

Part A: A History of Western Translation Theory



1.1. What is translation?

1.1.1. to carry across (Latin); 1.1.2. *amvad*, or to repeat (Indian)

trānsferō, -ferre, -tuli, -latum, *vt* to bring across, transport, transfer; (change) to transform; (language) to translate; (rhet) to use figuratively; (time) to postpone; (writing) to copy

trānslātiō, -trālātiō, -ōnis, transporting, transferring; (language) metaphor.

trānslātor, -oris, *m* transferrer.

1.2. Types of translation

Roman Jakobson's "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation"

1.2.1. Intra-lingual translation, or rewording (an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs in the same language).

1.2.2. Inter-lingual translation or translation proper (an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other languages).

1.2.3. Inter-semiotic translation or transmutation (an interpretation of verbal signs by means of nonverbal sign systems).

1.1.3.

翻譯？

- 夫翻譯者，謂翻梵天之語，轉成漢地之言。音雖似別，義則大同。宋僧傳云，如翻錦繡，背面俱華，但左右不同耳。譯之言易也。謂以所有，易其所無。
- (法雲《翻譯名義集》)

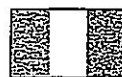
Unit A1

What is translation?

DEFINITIONS OF TRANSLATION

Translation is a phenomenon that has a huge effect on everyday life. This can range from the translation of a key international treaty to the following multilingual poster that welcomes customers to a small restaurant near to the home of one of the authors:

Example A1.1



Benvenuti



Welcome!



Hi!

How can we then go about defining the phenomenon of 'translation' and what the study of it entails? If we look at a general dictionary, we find the following definition of the term *translation*:

Example A1.2

translation *n.* 1 the act or an instance of translating. 2 a written or spoken expression of the meaning of a word, speech, book, etc. in another language.

(*The Concise Oxford English Dictionary*)

The first of these two senses relates to translation as a process, the second to the product. This immediately means that the term *translation* encompasses very distinct perspectives. The first sense focuses on the role of the translator in taking the original or source text (ST) and turning it into a text in another language (the target text, TT). The second sense centres on the concrete translation product produced by the translator. This distinction is drawn out by the definition in the specialist *Dictionary of Translation Studies* (Shuttleworth and Cowie 1997: 181):

Example A1.3

Translation An incredibly broad notion which can be understood in many different ways. For example, one may talk of translation as a process or a product, and identify

such sub-types as **literary translation**, technical translation, **subtitling** and machine translation; moreover, while more typically it just refers to the transfer of written texts, the term sometimes also includes interpreting.

This definition introduces further variables, first the 'sub-types', which include not only typically written products such as literary and technical translations, but also translation forms that have been created in recent decades, such as audiovisual translation, a written product which is read in conjunction with an image on screen (cinema, television, DVD or computer game). Moreover, the reference to machine translation reveals that translation is now no longer the preserve of human translators but, in a professional context, increasingly a process and product that marries computing power and the computerized analysis of language to the human's ability to analyse sense and determine appropriate forms in the other language.

INTERLINGUAL, INTRALINGUAL AND INTERSEMIOTIC TRANSLATION

The final line of Shuttleworth and Cowie's definition also illustrates the potential confusion of translation with interpreting, which is strictly speaking 'oral translation of a spoken message or text' (1997: 83). Yet this confusion is seen repeatedly in everyday non-technical language use, as in the trial in the Netherlands of two Libyans accused of bombing an American Panam passenger jet over Lockerbie, Scotland, where defence lawyers protested at the poor 'translation' which, they said, was impeding the defendants' comprehension of the proceedings (reported in the *Guardian* 10 June 2000).

Even if interpreting is excluded, the potential field and issues covered by translation are vast and complex. *Benvenuti!* may be what many people expect as a translation of *Welcome!*, but how do we explain *Hi!*? Translation also exists between different varieties of the same language and into what might be considered less conventional languages, such as braille, sign language and morse code. What about the flag symbol being understood as a country, nationality or language – is that 'translation' too? Such visual phenomena are seen on a daily basis: no-smoking or exit signs in public places or icons and symbols on the computer screen, such as the hour-glass signifying 'task is under way, please wait' or, as it sometimes seems, 'be patient and don't touch another key!'

Example A1.4

J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter children's books have been translated into over 40 languages and have sold millions of copies worldwide. It is interesting that a separate edition is published in the USA with some alterations. The first book in the series, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (Bloomsbury 1997), appeared as *Harry Potter and*

the Sorcerer's Stone in the USA (Scholastic 1998). As well as the title, there were other lexical changes: British *biscuits*, *football*, *Mummy*, *rounders* and the sweets *sherbet lemons* became American *cookies*, *soccer*, *Mommy*, *baseball* and *lemon drops*. The American edition makes a few alterations of grammar and syntax, such as replacing *got by gotten*, *dived by dove* and *at weekends by on weekends*, and occasionally simplifying the sentence structure.

