

BOOK REVIEW:

**Textproduktion im Zeitalter der Globalisierung.
Entwicklung einer Didaktik des Wissenstransfers.**

Susanne Göpferich

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This welcome new volume from Susanne Göpferich is an updated and much extended version of her 1998 book *Interkulturelles Technical Writing* (Tübingen: Narr). As befits a *Habilitationsschrift*, it is comprehensive, scholarly and closely argued. Whether it is also accessible to technical writers, journalists and specialist translators as part of its target readership, is, however, arguable. The subtitle of the volume - *Entwicklung einer Didaktik des Wissenstransfers* - also raises a general question about how analytical work can be applied to the task of teaching. Indeed, the exemplary annex containing a sample chapter from a possible textbook deals with points of punctuation, morphology and syntax, including common misunderstandings and errors, but this does not do justice to the richness of Göpferich's analytical work.

Having said all that, the book is a wonderful source of references – often those hard-to-trace almost apocryphal sources – and of examples for anyone teaching or researching technical writing, a subject which is often represented by how-to manuals based on experience, practice and belief. This one is based on a wide range of previous research from many related disciplines, closely-argued analysis and new empirical research. It therefore makes a significant contribution to the subject, particularly for academics wishing to get a handle on technical writing and for advanced students wishing to understand it rather than just do it.

The book differs structurally from the previous volume in that it contains no exercises or further reading, indicating a change of orientation away from a *Lehr- und Arbeitsbuch*, although the actual content is presented in a similar fashion. Of the eight chapters in the new volume, two early chapters are largely based on the 1998 book. Chapter 2: Präskriptive (prospektive) Textsortenlinguistik and chapter 3: Satzbau unter kommunikativem Aspekt borrow respectively from chapter 5: Textsorten der Technik, and chapter 6: Satzbau unter kommunikativem Aspekt in the 1998 volume. Chapter 4: Verstehen und Verständlichkeit shares its title but only part of its content with chapter 8 in the earlier volume. Other chapters occasionally draw on and extend smaller sections of the 1998 book, but the rest consists of new material.

Chapter 1 kicks off by setting the broad scene, touching on research issues, professional profiles and training for technical writers. It is made clear that the book deals with a range of specialist communication situations, not confined to expert-to-expert texts, in an age of borderless communication on the one hand and expectations of appropriateness to local situations and customs on the other hand. The title of chapter 2 reflects the critical approach adopted with respect to the analysis of selected text genres, going beyond the descriptive to the prescriptive and underlining the ultimate pedagogical orientation of the book. Chapter 3 deals with syntax in technical writing, with a view to motivating choices of verb form, word order and voice in the framework of speech act theory and functional sentence perspective (FSP). In chapter 4 we move on to cognitive territory, looking at texts from the perspective of receptors, not only from the point of view of characterising and facilitating readability, but also with a view to recognising that some texts may be written with the intention of obscuring their content for social or political reasons. This chapter is full of excellent and detailed examples of how specialist – mostly technical – texts are understood (or not) and how they could be improved. Chapter 5 balances the processing of texts by the reader with the production of texts by the author, drawing mainly on a model based on think-aloud protocols. A proposal then follows which reviews this model in the light of Göpferich's own cyclical pedagogically-oriented model of text production. Chapter 5 ends with a reference to second language acquisition in the form of Krashen's 1980s input hypothesis extended to writing, in which it is suggested that novice technical writers can improve their performance by extensive reading. Chapter 6 carries forward the resonance with second language research, this time from the 1970s in the form of error analysis. Numerous concrete examples of students' developing competence – if we can make that jump from performance – provide fascinating evidence for teachers at every linguistic level in a detailed grid of error types and frequency. This catalogue of errors could also be informative for advanced foreign language learning, where many error types overlap with those of native speakers, e.g. collocations, FSP errors, inappropriate word choice, and so on. The chapter concludes with the outline of a textbook chapter dedicated to the avoidance of such errors, and anticipating a further pedagogically-oriented publication by Göpferich. In chapter 7 the implications of the global-local tension are explored, as realised in the authoring of technical documents for global markets through internationalisation or neutralisation of cultural factors, and their

subsequent localisation, which is understood here to be synonymous with translation within a functionalist framework. The chapter contains a very useful summary of how culturally-biased information can be neutralised (based on a survey of practitioners by Göpferich conducted via several mail lists), as well as a discussion of controlled languages and their acceptance, and of various models of cultural comparison. The final brief chapter, chapter 8, concludes with a discussion of the interface between technical writing and specialist translation, including implications for the development of curricula in these closely-related disciplines.

The synergy between technical writing and specialist translation is evident not only from the explicit discussion in Göpferich's final chapter, but also from the series in which each of her books appears. The first volume, *Interkulturelles Technical Writing* (1998), appears in the Gunter Narr series *Forum für Fachsprachen-Forschung*, and the present volume appears in the Stauffenburg series *Studien zur Translation*. Hence Göpferich's work points the way forward, not only for a comprehensive view of specialist text production, including translation, but also for the development of well-motivated practice-relevant curricula.
