AL-FARABI KAZAKH NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Department of International Relations

Chair of Diplomatic Translation

**Translation business in the field of international and legal relations**

**“Translation of Scientific and Technical Documents”**

2024-2025 academic year, fall semester

**Lecture 3**

**Module 1: Introduction to scientific and technical translation**

**Lecture 3:** Features of functional style of scientific and technical texts

or communication within the community to be successful, its communicative purpose must be recognized and understood by others. For example, a patent applica- tion would not fulfil the purpose of making claims for a novel inven- tion if it was not accepted as such by patent offices, patent lawyers, etc. On the basis that the inventor is making those claims for novelty, others can then agree or challenge the claims. The parties involved have a shared understanding of the communicative purpose of the application. This is the basis on which the concept of genre is defined: ‘a recognizable communicative event characterized by a set of com- municative purpose(s) identified and mutually understood by the members of the professional or academic community in which it reg- ularly occurs’ (Bhatia 1993: 13, drawing on Swales’ (1990) work). For the members of the community to recognize and understand the communicative purpose, they have to be familiar with the struc- ture that the communication normally or typically takes. They learn this through their training and their own recurrent experience of the genre in their professional lives. A genre is therefore described as ‘a highly structured and conventionalized communicative event’ (Bhatia 1993: 14). As we will see in Chapter 5, patent specifications are con- structed in a certain way. The inventors writing them have some lin- guistic constraints to follow, as well as some freedom in how they formulate their ideas. But if they step far outside of the accepted rules and conventions of the genre, other members of the community are likely to not recognize the contribution as an example of the genre (Swales 2014: 313).

It will not be accepted as belonging to the genre and it will fail to fulfil its communicative purpose. As we will see in Chapter 6, an author submitting an article to a prestigious scientific journal may have their article rejected if it does not conform to the journal’s explicit rules, but also to a set of conventions that may not be explicitly stated but that are recognized by the established members of the community. Perhaps the author has used very colloquial language in the article. Established members will review the article; they them- selves may be regular readers of the journal or they may have had their own articles accepted for publication. The journal editor also acts as gatekeeper and decides whether the genre conventions have been met. The colloquial language may result in rejection of the article or a request for revision before it can be published. However, similar instances of colloquial language may be acceptable to the audience listening to a conference presentation at a scientific conference or in a science lecture to students; the topics under discussion may be the same in each case, but they are different genres, with different communicative purposes and different conventions. Translators often aim to translate a text in such a way that it will be accepted by the target discourse community as recognizably belonging to a genre, conforming to the rules and conventions of the genre, fulfilling identifiable communicative purposes. To do that is far from straightforward. It means translators have to be as knowledge- able about the genre as the expert members of the discourse commu- nity, although they have not trained or worked as engineers or scientists.

References

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