Task A1.1

- Consider the changes listed above in Example A1.4 and how far you think these can be termed 'translation'.

In this particular case it is not translation between two languages, but between two versions or dialects of the same language. As we shall see below, this is termed 'intralingual translation' in Roman Jakobson's typology and by other theorists may be known as a 'version'. Yet it does share some of the characteristics of translation between languages, notably the replacement of lexical items by other equivalent items that are considered more suited to the target audience.

Task A1.2

In the Hebrew translation of the same book, the translator chose to substitute the British with a traditional Jewish sweet, a kind of marshmallow.

- In what ways do you think this shows similar reasoning to that behind the American version?

In his seminal paper, 'On Linguistic Aspects of Translation' (Jakobson 1959/2000, see Section B, Text B1.1), the Russo-American linguist Roman Jakobson makes a very important distinction between three types of written translation:

1. intralingual translation – translation within the same language, which can involve rewording or paraphrase;
2. interlingual translation – translation from one language to another, and
3. intersemiotic translation – translation of the verbal sign by a non-verbal sign, for example music or image.

Only the second category, interlingual translation, is deemed 'translation proper' by Jakobson.

Task A1.3

- Look at the examples given in this section and think how they correspond to these three types of translation.

Translation between written languages remains today the core of translation research, but the focus has broadened far beyond the mere replacement of SL linguistic items with their TL equivalents. In the intervening years research has been undertaken into all types of linguistic, cultural and ideological phenomena around translation: in theatre translation (an example of translation that is written, but ultimately to be read aloud), for example, adaptation, of geographical or historical location and of dialect, is very common (see Upton ed. 2000). Where do we draw the line between 'translation' and 'adaptation'? What about Olivier Todd's massive biography of the Algerian French writer Albert Camus (Todd 1996); the English edition omits fully one third of the French original. Yet omission, decided upon by the publisher, does not negate translation. And then there is the political context of translation and language, visible on a basic level whenever we see a bilingual sign in the street or whenever a linguistic group asserts its identity by graffiti-ing over the language of the political majority. More extremely, in recent years the differences within the Serbo-Croat language have been deliberately reinforced for political reasons to cause a separation of Croatian, and indeed Bosnian, from Serbian, meaning that translation now takes place between these three languages (Susic 1996).

Developments have seen a certain blurring of research between the different types of translation too. Thus, research into audiovisual translation now encompasses sign language, intralingual subtitles, lip synchronization for dubbing as well as interlingual subtitles; the image-word relationship is crucial in both film and advertising, and there has been closer investigation of the links between translation, music and dance. In view of this complex situation and for reasons of space, in the present book we shall restrict ourselves mostly to forms of conventional written translation, including some subtitling and advertising, but excluding interpreting. We shall, however, examine a very wide range of types of written translation. These will include translation into the second language (see Campbell 1998), which does often take place in the context of both language learning and the translation profession, despite the general wisdom that the translator should always translate into his or her mother tongue or 'language of habitual use'.

Our threefold definition of the ambit of translation will thus be:

Concept box The ambit of translation

1. The process of transferring a written text from SL to TL, conducted by a translator, or translators, in a specific socio-cultural context.
2. The written product, or TT, which results from that process and which functions in the socio-cultural context of the TL.
3. The cognitive, linguistic, visual, cultural and ideological phenomena which are an integral part of 1 and 2.

WHAT IS TRANSLATION STUDIES?

Jakobson's discussion on translation centres around certain key questions of linguistics, including equivalence between items in SL and TL and the notion of translatability. These are issues which became central to research in translation in the 1960s and 1970s. This burgeoning field received the name 'Translation Studies' thanks to the Netherlands-based scholar James S. Holmes in his paper 'The Name and Nature of Translation Studies', originally presented in 1972 but widely published only much later (Holmes 1988/2000, see Text B1.2 in Section B). Holmes mapped out the new field like a science, dividing it into 'pure' Translation Studies (encompassing descriptive studies of existing translations and general and partial translation theories) and 'applied' studies (covering translator training, translator aids and translation criticism, amongst others). More priority is afforded to the 'pure' side, the objectives of which Holmes considers to be twofold (1988: 71):

1. to describe the phenomena of translating and translation(s) as they manifest themselves in the world of our experience, and
2. to establish general principles by means of which these phenomena can be explained and predicted.

Here Holmes uses 'translating' for the process and 'translation' for the product. The descriptions and generalized principles envisaged were much reinforced by Gideon Toury in his *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond* (1995) where two tentative general 'laws' of translation are proposed:

1. the law of growing standardization – TTs generally display less linguistic variation than STs, and
2. the law of interference – common ST lexical and syntactic patterns tend to be copied, creating unusual patterns in the TT.

