

Comic Contracts as Intersemiotic Translation: Can Comic-Style Communication Improve the Accessibility of Social Welfare Documents?

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The language used in social welfare documents can sometimes be hard for clients to understand. This presentation discusses an ongoing research project that examines whether social welfare documents can be intersemiotically translated (cf. Jakobson 1959) into comics without losing their value as legally binding public documents and whether such transformation can facilitate the comprehension of these documents. The project is carried out by an interdisciplinary research team consisting of scholars in the fields of translation studies, legal research and social work.

In this presentation, we introduce a pilot study in which we test the intersemiotic translation process of a social welfare document into a comic form and assess its reception with test readers, carried out in the spring of 2019. The document selected for this purpose is a contract for supervised exchange, signed between separated parents when a supervisor is needed to oversee a child's security in an exchange situation where a child is transferred from one parent to another.

Our presentation has three aims. First, we reflect on the stages of the actual intersemiotic translation process – converting the contract into a comic – which is designed by the entire research team and conducted by one of the team members who also works as an illustrator. Secondly, we present the results of the pilot reception study, in which the participants read the document, as verbal text and in a comic form, and then answer questions designed to evaluate how they comprehended the contents of the contract. Thirdly, we will discuss why the participants preferred a verbal or comic-style document. As the very first stage in the evaluation of the comic-style document, the experiment aims to assess if the intersemiotic translation of the document improved its intelligibility.

References:

Jakobson, R. "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation." In R. A. Brower (ed.), *On Translation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), pp. 232–239.