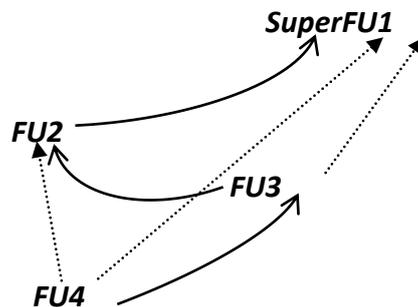
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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Vermeer (1992, p. 32) for the differentiation between “para-culture (=Parakultur)”, “dia-culture (=Diakultur)” and “idio-culture (=Idiokultur)”.

elements of the source text in the final intralingual translation product, i.e. the Modern Greek comic book of *The Birds*.

As we can conclude from this, intralingual translational transformations can be ascertained on each of the four functional levels, but it is very important to understand that each and every one of them is ultimately subordinate to the upper functional level, which is the text type, since every transformation on the levels below is absolutely dependent upon the central function of the intralingual translation, which is to produce an intralingual adaption of the original dramatic play of the Aristophanean *The Birds*. This same chain of hierarchy continues from every upper level to the next lower level and can be followed down to the last one. Consequently, every intralingual translational decision-making process is bound to begin from above, starting from the parameters of the text type that determine the cultural level and then passing on to next lower level, the linguistic one, which in itself is determined by the upper two, the cultural and the text typological one, before ending with the lowest level, which covers text-specific translational problems where, again, the decisions to be made are dependent upon the upper three levels and the decisions made on these levels before. Commencing intralingual text analysis from the bottom functional unit would not lead to a pragmatic-functional adaptation of *The Birds* as a Modern Greek comic book, as it would not take into account the specific pragmatic and functional parameters of the adaptation.

The extreme transformations on all four functional levels, as well as the fact that the hierarchical dependency of transformations always stem from the functional unit(s) (FU) on the level(s) above can be graphically depicted as follows:



**Figure 2.** Graphic depiction of the hierarchical dependencies of transformation in intralingual adaptation.<sup>4</sup>

## 5. Conclusions

These findings give rise to the following three conclusions with regard to intralingual translation:

Firstly, the nature of intralingual translation and, as such, intralingual translation as a final product, is to the utmost degree pragmatic-functional. While e.g. in functionally constant intralingual translation, where the focus usually lies on the different linguistic systems, the pragmatic aspect is, for all its relevance, not the main focus of translational action, due to the fact that intralingual translation predominantly aims to produce a different text type for a different kind of target group inside the same culture, but frequently of a different time

<sup>4</sup> Solid lines = direct dependency exactly of the level above. Dotted lines = indirect dependency of other levels above.

period, the functional and, hence, also the pragmatic divergence between source text and target text is particularly great.

Secondly, given this divergence and the specific hierarchical relations of the functional units as elaborated above with regard to the adaption of the ancient Greek comedy *The Birds* into a Modern Greek comic book, one may conclude that intralingual translation as a translational process can only be carried out correctly by top-down-procedures, and is as such a top-down-procedure.

Thirdly, one may therefore also conclude that the functional translation theory and its pragmatic-functional text analysis offer the suitable theoretical and practical tools to study in depth, explain and conceptualize the phenomenology of intralingual translation, as well as supporting the performance of this creative and special translational action. It would, of course, be welcome and useful to verify the findings of this paper and confirm its conclusions by further pragmatic-functionally orientated research in more kinds of intralingual translation.

Finally, one may conclude from the above that the working hypothesis at the beginning of this paper, i.e. that the inner rules that govern intralingual translation are culture-pragmatically determined and that they have a strong affinity to top-down-procedures, has been verified on the grounds of a “contrastive prototypology of text types”. Thus, we could deduce from this that the integrated approach of “contrastive prototypologies of text types” is not only useful to the contrastive investigation of culture and pragmatics in teaching translation but also as a heuristic tool for translation theory. In view of this, the overall aim of this paper, which is to contribute to translation theory by finding one possible theoretical and methodological means to study in depth, explain and conceptualize the phenomenology of intralingual translation, as well as support its performance with the appropriate scientific knowledge, may be regarded as having been achieved.

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**Biography:** Olaf Immanuel Seel is bilingual in German and Greek. He also speaks English, French, and some Spanish and Italian. He holds a B.A. in German Language and Literature, in English Language and Literature and in Theatre Science, as well as a Ph.D. in Translation Studies. His doctorate was published in the series “Studien zur Translation” of the German publishing company Stauffenburg. His research interests extend to a range of different fields, including Intercultural Communication, Translation Studies, Pragmatics, Sociolinguistics, Localization, Terminology, Greek and German Literature, as well as Foreign Language Teaching. He is currently a Lecturer in Translation and Translation Studies at the Department of Foreign Languages, Translation and Interpretation of The Ionian University of Corfu, Greece. As a translator, his working languages are German, Greek and English.