In both instances, the contention is that translated language in general displays specific characteristics, known as universals of translation.

Concept box Universals of translation

Specific characteristics that, it is hypothesized, are typical of translated language as distinct from non-translated language. This would be the same whatever the language pair involved and might include greater cohesion and explicitation (with reduced ambiguity) and the fact that a TT is normally longer than a ST. See Blum-Kulka and Levenson (1983), Baker (1993) and Mauranen and Kujamäki (2004) for more on universals.

The strong form of this hypothesis is that these are elements that always occur in translation; the weaker form is that these are tendencies that often occur. Recent progress with corpus-based approaches have followed up suggestions by Baker (1993) to investigate universals using larger corpora (electronic databases of texts) in an attempt to avoid the anecdotal findings of small-scale studies. The TEC corpus, overseen by Mona Baker at the University of Manchester, UK, is one of these (<<http://www.monabaker.com/tsresources/>>).

DEVELOPMENTS IN TRANSLATION STUDIES

Although references are still to be found to the new or 'emerging' discipline (e.g. Riccardi 2002), since Holmes's paper, Translation Studies has evolved to such an extent that it is really a perfect interdiscipline, interfacing with a whole host of other fields. The aim may still be to describe translation phenomena, and in some cases to establish general principles, but the methods of analysis are more varied and the cultural and ideological features of translation have become as prominent as linguistics. Figure A1.1 illustrates the breadth of contacts:

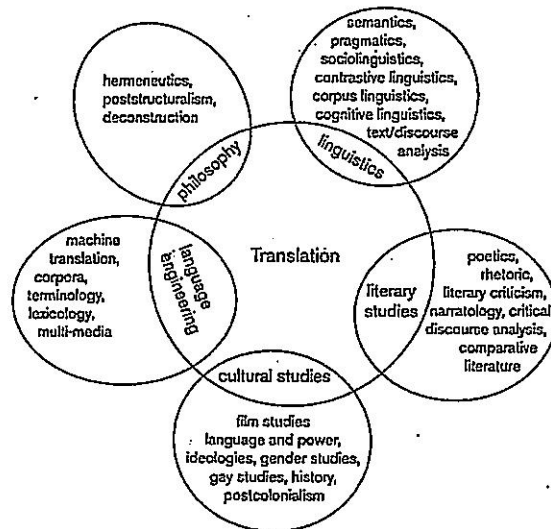


Figure A1.1 Map of disciplines interfacing with Translation Studies

The richness of the field is also illustrated by areas for research suggested by Williams and Chesterman (2002: 6–27), which include:

1. Text analysis and translation
2. Translation quality assessment
3. Translation of literary and other genres
4. Multi-media translation (audiovisual translation)
5. Translation and technology
6. Translation history
7. Translation ethics
8. Terminology and glossaries
9. The translation process
10. Translator training
11. The characteristics of the translation profession

Task A1.4

- In view of the diversity of contexts in which translation research is conducted, Figure A1.1 can never be fully comprehensive. Look at the different areas mentioned, look up definitions of any with which you are not familiar, and reflect on whether there are any areas which could be added.

Task A1.5

- Make a note of the terminology of translation used in this unit and keep the glossary updated as you cover more areas of Translation Studies. At various points throughout the book we will refer to this glossary.

This first unit has discussed what we mean by 'translation' and 'Translation Studies'. It has built on Jakobson's term 'interlingual translation' and Holmes's mapping of the field of Translation Studies. In truth we are talking of an interdiscipline, interfacing with a vast breadth of knowledge which means that research into translation is possible from many different angles, from scientific to literary, cultural and political. A threefold scope of translation has been presented, with a goal of describing the translation process and identifying trends, if not laws or universals, of translation.



What is a translation theory?

This short chapter explains what we mean by the terms "theory" and "paradigm," and how theorization can be related to translation practice. We also detail the overall chapter plan of this course, some reasons for studying translation theory, and the ways this book may be used as part of a learning process based on debate.

1.1 FROM THEORIZING TO THEORIES

Translators are theorizing all the time. Once they have identified a translation problem, they usually have to decide between several possible solutions. Let us say you have to translate the English term "Tory," employed to designate the Conservative Party in Britain. According to the situation, you might consider things like using the English term and inserting information to explain it, or adding a footnote, or just giving a word-for-word equivalent of "Conservative Party," or naming the corresponding part of the political spectrum in the target culture, or just leaving out the problematic name altogether. All those options could be legitimate, given the appropriate text, purpose, and client. Formulating them (*generating* possible translations) and then choosing between them (*selecting* a definitive translation) can be a difficult and complex operation, yet translators are doing precisely that all the time, in split seconds. Whenever they do it, whenever they decide to opt for one rendition and not others, they bring into play a series of ideas about what translation is and how it should be carried out. They are theorizing.

The word "theory" probably comes from the Greek *theā*, view + *-horan*, to see – to theorize is to look at a view (the word *theater* has the same origins). A theory sets the scene where the generation and selection process takes place. Translators are thus constantly theorizing as part of the regular practice of translating.

This private, internal theorizing becomes public when translators discuss what they do. They occasionally theorize out loud when talking with other translators or with clients, sometimes with fellow students or instructors. Sometimes this out-loud theorizing involves no more than a few shared terms for the things we are dealing with. For example, here we will refer to the "source text" as the one we translate from, and to the "target text" as the translation we produce. By extension, we can talk about the "source language" and the "target language," or the "source culture" and the "target culture." "Translating" would then be a set of processes leading from one side to the other.

Do these terms mean that we are already using a theory? Probably not, at least not in the sense of having an explicit theory and defending it. Then again, these interrelated

2 WHAT IS TRANSLATION THEORY?

names-for-things do tend to form models of translation, and those models conceal some very powerful guiding ideas. Why, for example, should our terms reduce translation to an affair of just two sides ("source" and "target")? Surely each source can be traced back to a number of previous sources? And each target is only a link towards further actions and aims. For that matter, each text may contain elements of more than one language and culture. In all these aspects there are usually more than just two sides involved. Further, when we put the "source" and "target" concepts next to the "trans-" part of "translation," we see that the terms build a very *spatial* image in which our actions just go from one side to the other. The words suggest that translators affect the target culture but not the source, thanks to a transitivity that happens in space. Now, is this always true?

Compare that model with "anuvad," a Sanskrit and Hindi term for written translation that basically means, we are told, "repeating" or "saying later" (cf. Chesterman 2006; Spivak 2007: 274). According to this alternative term, the main difference between one text and the other could be not in space, but in time. Translation might then be seen as a constant process of updating and elaborating, rather than as some kind of physical movement across cultures.

Our interrelated names-for-things form models, and those models become theories, scenes set by ideas about what could or should be in a translation. In other words, our basic terms encapsulate theories, even though we are mostly not aware of those theories.

This does not mean that all our inner theorizing is constantly turned into public theories. When translators talk with each other, they mostly accept the common terms without too much argument. Straight mistakes are usually fixed quickly, through reference to usage, to linguistic knowledge, or to common sense. For instance, we might correct a translator who identifies the term "Tory" with extreme right-wing politics. Any ensuing discussion could be interesting but it will have no great need of translation theory (political theory, perhaps, but not ideas about translation). Only when there are disagreements over different ways of translating does private theorization tend to become public theory. If different translators have come up with alternative renditions of the term "Tory," one of them might argue that "translation should explain the source culture" (so they will use the English term and add a long footnote). Another might say that "translation should make things understandable to the target culture" (so they will just put "the main right-wing party"). A third might consider that "the translation should re-situate everything in the target culture" (so they would give the name of a conservative target-culture party). And a fourth will perhaps insist that since the source text was not primarily about politics, there is no need to waste time on an ornamental detail (so they might calmly eliminate all reference to the term).

When those kinds of arguments are happening, practical theorizing is turning into explicit theories. The arguments turn out to be between different theoretical positions. Sometimes the exchanges turn one way rather than the other, and two initially opposed positions will find they are compatible within a larger theory. Often, though, people remain with their fixed positions; they keep arguing.

Theory = Rule

- Theory is a set of rules or instructions on how to do something?
- For example:
- Learning some theories of translation might help improve my translation skills?

Theory ?

1. [C]set of reasoned ideas intended to explain facts or events
2. [C]opinion or supposition, not necessarily based on reasoning
3. [U]ideas or supposition in general (contrasted with practice)
4. [C,U]statement of the principles on which a subject is based

Andrew Chesterman

1. the Greek origin of the word: 'a way of looking at something, a point of view; a contemplation;' ("To theorize is to look at a view.")
2. *myths* as theories: (the Tower of Babel, in Genesis, chapter 11; Eastern myths about rebirth and spiritual development);
3. *metaphors* as theories;
4. empirical, *scientific* theories: the importance of testing claims.

Translation theory?

- Greek: 'a way of looking at something, a point of view; a contemplation.
- Pictures of the world of translation, regularly readjusted as they come up against answers
- Theory is not a set of instructions on how to do something.

The construction of translation theory/theories

- "Translators are theorizing all the time."
- When translators discuss what they do, they are theorizing.
- For example: source text, target text, start text (Language/culture)

An example: Tory

- The Conservative Party in Britain
 - How many translations do we have?
1. Tory + note
 2. Tory + "the main right-wing party"
 3. Give the name of a conservative target-culture party
 4. Omission, not important in the text